UNIT 1 INTRODUCING AFRICA

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Africa is a continent of many countries, big and small. At present the continent consists of 54 countries(48 countrieson the mainland and 6 island countries).Nearly 800 million people accounting for 13 per cent of the total population of the world live on this continent. The continent accounts for nearly a quarter of the world's landmass. It is the second largest continent next to Asia, It was physically joined to Asia in the northeast by the Sinai peninsula before the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Africa contains some of the finest varieties of world culture, tribes, contrasts and contradictions. When India got independence there were only four independent countries in Africa. By 1963 when the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was established their number shot up to **32.** With the independence of Portuguese colonies and countries of whites in the southern peninsula including Zimbabwe and Namibia, the number of the independent countries rose to 52. After the separation of Eritrea from Ethiopia and the fall of *apartheid* regime in **South** Africa, there are 54

independent countries on this continent. Africa today is a continent at a critical point in history. During the past half a decade there has occurred an unprecedented political revolution in Africa variously characterised as a "new wind of change", a "second liberation", and/or a "second African independence".

Many people still mistakenly refer to Africa as a 'dark continent', as if it had no history, no culture and no achievements. But Africa has its own history and civilisation. The origin of the evolution of mankind is traced to this continent. It had huge manpower that was lost in the slave trade. Its vast and rich resources made the continent target of the European industry. Their interests led not only to colonisation but also fragmentation into different spheres — Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone — at continental level and into thousands of ethnic and tribal groupings at local levels. Because it served their vested interest Africa was projected as a 'dark continent' to the international community.

Modern Africa is not stagnant. It has formed different regional and economic organisations like Organisation of African Unity (OAU, now AU), Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC). Through these organisations Africa interacts not only within the continent but with the outside world as well. The continent is now being developed through Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), and the New Partnership for African Development (NAPED) has provided it new and improved pace.

1.2 WOW AFRICA CAME INTO BEING

History of Africa was written largely on the information derived from the reports of visitors, traders, and invaders (for slaves and colonisation) over the last five hundred years. Historians have constructed accounts of societies that existed thousands of years ago. Modem scholars have also used ancient records of archaeology, anthropology and linguistics to fill in the gaps in Africa's historical record. Their efforts have provided insiglit into the continent's past and allowed historians to trace broad patterns of development. However, we are far from a complete picture of the African past and also the 'dark ages' of the Slave Trade.

a) *Geographical and Sociological Aspects*

In Africa, the herding of animals appeared before the development of agriculture. By about 7500 B.C., people in the western desert of Egypt had domesticated cattle. Over the next 2,000 years, the practice of herding spread into the central Sahara desert. From there it made its way to the Atlantic coast, into the highlands of present day Ethiopia, and south to the border of Africa's tropical forests. Many parts of the Sahara region were well watered, supporting forests and other vegetation. About 6000 B.C., the weather began to change, the Sahara became drier. This process continued for about 4,500 years until most of North Africa became a desert. During the long period of change, a surprising variety of settlements flourished in the Central and Southern Sahara. There is even evidence that members of different communities gathered together at certain times of the year to share their resources and skills, and in this way they had a better chance of surviving difficult environmental conditions. Perhaps this interaction between settlements emboldened them to experiment with growing grains. After about 2500 B.C., many pastoral groups made their way into central, eastern, and southern Africa. Herding peoples occupied the highlands of Ethiopia more than a thousand years before farmers appeared there. By about 1000 B.C. pastoralists had spread into the Rift Valley in present day Kenya, and by 400 B.C. they had reached the border of present-

day Tanzania. Pastoralists also had spread to central Africa by 400 B.C. and to southern Africa by A.D. 200. By 1500 B.C. Bantu speaking peoples had migrated into the eastern part of present-day Cameroon, and they eventually spread east and south across central and southern Africa. As they migrated, the Bantu began growing grains and were among the first to produce iron in sub-Saharan Africa.

b) *Importance of Metal in Social Development*

The rise of metalworking revolutionised social development in Africa. The use of metals led to specialisation and the evolution of a more hierarchical society and to new ideas about authority. It was an important factor in the development of trade and cities in Africa.

People in ancient Egypt and Nubians were smelting bronze as early as 2000 B.C. The Greeks and Carthaginians brought iron and copper technology to North Africa sometime after 1000 B.C. and from there it spread southward down the Nile Valley. The earliest evidence of iron working in sub-Saharan Africa, discovered in prescnt-day Niger, dated to about 700 B.C. Copper smelting seems to have begun in the region of present day Mauritania about a hundred years later. Iron had an immediate impact on African civilisation. In West Africa, for example, the use of iron tools helped in the clearing and settling of land in the valleys along tlie Senegal and Niger Rivers and iron goods from these areas were probably part of the early trade in this region. Iron tools allowed new lands to be settled, which resulted in an increase in population. By about 300 B.C. iron working technology was well established in the areas of western Afiica settled by the Bantu. From there it spread into central Africa and ultimately to eastern and southeastern Africa. Iron artefacts dating from about 100 A.D. to 400 A.D have been found at Lake Victoria, in southern Tanzania and in southeastern Africa. By about 600 A.D. urban settlements featuring a hierarchical society, specialised labour, large-scale production of goods, long-distance trade, and complex political organisation were appearing throughout Afiica. In West Africa expanding long-distance trade along the Middle Niger River promoted the growth of early urban areas. By the late 18th Century, large urban centres with hierarchical social structures had appeared in many other areas of Africa as well.

1.3 EVOLUTION OF AFRICA

1.3.1 Northern Africa

Northern Africa comprises Egypt, the northern half of Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. Early Stone Age axes have been Found throughout North Africa, from the Red Sea to the Atlantic Ocean and from the Mediterranean coast southward. In the Sahara they have often been unearthed near former springs and lakeshores that supported life during wetter eras in the region's past,' Middle Stone Age sites in the Sahara and the *Maghreb* (northwest Africa) show that people butchered rhinoceroses, giraffes, horses, antelopes, and gazelles. A few sites also contain stones that people may have used to grind wild plant foods to tnake them more palatable. In the Nile River valley where fish bones, including some from very large deepwater Fish were discovered, is among the oldest evidence in the world of fishing. Between 20,000 and 13,000 years ago the sea level along the Mediterranean shore was much lower than today and coastal regions that are now under water were probably the main centres of population. The Nile River, much smaller than it is today, supported a narrow ribbon of life surrounded on both sides by deserts. The people who lived there probably had to compete for resources—many skeletons show evidence of violence, sometimes approaching the intensity of warfare. Around 11,000 years ago, changes in rainfall patterns increased the flow of the Nile and also moistened the Sahara making it habitable during the monsoons. About 8,000 years ago people began living there throughout the year, digging wells and constructing round houses. They also set up large standing stones arranged in lines or circles, which perhaps had

astronomical or religious meaning. Several thousand years later, the climate changed again and much of the Sahara became too dry for humans to live in.

By 3100 B.C. a nation state ruled by kings known as *pharaohs* had emerged in Egypt. The largest Kushite pyramid discovered at a site called Nuri in Sudan measures about 95 feet (30 meters) a side. Greco-Roman ruins also dot the North African coast west of Egypt. The Tunisian site of Leptiminus, for example, was a Mediterranean port that came under Roman rule in the first Century A.D. During the 20th Century, archaeologists excavated three Roman cemeteries there. One was located in an area that produced a distinctive type of pottery, a major trade item in the Mediterranean region for five centuries.

1.3.2 Western Africa

Western Africa includes Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Benin, Burkina Faso, Togo, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia, and Senegal. The region stretches into the Sahara desert in the north, but its coastal area consists primarily of tropical rain forest. Around 2000 B.C., agricultural production increased and settled communities developed in the forest and savannah regions in the southern part ofwestern Africa. More than two dozen sites in Ghana and Ivory Coast have revealed large settlements, complete with a variety of stone tools, remains of sheep and goats, and pottery vessels and figurines. Around the same time, people in the area began to work metal. They may have learned techniques from cultures in Sudan and North Africa or developed them on their own. Discoveries in Niger show that people there worked copper as early as 2000 B.C. The earliest evidence of iron working, also in Niger, dates from about 1000 B.C. A few centuries later, Nigeria, Mali, Ghana, Chad, and Senegal were also producing iron. Western Africa developed large urban centres and complex social structures as a result ofcontact with Arabs from North Africa from 7th Century. Established by250 B.C., the towns entered a period of rapid growth some 500 years later. Elsewhere in western Africa large earthen mounds have been found containing burial chambers, human sacrifices, and various objects buried with the dead.

Oral tradition and a few written records, including accounts by Arab travellers provide insights into western African states after 1000 A.D. Ancient Ghana extended over much of present day Mauritania, Mali, and Senegal. Arabic sources refer to Ghana as a flourishing kingdom. One description of a royal burial has shed light on the ritual purpose of burial mounds at Koumbi Saleh, a site in Mauritania thought to have been Ghana's capital. Arabic and European sources describe the rich and powerful kingdom of Benin in Nigeria which reached its peak between the 13th and 17th centuries. Although slave trade was most devastating, the African towns, in the 19th Century had a population of 15,000 to 20,000 inhabitants. Excavations have revealed evidence of far-flung trade: European pottery, glass and beads, and fine ceramics from China and goods from India and Far East.

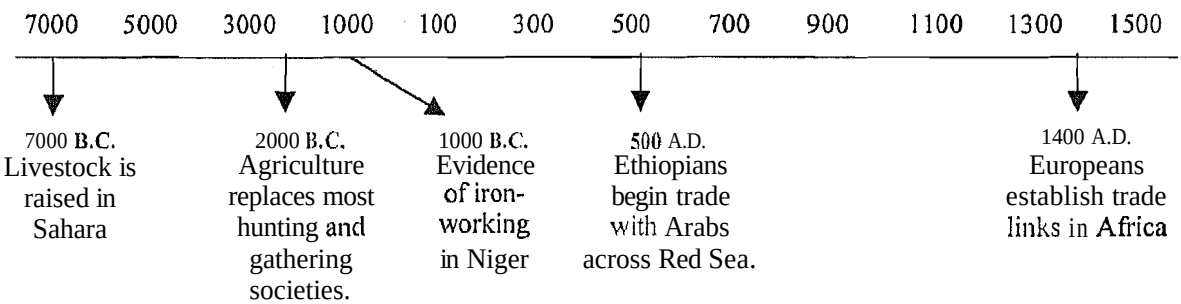
1.3.3 Eastern Africa

Eastern Africa includes Djibouti, Eritsea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda. Eastern Africa first became famous in the 1960s when members of the Leakey family made dramatic fossil discoveries. These findings cast new light on the earliest human origins in Africa. Theories that suggest an African origin for Homo sapiens have focused attention on the Middle Stone Age sites, such as Gadamotta near Lake Zwai in Ethiopia. The inhabitants of Gadamotta used obsidian—a glassy, volcanic rock—to manufacture tools more than 200,000 years ago. Other important sites in Tanzania contain stone tools more than 100,000 years old.

The herding of domestic livestock began in eastern Africa about 4,000 to 5,000 years ago, and many groups in the region still follow a pastoral way of life. The most common domesticated animals were cattle, sheep, and goats. The earliest indications of farming in the region come from Lalibela Cave in the highlands of Ethiopia, which contained traces of beans, barley, and chickpeas. Evidence of domesticated wheat, grapes, and lentils has been found at other Ethiopian sites. The first communities to use iron in eastern Africa were those from the shores of lake-Victoria between 2,500 and 1,700 years ago. Archaeologists have not yet identified the origins of these communities and evidence remains scarce. By about 500 A.D., farmers using iron tools believed to have occupied areas of eastern Africa with wooded and wet environments, especially the coastal hills and plains.

Early evidence of complex African societies comes from the coast of eastern Africa, where urban communities based on Indian Ocean trading networks were developed by 800 A.D. Some communities built large structures of timber, coral, and limestone and minted their own coins. There is evidence of Islam, the religion that originated in Arabia. The inhabitants of the urban centres at Zanzibar and elsewhere along the coast were the ancestors of the **Swahili** coastal traders who now live in east African towns such as Mombassa.

Time Line



1.3.4 Central and Southern Africa

Africa's central and southern regions include Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sao, Tome and Principe, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Some sites in southern Africa, such as Border Cave in Swaziland and Klasies River Mouth on the coast of South Africa contain skeletons of *homo sapiens* along with evidence of "modern" behaviour such as the development of family groups, food sharing, and the planned use of resources. These sites may be more than 100,000 years old. During the late Stone Age, the peoples of central and southern Africa were largely nomadic, moving with the seasons between mountainous areas and low-lying lands. They trapped and hunted animals, gathered a wide variety of plant foods, and used marine resources such as shellfish. They also carefully buried their dead, sometimes placing various objects in the grave, and painted complex images on the walls of rock shelters. In parts of central and southern Africa with fairly dependable summer rainfall, people adopted a system of mixed agriculture, combining grain farming with livestock raising. The villages were linked by the exchange of goods, such as food products, pottery, salt, and iron. They may also have interacted with hunter-gatherers who still followed the Stone Age way of life because stone tools have been found in some village sites.

The picture of central and southern Africa is clearer for the past thousand years or so. Domestic livestock, especially cattle, became very important throughout much of the region. Farming settlements spread into the highlands, where ruins of stone-built communities indicate the existence

of large and thriving populations. By the 12th Century A.D., complex states were emerging. Mapungabwe and other hilltop towns along the Limpopo River in Zimbabwe and Botswana were centres of such states. These societies were organised into different economic and social classes. Their rulers controlled both the local economy and connections with the outside world. These links occurred with traders from Arabia on the coast of the Indian Ocean, where African goods such as gold, ivory, and animal skins were exchanged for foreign items such as glass beads and cotton cloth. The Arab traders who linked southern Africa to the Indian Ocean limited their settlements to the coast. European colonists, beginning with the Portuguese in the early 1500s, ventured into the interior.

1.4 EARLY AFRICAN KINGDOMS

Kingdoms emerged in several African regions during the first millennium A.D. At first, so far as the slender evidence goes, they were little more than enlarged chiefdoms whose rulers or main representatives were at once senior lineage leaders and persons charged with ritual powers concerned with their people's general welfare. But ritual powers were buttressed by secular powers whose importance gradually increased under the influence ofpolitical and economic development. The west Asian mercenaries of Ayyubid Egypt were able, in the 13th Century, to establish the dynasty of Mamluk who ruled Egypt until the early 16th Century, often with an imposing success.

Of the large mediaeval empires the first was Ghana, formed in the western Sudan by Soninke chiefs long before the 8th Century, and reaching the height of its power in the 11th Century.

Rising to power in the western and central Sudan after Ghana, the still larger though shorter-lived empire of Mali likewise became dominant over the southern terminals of the trading network of the west. Its Mandinka Icings appear to have accepted Islam as early as the 11th Century, and several went on pilgrimages. But the triumph of Islam in Mali really came with the reign of its most famous ruler, Mansa Kankan Musa (1312-1337), who brought most of the western Sudan, the westerly portions of the central Sudan, and much of the southern Sahara under his general control; he made a pilgrimage in 1324 that was long remembered in Cairo for its splendour; and who, upon returning introduced Muslim patterns ofadministration into his court and government structure.

The word Guinea being of Berber origin saw the emergence of a large number of kingdoms at a point generally before about 1400 A.D. Notable among these were early kingdoms of the Yoruba (western Nigeria), of the Edo (mid-westernNigeria), of the Akan (central Ghana, and of the Wolof (Senegal). The kingdoms of the Yoruba appear to have evolved from a cultural synthesis, between existing indigenous peoples and intrusive migrants from the central Sudan at some time not long before 1000 A.D. They developed a rich cultural life, some outstanding skills in handicraft production, a characteristic but rare pattern of large urban settlements, and complex political systems. Generally fractious, except in religious loyalty and ethnic solidarity, many of these Yoruba kingdoms were eventually drawn together in the Oyo Empire (1650-1810).

Othertypes ofkingship, basically the same as in west Africa in having developed from the needs of ritual and then of political and military leadership, were formed in eastern, central and southern Africa some of them were deeply influenced by long-distance trade, such as the Shona and their neighbours of thecentral southern plateau, and, after the 16th Century, the Luba and Lunda and their neighbours of the southern Congolese-Angolan grasslands. Others were concerned mainly with the command; defence and distribution of cattle pasture and farming land; among these, for example, were the states of the southern Bantu in what are now the Transvaal, Natal, eastern Cape provinces of South Africa, and in neighbouring areas among others the states of the Swazi, Venda, Xhosa and Nguni (the last producing the Zulu empire early in the 19th Century). Others,

again, were stratified "conquest kingdoms" in which cattle owners ruled over cultivators on lines marked by ethnic differences. Though based on a steadily growing class or caste stratification, none of these kingdoms evolved the hierarchical rigidities of Europe or, indeed, of Asia, if only because there was no private ownership of land but only private ownership of its fruits and of cattle.

1.5 THE SPREAD OF ISLAM

The religion of Islam began in the Arabian city of Mecca around 610 A.D. with prophet Muhammad. After Muhammad's death in 632, Arab traders, settlers, and soldiers carried his teachings into Africa. By conversion and conquest, Islam spread across North Africa, into the eastern Horn of Africa, and even over the Sahara Desert into West Africa. The arrival of Islam had a major impact on the political and social development of those regions, and it remains a significant force in Africa today.

Islam arrived on the continent in the 7th and 8th centuries. It was brought to Egypt and North Afsica by conquering armies and to the East African coast by traders and merchants. West Africa did not encounter Islam until about the 8th Century, and it spread more slowly in the region than in the eastern part of the continent.

1.5.1 Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia

In 639, an Arab army of some 4,000 men invaded Egypt which was then under the control of the Byzantine Empire. Despite its small size, this Muslim force succeeded in driving the Byzantines out of Egypt and instal led their own ruler, known as Emir. Soon afterwards the Arabs began to push south along the Nile River, attacking the Christian kingdom of Nubia in what is now northern Sudan. However, Nubian resistance halted the Arab advance, and in 651, the Emir of Egypt signed a peace treaty with the Nubians.

Only in the 13th Century when the Nubian kingdoms had gone into decline, Islam began to take hold in Nubia. Arab Muslims from Egypt began to settle there and to intermarry with Nubians. Within a hundred years Islam had replaced Christianity as the main religion. However, Islam made little headway in southern Nubia, which remains mostly Christian to this day. Moreover, conflict between the Muslim north and the Christian south continues in the modern natibn of Sudan. Unlike the rest of Africa, Ethiopia had contact with the Arab world long before the rise of Islam. Thus, when the followers of Muhammad fled from persecution in Arabia in 615 and 616, they found a safe haven in the Ethiopian Christian kingdom of Abyssinia. Muslim merchants established settlements along the coast of the Red Sea that controlled trade routes to the interior. These Muslim settlements grew into small kingdoms ruled by sultans. In the 15th Century, a Muslim leader known as Ahmad Gran united the sultanates in war against Christian Ethiopia. However, the defeat of the Muslims in 1543 ended the expansion of their influence in Ethiopia.

Like Ethiopia, Somalia was home to Arab trading communities before the rise of Islam, and by the 10th Century, Muslim settlements dotted the coastline, including Mogadishu. Another wave of Muslim migration to Somalia began in the 12th Century. As the Somalis invaded south, they brought Islam with them as far as northeastern Kenya. Nomadic Somali herders spread Islam into the rural interior where it developed alongside traditional African religions and customs and blended with them. In the 20th Century, Somalia was home to a number of Sufi brotherhoods, mystical Islamic sects. One of the Sufi leaders, Muhammad Abdallah Hasan, emerged as a major opponent of the European colonisation of Somalia.

In 740, a new group of Muslims arrived on the shores of eastern Africa from southern Mesopotamia (now Iraq). Many of them settled in Arab towns on islands just off the coast. These island towns,

as well as those along the coast itself, became centres of Muslim influence, and over time the Muslims adopted the Swahili language and many local customs. A new East African Islamic culture developed in cities and towns from southern Somalia to northern Mozambique.

Islam's spread to the East African interior began only in the 18th and 19th centuries. At that time Muslims from the Arabian kingdom of Oman controlled much of the coast. Omani merchants who had established a trading empire based in Zanzibar, set up new trade routes to the interior, establishing settlements and caravan routes into Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.

By the late 19th Century, British and German colonial armies had taken over these regions. Colonial officials hired Muslims as civil servants, soldiers, and tax collectors, making centres of Muslim culture into colonial administrative centres. This situation tended to keep Muslim influence concentrated in the cities and towns.

1.5.2 West Africa

The earliest evidence of Muslim contact with West Africa dates back to about 9th Century in the kingdom of Kanem, in what is now Chad. Islam became the religion of Kanem in 1085, and in other kingdoms farther west, such as Gao in Mali around the same time. Although Muslims never gained the throne in the ancient West African empire of Ghana, they worked there as scribes and ministers. In the late 11th Century Muslims from North Africa and Spain helped bring about the collapse of the Ghanaian empire.

At that time Muslim traders also controlled the caravan routes that crossed the Sahara between northern and western Africa. These caravans carried gold, slaves, salt, cloth, and horses over hundreds of miles. To maintain control over trade and increase tax collection, local Muslim rulers conquered towns and villages along the routes. These towns eventually grew into large kingdoms such as Mali, Songhai, and Kanem.

In many of these kingdoms, Islam existed side-by-side with indigenous religions, Although this arrangement helped maintain order, it angered Sufi leaders who wanted the people to follow Muslim principles more strictly. Beginning around 18th Century, Sufi leaders in western Africa launched a series of *jihads*, or holy wars, against Muslim kingdoms that had not completely abandoned traditional religions. The jihad movement lasted almost 200 years and resulted in the founding of several strict Islamic states.

In the late 19th Century, French and British armies defeated the forces of the *jihadis*. From then on, as in East Africa, educated Muslims often cooperated with and served in the colonial governments. This led many Europeans to consider Muslims to be superior to other Africans. However, when some Islamic leaders opposed colonial rule, Europeans called Islam a superstitious, fanatic, and anti-Christian religion.

1.5.3 Islamic Influence in Africa

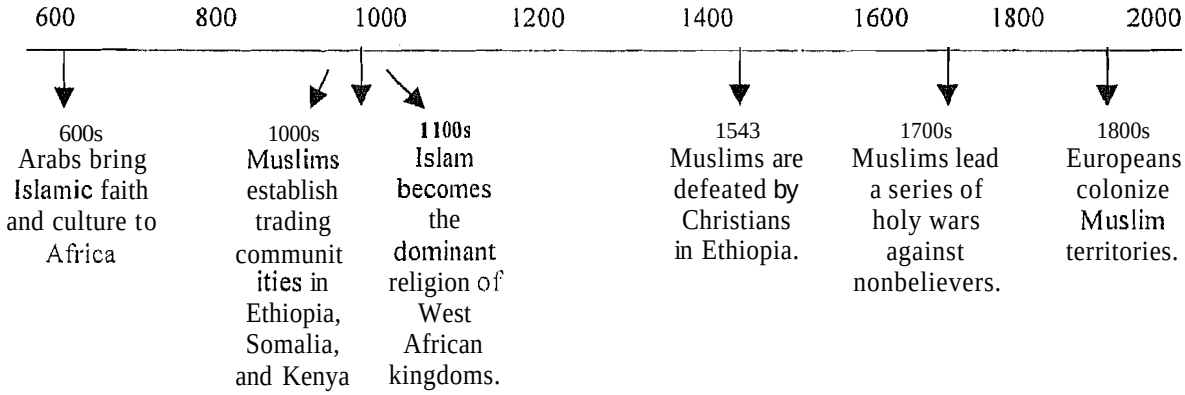
As a political and military force, Islam united large areas of Africa. However, as Muslim culture took root across the continent it also clashed with existing legal, religious, and social practices.

The introduction of Islamic law changed important aspects of the legal relationships of individuals in African society. Islamic law, or *Shari'a* is a written system; many indigenous legal traditions have come together, resulting in a blend of Islamic and indigenous practices. But where Islamic authorities have insisted on a strict interpretation of the written law, *Shari'a* has changed some of the basic elements of social relations.

In traditional African societies, kinship relations—relations of family and community—are basic to one's identity, rights, responsibilities, and role in society. Islamic law has redefined many of these

relations in ways that conflict with traditional practices. Islamic law has affected the role of women in African society as well. It generally gives men considerable power over property, and the right of women to make decisions about pregnancy and birth. Many traditional African societies allowed women more personal freedom.

Time Line



In recent years reformers have worked to modify parts of Islamic law to bring it more in line with other traditions.

1.6 EUROPEAN INFLUENCE AND SLAVE TRADE

Throughout history, slavery has been a feature of many societies in many parts of the world, including Africa. However, when the Europeans arrived, the slave trade became a commerce in which enslaved humans were bought, sold, or traded as goods or property. Millions of Africans suffered the brutality and cruelty of the slave trade. Though slavery was declared illegal in the early years of the 19th Century it took decades to stamp it out from the stranglehold of slave-trade merchants. The greatest number of people were taken from western and central Africa and shipped across the Atlantic Ocean to European colonies in the Americas. Slave traders had been active in other parts of Africa for centuries before tlie transatlantic slave trade began. The slave trade had long-tern1 effects including the establishment of African populations on other continents, the weakening of African societies that were robbed of many productive young people, and warfare among African states, some of which supplied captives to foreign slave traders.

1.6.1 Northern Africa

The largest part of the Northern African'slave trade involved camel caravans organised by the Berber and Arabic-speaking peoples of North Africa and the Sahara region. Some of these caravans crossed the Western Sahara, carrying enslaved Africans from what are now Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Ghana, and other parts of western Africa to settlements in Arab North Africa. Other caravans began farther east in Darfur in what is now Sudan. They carried captives frotn the southern Nile River valley, Ethiopia, and southern Sudan north to Egypt along a route called the Forty Day Road. Historians estimate that about four million captives crossed the Sahara and another two million crossed the Red Sea between the 8th and the 19th centuries. Most of these victims of the Saharan and Red Sea slave trades were settled in North Africa, Arabia, the lands around the Persian Gulf and southern Asia, Others, however, remained within tlie Sahara region, northern Sudan, or Ethiopia. Among tlie slaves were many women, destined to become domestic labourers or concubines. Enslaved men were acquired to work in agriculture, mining, shipping, fishing, and for other manual labour. In addition, some rulers in Egypt and elsewhere in North Africa used black male slaves as soldiers.

1.6.2 Western Africa

Beginning in tlie 15th Century, European powers established colonies first on islands in the Atlantic Ocean, later in the Americas, and finally in Africa, European traders were familiar with western Africa as a source of goods such as gold, copper, pepper and had even acquired some black slaves there. With the colonisation of the Americas, the trickle of black slaves grew into a flood, and a slave trade developed that involved both Africans and Europeans. African slaves became part of a highly profitable commercial network that is often called the triangle trade. On the first leg of the triangle, ships carried European manufactured goods such as cloth and cheap guns to Africa to be exchanged for slaves. The second leg of the triangle known as tlie Middle Passage, took the enslaved Africans to the Americas. The third leg of the trade carried sugar, rum, tobacco, and other plantation crops to Europe. The Middle Passage was a fearful ordeal for captive Africans. The transatlantic slave trade lasted from the 1440s to the 1860s and was at its peak from 1700 to 1850. At least 13 million people were shipped from Africa to the Americas as slaves. Most of them were between 15 and 30 years old. About two thirds of the captives were male — slaveholders in the Americas preferred men for field labour. Of the 13 million Africans forced to make the journey* to the Americas, a great majority came from the coastal region of western Africa between Senegal and Cameroon. Many captives were taken from the lands between the Volta River in Ghana and the Niger River in Nigeria that Europeans called that region the Slave Coast.

The Portuguese began exporting slaves from central Africa in the 15th Century, when they established sugar plantations on the island of Sao Tome off the western coast of Africa. By the 1560s the Portuguese had brought 30,000 slaves to the island, mostly from Angola. In the century that followed, they developed a large-scale slave trade south of the Congo River aided by bands of young African warriors who conducted raids to capture slaves. By the 17th Century, Brazil had replaced Sao Tome as the principal market for Portuguese slave traders. The vast sugar plantations of Brazil required ever-larger numbers of African slaves, and the discovery of golcl and diamonds in Brazil in the 18th Century increased the demand for labour even more. In the late 17th Century, English, French, and Dutch slavers also began operating along the Atlantic coast of central Africa, shipping enslaved people primarily to sugar plantations in the West Indies.

The first evidence of a significant slave trade in tlie region dates from after the rise of Islam in the 7th Century A.D. The Abbasid Caliphate that formed in what is now Iraq and Iran imported African slaves to use as soldiers, farm labourers, and domestic workers. Muslim traders also sent Africans farther east, to Indonesia and China. Beginning in the late 17th Century, the state of Oman on the Arabian coast expanded its cultivation of date palms and also started plantations along the coast of Kenya. In the early 18th Century, tlie French established Caribbean style sugar plantations on the Indian Ocean islands of Mauritius and Reunion. These developments further created a growing demand for slave labour. To meet the demand, new slave markets arose *in* eastern Africa. The largest were in the southern part of the coast, but by the 19th Century virtually every port on the eastern coast was involved in the slave trade to some degree. Most victims of the eastern African slave trade came from Mozambique, Tanzania, and the region around Lake Malawi, eastern Congo, and Madagascar. Some of those who.passed through tlie coastal slave markets were sent overseas or the off-shore islands; others went to Arab-owned plantations in Zanzibar, Kenya, and southern Somalia. From the firsthalf of the 18th Century, slave traders from Brazil also appeared on the slave markets of eastern Africa, seeking labour for Brazil's booming plantation economy. The African rulers of Madagascar and Dutch settlers in South Africa also imported slaves from eastern Africa. This trade in slaves in this region reached its height between 1770 and 1870, with exports perhaps reaching 30,000 people a year.

1.6.3 The End of the Slave Trade

Abolition—the movement to end slavery — began to attract support among Europeans in the late 18th Century, largely because of moral outrage against slavery. The slave trade was eventually stamped out partly for religious or moral reasons and partly for economic ones. Four hundred years ofviolent slave trading, however, had left deep marks on the African population. Africans such as Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugoano, former slaves from western Africa who lived in England, spoke and wrote about the cruelties of the slave trade and campaigned against it. Other Africans performed the same role in France and the Americas. In 1805, Denmark became the first country to make it illegal for its citizens to participate in the slave trade. Great Britain followed two years later. The United States banned slave trade in 1808, followed by the Netherlands in 1814 and France in 1817. Great Britain abolished the institution ofslavery and freed all slaves in 1834. By the time Brazil ended slavery in 1888, the institution had been outlawed throughout the Western world. Meanwhile, within the Ottoman Empire the period from the 1830s to the 1880s was a time of reform when upper class, educated people began questioning slavery on moral grounds. During that time Ottoman rulers also came under increasing pressure from Great Britain and other European nations to abolish slavery. Britain took steps to cut off the trade routes that supplied the Ottoman Empire with slaves. As a result, the Ottomans passed a series of laws between 1847 and 1908 ending the trade in both African arid white slaves and officially abolishing slavery.

The trade in African slaves brought about the largest forced movement of people in history. It established the basis for black population in the Caribbean and in North and South America, disrupted social and political life in Africa and opened the door for European colonisation of the continent. The slave trade encouraged strong states to raid weaker states for slaves. As a result, many African societies were torn by organised slave wars and general banditry. Successful slave raiding and trading societies formed new states that were dominated by military groups and were constantly at war with their neighbours.

Although the abolition movement grew out of the sincere belief that slavery was wrong, it also provided Europeans with a reason to invade and conquer the African continent. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the European powers established firm control over most of Africa. Together with the spread of Christianity, their rule undermined slavery and other servile institutions. These institution's did not disappear overnight. In some regions reform was gradual, and slavery and pawnship died out slowly. Colonial administrations themselves established new servile institutions, such as forced labour for road-building projects or plantations. They also introduced taxation, which often required Africans to take whatever wage labour they could find in order to pay their taxes. As a result, many Africans laboured in conditions not very different from servitude. In addition, local African rulers who cooperated with the new colonial administrations usually were allowed to keep some degree of power over those who liad been slaves or pawns. Finally, although Europeans made the buying and selling of slaves illegal, the laws were not always easy to enforce. Traffic in slaves continued for years in parts of Africa. In some areas it survived even after the colonies gained independence in tlie mid-1900s.

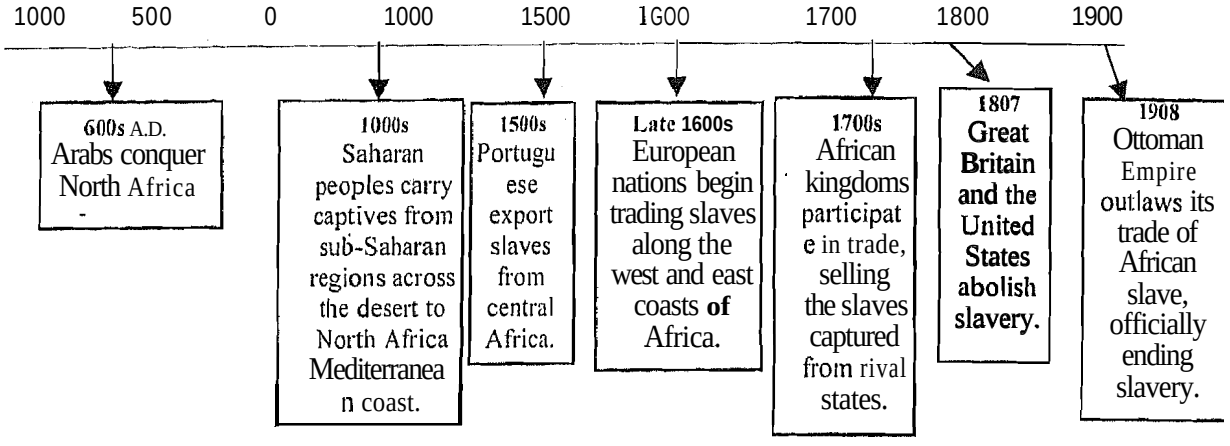
1.6.4 Characteristics of African Slavery

People in Africa acquired slavesfor reasons other than economic usefulness. Ownership of a large number of slaves, for example, was a sign of power and importance.

African slavery was closely related to issues of kinship, the network of extended family relationship that forms the primary social unit in most African cultures. The main characteristics of Western slavery were the loss of freedom. In African societies, however, people placed a very high value on belongingto a kinship group. For them slavery also involved the loss of kinfolk. Newly acquired

slaves in Africa possessed none of the rights or benefitsof kinship, but in time they or their descendants could receive some of those rights arid benefits, as they gradually became part of the master's kinship group.

Time Line



1.7 COLONIALISM AND SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA

Abolition and the Christian reform movement gave Europeans a strong interest in the internal affairs of African states. Eventually the mission to stamp out slavery became, in the eyes of many Europeans, a justification for bringing African territories under their control. From the late 19th Century, they began dividing the continent into their colonies.

Colonialism, which refers to tlie establishment of political and economic control by one state over another, had an enormous impact on Africa. Between the 15th and 19th centuries, Europeans began to take an interest in Africa, mainly the coastal regions. Sailing along the shores of the continent they established trading posts and engaged in commerce with local peoples. They made little attempt to explore the interior. During this period, Europeans had very little influence in Africa. From tlie mid-17th to 19th centuries, Europeans became more involved in the continent and engaged in explorations of the interioc Impressed by the continent's abundant natural resources, Europeans sought to exploit the potential wealth. To achieve this goal, they attempted to suppress African peoples and force them to accept foreign rule. In the 1870 rival European nations raced to colonise as much African territory as possible. By the late 1880s, they had divided up most of the continent among themselves.

1.7.1 Patterns of European Expansion

Traders established the first European settlements in Africa. By the late 1870s, Africa had begun to attract other kinds of Europeans: adventurers and entrepreneurs. Many of these individuals were interested only in obtaining riches or in recreating European culture in Africa. They urged their governments to establish colonies that would serve as sources of raw materials and as markets for European goods.

The desire to establish colonies and obtain raw materials led to the so-called "scramble" for Africa. Belgium, France, Great Britain, and Portugal struggled to claim territory and establish colonial outposts in Africa. They tried to get African rulers to sign treaties that would cede control of land.

Between 1884 and 1885, representatives From several European nations met in Berlin to discuss ways to avoid conflict among themselves over the competition for African colonies. The European

powers agreed on a set of rilles for annexing territories in that continent. They signed various treaties with each other that resulted in the partitioning or division of Africa into colonies with clearly defined borders.

As the pace of European imperialism increased, many African peoples became very concerned. Fear of Europeans seizure of all the land led to a number of armed conflicts. Some of these developed into full-scale wars as well-equipped armies from Europe invaded Africa to secure territorial claims. By 1919, Europeans had taken over the entire continent except for Ethiopia and Liberia. European imperialism now consolidated itself by establishing colon'ial administrations that would maintain order and provide economic benefits for the governing nations.

1.7.2 The 'Scramble" for Africa

The competition for territory in Africa was truly a "scramble," as explorers, traders, and adventurers fanned out across the continent signing treaties with local rulers. Many people feared that this haphazard approach would create conflicting claims. In November 1884, German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck called a meeting in Berlin to discuss colonisation in Africa. Representatives from 14 countries, including the United States, the Ottoman Empire, and most European nations, attended. They agreed to guarantee free trade and the neutrality of the "Congo Free State" established by the Belgian King Leopold. The guidelines they established influenced the way in which European nations carved up Africa.

The colonial economy was perhaps the most important aspect of European policy in Africa, Before the 19th Century, Africa had developed a system of local and foreign trading networks, and Africans and Europeans were fairly equal trading partners. This situation changed as Europeans took steps to control trade and natural resources in Africa.

The colonial powers flooded Africa with European goods, undermining many African industries because they could not compete. Europeans also encouraged the growth of cash crops in Africa, each colony specialising in a different crop. Tlie shift to cash crops destroyed many traditional forms of agriculture. In some colonies white farmers received special treatment, They claimed the best land, forcing Africans out to work less desirable plots. Some colonial governments imposed taxes on Africans. Many Africans had to abandon their land and work for wages on white owned farms and in mines to pay the taxes.

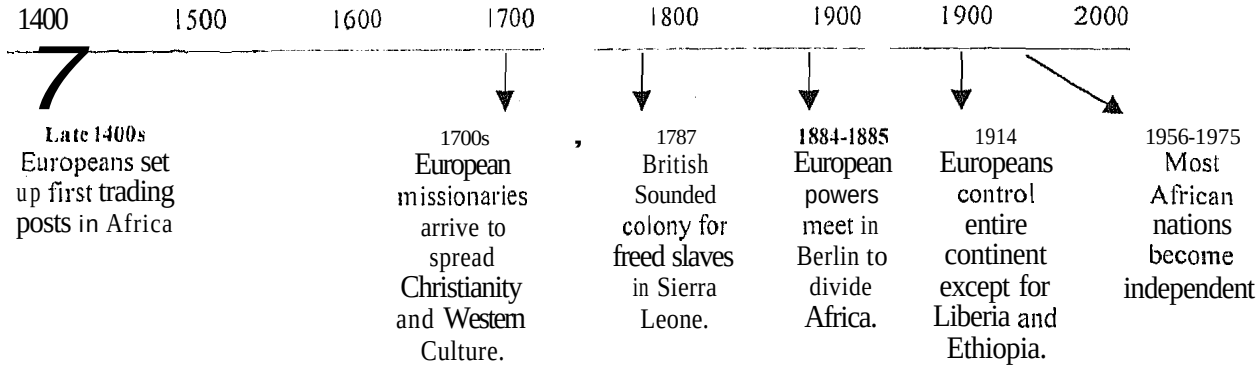
1.7.3 Impact of Colonialism on African Societies

Colonial governments brought roads, railroads, ports, new technology, and other benefits to Africa. However, their policies also damaged traditional economies and dramatically changed patterns of land ownership and labour. Although the colonial system pravidecl opportunities such as education, jobs, and new markets for goods but it also left many people poor and landless. Besides, tlie emphasis on cash crops for export made African societies dependent on foreign nations. Little was done to develop trade between colonies. As a result, many African nations still trade more with overseas countries than with neighbouring states.

Colonial rule disrupted the traditional political and social institutions that had developed in Africa over centuries. As Europeans carved out empires, they destroyed existing kingdoms and split up or combined many ethnic groups. The colonies they created became African nations consistitig of diverse groups with little in common with their fellow citizens. Furthermore. European powers destroyed much of the political and social control of traditional African chiefs and rulers. They failed, however, to establish lasting replacements for these authorities. Finally, European colonialism introduced Africans lo various aspects of Western culture. African schools and universities are

based on European systems of education and religion. But other aspects of Western culture have not taken root as firmly.

Time Line



1.8 MODERN AFRICA

About 50 African states became independent between 1957 and 1993. The late 1960s brought much new investment in the exploitation of raw materials and in infrastructure. All the newly independent African states have to some extent regain command of their own history. This process continues, and its influence may be seen in many ways both positiveand negative: in tlie effort to achieve new institutional stabilities arid to fashion more effective indigenous structure of political and economic life, or negatively, in the many upheavals, sudden changes of government, and instability of tlie past few years. It has been said, for example, that the decade of the 1960s was a "time of disillusionment" with the high hopes of independence: no less true is the fact that the 1960s was also a time of valuable and often necessary experiment. The legacy of inadequate or outmoded structures continues to weigh heavily on large number of the new countries, giving rise to economic difficulties as well as to political instability and to occasional disasters. In 1973-75 was a general inability to meet the challenge of a severe drought in northeastern Africa and generally in tlie Sahel region, lying between the southern fringes of the Sahara Desert and the wooded country north of the West African forest belt. In this respect it was significant that the only country and regime which proved capable of meeting this drought disaster with efficiency and honesty was Somalia, which was also the only country and regime among those affected by drought, concerned with the revolutionary development of new socio-economic structures. In tlie 1980s, several contrary trends making for strife or for peace were visible. Throughout southern and much of central Africa the long-drawn tensions between movements and governments of majority nationalism reached a dangerous polarisation. Another development was the increasing collaboration between the leaders of Tanzania, Botswana and Zambia, and the new leaders of Mozambique and Angola.

Another centre of conflict developed in the Horn of Africa after the overthrow of the Ethiopian emperor in 1974. An emergent Ethiopian regime called for far-reaching structural changes in Ethiopian society, the most important being a radical land reform. In 1976-77, an attempt by the Western Somali Liberation Front (in Ogaden) to achieve self-determination by force of arms received military support from tlie neighbouring Republic of Somalia. This was initially successful but was repulsed by the Ethiopian armed forces after their reinforcement with Soviet weaponry (including tanks and aircraft) and Cuban troops. Etliiopian control was formally restored, but guerrilla warfare continued. At the same time, the Ethiopian armed forces mounted major offensives to rescue Eritrea from its independence movements, the most important of which, was the Eritrean People's

Liberation Front (EPLF). These offensives renewed Ethiopian military control of important towns in Eritrea in late 1978, but by the middle of 1979 the Eritreans had once again captured positions of strength in rural areas and the war continued.

In West Africa, in contrast, a multi-state treaty of economic co-operation in 1975 signalled a new trend towards organic integration. Signed in Lagos, this treaty established the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS). Fifteen governments agreed to move "by stage" towards the elimination of customs duties between members, the removal of internal restrictions on trade, and the eventual fixing of a common tariff and commercial policy towards non-members. The founding states of ECOWAS were Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria. Ivory Coast, Mali, Upper Volta, Ghana, Togo, Benin (ex-Dahomey), and Niger.

1.9 SUMMARY

This unit traces the evolution and political and social development of the African continent from ancient to the modern times giving brief descriptions of the northern, western, eastern, and the central and southern regions of Africa. While several kingdoms emerged in Africa during the first millennium A.D., the religion of Islam began in tlie Arabian city of Mecca around 610 A.D. through the work of Prophet Muhammad. Islam made a significant impact on the political and social development in Africa. As a political and military force it united large areas of Africa. Efforts are still afoot to adapt Islamic laws in order to bring its legal, religious and social mores in line with traditional practices.

Africa also suffered the brutality of the slave trade. The slave trade had long-term effects including the establishment of African populations on other continents and weakening of African societies. The movement to end slavery attracted support among Europeans in the late 18th Century because of moral outrage. The mission to eliminate slavery was used by the European nations, as an excuse to bring African territories under their control, which eventually led to the division of the continent into colonies.

After the Second World War, tlie pace of political change in Africa accelerated. European powers found it difficult to deny self-determination to their colonial subjects. Added to that, was the financial strain, which made it difficult to maintain colonial empires. Growth of independence movements and political parties established important traditions of democracy and many African states achieved independence between 1957 and 1993.

1.10 EXERCISES

1) Trace the origins and spread of Islam in Africa.

2) What were the reasons leading to the establishment of slavery and subsequently to its abolishment?

3) Give a brief account of colonialism and the scramble for Africa.