



**A Presentation of the Mombasa Old Town
Conservation Project Experience**

presented at

**The 1st International Conference on Urban
Heritage Safeguarding in Addis Ababa**

on 1st to 3rd June 2009

Presented by: Arch. Kassim M. Omar

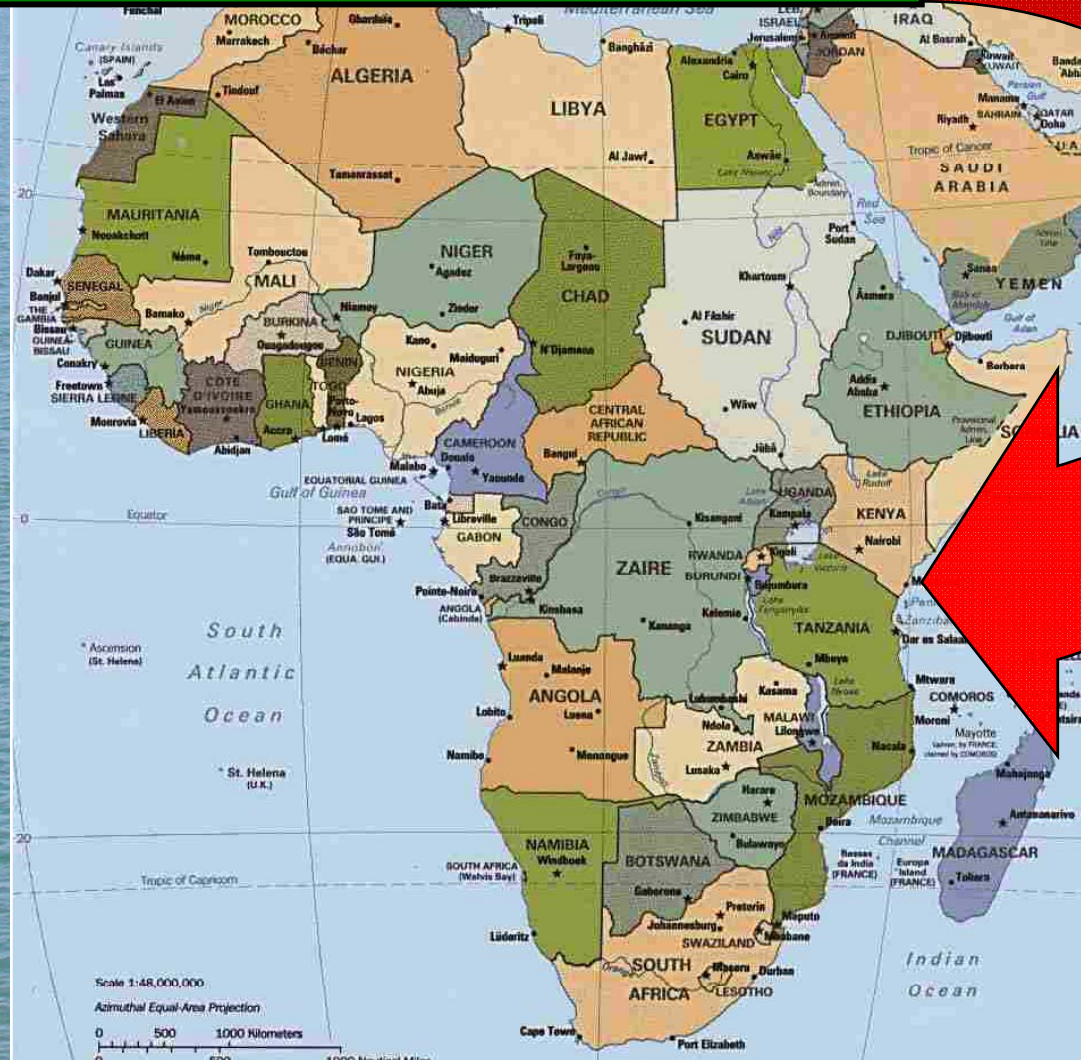
The background of the slide is a photograph of a body of water, likely the Indian Ocean near Mombasa. In the center, a small, traditional wooden boat with a single mast is visible. The water is a deep blue-green color. In the background, there is a shoreline with some greenery, trees, and a few buildings. The sky is clear and bright.

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

The Conservation and management of the built heritage in Kenya is the responsibility of the National Museums of Kenya which is the custodian of the Nation's Heritage.

To do this it derives its mandate through the National Museums and Heritage Act of 2006

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project





The Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project area

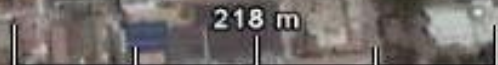


Image © 2007 DigitalGlobe
© 2007 Europa Technologies

© 2007 Google™



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

HISTORY OF THE CONSERVATION PROGRAMME IN KENYA

- 1972 when an Inter-Governmental Working Party was set up to investigate the future of Lamu District in Kenya.
- Recommended that studies should be carried out into the building standards which are required in order to ensure that the existing architectural and social cohesiveness of Lamu town is not destroyed through unsuitable design or bad siting of buildings including identifying which buildings require renovations, which contain features of unique importance requiring preservation and which are suitable for demolition and re-development as totally new buildings or conversion. The Working Party recommendations were accepted by the Government and funds voted through the National Museums of Kenya to carry out further studies.



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

HISTORY OF THE CONSERVATION PROGRAMME IN KENYA

- The Working Party recommendations were accepted by the Government and funds voted through the National Museums of Kenya to carry out further studies.
- 1975 - a "Study in Conservation of Lamu" was carried out
- 1975 - 1985 - several monuments were restored and the Lamu sea wall repaired.
- 1981 - National Museums of Kenya sponsored a pilot study for the conservation of Old Town of Mombasa.



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

HISTORY OF THE CONSERVATION PROGRAMME IN KENYA

- 1985 -the Lamu Conservation Plan was published. At this time, the Mombasa Old Town Conservation Programme began to take off.
- 1986 -Lamu was gazetted as a monument under the Antiquities and Monuments Act of 1983. Lamu Fort was rehabilitated into what it is today - a socio-cultural and education centre.
- 1987 -the Lamu Town planning and Conservation office was established under the auspices of the National Museums of Kenya.



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

HISTORY OF THE CONSERVATION PROGRAMME IN KENYA

- 1990 -the "Conservation Plan for the Old Town of Mombasa" was published.
- 1991 -Mombasa Old Town Conservation Area was gazetted as a monument under the then Antiquities and Monuments Act. Mombasa Old Town Conservation Office was established.

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

- **The island was an important Islamic trading port**
- **One of the centres of swahili civilization that flourished along the East coast between 13-17th Centuries**
- **Survived a variety of rulers and managed to retain its special character**



Mombasa Old Town
Conservation Area

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

Mombasa Old Town
Conservation Area

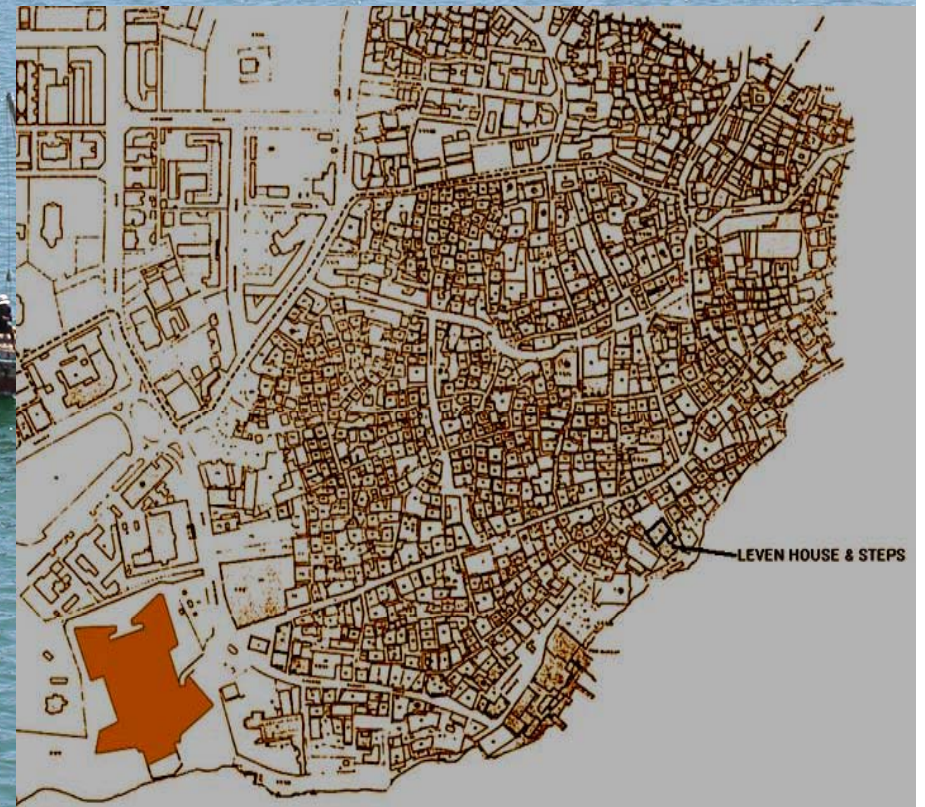
LEVEN HOUSE & STEPS



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

Early Mombasa Old Town History

- Earliest settlement centered in three places
- Northern end near Coast General Hospital (Shehe Mvita's Grave)
- Kilindini Area
- Mbaraki pillar area



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

Economic and Administrative Background

- Mombasa- Kisumu Railwayline finished in 1901
- 1906 capital of Kenya moved from Mombasa to Nairobi-**Treasury Square used to be the British Colonial Headquarters**
- 1st British Commissioner, Arthur Hardinge had an office in Fort Jesus



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

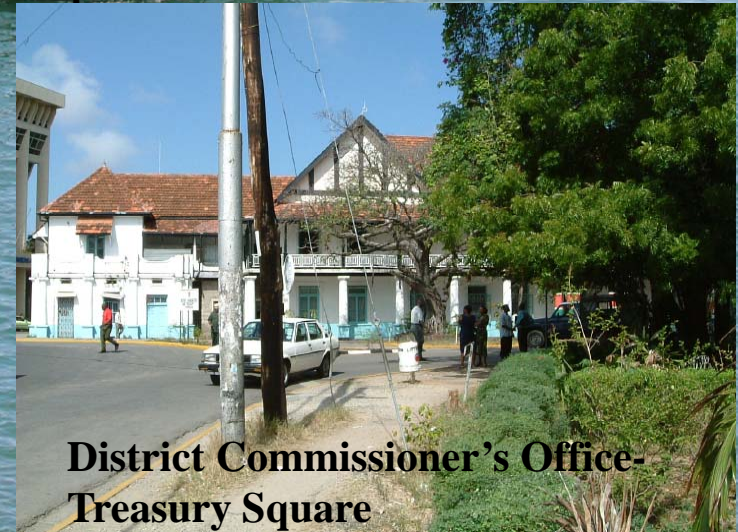
- **TREASURY SQUARE**
- Opened in 1901. Originally had a statue of William Mackinnon founder of British East Africa-was removed after independence
- Square surrounded by fine colonial style buildings all dating to 1900.



Standard chartered Bank-Treasury Square



Garden within Treasury square



District Commissioner's Office-Treasury Square

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

Old Port and Government Square

- For over 1000 years, one of the major ports of the dhow trade of the Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf.



View of Old Port

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

The Old Post Office

- Opened in 1899. Mainly used by Indians who built the railway to send money home to their families. Trolley tickets were also sold here. Later moved to moved to Treasury Square in 1941.



The Old Post Office

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

The Historic Old Town

- The Old Town is a microcosm which still retains much of historic character of the pre-20th century
- It still has small narrow streets and alleyways where you will often find bui-bui clad women, handcarts, coffee sellers, mosques giving a strong sense of neighbourhood



THE OLD TOWN

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

The Historic Old Town

- The Old Town measures about 72 hectares and is bound by Mombasa channel on the east, Nkrumah road to the south, Digo road to the west and Abdul Nasser and eventually converges with the waterfront at Allidina Visram high school to the north.
- However only the Conservation programme covers only 31 hectares



THE OLD TOWN

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

THE MOMBASA OLD TOWN CONSERVATION AREA

- The Conservation Area sits at the south-east corner of the Old Town and measures approximately 31 hectares in size.
- The area roughly corresponds to the old walled town build by the Portuguese in the late sixteenth century.
- The Portuguese wall is thought to have run along Nkrumah and Makadara Roads to the south, Samburu Road to the west, and at its north border, along Wachangamwe Street (formerly called Wall Street) and Kitui Road.
- To form the Conservation Area, a small section was added to the north of this border in order to include Piggot Place, and to the south, Treasury Square and Fort Jesus were added



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

Types of buildings found in the Conservation area

- **The Swahili House**

- the construction was usually of coral rug and mortar/mud
- had timber windows which were mostly shuttered
- had barazas or benches at the front

- **Commercial buildings**

- built between 1930-1950 by Indian merchants who came to Mombasa during British rule concentrated around the Mackinnon market and Makadara gardens)

- **The 1930-1950 Shop House**

- This type of house was usually built by Indian businessmen and is to found along Kibokoni road, Piggot place, Makadara gardens and Mackinnon market

- Its characteristics were:-

- Built through modern methods of construction
- usually Reinforced concrete with corrugated Iron sheet roof
- it had a solid appearance with massive wooden doors
- it also had concrete awnings to keep off rain



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

- Conservation area is also important historically as the area has mostly the **Mombasa Traditional Houses** which were usually built by Wealthy Arab or Indian businessmen



**MOMBASA TRADITIONAL
HOUSE**

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

- **The Mombasa Traditional Houses**
- These houses were similar to Zanzibar houses and were predominantly of coral rag construction
- They were normally two storeyed with a simple and elegant façade
- The rooms were hardly more than three metres in span (maximum size of spanning material)



**MOMBASA TRADITIONAL
HOUSE**

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

- **The Mombasa Traditional Houses**
- There was no single plan, and Indian teak wood was used mainly in doors, windows and sometimes in floors
- they usually had carved doors with vertical windows incorporating vertical iron security bars
- windows also had timber shutters
- most of them had timber balconies and carved plasterwork



**MOMBASA TRADITIONAL
HOUSE**

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

Other Architectural elements in Mombasa Old Town

Carved Doors

- Sir Richard Burton while commenting on carved doors stated that “ the higher the tenement, the bigger the gateway, the heavier the padlock and the longer the iron studs which nail the door of heavy timber, the greater is the owner’s dignity”
- carved doors are principle ornament elements in Islamic architecture of which Swahili architecture heavily borrows from
- In Mombasa the following door types are to be found:-
- Indian
- Siyu/Lamu
- Zanzibar

Balconies

- Balconies were introduced to the houses to primarily offer a relaxation area due to the hot and humid weather-Ventilation
- they also offered privacy (especially the screened ones) for the women. This is more so for Muslim communities such as in Old Town





**Omani style door in
one of the buissy
streets in Lamu**



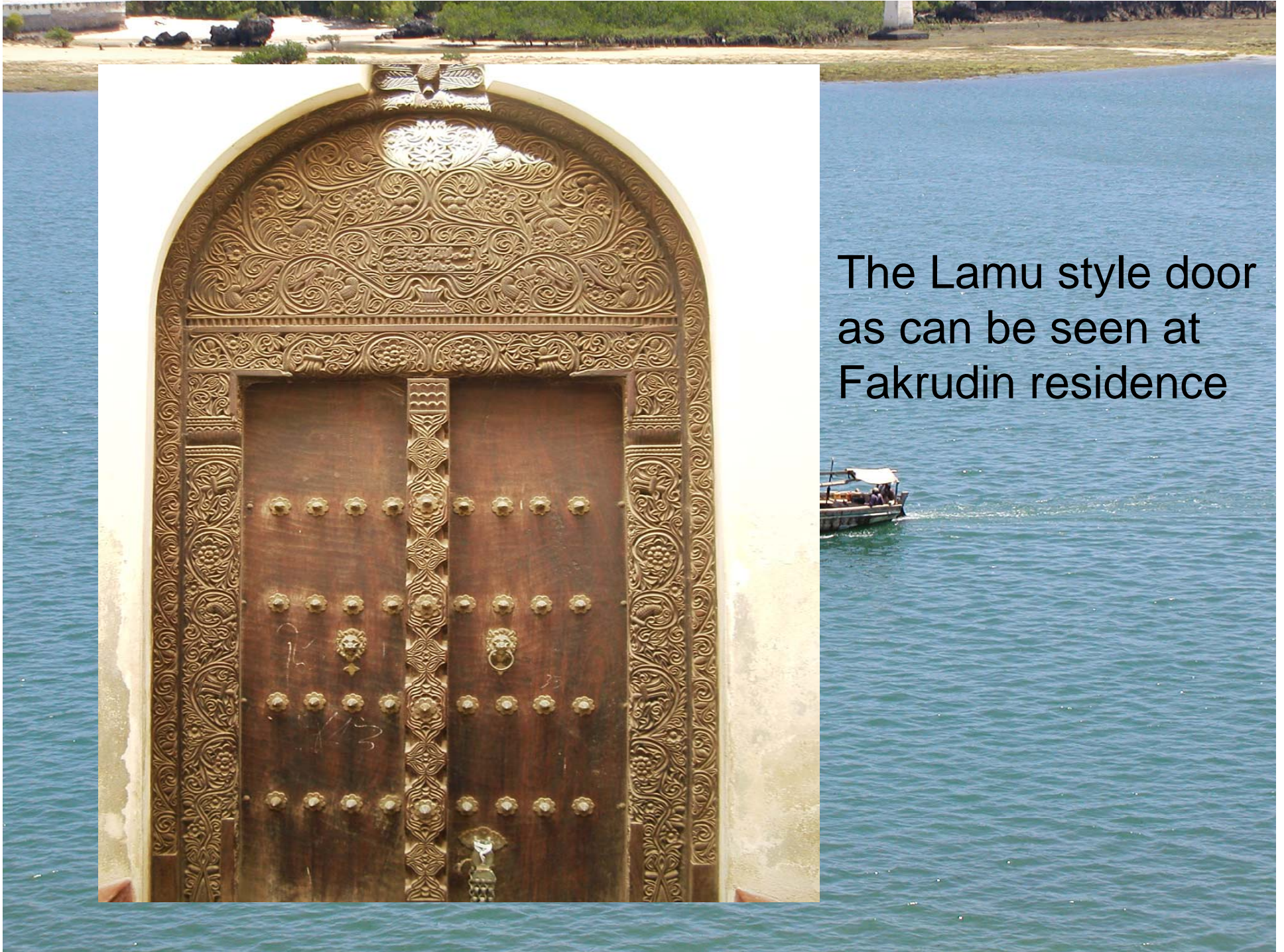
A Siu style door at Lamu Museum



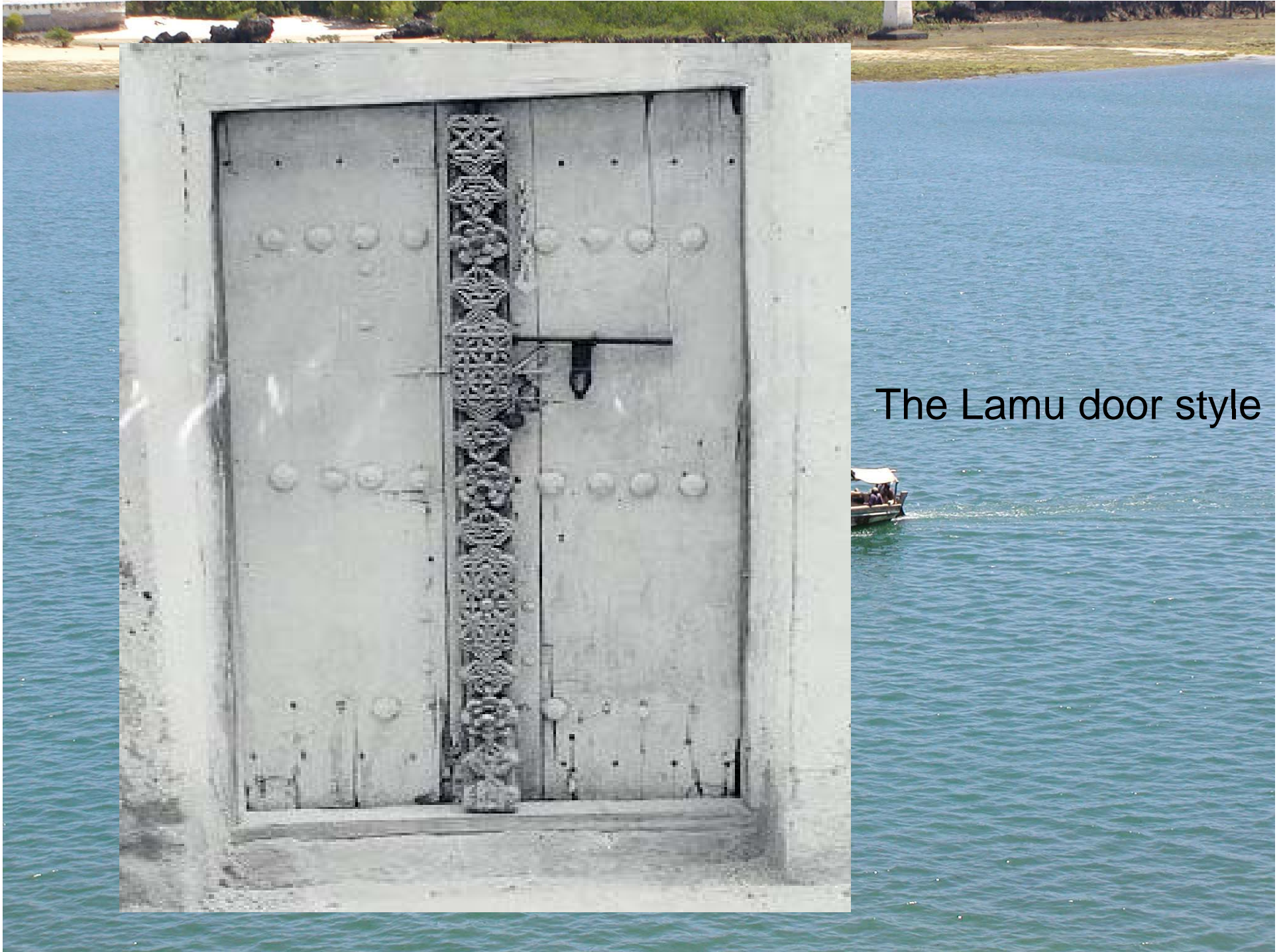
A typical Bajuni style door



A typical Zanzibar style door



The Lamu style door as can be seen at Fakrudin residence



The Lamu door style



A Gujerati style door
at Fatehali shop
in lamu

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

- **Balconies**
- Some balconies are a work of art in themselves with elaborate brackets and timber screen work
- Some balconies had elaborate wrought iron screens



**BALCONY ON NDIA KUU
ROAD**

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

- **Shuttered Windows**
- Some houses in the Old Town have shuttered windows these evolved out of the need to have both ventilation and privacy at the same time



Screened Balcony on Ndia Kuu
Rood

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

MANDHRY MOSQUE

- One of the oldest mosques in Mombasa, built in 1570/1.
- Present building dates to 1830.
- The apse-like *qibla* in the north wall indicates direction of Mecca.
- The mosque well is across the road and frontage dates to 1901.



Mandhry Mosque



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE MOMBASA OLD TOWN CONSERVATION AREA

- Historically, it was the centre of activity for Mombasa between the late sixteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- Successive rulers, including the Portuguese, the Mazrui, the al-Busaidi, and finally the British all centred themselves in this section of the Old town because of its proximity to both the fort and the excellent harbour.
- Most of the prominent businessmen and civic leaders of Mombasa have also lived in this area, resulting in the best houses and shops being constructed here.
- Currently, it has many of the oldest as well as the most architecturally significant buildings that remain in the Old Town.

The background of the slide is a photograph of a body of water, likely the Indian Ocean near Mombasa. In the foreground, a small wooden boat with a single mast is moving across the water, leaving a small wake. The water is a deep blue-green color. In the background, a shoreline is visible with some buildings, trees, and a sandy area. The sky is clear and bright.

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE MOMBASA OLD TOWN CONSERVATION AREA

- The Conservation Area also creates a very distinctive atmosphere.
- Because of the historical, architectural, and urban differences in the three areas, it was decided that the old Portuguese walled town with the additions mentioned above, would be the best place to begin a conservation effort in the Old Town.



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

Until the end of 80s and early 90s, the objectives of the Conservation Programme included:-

- planning, execution and actual implementation of the Conservation Programme.
- preparation of plans and proposals for restoration.
- provision of technical advice.
- monitoring of building activities within the Conservation Areas.
- improvement of public areas.
- setting up a legal framework for Conservation.



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MOMBASA OLD TOWN CONSERVATION AREA

- The Conservation Area has three distinct types of neighbourhoods:- the Swahili neighbourhood found on the interiors of sections XXIX, XXX, XLII, and parts of XXXIV. The predominant building type is the Swahili House, a one storey structure that is rectangular in plan. The pathways, which are all pedestrian, are defined by the facades of the buildings and are often crooked or make sudden turns with the variation of plot sizes and shapes
- Traditional Mombasa Style house neighbourhood which are much less inviting of public exchange. The buildings are two or three storeys and sit along narrow alleyways that follow the irregular shapes of the plots. They tend to feel far more dense than the Swahili neighbourhoods, the alleyways are much less conducive to stopping and socialising with neighbours.



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MOMBASA OLD TOWN CONSERVATION AREA

- The third type of neighbourhood is found on the waterfront in section XXXII. The owners of these plots were particularly important and wealthy people in Mombasa such as Sir Ali Bin Salim and Sir Mbarak bin Ali Hinawy, both Liwalis of Mombasa. The plots in this area are slightly larger than those in other areas, and in the last 20 years, many of the buildings have been radically altered, modernised, or torn down and replaced by new buildings. As a result, there are very few older buildings in this area. A large portion of this land is owned by the government, and there used to be a small public garden located in the area.



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

BUILDING TYPOLOGY IN THE MOMBASA OLD TOWN CONSERVATION AREA

- When examining the various buildings in order to determine a classification system for them, the following criteria were used: Method of Construction; Building Materials; Period of Construction; Function of the Building; External Facade and Architectural Characteristics; and Architectural Influences.
- Based on these criteria, the buildings in the Conservation Area were classified into the following eight different building types:
 - Swahili House; 26%
 - Mombasa Traditional House; 41%
 - 1930-1950 Shop House; 10%



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

BUILDING TYPOLOGY IN THE MOMBASA OLD TOWN CONSERVATION AREA

- Religious Buildings; 3%
- Administrative Buildings; 1.6%
- Commercial Buildings; 5%
- Contemporary Non-conforming Buildings; 11%
- and Other Non-conforming Buildings. 12%



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

PAST CONSERVATION PROJECTS

- In Mombasa there was the restoration of the Swahili Cultural Centre funded by ILO and UNDP to train artisans in woodcarving, masonry, decorative plasterwork and dress making
- Restoration of the Old Law Courts through funding from a variety of donors and the government
- Rehabilitation of Mandhry mosque , a 16th century mosque

The background of the slide is a photograph of a coastal scene. In the foreground, there is a body of blue water with a small, traditional wooden boat with a single mast and a white canopy. The boat is moving across the water, leaving a slight wake. In the background, there is a sandy beach with some sparse green vegetation and a few buildings. The sky is clear and bright.

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

PAST CONSERVATION PROJECTS

- In 1995 a major Conservation project, The Revival and development of Swahili Culture project was initiated whose aims were:-
- safeguarding historical sites and monuments
- Defining an institutional framework to conserve and safeguard Kenya's and, in future, other Eastern African historical towns, Sites and Monuments
- Strengthening the National Museums of Kenya's (NMK) capacity to carry on conservation projects, by increasing its resources and staff training

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

PAST CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Key Achievements of the Project:-

- A total of 22 houses (6 in Mombasa and 16 in Lamu) have been restored through the Community Conservation Fund (CCF)

One of the houses restored under the project



REVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT
OF SWAHILI CULTURE

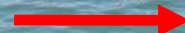
Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

PAST CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Key Achievements of the Project:-

- The remainder of the funds were used to pave 9800 sq. of Mombasa Old Town roads and landscape the Mombasa seafront

Part of the roads paved under the project



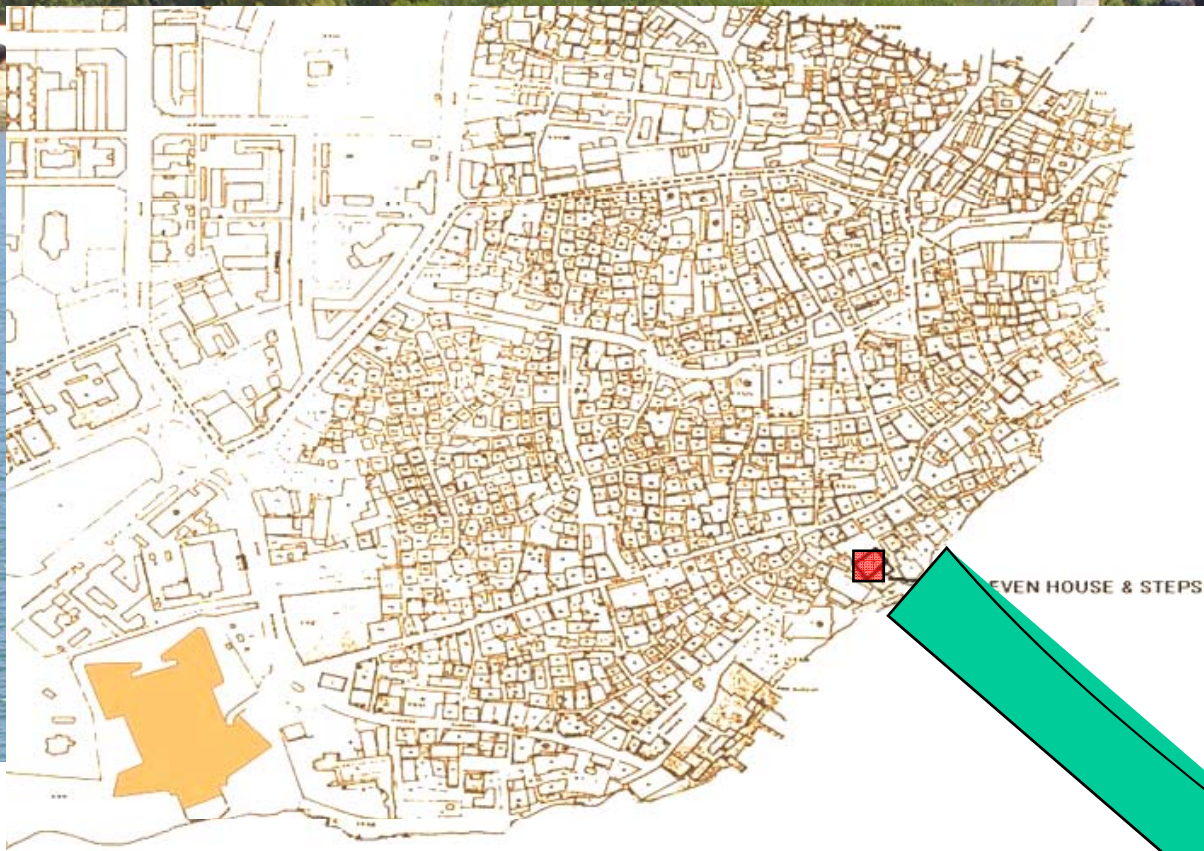
REVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT OF SWAHILI CULTURE



Restoration of Leven House - Mombasa

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project



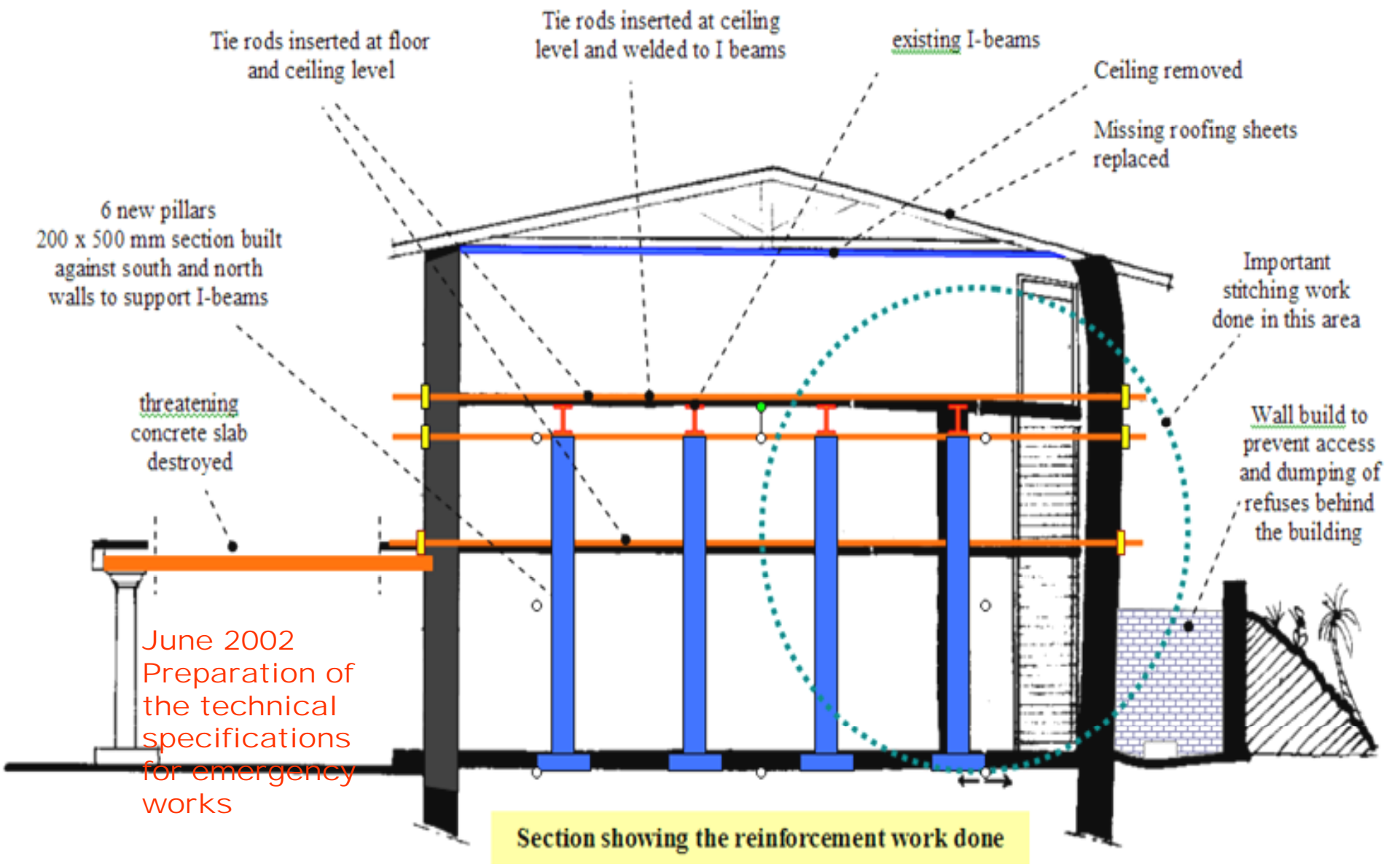


2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006



August - November 2001 : AFRICA 2009 Regional course
Stakeholders identified and start of management plan





2001 2002 2003 **2004** 2005 2006

100,000 US\$ allocated by AFRICA 2009.
Administrative procedures to prepare for the implementation

Discussion with the stakeholders on the possible uses of the building



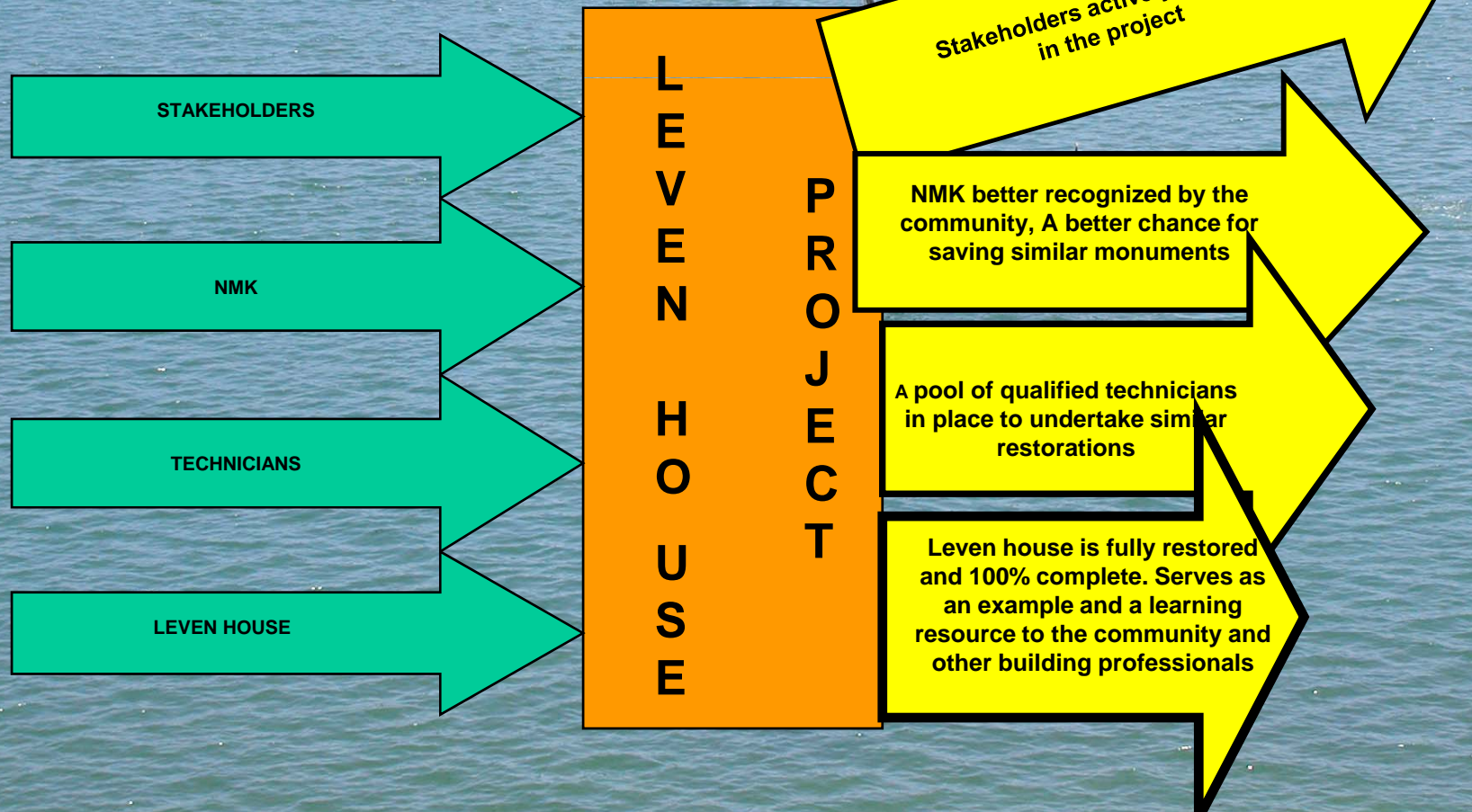
Second floor : MOTCO Offices + flat

First floor : Swahili museum

Ground floor : Commercial activities and swahili bar

2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008

RESULTS



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

Lessons for Addis Ababa
Legal Framework

Land,
Commercial and
other legislations

Environment
legislation

National
Physical
development
legislation

A legal framework
that is impervious to
other legal structures
on the ground – to
guarantee non-
interference on
initiatives in the
Addis Ababa Urban
Heritage Agenda

Local
development
legislation

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

Lessons for Addis Ababa
Technical Framework

Foreign &
Local professionals

International
Conservation
Conventions
and Norms

Environmental
and other factors

**LOCAL
TECHNICAL
EXPERTISE
(adaptation and
synthesis)**

Implementation

Addis Ababa
Urban Heritage
Agenda

S
U
S
T
A
I
N
A
B
I
L
I
T
Y

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

Lessons for Addis Ababa

Community and Stakeholder

Involvement

Local community,
artisans and other
local stakeholders

Heritage
Conservation
Professionals

Local and
Foreign interest
groups

**Formulation of
relevant Local
solutions as per
identified
priorities**

Implementation

Addis Ababa
Urban Heritage
Agenda

**S
U
S
T
A
I
N
A
B
I
L
I
T
Y**

Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

Lessons for Addis Ababa

Socio - Economic Initiatives

Local community,
artisans and other
local stakeholders

Heritage
Conservation
Professionals

Local and
Foreign interest
groups

**Identification of key
rejuvenation projects with
compatible economic activities –
aimed at revitalizing inner core
areas**

Implementation

Addis Ababa
Urban Heritage
Agenda

**S
U
S
T
A
I
N
A
B
I
L
I
T
Y**



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

Lessons

- **Ultimately any Conservation Programme that focusses only on physical aspects; such as the restoration of houses, the application of building guidelines, the rehabilitation of infrastructure and the re-landscaping of open public areas, among others, tends to freeze the development of historic areas.**
- **What is needed is the contextualization of such technical interventions within a development policy which is able to contribute to the strengthening of the socio-economic aspects of the community and cultural identity of the society as a whole.**



Mombasa Old Town Conservation Project

- **THE END**

- **AHSANTENI SANA**

- **THANK YOU**