

# ASMRB: Pulp Mombasa

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## MOMBASA, Kenya, Africa Population 42,000

*Hotels for Officers.* MANOR, Salim Road, Tel. 112, rooms 15/50 up. PALACE, Killindini Road, tel. "Palace", rooms 15/- up. REX, Killindini Road, tel. 319, rooms 15/- up.

*Seamen's Homes.* SEAMEN'S INSTITUTE (Missions to Seamen, London), temporary quarters Killindini Road, tel. 262. Shower, canteen, reading and writing rooms, library, billiards, table tennis. THE SERVICES CANTEEN, tel. 432. Restaurant, lunch counter, reading and writing rooms, library, table tennis, concerts, dances, cinema, etc.

*Seamen's Bank.* Consult Port Captain, dock area.

*Legal Aid.* American Consulate, through the Provincial Commissioner.

*Hospitals.* European Hospital (whites), tel. 561. Native Hospital (colored), tel. 550.

*Venereal Disease Clinics.* At the hospitals (8 a.m. to 12 m.).

*Physicians.* Medical Officer, European Hospital. Dr. W. N. Sargent, Native Hospital. Dr. J. H. Chataway, Native Hospital.

*Dentists.* C. E. Thomas (dental surgeon), tel. 921.

*Laundries.* European Laundry, Killindini Road, tel. 209.

*Amusements.* Moving pictures: Regal; Majestic.

*Points of Interest.* The town itself. Fort Jesus, 16th century.

*Caution:* Not a "pay off" port. Seamen who miss their ships are subject to penalties provided by law. Tropical helmets should be worn because of great heat.

*American Consulate:* At Nairobi, 400 miles.

-- from the *Seamen's Guide to Shore Leave*, 1944

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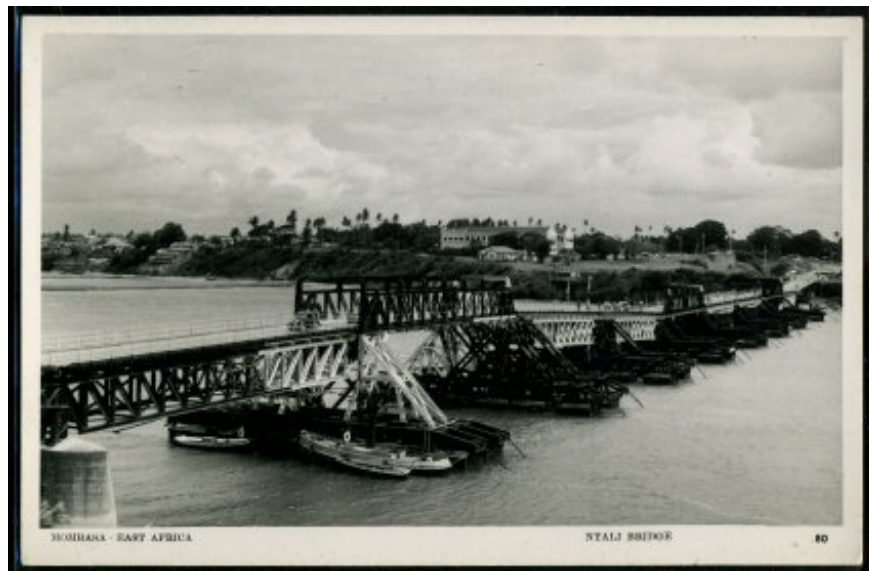
Mombasa is on an island about two miles wide and four miles long, connected by a pontoon bridge (constructed 1931), ferries and two causeways with the mainland.

Small coastal vessels and *dhow*s still use the shallow harbor, east of the island; the deepest parts of the old port are about 33' below average sea level, and most of it is unsuitable for vessels drawing more than 20' of water.

Killindini Harbor is 25 to 30 fathoms deep in the center, and at least 15 fathoms deep in the narrow channel leading to the sea. However, the water along the pier is only suitable for ships drawing 27' of draft, or less. Tidal fluctuation is semi-diurnal, that is, there are two highs and two lows during each 24-hour period; high tide is about 9 feet above the mean, and low tide about 2' 6" below the mean. The wharf at Killindini Harbor can only accomodate 3000' worth of ships; others must anchor out in the harbor. The port can provide fuel oil and coal.

Most of the water in the Port Tudor area, and west of Port Reitz, is tidal flats and swamps.

There are a *lot* of shipwrecks in the waters around Mombasa.



*Nyali pontoon bridge, constructed 1931*

*"... sailors and visitors arriving by ship would have seen lush vegetation with great baobabs clustered at the edge of the grey coral cliffs together with coconut palms, varieties of giant tropical figs, flame trees and spathodeas with their brilliant red blooms and casuarina pines mingled with broad-leaved indigenous trees. Pawpaw and mango trees grew in backyards and the grass would have been a brilliant green. The red corrugated-iron roofed bungalows of the residential areas would have been mostly hidden behind the foliage. The streets of double-storied shops, offices and small apartment buildings in the commercial centre would showed themselves in shifting glimpses."*

An aerodrome, with airship mast, and a seaplane harbor, are established on the mainland near Port Reitz (northwest of the island). No RAF units are based here, although the airfield was built for military uses. RAF survey and transport aircraft, usually Supermarine Southampton flying boats, visit from time to time.

Most of the policemen are Sikhs; the railway staff, crane operators, and other "technical" people are largely Indians. Small shops are run by Arabs; larger shops and markets are run by Chinese, Goans, Persians, Indians, etc.. There are Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches, Hindu temples, mosques, etc.

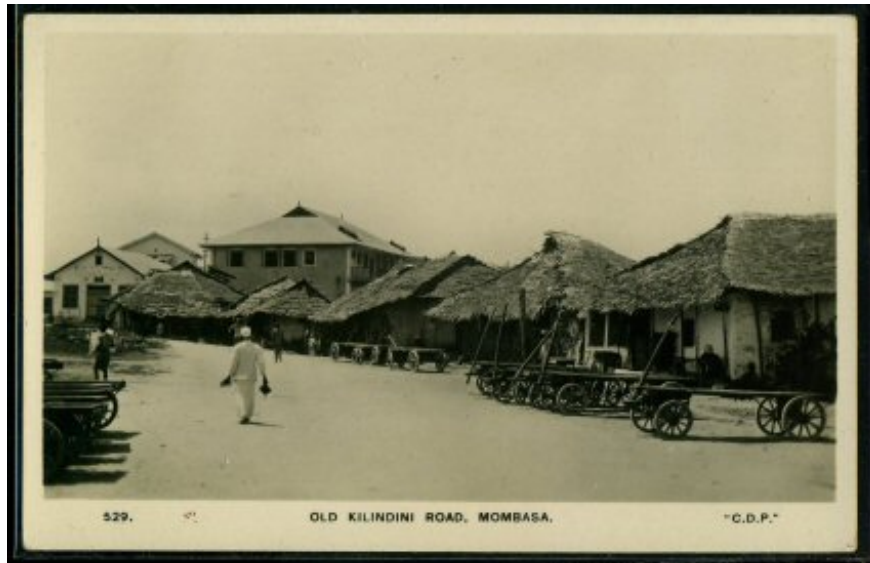
Kilindini Road is the main east-west thoroughfare on the island; it connects the deepwater harbour with the old town. The *Manor Hotel* is the largest in the country, with 54 beds; it is seen in both of the next two pictures (on the right side in the top photograph, on the left side of the next photograph).



*Kilindini Road, at Salim Road*

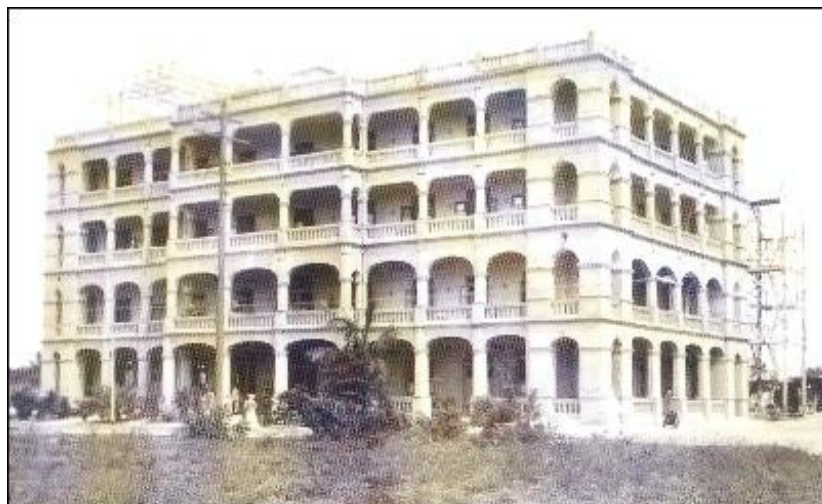


*Salim Road, at Kilindini Road*



*Kilindini Road, outside of downtown*

Another large hotel is the *Palace* (36 beds), on Kilindini Road:



The *Regal Theatre* was constructed in 1931, on Salim Road.



Weather in August and September: 72 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit average; humidity 70% to 80%; 2.5" of rain per month, with rain about half of the days.

The overnight train journey from Mombasa to Nairobi leaves at 7 pm each evening, arriving the next day at 8:30 am. Another train departs from Nairobi for Mombasa at the same time.

Mombasa is connected to an extensive intercontinental telephone network, including links to North America. *Campaign note: we're well aware that this is 20 years before any transatlantic telephone services historically, and 30 years before the Kenyan telephone network had any connections outside of eastern Africa.*

Local languages in Mombasa: English, Swahili. Arabic, Chinese dialects, Portuguese, Hindi, Farsi, etc. are used by immigrants and traders. Out of the 40,000 persons in Mombasa in 1932, "... 900 were Europeans, 6,000 were Arabs, 12,000 Asians, and 20,000 were Africans." Back in 1918, the total population was only 30,000, with only 230 Europeans.





*Vasco da Gama street in Mombasa*

A notable social center for the "upper classes" is the *Mombassa Sports Club*, with polo ground, rugby/soccer fields and a cricket pavilion, tennis courts, boxing rings, squash court, lawn bowling green, gymnasium, etc.; plus two bars (the Men's Bar and the Lounge Bar) and a dining room. Subscriptions cost 20 East African shillings per month (quite expensive). There are a few other, cheaper sports and athletic clubs, as well.

There are no nightclubs, casinos or even beach hotels. The main daily newspaper is the *East African Standard*, which comes down from Nairobi by train.

Adjacent to Fort Jesus is the *Mombasa Club*, established in 1885; besides drinking, dining and snooker, this club operates a nine-hole golf course (the tournament is in August) of particular beauty, surrounded by white sandy beaches and tropical greenery. This club is considered more 'staid and elderly' than the Mombasa Sports Club.



*The Mombasa Club, near the 1st hole of the golf course*

The *Mombasa Yacht Club* has a pleasant clubhouse and dock along the west side of the island.

The currency is the *East African Shilling*, worth the same as a regular shilling, and divided into 100 cents. Notes for 20 East African Shillings or more carry their pound sterling equivalents on them also.

A company of the King's African Rifles, and a battery of the East African Artillery, are stationed outside of town (on the mainland). There is a large military and naval hospital. Harbour defenses consist of some (not currently deployed) anti-submarine booms, a few pillboxes with mounts for machine guns (not installed), a couple of searchlight bunkers, and several harbour defence motor launches. A battery of two 6" guns is proposed for Ras Serani, at the easternmost end of the island; construction of the gun bunkers won't be finished until 1936. Fort Jesus is in use as a prison (the provincial gallows are inside); the walls are about 17 meters high.

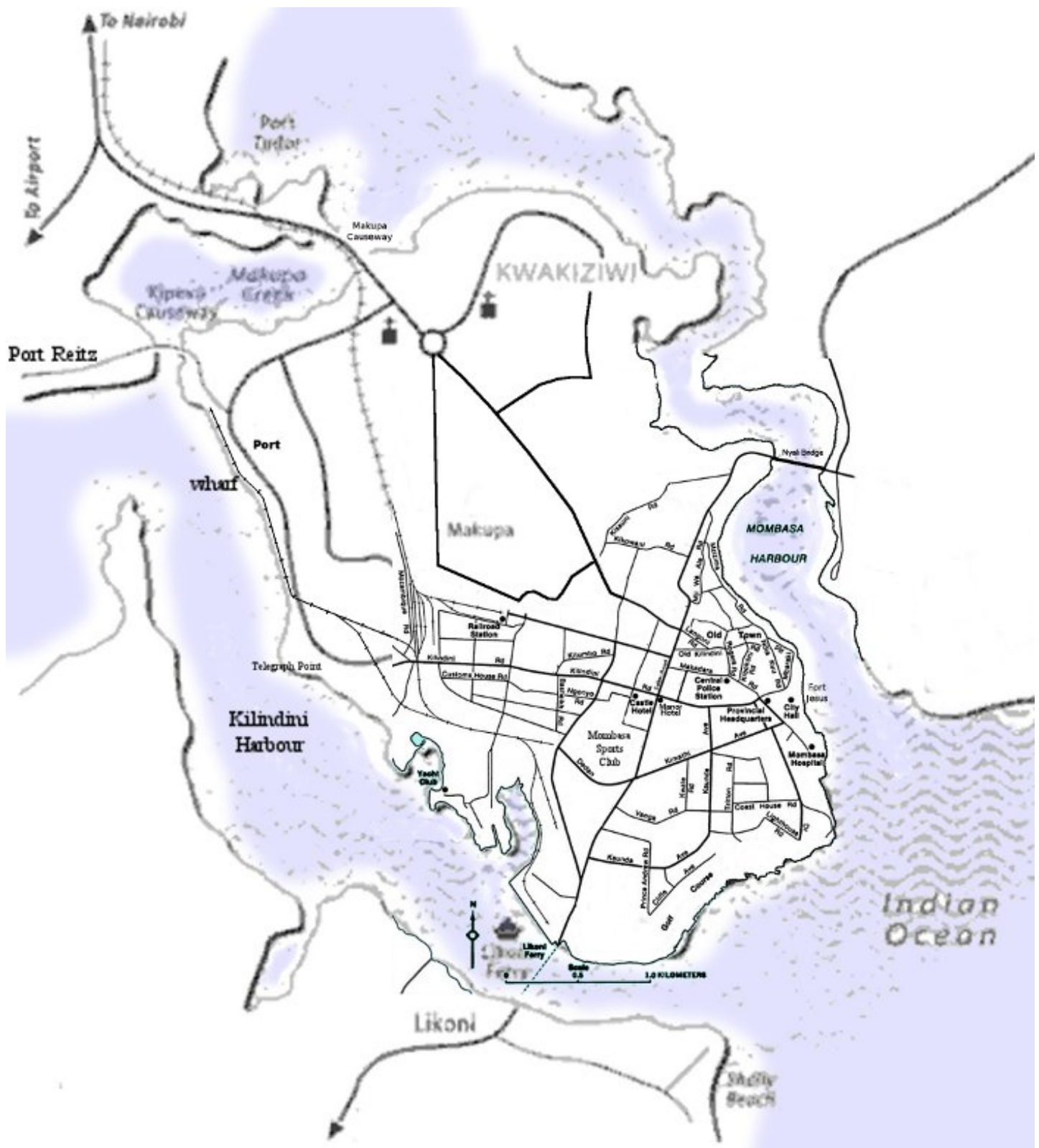
The pontoon bridge at Nyali (largest in the world) was built by Nyali Limited, a sisal plantation company; they own much land on the coast north of Mombasa. There are 6 or so palm-thatched coral masonry bungalows available for rent on the north shore.

The island side of the ferries, causeways and bridge all have police checkpoints -- identity cards must be shown by anyone not obviously white. And of course in emergencies, *everyone* can be stopped and searched.



*Fort Jesus*

Naval operations (under the [East Indies Station](#)) are centered on the Kilindini naval base; the local HQ is Navy House, at Telegraph Point. Mombasa can provide fuel, water and provisions, but no ammunition nor any large-scale repair.



More information on Kenya at the [Rift Valley page](#).