

Lamu Fort Historical Background

The construction of Lamu Fort commenced in 1813, shortly after Lamu's victory over Pate and Mombasa in the battle of Shela. This major building task was reputedly undertaken with the cooperation of Seyyid Said, the Sultan of Oman who was then cultivating a promising new alliance with Lamu.

Upon its completion in about 1821 the fort marked the southern corner of the traditional stone town and served as a garrison for Baluchi soldiers sent by the Sultan of Oman. Its protective presence encouraged new development around it, for example it was at this time that some Lamu merchants erected the 19th century shopfront and buildings. By 1900 the Fort had become a central to the community, a role which it still plays today.

It served as a prison from 1910 to 1984 to both the British colonial regime and the Kenya government, before it was handed over to the National Museums of Kenya in 1984. Efforts to turn the Fort into a museum were started with technical and financial assistance from Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). With its inception as a museum with environmental conservation as its general theme; Lamu Fort is basically a community center for the people of Lamu old town.

The courtyard is available for weddings, meetings and theatre productions. At the ground floor there is a large exhibition space, which most recently hosted the first Environmental Museum in Africa. Upstairs there are administrative offices, laboratories, a workshop and a rooftop with impressive views over the town. There is also an excellent conference facility that is available for hire.

Lamu Fort is a massive two storey stone structure located in Lamu Old town, Lamu District. It lies about 70 meters inland at the main jetty within Grid Reference 114 498 on the Lamu 1:50,000, Kenya Survey Map sheet No. 180/1.