

Kilwa Kisiwani

Trading kings of the Swahili Coast

A presentation by Sophie Ledden

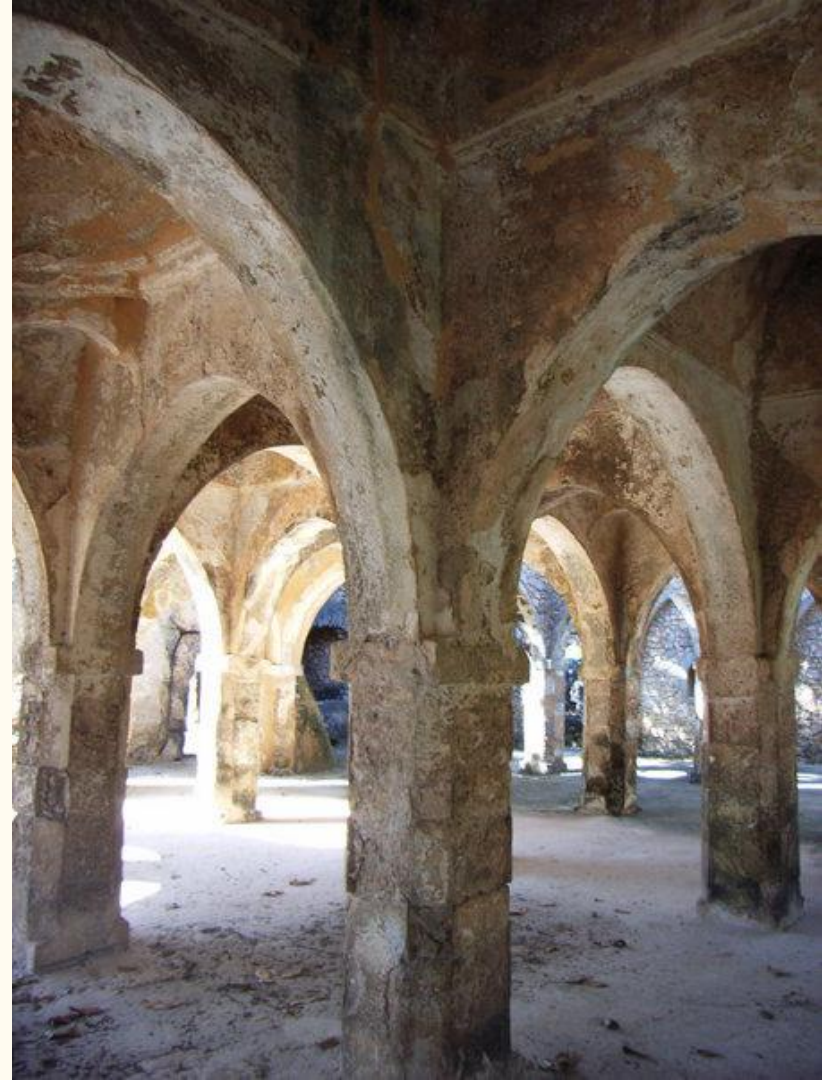
“[Kilwa is] one of the most beautiful and best built towns... built of handsome houses...with plenty of gardens, in which there are many fruit trees and much water.”

-Ibn Battuta, visiting 1330
during rule of Sultan al-Hasan
ibn Sulaiman; from W.E.B.
Du Bois



Intro

- Est. either 10th or 12th century (Saad)
- Semi-mythical founder Ali ibn al-Hassan Shiraz (Du Bois)
- Originally only on Kilwa Kisiwani, but grew to encompass Sofala and Mogadishu (Cartwright)
- Eventually covers most of the Swahili Coast and some of Madagascar (Britannica)
- Ends 1505 when Portugese take Kilwa (Britannica)





Geography

- Coastal (Pollard)
- Seasonal monsoon winds (Hirst)
- Easy access to both inner Africa and the Indian Ocean (Christie)
- Modern Tanzania, Kenya, and Madagascar (Elhanafy)

Shirazi people

- Bantu and Arab origins (Hirst)
- Swahili group (Hirst)
- Form ruling class (Elkiss)
- Major players in East African slave trade (Gates)
- Claim descendance from Ali ibn al-Hassan Shiraz (Saad)

"A SWAHILI 'IDENTITY' [WAS] CHARACTERIZED BY THE IMPACT OF THE MARITIME CONNECTIONS OF THIS REGION, THE APPRECIATION AND APPROPRIATION OF IMPORTED OBJECTS, AND THEIR INCORPORATION AND DISPLAY IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT"
(SCHULZ, "CORAL STONE")

Trade

- Food, gold, and ivory from inland (Pollard, Gates)
- Control of the African gold trade (Gates)
- Export gold, textiles, and iron-and bronze works, as well as enslaved people (Gates)
- Import marble, ceramics, luxury goods (Shulz)
- Seasonal with monsoon winds (Patel)
- Facilitated by Islam (Anderson)



Image: Muhammad Mahdi Karim



Cultural Exchange



1

3



2



1. Yuan flask from Husuni Kubwa
2. Kilwa coin found in Australia
3. Gujarati Tombstone found on Kilwa Kisiwani

Architecture

- Grand architecture made from corallite limestone (top) (Patel)
- General population lives in wattle and daub (bottom) (Fleisher)
- Domed mosques from Arab influence (Chittick)
- Major achievements during rule of Sultan al-Hasan ibn Sulaiman (Gates)
- Indoor plumbing in some structures (Gates)





Image: World Monuments Fund



Image: Hirst

Hospitality

- Complex trade rituals of hospitality, with major merchants acting as host to incoming traders (Schulz)
- Hospitality as a display of power (Fleisher)
- Aesthetic emphasis on public-facing spaces (Fleisher)
- Such a deeply ingrained value that it is embodied in architecture through porcelain plates embedded in walls (Schulz)



Images: V.S. Schulz; Sotheby's via ArtNet

Conclusion

- Disproves colonial notions of Africa as isolated and primitive
- Impact of Islam in Africa and as a tool for globalization
- Under-studied, especially considering its level of influence

Works Cited/Referenced

- AFP. "How 900-Year-Old African Coins Found in Australia May Finally Solve the Mystery of Who Arrived Down Under First." *Daily Mail Online*, Associated Newspapers, 22 Aug. 2013, www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2400215/How-900-year-old-African-coins-Australia-finally-solve-mystery-arrived-Down-Under-first.html.
- Anderson, Thomas. "Teaching the Indian Ocean as World History." *World History Connected* 11.1 (2014): 28 pars. Accessed 7 March, 2021. <https://worldhistoryconnected.press.uillinois.edu/11.1/anderson.html>.
- Cartwright, Mark. "Kilwa." *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, Ancient History Encyclopedia, 26 Feb. 2021, www.ancient.eu/Kilwa/.
- Cascone, Sarah. "A 15th-Century Chinese Porcelain Bowl Bought for \$35 at a Connecticut Yard Sale Just Sold for Over \$700,000 at Auction." *Artnet News*, Artnet News, 19 Mar. 2021, news.artnet.com/market/chinese-bowl-from-yard-sale-auction-1952881.
- Chittick, Neville. "Kilwa and the Arab Settlement of the East African Coast." *The Journal of African History*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1963, pp. 179–190. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1017/s0021853700004011.
- Christie, Annalisa C. "Exploring the Social Context of Maritime Exploitation in Tanzania between the 14th-18th c. AD: Recent Research from the Mafia Archipelago." *Prehistoric Marine Resource Use in the Indo-Pacific Regions (Terra Australis 39)*, 2013, doi:10.22459/ta39.12.2013.05.
- "Coral Rock Marine Limestone." *Carroll's Building Materials (St. Petersburg, FL) :: Ready Mix Concrete, Masonry, Stone, Gravel, Sand, Brick, Pavers*, 29 Mar. 2021, carrollsbuildingmaterials.com/product/coral-rock-marine-limestone/.
- Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt. "Chapter 9: Asian in Africa." *The World and Africa*. New York: Viking, 1947. 185-209. *Black Thought and Culture Database*. Web.
- Elhanafy, Heba. "Building Africa: Kilwa Kisiwani, the Indian Ocean Trade, and the Rise of East African City-States." 25 June, 2020 *Charter Cities Institute*, Charter Cities Institute, www.chartercitiesinstitute.org/post/building-africa-kilwa-kisiwani-the-indian-ocean-trade-and-the-rise-of-east-african-city-states. Accessed 7 March, 2021

- Elkiss, Terry H. "Kilwa Kisiwani: The Rise of an East African City-State." *African Studies Review*, vol. 16, no. 1, Apr. 1973, pp. 119–130. *JSTOR*, doi:10.2307/523737.
- Fauvelle, François-Xavier. *The Golden Rhinoceros: Histories of the African Middle Ages*. Princeton University Press, 2018.
- Fleisher, Jeffrey. "Rituals of Consumption and the Politics of Feasting on the Eastern African Coast, AD 700–1500." *Journal of World Prehistory*, vol. 23, no. 4, 4 Dec. 2010, pp. 195–217. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1007/s10963-010-9041-3.
- Fleisher, Jeffrey, et al. "Geophysical Survey at Kilwa Kisiwani, Tanzania." *Journal of African Archaeology*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2012, pp. 207–220. *JSTOR*, doi:10.3213/2191-5784-10220.
- Gates, Henry Louis. "Africa's Great Civilizations." *Prime Video*, Season 1, Episode 4, PBS, Feb. 2017, www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B06X9Z37Q9/ref=atv_wl_hom_c_unkc_1_7.
- Google Maps. Alphabet Inc.. <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Kilwa+Kisiwani,+Tanzania/@-8.9658526,39.4883272,15z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x18f4efc4d22fa8d9:0x89628caa9070ac56!8m2!3d-8.965874!4d39.497082>. Accessed March 7, 202.
- Hawkes, Jason D. and Wynne-Jones, Stephanie. "India in Africa: Trade Goods and Connections of the Late First Millennium", *Afriques* [Online], June 2015, published online 21 December 2015, accessed 7 March 2021. <http://journals.openedition.org/afriques/1752>; doi: <https://doi.org/10.4000/afriques.1752>
- Hirst, Kris K. "Kilwa Kisiwani: Medieval Trade Center on Africa's Swahili Coast." *ThoughtCo*, ThoughtCo, 31 Mar. 2019, www.thoughtco.com/kilwa-kisiwani-medieval-trade-center-17288.
- Hirst, K. Kris. "The Sultans of the Swahili Culture?" *ThoughtCo*, 18 Aug. 2018, www.thoughtco.com/kilwa-chronicle-sultan-list-swahili-culture-171631.
- "Historic Sites of Kilwa." *World Monuments Fund*, World Monuments Fund, www.wmf.org/project/historic-sites-kilwa.
- Lloyd, Joe. "Kilwa Kisiwani: Ruins Of East Africa's Greatest Empire." *Culture Trip*, The Culture Trip, 29 July 2014, theculturetrip.com/africa/tanzania/articles/kilwa-kisiwani-the-ruins-of-east-africa-s-greatest-empire/.
- Low, D. Anthony. "Eastern Africa." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/place/eastern-Africa.

- Mediastorehouse. "Print of A Chinese Yuan Dynasty Flask Which Was Found in the Ruins of the Husuni Kubwa Palace at Kilwa." *Media Storehouse Photo Prints*, 29 May 2018, www.mediastorehouse.com/heritage-images/chinese-yuan-dynasty-flask-ruins-husuni-kubwa-15062245.html.
- Milton, John. *Paradise Lost. The John Milton Reading Room*. Dartmouth University, https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/pl/book_11/text.shtm. I. Accessed March 7th, 2021.
- Muhammad Mahdi Karim, "Dhow." 2011. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dhow_znz.jpg
- Owen, Mike. "Unravelling the Mystery of Arnhem Land's Ancient African Coins." *Australian Geographic*, Australian Geographic, 7 Aug. 2014, www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/history-culture/2014/08/mystery-of-ancient-african-coins-found-in-australia/.
- Patel, Samir S. "Towns of the Swahili Coast." *Archaeology*, vol. 67, no. 1, Jan. 2014, pp. 42–49. *JSTOR*, [jstor.org/stable/24363749](https://www.jstor.org/stable/24363749).
- Pollard, Edward John. "The Maritime Landscape of Kilwa Kisiwani and Its Region, Tanzania, 11th to 15th Century AD." *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2008, pp. 265–280., doi:10.1016/j.jaa.2008.07.001.
- Saad, Elias. "Kilwa Dynastic Historiography: A Critical Study." *History in Africa*, vol. 6, 1979, pp. 177–207. *JSTOR*, doi:10.2307/3171745.
- Schulz, Vera-Simone. "Coral Stone Architecture, Chinese Porcelain, and Indian Ocean Artifacts along the Swahili Coast: Cross-Cultural Dynamics in Medieval East Africa." *Knowledge E Social Sciences*, 2019, doi:10.18502/kss.v3i27.5529.
- Schulz, Vera-Simone. "Artistic Dynamics across the Seas: Architecture, Objects, and Ornamentation in the Medieval Port Cities of Kilwa, Songo Mnara, and Pisa." *Early Maritime Cultures in East Africa and the Western Indian Ocean: Papers from a Conference Held at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (African Studies Program), 23-24 October 2015, with Additional Contributions*, edited by Akshay Sarathi. Archaeopress, 2018.
- "Some Key Dates in Swahili History." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 59, no. 2, 1989, pp. 144–144., doi: 10.2307/1160483.
- "Wattle and Daub." *Wattle and Daub - Designing Buildings Wiki*, www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/Wattle_and_daub.