



# **Societies, Religion, and History: Central-East Tanzanians and the World They Created, c. 200 BCE to 1800 CE (Gutenberg-e)**

*Rhonda M. Gonzales*

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Scholars often equate a Swahili presence with the moment history began on the Tanzanian central coast. In this book, Rhonda M. Gonzales proposes an altogether different and more comprehensive narrative.

*Societies, Religion, and History* is the first study to apply historical linguistic methods to the Bantu-speaking peoples of the coastal and interior regions of central east Tanzania, individuals and communities who later became part of the Swahili world. The Seuta and Ruvu Bantu societies were entrenched along the coast and interior of Tanzania for centuries before Swahili-speaking populations expanded their towns and settlements southward along the East African coastline.

Making use of historical linguistics, the findings of cutting-edge archaeologists, ethnographic sources, and her own extensive field research, Gonzales unfolds a historical panorama of thriving societies engaged in vibrant cross-cultural exchange and prosperous regional and transoceanic networks. According to Gonzales, scholars need to integrate these communities into their stories if they are to compose a full and satisfying history of central eastern Tanzania. Recovering this history requires close attention to the happenings of the interior, often misleadingly referred to—and treated—as hinterland. Toward that end, Gonzales combines a challenging range of historical resources to build a long-term history of the social, cultural, and religious beliefs and practices of the region as they have developed over the past 2,000 years.

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