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GEO-ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OF THE DAR-ES-SALAAM- BAGAMOYO COASTAL AREA: SETTLEMENT DYNAMICS

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INTRODUCTION

The Tanzanian coast is part of the Indian Ocean seaboard. The south-east trade winds and north-east monsoon winds facilitated sea travel between the regions along the coast and the rest of the world. Coastal people have had a long relationship with the ocean not only for transport but also as an important resource for food and other maritime products. Many of the earliest stone buildings in almost all the coastal towns were built of maritime products including coral-stones, lime and mangrove poles.

Trade between the ancient coast of East Africa and the rest of the ancient world dates back to more than 2000 years ago (Chami 2001). Graeco-Roman literature (Casson 1989) and recent archaeological research (Chami 2001; Chami & Msemwa 1997) show that the East African coastal people had contacts with the Far East, Middle East and Mediterranean for many centuries before Christ.

By the 10th century AD, a number of substantial towns now called Swahili city-states developed along the coast (Chittick 1974; Chami 1998; Kusimba 1999). Kaole is one of the settlements, which grew as a result of trade expansion and interaction between foreign traders and the local people who by then were Bantu speakers (Chami 1998; Schmidt 1994-

95). Kilwa and Tongoni are two examples although the Msasani and Mbweni ruins (see Fig. 2.1) may have followed immediately afterward. Whichever is the case, archeological finds from Msasani site now housed at the Dar es Salaam national museum provide a clue to the 13th and 14th century settlements. Similarly, the Mbweni ruins, between Dar es Salaam and Bagamoyo, provide evidence of the 14th and 15th century settlements with buildings and mosques very similar to the ones at Kaole (Mturi 1974). These are just a few of the Swahili towns that must have had trading links with Kaole and probably Zanzibar.

The purpose of this chapter is to shed more light into the factors that led to the demise of the Swahili tradition settlements with a focus on Kaole. The main focus is on the environmental changes along the shore and their effects on the trading towns.

THE NATURE OF THE KAOLE/BAGAMOYO COAST

Kaole and Bagamoyo town lie within the Ruvu River valley that forms a flood plain rather than ordinary coastal plain. Both are on the same bay, 30 km west of Zanzibar. The Zanzibar channel, which forms the beach of the