

CHAPTER 9

Faunal Remains from Kaya Bate, an Ancient Mijikenda Settlement on the Northern Kenya Coast

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This chapter presents the results of the analysis of faunal remains from Kaya Bate site on the Kenya coast. The evidence shows that the inhabitants of the site, dated to the period between the 7th - 10th centuries AD were mixed farmers who kept domesticated fauna (cattle, sheep/goat) as well as chicken. In addition to domestic fauna, they also relied on a variety of wild animals for meat. Fish also appears to have made an important contribution to their diet. The results of the faunal analysis contribute new data towards our understanding of the animal subsistence economy of early settlements on the east African coast.

Introduction

Subsistence economies of ancient settlements can be reconstructed from remains of activities such as hunting, fishing, animal husbandry, crop cultivation and pottery manufacture (Grayson, 1984; Spear 1987; Mutoro, 1987; Abungu and Mutoro, 1993; Chami, 1994; Helm, 2000; Kiriamu, 2004). These activities leave behind evidence which can be interpreted to shed light on the type of animals herded or hunted, the type of food eaten as well as eating habits of the people. In discussing the subsistence economy of Kaya Bate as reflected in the archaeological record, this chapter focuses on the faunal remains that were discarded by the occupants of this site.

The Physical Setting of Kaya Bate

Kaya Bate is located on latitude 03° 12½ S and longitude 39° 56½ E on the bank of the Sabaki river in Dagamura Location in the Malindi District on the northern Kenya coast (Fig. 1). At altitude of 30m. above sea level, the site of Kaya Bate is in the hinterland zone of the Kenya coast that is characterized by a varied topography of the coastal upland that is intermittently dissected by the Sabaki River Valley. The ridge which stretches from Mwangia hills in the north to the Shimba hills in the south supports a variety of coastal forested ecozones. The ecozones have been adversely affected by human activities in the recent past, so that one does not see the floral complexity of the coastal mixed dry forest that used to be dominated by trees of the Legume family such as *Baphia puguensis*. Rather, the kind of vegetation observed now is a result of disturbed forests or is an intermediate regeneration phase of sub-climax forests following clearance or seasonal burning. Kaya Bate