

SECOND EDITION

# KENYA

## The Quest for Prosperity

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Norman Miller  
and Rodger Yeager



Nations of Contemporary Africa

# KENYA

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*To our families*



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## *Preface*

This book examines the entrepreneurial, innovative, aggressive approach to life that characterizes modern Kenyan society. Reflecting a mood encountered throughout much of the country, today's Nairobi is a freewheeling, materialistic place where the search for individual advancement shapes the dominant ethic. To the extent that it defines the Kenyan civic culture, this orientation is unique in eastern Africa. It has been both heralded as a harbinger of democratic achievement, social integration, and economic justice and condemned as a deeply embedded cause of political elitism, social conflict, and economic exploitation.

Our view of Kenya is essentially positive, although we believe that a country can be defended and still criticized. The inequities of Kenyan society are not necessarily permanent. The economy faces difficult times but abounds in untapped potential. The political system, increasingly repressive, is nevertheless alive with demands for democratic reform. The overstressed environment still offers the promise of sustainable resource use for the benefit of present and future generations. Events in the international arena are threatening but not overwhelming. Our purpose in the following pages is to describe, explain, and evaluate these divergent tendencies.

In addition to the organizations, friends, and colleagues acknowledged in the first edition, we thank several institutions and individuals for helping make this second edition possible. Under the auspices of the African-Caribbean Institute, our most recent work in Kenya and in other African countries focuses on public-policy problems of natural resource conservation, health, and biodiversity management. We are grateful to the Ford Foundation, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for their financial support of this effort. In Nairobi, the assistance of the following persons was especially appreciated: Ford Foundation country representatives Goran Hyden, Diana Rocheleau, and Eric

Rusten; John Gaudet, Larry Hausman, and John Koehring at USAID's regional office for eastern and southern Africa; and Mona Bjorkland of UNEP headquarters. We are also obliged to the researchers and research advisors associated with our Kenyan projects: Mohamud Abdi Jama and J. Keter, University of Nairobi; A. K. Kiriroti, National Environment Secretariat; Michael Korir-Koech, Kenyatta University; Francis Lelo, Egerton University; Charles Okidi, Moi University; Fred Owino, International Centre for Research in Agroforestry; Betty Nafuna Wamalwa, UN Development Programme; and David Wasawo, UN Environment Programme.

Both individually and together, we have long enjoyed an excellent working relationship with Westview Press and with its Nations of Contemporary Africa series. Over the years, series editor Larry W. Bowman has continued to encourage and support our work, as have our Westview editors, Barbara Ellington, Miriam Gilbert, Michelle Murphy, and Shena Redmond. To them we are particularly indebted for enabling our thoughts to see the light of day.

In the final analysis, our deepest thanks are reserved for our long-suffering academic associates and students and, above all, for our families, to whom this book is dedicated: Jan Yeager and Judith, Scott, and Amy Miller. Carrying on a tradition established in nearly three decades of friendship and research collaboration in Africa, we have once again agreed to attribute any errors of fact and interpretation to each other.

*Norman Miller  
Rodger Yeager*

#### **NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION**

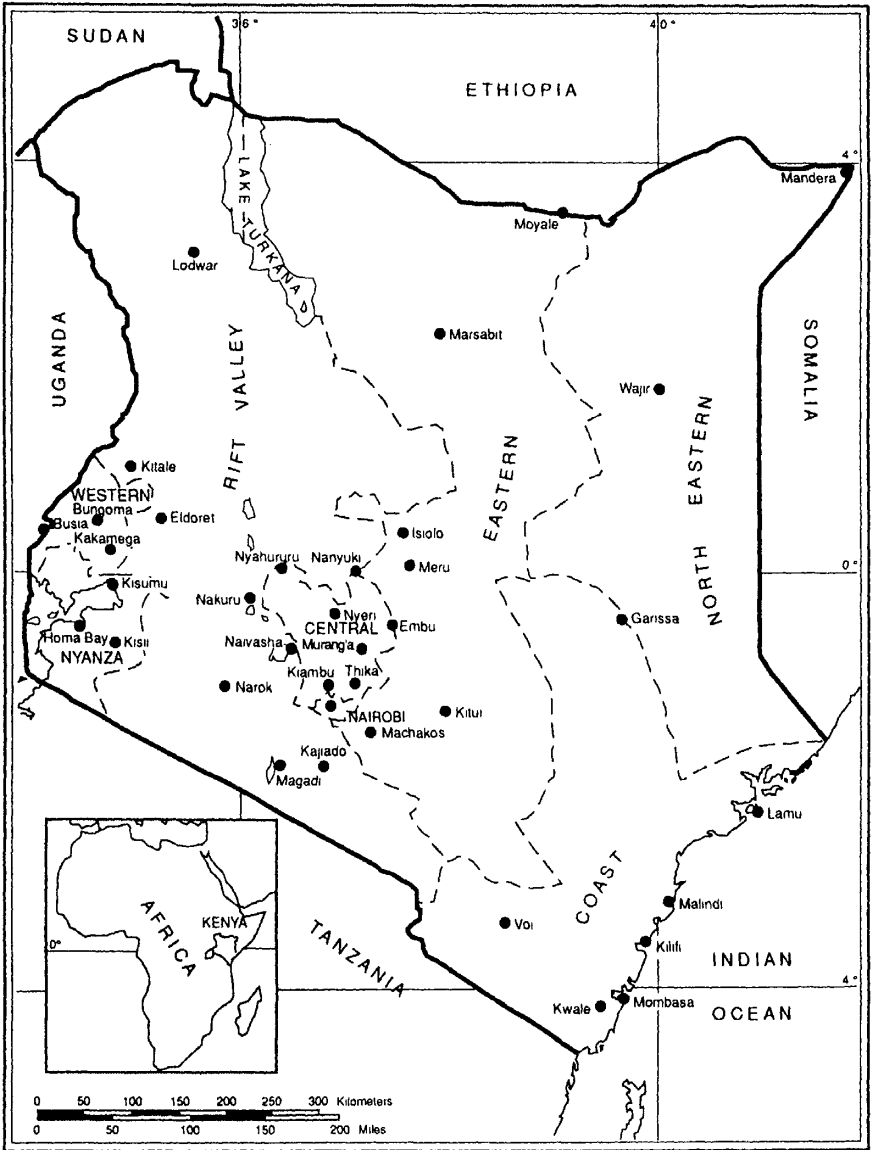
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Nearly ten turbulent years have elapsed since this book first went to press. So many changes have occurred and so many different actors have entered and exited the political stage that an entirely new edition was called for. Happily, Rodger Yeager, my long-standing friend and author of the Tanzania book in this series, agreed to coauthor the second edition. He has carried the lion's share of responsibility for researching and writing the chapters that follow. I also thank David Keith Jones and the editors and staff of the *Daily Nation* (Nairobi) for their generosity in providing photographs for this edition as they did for the first.

N. M.

# KENYA

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Republic of Kenya

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# *Introduction*

In comparison with the situation in Africa's other centers of European entrenchment, Kenya's transition to independence was remarkably orderly, free from racial strife, and sensitive to the importance of political rights and freedoms. Yet as democratic reforms are increasingly being secured elsewhere in Africa, these protections are becoming progressively eroded in Kenya. Again, although Kenya's economic performance has exceeded that of most other African countries, the benefits of this growth have been diluted by deepening elite corruption, increasing inequality, and a growing potential for class conflict. Consisting of forty ethnic groups dominated by three very large ones, Kenyan society has long been troubled by ethnic competition for land and other attributes of wealth, status, and power. Instead of remaining narrow and predictable over the years, however, the game of ethnic politics has expanded to include an ever-larger number of committed but insecure minor players. In human-ecological terms, few African countries have profited so much from so limited a resource base, but one of the world's fastest-growing populations is now causing serious resource depletion in the absence of effective measures to ameliorate relentless environmental exploitation. On the basis of its economic hegemony in eastern Africa, its commanding geopolitical location in that part of the continent, and the ability of its elites to manage foreign interests, Kenya has moved farther than most African states toward converting international dependency into a series of mutually beneficial relationships with other nations. At the same time, the very factors responsible for this success have made Kenya vulnerable to international forces that could soon overwhelm it.

To explain how Kenya came to be what it is today, the first two chapters of this book are devoted to the historical determinants of the country's modern quest for prosperity. These include early trade patterns and colonial experiences, important agreements reached at

independence, and the politics and policies of the first postcolonial government, led by President Jomo Kenyatta. The next four chapters focus on the contemporary period, beginning with the rise to power of President Daniel arap Moi in August 1978. These discussions approach Kenya from the perspectives of its current social, political, economic, and international realities. A concluding chapter projects the country into a twenty-first century full of dangers and opportunities.

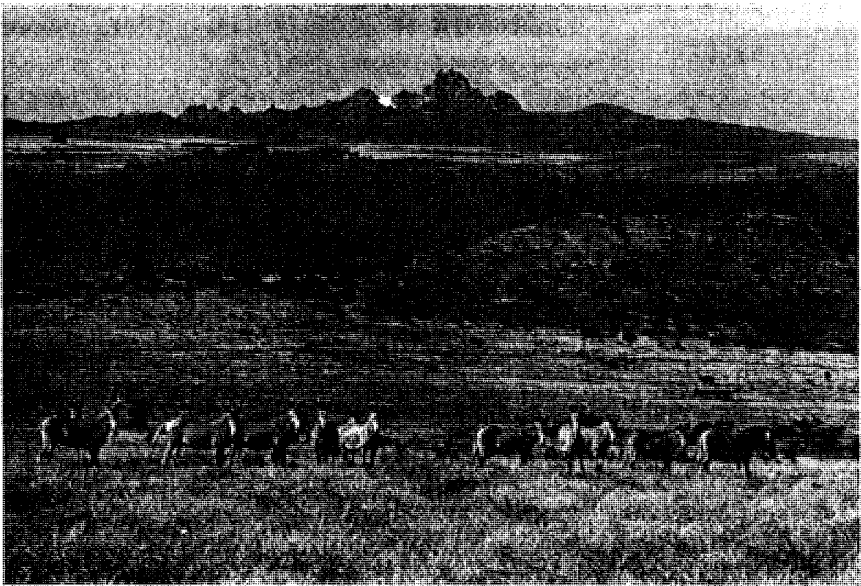
The people of Kenya form an intricate mosaic of African societies with an admixture of Asian, Arab, and European influences. The population remains overwhelmingly rural, although voluntary and forced urbanization is rapidly altering this situation. Growing at an astounding annual rate of nearly 4 percent during the 1980s, the Kenyan population swelled from 19.5 million in 1984 (when the first edition of this book was published) to an estimated 27.5 million by 1993. This increase and the scarcity of arable land to accommodate it have created one of Kenya's most intractable problems of socioeconomic development. More than 80 percent of the population inhabits less than 20 percent of the land, producing demographic pressures that threaten agricultural carrying capacities in less well-endowed regions. High population densities in fertile zones have prompted movements of impoverished farmers to Kenya's vast but ecologically fragile arid and semiarid lands. Out-migration from heavily settled rural areas has produced annual urbanization rates of more than 8 percent. In 1965, 9 percent of the population lived in underemployed and food-dependent urban areas; by 1990 the urban proportion had risen to 24 percent.<sup>1</sup>

In this potentially Malthusian setting requiring urgent policy responses, the Kenyan governing system is dominated by hierarchically organized networks of patron-client relations. Power flows from the top, ultimately the office of the president, through formal and informal channels managed by ethnically and regionally oriented brokers and go-betweens. Kenya politics has a rough-and-tumble character that is observable in the brokerage process and in open contests for favor and position among individuals and ethnic cliques. Young politicians eagerly contend for influence in the ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) political party, in the trade unions and government corporations, and in the private sector. For its part, the civil service functions as an elite technocracy, although informal economic and political maneuvering also permeates the bureaucratic ranks. Conflicts of interest are of little concern to the civil service, and consequently the administrative process can best be described as "disjointed incrementalism." Imbued with hidden agendas and somewhat casual about detail, this eclectic approach to public problem solving provides work incentives and distributes rewards in society, but it also leads to inefficiencies in daily oper-

ations, encourages a proliferation of ill-defined policies, and affords many opportunities for corruption and waste of resources.

Kenya has long served as the center of international capitalism in eastern Africa. Until the early 1980s, it was considered a model of economic opportunity and stability in the region. A 1982 military uprising cast doubt on this assessment, and issues of political and economic security have since preoccupied the domestic leadership and foreign investors as well. Some 350 multinational corporations are based in Nairobi, together with a host of development agencies and volunteer organizations. More than twenty thousand foreign residents belong to this community. Their presence contributes much-needed skills but also creates problems of coordination and control for Kenyan political and administrative elites.

Located astride the equator on the Indian Ocean, Kenya encompasses an area of 582,748 square kilometers (233,099 square miles), making it about as large as France and slightly larger than Texas. Eighty-three percent of the land is arid and semiarid, the remainder consisting of coastal and upland areas of medium to high potential for rain-fed agriculture. Annual rainfall depends on climatic patterns driven by dry winds blowing south from the Sahara Desert and meeting moist air masses from the Indian Ocean. During April and May, monsoon sea



Zebras with Mt. Kenya in background (photo by David Keith Jones/Images of Africa Photobank)

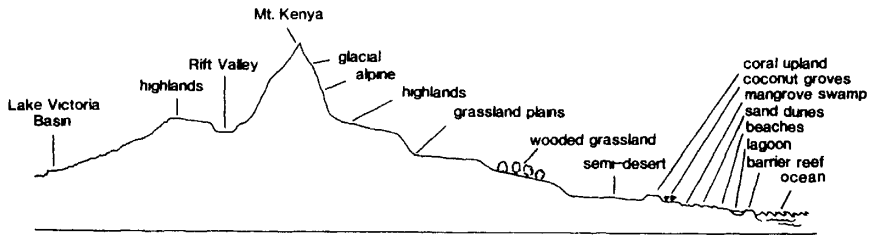


FIGURE 1 Selected ecological zones in Kenya

breezes change their northeasterly direction and become southwesterly trade winds. The pattern is reversed in November and December, completing a cycle that produces most of its rainfall in the April-May season.

Kenya's highest mountain, Mt. Kenya, is located in roughly the center of the country. From a high-altitude aerial perspective Kenya would look like an upside-down saucer. The eastern branch of Africa's Great Rift Valley slashes from north to south through the country, separating the Lake Victoria basin to the west from eastern hills that slide away into dry lowlands and coastal beaches (Figure 1). This complex topography is matched by an equally diverse ecology and pattern of human adaptation.<sup>2</sup>

Kenya can be divided into five ecological zones. Paralleling the Indian Ocean, the *coastal zone* consists of a lowland plain extending 16 to 64 kilometers (10 to 40 miles) inland. A barrier reef lies outside much of the 440-kilometer (275-mile) coastline, and several large islands, including Mombasa and Lamu, dot the offshore waters. The beach ecology of this zone incorporates mangrove swamps, communities of variegated dune vegetation, and brackish estuaries. Mombasa, Kenya's second-largest city and principal deep-water port, bustles on the southern coast. Nonurban settlement features small villages and dispersed homesteads situated a kilometer or more inland from the infertile coral sands nearest the ocean. Mixed agriculture, with maize and cassava predominating, is practiced in this hinterland. Sociologists have referred to the Kenya coast as a "shatter zone," in which a tradition of slaving, warfare, smuggling, and other disruptive activities has led to a permanent fragmentation of indigenous cultures. Coastal African society today is a loose ethnic assemblage, collectively termed the Mijikenda (nine villages).

Kenya's *arid zone* stretches in a great arc from the southeastern part of the country throughout the north and northwest. This expanse is characterized by low rainfall, frequent drought, and rock-strewn wasteland interspersed with hilly outcrops and low mountains. Soils are generally shallow, stony, and of recent geological origin. Despite its infertility and lack of rainfall, the arid zone offers sufficient vegetation and moisture to

support widely dispersed human and wildlife populations. Groups such as the Boran, Gabbra, Rendille, Samburu, Somali, and Turkana persist in their time-honored tradition of seminomadic pastoralism despite attempts to settle them with a view to commercializing their livestock economies and providing their scattered communities with improved education, health care, and other amenities.

The Kenya *highland zone* was dubbed the “white highlands” in colonial times because its fertile soils, temperate climate, and relatively disease-free environment attracted the largest number of resident Europeans in British East Africa. Today Kenya’s largest ethnic group, the Kikuyu, is concentrated in the central portion of the highlands. The highland zone is a region of rolling uplands characterized by cool weather, abundant rainfall, rich volcanic soils, and dense human settlement. Together with the eastern part of the Lake Victoria hinterland, it represents only about 10 percent of Kenya’s total land area but contains over half its population. Here a plenitude of native flora and fauna is complemented by a wide variety of agricultural products. For example, under strong equatorial sunlight the upper reaches of Mt. Kenya support many varieties of bamboo, lichens, giant ferns, and other plants rare in eastern Africa. Lower on the mountain, a wide assortment of food and export crops is cultivated with high yields.

The highlands are divided into two sectors separated by the Rift Valley. The eastern highlands lie north of Nairobi and include Mt. Kenya, the Aberdare Mountains, and the high plateaus to the west. Here small and large farms, estates, settlement schemes, and ranches produce coffee, tea, wheat, maize, barley, dairy products, and cattle. The cities of Eldoret and Kitale serve as market centers for the western highlands, in which less-densely settled farming areas are planted in wheat, barley, and maize. The eastern and western highlands together generate the lion’s share of agricultural output for Kenya’s largely agricultural economy.

The *Lake Victoria basin zone* forms a crescent adjoining the northeastern corner of Lake Victoria. Here rolling, well-watered farmland is intersected by dry savannas rising to between 540 and 720 meters (1,800 to 2,400 feet) above sea level. Kisumu, the third-largest city in Kenya and the western region’s major entrepôt, is situated on the lakeshore and functions as an important railhead and port. Sandy and loamy soils and a semitropical, often humid climate typify this zone. Exceeding 300 people per square kilometer in some places, average population densities in the Lake Victoria basin equal those of the crowded central highlands. Economic activities include commercial cotton and sugar production, intensive small farming in bananas and other food crops, and a substantial lake fishing industry. The Lake Victoria zone is home to Kenya’s second- and third-largest ethnic communities, the Luo and the Abaluhya.

The *savanna zone* of south-central Kenya is a place of lush grasslands, majestic vistas, and plentiful wildlife. Varying in altitude from 750 to 1,800 meters (2,500 to 6,000 feet), the prairies of this zone separate the western highland steppes and the Lake Victoria basin from the arid reaches of the northeast. Some of Africa's best-known game preserves, including Nairobi National Park, Maasai Mara National Reserve, and Amboseli National Park, have been established here. (Islands of similar grasslands in otherwise drier regions are likewise set aside for wildlife, notably Samburu National Reserve and parts of Tsavo National Park.<sup>3</sup>) Roamed by the fabled Maasai, the open ranges of the savanna zone are primarily given over to pastoralism, with some shifting cultivation of food crops. This equilibrium will soon change, however, as the savanna country is subjected to peasant migrations and elite land accumulations from the densely settled and politically dominant north.

In a country still full of open spaces and frontier wilderness, it may seem ironic that Kenyans have for so long been preoccupied with land hunger, land struggle, and an unrelenting pursuit of territoriality. For centuries, a central theme running through the Kenyan experience has been intense competition for prime farming land, rights to grazing land, access to hunting land, land to bequeath to kindred and to withhold from strangers. Now as in the past, Kenya's quest for prosperity is intimately linked with the land.

# 1

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## *The Colonial Legacy*

### **BEGINNINGS**

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Eastern Africa may very well be the birthplace of humanity.<sup>1</sup> Some of the earliest predecessors of *Homo sapiens* lived around the lakes and in the lush, game-filled savannas of the Great Rift Valley. During the late 1950s and 1960s, the remains of *Zinjanthropus boisei* and *Homo habilis* were discovered at Olduvai Gorge in northern Tanzania. These two species lived during the Lower Pleistocene epoch, between three million and one million years ago. More recently, a probable ancestor of these protohumans was uncovered near Lake Turkana in Kenya. Pioneered by the Leakey family of prehistorians, the search continues for still older evolutionary progenitors.

As far as can yet be determined, the human history of Kenya began about ten thousand years ago, when isolated communities of Khoi-San hunters and gatherers settled in the Rift Valley. These movements were followed in the first millennium B.C. by migrations of Cushitic-speaking pastoralists from southern Ethiopia and in the first millennium A.D. by a much larger influx of Bantu-speaking cultivators from western Africa. The initial settling of Kenya was completed between the tenth and the eighteenth century in a series of migrations from the Sudanic Nile region.<sup>2</sup>

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, many of the socioeconomic and cultural features of modern Kenya had taken basic shape. The dry reaches of the north were inhabited by widely scattered populations of seminomadic pastoralists. In the south, pastoralists and cultivators bartered goods and competed for land as long-distance caravan routes penetrated the territories of both from the Kenya coast to the kingdoms of what is now Uganda. A mixing of Arab, Shirazi, and coastal African cultures had given rise to an Islamic Swahili people trading in a variety of up-country commodities, including slaves. Networks of commerce

linked inland societies with the coast. From their home territory in south-central Kenya, Kamba elephant hunters mounted long-distance expeditions in search of ivory. To the west, Kikuyu farmers overcame their hostility toward free-ranging herders in the interest of a sophisticated trade with the pastoral Maasai in cattle, iron goods, and items obtained from coastal merchants.<sup>3</sup> Commerce in the vicinity of Lake Victoria focused on skins and hides, salt, forged iron products, and beeswax.

Much of this early interaction among peoples was stimulated by the impact of Arab and Shirazi entrepôts including Kilwa Kisiwani, Pemba, Zanzibar, Gedi, Malindi, and Mombasa. Galleon-like dhows sailed with the monsoon winds to and from eastern Africa, transporting large varieties of imports and exports. Reaching Kenya were salt, metal goods, beads, furniture, tools, and cloth. Carried away were slaves, ivory, dried fish, tortoise shells, and building materials. As this traffic increased in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, key trading ports became self-governing city-states complete with merchant houses, military establishments, and civil administrations. Two important cultural nuances resulted from this activity. First, Kiswahili emerged as eastern Africa's major language of trade. Originating in a combination of Bantu and Arabic dialects, Kiswahili facilitated economic relations and, as a *lingua franca*, eventual European exploration, religious conversion, and colonization from the coast to Lake Victoria and beyond. Second, a rich coastal civilization—the Omani-Swahili—arose from the combination of African and Arabian Gulf traditions to form distinct patterns of architecture and art, poetry, cuisine, manners, and social customs.<sup>4</sup> Chief among the latter was a strong mercantile ethic.

In 1498, a new era began for coastal eastern Africa with the arrival of the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama. Trade and conquest were the twin objectives of the powerful Portuguese, and within a short time they dominated the western Indian Ocean littoral. Fort Jesus, with its imposing ramparts and turrets overlooking Mombasa harbor, was completed in 1593 to afford the Portuguese military control over the coast and to eliminate the commercial hegemony of the resident Omani Arabs. Intended primarily to establish and defend resupply points for ships en route to the Orient, Portuguese suzerainty was oppressive but relatively short. Under the command of the imam of Oman, Saif bin Sultan, Omanis took Mombasa in 1698 and captured Pemba and Kilwa a year later. By 1729 they had expelled the Portuguese from all settlements north of the Ruvuma River, which later formed the northern boundary of Portuguese Mozambique.

Although their tenure was brief and disruptive, the Portuguese contributed significantly to Kenya's food crops and coastal technologies. They probably brought the first maize, potatoes, and cassava root to east-

ern Africa.<sup>5</sup> They also exercised considerable influence over local naval design, navigation and sailing techniques, and modes of warfare. Still, the Kenya coast had nurtured an Islamic African-Arabian civilization before the Portuguese came, and when they left it returned to Islamic control. The interlopers represented an alien, Christian culture that subsequent Muslim rulers took particular care to eradicate.

Having expelled the Portuguese, Saif bin Sultan returned to Oman after appointing Arab governors over the coastal city-states. Several of these regimes later fell under the sway of the governor of Mombasa, Muhammed bin Uthman al-Mazrui, head of the powerful Mazrui dynasty. Appointees from this family soon gained dominion over much of the coast, ruling as independent sultans while offering ceremonial allegiance to the Omani imam and often quarreling among themselves for influence and wealth. These unstable arrangements persisted into the nineteenth century.

Trade and slavery characterized the second Islamic period in Kenya, extending from 1700 to 1880. Slaves were needed throughout the Arabian Peninsula to man Arab armies, to perform manual labor, and to serve as house servants and harem eunuchs. Europeans, particularly the French, also employed slaves in their newly acquired colonial outposts. The slave trade was controlled by Gulf merchants, who arranged orders and supplied dhow transport. Kenya-based Arabs organized expeditions and either led these forays themselves or relied on Swahili middlemen. Onslaughts of slave hunting tore apart indigenous coastal societies and spread enormous suffering as far west as the eastern Congo. Slaving continued throughout the 1700s, to be challenged only in 1807, when the British abolished slavery and initiated the long process of ending the trade.

A key personality in the Indian Ocean antislavery movement was Said bin Sultan, more commonly known as Sayyid Said, who became imam of Oman in 1806. Sayyid Said realized that he required British help to consolidate his rule in Oman and to reclaim Oman's eastern African territories. He was thus persuaded to accede to the Moresby Treaty of 1822, a European-Zanzibari agreement prohibiting the sale of slaves to Christian powers. Backed by the British, Sayyid Said traveled to Mombasa in 1828, expelled the Mazruis from Fort Jesus in 1836, and soon after moved his capital from Oman to Zanzibar. From there he extended his trading empire from Mogadishu to the Ruvuma, ruling both Oman and coastal eastern Africa until his death in 1856.

During the last twenty years of his reign, Sayyid Said displayed little enthusiasm for the antislavery movement and in fact lacked enforcement power over his acquisitive mainland and island subjects. Slavery continued and in some areas increased. It was not until a suc-

cessor, Said Barghash, took stronger pro-British measures that the trade began significantly to diminish.<sup>6</sup> Said imposed a total ban in 1873, but because the measure was still extremely unpopular among traders and coastal merchants, clandestine slaving persisted. Trafficking in human beings provided a powerful incentive for Arab entrepreneurs and their Swahili agents. An equally compelling humanitarian concern for its abolition excited the interest of two other entrepreneurial groups. These introduced even more portentous alien forces, one religious and the other imperial, into eastern Africa.

### THE EUROPEAN PENETRATION, 1880–1915

After “discovering” eastern Africa in the early to middle 1800s, Christian missionaries and missionary-explorers became preoccupied with two objectives: to stamp out the slave trade and domestic slavery and, through Protestant and Roman Catholic conversion, to confer a firm sense of Victorian morality on the indigenous societies thus saved. Given competing Islamic beliefs and economic practices along the coast and the potential resistance of myriad inland African societies, both tasks were formidable. Two such proselytizers, Johann Krapf and Yohannes Rebmann, established Mombasa’s first mission station in 1846, but it was not until Said Barghash’s banning of slavery in 1873 that missionaries felt free to speak out against the practice. Even then, there was widespread opposition; the resident Muslim population resented Christian teachings, and slavery was still a profitable business. General resistance was also encountered up-country until growing numbers of Africans began to associate religious conversion with the acquisition of colonial economic rewards.

Indeed, David Livingstone and those who followed him believed that commerce would pave the way for Christianity and that profit derived from a wage-labor system would put an end to all forms of servitude. From the 1870s on, European travelers and traders, particularly those involved in the Uganda caravans, came under strong moral pressure to pay fully for their porters and to avoid compulsory labor. Missionaries instructed their converts in the mechanical and agricultural arts and committed Kiswahili to the Roman alphabet so that it could serve future economic and administrative purposes as well as their own. In short, missionaries carried the related messages of Western religion, orderly progress, and commercial profit.<sup>7</sup> These lessons, especially the latter, were not lost on those who were to feel the full impact of colonial rule.

In contrast to the Portuguese, the second wave of eastern Africa’s European invaders, led by explorers and missionaries, intended to move

inland and, eventually, to settle. In the south, Germans occupied what later became Tanganyika Territory (plus present-day Rwanda and Burundi) and ultimately independent Tanzania (including Zanzibar). To the north, Britain claimed Kenya as its East Africa Protectorate in 1895 and in 1920 annexed all but the coastal strip as Kenya Colony. The coast remained under the nominal jurisdiction of Zanzibar, by now itself, like Uganda, a British protectorate.

The motives for this penetration were religious, economic, and political. By 1880, the missionary movement was bringing strong pressure on the British government to commit itself more fully to the antislavery campaign and to protect Victorian clergymen venturing up-country. The economic prospects of the entire region had been dramatically altered with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Kenya was now closer to England, and Mombasa had suddenly become an important strategic port on the British trade route to India and the Far East. European industrialization had produced intense economic and political rivalries, allowing France and Germany to challenge Britain's technological dominance. In particular, new railroad technology facilitated communication from the sea to the African interior and stimulated the European demand for resources, markets, and the political prestige associated with empire.

For Kenya as for the rest of its African territories, Britain's initial colonial strategy was to permit commercial interests to take the lead and assume the attached risks. In 1888 a privately financed trading company, the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC), was awarded a royal charter to develop commerce in the protectorate. IBEAC was structured like its British-African counterparts, the Royal Niger Company and the British South African Company, but unlike these enterprises it was not based on new mineral concessions or the prospect of quick agricultural profits. Seemingly without direction, the company drifted into financial straits, and this and the founding of the Uganda Protectorate in 1894 led the British government to assume direct control over Kenya in 1895.

According to a logic that today seems fanciful, British policy focused on Uganda as a key to its strategic interests in Africa. The reasoning was that unless Britain controlled Uganda, the headwaters of the White Nile might be dammed by another European power. This would disrupt the river, bring Egyptian agriculture to its knees, cause peasant uprisings in Egypt and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, threaten the Suez Canal, and prevent British entry to the Red Sea and beyond. India, the Pearl of the Empire, and the Far East trade could become virtually inaccessible. In reality, damming the Nile would have meant transporting heavy equipment to Uganda, 800 kilometers (500 miles) inland, through a territory with no improved roads or bridges, and thereafter building a structure that was technologically far beyond nineteenth-century capa-