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Ivory and slaves in East and Central Africa (c. 1800–1880)

**Com-
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Africa**

Under Central and East Africa we include most of the land north of the Limpopo and south of the Equator. The coast of what is often called West Central Africa featured in the chapters on the Atlantic slave trade and West Africa, but the peoples and routes that supplied the slaves for the coast will be discussed here. There are some similarities between the situation in North and West Africa and that existing in East and Central Africa. In Northeast Africa and in the central Sudan of West Africa we come across warlords such as Zubayr and Rabih. In Central and East Africa we meet up with leaders such as Msiri, Mirambo, Tippu Tip and Mlozi who also built up secondary trading and conquest states that dealt in slaves and ivory. In these other regions we witness some empire building during the period of the jihads by people such as al-Hajj Umar and Samory Touré, by Mohammad Ali in Egypt and Menelik in Ethiopia. In this region too, we have some empire building and state expansion, for example on the island of Madagascar by the Merina, in the area of the Great Lakes by Buganda, and also the growth of the trading empire of the Omani Arabs in East Africa. But large empires were scarce because the geography did not encourage the growth of big polities. It was mainly in the Great Lakes region that we find sizeable states such as Buganda.

- Missions and explorers** The growing European presence in East and Central Africa was also linked with the banning of the slave trade and the encouragement of legitimate commerce. Mission stations played a major role in this. But it was a different role from that played by mission stations in West Africa, which were by and large instrumental in westernising and nurturing black elites. In East Central Africa mission stations were very much in the frontline, witnessing the devastation of slave raids, sometimes even taking up arms to drive off slave raiders. Explorers also played a different role here, for it was a region where European interest, and knowledge of conditions, came much later than in West Africa. Explorers were very much in the forefront in bringing conditions in East Africa to the notice of Europe.
- Penetration of interior** In East and Central Africa the penetration of the interior came earlier and was accompanied by much more violence than in West Africa. The increased demand for slaves and ivory led to the coastal people taking the initiative in going into the interior. In West Africa the fall in palm oil prices, followed by the depression in the 1870s, forced Europeans to change their modus operandi and to go inland in order to cut prices. In contrast with West Africa, it was not Europeans who ventured into the interior from their coastal depots, but Swahili-Arabs backed by Indian capital.
- Swahili-Arabs**
- Ngoni invasions** Besides the Swahili-Arab penetration, East Africa was also faced with massive inroads from outside the region in the form of the Ngoni invasions. The East and Central African interior was thus faced with two invasions – the invasion by traders from the coast, and invasion by the Ngoni from the south.
- Density of population** For the most part Central and East Africa was less densely populated than West Africa. Very little of the bush and forest had been cleared, which gave the tsetse fly ample breeding opportunity, so that large areas were unsuitable for draught animals. Besides the density of population, there was also a different distribution of population. There was a high density of population on the East African coast and also in the interior in the vicinity of the Great Lakes. But between the coast and the lakes the country was sparsely populated. Behind the fertile coastal belt was a large stretch of uninviting scrub land. One of the few places where a densely populated area linked the coast with the interior was in the Zambezi valley, and the Portuguese made use of this to involve themselves in the affairs of the interior long before 1800. Whereas in West Africa in the first half of the nineteenth century the slave trade in most places was declining and was being replaced by legitimate trade in vegetable products (palm oil in particular), in East and Central Africa the slave trade, which had not featured very prominently in the period before 1800, expanded rapidly in the first half of the century, and by 1880 was probably at its height. And although men like David Livingstone spoke of promoting the three Cs – Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation – there was very little that could be done to promote legitimate commerce to replace the trade in slaves. The one product that was available was ivory, but the expansion of trade in ivory went hand in hand with the growth of the slave trade. Of crucial significance is that East and Central Africa had no equivalent of palm oil. With one or two exceptions it did not have the rivers to transport goods, so that human portage and the slave trade sustained each other.
- Slave trade**

Underdevelopment In West Africa we saw how the demand for slaves and palm oil had not led to the development of an economic infrastructure that might have provided the basis for the growth of processing industries. In East Central Africa the position was even worse. As we have seen, in West Africa the arrival of Europeans on the Atlantic seaboard was only one factor in the economic equation; there were a number of indigenous strands of economic development and growth, and until well into the second half of the nineteenth century it could be argued that internal dynamism was more important than external stimuli. Whereas in West Africa there was a vigorous local long-distance and even overseas trade that was independent of the slave trade, in this region the slave and ivory trade played a more crucial role in opening up routes and creating new demands and avenues. In the period up to 1880 the search for slaves and ivory, essentially extractive products, became so significant that other activities such as agriculture and manufacturing were neglected. So in East Central Africa the underdevelopment of society was much more marked than in West Africa. The stimulus for economic change, and the accompanying political and social restructuring, were very much dependent upon the Atlantic and Indian Ocean trading systems.

THE SLAVE TRADE SOUTH OF CAPE DELGADO

Portuguese presence The Portuguese conducted the slave and ivory trade south of Cape Delgado. They had interests on both the west and east coasts of Africa. On the west coast south of the Congo River the Portuguese had withdrawn from the Kongo kingdom in 1665 and by 1800 their hold on the coast was based at Luanda and Benguela in Angola. On the east coast by 1800 they were confined to Mozambique Island and the opposite mainland and a few other bases such as Quilimane on the coast and Sena and Tete on the Zambezi River. Although from time to time the Portuguese laid claim to a huge, undefined part of the hinterland, their presence was limited mainly to the coast. In the interior Portuguese presence was represented by the *prazeros* of the Zambezi valley. By the nineteenth century the descendants of the original Portuguese *prazeros* had largely been Africanised.

Corruption The Portuguese settlements of Angola and Mozambique had a notorious reputation for inefficient and corrupt administration. Governors sent out from Portugal frequently found themselves at loggerheads with the local white population when they wished to take steps against the slave trade, which officially was supposed to have ended in Portuguese possessions in 1838. In 1839 the governor of Angola was unceremoniously ejected when he tried to give effect to the home government's ban on the slave trade. Life for governors was far more pleasant if they did not oppose the slave trade, but instead supplemented their meagre salaries by taking part. One of the reasons why the settlements languished was that it was difficult to persuade people from Portugal to settle there. Those who emigrated to escape the grinding poverty of their homeland preferred Brazil to Africa. The land was better in Brazil and gold had been discovered there in the 1690s. As late as the middle of the nineteenth century there were fewer than 2 000 whites in Angola and an even smaller number in Mozambique. The overwhelming majority of these whites were men, so miscegenation was steadily producing

a growing mulatto population, who took the lead in pioneering trade links between the coast and the interior.

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In the eighteenth century Indian and Portuguese traders funnelled ivory through Mozambique, but this trade shifted northwards early in the nineteenth century to Kilwa which was outside Portuguese control, and Mozambique had to rely more on the slave trade. Fortunately for the Mozambican economy, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the demand for slaves was rising. There were a number of reasons for this. One was that British anti-slavery measures were not as vigorous off the East African coast as they were in the Atlantic, and as the campaign against the trade gathered momentum on the west coast, more slaves were taken from the east coast. The 1817 treaty with the British allowed Portuguese slave traders to continue operating from south of the equator, so that many of the slaves destined for Brazil came from Angola and Mozambique. In Mozambique the slaves were exported mainly from Mozambique Island or from Quilimane, located on the Kwakwa River, which was preferred to the mouths of the Zambezi River as the main entry point to the Zambezi valley. The prohibition on slave trading in Portuguese possessions after 1838 doubtlessly led to a decline in the Mozambican trade, but the Brazilian market continued to be supplied from Portuguese possessions until the Brazilian trade came to an end in 1851.

**Failure
of anti-
slaving
patrols**

For a long time British anti-slavery patrols in East African waters were very small. It was only from the 1840s that the growth of Zanzibar as a trading centre of note brought European commercial interests to the region, and revelations of the East African slave trade focused the attention of British humanitarians on the region. For a short spell in the 1840s British ships off Mozambique had the cooperation of the Portuguese governor in apprehending slavers, but this was the exception rather than the rule as most governors made a living from the trade, despite the official Portuguese ban. British officials often had to close their eyes to the situation. In his efforts to see that local Portuguese officials obeyed Lisbon's ban on the trade, the first British consul appointed in Mozambique in 1857 made himself so unpopular that life became impossible and he was forced to leave after nine months. The British did not appoint another consul there until 1875.

**Trade
with Ré-
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In addition to the Brazil trade, Mozambique was supplying slaves for the French East African islands. After 1785 the development of French plantations on the Mascarene Islands, including Réunion and Mauritius, where sugar had become the basis of the economy by the end of the century, increased the demand for slaves. From the late 1730s the French had bought slaves for the Mascarene Islands in Madagascar, but these slaves soon acquired a reputation for being 'insolent' and so the French gradually obtained more slaves from Mozambique, developing a flourishing trade with the Makua who lived close to the coast behind Mozambique. But as was the case with much of Mozambique's other trade which began to gravitate to Kilwa, the French later obtained slaves from Kilwa. Slaves were taken from Kilwa by Arabs in dhows to the Comoro Islands, where the cargoes were transferred to French boats.

French suspicions As in West Africa, the French complicated and hampered British attempts to take decisive action against the slave trade. It was not merely the slave trade that was at issue. France saw the British campaign as a device to further British trading and other interests at the expense of France. There can be little doubt that British actions were not always humanitarian and disinterested. Thus British involvement in Madagascar in the nineteenth century was aimed not only at preventing the slave trade but also at limiting French influence on the island. The demand for slaves in the Mascarenes and the importation of firearms in return for the slaves altered the balance of power among competing kingdoms in Madagascar. The Merina near the centre of the island profited very much from this demand for slaves, and built up their power. In their attempt to conquer the whole island early in the nineteenth century they welcomed the help of French agents and missionaries in modernising the state; a standing army was created which was modelled on European lines and the Merina soon dominated about two thirds of the island. When the British captured Mauritius in 1810, they decided that support for a Merinian conquest of the whole island would end the wars between the various groups – wars which fed the slave trade – and at the same time would increase British influence at the expense of the French. The French were suspicious of British actions taken in the name of striking a blow at the slave trade, especially when they saw that the result was an increase in British influence at the expense of their own. In 1817, in return for agreeing to renounce the external slave trade, although not slavery within Madagascar itself, King Radama obtained British assistance and increased his domains.

But the rise in British power in Madagascar was only temporary, and when King Radama died in 1828 there was a reaction against European influence which lasted until 1861. When European influence again expanded, the French predominated. The Merina were able to maintain their independence for a long time because of their skill in playing off the British and French missionaries and traders against one another.

French suspicions of British motives were also confirmed by their experience with the Réunion labour supply. During the Napoleonic wars French privateers from their bases in Mauritius played havoc with British shipping; the British answer to this was to capture the Mascarenes in 1810. When peace was concluded in 1815 the British retained Mauritius, which brought the slave trade there to an end. In order to obtain more labourers for the sugar plantations on the island, from the 1830s the British imported contract labourers from British India. Many of them remained behind after the expiration of their contracts. Fresh inputs of contract labour followed a period of great growth in the sugar industry in the 1850s, and by 1907 almost half a million Indians had been brought to Mauritius. At the same time the British refused to allow the French to import Indian labour to Réunion to extend the plantations there. So the French devised a free labour scheme, the so-called *libres engagés* system, obtaining the labour from Africa. The manner in which the labourers were recruited caused the *engagé* system to be labelled by the British a form of slavery and they made attempts to stop it. The French saw these British moves as commercially inspired, a diabolical plot to starve the French island of labour. In 1861 the British did eventually permit the recruitment of Indian labour to Réunion under strictly controlled supervision, but this was stopped again in

the early 1880s. The illegal slave trade to Réunion from Mozambique continued alongside the engagé system and did not come to an end until the early 1880s.

SEYYID SAID AND OMANI POWER IN EAST AFRICA

Little contact between coast and interior

The decline of Portuguese enterprises in East Africa was partly the result of the rise of the Omani trading empire based on Zanzibar. North of Mozambique by 1800 there had been very little contact between the East African coast and the interior. In the well-watered and fertile coastal area with its white sandy beaches fringed with coconut palms, the Swahili-Arabs traded coconuts, copra, oil seeds and cowrie shells. They saw no reason for going into the arid belt of thorn scrub and poor soil that lay beyond the coast. Also, the people of the interior were hostile, and the presence of the tsetse fly meant that they could not take draught animals into much of the interior. Soon, however, there were very good reasons for venturing into this hitherto unattractive country behind the coast. The two most important reasons may be summed up as an increased demand for slaves and ivory. As on the Atlantic coast of West Africa, the pull of international trade drew coast and interior together.

Seyyid Said

In 1806 Seyyid Said became sultan of Muscat in Oman on the southwestern tip of Saudi Arabia. As sultan he was the hereditary overlord of the Arab settlements along the East African coast, but his control was only nominal. The new sultan determined to build up a trading empire in East Africa. Before the end of the first year of his reign he had signed a trade and friendship treaty with Great Britain, thus ensuring himself of British support against interference from other European powers. At this stage the British presence on the East African coast was very small, smaller than the presence of other European powers, but the treaty nevertheless served Said's purpose.

Mombasa subdued

Mombasa, Kilwa and Zanzibar were the most important city states on the coast, and the powerful Mazrui family of Mombasa in particular was unwilling to recognise his overlordship. In 1824 Captain William Fitzwilliam Owen accepted the offer of the rebellious inhabitants of Mombasa and proclaimed Mombasa a British possession. The British government, however, refused to accept Mombasa and the flag was hauled down. Palmerston was firmly opposed to any extension of British authority – he regarded treaties and patrol boats as the best way of combatting the slave trade. Britain was interested in fighting the slave trade and in the commercial possibilities presented by Zanzibar – she was not interested in colonies. With the help of his small force of mercenaries as well as naval action Said finally succeeded in subduing Mombasa in 1837. He then became the acknowledged ruler of the whole coast from Warsheik (just north of Mogadishu) to Cape Delgado in the south. The sultan left most of the local rulers in power and did not interfere with them so long as they acknowledged his sovereignty and paid him customs dues. Said farmed out the collection of these dues to Indian merchants and traders who settled in Zanzibar and the coastal towns in increasing numbers.

Arab slave trading

Before the late eighteenth century the slave trade from East Africa had been insignificant when compared with the numbers involved in the West African slave trade. But it

had been going on longer than the West African trade. It was conducted mainly by Arabs and the Swahili-Arabs, an increasingly large group of varying degrees of Arab-African mixing. The Koran appeared to sanction slavery by forbidding the enslavement of the Faithful. Slaves therefore had to be obtained among infidel and pagan populations. For centuries slaves had been carried northwards across the Sahara to North African ports in order to be shipped to the Ottoman empire and to the East. Slaves and ivory were also brought from the interior to the east coast, where the Arabs bought them and transported them to Arabia and Persia in dhows. The passage between Zanzibar and southern Arabia usually took between 30 and 35 days. The short passage from Kilwa to Zanzibar took only 24 hours, so no food for slaves was taken aboard. If the winds failed and the boat was becalmed for a few days, there was great hardship and many slaves died in appalling conditions in the cramped dhows.

Zanzibar, Pemba and the clove industry Said was responsible for increasing the demand for slaves by starting to produce cloves on Zanzibar in 1818. Prior to that Zanzibar's only export had been coconuts. Pemba, another island close by, exported rice. But when an Omani Arab brought the first shoots of a clove tree to Zanzibar from Réunion, Said saw the possibilities and before long many plantations had been established there and also on the island of Pemba. As the demand for cloves expanded from the 1830s ever-increasing numbers of slaves were required for the plantations. By 1856 clove exports were worth about £60 000 a year. By the early twentieth century the two islands were producing almost 80 per cent of the world's cloves. Between the 1780s and 1820s slave prices fell by half, making the use of slave labour in the clove plantations more attractive. Clove prices were at their highest between 1835 and 1845, after which they declined, with the exception of the period after 1872, when a hurricane destroyed many of Zanzibar's clove trees, causing a shortage. Although the price of cloves dropped after 1845, expansion of production continued for some time, for it takes at least seven or eight years for clove trees to reach full production, so the greatest need for slaves to pick cloves came in the 1850s, when prices were falling.

Zanzibar and the slave trade Zanzibar was not only a producer of cloves, but it also became the centre of much of the East African coastal trade, with goods destined for Oman being funnelled through the island. It has been estimated that as many as 70 000 slaves a year were passing through the Zanzibar market in the 1860s and that the real growth in traffic had been after 1840, by which time the West African slave trade was drying up. It is likely that about 10 000 of the 70 000 were being absorbed by Zanzibar and Pemba for their plantations. The growing importance of Zanzibar as the entrepôt of East African trade because of the activities of Arab and Indian traders caused Said to move his capital from Muscat to Zanzibar in 1840. Around 1860 there were about 4 000 Arabs in Zanzibar where they formed a landed upper class. At the same time there were about 6 000 Indians in East Africa. It was largely because of Said's initiative and Indian capital that the isolation between the East African littoral and the interior was ended.

Ivory If one reason for vigorous trade between the coast and the interior was the greatly increased demand for slaves, the other reason was the increased demand for ivory. Ivory had been an item of trade for a long time. African ivory, which was not as brittle

as Indian ivory, had been exported to India for Hindu wedding ceremonies and other uses for at least a thousand years, but now Europe and America developed new uses for East African ivory. Knife handles had been made from the hard ivory of West Africa, but the softer East African ivory was better for billiard balls, piano keys and combs. It is ironic that this demand for luxury items should have dictated the course of African economies, but such was the strength of the new industrialising world that even its demand for trivial articles could transform non-industrialising countries dependent totally for trade on labour and natural resources. Throughout the nineteenth century demand was greater than the supply, and the price moved steadily upwards. The ivory and slave trade developed side by side, and slaves were used to transport the ivory to the coast as draught animals could not live in the tsetse-infested country. By the 1850s Zanzibar was exporting almost 250 000 kg of ivory a year, valued at £150 000; exports remained high until the 1890s. But it was not a trade that could last indefinitely, especially as firearms became more freely available in the interior from the 1860s. For every 50 kg of ivory at least one elephant had to be killed, and hunters like the Chokwe had continually to move further afield as elephants became scarce.

Kilwa The growth of Zanzibar was to a certain extent at the expense of Mozambique. Kilwa, to the north of Mozambique, was outside the Portuguese sphere of control and was a real thorn in the flesh of the Portuguese since it drew trade from the same interior. Yao overland routes to Kilwa passed through the densely populated regions around Lake Nyasa, thus providing a good supply of slaves. Trade in Kilwa was stimulated by the demand for slaves for the French islands. Yao traders who took their ivory to Mozambique could also deliver the tusks to Kilwa and from early in the nineteenth century they began doing so. They did so because the Makua, who stood between them and Mozambique, having obtained firearms through trading slaves with the French, prevented the Yao from going to the coast, making this route rather dangerous. Moreover, at a time when the price of ivory on world markets was rapidly rising, the Portuguese increased the duties on Yao trade and took steps to establish a government monopoly in the trade in ivory.

Growth of Zanzibar's commercial empire Through taxes and restrictive licensing the Portuguese crown ensured that a large share of the profits of the Mozambique trade went to Portuguese citizens and the state. Although this led to friction with the Indian traders of Mozambique, Indian traders continued to patronise Mozambique so long as a steady stream of gold was reaching the Portuguese coast from the interior. But by the late eighteenth century the amount of gold coming through had dropped markedly, and traders increasingly went to Kilwa for slaves and ivory. The transfer of the ivory to Kilwa contributed to the growth of Zanzibar's commercial empire in the nineteenth century, as Zanzibar became sufficiently powerful to make sure that all foreign trade went through Zanzibar itself, placing a ban on direct foreign trade in ivory and copal from Kilwa. Foreign traders were also barred from most of the coast of Tanzania. For all the trade south of Bagamoyo Zanzibar was the obvious stopping place for Indian Ocean sailing ships for, if they went further down the coast, they risked being stranded by the changing pattern of wind.

India and the ivory trade Zanzibar's wealth was above all built on ivory. The price of ivory quadrupled between 1823 and 1873. Indian merchants, many of them with commercial ties in India, financed the growing trade. They represented large trading houses and manufacturers in India and had both the goods and the capital to organise trade on the large scale that was necessary to secure the safe passage of caravans in the unsettled interior. They gave credit to Swahili-Arab traders to organise well-equipped and well-armed caravans to go into the interior in search of ivory and slaves. The Arabs concentrated mainly on the slave trade while the Indians tended to dominate the ivory trade, perhaps because they had the knowledge and contacts for the Bombay ivory market, which received most East African ivory. A proportion of the tusks reaching Bombay was re-exported to England. Said's encouragement of Indian enterprise and settlement gave them a prominent place in the East African economy. The capital and goods the Indians supplied were critical for the Arab and Swahili caravans. Although the Indians did not obtain any prominent political positions, economically they became very dominant.

Duties on ivory Because Zanzibar became an important entrepôt through which trade was channelled and through which ivory passed, it could successfully impose duties on ivory coming in. Nyamwezi traders were discouraged from selling their ivory in Zanzibar by discriminatory tariffs. Tusks brought in by Arabs paid less duty than tusks brought in by Nyamwezi. Because Zanzibar was so prominent in East African trade American and European traders also went there, since they could obtain all they required in Zanzibar, rather than waste time travelling up the coast.

Moresby treaty The steps taken by the British to end the Portuguese and French slave trading activities south of Cape Delgado were matched in the north by pressure on Seyyid Said. From 1806, early in his reign, when British ships cleared the waters around Oman of privateers, Said and the British had a good relationship, which was reflected in the signing of a treaty of friendship in 1806. In the 1820s pressure was applied to force Said to take action against the slave trade. In 1822 Captain Fairfax Moresby, senior officer in Mauritius, signed a treaty with Said in which the sultan agreed to ban the sale of slaves to Christians by his subjects. This treaty, together with the 1817 treaty with Radama of Madagascar, meant *in theory* that the export of slaves to European possessions would end. Said had signed the treaty because he had no option – he could not match British naval power. In addition, as far as the sultan was concerned the Moresby Treaty had a positive side – it tacitly recognised the sultan's authority over the coast, and would thus prevent other powers from challenging him. Although Said's subjects were unhappy with this limitation on their activities, in practice it did not restrict them, for they simply ignored it. If Said benefited from the treaty, so did the British. Although it did not live up to its expectations, it did give the British a measure of control over the slave trade on the coast.

Expanding trade relations From the early nineteenth century American and German traders appeared in Zanzibar and in 1837 an American consul was appointed there; a British consul followed four years later and in 1844 the French also appointed a consul in Zanzibar. Between 1859 and 1879 the total foreign trade of Zanzibar increased from £500 000 to £2 000 000. In the first half of the nineteenth century France, Germany and the United States all traded

much more than the British in Zanzibar. Trade with the United States in particular was growing rapidly.

British trade relations

Although the sultan was trading more with the French than the British, he relied on the British to keep the French at a distance. He was afraid that an increase in French influence would lead to the annexation of his territories, whereas the British had shown by the Moresby Treaty and the rejection of Owen's action in Mombasa that they had no design on Said's empire. Because of the anti-slavery patrols, there were also more British ships to be seen off the coast, so British power was more visible. These British ships were also useful on occasion to the sultan, whose political authority over much of the area where he was recognised as suzerain was somewhat shaky. His political power was confined to the islands and to the mainland ports which he could control with his own fleet, or, if necessary, with the aid of British ships. So although British trade with Zanzibar was not so large, British political influence was predominant.

Said's influence in the interior

Although Said did not have power in the interior, he did have influence. The traders who went into the interior did so under his banner, and the inland rulers honoured and respected the flag. Seyyid Said made trade treaties with some of the inland rulers to secure the safety of his traders. His successor, Barghash, later did the same, exchanging gifts with these rulers. This was all very convenient for the traders, for they received the benefit of the sultan's influence, without having to restrict their actions by any code laid down in Zanzibar. They were free to act much as they liked without reference to the sultan. The political structure of the Zanzibar trading empire was thus extremely fragile. Even on the coast the sultan's hold depended very much on the extent to which Britain was prepared to assist him.

Hamerton treaty

The British supported the sultan but the price of assistance was increasing pressure on Said to take steps against the slave trade. Hamerton was the first British consul in Zanzibar and served there from 1841 until his death in 1857. His main duties were to obtain information on the extent of the slave trade in the area and also to keep an eye on the French. He established very good relations with Said, becoming a trusted adviser of the sultan. But he did not do very much to limit the slave trade. He did, however, keep an eye on the French. The threat to Said implied by the spread of French influence to the island of Nossi Bé in 1840, and to Mayotte, one of the Comoro Islands, in 1843, was used by Hamerton to persuade Said to sign the Hamerton Treaty in 1845. In terms of this Said agreed to end the export of slaves into his Arabian possessions and also the export of slaves from the mainland of Africa, except to Zanzibar, Pemba and Mafia. At the same time the Royal Navy obtained the right to intercept and search slavers. Theoretically this should have ended the slave trade from the East African coast to the French islands but it did not. The refusal of the French government to allow reciprocal search and visit rights meant that the French flag enjoyed immunity from interception by British ships; Arabs who could obtain the right to fly the French flag could pass unmolested through British anti-slavery patrols, and for a long time it did not seem as if the French were particularly careful to make sure that those who hoisted their flag had the unqualified right to do so.

Complications In terms of the Hamerton Treaty the slave trade between the East African coast and Zanzibar remained legal. The captains of British ships had to decide which dhows carried slaves bound for Zanzibar, which they could not touch, and which were bound for the East, which they could intercept. To complicate matters further, the institution of slavery itself was still legal, so that travellers were entitled to bring their domestic slaves with them, forcing British captains to try to distinguish between slaves that were held legally and those who were being transported for sale in Oman.

Dhows There were many practical difficulties capturing dhows, which were fast and manoeuvrable and could hug the shoreline where they could not easily be followed by British sailing ships. The moment a dhow caught sight of a British naval vessel it made for the shore, to be lost in a small creek, or to unload its cargo. Until steamships replaced sailing ships in the second half of the century, dhows were faster than the patrol boats, especially as it was mostly old ships that were employed on the East Coast Squadron. The dhows were frail craft and very lightly armed, however, so that if they were trapped on the open seas they usually surrendered without a fight.

Majid In 1856 a new era dawned in the history of European influence in East Africa. In that year David Livingstone crossed Africa and news of the devastation being wreaked by the slave trade in the interior soon filtered through to England and led to increased interest in the region. Seyyid Said died in 1856 and Hamerton a year later. British help in solving the disputes that followed Said's death gave England a greater hold on Zanzibar. When Said died his empire was divided, his son Majid being in control of the East African part of the empire. But two of Said's other sons, Thwain and Barghash, believed that they had a better claim to Zanzibar and the title of sultan, and tried to overthrow him. This was not the end of Majid's troubles. On taking up his appointment in 1858 the new British consul, Colonel C. R. Rigby, discovered that Hamerton had allowed the 1845 treaty to be largely ignored and evaded. He put pressure on the new ruler to put the provisions of that treaty into effect, but Majid was too weak to enforce unpopular measures on his unwilling subjects who saw their livelihood threatened.

British support Increasingly Majid had to rely on British support to retain his position as sultan. In 1859 a war fleet, sent by Thwain with French approval to Zanzibar to oust Majid, was intercepted by the British and persuaded to return to Oman. By now Rigby had emerged openly as Majid's protector. Meanwhile the French consul in Zanzibar gave his support to Majid's brothers, and prepared to back this up by calling in the help of two French warships that had come to Zanzibar. It was only the diplomatic intervention of Rigby and the timely arrival of two British warships that prevented a very awkward situation from developing.

Majid was powerless to move against the slave traders and so Rigby decided to grab the initiative himself. He called upon British captains to take vigorous action against slave-carrying dhows, many of which were sunk. But after he left Zanzibar in 1862 the slave trade soon resumed its normal flow.

Suez Canal In 1869 the Suez Canal was opened and some of the traffic that came down through the canal found its way to Zanzibar. With the opening of a shorter route to the East the

waters around the east coast of Africa assumed greater strategic significance. British trade with Zanzibar had by now overtaken that of the Germans, French and Americans. By the 1870s British and British-Indian trade was twice that of Germany and almost three times that of the United States.

Dr John Kirk When Majid died in 1870, the French encouraged the new sultan, Barghash, to chart his own course without reference to the British. The British were not prepared to accept this, however, and Dr John Kirk applied steady pressure on Barghash to take action against the slave trade. As physician and naturalist Kirk had accompanied David Livingstone on most of his journeys between 1858 and 1863, when he was invalided back to England. He became vice-consul in Zanzibar in 1866, and in 1873 was promoted to consul-general. He was knighted in 1881 and served in Zanzibar until his retirement in 1887. Kirk paved the way for the special mission of Sir Bartle Frere to Barghash in 1873, which led to the sultan signing a treaty declaring the slave trade in his dominions illegal.

Sir Bartle Frere and the 1873 treaty Frere was as much concerned with the protection of British interests as he was with the suppression of the slave trade. He went to Zanzibar in the wake of a government decision to introduce a mail steamship service which would increase British influence and at the same time help to encourage the growth of legitimate trade to counter the slave trade. Frere put pressure on Barghash to end the slave trade by signing treaties with his rivals in Muscat and with other rulers in the Persian Gulf. He gave instructions for Kilwa to be blockaded and all dhows entering and leaving with slaves to be examined and allowed to proceed only if they could show that they had bona fide domestic slaves on board. The threat of an even more sweeping blockade forced Barghash to capitulate, and he signed a treaty stopping the export of all slaves from the mainland and the closing of all public slave markets in his territories. The infamous Zanzibar slave market closed and a cathedral was later built by the Universities' Mission to Central Africa on the site of the market, the altar being erected where the whipping post for wayward slaves had been. The 1873 treaty was forced upon Barghash; the British had given him no option. From the outset Barghash had undoubtedly known that his resistance and opposition would be of no avail, but he delayed signing the treaty until it was clear to all his subjects that he was against the treaty but had signed it only because he had no choice.

Increased British involvement The treaty of 1873 ushered in a period of close cooperation between Barghash and Kirk, who became firm friends. The sultan enjoyed British protection, but the price was compliance with increasing British involvement in his territories. Thus when the Egyptians seized the sultan's northern ports of Kismayu and Brava on the Benadir coast, Britain forced them to withdraw, but Kirk used the occasion to take steps to stop the slave trade on the Benadir coast. Slaves were still being transported along the coast from Kilwa to Mombasa, where they were smuggled to Pemba; the French engagé trade also continued. In 1876 Britain induced the sultan to forbid the transport of slaves in his dominions and to prohibit the equipping of caravans in his territory. When these measures resulted in disturbances at Kilwa it was the British who quelled them. Sir Lloyd Mathews trained and operated a force on the mainland to uphold the sultan's

authority on the coastal belt, suppressing riots and rebellion and stopping the movement of slaves.

Britain's
hold on
the sul-
tan

Britain was content to have a hold on the sultan and to exercise informal influence in East Africa. By 1880 the government had no intention of increasing its territorial commitments. When Sir William Mackinnon wanted to establish a company to administer and develop a large part of East Africa which Barghash had given him as a concession, the British government refused to allow him to take up the concession. Said and Majid and Barghash had never been rulers over a specific territory – they had influence rather than power, their empire was a commercial one, based on the collection of customs dues. But from the mid-1870s Kirk, who was one of the more influential of the 'men on the spot', increasingly felt that Barghash should turn his commercial empire into a political one. Whether or not the sultan wanted this was of less importance than the fact this that was what Kirk wanted. 'To Kirk the Sultan was the instrument of informal empire, the agent who would suppress the slave trade and promote legitimate commerce, and with it British influence, at little cost to the imperial treasury ... Barghash could be sure of British support only as long as he was useful and co-operative. Ominously the measures now being forced on him were not in the economic interests of his own subjects, whose prosperity depended on a steady supply of slave labour.' In 1876 Kirk wrote: 'We must strengthen him, or be dragged into the work ourselves, and that would be more entangling still.'¹

Slave
trade
con-
tinues

The 1873 and 1876 treaties did not immediately put an end to the slave trade. Slaves continued to be smuggled into Zanzibar. The death rate on Zanzibar was high and the birth rate low, so fresh supplies of slaves were constantly in demand. In any case the treaties did not affect the slave trade in the interior, and the sultan had no control over the actions of his subjects away from the coast. The East African slave trade across the Red Sea continued, as did the traffic on the mainland itself. The slave trade was an integral part of the arms and ivory trade and slaves and ivory were virtually unobtainable unless purchased with firearms. There was a large internal market for slaves in the interior. There were many plantations that required slaves, for example in the production of oil seeds in the northernmost part of Mozambique. There were new sugar and cereal plantations on the coast in which slave labour was used. Zanzibar and Pemba were fed from these plantations. There were also plantations along the caravan routes to service and feed the caravans. Slaves were also used as porters and soldiers. In the late 1870s it seemed as if the internal slave trade in the interior was increasing. Britain was anxious to put a stop to this trade but there was a limit to the steps it would take. It did not want to intervene in East Africa itself. What Britain did want, was to stop the slave trade and prevent other powers from intervening there. So Kirk, who was the real power in the land, encouraged Arab expansion into the East African interior. While Kirk welcomed Arab conquests, the missionaries who were working in the interior did not. They were appalled at the destruction and burning of villages, and the starving refugees who clamoured at their doors for sustenance and protection.

TRADE ROUTES INTO THE INTERIOR

African pioneers Trade routes in the interior had been pioneered by the Africans themselves. The Yao had found their way from the vicinity of Lake Nyasa to the coast long before coastal traders decided to go inland. Kamba traders southeast of Mount Kenya had traded in ivory for many years before the coastal traders moved in and took over their routes. The Nyamwezi of west central Tanzania played a leading role in the pioneering of a number of trade routes in the interior. In the eighteenth century goods along Nyamwezi routes had found their way to Uganda and Ruanda. The Nyamwezi had also opened up a route to the coast which they were using about 1800, and it was this route that the Swahili-Arab traders from the coast employed when they made their first forays into the interior. Although ivory had always trickled through from the interior to the coast, the growth in the demand for ivory in the nineteenth century made a more systematic approach necessary for its gathering. As early as 1811 caravans from the coast were reaching into central Tanzania, and a decade later Swahili-Arab caravans were found on the other side of Lake Tanganyika in modern Zaïre. By mid-century the Arabs had established the town of Unyanyembe or Tabora, and Ujiji on Lake Tanganyika.

Arab domination Although Africans in the interior had pioneered these routes, in many cases they were ousted by the Arabs who had three great advantages over the indigenous traders – they had a wider range of products to offer, they had modern arms, access to credit, and they knew the Zanzibar trading system and could influence it. Africans in the interior had no way of tapping into the financing services provided by local Indian financiers. And the African traders of the interior were discriminated against when they arrived at the coast; they were forced to pay higher duties on goods they wished to sell than the Swahili-Arabs. But although people such as the Kamba and the Nyamwezi found themselves being ousted to some extent, the Yao further southwards retained control over the routes between Lake Nyasa and Kilwa, probably the main routes in East Africa for slaves, who came principally from the Lake Nyasa region. The Yao were too strong and well entrenched to be pushed aside.

Other commodities The Swahili-Arab advent into the interior saw the expansion of the existing trade routes. They became major arteries through which flowed a considerable variety of goods. If one considers the Mozambique port of Quilimane, it is clear that the export production was dominated by ivory and slaves and few other products found their way there. But in the case of Zanzibar, slaves and ivory were not the only commodities to flow down these routes – there were other products such as iron (including iron implements), copper, salt, tobacco, food, gum copal and cowries, cloves, coconuts, hides and sesame. The slave and ivory trade generated vigorous trading activity and thus promoted trade in other articles as well. In East and Central Africa many of the factors that had aided the development of trade in West Africa were absent. In East Africa there were no navigable rivers comparable with those in West Africa, although even there they were the exception rather than the rule. Traders had to rely heavily on head portage, the most expensive way of conveying goods, so that it was not financially viable to transport many of the products of the far interior to the coast, except for ivory and slaves. The slaves carried the ivory to the coast, where both slaves

and ivory were sold! In the western Sudan the need for vital products such as salt acted as a generator of trade, and in Central Africa it also did so, but in much of East Africa salt came from densely populated areas so that there was little incentive to transport large quantities of it over long distances. Despite these limiting factors, the ivory and slave trades did expand the long-distance routes so that there were more of them and they were used far more frequently to carry a wider variety of goods over longer distances. By the middle of the nineteenth century the value of gum copal passing through Zanzibar was £35 000. Food production was greatly stimulated. There were now many more people who had to be fed and who did not grow their own food. This applied to those employed in caravans, and to the increasing number of persons living in the inland trading centres and on Zanzibar and Pemba. Most of the agricultural goods destined for the islands and for servicing the caravans were grown close to the coast and did not come from the interior, but there was also a market for grain inland, for example along the caravan routes. An increase in food prices made the extension of agricultural activity worthwhile.

**Main
trade
routes**

The main trade route from the coast went to Tabora. From here a number of routes radiated out. One went northwest around Lake Victoria into Uganda; another branched off towards the southwest around the southern end of Lake Tanganyika; this route which went to the Lunda empire of Kazembe and from there to the kingdom of the Mwata Yamvo, was in touch with Luanda on the Atlantic coast. So in effect this was a trans-continental trade route. A branch of this also filtered into the Ovimbundu network to Benguela. Another major route from Tabora went directly west to Ujiji on the shores of Lake Tanganyika and across the lake into modern Zaïre. Along the central route to Tabora and beyond, and on the northern routes, the slave trade did not appear to assume major proportions until after the 1850s.

**North-
ern
routes**

There were also a number of smaller northern routes which went from the vicinity of Lake Victoria and Lake Rudolph to harbours north of Zanzibar, such as Malindi and Mombasa. These northerly routes to the coast were more direct than the one via Tabora and from the outset would have enjoyed more importance had it not been for the presence of the Masai of modern Kenya whose cattle raiding on the open plains discouraged traders. The Kamba monopolised the trade route between the Kikuyu and Mombasa until the Arabs gained control of Kikuyu trade in the 1860s. Virtually the only densely populated and large states on the routes north of Tabora were around Lake Victoria. It was here that Buganda was busy expanding its authority.

**South-
ern
routes**

To the south many routes linked up with Tabora. But some had other destinations. The Makua and Yao took their slaves to Mozambique and Kilwa. Routes from both north and south of Lake Nyasa were in touch with the trans-continental trade via Kazembe. Portuguese initiative fuelled the development of these trade routes from the Atlantic side. By the second half of the seventeenth century, Portuguese activity on the west coast of Central Africa was restricted to the hinterland of Luanda and Benguela. Although direct Portuguese control did not extend very far into the interior, caravans from Luanda and Benguela led by mulatto pombeiros found their way to the Mwata Yamvo. The Luanda route flourished in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth cen-

turies when there was a good demand for slaves, and the Benguela route came into its own when the ivory trade became more important.

The Mwato Yamvo

The Lunda empire of the Mwato Yamvo was the most important of a number of large political institutions in the savanna half of Central Africa. This empire had begun to emerge about 1700 and at least until the mid-nineteenth century it enjoyed great unity and stability. There were copper mines in the southeastern part of the empire and Lunda craftsmen were very good at converting copper ingots into an alloy which made the fine trade wire that was used to produce bangles. One of the most vital trade articles was salt, which was a scarce resource throughout the Lunda empire. The Lunda empire also did very well indeed from the slave trade. At least 2 000 – 3 000 slaves a year were being sent out from the Lunda sphere of influence. Because the chiefs were in charge of the administration of justice and the conduct of local and national wars, which were two principal ways of obtaining slaves, they controlled the slave trade, which was an important element in the growth of their power and wealth.

The Mwata Kazembe

From the kingdom of the Mwato Yamvo the trade route went eastwards to the Lunda kingdom of the Mwata Kazembe on the Luapula River to the southeast of Lake Mweru. By the middle of the nineteenth century Kazembe controlled large parts of modern southern Katanga and Zambia. It had a vigorous external trade. Although exotic goods such as metalware, ornaments, shells and even crockery came in from the Atlantic coast, its trading links eastwards were significant. Although contact was made with the Portuguese station at Tete early in the nineteenth century, this did not develop into a major trading artery because the strong pull of the Zanzibar trading entrepôt drew trade away from the lower Zambezi and the Portuguese possessions. By the 1830s Kazembe's main trading links eastward were with Zanzibar via Tabora or Kilwa.

Avoidance of Portuguese possessions

In the early part of the nineteenth century ivory traders who had a choice preferred to send their ivory to the east coast rather than the west. While the presence of increasingly large amounts of Indian capital on the east coast undoubtedly influenced their decision, the most important reason for avoiding Portuguese possessions was that the government in Portugal attempted to keep the price of ivory down artificially by making it a government monopoly. Ivory traders in West Central Africa, for whom the transportation of ivory to the east coast was impractical, also tended to keep away from Angola and take their wares to the trading stations of other European nations north of Angola. They took not only their ivory but also their palm kernels, beeswax, coffee, raw cotton and rubber. British trade on the coast between Angola and Cameroon assumed considerable proportions.

Value of exports

In 1843, although it still attempted to manipulate the price of ivory and keep it down artificially, the Portuguese government lifted its monopoly of the ivory trade, and more tusks found their way to the Portuguese west coast. Between 1844 and 1881 the value of goods (mainly ivory, wax, copal, palm oil products and coffee) that passed through Angolan ports increased sevenfold. But there was still a relative decline from the days of the export of slaves. Thus in the early 1870s the value of all of these products was only double the value of slave exports in the 1820s.

THE EFFECTS OF THE SLAVE AND IVORY TRADE

The formation of secondary empires

Swahili-Arabs When the Swahili-Arabs themselves raided for slaves they usually did so at night; villages were surrounded and burned down and gardens were destroyed, because starvation favoured the conditions in which the slave trade thrived. The Swahili-Arabs were ruthless ivory hunters and razed the villages of those who stood in their way. But this applies particularly to the first Arabs to enter the region. The merchants who followed later adopted a settled way of life, developing thriving plantations, worked, of course, by slave labour, introducing new crops, building mosques and surrounding themselves with many of the trappings of life at the coast. Such was the situation at Tabora. They obtained much of the ivory and a good proportion of the slaves they required from local rulers, making contracts with them for the delivery of these commodities. So they had to remain on good terms with local rulers. The Arabs formed only a small minority of the populations of the areas in which they settled so they could not force their will on the inhabitants, and sought their cooperation instead, deliberately befriending them. Even marriages between traders and daughters of Nyamwezi chiefs were contracted. Islam did not spread in the interior in the same way as it did in the western Sudan. One reason for this is that the Arab population in the interior remained small. Also, the Arabs made no real attempt to convert the indigenous inhabitants. The basis of their relationship was trade and only in the immediate vicinity of their settlements did the local population adopt the Arab way of life and their religion. Thus while the coast was overwhelmingly Muslim in character, communities in the interior retained their traditional pagan culture.

Political involvement The Arabs in East Africa were interested in trading profits and not in political authority, but they gradually exercised some control over the surrounding areas. Swahili-Arab traders interfered in local disputes, taking sides with one chief against another. The political impact was most pronounced among the Nyamwezi, where there was a large population of Swahili-Arabs in places such as Tabora. They became an important element in the political elite of the polity and played a crucial role in the struggle for political authority. Although they themselves did not try to take power their influence was often the vital element that enabled one or other party to triumph. The Swahili-Arabs became involved in local wars and disputes, but their aim was to secure or further their commercial interests. Although in time they did come to exercise political leverage, it was usually exercised indirectly, and for the sake of trade.

Shifting frontiers The traders' frontier was constantly shifting because as the elephants were wiped out in one area the hunters, followed by the traders, moved deeper into the interior. This shifting hunting and trading frontier was, at the same time, a frontier of slave-raiding and warfare, for the traders were keen to buy slaves as well as ivory, and the elephant hunters with their skill in firearms were well suited to gathering slaves as well as ivory. By the second half of the nineteenth century traders were moving into the eastern half of modern Zaïre and were putting pressure on chiefs to supply ivory. As the frontier shifted, those who had been left behind faced economic collapse. The area had been

devastated by war and there were no more elephants. Many communities joined up with others in heavily fortified villages in order to protect themselves against slave raiders.

Firearms In East Central Africa firearms enabled coastal traders to venture inland in the early nineteenth century, and it was the spread of firearms in the interior from the middle of the century that witnessed an acceleration of hunting and slaving activities deep into Central Africa. According to one estimate about 20 million guns were imported into Africa in the nineteenth century – and most of them came in after about 1860. Security lay in the possession of arms and so African rulers participated as much as they could in the international trade to obtain guns. States with easier access to firearms had an advantage over rival states. Within a state possession of firearms tilted the balance between rival factions. Political authority came to depend more on military power than religious authority. The lure of imported goods could encourage subordinate rulers to loosen the chains of dependence, so we find many kings taking vigorous action to keep long distance trade strictly under their own control. Access to guns and wealth from trade were major incentives for leaders wishing to build up large followings. Political office became more attractive and thus more keenly contested because with it came tribute in ivory and other valuable articles.

Secondary kingdoms The people with the best guns were traders and caravan leaders, and many of them set themselves up around the borders of the traditional states, operating at first as traders and hunters, but later becoming warlords who obtained slaves, ivory and other products as tribute. A number of secondary kingdoms were established in East Central Africa. There was a pattern to the establishment of 'loose, military overlordships created by the magnates of the caravan trade to safeguard the sources of their wealth'. Professor Oliver describes a typical pattern of development: 'Especially where traditional polities were small and weak, traders defended themselves by travelling with armed escorts and establishing fortified depots for their goods. From there, it was a short step to taking hostages or seizing cattle in order to assure the supply of ivory, slaves or rubber at attractive prices, and this in turn often led on to the trader settling down as a ruler, taking tribute from the indigenous population by military means.'²

Tippu Tip One of the most noteworthy of the secondary states, that established in the mid-1870s by Tippu Tip, a Swahili-Arab coastal trader, was in the heart of Central Africa, west of Lake Tanganyika, in the country west and south of the Nyamwezi. From his headquarters at Kasongo he organised a state with a strong military force to back up his demands. He had plantations laid out and roads built, and he monopolised the sale of ivory. Tippu also appointed agents to administer justice and collect tribute. He did not raid for slaves in his own land, but neighbouring peoples were raided for slaves and ivory.

Mirambo Another secondary state in this region was established by Mirambo, a young Nyamwezi chief, who welded a considerable number of Nyamwezi groups into a formidable unit. He was the ruler of a small state to the west of Tabora, and in the 1860s with the help of a body of warriors he managed to gain control of some of the surrounding states. Between 1870 and his death in 1884 he undertook many campaigns and expanded the

area under his control. By 1880 he had gained control of the route between Tabora and Ujiji. The Arabs of Tabora had to pay him if they wished to use the route. Because of his control of the country between Tabora and Lake Victoria he was also in a position to threaten the trade route leading northwestwards to Buganda. The basis for Mirambo's strength was his army, and when he died the 'empire' he had built up collapsed because there was no-one who could keep the army together. Mirambo was not well disposed towards the Arabs, nor was Msiri, who conducted similar operations west of Lake Mweru in the copper-rich region of Katanga.

Rise of the Chokwe empire In West Central Africa the rise of the Chokwe trading empire was one of the most remarkable tales of expansionist enterprise in nineteenth-century Central Africa. Birmingham writes that: 'In the short space of fifty years the Chokwe had risen from being a small, remote, forest people to being one of the most dynamic economic forces in Central Africa. They had also become one of the most powerful military forces, and their early, inconspicuous migrations were increasingly replaced by violent raiding. By the 1870s they were a match for any rival including the large, organized empire of their Lunda neighbours, which they succeeded in subverting and almost destroying.'³

Chokwe ivory trade In the eighteenth century the Chokwe of the highland area of Angola played only a small role in trade, exporting mainly ivory and wax. They were not a major provider of slaves. In the 1840s they were engaged in the export of wax, but with the abolition of the Portuguese royal monopoly of ivory in 1843, there was a great revival in the ivory trade, an opportunity which the Chokwe were well positioned to exploit. The Imbangala of Kasanje had been the major long-distance traders in the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century their place was taken largely by the Ovimbundu of the Benguela hinterland. They became the main suppliers of firearms to the Chokwe, who were skilled hunters and good gunsmiths. In the late 1840s there were plenty of elephants in the Chokwe woodland. This woodland was the closest region to the coast where elephants were still plentiful at that time. So they became large-scale ivory hunters. By the middle of the nineteenth century there were no more elephants in their area and they had to go further afield to the north and east. There were still many elephants in Lunda territory. The Lunda, who were not great hunters and had not utilised the forests in their area, welcomed the Chokwe hunters, who were willing to pay a tusk for every elephant shot in the Lunda region.

Chokwe slave trade The new prosperity meant an increase in Chokwe numbers. Pressure of population as well as the search for fresh supplies of elephant forced them to expand, and in the course of this expansion they became major dealers in slaves. The Chokwe moved eastwards following the line of forests. Soon they were among the greatest slave traders in Central Africa, and they added considerably to their own slave holdings, purchasing many slave women. Families increased and after the 1850s a slow process of Chokwe migration northwards began.

Chokwe migration Chokwe expansion was also given impetus by the new demand by Europeans for wild rubber which could be obtained fairly easily from most of the forests. In the late 1860s the Chokwe began to produce rubber, tapped from forest vines. But in their own area

this did not last long as the methods of tapping latex were very wasteful, so the rubber collectors moved north, hastening Chokwe migration. When there was no more ivory and rubber in the vicinity of the upper Kasai River, the Chokwe stopped being producers and became traders, obtaining ivory from the middle Kasai and eventually from among the Luba. Very soon they no longer practised their traditional skills as producers and they became trading middlemen. They set up their own routes and caravan systems and it was not long before they were offering serious competition to the older carriers.

**The
Yeke
and
Msiri**

The Yeke played a considerable role in the changing balance of political power in Central Africa. By the 1850s the Nyamwezi were large-scale caravan operators and they bought ivory and Katanga copper from Kazembe. It was not long before they began to bypass Kazembe to trade directly with the copper producers. The Sumbwa Nyamwezi were particularly successful in this and in Katanga became known as the Yeke. Besides penetration of the western parts of Kazembe the Yeke were also making inroads into the borders of the Mwata Yamvo. At first this penetration was peaceful and aimed at trade. The Yeke were welcomed because they brought foreign goods with them. Then along came Msiri ('the mosquito'). He exploited differences between the various clans and attracted a large number of followers. Under Msiri the Yeke moved to attain political power. Msiri began expanding from his base on the borders of the Lunda kingdom in the 1850s. To keep his warriors contented Msiri raided far and wide for cattle and women and other booty, coming to control much of Katanga and intruding on the area controlled by the Mwato Kazembe; he campaigned against the Luba in the north and by about 1870 he was strong enough to challenge Kazembe overlordship.

**Garen-
ganze**

Many joined Msiri and by the 1880s his new kingdom of Garenganze had grown to over 40 villages of followers. Through intervention in his neighbours' disputes, his influence soon covered most of the area between the Lualaba and the Luapula. Garenganze became one of the most important and successful of the conquest states of Central Africa in the nineteenth century. His initial success may have been due to access to firearms, but his later success depended on his effective administration and system of provincial governors, who levied the ivory tax that lay at the heart of Msiri's wealth. He had a monopoly of tusks taken in his territory. Because Garenganze was so isolated from the major trade routes, elephants were plentiful after the 1870s, whereas areas closer to the coast had been hunted out. From a levy on copper production he moved to a state monopoly, producing wire, bracelets and ingots for surrounding markets. The slaves were obtained by warfare.

**Decline
of Ka-
zembe**

While the new Yeke kingdom of Garenganze undermined Kazembe from the west, the Mwato Kazembe was also fatally weakened in the east as the Swahili-Arabs penetrated the interior and settled there. The inability of the Kazembe rulers to satisfy rising expectations led to internal conflict which was easily exploited by the increasingly strong traders from outside. The Swahili-Arabs intervened between factions, weakening the old order and increasing their own power. Local chiefs were overthrown, while the allegiance of many of the remaining chiefs was given to the Swahili-Arabs rather than Kazembe.

The Ngoni While the Arabs were penetrating the interior, to the south a new wave of immigrants exploded onto the Central and East African scene. During the Mfecane (Difaqane) in southern Africa (which literally means the time of crushing and enforced migration) many refugees fled from Shaka after quarrelling with or falling foul of the Zulu king. One group that fled in about 1820 was led by Zwangendaba and they spent the next 15 years wandering about southern Mozambique. The Ngoni, as they were known north of the Limpopo, were schooled in the military techniques developed by Shaka, and the peoples beyond the Limpopo could offer little resistance. They wreaked havoc among the Shona between the Limpopo and Zambezi rivers, and delivered the final blow to the crumbling Rozvi empire. The Rozvi kingdom of the Changamires was part of the Shona-speaking peoples who populated most of Zimbabwe and a large part of Mozambique.

Ngoni invasions The Ngoni crossed the Zambezi in 1835 and moved northwards along the length of Lake Nyasa, on its west side, leaving a trail of destruction behind them. They eventually settled at Mapupo between Lake Nyasa and Lake Tanganyika. After Zwangendaba's death in the mid-1840s the invaders broke up into a number of smaller groups. One of these groups virtually depopulated parts of western and southern Tanzania with their raids. Other Ngoni groups turned southwards, finally settling to the east and west of Lake Nyasa. Although they took many slaves, they incorporated most of them into their society. They were always in need of agricultural labour to feed their standing armies. Remnants of tribes were incorporated into the Ngoni; other remnants joined together and remodelled themselves on Ngoni lines to withstand attacks.

Disruption of population The Ngoni invasions resulted in much dislocation and redistribution of population. The invasions added to an already unstable situation, and in the chaotic aftermath of the invasions the neighbourhood of Lake Nyasa became a fertile raiding ground for slaves. The Chewa to the west of the lake were probably the worst victim of slave raids in the entire region.

The Yao In the Lake Nyasa area there were many small stateless societies. One of the large polities that lived in the area was the Yao, whose villages lay between the lake and the sea. The Yao had originally been loosely organised in small groups, but by mid-century they were in larger settlements under chiefs who were fairly dominant. Historians have portrayed this change as being due to the Ngoni invasions, but it seems as if it started earlier, and that the impetus was provided by their trading activities. The Yao suffered from the Ngoni raids but they were great slave raiders themselves and were also responsible for much disruption south and west of Lake Nyasa. The guns the Yao obtained served a dual purpose – they were used for protection against Ngoni attacks and for slave raiding. Portuguese freebooters also obtained slaves from the area south of the lake, and between them the Portuguese, the Yao and the Ngoni virtually depopulated this region. In the unsettled state of affairs bands of warriors wandered about pillaging and were sometimes employed by Arab traders to engage in slave raiding. This was therefore an area from which many slaves came.

Matabele Another Zulu offshoot also penetrated northwards when, after their defeat by the Boers in 1836, the Ndebele of Mzilikazi fled across the Limpopo River sowing destruc-

tion in their path. They settled in Shona country in modern-day Zimbabwe and here Mzilikazi and his successor Lobengula created a tightly knit military state, assimilating many Shona. North of the Limpopo they were known as the Matabele.

Internal changes

General changes Not all societies were affected in the same way, but there were some general changes that altered key aspects of the way of life of many peoples. Whereas chiefs had depended earlier upon tribute from the people who worked their lands, they now needed to rely much less on their subjects, sometimes even selling them as slaves if prices were right. They now depended on mercenaries to uphold their power. Some chiefs managed to collect tolls from caravans as a source of income, particularly if they controlled a river crossing or monopolised a vital waterhole in a dry area. Rulers of strong indigenous states could demand a share of the profits from the caravans. Larger caravans could negotiate more favourable tolls with major chiefs than small caravans could, and this led to caravans linking up; large caravans were also better able to defend themselves.

The Shamba kingdom In the case of the Shamba kingdom, which was situated southeast of Mount Kilimanjaro, the capital and the areas of greatest population were in a mountainous region that was avoided by caravans, which preferred travelling along the plains. So power drained from the king to a minor governor who took over control of a major stopping place for caravans, and gained access to arms, with which to challenge the king's power and also to assemble parties of elephant hunters. He relied on mercenaries for his power. Another destabilising factor coincided with this development, and that was the rapid increase in the 1870s in the demand for slaves for the Pemba clove plantations. By the mid-1870s local chiefs were preying on their own subjects and making war on neighbours in order to feed this demand for slaves. So the orderly and peaceful Shamba kingdom broke up into a number of small chiefdoms, competing with each other to establish ties with traders to whom they sold slaves.

Effect on local industries The Swahili-Arab contact changed traditional values and cultures. Africans developed a taste for foreign commodities such as cloth, including American calico. There was a market in East and Central Africa for items such as beads and copper wire; the latter was used to make coiled bracelets, which became popular ornaments. There was a demand for many items of dress. Traditional fashions gradually underwent a change. Handcraft industries in East and Central Africa were not nearly so numerous or flourishing as the industries in the Sahel on the shores of the Sahara. One of the reasons for this is that manufacturers abroad had easy access to local markets. There was no opportunity for local craftsmen to compete. Although, as we have seen, the trade in ivory and slaves led to a great increase in the trade of other goods, and therefore in theory should have stimulated local production and manufacturing, it also allowed the import of cheap European manufactured goods into the interior. Industries such as the bark-cloth industry of the Lakes region and the hand-woven cloth industry in south-western Tanzania were killed or retarded by the import of cheap goods from abroad. Much of the increased trade did not stimulate local industries. Of course this applied

particularly to the East African coast. For centuries mangrove poles had been a major export from East Africa to Arabia and Iran. The exporters themselves, or at least the crews of their boats, cut down the trees along river banks and estuaries close to the coast. So this provided no real chance for the development of local industry. The same is true of cowrie shells, taken from the Kenya coast. The shippers gathered the shells themselves. Copal (a wild resin which in the nineteenth century was used to make varnish) fetched very low prices in its natural state, and local producers received poor prices while the cleaning of the gum was done by foreign merchants, or by manufacturers abroad. Although there were local industries such as the copper work in the lands of the Mwato Yamvo, the great quest for slaves and ivory, and the expansion of the ivory frontier in particular, did much to harm such industries.

Ethnic diversity Building styles also underwent a metamorphosis. Before the nineteenth century most peoples built circular huts, but the rectangular buildings popular among the Swahili of the coast soon spread to the interior. Towns became bigger and with more ethnic diversity. More people took foreign wives. For example, most of Seyyid Said's wives were Africans, and his children were fluent in Kiswahili rather than Arabic. All of Said's successors as sultans in the nineteenth century were born of slave women.

Elephant hunting Until then ivory had been used simply as an ornament, a by-product of hunting elephants for meat or killing them because they were threatening villages or crops. Traditionally elephants were hunted during the dry season by hunter bands consisting of between 20 to 30 men armed with bows and arrows, spears, clubs and axes. With the arrival of the coastal caravans this changed. Now the aim was to kill as many elephants as possible. There were more expeditions and hunting was no longer confined to traditional bands; new ways of ensnaring elephants were devised. The desire to sell ivory privately hastened the end of the community system of hunting. This process gathered momentum as firearms became more common in the interior from about 1860. Professional hunters spent their time following the herds. People thus tended to move about more, and not to live in such close-knit units, so that the authority of the elders lessened. A new breed of men came to prominence. Traders became wealthy and built up followings, dispensing patronage and winning respect and prestige outside the traditional social framework of the society. Those with access to imported articles gained influence at the expense of ordinary hunters and traditional religious leaders. Elephant hunters gained tremendous prestige in their societies and had more social status than did ordinary hunters.

As has been indicated in various places in this book, there is no agreement on the harm done to African societies by the slave trade. In East and Central Africa, on the surface at least, this would appear to have been greater than in the case of West Africa. Certain historians have come down very heavily in blaming the slave trade for retarding the region economically. The rural economy, so it has been argued, was violently disrupted, many of the most productive people were exported and contagious diseases that had hitherto been unknown in the interior of Central Africa, such as smallpox and cholera, wreaked havoc.

Effect of slave trade on East Africa Historians by no means agree, however, on the effect of the slave trade on the population of East Africa. There were never as many slaves taken from East Africa as went across the Sahara and to the Atlantic coast. Even during the peak of the East African slave trade in the nineteenth century the bulk of the slaves were taken from a relatively small area, represented on the coast within the limits between Kilwa and Quilimane and in the interior extending just beyond Lake Nyasa. The major source for slaves was the Chewa-speaking peoples west of Lake Nyasa, and there were no signs of depopulation among them. Even in the twentieth century they continued to export labour. Although it could be argued that the slave trade in Central Africa was more widespread than in East Africa, when looking at the question of the effect of the slave trade on population it should also be borne in mind that many of the slaves captured in the interior were relocated on the coast and were not lost to Africa. So although there was a redistribution of population, as reflected to an extent in the fairly substantial growth in the population of the main coastal cities, this did not represent a population loss.

Dis-eases But having said this, it is clear that the population of East Africa as a whole was declining between the late 1880s and the end of the 1920s. One may advance certain contributory factors. One is that the caravans introduced new diseases to the interior. These took a heavy toll of peoples who initially had no immunity to these sicknesses. Thus throughout the nineteenth century outbreaks of smallpox and cholera occurred frequently on all the caravan routes. African diseases such as sleeping sickness and tick-borne fevers, which had earlier been confined to certain areas, became far more widespread as the pace of commercial penetration quickened. Towards the end of the nineteenth century diseases such as jiggers, imported from the Equatorial coast of West Africa, and major outbreaks of sleeping sickness and fever, killed many people. By limiting grazing areas, the rinderpest epidemic at the end of the century meant that there was more undisturbed bush which the tsetse fly needed to thrive, and this helps to explain why there were also serious outbreaks of sleeping sickness.

Great Lakes states By no means all societies were traumatised by the slave and ivory trades. These trades fuelled the growth of Omani power in East Africa. Some states succeeded in keeping control of trade in their hands. In the area of the Great Lakes, strong states such as Buganda did not become prey to the disruptions inherent in the Swahili-Arab quest for ivory and slaves, and rulers turned the demand to their own advantage, using it to build their own strength, maintaining monopolies over the trade in tusks and firearms.

Because of the favourable rainfall and a stable agricultural environment based on bananas, grain and livestock, which generated a surplus that could maintain a large population, conditions in the Great Lakes were conducive to the founding of large states. It was a densely populated area. By at least 1750 there were markets all along the shores of the lakes and market centres inland. Sorghum, millet, honey, peas, dried bananas, coffee, skins and hides and copper wire were traded, but the staples of the trade were salt and iron.

In the nineteenth century the states in the region were still evolving, still incorporating new peoples, a process that was accompanied by considerable resistance. There was a constant struggle between the more powerful states in the region for control of areas

that could deliver agricultural tribute, and also a struggle for control of resources such as salt, cattle and iron. There was a major contest over the control of the trade routes and the systems of distribution.

Changes in relations

By the middle of the nineteenth century there were many kingdoms of varying size, but the three largest were Buganda, Bunyoro and Burundi. Prior to the advent of the Nyamwezi and Swahili-Arabs onto the scene, ivory and slaves had not been traded in the area. As early as 1844 traders from the coast reached Buganda. It was not long before the new trade began to change relationships in the Great Lakes region. The gap between larger and the smaller states widened rapidly as the major states reaped the benefits of outside contacts, obtaining firearms, trade goods and missionaries. Traditional kings who wielded a great deal of power were able to keep control of the slave and ivory trade in their own hands. They were not prepared to sell too many slaves so ivory was a greater trade item than slaves. It was customary in this region for one tusk of every elephant killed to go to the king, and when Nyamwezi hunters began large-scale hunting of elephant and threatened to disrupt this old practice, the kings were quick to take action and bring the hunting of elephant under their own wing, hiring Nyamwezi as royal elephant hunters. The kings were strong enough to enforce their will and the trade in ivory thus remained in their hands. Firearms purchased with the proceeds of the sale of ivory were also retained by the rulers. Firearms obtained by the larger states increased their advantage over the smaller polities.

Bugandan expansion

Under the rule of kabakas Suna (1830–1856) and Mutesa (1856–1884) Bugandan power and authority expanded at the expense of Bunyoro, which had previously dominated them. Bunyoro was eventually confined to a small triangle between Buganda, Lake Albert and the Victoria Nile. Mutesa kept the trade in firearms under his control and thus had the means to raid his neighbours, steadily increasing Bugandan wealth by enlarging the area from which the state obtained tribute. Slaves and ivory were sold to Zanzibar merchants, and the trading articles that the Swahili-Arabs supplied, particularly firearms, enabled kabaka Mutesa to build up a permanent group of musketeers to form a solid and formidable core for his army of peasants armed with spears.

The Nyamwezi

The Nyamwezi were the first large group to make prolonged contact with the Swahili-Arab traders. They welcomed the coastal men as the bringers of prosperity and as the means to firearms. Although they lost their monopoly of the routes they had developed, in a number of ways they were able to share in the expanded trade being carried on these routes. The appearance of Swahili-Arab caravans in the interior had a major impact on the Nyamwezi. Nyamwezi were often employed by the caravans, sometimes acting as guides; they became well known as porters, and men who had made the journey to the coast were held in high esteem in society. Although the Nyamwezi sometimes helped the Swahili-Arabs in their slave raids, and small groups of Nyamwezi did participate in the slave trade on their own behalf, the Nyamwezi as a whole were not enthusiastic slave gatherers. They did not enslave their own people, but at the same time they were strong enough to prevent the Swahili-Arabs from attacking them and taking slaves. With the increase in trade many Nyamwezi were away from home for considerable periods of time. Porters, for example, were often absent for months as they

had to wait at the coast until a return caravan was ready to depart for the interior. There was thus a great shortage of labour for tasks such as hut building and the collection of honey; it was difficult to find enough men to prepare the soil so that the women could plant. So in time the Nyamwezi turned increasingly to buying slaves to ease the labour shortage. With the increase in the demand for agricultural produce to feed the caravans and the growing number of residents of the inland trading centres, as well as for export to non-grainproducing areas, the price of agricultural products rose and the Nyamwezi put slaves to work on food production.

The Nyamwezi did not merely find employment in Swahili-Arab caravans. They also fitted out their own caravans. These were mostly small caravans but by the end of the 1850s there were more Nyamwezi caravans going to the coast than coastal caravans going inland. They also sent caravans to the copper-producing area of Katanga, where Nyamwezi groups were responsible for establishing Garenganze.

Terms of trade, underdevelopment

Effects of trade in wasting assets

There is no space here for a discussion of the underdevelopment theory, but even more obviously than in the case of West Africa, when we look at East and Central Africa it is clear that the international demand for slaves and ivory was a major factor in transforming the economy of the region, and that the search for these products resulted in the neglect of other, more productive activities of societies. While slaves and ivory were readily available the problems inherent in heavy reliance on wasting assets were not so apparent, but when the supplies were exhausted or more difficult to come by, latent tensions and disintegrative tendencies rapidly came to the fore. Societies could not simply return to their old ways. They had become locked into the international trading system, and had become dependent upon the imported foreign articles that could only be obtained by continuing to supply the international market with what it wanted. Perhaps it could also be argued that the search for ivory and slaves had positive aspects, unexpected spinoffs in the short term, in that it stimulated the trade in other articles, and that even in the long term, by bringing about new state formations and breaking up old ones, the results were not entirely negative. There can be little doubt, however, that the nature of the way in which East and Central Africa were drawn into the world economy had calamitous results for many of the societies involved.

Dependence on the slave trade

One can examine the effects of underdevelopment on various levels. The way that Africa was being integrated into the world economy was reflected in the number of slaves captured. In the early part of the century, before the British had signed any anti-slavery treaties or patrolled East African waters, 10 000 to 15 000 slaves were probably being exported from East Africa every year. By the 1860s, by which time treaties had been signed and patrols instituted, according to one estimate 70 000 slaves a year were being sold in the Zanzibar market. Although no reliable figures are available, it would seem that for a number of years after 1873, when it became illegal to ship slaves by sea, even more slaves were being traded. What on the surface is even more puzzling is that the number of slaves traded was rising although the price obtained for slaves was either static or dropping. How does one explain this phenome-

non? The answer lies in the fact that once a society had geared itself to the capture and sale of slaves as a living, it could not simply stop this way of life when prices declined. When prices rose in the occasional boom they went further into the interior in search of slaves; when prices fell again, they could not simply withdraw. They were locked into the international trade. The decimation of elephant herds often put pressure on societies to increase their sale of slaves. And the fall in the price of slaves placed pressure on them to increase that supply even further. With the same situation existing in neighbouring territories, rulers often had recourse to enslaving their own people, which contributed to the further undermining of the stability of the polity.

**Exam-
ples of
under-
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opment**

The changes which the growth in the ivory trade brought about accelerated in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. To a greater or lesser extent all societies were locked into the slave and ivory trade. It was especially their dependence upon the latter that had such a disastrous effect as the supply of elephants ran out. We have briefly discussed elements of underdevelopment among people such as the Nyamwezi and the Shamba. A few examples from societies that were devastated by the effects of the ivory and slave trade will illustrate underdevelopment at work.

**The
Zam-
bezi
valley**

In the Zambezi valley Portuguese and African hunters and traders, some of whom were ex-soldiers, continued to live in great luxury on their huge prazos or estates, surrounded by many retainers and paying scant attention to any orders issued by the governor in Mozambique. By the nineteenth century the descendants of these prazeros were largely Africanised. To all intents and purposes they were independent African chiefs. It had been hoped that agricultural and mineral products would be produced in profusion, but as in so many other East and Central African societies, the prazeros gradually became gatherers of commodities rather than producers. They had close relations with neighbouring states and traded with them for gold, slaves and ivory. The dominant Changamire empire had restricted their access to the gold-producing areas to the southwest of the Zambezi River, but with the decline of the Maravi empire to the south of Lake Nyasa in the eighteenth century, they focused their attention in this direction and came to dominate the ivory trade in the lower Zambezi valley. They had armies composed of slaves. These were known as chikunda and were used to collect taxes, to trade and raid for slaves as well as to hunt for ivory. The increased demand for slaves saw an extension of hunting and raiding. But there were limits to this. When the ivory was exhausted and they had to increase the number of slaves they sold, it became more difficult to obtain supplies from neighbouring peoples, who also had guns and were themselves caught up in the search for slaves. The prazeros on the lower Zambezi were forced into selling their own subjects into slavery, and sometimes even members of their chikunda armies. Those liable to be enslaved revolted or moved away, and by 1830 most of the small prazos had been destroyed. The remaining ones were consolidated into a few large prazos. By the 1870s there were three such states ruled by dynastic families in the Zambezi valley between the confluence of the Shire River and Zumbo, and there was another conquest state south of the river, in Manicaland. This is an example of one way in which the quest for slaves and ivory transformed the interior of

East and Central Africa, and throughout the region the pattern was repeated with local variations.

The Makua The Makua, who traded with the Portuguese in Mozambique, and the Yao, who carried their ivory and slaves first to Mozambique and later to Kilwa, were caught in the same web. Until the 1850s the Makua were the main suppliers of slaves to Mozambique Island. Makua slaving activities caused their victims to move away. To procure enough slaves the Makua chiefs now had to raid one another. They were so dependent upon the slave trade that they could not find an alternative means of income. They were captives of the international slave-trading economy; the trading goods that they received in return for slaves had become so much a part of their society that it seemed that they could not do without them. Within two decades the Makua had become so weak and fragmented that it was an easy matter for the Portuguese to take over control.

The Yao If the Makua were captives of the international trading economy, the Yao were no less so. Their widespread trading activities, first in ivory and later in slaves, were made possible because the women tended the crops. In order to ensure that the supply of cloths and guns and beads did not dry up they neglected production and the development of manufacturing industries. With regard to the women tending the crops, Alpers writes that: 'While women were taking the major responsibility for producing the real wealth in their societies – wealth upon which genuine development, however, gradual, could be based – men were beginning to engage themselves in a related set of purely extractive economic activities for the luxury trade in ivory ... Participation in this trade eventually became so important to the Yao that the economic values of their society came to be derived from the wealth and prestige that it brought, rather than from the truly productive aspects of the economy, such as agriculture and manufacturing. Social differentiation and stratification were increased as a result of this trade, although the productive capacity of society was in no way increased, except by the addition of slave labour that was purchased with its profits ... By the end of the nineteenth century the economic values of people like the Yao had been completely distorted so that this sort of trade was considered the only activity worth pursuing. At the same time, the entire course of their economic development had been disastrously skewed and was already on its way towards an underdeveloped state.'⁴

Mwata Yamvo Some other examples taken from Central Africa are even more revealing. As has been indicated, the sudden disintegration of the western Lunda kingdom of the Mwata Yamvo in the 1870s was the result of a build-up of pressures over a longer period of time. The demand for slaves and establishment of long-distance routes had brought prosperity to the empire, and the change in the supply and demand led to its decline. By the 1840s, when the demand for slaves decreased, ivory and rubber resources were already exhausted and they were unable to adapt to changing circumstances. When the Atlantic slave trade went into its final decline, the Mwata Yamvo tried to bolster falling export revenues with wax, ivory and rubber. Slaves were sold to the Luba in the east in return for ivory. But these short-term initiatives were unable to compensate for the loss of export earnings, and the state became a hotbed of dissatisfied factions vying for power as they tried to stem the decline. One of these factions called in Chokwe

mercenaries to support its cause. Chokwe involvement resulted in a temporary restoration of central power, but increasing numbers of Chokwe began to settle in central Lunda, overrunning the kingdom. Thus the central part of the kingdom followed the outer parts which had been disintegrating as a result of pressures from both the east and west.

Luba To the north of the Yeke was the Luba empire. From about the 1780s Luban influence spread rapidly over the region between the Lualaba and Lake Tanganyika, and early in the nineteenth century they conquered the Lualaba lakes and took over the rich fishing and palm oil industries. In the middle of the nineteenth century the Luba empire was at its height and was at the centre of a large and varied trade to both the north and south in articles such as arrow poisons, drums, baskets, iron, palm cloth, fish and zebra skins. But about 1870 the economic and political growth of Luba began to weaken, and the latent potential for internal dissension then came to the fore. A crucial factor in the decline was the exhaustion of ivory supplies. While it had ivory there was no problem, its trading relations with the Nyamwezi-Yeke in the south and the Swahili-Arabs from Ujiji in the north were stable. But when ivory became scarce the Yeke state, which was based on overt military power and exploitation, became a threat to it. Another threat came from the Swahili-Arabs who, by driving northwards into the forest, obtained ivory directly, cutting the Luba off from their northern trading circuit. This decline in Luban fortunes occurred just when it needed outside trade in order to obtain guns to survive. With no ivory it had to turn to trading slaves in return for guns. But slaves were not a high priority among traders at this time, so prices were low. To compensate for the low prices Luba had to increase the number of slaves sold.

The Luban slave trade thus expanded in the 1870s. But this was not so easy to do, as Luba was confined in both the north and the south by strong, well-armed states, which were not open to Luba slave raiding on a large scale. In fact, these states were more likely to use the Luba as a raiding ground of their own. The Luba thus had to obtain the slaves internally, which exacerbated conflicts and tensions and saw a further decline in authority. The result of this crisis was that in the 1870s and 1880s the Luba began to break up into factions. As the empire declined so it increasingly became prey to Yeke and Swahili-Arab slave raids.

EUROPE IN THE EAST AFRICAN INTERIOR

Limited knowledge Until the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, East, Northeast and Central Africa were far more inaccessible to Europe than West Africa, and this region also appeared less attractive commercially, so in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it did not receive as much attention as West Africa. Europeans in 1800 knew very little about the Central or East African interior, and there was not much at the coast that attracted their interest either. The Atlantic slave trade was the main concern of abolitionists in England. By comparison the East African slave trade (if they were aware of it) seemed very small.

- The Congo basin** Europeans also knew little about the Congo basin. Although the Congo River has about 6 500 km of uninterrupted navigable waterways, it is not navigable between the Atlantic Ocean and Stanley Pool (Malebo Pool) at Leopoldville (Kinshasha), a distance of 400 km from the coast. This stretch of the river is broken by cataracts and waterfalls and goods had to be carried from Stanley Pool to the coast. Having to use expensive head portage on this part of the river made it an unattractive proposition for European traders. It was thus not primarily the desire for trade that made Europeans penetrate much of the Central and East African interior, but rather intriguing and unsolved riddles regarding the source of the Nile and the Congo rivers and other geographical puzzles. Continued rumours about huge lakes in the African interior and the existence of the fabulous Mountains of the Moon drew adventurers and geographers to this part of Africa.
- Bruce, Krapf and Rebmann** James Bruce spent five years travelling in the Sudan and Ethiopia, and the publication in 1790 of his five-volume *Travels to discover the source of the Nile in the years 1768–73* did more than any other previous work to stimulate interest in Africa. It awakened the interest of the German Johan Ludwig Krapf in Africa; he belonged to the Church Missionary Society and between 1848 and 1852, together with fellow missionary Johan Rebmann, made a number of journeys into the interior to search for suitable sites for new mission stations. In the course of one of these trips, on 11 May 1848 Rebmann became the first white man to see the cap of Kibo, the highest of Mount Kilimanjaro's summits. Krapf was rewarded by being the first white man to see Mount Kenya.
- Burton and Speke** In February 1858 Captain Richard Burton and John Hanning Speke reached Lake Tanganyika. Speke later found his way to Lake Victoria, and on a second journey to Africa in 1860, together with James Grant, he went part of the way round Lake Victoria confirming that it was indeed the source of the Nile.
- Livingstone** David Livingstone was to do more than anyone else to bring the attention of Europe to the slave trade in the interior of East Africa. He made a number of journeys from his base at Kolobeng in Bechuanaland on the eastern fringe of the Kalahari desert, discovering Lake Ngami in 1849 and travelling as far as the Zambezi in 1851. In the first half of the 1850s, accompanied part of the way by a band of Makololo helpers, he crossed the continent from Luanda to Quilimane, which he reached in May 1856, having been the first white man to see the waterfalls that the Makololo called 'the smoke that thunders' and which he named the Victoria Falls.
- When he returned to England he was given a hero's welcome. In 1857 he published the first of his three books, *Missionary travels*. In 1858 he returned to Africa under the aegis of the British government with instructions to explore the Zambezi and its environs. The aim of the expedition was to obtain information about the area and to open the way for the introduction of the three 'Cs' – Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation. Livingstone had come across the devastation caused by the slave trade, and he was convinced that the only way this evil could be combatted was by missionaries and traders opening up Central Africa. The expedition of 1858–1863 found more evidence of the horrors of the slave trade and of the cruelty that accompanied it, and when Livingstone returned to England in 1864 he did much to bring this to the attention of people. His book *The*

Zambezi and its tributaries contained a terrible indictment of the trade in human flesh and aroused widespread concern and indignation in England, where there had hitherto not been much interest or knowledge of what was happening in the East African interior.

In 1866 he set out on his last journey in search of the source of the Nile. He was in an exhausted state when he struggled into Ujiji on the eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika, and it was while he was here that he was found by Henry Morton Stanley in November 1871 and greeted with the famous words, 'Dr Livingstone, I presume?' Livingstone died in 1874 near the village of Ilala, close to Lake Bangweulu.

Stanley Born as John Rowlands in Wales in 1841, Stanley joined the *New York Herald* in 1869. When rumours of Livingstone's death reached England, the newspaper decided to send Stanley to Africa to find out whether Livingstone was dead. Stanley made great capital out of his successful quest with his books *Through darkest Africa* and *How I found Livingstone*. Stanley spent four months with Livingstone, during which time he became fired with enthusiasm for the search for the course of the Congo and the source of the Nile. After attending Livingstone's funeral in Westminster Abbey in London in April 1874, he set out for Africa again, and turned his attention to Livingstone's theory that the Lualaba was really the Nile. It was a dreadful journey with the boats having to be dismantled and hauled overland whenever they came to one of the many stretches of unnavigable water, all the while having to ward off attacks by hostile tribesmen and cope with smallpox, dysentery and typhoid fever. Since the river took them in a northwesterly direction it became clear that it was not the Nile, but the Congo River.

Stanley directed his attention to the commercial possibilities of opening up Africa, which he thought were excellent, for beyond Stanley Pool the river was navigable as far as Stanleyville. But he could not interest the British in his schemes to open up the Congo basin to European penetration. By the 1870s British traders between Angola and Cameroon had built up a substantial trade that rivalled the trade on the Oil Rivers. By remaining on the coast and buying the ivory and other articles that were brought to them, they were flourishing and certainly did not see any need to extend their activities into the interior. Stanley's appeals for the opening up of the Congo basin therefore did not strike a responsive chord.

But Stanley's plans were seized upon by King Leopold of Belgium. For a long time he had been interested in the Congo basin, and now that Stanley had demonstrated the possibilities he was ready to act. When Stanley returned to Africa in 1878 he did so at Leopold's request. In 1876 Leopold had been the moving spirit behind the establishment of the International African Association, whose aims were ostensibly to bring enlightenment and civilisation to Africa. The various committees of the African Association operated separately in each country, and it was as the representative of the Belgian branch of this association that Stanley returned to the Congo. To Leopold the African association was merely a mask behind which to conceal his real intentions, and these were to create a personal empire in the heart of Africa. The tale of how he did so forms part of the partitioning of the continent.

Opening of Africa to European influence The journeys of Livingstone and Stanley contributed greatly to the opening up of Africa to European influence. They focused world attention on Central and East Africa, particularly on the slave trade. Livingstone had travelled the Swahili-Arab route from Zanzibar to Ujiji, and he had seen it littered with the bones of those who had fallen by the wayside during the 1 300-km march from Ujiji to the coast. He brought home to millions of Europeans the human misery of refugees living in fear of the armed bands of slave raiders who might sweep down at any moment. He saw too that the slave and ivory trade went hand in hand, that slaves were used to carry the ivory to the coast, where both slaves and tusks were then disposed of at a profit. Livingstone believed that the introduction of legitimate trade would destroy the slave trade. Africa must be opened up to Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation.

Mission stations Before the partitioning of Africa the main European activity in East Central Africa was the Christian mission. There had been mission stations here before Livingstone's journeys but his accounts of the slave trade in the interior gave great impetus to mission activity. In 1859 the London Missionary Society to which Livingstone belonged established a station at Inyati in Matabeleland. Livingstone was directly responsible for the Universities' Mission to Central Africa sending Charles Frederick Mackenzie and eight missionaries to the Shire highlands in 1861 to an area that was constantly being invaded by Yao slave raiders. Mackenzie used his rifle to ward off the attackers. Fever took a heavy toll of the missionaries, and Mackenzie himself succumbed in 1862. In 1863 the mission withdrew to Zanzibar.

In 1868 the Roman Catholic Holy Ghost Fathers started working at Bagamoyo on the coast among freed slaves. The Church Missionary Society established a station at Mombasa in 1875. In the same year the Free Church of Scotland and the Foreign Mission of the Established Church of Scotland started a mission at the southern end of Lake Nyasa at Cape Maclear. The name of the station was Livingstonia, a clear indication of the inspiration for the settlement. E. D. Young and James Stewart of Lovedale fame were in charge of the station for a brief spell before Dr Robert Laws, a medical missionary, took over. Dr Laws's surgery won the respect of the surrounding people and within a short space of time the first school was started. The demand for Dr Laws's medical skills was matched by the demand for the calico cloth that the missionaries brought with them, and Laws soon found himself spending most of his time trading. His plea for traders to come and release him from this activity resulted in the launching in June 1878 of the Livingstonia Central Africa Company by the Moir brothers, John and Frederick. In 1881 the missionaries moved to the west of Lake Nyasa, to Bandawe, a more populous area. Although the local people were constantly threatened by the Ngoni, Laws refused to lead them in battle against the Ngoni or to harbour a refugee slave even for one night.

Other missions were not so successful in avoiding entanglements. One of the problems facing missions in the troubled area south of Lake Nyasa was that slaves and other refugees flocked to the stations for protection. Henry Henderson, who had been the sole representative of the Church of Scotland at the Livingstonia mission, in 1876 established a station in the Shire highlands in the area where Mackenzie had operated. It was

named Blantyre after Livingstone's birthplace. There was no clergyman, only a doctor and a small group of artisans. The Moir brothers had no agent in Blantyre but kept supplies in one of the mission's rooms and the missionaries found themselves engaged in much trading and checking of stores. The Reverend Duff Macdonald eventually arrived as minister at Blantyre, but he was not the right man for the post. He soon became totally involved in the affairs of the fugitive slaves who established villages in the neighbourhood of the mission station, playing the role of chief, trying and flogging those found guilty of theft. It was not long before the inevitable happened and he tried and executed a man found guilty of murder. When the mission at home heard about this, they recalled almost the entire staff and the Blantyre mission had virtually to be re-founded.

The Universities' Mission to Central Africa returned to the Nyasa area in 1876 and soon had a number of stations east and west of the lake. From 1878 the London Missionary Society established itself around Lake Tanganyika. The White Fathers was a Catholic order founded in 1868 by the Frenchman Cardinal Lavigerie, who in the late 1880s played a prominent role in whipping up flagging European interest in fighting the slave trade. They set up a station at Ujiji in 1879 and within a few years had started a chain of stations from Lake Tanganyika to Lake Victoria further south.

The greatest missionary impact was made in Buganda, further north. The kabaka Mutesa studied Islam, but when he perceived a threat to his political domain he saw the Christian missionaries as a way of preserving his independence. He asked Stanley to let Europe know he was ready to welcome Christian missionaries. Stanley's letter of appeal published in England in 1875 found a ready response, and by 1878 there were five Church Missionary Society missionaries in Buganda. By 1880 the White Fathers were also active there.

In 1856 there had been only one missionary on the mainland; by the early 1880s there were over 100 European missionaries in East Africa. Missionaries and explorers were not the only Europeans who found their way to East Central Africa in these years. There were other traders besides the Moir brothers, whose company was later renamed the African Lakes Company. Rumours of gold in the interior and the discovery of Great Zimbabwe by Karl Mauch in 1871 focused attention on the area. Prospectors, hunters, traders and adventurers all made their way there, but by the mid-1870s their numbers were still small, and a contemporary estimate was that only about 20 trading wagons a year came into Matabeleland. In the Lake Nyasa neighbourhood in the late 1880s there were only about 70 Europeans. Compared with West Africa, by 1880 the presence of Europeans and of European interests in East and Central Africa was small.

THE END OF THE SLAVE TRADE

Colo-
nial re-
bellion

The partitioning of Africa by the Europeans will be discussed from chapter 6 onwards, but it is necessary to anticipate events a little in order to round off the campaign against the slave trade in this part of Africa. Britain's policy of controlling East Africa indirectly via the sultan of Zanzibar failed in 1885 when Germany established the colony of

German East Africa, later known as Tanganyika. It was not long before tactless German behaviour and the harsh practices of the German Colonisation Society, which set up the German East Africa Company, resulted in a major revolt at the end of 1888. Bismarck required a demonstration of Anglo-German solidarity and in order to obtain British support he blamed the Arab slave dealers for the rebellion. Salisbury was reluctant to become involved, but he was afraid that if he did not there was a danger that Germany would intervene in Zanzibar. So he presented the measure to the public as a step to combat the slave trade.

**British
postal
subsidy**

The slave trade had often been used as a mask for the promotion of other interests. When the government subsidy for the British India Steam Navigation Company came up for renewal in 1882, the Post Office expressed the view that the service had little postal value and was not worth the £10 000 subsidy. But the Foreign Office insisted that the subsidy be renewed, not because of the post, nor even because of the slave trade, but to keep the trade that accompanied the mail service in British hands. They were afraid that without this British service the French not only would make inroads in British trading spheres but would also erode British political influence. The renewal of the subsidy was presented to parliament as a measure to combat the slave trade by encouraging the growth of legitimate trade, but the real reason was to counter French commercial and political expansion. 'One is left,' writes Suzanne Miers, 'with the impression that, while the suppression of the slave trade was undoubtedly desired by vocal sections of the British public and was a clear British objective, those whose job it was to defend British interests abroad did not let humanitarian questions dictate their policy. They were happy, however, to present that policy to the world in an anti-slavery guise.'⁵

**The
French
flag**

Now, in 1888, Salisbury felt it politic for Britain's wider interests to support Bismarck's call for a blockade of the coast, and he saw in this an opportunity of hitting at the slave trade and limiting the growth of French influence in the region. British anti-slavery cruisers along the coast had very little effect because an increasing number of slave runners used the French flag; as France extended its colonial possessions to the Red Sea littoral, Madagascar and the Comoro Islands, more people became entitled to use that flag. France's desire to build up its trade in the region made it unwilling to inquire too closely into the credentials of those who flew the French emblem on their dhows. Because the French would not allow British cruisers to search French ships for slaves, Arab dhows flying the Tricolor could pass British ships without fear of interception. What made the position of the cruisers even more difficult was that as more of the African coastline came under European control, their freedom of action was further circumscribed since British ships could not search vessels in the territorial waters of other powers such as Germany.

**Naval
block-
cade**

The blockade that was set up along the whole coast in November 1888 greatly alarmed France, who was concerned that Britain might interfere in Madagascar under the pretext of fighting the slave trade. The French now became more careful about whom they allowed to make use of their flag and they also increased the number of their own ships doing patrol duty and apprehending slavers. The sultan, who was losing revenue

through the stopping of trade, wanted the blockade to end, and the British put pressure on him to issue a decree to the effect that all slaves entering his domains after 1 November 1889 would be free. By now Bismarck was also keen to end the blockade, and it was lifted on 1 October 1889. The blockade thus had a good effect in helping to clamp down on the slave trade, although for some time afterwards the sultan's subjects simply ignored the anti-slavery decree.

**Leo-
pold
and the
arms
ban**

During the blockade the Germans had been more interested in preventing arms from reaching the rebels than they had been in fighting the slave trade. King Leopold of Belgium, whose personal control of the Congo Free State had been recognised internationally at the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, was keen to extend the borders of his new state, and in the east he cast covetous eyes on the sphere of influence built up by Tippu Tip. Leopold cooperated with Bismarck in trying to stop the arms trade but he had his own agenda, which was to gain as much control as possible over Tippu Tip. He therefore confiscated consignments of arms destined for Tippu Tip and banned the sale of arms and ammunition on the upper river and its tributaries. Leopold represented these measures as steps to combat the slave trade. He also represented the war that broke out between the Arabs and the Free State in 1892 in the same terms, but his real aim was to expand eastwards.

**The
arms
trade**

In 1889 Bismarck approached Salisbury with a view to obtaining an international agreement to control the trade in arms. But Salisbury was not keen. This was a tricky problem, which had been avoided at the Berlin Conference, the first international conference to deal exclusively with African affairs. The arms trade was a totally different proposition from the liquor trade. As Miers writes of Berlin: 'In attempting to restrict the spirits trade, Granville had clear evidence that the temperance movement was behind him and he knew that no important British industrial interests were at stake. The arms traffic, on the other hand, consisted largely of British manufactures and only the humanitarians attacked it. Granville took no steps to raise the matter in Berlin. Other powers also showed no interest in the question.'⁶ Besides liquor, guns were a staple of trade on the Niger River and chiefs demanded guns as 'dash' before giving permission to trade. Merchants regarded the trade in munitions as important as it attracted other trade as well. It was also a complicated moral issue because to stop the trade encouraged smugglers who sold guns to slave raiders. The supply of guns enabled people to protect themselves against slavers. In 1889, in the Nyasa area where there was war with the Arabs, Mlozi and his supporters were already well armed. To stop the trade in arms would be to the disadvantage of Mlozi's victims. Mlozi's possession of arms and the absence of arms among the surrounding peoples had enabled Mlozi to terrorise the neighbourhood. In addition, Rhodes's agent had promised Lobengula 1 000 guns, and the British government was busy talking to Rhodes about granting his British South Africa Company a charter, so it did not seem to be a good time to take action against the arms trade.

**Brussels
Con-
ference:
1890**

A better opportunity of doing something positive about the arms trade arose with the convening of the Brussels Conference in 1890. This was called to discuss the slave trade in Africa; a secondary aim was the restriction of the arms and liquor traffic. Cardinal

Lavigerie of the White Fathers, which had missions around Lakes Victoria and Tanganyika, toured Europe between 1888 and 1890 calling for a Christian crusade and whipping up public opinion against the East African slave trade. He did not say anything new, but he revived flagging public interest in the question of slavery. But although the objectives of the conference were humanitarian, humanity played a minor role in the way in which the issues were handled. The major powers used the conference to feather their own nests, and although the 17 powers represented at Brussels agreed to fight the slave trade and to prevent the importation of firearms and hard liquor, the clauses were largely evaded. The contribution of the Brussels Act was not so much in combating the slave, liquor and firearms trade, but in the formulation of the idea of trusteeship.

**Banning
the
slave
trade:
Berlin**

At the Berlin Conference Britain proposed that the traffic in slaves be declared a crime against the Law of Nations. There was not enough support to pass the measure, but the slave trade was condemned. Article VI of the Berlin Act read as follows: 'All the Powers exercising sovereign rights or influence in the aforesaid territory bind themselves to watch over the preservation of the native tribes, and to care for the improvement of their moral and material well-being, and to help in suppressing slavery, and especially the slave trade.' But no plan for common action was formulated, no practical measures were taken to see that this was adhered to – the powers were not committed to any specific action. The pushing by Britain of the anti-slavery proposals at Berlin was in part a gesture to the humanitarian and philanthropic movements in Britain. But even if the powers had no intention of taking action to stamp out slavery and the slave trade, at least they acknowledged that they had a duty to do so. So in many ways this was the first small step on the way towards the idea of trusteeship that was later to feature more prominently.

Brussels

At Brussels this was taken a step further. The statesmen in Brussels in 1890 used the anti-slavery movement to further their own ends, but as Suzanne Miers writes, 'they were forced to pay at least lip service to a high ideal. The Act largely failed both as an instrument for the promotion of "native welfare" and as an experiment in international co-operation. Nevertheless the ideal had been voiced and the responsibility accepted, and the principles embodied in it were adopted by the League of Nations and eventually passed to the United Nations. They were principles above the sordid and selfish aspirations of individual powers.'⁷

The legal status of slavery on Zanzibar and the other islands was eventually ended on 5 April 1897. Slavery was abolished in the sultan's mainland dominions only in 1907; this abolition did not include German East Africa, where slavery as an institution was abolished only in 1922. At Brussels the French had agreed to take measures about who was entitled to use their flag, and in 1905 the Court of Arbitration at the Hague ruled that, by signing at Brussels, France had in effect agreed to limit the use of her flag where 'native vessels' were concerned.

British motives As we have seen, other nations charged that Britain's anti-slavery patrols gave it a convenient excuse for interfering with indigenous rulers, and that they were used to support British traders. Both France and Portugal believed that British sponsorship of the anti-slavery campaign was a cloak, that it was merely an excuse to harry the trade of rivals and promote British interests.

There is an element of truth in this and naval ships were undoubtedly used to keep a close watch on the activities of rivals. But we should not take too cynical a view of the British campaign. Britain frequently took steps against the slave trade when it would have preferred not to, and British merchants were sometimes hamstrung in their operations because of government action against this trade. Britain did not sustain the campaign on the same level all the time. It had high points and low points. It was usually a secondary consideration and the amount of funds available was limited.

As far as the British public were concerned, it was a cause for which they were prepared to see money and men expended. They supported the campaign even in those parts of Africa where Britain did not have major interests. But because the public were prepared to see funds going towards combating the slave trade, all sorts and conditions of interested parties raised support for their own interests by clothing their wants in an anti-slavery guise. Salisbury was adept at putting an anti-slavery mask on a wide variety of projects in order to raise money from parliament or to justify a particular line of action. Of course this does not mean that a man such as Sir John Kirk was not really interested in fighting the slave trade – he was very much concerned with it, but he was not averse to advancing British political interests and expansion at the same time as he was striking a blow at the trade in human beings.

Suzanne Miers, who takes a very close and canny look at the motives behind the campaign, writes that 'it is perhaps fair to suggest that Britain remained faithful to the anti-slavery cause and made certain sacrifices to further it but that she did not sacrifice any important national interest and she sometimes used it for other than humanitarian purposes. But when all is said and done she did more than any other power.'⁸

Notes

- 1 S. Miers, *Britain and the ending of the slave trade*, p. 94.
- 2 R. Oliver, 'Introduction', in R. Oliver & G. N. Sanderson (eds), *The Cambridge history of Africa*, vol. 6, *From 1870 to 1905*, p. 3.
- 3 D. Birmingham, *Central Africa to 1870: Zambezia, Zaire and the South Atlantic*, p. 124.
- 4 E. A. Alpers, *Ivory and slaves in East Central Africa*, pp. 30–31.
- 5 Miers, *Britain and the ending of the slave trade*, p. 35.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 187.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 319.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 317.