

The Archaeology of Mbui: In Search of Pre-Islamic Settlement on Pate Island

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Introduction

This is a report on fieldwork and excavations undertaken in May and August 2010 at Mbui Site on Pate Island of Lamu archipelago. Mbui was first reported by Chittick (1967) and later by Wilding (1973) and Horton (1984) to have materials of the 10th century AD. The earlier researchers utilized materials mainly from surface collections and did little to get materials in their context to further understand early settlements on the island. The African Archaeology Network has embarked on the project to try and unveil evidence of pre-Islamic settlements on the Island of Pate. The results of this first project at Mbui have revealed a wide range of archaeological materials which not only strengthen the exchange and distribution hypothesis of coastal settlements with the hinterland, but also provides the potential that some 3 sites in the northern islands were settled by non Islamic peoples and could date to a periods earlier than the 7th century AD.

Objective of study

The main objective of this project is to establish a chronology and culture history and investigate the evidence for pre-Islamic settlements on the island of Pate. During the initial stage of the field work we aimed to; conduct a surface survey of the site of Mbui; producing a site map of the working area; do Archaeological excavations to collect material evidence for further analysis.

Geographical Setting and Location

Mbui Site is located on the south western tip of Pate Island of the Lamu Archipelago, three kilometres northwest of Pate town. Mbui site lies roughly at 02° 07' 20.8" S and longitude of 040° 50' 55.1" E. Mbui Site is located on the south western tip of Pate Island, three kilometres northwest of Pate town.