



*KONGO MOSQUE, Diani Beach, South Coast  
maintained by the National Museums of Kenya and still in use today*

## **COASTAL RESOURCES AND THEIR USE**

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### **HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

The Kenya coast is rich in historical and archaeological sites, a testament to its long and full history depicting centuries of Swahili culture. Various remnants of mosques and other buildings reflect different ensembles of Islamic architecture using lime, coral stone and timber. Whatever the site, the historical remains may comprise of mosques, groups of tombs located inside or outside city walls, mounds and house walls representing the old city houses. Following are brief descriptions of the main archaeological sites of significance along the Kenya Coast based on various reports of the National Museums of Kenya.

Lamu, one of the most spectacular areas, was mentioned in the writings of Claudius Ptolemaeus in the second century AD, by Masudi in the 10th Century, Ibin Battuta in the 14th Century and later by Abu Mahasin. Among the historical remains in the area are Fort Lamu, Mkomani and Hidabu, many tombs, ruined houses, as well as good collections in the Lamu Museum. There are also many buildings with old traditional carved wooden doors and a lot of moulded plaster work, some dating back to the 18th Century.

Pate is the largest site on the coast. It has eight ruined mosques, numerous house ruins and tombs. This is one of the earliest sites on the Coast, along with Manda and Shanga and it has a high tourist potential.

## Coastal Resources and Their Use

Gedi, in Mida area, is a 15th Century Arab town and has been declared a national monument. A great mosque, six minor mosques, numerous large houses, pillar tombs, stone tombs and the town walls are some of the most distinctive attributes of this magnificent site. Further south is Jumba La Mtwana, another national monument with four mosques, numerous houses and some tombs as well as the Home of the Slave-Master.

Another national monument is Takwa. This site has a very high archaeological potential, well above average because of the number of surviving structures. These include a fine Friday Mosque and 148 other coral-built structures, including houses, the town wall with gatehouses, and a pillar tomb with an interesting inscription.

Ungwana in the central sector has eight mosques including an old and new Jamia and a mosque of the Domed Mihrab. There are also numerous houses and tombs and the old town wall. Probably, Ungwana is one of the sites with the greatest potential for development for tourism.



*Figure 32 : The Palace, Gede, just south of Malindi, 15th century*

The ruins at Malindi include the Jemadari Mosque in the north, the pillar tombs, an old Portuguese chapel, the Da Gama Cross (at the southern end of Malindi Harbour given to the Shirazi Sheikh of Malindi in gratitude for the warm reception received) and the South Mosque.

The Mombasa area has many interesting sites and monuments. These include a large part of Mombasa Old Town, Fort Jesus (built by the Portuguese in the 15th Century), Fort St Joseph, the Mbaraki pillar, the Mazrui Cemetery, the redoubts at the present-day golf course, the ruins at Allidina Visram school and other minor remains of great interest to tourists. There are also numerous other sites of relatively low tourist potential but of significant architectural merit.

At Siyu, the Siyu Fort, the old town including four mosques, many ruined houses and tombs are significant. This town was probably founded much earlier than archaeologists have been able to prove to date.

The Mwana remains include a fine domed mosque, a crumbling Friday Mosque, a small mosque with carved bosses, and at least one other mosque. There are also numerous houses spread over a large area and nearby there is a group of fine tombs.

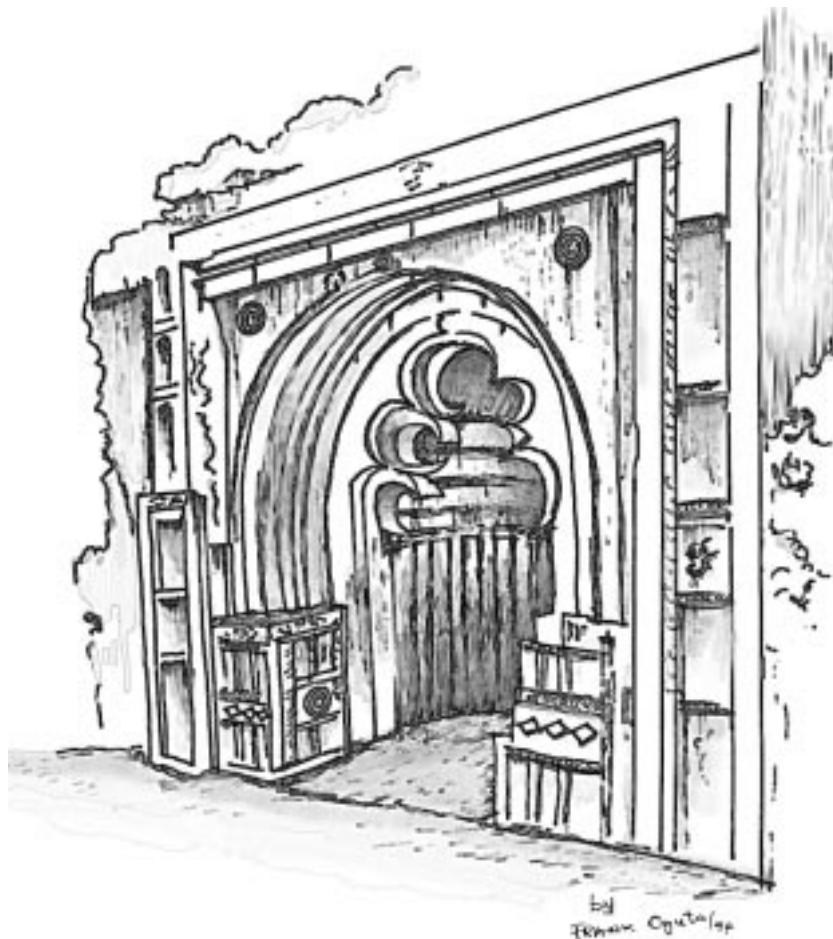


Figure 33 : Mosque of Bwana Bakari, Pate town, Pate Island (Lamu Archipelago), dates to the 17th century

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There are many more sites all along the Coast. Some of the most exciting ones include Ishakani with two mosques and various tombs of outstanding architecture at the main site, as well as two outlying tomb groups with some of the finest funerary architecture on the East African coast. Mtwapa has a large Friday Mosque, tombs, and the remains of over sixty houses, often well-preserved with fine architectural details. Mwana Mchama has several houses, one of which has fine doorways and niches of cut coral and a mosque with large abutting tomb. Omwe has two very ruined mosques, and numerous monumental tombs. Shanga, with its three mosques, many ruined houses and many tombs, has great archaeological potential.



*Figure 34 : An example of the intricate carving found on entrance doors to some buildings in Mombasa Old Town.*