

Swahili Coast:

During the medieval period, a particular section of Africa rose to great importance: the Swahili Coast. “Swahili” is the name of the language spoken even today by this region’s inhabitants. “Coast” refers the region’s location along Africa’s eastern coast on the shores of the Indian Ocean.

By about 800 C.E. Africans from the Swahili Coast had begun trading with Arabs and Persians who sailed from the Middle East across the Indian Ocean. Long before Europeans had begun crossing the Atlantic on their ships (like Christopher Columbus), Africans were trading for precious goods across the Indian Ocean with Middle Eastern traders. The Swahili people traded ivory, gold, and slaves for spices and other goods from the Middle East. The Swahili people created elaborate, complex trade routes that went from the coast to the interiors of some of Africa’s jungles.



Trade had profound effect on the Swahili people. The language itself is a mixture of Bantu (a type of African language) and Arabic (the major language spoken in the Middle East). Many Middle Easterners settled in Africa along the Swahili Coast. The Swahili people used their new wealth to build beautiful cities along Africa’s eastern coast. The built structures out of coral, a beautiful and rare type of rock found underwater.



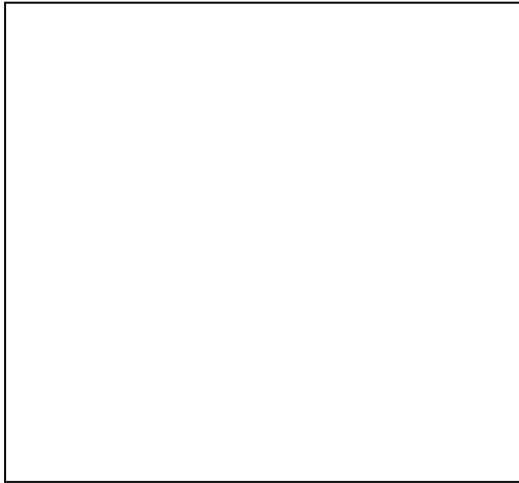
Directions: Answer each of the questions below in a complete sentence.

1. Which groups of people traded with Africans who lived along the Swahili coast? _____

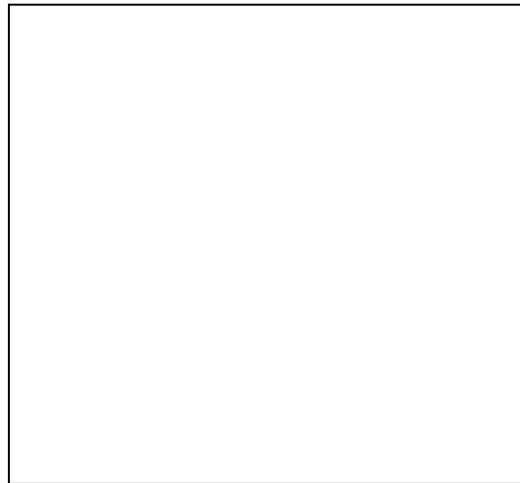
2. What kinds of goods were traded along the Swahili coast? _____

3. Explain how the Swahili *language* developed. _____

Create an illustration in each box that goes along with the description below each box.



An Arab ship landing along
the Swahili Coast



One of the beautiful, ancient
cities on the Swahili coast

Above and Beyond: Would you have preferred to live in Muslim Spain or along the Swahili coast? Explain your answer in the space below.