

Friends  
At Bamburi Beach



Shee • Wambua  
Kariuki • Kerina

By  
HAWA NOOR MOHAMMED  
ULRICH HERMANN



Friends  
At Bamburi Beach

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Paintings and Carvings

BY

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ULRICH HERMANN

For Little Bachu with Love!  
And his First Maid, Saida.



© Hawa Noor Mohammed, Shee, Peter Wambua,  
Dixon Kariuki, Kerina, Ulrich Hermanns, 2015.  
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## Friends at Bamburi Beach

When I met Dixon Kariuki he was selling paintings to tourists at his place on Bamburi Beach. He presented his wares but I declined. Only after an intensive talk about painting did I find one piece which had a similarity to the styles I knew. It was of nomads returning home, painted in a funny, abstract way, an early work of Kariuki's himself who mainly sold paintings by local artists.

Their slim shapes reminded me a little of Dali and I could imagine that if these painters placed their canvases beneath each other, Kariuki's nomads would walk into Dali's surrealist world of burning giraffes or of swans reflecting elephants.

From that day, I looked at the artwork offered on the beach more thoroughly. It was worth the small effort. The paintings by the former farmer Shee from Lamu or Zanzibar fascinated me at first sight. Similarly, a few carvings showing so nicely the lost world of social ties generated by

physical closeness in magical positions.

The word 'folkloric' lost its constrained meaning. The reward was to see the sellers work in a new light. It unveiled their continuous efforts to earn a living - at an obviously low level. I started to look at things from the perspective of my new friends. Whether fruit seller, carver or woman offering a relaxing massage.

I felt a seller there myself, thinking in their terms.

### **Moving, moving, moving ...**

Our business culture at Bamburi Beach is unique! Why? Because the beach demands specific care in many regards. Imagine first the tides - our shops are placed next to the Ocean! Ebb and flow define the space left. So we are flexible in arranging our offer for you.

When the night comes, all shops have to close. But they have no walls or doors! So everything has to be packed and stored safely. The carts are important for shop operation here. Beside that we continuously use our energy to organize everything we sell very carefully for you. And sunshine is truly hot - sometimes!

So, if there are small signs of nature's power, don't worry, it makes the things you buy even more valuable!

### **Harambee - all together**

Life at Bamburi Beach is wonderful! This precious place on the Kenyan North Coast gives you all you need to enjoy and relax in a very unique way.

It has also always been the traditional market place where you can buy lovely goodies from fresh fruit, fashion and sandals to carvings and paintings. A wide range of pleasure services is also available -from relaxing massages, to boat hire, camel walking and accompanied excursions.

Take a look at our unique offer; we are Kenyans who operate shops here - often for a long time.

Please, note - even if a shop is small, it is the main source of income for most of us here. Enjoy your stay and don't forget to visit us - each day you spend your precious time here!

Looking forward to seeing you soon!

Shee  
Come Together, 2012  
Oil on Canvas,  
89,0 x 59,0 cm



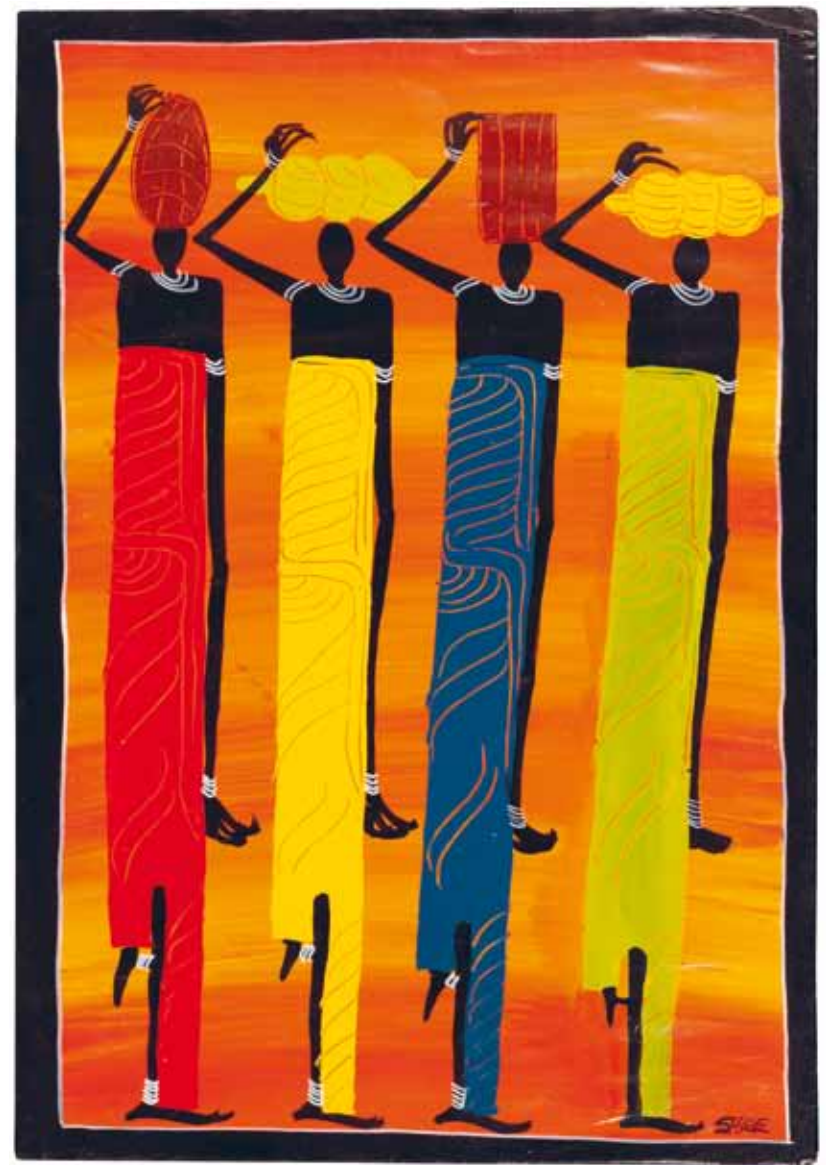


Shee  
Wild White Dancers, 2012  
Oil on Canvas,  
86,0 x 36,0 cm



Shee  
Homecoming, 2010  
Oil on Canvas,  
66,0 x 40,0 cm





Shee  
Homecoming, 2011  
Oil on Canvas,  
79,0 x 42,0 cm



Shee  
Wild Blue Dancers, 2010  
Oil on Canvas,  
81,0 x 28,0 cm





Shee  
Yellow Dancers, 2013  
Oil on Canvas,  
59,0 x 24,0 cm



Shee  
Dance, 2014  
Oil on Canvas,  
26,5 x 27,5 cm



Shee  
Celebration, 2014  
Oil on Canvas,  
68,5 x 40,5 cm





Shee  
Dancing, 2013  
Oil on Canvas,  
49,0 x 49,0 cm





Shee  
Harambee, 2011  
Oil on Canvas,  
65,5 x 35,5 cm





Shee  
Walking, 2014  
Oil on Canvas,  
27,5 x 29,5 cm

Shee, Lamu, Oil on Canvas, 2013, 63,0 x 41,0 cm





Peter Wambua, Celebration, 2008, Oil on Canvas, 111,0 x 81,5 cm







Peter Wambua, Party, 2014,  
Oil on Canvas, 35,0 x 23,0 cm

Peter Wambua  
Pink Party, 2010  
Acrylic on Canvas,  
26,0 x 35,0 cm





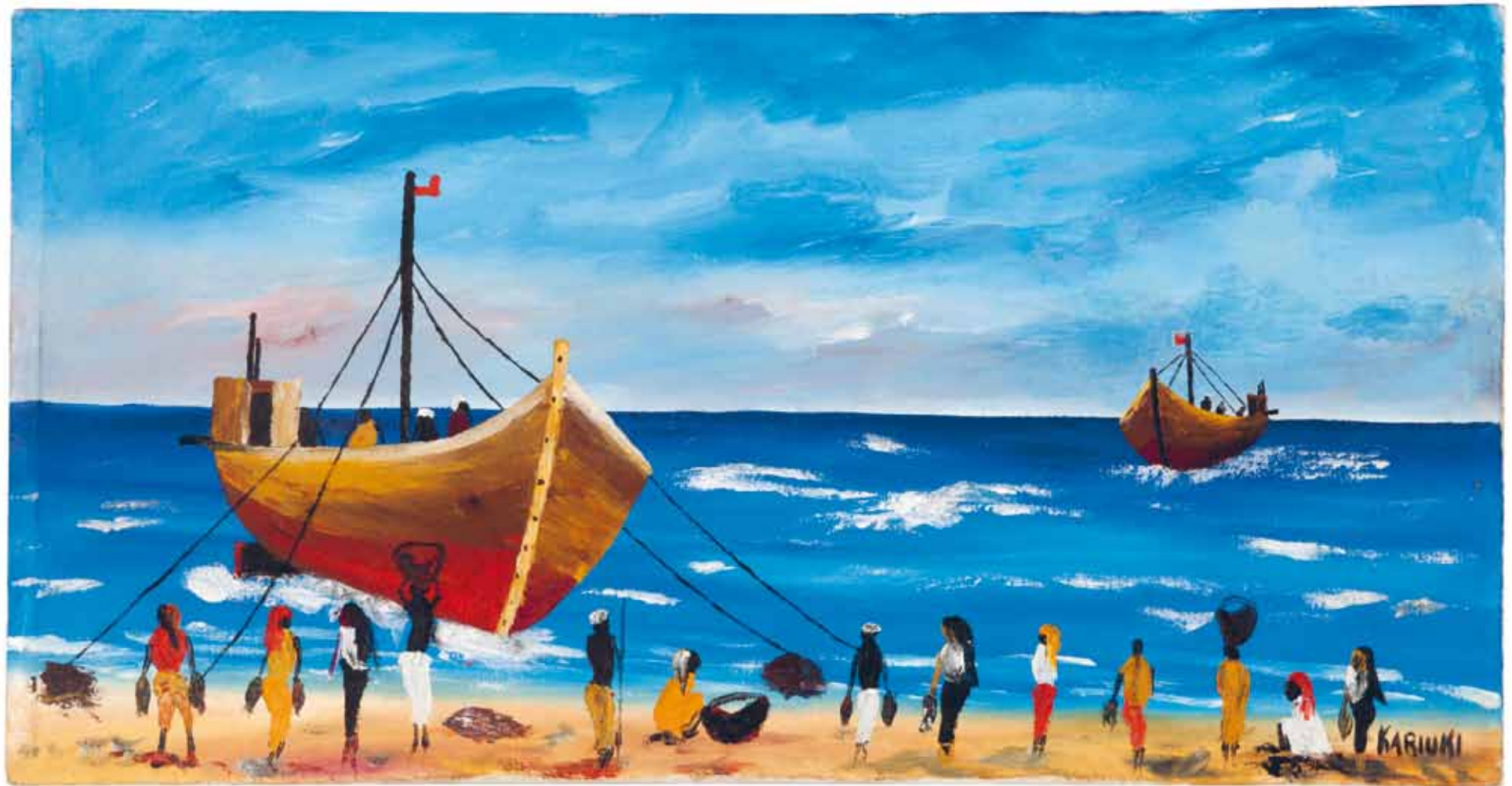
Peter Wambua  
Yellow Party, 2010  
Acrylic on Canvas  
25,0 x 38,0 cm





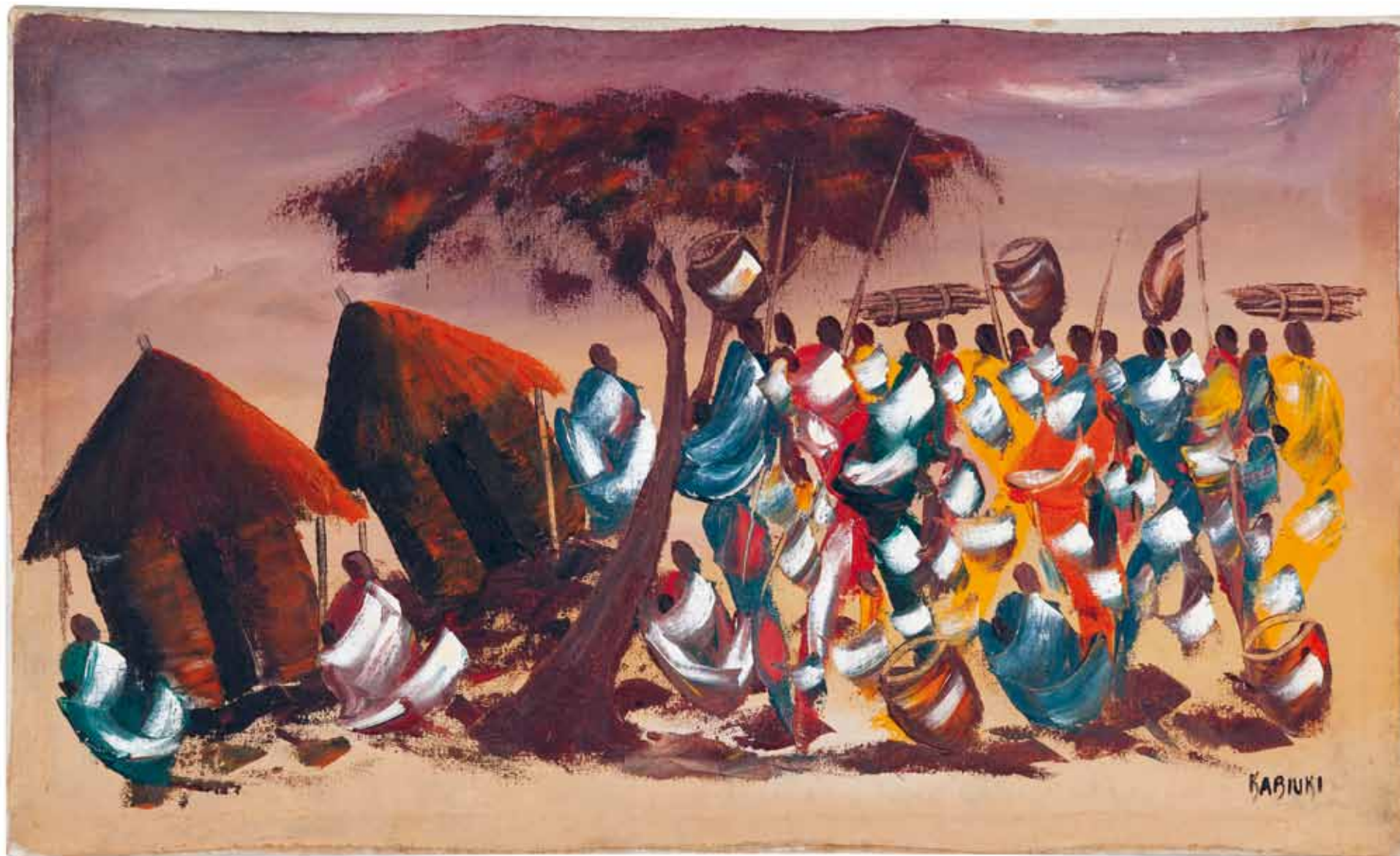
Dixon Kariuki  
Nomads, 2008  
Acrylic on Canvas,  
75,0 x 25,0 cm





Dixon Kariuki, Fish Market  
Acrylic on Canvas, 2008, 76,0 x 39,0 cm





Dixon Kariuki, Village  
Acrylic on Canvas, 2009, 64,0 x 38,0 cm

Kerina  
Water  
Acrylic on Canvas  
2013  
22,5 x 33,0 cm







Kerina  
Nomads  
Acrylic on Canvas  
2013  
25,0 x 38,0 cm



Makonde Style Carving  
All Together - Harambee  
Ebony Wood  
Height 320 mm  
2013



Makonde Style Carving  
Friends  
Ebony Wood  
Height 300 mm  
2013



Makonde Style Carving  
Very Busy  
Ebony Wood  
Height 290 mm  
2014



Makonde Style Carving  
Cool Relaxation  
Ebony Wood  
Height 325 mm  
2013



Carving  
Couple  
Ebony Wood  
Height 430 / 490 mm  
2013



ESSAY

Swahili Spirit

## Swahili Spirit at Bamburi Beach

Swahili culture was born a thousand years ago at the larger East African coast comprising of the current Somali, Kenyan and Tanzanian territories. Through trade, Arabs and Indians brought along their cultural practices to the native Africans at the coast in which basic ideas of the religion of Islam and the Arabic language met local traditions.

Since the late 17th century elaborated scripts on Swahili language are handed down. These early artifacts can still be studied today when the former dwellers directly transmitted their knowledge, opinions, experience and ideas of social life to their children and grandchildren. Continuous exchanges gave them the basics for peaceful co-existence.

Even when the main embodiments of trade were often mainly slaves, gold, jewellery and ebony sourced from central African regions, the East African coastal people

developed advanced skills, especially in handcraft trade and their exceptional hospitality was an added value. Besides, busy vegetables and fruits farmers cultivated the fertile soil under the warm climate, while talented cooks invented lovely dishes to feed an armada of hungry travelers.

From their Arabic customers the locals also learned how to build harbors and adopted medical skills. Besides, the fact that Swahili people love their sense of style as expressed in their fashion, hospitality and open-minded mentality, they always seem to keep themselves busy even in their sometimes-unfavorable hot weather as long as the work is worth it.

### **Differing Interests**

At Bamburi Beach, you find more than just the general traces of traditional Swahili behavior. Most traders display the known early spirit of social life and extending trade by selling hand made products such as carvings, clothes, sandals including fresh fruit and offering the famous traditional Swahili massage. Instead of organizing caravans they offer safaris and camel beach walks – their ability unfortunately restricted to the presence of tourists who

are their main customers.

In Kenya, today, as a colonialism aftermath and other related factors, a lot remains to be done in the provision of public health services and education, which is still inaccessible for the many underprivileged. On the other hand, globalization leaves its heavy marks on the local handcraft business. It is only a decade ago when weavers could walk from village to village in Tanzania to process local cotton harvests to nice versatile kanga clothes – but today mass products arriving from China have unfortunately replaced such locally produced beautiful commodities which are important in uplifting the living standards of the local people.

Therefore, social pressure as a result of globalization is not likely to support most ordinary Kenyans worsened by the handsome promises given by politicians during election periods that are hardly acted upon. While omnipresent mass media promote questionable ideals of behavior and ownership, it becomes even harder for people to continue respecting cultural values. This is the reason why the Swahili spirit is eroded by the day – Unfortunately! But: Not too Late ...

## **Improve and Support Swahili Spirit**

If you take a closer look at most locally produced products along the famous Bamburi Beach, you will definitely trace the Swahili spirit from the creativity used to make them. The products however represent more than just pieces of nicely handmade products because, behind the facade, the income generated is used to support families and educate children.

Therefore, during your holiday when you just want to relax, you may once in a while feel bothered by the traders as they try to sell their commodities. In such a case, kindly try to understand by remembering that there is an ever-growing pressure and competition on the sellers because many hotels located along the beaches have opened their own gift shops as a way of tapping the cash that tourists would instead be spending on those local beach traders. Also, please remember that in most of those shops, little salaries and low acquisition prices are made in exchange for high profits, which is not a fair deal to the original producers.

As a way of organizing themselves therefore, the official traders of Bamburi Beach wear badges to identify themselves –

a true sign of Swahili spirit's order.

Even if the local culture is more than just selling of commodities along a famous tourist beach, every buyer can only give what is in his or her own reach!

So, let's support local entrepreneurship. Let's build a better world by uplifting local living standards through sustainable tourism!

And don't forget to visit Fort Jesus in Mombasa's Old Town! See the next but one page!

For further information, read:  
Ali and Alamin Mazrui, Swahili State and Society, 1995.

**Kwaheri na baadaye!**



[www.life-at.com](http://www.life-at.com)



Fort Jesus, Mombassa Old Town



#### Recommendations

Maybe you listen to the peaceful songs of **Nyota N'Dogo** while watching the paintings and carvings. Enjoy a walk along Bamburi Beach and relax with a massage by **Joyce, Fatuma** and her friends. Buy some fruit from **Elizabeth, Stella** and her colleagues, look for carvings by little Peter and other carvers, talk to the painters and buy their work!

#### Credits to:

**Simon** (see above), owner of Simon's Beach Gallery, Bamburi Beach (Kenya) for providing paintings of Shee, Wambua, Kerina and the spirit of friendship. **Peter**, for providing Makonde style carvings. **Whitesand's Cooperative** for several carvings (p. 52, 63). **Thomas Philippi** (Solingen, Germany) for photography (p. 13 - 61).

