

ESMOND BRADLEY MARTIN begins a survey of Kenya's Indian Ocean shore...

HISTORIC COAST

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From VANGA to MOMBASA

WHEN an overseas visitor thinks of the Kenya coast, he thinks in terms of bright sunny days, tall swaying palm trees, and the waves of the Indian Ocean slowly breaking onto the white sands of uninhabited beaches.

Although these images certainly do characterise the Kenya coast, and thus create one of the major tourist regions in Africa, the area—and the south coast in particular—has many other attractions to offer the casual visitor.

What makes the Kenya coast so unusual is that the indigenous culture, which I will call Swahili culture here, is still practised in much the same way as hundreds of years ago. Today it is a common sight to see men wearing long, flowing, white robes called *kanzus* and small embroidered caps (*kofias*) and their women in traditional black cloaks called *buibuis* which partly cover their faces as well as their limbs from curious men admirers.

The food that many of the coastal people eat is similar to the food that the famous historian Ibn Battuta tasted when he was visiting the coast more than 600 years ago: deliciously spiced stews made of chicken, fish, vegetables and meat cooked in a sauce of coconut milk with bananas and served with rice.

The typical Swahili house of mud and coral chips with a palm thatch roof, originated hundreds of years ago and is still the most common type of house found on the Kenya coast.

There are many other examples of the traditional culture still flourishing today, but suffice to say that the visitor will find the coast culture entirely different from that of inland.

This Swahili culture developed over a thousand years ago from the mixture of local Bantu Africans and Arab colonisers. A prototype of the Swahili language, the most common language of the coast today and the official language of Tanzania, soon developed.

From the Ninth Century to the end of the Fifteenth, Arabs from Arabia, Yemen, Oman, and the Persian Gulf continued to migrate here along with Indonesians, Persians and Indians. The urban communities, like the towns of Lamu, Malindi and Mombasa, were Moslem and the religious and secular leaders spoke Arabic as well as some form of Swahili.

With the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498, new influences and food crops were introduced, but although the Portuguese occupied parts of the coast on and off for about 200 years, Christianity made few inroads. With the final expulsion of the Portuguese in 1729, it was not until the late Nineteenth Century that Europeans once again occupied the Kenya coast.

During the Nineteenth Century many more Indians, both Moslem and Hindu, arrived as did Omani Arabs, Hadrami Arabs and Baluchis, all of whom brought with them their particular customs and many material possessions.

From 1895 to 1963 the British Government, in the name of the Sultan of Zanzibar, administered the Kenya coast and by 1963 there were as many as 7,000 Europeans living here. During the British period the major coastal towns were modernised and many new technological inventions and new foods were introduced.



But probably one of the biggest changes during the Twentieth Century was the arrival of thousands of up-country Africans who were not Moslems. The effect was that by around 1955, Mombasa for the first time in its history had more Christians than Moslems.

Remembering what Swahili culture is composed of, for

that will help to explain why such diverse cultural phenomena as house types and food are the same from Kismayu in Somalia to southern Tanzania for example, let us now look at what attractions the south coast of Kenya has to offer the visitor.

We start at Vanga, the town on the Kenya-Tanzania border,

and proceed northwards to Mombasa.

Vanga is not one of the oldest towns on the coast, but is nevertheless an interesting place to visit. It was founded as a town around 1800 and later in the century the region was developed by the Sultans of Zanzibar who encouraged the production of grains.

During the second half of the Nineteenth Century, Vanga developed into one of the largest towns on the coast. In the 1890s it was the fourth most important port, the major exports being rubber, mangrove poles, ivory, and grains.

However, because of the existence of the nearby Uмба river, mosquitoes and other insects bred in great numbers, especially during the rains in May and November. Consequently, the British administrators never used Vanga as their administrative headquarters, but instead chose the more salubrious Shimoni, a nearby village considerably smaller in size; eventually, the British administration moved the district headquarters away from the coast entirely and went up into the cooler Shimba Hills to Kwale. As a result of this move and several sackings of the town by rebels, Vanga declined after 1895.

Today Vanga is only about one-third the size it was a hundred years ago, with a present population of 900. Most of the people are Moslem Digos, but there are also small numbers of Bajuns, Segejus, Shirazis and Bohora Indians,

Picture by FRANZ HARTMANN

the latter owning the largest shops in town.

The economy is based upon the cutting of mangrove poles (4,765 scores were cut in 1970, which is far greater than any other single area in Kwale District), fishing and farming.

In 1970, there were 67 fishing craft, mostly small dugout canoes and about 200 fishermen. The fish are purchased directly from the fishermen by the government at Shs. 1/80 a kilo and in turn an Arab buys the fish from the government and ships them 75 miles to Mombasa for sale.

In 1968, 185 tons of fish were caught worth £8,253 to the Vanga fishermen. The biggest money-maker, though, is agriculture which is based on 700 acres of irrigated land on the banks of the Uмба river. Rice is the main crop, almost all of which is consumed locally. Other cash crops are bananas, maize, cassava, and products from the coconut palm.

Most of the typical coast fishing craft are to be seen at the Vanga waterfront. Small dugouts called *horis* are mostly imported from India and are made out of mango wood. The most unusual craft is the *ngalawa*, a double outrigger canoe; this probably originated in Malaya and then was brought to Madagascar and the Comoros hundreds of years ago; from there it was introduced into Kenya.

The *ngalawa* used to be much more common in the past, but it is a cumbersome

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fishing craft and there are only 95 remaining on the entire Kenya coast.

To the immediate west of the boatyard on the northern part of the town's beach is a pillar tomb. This is made out of coral with an almost triangular top. It is not old, dating back only to the Nineteenth Century.

Finally, on returning to the centre of Vanga on the seafront, the visitor will see a large white building with part of the roof collapsed. This house is said to have been built by Sultan Barghash of Zanzibar (1870-1888) and therefore would be one of the oldest buildings in Vanga.

Some miles northward is the more recent town of Shimoni which was probably founded around 1865. It is of little interest except for the minor dhow trade it has with the various ports of Zanzibar, Tanga and Dar es Salaam, and even that has declined from 163 ships a year in 1958 to only 59 in 1969.

The town of Wasini on the island of Wasin directly across from Shimoni is, however, of great interest. If one wanted to know what a coastal town was like in the Nineteenth Century, the best place to visit on the south coast would be Wasini which has "progressed" only slightly over the past hundred years.

The famous explorer Sir Richard Burton visited it in 1857 and found "the climate... infamous for breeding fever... the air being poisoned by cowries festering under a tropical sun, and by two large graveyards—here also, as at Zanzibar, the abodes of the dead are built amongst the habitations of the living".

Burton also found the people to be most unattractive in their manners. Fortunately, these "peculiarities" have changed: there is no longer an all-encompassing smell of cowries or graveyards, and I found the people to be most polite. Today, as in Richard Burton's time, the drinking water is saline and little agriculture is practised because the soils are very thin. This has limited the growth of Wasini town to about 500 people, although Wasini is far older than either Vanga or Shimoni. It dates back to at least 1748 because one of the four mosques still in use has that date on its *qibla*.

The main economic activity of Wasini is fishing and there are 23 fishing craft. If one is lucky, one can see the octopus being put to dry in the sun.

The town is attractively situated overlooking the sea with Shimoni and the Shimba Hills in the background. With permission, men visitors may enter the old mosques, and on the seafront near the big baobab tree is a tomb with several Nineteenth Century Chinese bowls attached and also a pillar tomb. Walking around Wasini the visitor will soon realize how difficult it is to make much of a living here and how the total atmosphere of Wasini reflects an earlier era.

For a complete change, a

morning or late afternoon spent in the Shimba Hills National Reserve is an enjoyable experience. The Shimba Hills comprise a dissected plateau rising fairly steeply from 400 feet on the coastal plain to 1,500 feet in the Pengo and Marere Hills.

The Shimba Hills were first demarcated as a forest area in 1903, and in 1947, 1,000 acres were planted with *mvule* trees. Sixteen years later an agreement was made by which the Forest Department and the Game Department would jointly manage the area. The unfortunate aspect of this agreement is that within the last year or so the Forest Department has planted many acres of non-indigenous trees such as the *Araucaria cunninghamii* and the *Casuarina equisetifolia* which have somewhat spoiled the landscape. Not only are there large areas planted with only one species of trees, which looks unnatural but also those trees planted are entirely different in appearance from the indigenous ones.

Other parts of the Shimba Hills, however, are still extremely attractive with rolling hills, open grasslands, and natural forests. The two most intriguing places to visit are the Makadara forest which is full of tall, indigenous trees, mosses, ferns, and wild orchids, and Giriama Point which has a spectacular view of the coastal plain and the Indian Ocean.

But the main reason to come to the Shimba Hills is to see the roan antelope and the majestic sable. Whether the roan were indigenous to the area during the past hundred years or so is debatable but a translocation exercise sponsored by the East African Wild Life Society may ensure the survival of the species in Kenya at the Shimba Hills sanctuary.

The same may also be true for the sable, a large antelope weighing up to 550 pounds with horns curving backwards measuring up to 40 inches. The sable also exists in small numbers in Kilifi District, but because of the increase in the number of farms and ranches, it will become more and more difficult to see there.

What is especially pleasant about the Shimba Hills National Reserve is the almost total absence of vehicles and people. Unlike Nairobi National Park which had 143,974 visitors from July 1970 to June 1971, the Shimba Hills had only 3,745 during the same period, in spite of being just twenty-five miles from the second largest city in Kenya.

Continuing north on the main road to Mombasa just a few miles south of Gazi is the Gazi Coconut Estate, 1,000 acres in size and employing 300 people. This is one of the largest single coconut estates on the entire coast, which produces four different products: Coir (the fibre from the coconut) which is mostly exported to Israel for the making of bags and carpets; crushed coconut shells which are sent to Hamburg for the making of buttons; copra (the dried fruit) which is sent to Mombasa unprocessed; and about 2,000,000 whole coconuts which are exported to places all over the world.

A few miles farther along the road is the small village of Gazi which has some historical significance.

During the middle of the Nineteenth Century, Gazi was one of the most important towns on the south coast because a branch of the Mazrui family, the same family which ruled Mombasa from 1731 to 1837, made its headquarters here.

From 1872 to 1895 one member of this family, Mbaruk bin Rashid, was in open rebellion against the Sultan of Zanzibar. On several occasions, beginning in 1871, Vanga was sacked by Mbaruk bin Rashid in his endless quest for slaves. After he was forced into Tanganyika in 1895 by Sir Arthur Hardinge, the British Consul General in Zanzibar and later the first Commissioner of the East Africa Protectorate, Mbaruk bin Rashid's followers abandoned Gazi and two years later the population of the town declined to 343.

Today, Gazi is a small village of about 500 people who, economically, survive on agriculture, the cutting of mangroves (1,737 scores in 1970) and fishing with their 18 craft.

Mbaruk's house is still standing and can be visited. Part of this large single-storied building is now used by the Education Department, part by a local court, and the rest is occasionally occupied by bats. Rumour has it that some of the rooms were used by Mbaruk as torture chambers and that his victims would be threatened by suffocation from the acrid fumes of burning chillies.

On the front of the building is a fine example of a carved wooden door, having on it the ubiquitous chain motif which is found on carved doors throughout the western Indian Ocean from Massawa in northern Ethiopia to Tanzania, as well as the common rosette which is on top.

Mombasa is the oldest city of East Africa and probably the most interesting because of the presence of numerous old buildings, a diverse population, and many traditional ways of life that have changed relatively slightly over the centuries.

In 1969, Mombasa had a population of 247,000. The largest single tribe was the Mijikenda (59,139), followed by the Kamba (29,354), Luo (22,058), Luhya (15,160), Kikuyu (14,910), and Taita (14,553); there were also 39,049 Asians, 15,863 Arabs, 10,386 Tanzanians, and 4,925 Europeans of whom 458 were Kenya citizens.

The history of Mombasa is extremely rich and colourful and can only briefly be summarized here.

Like many towns on the Kenya coast, Mombasa was founded probably by the Arabs before the Twelfth Century. During the next century and a half, it was a minor town compared with either Mogadishu or Kilwa. Beginning in the latter part of the Fourteenth Century and continuing throughout the Fifteenth, Mombasa greatly expanded. When the Portuguese Captain Almeida sacked the town in 1505, the booty was so great that it took the Portuguese soldiers fifteen days to cart it away. The town's population

was 10,000 at that time, about double that of Malindi then.

Throughout most of the Sixteenth Century, relations were strained between the leaders of Mombasa and the Portuguese, with the result that the Portuguese sacked Mombasa again in 1528, 1587, and 1589. Finally, in 1591, the Portuguese decided that they should fortify their position somewhere on what is now the Kenya coast and chose Mombasa. Since Mombasa was on an island, it would be easier to defend and Mombasa also had a better harbour than Malindi. In 1593, the construction of Fort Jesus began.

The original settlement of Mombasa took place just west of the present toll booth of the Nyali bridge at a place called Mvita. What is now known as Old Town was the place where the Portuguese lived, and later in the Eighteenth Century the Omanis also settled there in considerable numbers.

Between the Shirazi part of town and Fort Jesus was an area called the Gavana, where the Portuguese established their part of the town in the late Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. There the Portuguese built an Augustinian convent and the Church of the Misericordia; unfortunately, none of these buildings stand today, but at the top end of Ndia Kuu there may be some Portuguese masonry work still intact at the bottom of the buildings.

During the middle and latter part of the Seventeenth Century, Portugal began to lose control in the Persian Gulf and on the East African coast to the Omani Arabs. In March 1696, three thousand Omanis and their supporters laid siege to Fort Jesus. Inside the Fort there were only about 50 Portuguese, including civilians, led by Captain Joao Leao, but there were also said to be about 1,700 Swahili allies, most of whom were encamped outside the Fort in the surrounding ditch.

At first, the Omanis did not aggressively try to take the Fort but instead followed a policy of wait-and-see. A few months later, 15 more Portuguese got into the Fort but in October the capable Captain Leao died. He was succeeded by a civilian, Mogo de Mello, who made the dreadful error of allowing the soldiers to visit the women in the ditches; the obvious result was, that many of the men caught venereal diseases.

In December, more Omanis arrived and they pressed with greater vigour. The Portuguese were soon reduced to only 20 men plus their loyal Swahili contingent. Fortunately for the Portuguese, a relief mission arrived from Goa on Christmas Day, 1696, but because the captain of the Portuguese fleet was in a hurry to sail down to Mozambique to trade, only a few supplies and men were sent into Fort Jesus.

By July, 1697, there was only a total of 30 men remaining inside the Fort, including Mogo de Mello, an Augustin Prior, and a relative of the Sheikh of Faza named Bwana Daud. Warfare, disease, and starvation had killed the others.

On July 20th, the Arabs attacked again with the effect that within a few days Mogo de Mello and all the Portuguese soldiers died. This looked like the end, but Bwana Daud and some 50 women were able to hold out for another six weeks when the Captain who earlier that year had gone to Mozambique looked in at the Fort and died there on November 19th. The Fort was relieved for the last time in January 1698 when the women were taken to Goa. In turn, the Omani Arabs got reinforcements and the siege continued reducing the number of Portuguese soldiers. The Omanis kept up their offensive during most of the year until December 12th when the garrison was reduced to only 10 Portuguese, three Indians and two African women. That night the Captain sent a boy over the walls to get medical attention, but he was captured and told the Omanis of the desperate plight of the surviving garrison.

During the early morning hours of December 13th, 1698, the Omanis made their final attack by scaling the walls. The garrison was unable to defend the Fort and the Captain was killed. A soldier led the Omanis to the powder store, telling them that gold was kept there. A torch was flung into the opening, the powder store blew up and many Omanis were killed. In spite of this last valiant effort, Fort Jesus on that day fell to the Omani Arabs after a 33-month siege.

After the fall of Fort Jesus, the Portuguese never again regained complete control of Mombasa and the South Coast, although they did re-capture Fort Jesus and held it in 1728 and 1729.

From 1735 to 1837, the town of Mombasa was ruled by the Mazruis, a family of Omani Arabs, and during this period it expanded significantly. The leaders of Mombasa also controlled the coast as far north as Kilifi and as far south as Pangani in Tanzania, plus the fertile island of Pemba.

Beginning in 1824, Seyyid Said, the future Sultan of Zanzibar, fought the Mazruis for control of Mombasa and finally succeeded in 1837. During the subsequent "Zanzibar Period" (1837-1895), the population of Mombasa grew tremendously, from 8,000 to 24,000, the most startling increases being among the Asians.

In the financial year of 1895-96, the major exports from Mombasa were ivory, livestock, rubber, and gum copal (used for making a varnish), while imports consisted of cotton piece goods, rice, provisions, and hardware.

In June 1895, the British Government established the East Africa Protectorate, and in the following year, the railway to Uganda was begun; it reached Lake Victoria at the end of 1901. At the same time, Kilindini Port was developed because Mombasa Old Port was both too shallow and too small for the large ships coming to East Africa.

During the Twentieth Century, Mombasa continued its expansion as a port and as a town. Tonnages increased from 2,344,000 in 1948 to 5,308,000

in 1969. The town easily kept pace with the expansion of the port. In 1930, the number of people was 42,000 a figure which doubled by 1948 and doubled again to 180,000 in 1962. Today Mombasa has a population of 280,000 which is increasing at five per cent a year.

The major place of interest in Mombasa is Fort Jesus which is now a national museum. After wandering around the Fort itself, one should go inside the modern gallery. Here a great variety of objects are displayed, including large water jars from Thailand, a Goan wooden chair which was the royal throne of the Sheikh of Siyu, and a Chinese copper-red porcelain jar of a type which is rarely seen outside China. Just outside the gallery are many of the cannons that played a role in the history of Mombasa. Most of them are British made, and the largest ever used at Fort Jesus was an English Eighteenth Century 42 pounder.

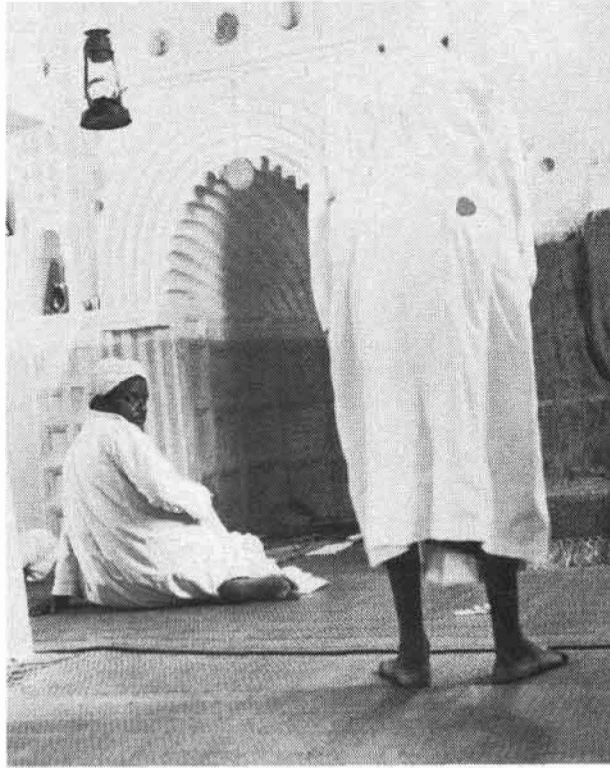
In the centre of Mombasa island is the Wailing Mosque, much of it in ruins but nonetheless interesting to examine. It was built in the Nineteenth Century, probably over an earlier mosque. It was abandoned in 1837 and over the past few years a gigantic banyan tree has been partially responsible for knocking down some of the walls. The mosque is not being looked after by the authorities, and unless some action is taken soon what remains of it will collapse entirely. The banyan tree should be left standing as it makes an attractive cover for the mosque, but it should be pruned and the vegetation in the mosque cleared away.

The origin of the name of the Wailing Mosque is most unusual. According to Dr. James Kirkman, Curator of Fort Jesus, young boys used to be circumcised on the beach below the mosque at which time they would scream in pain; after the ceremony the party would retire to the mosque—hence the name.

Overlooking Mbaraki Creek is a unique monument, the so-called Mbaraki pillar. It was built as a tomb sometime between 1636 and 1728, and is shown on the Portuguese maps. The fascinating aspect is that it is now used as place of worship by the Swahili people. In and around the pillar are incense burners, small offerings of sugar cane and rosewater, and pieces of coloured cloth hung from the nearby trees. These items have been placed here by the Swahili to appease the local spirits.

The most interesting area to walk around in Mombasa is the Old Town where there are many old buildings, but few which date to earlier than the middle of the Eighteenth Century. One exception is the Mandhry Mosque with its attractive minaret, which dates back to 1571 but has been rebuilt several times.

A curious feature about the mosques of East Africa is the general absence of minarets. The Ibadhis, a strict religious sect found in Oman, do not construct minarets but it is generally believed that the Ibadhis did not come to East Africa in any numbers until



Top: Inside a mosque at Mombasa; A dhow captain—pictures by Esmond Bradley Martin.

after 1820. Why the earlier Arab immigrants in East Africa did not usually build minarets remains a puzzle.

If one is fortunate in being in Mombasa between December and early April, one is likely to see the large foreign dhows from Arabia, the Persian Gulf, Pakistan, and India in the harbour of the Old Port. Also here at this time of the year when the northeast monsoon blows will be many local sailing craft which ply between Mombasa and the smaller ports of Kenya.

Since the dhow trade is one of the most fascinating forms of commerce still in existence anywhere in the world, it is worth examining in detail.

The overseas dhow trade to East Africa is at least 2,000 years old. Until the end of the Nineteenth Century no figures existed on the number of dhows arriving at Mombasa, but we do know the major imports and exports to and from the port at various periods of time before that.

In the early Sixteenth Century the major exports were ivory, ambergris, gum copal and perhaps slaves, while the imports consisted of spices from India, damasks, silks and other luxury items.

Two hundred and fifty years later many of the exports were the same: Gum copal obtained from the Nyika, ivory from the Chagga and Kamba, hippopotamus teeth, rhino horn, cattle, and cereals were being carried out by dhows. Slaves were brought into Mombasa from Zanzibar, as were cotton piece goods, China, glass and various sorts of hardware.

After 1898, most of Mombasa's imports and exports were transported by large steam ships and so the dhow trade began to give way to modernization.

The number of ocean-going dhows coming from or going to foreign ports (this excludes all ports in Kenya, Tanzania and Zanzibar) has varied considerably over the past 70 years. The busiest year was 1907/8 when 345 dhows came into Mombasa, but 1947 and 1948 were also good years with 310 and 321 respectively. Over the past ten years (1961-1970), an average of 57 ocean-going dhows (with or without cargo) have arrived and there has recently been a steady increase from 30 in 1966 to 85 in 1970.

Of the 68 dhows with cargo which came into Mombasa in 1970, about one-third were registered in Arabia, one-third in

Iran and 18 per cent were of Somali nationality. The last ports of call of these dhows before reaching Mombasa were in order of frequency Aden, Kismayu, Sehut, and Mukalla. In the past, a majority of these ocean-going dhows would have first called at Zanzibar before coming to Mombasa. Some of the large dhows would come into Mombasa as early as the second week in January, but generally the majority would arrive in February and March.

In 1970, the most important imports brought in by the dhows were dried salted fish (£32,748) from Arabia, Aden, Socotra, and Somalia; salt (£14,960) all from Aden; dried shark dish (£10,240) from Arabia, Somalia, and Dubai; wooden chests (£8,000) and carpets (£7,490) from the Persian Gulf and Arabia; and a great variety of other commodities of considerably less value, such as sea shells (£780) *Kikoys* (£740), dates (£255), and henna (£162). The total value of all the commodities imported into Mombasa Old Port from foreign ports for 1970 was £76,000.

After all these commodities are unloaded, the ocean-going dhow crews usually spend some time in Old Port careening and repairing their vessels. In early April after the monsoon changes, the dhow captains supervise the final loading of the crew's supplies and the valuable export commodities which will eventually be off-loaded in Somalia, Arabia, Persian Gulf ports, and/or India.

In 1970, the most valuable export commodities were ghee (£31,550) produced mostly in Kenya; cotton seed oil (£22,875) mostly processed in Uganda; sorghum (£22,400) all grown in Tanzania; wheat flour (£20,850) all grown in Kenya; tea (£17,075) from Kenya and Uganda; coffee (£14,609) almost all from Tanzania; coconut oil (£11,295) from Kenya; and coffee husks (£10,075) mostly from Uganda.

There was a great variety of other products such as rice, maize, charcoal, aluminium kettles, beetlenut, chillies, and simsim oil making a grand total of £220,109 worth of commodities exported in 1970. This is about triple the value of goods imported into Mombasa by ocean-going dhows. On leaving Mombasa, some of these dhows make their way south to the Rufiji Delta or north to Ngomeni and Lamu to pick up mangrove poles.

As to the future for the dhow trade, it would seem that so long as East Africa continues to produce agricultural commodities cheaply and mangrove poles are allowed to be exported, foreign dhows will continue to come into Mombasa for these products.

As far as the coastal dhow trade is concerned, it too has declined over the years from a high of 1,398 craft coming into Old Port in 1938 to 301 in 1966.

From 1962 to 1970 the number of craft (which also includes a few motorboats) which left Old Port for coastal destinations in Kenya and Tanzania averaged 441 a year with 565 in 1970. Almost all the dhow traffic is between Old Port and Lamu, a distance of

180 miles.

In 1970 the major commodities carried to Lamu by local sailing craft and small motor boats were flour and grain (£36,085), alcoholic beverages (£21,785), sugar (£17,900), cement (£15,240), cigarettes (£9,900), fuel (£9,250), and tea (£8,045) plus smaller amounts of other commodities which made a total of £166,280 for the year.

As long as the road from Malindi to Lamu is closed to lorries at certain times of the year due to the flooding of the Tana River this local dhow trade will continue. But if the road is asphalted, the number of dhows in this traffic would probably be reduced to less than 150 annually.

A curiosity to be found in Mombasa District is the presence of thirty Hindu-managed vegetable farms which run almost identically to their counterparts in western India. About 20 of these vegetable farms are located at Likoni, four in Changamwe and six in Kisauni, all in the municipality of Mombasa. Their size varies between five and 30 acres with the majority being between 10 and 15 acres. An interesting fact is that none of the Hindu farmers own their land but rent it for about shs 250/- a month; this is because they are not Kenya citizens.

The most popular crop grown is the dwarf Cavendish banana which is popular with all the ethnic groups in Mombasa town; most of the rest of the crops grown are Asian vegetables. All the crops on the Hindu farms are raised under irrigation, and fertilizers are generously used.

The daily life of these Hindu farmers is tough, to say the least. Every morning, and this means 365 days a year, the farmer must rise at 3:30 in the morning to start harvesting his vegetables. At 5:00 he has to transport them to the market. In the past he would have had his own stall in the Mackinnon Road market, but since the retailing is now reserved for citizens, he must stand around waiting until about 11 a.m. while his vegetables are sold by other people to whom he has to pay commissions.

Then he returns to his farm and carries on with his management duties for the rest of the day. He may employ African workers, but his own wife and children and other relatives are out in the fields as well.

Most of the Hindu farmers are not formally educated and they follow a way of life similar to that practised in their original homes in Cutch-Mandvi in India. Their house types, their food, their clothes are similar.

Although a difficult life (and probably only Hindus would get up every morning at 3:30), their standard of living is higher than it would be in India. The average farm grosses about £1,800 a year resulting in a profit of £900. In India they could only expect to net £200. And because of this financial aspect and the fact that they are producing a commodity that is both in demand and without competition, these Hindu farmers are likely to remain in Mombasa.

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9,650 square miles, depending on the heaviness of summer rains and the underground run-off and evaporation during the dry season.

Excavations can easily be carried out around Lake Chad, and archaeologists have unearthed traces of civilizations that flourished more than a thousand years ago.

The Sao people, who lived on the borders of the lake between the Ninth and Sixteenth Centuries, have aroused the most curiosity because of their terra cotta sculptures which show a refined sense of artistry.

While we were scanning the distance, looking for the famed papyrus boats used on the lake and which Thor Heyerdahl studied before building the "Ra" to sail to Barbados, a cloud of dust appeared, followed by an old Austrian dune buggy in which was perched a French captain among several Africans holding machine guns at the ready. I trembled when he stopped in front of us and bellowed "What the hell are you doing here?"

Esmond was not in the least perturbed and saw this as our chance to get some help to dig the car out of the sand. He immediately had me translate his wishes to which in reply I got growls and scowls.

The captain definitely did not like our being there, perhaps because he had brought a dozen French subordinates and about twenty Africans to practice desert manoeuvres on the peaceful lakeside.

DROLL

Anyway, he had us show him where the car was. Then he took off for a hidden camp to find some more Africans. When he came back with them and the work began, Esmond couldn't resist taking pictures. It was a droll sight: soldiers with survival kits strapped to their back trying to manage machine guns and sand shovels at the same time.

The Frenchman treated his men harshly, and I was quite annoyed when he lashed out at our guide for irresponsibility.

At last the car was free, but the driver was told to take it through more sand to get to another road alongside the lake that eventually winds back to Douguia.

Lunchtime was then announced, and the captain and his entourage marched single-file back to their camp, leaving orders that Esmond and I were to proceed in their direction in one hour. We would see a red parachute around the bend and that was where we were to meet.

Esmond sat down under a tree and began to eat his picnic lunch. I wasn't at all hungry and tried to solace our dejected guide with a loaf of French bread and some *pate de foie gras*.

He confided to me that he had been too afraid to tell the captain that the other way to Douguia was not only twice as long but just as

sandy. So when we duly turned up at the red parachute (a covering used as a tent to protect the luncheon table from direct sun), it was up to me to try to persuade the captain to let us return to Douguia the way we had come.

After a third cup of sugared tea Arab style and repeated nudges from Esmond, I braved the subject. Some argument ensued between the captain and his subordinates, who took my side, but in the end the request was granted.

The same Africans repeated their efforts the three times the car got stuck on its way back to its original position. Finally we were off. A couple of hours later we dropped the guide at Douguia and saw a large family of warhogs brazenly sniffing around the hunters' camp.

Bangui, 21 February

The flamboyant trees jewelling Bangui inspired someone to dub the capital of the Central African Republic "*la Coquette*".

Situated on the Oubangui river, surrounded by forested land, it is indeed a pretty town. The temperature is milder and at last we have escaped the dusty haze covering the skies of Upper Volta, Niger and Chad.

There are only a million and a half inhabitants in this country which is about the size of Texas. Millet, maize and manioc are the products of the subsistence agriculture in which ninety per cent of the people are engaged.

Cotton and coffee are the only export crops, and both of these are limited. The diamond reserves which account for half the export earnings will soon be exhausted, and an alternative source of income has yet to be discovered.

The government in "*la Coquette*" will have to do a lot of flirting with the developed countries.

We went on an excursion yesterday on the Oubangui river to a coffee plantation owned by a Portuguese and managed by a Corsican. We were taken by a former French colonist of Algeria, one of many *pieds noirs* who preferred not to return to France and went in a speed boat, accompanied by four French tourists.

CARE-FREE

At this time of the year the river is very shallow; twice we had to get out of the boat and pull it through the river with a rope. The tourists and Esmond and I gaily splashed one another.

How different our care-free journey was in comparison to Conrad's descriptions in the *Heart of Darkness*!

On either side of the river were dense forests like those he so eloquently and fearfully evokes in that masterpiece.

"Are there Pygmies in there?" I asked, pointing to one side.

"Yes, but you won't see any unless you help pull harder," came the reply. I didn't understand how pulling harder would

make Pygmies appear, but the *pied noir* just laughed when I tried to pursue the point.

Being spoiled by the beautiful coffee plantations of Kenya, I was rather disenchanted by the poor upkeep of this one in Central Africa. There were none of the neat rows of bushes, just clumps here and there. However, the coffee produced in this country is of just as high a quality as Kenya's.

We were shown a bean taken apart, and for the first time I saw what caffeine is: a tiny little ball of gummy substance that sticks to your fingers. The flotation process is used to get rid of it for stuff like *Sanka*.

"Come along now," the tour leader called, "or else you'll miss what you really want to see."

We followed him for almost a mile down a narrow path and reached a clearing where three miniature huts with roofs of leaves stood.

"This is where the part-time workers of the plantation live," he said. Just as I started to ask who they were, six Pygmy men came running towards us. They knew the Frenchman well and were delighted to see that he had an airline satchel with him.

They pointed at it and jumped up and down and could hardly wait until it was opened.

Inside was a bag of salt and several packages of *Gitanes* cigarettes.

"Yes, yes, I've brought these for you," he told them. "Now what are you going to do for us?"

DANCE

We all stood around while a spontaneous Pygmy dance ensued. It was so fast and funny with lots of spinning around that almost every time Esmond clicked his camera he missed his subject who had given a great leap into the air.

We were thrilled by our reception. The only other time I've seen Pygmies was in Uganda in the Ruwenzori mountains, which were not too friendly. But the Pygmies here seemed to enjoy our presence as much as we theirs.

One man pulled playfully at my long hair and laughed uproariously at it, then he took my hand and rubbed it against his chest of "peppercorn hair" which along with wrinkled skin characterises his race.

Pygmies are believed to be the oldest forest dwellers of Africa and are related to the Bushmen of South Africa who use similar bows and arrows.

Back in town again, we hired a taxi and drove southwest of Bangui. We were going on a *chasse aux papillons*, or butterfly hunt.

We came to a police barrier and were told that we could not go further without a permit. We explained what we wanted to do, and it was agreed that we could proceed—but only on foot.

So we left the taxi and walked down the road. A little boy came up to us and showed us a newspaper packet. It was intricately folded into little envelopes, each containing a beautiful butterfly.

We asked him what he was going to do with them, and he told us that he, Timothee, was one of the best butterfly catchers in Bangui, and that "big" boys bought all his butterflies from him for ten CFA francs each. They would make pictures with them which they would in turn sell to the French shops.

"If you want, you can have the butterfly you like best," he offered with a winning smile. We thanked him and said that we would prefer to have him show us how he caught his butterflies.

The Central African Republic like Madagascar, attracts some of the most spectacular butterflies in the world, and *Nymphalides*, *Pierides* and *Saturnides* are all to be found here.

Even though it's the dry season now, and the butterflies are smaller and generally less colourful, a few brilliant species can still be collected.

We had been racing through the riverine forest with Timothee, and by the end of the afternoon we could wield his net with nearly the same expertise. I caught a bright red butterfly that I'm going to have made into a glass paper weight when we get to Nairobi.

Nairobi, 27 February

Well, we're back! But what a time we had getting here!

From Bangui we had our choice of weekly flights either to the Sudan or the Congo (now Zaire). Esmond opted for the latter, but the connecting flight in Kinshasa didn't show up and so we had to spend five days waiting for the next scheduled one.

There is a shortage of hotel rooms in Kinshasa and we had a dreadful time trying to get any kind of room anywhere. As a result, we ended up staying 20 miles outside of town and begging taxi drivers over the telephone to come get us so we could spend at least part of our time in the capital.

Finally, this morning, we found ourselves flying over the Rift Valley and toward the Ngong Hills, and we were so excited we ran up and down the aisles looking for the best view of Langata, where a new house that we had built while we were away stands waiting for us.

The stewardess kindly but firmly insisted that we really must sit down, and I fervently hoped we wouldn't have to wait very long before landing at Embakasi.

We didn't, and made it through customs in record time in comparison to the countries we have just visited.

At last we were outside the terminal, and whichever way we looked we found a friendly face.

A row of airport taxis were lined up and the driver of the first one had already opened the door for us while the porter artfully fitted most of our suitcases into the boot.

Once in the car, we explained that we had just arrived back in Nairobi after a fifteen-month absence and wanted to see everything. The driver laughed and gave us a tremendous "welcome back" handshake then sped towards the "City in the Sun".

THE COAST

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The Mackinnon Road market itself should definitely be visited as it's the main outlet for a tremendous variety of agricultural and dairy products from the Mombasa district. In 1970, the major commodities for sale were coconuts and their various by-products (£166,336), eggs (£68,438), milk (£43,471), fresh vegetables (£42,568), cashew nuts (£27,548), pawpaw (£18,000), and bananas (£14,400).

Other products from up-country are also for sale at the Mackinnon Road market, including potatoes, peas, beans, and carrots. It was opened in 1914 and unfortunately is soon to be transferred from its present site. The stall renters come from all parts of the coast, and there is an especially large group from the Lamu archipelago. These people are very friendly and the visitor will enjoy dealing with them.

Something completely out of the ordinary in the Mombasa area is a large hole at the Bamburi Cement Factory, a few miles north of Mombasa; but first a few words must be said about the factory itself and the origin of this hole.

The Bamburi Portland Cement Factory was opened in 1956, the first full-time cement works in Kenya, and in the first year of production, 525 tons of cement worth £3,150 were exported, mostly to Tanzania and Somalia. Since then the company has expanded rapidly. In 1960, exports increased to £240,000; five years later the figure was over £1,000,000, and in 1970 about 500,000 tons of cement worth £3,000,000 were sent abroad.

In 1970, the major countries receiving this high quality cement were Mauritius and Reunion (£1,116,000), Tanzania (£744,000), the Persian Gulf and Arabia (£504,000), Seychelles (£198,000), and Uganda (£162,000).

The cement is sent out in bags and in bulk from the cement silos in English Point which were built in 1960, and the huge new silos at Kilindini which opened only last year. Obviously, with operations on such a large scale, a huge hole near the factory had to be excavated and the question for the management was what to do with it since it covered some ten acres.

Rene Haller, the factory's farm manager, had the answer. Since the bottom of the hole coincided with the water table, he began in 1971 to plant fast growing trees such as *Conocarpus lancifolius* and casuarina to develop a small forest which would also attract birds. He has also planted date palms which in the past have not been successful anywhere on the Kenya coast. Four ponds have been made and into them he introduced many different kinds of fish.

Mr. Haller eventually hopes to plant up the entire area and introduce some small wild animals. Soon this hole may become a major tourist attraction of Mombasa. At the moment it is one of the best examples of a true conservationist at work.