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# SITES AND SETTLEMENT PATTERNS OF COASTAL JUBALAND, SOUTHERN SOMALIA

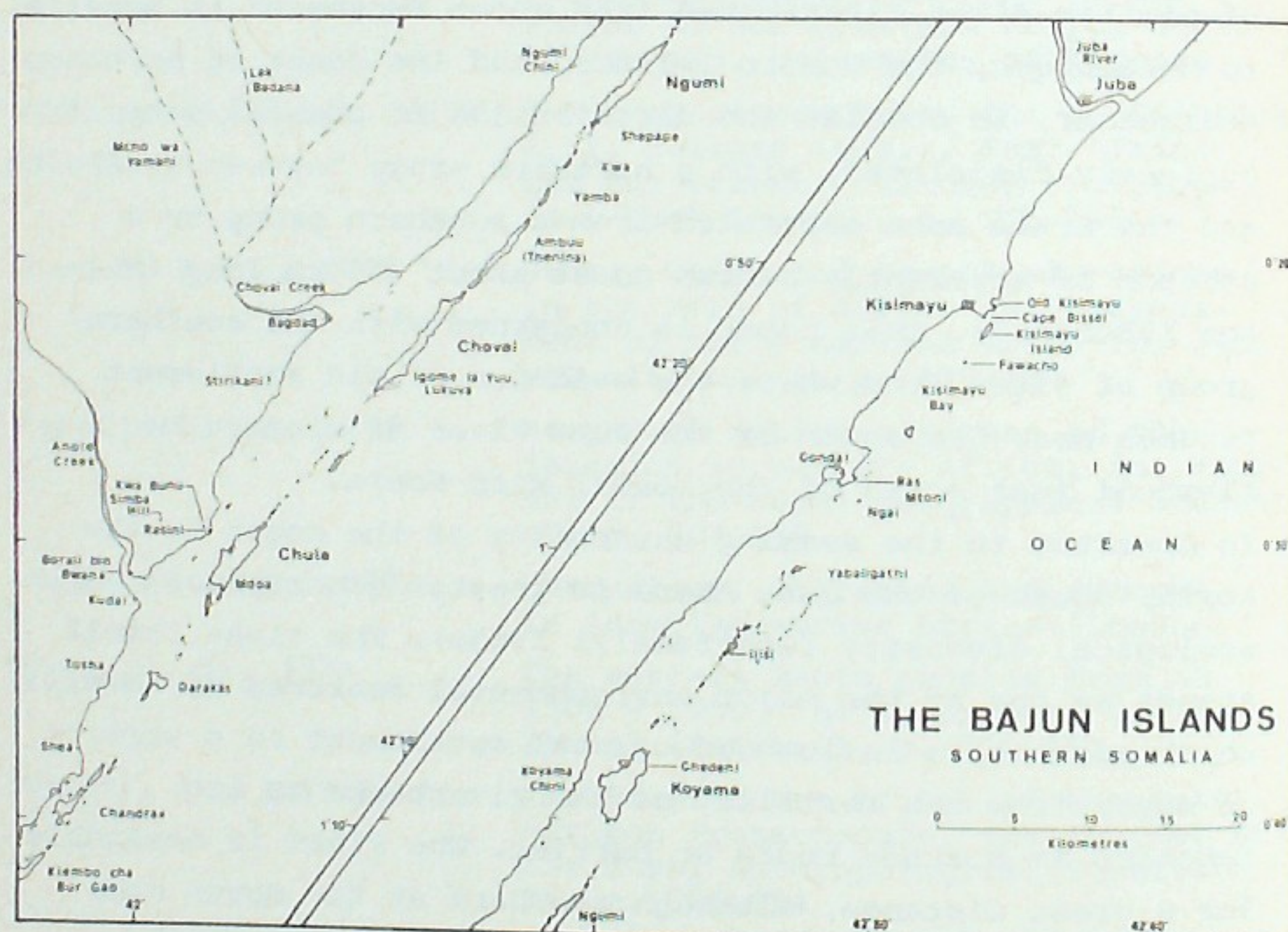
This paper discusses the archaeological sites and settlement patterns of the coast of southern Somalia from the Juba River to the Kenya frontier. The sites of coastal Jubaland<sup>I</sup> comprise a relatively small and poorly-known but important group of ruins that forms part of a large number of similar sites distributed from about Warsheikh in Somalia to Mozambique, the Comoro Islands, and the coast of northern Madagascar. In Somalia the distribution of coastal sites is curiously disjointed, with a northern group between Warsheikh and the Brava area separated from a southern group by a stretch of apparently barren coast about 235 km long (Wilson 1980b:5-7). This paper is concerned with the southern group of sites from where the evidence of old settlement resumes near the mouth of the Juba River at Kismayu to Kiamboni just north of the border with Kenya.

In contrast to the seeming uniformity of the coast to the north, south of the Juba there is greater geographical and ecological diversity (Grottanelli 1955a). The river itself stands as one of the major environmental features of Somalia, which might have influenced coastal settlement in a variety of ways, from the fertility of the riverbanks to its function as a trade route or barrier. The river is navigable for a great distance, although sandbars at the mouth complicate entrance from the sea. No sites have come to light around the river's mouth, perhaps because Kismayu, on a bay 16 km to the south, then as now functioned as the Juba port by providing the shelter the mouth lacks. South of Kismayu



Bay the Bajun Islands stretch away to the southwest, forming a geographical system of islands close offshore with mainland creeks opposite that favoured settlement just as similar systems did elsewhere on the coast. The chain has been called "the 500 isles" because of the numerous little atolls, projections, and sandbars that protrude between the major islands of Koyama, Ngumi, Chovai, and Chula, which parallel the coast for almost 100 km from Yabaligathi just south of Ras Mtoni to the Kiombo cha Bur Gao (figure 1).

Figure 1. The Bajun Islands



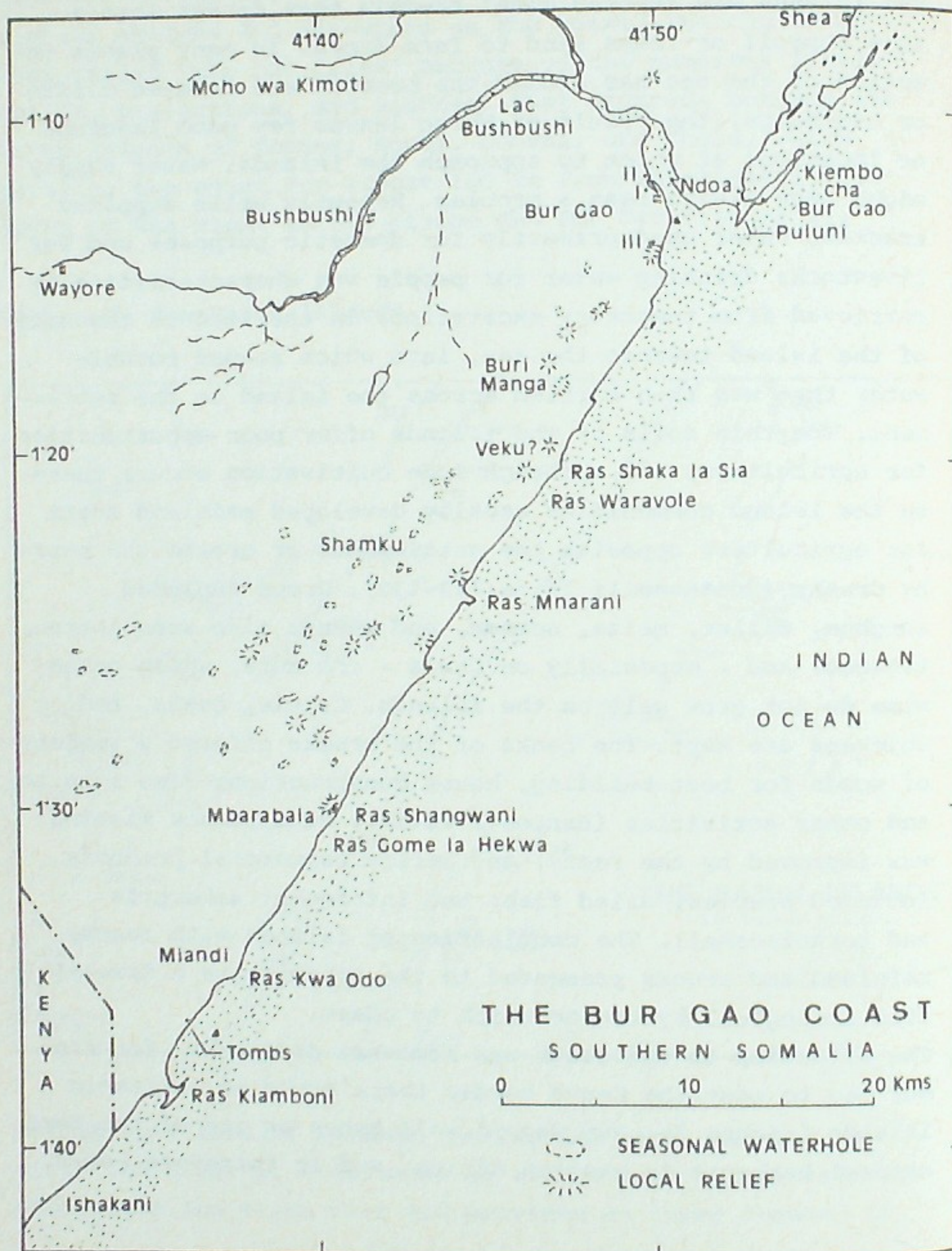
Within this line of islands, reefs, and bars, which runs along the coast at a distance of two to four kilometers from shore, the sea stays calm and provides an inner channel or

bahari ndani for ships whose skippers would rather navigate the shallow passages than face the swell of the open ocean. The islands are exposed coral breccia that decays into a thin topsoil or traps sand to form dunes. In many places the action of the sea has eroded the breccia and created cliffs or overhangs, the result of which leaves few good landings or locations at which to approach the islands. Water supply might have always been a problem. Recently wells supplied brackish water used primarily for domestic purposes and for livestock; drinking water for people was characteristically retrieved from temporary excavations in the sand on the side of the island towards the sea, into which seeped potable water that was then carried across the island to the settlement. The thin soils of the islands offer poor opportunities for agriculture, and although some cultivation occurs thereon the island communities usually developed mainland areas for agriculture opposite the settlements or around the nearby creeks (Grottanelli 1955a:127-130). Crops included sorghum, millet, maize, sesame, and beans; also some cotton, tobacco, and - especially on Chula - coconuts, which otherwise do not grow well on the islands. Cattle, goats, and chickens are kept. The banks of the creeks offered a variety of woods for boat building, house construction, lime burning, and other activities (Barton 1922:39). Subsistence fishing was improved by the reefs, and marine commercial products included cowries, dried fish, and infrequent ambergris and tortoiseshell. The combination of islands with nearby mainland and creeks presented to the inhabitants a diversified ecological system to which to adapt.

The situation to the south was somewhat different, for from Bur Gao to past the Kenya border there occur no habitable islands (figure 2). Bur Gao is well known as one of the best natural harbours in eastern Africa, and it therefore comes



Figure 2. The Bur Gao Coast



as little surprise that two of the largest sites of southern Somalia lie on the south bank of the creek. Perhaps not so widely appreciated is the fact that some of the most fertile land of the district occurs between the upper reaches of Anole Creek and Wayore on the Lac Bushbushi above Bur Gao, an area also of relatively good groundwater supply (Barton 1922:39). Behind the coastline south of Bur Gao a series of seasonal rainwater pools extends for a considerable distance. How these might have affected coastal settlement is unclear, but they must have greatly increased the carrying capacity of the land for animals. This area might have been attractive for groups practicing various economic strategies.

#### Archaeological sites of coastal Jubaland

Surprisingly enough, no one has previously attempted to make a detailed synthesis of the archaeology of the southern end of the coast of Somalia. Such a synthesis entails: distinguishing each site and each structure from others in the often confusing literature; reconciling site names and variant spellings; determining when possible the size, date, and nature of the remains at each site; and locating each site with reasonable accuracy. The purpose of this lengthy section is to reconcile the various accounts for each of the 28 sites under consideration, and to interpret and synthesize this information comprehensively.

Old Kismayu stands as the northernmost site in coastal Jubaland, located on and behind the headland known as Cape Bissell to the east of Kismayu town. The high rocky coral headland of the cape joins the mainland by a neck of low-lying sand dunes. On the heights of the cape Révoil visited a ruined mosque and tombs as well as "vestiges of the ancient habitations" (1888:395). At the time of Elliot's visit the



mosque had been dismantled and the stones of the walls and kibla removed to Kismayu (I926:I59-I63). Near the interface between the coral promontory and the dunes Elliott found a cemetery exposed by erosion in the sandy cliff face at a depth of about 1.5 - 2 m below the surface. He saw human bones, ceramics, cannonballs, and beads of carnelian, turquoise (?), glass, bone, and ivory. He traced an apparent water duct by digging, and reported (house ?) walls nearby and a possible landing place of masonry. His ceramic collection appears to include celadons, white and blue and white porcelains, Islamic monochromes, and stonewares. As a group these suggest the 15th and 16th century period, if the ascriptions are correct. The apparent depth of the deposit and variety of artifacts at Old Kismayu suggest that the location would repay archaeological investigation. It may well be the site of old Juba.

Present-day Kismayu stands at the north end of Kismayu Bay on an anchorage protected by the projecting Cape Bissell headland to the northeast and Kismayu Island close offshore to the southeast. The reefs and salient rocks of the area imperil navigation but nevertheless offer protection from incoming waves and form a good anchorage (Owen I833,I:363). Elliott found the approximately 4000 persons of Kismayu engaged in the export of hides, maize, and cotton in return for manufactured goods, especially cotton cloth (I9I3:558). Brenner mentioned a small fort with embrasures, outer wall, and well, that was built at the end of the 18th century to protect vessels at anchor (I868:362). Kismayu Fort is located on Owen's map, but might have been dismantled by this century as later visitors do not comment upon it. The only mention of ruins on Kismayu Island is by Grottanelli (I955a:76), who wrote of ruins "on the small island now uninhabited that closes (Kismayu Bay) at the north."

Sailing down the bay one passes Pillar Rock on the mainland and Fawacho Islet to the east. To the south lies Gondal Bay, where ruins occur at Gondal, the small, flat, T-shaped promontory that forms the southern end of Kismayu Bay (Elliot I926:246; Grottanelli I955a:76). Dracopoli wrote of two buildings and a "shrine", which one can identify as a mosque mihrab from the accompanying photograph (I9I4:opposite p. 40, 57-59). He mentioned walls of masonry about 90 cm wide and 9 m long, the width of which suggests a mosque rather than domestic structure.

South of Ras Mtoni the channel widens and fewer obstacles restrict navigation. A line of rocky outcrops that parallels the mainland shore at a distance of about 3.5 km protects the inner passage. Elliott recorded the names of some of the outcrops (I926:246): Yabaligathi, Ilisi, Buli, Fuma Mkubwa, and Fuma Nyangwe. The lee side of Koyama Island offers natural protection, and the landing place occupies a projecting sand spit on the northwest side, at one of the few spots on the perimeter of the island not faced with steep, jagged coral cliffs. In the early part of this century coconuts, some grain, and tobacco were grown, goats and sheep were raised, and a cloth slightly different from that of the Benadir was produced. Barton found the wells of Koyama "extremely brackish" (I922:33). The village of Ghedeni lies near the landing, and Koyamani stands toward the eastern dunes near the highest point of the island.

Most ruins are around Ghedeni. On a coral cliff near the landing stands a small mosque built by one Mwenyi Mwii and dated apparently by inscription to A.H. I224, A.D. I809-I8I0 (Barton I922:33). Elliott reported a second more recent dilapidated mosque nearby (I926:247-250). The ruins of the old settlement occupy the area near the harbour northeast of Ghedeni. Two remarkable pillar tombs command attention



(Grottanelli 1955a:figures 9, 10; Révoil 1888:399). The northern tomb has the higher pillar, an octagonal shaft stepped at the top that rises 4.6 m above the ground. Panels and friezes of niches decorate the enclosure wall. Elliot read an inscription (48 X 30 cm) set into the wall directly below the pillar as the tomb of Ali bin Hassan bin Omar bin Hussein, with the uncertain date A.H. 1009, A.D. 1600-1601. The southern tomb has a square pillar rising above walls that measure 2.6 m from the foundation to the flat top of the wall. The wall panels are noticeably tall in relation to width (120 X 46 cm). Two rows of rectangular niches surmount the panels, the first occurrence of a rare double niche frieze design that one finds again at Bur Gao. The two sets of steps, each about 30 cm wide, that ascend the west wall of the tomb are also uncommon. Near these tombs stands a small mosque with the kibla intact, the features of which include an unread inscription and an mtambu leaf carved in low relief above the mihrab opening (Brenner 1868:362). Low arched piers once supported the roof of this structure. Nearby, three doorways with pointed arches survive in a larger structure, perhaps also a mosque. More ruins lie scattered over the relatively small area, which was surrounded by a wall. More tombs occur at Koyamani, one with a short pillar pierced through the base by an arched hole (Grottanelli 1955:figure 11). Brenner's "carefully worked cistern" at the highest point on the island probably refers to a plain tomb enclosure. Nothing is demonstrably early at either location on Koyama Island. On the basis of the funerary inscription, the Islamic monochromes from Koyamani (Grottanelli 1955a:389-392, no. 18-21), and the style of the tombs, the main occupation of the island would not seem to predate the 16th century. Brenner recorded ruins opposite Koyama Island some few

minutes inland from the coast, which he took to be large houses and other remnants of walls, in a valley at the base of wooded hills of dune sand (1868:362). Chittick's informants confirmed ruins on the mainland opposite Koyama, called Koyama Chini (1969:123). Brenner wrote that the soil in this area is rich and humic, and that attempts by the islanders to cultivate there had to be abandoned due to Orma pressure in 1862. A tradition survives that the islands were populated from the Koyama mainland, with each section of the people cutting its mark on a baobab tree before crossing (Barton 1922:33; Elliot 1926:252).

Ngumi is the next large island south of Koyama. Between the two islands the water flows along a relatively deep channel without obstructions and with access to the sea. Small numbers of fishermen visit Ngumi periodically, but the island now lacks permanent inhabitants, perhaps because water must be retrieved from Koyama (Révoil 1888:398; Barton 1922:34; Elliot 1927:147, 253-256, 338; Chittick 1969:123, pls. XVIIb, XVIIa). The anchorage at Ngumi lies below one of the highest dunes on the landward side of this narrow island. The ruins stand close to the shore overlooking the inner channel, between the water and the eastern dunes. The plain, high-walled tombs of the cemetery cluster a kilometer or so away on the southwest side near the cliffs at the sea's edge (Grottanelli 1955a:figure 13). Settlement at Ngumi was dense within the town wall. Chittick identified a large mosque (c. 12-15 X 9 m) in a state of advanced delapidation; otherwise it appears that houses comprise the relatively large amount of standing masonry. Nothing in Grottanelli's ceramic collection as it is described appears to predate the 15th century (1955a:389-392), and the architectural evidence might suggest a somewhat later date (Chittick 1969:123).



Elliot mentioned a mosque and one or two houses on the mainland opposite Ngumi, although he apparently did not visit the site (1926:256), Ngumi Chini.

Another line of rocks and bars maintains the protection of the inner channel from the ocean south of Ngumi. Elliot recorded the names of some of the more notable of these (1926:256): Shepape ("with its sonorous blow-hole"), Kwa, Yamba, and Ambuu (Thenina). Clear sailing lasts until the approach to Chovai Island, where the passage thins appreciably toward the mouth of Chovai Creek on the mainland and low tides expose broad stretches of sand. A long channel leads to the anchorage of Chovai, at which until the early years of this century one required ladders to ascend the coral cliff onto the island. At the time of Révoil's visit the ladders were simple notched stakes, "on which women heavily laden with cowries entrust themselves to truly vertiginous gymnastics" (1888:398).

Chovai was the most prosperous of the islands toward the beginning of this century, where maize, millet, sweet potatoes, and a few coconuts were cultivated in the shallow soils (Haywood 1935:61; Barton 1922:34). The people of Chovai still built dhows and mitepe when Elliot visited, obtaining the wood for their construction from up the creek on the mainland opposite the island (1926:258). The village rests in a depression toward the centre of the island, surrounded by hills of decomposed coral and white sand. Brackish well water at the village forced the collection of drinking water from across the island. Archaeological remains on Chovai include the cemetery near the village, where Chittick (1969:124) found a roughly inscribed tombstone of one 'Umr bin Bwana Mkuu bin Bwana 'Umr bin Bwana Mkuu bin Bwana Dayo bin Bwana Shee. The main area of old settlement is at the southern end of the island. Elliot reported a ruined mosque on a hill

at a place called Lukuva, with graves stretching off farther south toward Umuripombor Head (1926:257). Chittick called this area Igome la Yuu, where both he and Elliot found another small mosque, a plain tomb enclosure without superstructure, and the remains of two houses (1969:pls. XVIIb, XVIIIa). From the few chronological indications available, settlement at Chovai does not appear to predate the 16th century.

The mangrove-fringed creek named after the island or called the Shamba Mouth issues forth opposite the island, rising out of drainages known as the Lak Badana or the Mcho ya Yamani. Alleged ivory smuggling from the creek in the early years of this century attests its suitability for coasters (Barton 1922:34, 37). Near a hamlet known as Bagdad on the south bank stand the ruins of a mosque with a kibla notable for its deep recess and square-ribbed apse design, funerary structures including pillar tombs, and the foundations of other buildings (Brenner 1868:362; Elliot 1926:258-259).

On the mainland south of the mouth of Chovai Creek Brenner listed a site at 0°54', a few hundred meters inland, comprising "four rectangular ruins and one quadrangular prayer house" (four tombs and a mosque or domed tomb?). Elliot mentioned from hearsay a site that must be in the same general area, hidden in dense bush and accessible only over sharp coral (1926:259). He called the site Österun, from the verb ku-stirika, to be hidden, from the discovery of a cache of cowrie shells said to have been made there. A site name more consistent with the Swahili verb is suggested: Stirikani.

Although the waters between the islands and the mainland from Chovai to Chula appear broad, wide stretches of sand restrict sailing to a narrow passage. A line of coral outcrops that extends from the southern tip of Chovai to the



northern point of Chula limits access to the open ocean. Elliot recorded the names of some of these small islands (1926:259): Pangazi, Mbavazi, Kuivi, Kivumbi, Ngai, Burihaula, Schie, Yundu Yundu, and Tangwe. Chula was the second most populous island after Chovai, and was reputed to possess the sweetest water of the group (Barton 1922:35). The anchorage lies on the northwest side of the island, below a coral cliff up which one had to climb, as at Chovai, to arrive on land. A coral ridge separates the anchorage from Chula village, which is located on a sand-spit between two lagoons. A second village called Madoa stands at the south end of the island, where some of the best wells are to be found, and two sarchphagus-like masonry graves (Elliot 1926:342).

One of the most distinctive tombs of the Bajun Islands was constructed near the village of Chula on the side toward the southern lagoon (Grottanelli 1955a: fig. I6; Elliot 1926: 260-261). Four recessed panels containing alternating diagonals and a sort of arched motif, with pairs of vertical niches between, decorate the walls of this almost square enclosure (5.43 X 5.33 m). The east wall carries three large tombstones, the highest reaching 3.25 m above the ground; the other walls probably each supported central wall monuments designed as four-riser steps surmounted by the same kind of kofia (hat) above little columns as on the eastern tombstone (compare Wilson 1979:fig. 2).

The scanty remains of an apparently large structure of indeterminate nature stand at the entrance to the southern lagoon opposite the village, and an old house ruin rests on the ridge of coral separating the anchorage from the village (Elliot 1926:259, 341). In the village itself, but near the northern lagoon, is a small ruined house with delicate plasterwork decoration surviving. Evidence collected by both

Barton (1922:35) and Elliot (1926:262) suggests that the house was built around the middle of the 19th century, and photographs indicate its similarity to the smaller houses built of coral masonry in the Lamu area about the same time.

A cemetery of mostly plain enclosures with step-ends at the corners extends beyond the northern lagoon, with the best tombs located on rising ground toward the north. Another type was designed with a sort of gabled roof, "like a sarcophagus", which Elliot associated with the Garreh, supporting this suggestion with the observation of a Somali headrest sculpted in plaster on one of them (1926:343; Grottanelli 1955a: fig. I4 and I8). Close to the mangroves nearby he saw a ruined mosque sunk below ground level. The pillar tomb reputed to be the grave of Sherif Omari occupies an isolated position at the northern end of the island (Grottanelli 1955a:fig. I5). On the east wall a tapering pillar rises about 5.5 m, surmounted by an urn and decorated with a celadon bowl set into the masonry about half way up (see Kirkman 1958:fig. 2, 1964:49). Elliot reported "single tombs, in various stages of decay" occupying the crests of hillocks all around on the ocean side.

Grottanelli's ceramic collection from Chula contains one piece of great interest. He described sherd number 25 (1955a: 391): "yellowish paste, semi-opaque varnish on the two faces, intense green on the exterior, iron-grey on the interior; thickness noteworthy, 20 mm." This is a fairly precise description of the characteristics of a plain sherd of Sassanian-Islamic ware, one of the distinctive ceramics of the 9th - 10th century period on the coast of eastern Africa. Of course one cannot make a positive identification without observing the specimen, but the suggestion is tantalizing that Chula Island or somewhere nearby was occupied or



visited as early as any site now known archaeologically on the coast south of Ras Hafun. With the exception of this possible Sasanian-Islamic sherd, nothing in the collection appears inordinately early. Chula, along with Shungwaya, was considered by the Portuguese to have been of sufficient importance to direct a ship there that left Goa in 1686, as well as a fleet that sailed a decade later (Strandes 1971:206,220). This in itself suggests that Chula was one of the most important ports of Jubaland in the 17th century.

The mouth of Anole Creek opens on the mainland opposite the southern end of Chula Island. Although the approach to the creek from the sea is relatively deep, the mouth is not a particularly good anchorage for large vessels and the creek itself only admits boats of 90 - 120 cm draught, which can then proceed about 8 km inland. Canoes and boats of very shallow draught can ascend a further 32 - 40 km upstream (Barton 1922:38). At the mouth, broad reaches of sand under shallow water and mangroves restrict approach to the mainland except by the creek channel. Ruins occur on both banks of the creek near the mouth, on the coast to the north, and inland from the coast opposite Chula.

The small mosque at Rasini, justifiably one of the best known sites of southern Somalia, rests atop a low coral cliff on the coast immediately across the water from Chula village. This site has been called Kikoni by Révoil (1888:401-402) and Kituni by Barton (1922:35); it is Brenner's entry at 1°0' (1868:362), and Prins' no. 9 instead of no. 4 (1967:33). On old maps and charts it is variously labelled "Portuguese Castle" or "Castellated Ruin". The mihrab has been called "one of the most perfect monuments of Muslim art in East Africa", and has been illustrated by Révoil (1888:403), Grottanelli (1955a:fig. 19) and Garlake (1966:fig. 62, where the mosque is mistakenly located on Chula Island). Pillar

tombs are also visible as one approaches the Rasini site by water. Brenner reached them by a walk of about five minutes along a "Galla travelling path" that extended from the mosque in a westerly direction past the hill on which he found the tombs (Decken 1869-1879,2:Karte VI). Elliot saw three pillar tombs at this site (1926:346), probably the same tombs that Chittick's informants called Kwa Bunu (1969:124). On one, said to be the tomb of Sheikh Ali, a circular column rose 5.64 m with six depressions for ceramics in its face, the topmost of which still contained a bowl of "Lamu China". He recorded the second tomb as that of Sherif Omar Ismail without further comment, and ascribed the third tomb to the reputed builder of the Rasini mosque, Sherif Ismail bin Omar. The rectangular pillar of the latter structure stood 4.27 m high, and once exhibited bowls along the front and an urn on top. Only the topmost bowl survived. Grottanelli collected six fragments of white porcelain from a pillar tomb at Rasini, probably one of these three (1955a:389).

We are fortunate in the case of the Rasini mosque and tombs to possess a method of dating independent of the architectural and ceramic evidence. This is based on the list of the headmen of Chula collected by Elliot (1926:340) on which appears, in the tenth position back, the name of Sherif Omari, the father of the Sherif Ismail who reputedly built the Rasini mosque and was buried in the third pillar tomb nearby (1926:344-346). Although not a headman himself, Ismail bin Omari's life would have coincided with the ninth generation of Chula headmen back from 1925. Omitting one headman from the list whose tenure in office only lasted two years, and allowing 20 or 25 years for each of the eight remaining generations, suggest the period 1725 - 1765 as the time of construction of the mosque and tomb. A somewhat



earlier date has been supposed for the mosque on architectural grounds (Chittick 1969:124). If the later dating proves to be approximately correct, it would also demonstrate that high pillars were erected on tombs as late as the mid-18th century.

Brenner encountered a ruined mosque and some "fortified buildings" (plain tombs?) on the ridge of a range of hills inland one hour from the coast, approximately half way between the Rasini mosque and Anole Creek. At a distance he saw pillar tombs and tombs with other monuments on the walls and step-ends at the corners. He mentioned two pillars about meters high, and noted the presence of inscriptions that were considered unreadable. This is perhaps the same site that Elliot heard about, but apparently did not visit, three or four miles up Anole Creek at the northern extremity of Simba Hill (1926:349). Still, given the discrepancy between Brenner's location of the site at the south end of a range of hills and Elliot's information that the ruins stand at the north end of Simba Hill, the possibility must be entertained that there are two separate sites.

The well-preserved mosque of Borali bin Bwana stands about 800 m up the left (north) bank of Anole Creek, at a point where the creek begins to widen toward the sea (Elliot 1926:348-349). Brenner wrote that it was built at the end of the 18th century when people from Chula began to cultivate the area, only to retreat to the island once again because of Orma raids. Ruins occur on the south bank of the creek near Kudai, comprising a mosque and some tombs (Grottanelli 1955a:76; Révoil 1888:402). Brenner described the mosque as having inner arches, an ablution cistern ("big sandstone trough"), and the "remnants of a spiral staircase", which could have been part of a minbar or a stairway to the roof for the call to prayer. He also suggested that there exist ruins other

than those mentioned up the banks of Anole Creek.

Sailing south from the Chula area in a small craft at high tide permits passage between Darakas and Chandraa Islands and the mainland, although the channel near Chandraa is narrow and choked by mangroves. Boats must steer for the open sea after Chandraa to avoid the Kiembo cha Bur Gao peninsula, the first obstacle that completely blocks the inner channel, which until here provided protection for vessels all the way from Kismayu Bay. This stretch of mainland coast has so far yielded only infrequent hamlets and minor ruins. Barton noted fresh water but recorded no ruins at Tosha, a hamlet about 5 km south of Kudai opposite Darakas Island (1922:35). Révoil put in at Shea (Cheia), a hamlet about half way to Bur Gao from Chula, near which he visited a tomb that for him held no interest (1888:402). Elliot also mentioned Shea amongst the small settlements behind the Kiembo cha Bur Gao, along with Ndoa and Puluni (1926:354). At Ndoa there were supposed to be a mosque and one or two graves. These may be Brenner's nondescript ruins at  $1^{\circ}11'$ , and correspond with the ruins located at  $1^{\circ}12'24''$  on the Kiddle and Lockhart map of 1895. Puluni is the name of the isthmus between the Kiembo cha Bur Gao and the mainland, and may be taken as the name for the tombs and well located there at  $1^{\circ}13'18''$ . The paucity of information about these sites can only be alleviated by proper archaeological survey.

Most authorities consider Bur Gao to be the best anchorage south of Hafun. Craft of under about 1.5 m draught can ascend the 25 km to Bushbushi at any time of the year, and canoes can reach Wayore about 20 km farther on (Barton 1922:38). Bur Gao may be the best port in Jubaland and beyond, but the approach to the harbour can be rough. Once the mouth of the creek has been safely negotiated, however, one encounters



the landing up the deep channel of the creek on the right bank near where the present village stands.

Chittick distinguished three sites at Bur Gao (1969:124-129), Site I, a walled location about one kilometer northwest of the village; Site II, a second area of ruins on the bank of the creek about one-half kilometer north of Site I; and Site III, a defensive position on Mabruk Hill about two and one-half kilometers south of the village. Site II might have been the location of earliest settlement at Bur Gao, and is accordingly discussed first.

Bur Gao Site II occupies low-lying ground partially delimited by the creek and by a tidal marsh with mangroves. Overgrown vegetation has inhibited observation of the site, but it was apparently extensive and might have been walled (Elliot 1926:352-353). One of the most distinctive monuments of southern Somalia, at least until the collapse of its mighty pillar sometime between 1952 and 1968, was the great pillar tomb of Bur Gao (Grottanelli 1955b:233, 237; Chittick 1969: pl. XXIb). The pillar of this tomb rose 11 m, with a fluted section about 1.3 m high about two-thirds the way up. The 1.8 m high enclosing wall was panelled all around and decorated by a frieze of niches of unique design, with every fourth niche approximately doubled in height by a triangular or arch-shaped extension. The enclosure itself may be one of the largest on the coast. Chittick illustrated a second distinctive tomb from Site II, a domed tomb notable for a frieze of double niches around the upper wall (1969:pl. XXIIa). This may be the only example where decoration of a type otherwise reserved for the facades of enclosure tombs was incorporated into the design of a domed tomb. Chittick and Elliot both saw a large structure near the pillar tomb, which each suggested might be a mosque, but which neither was able to confirm. Other tombs and ruined structures lie

about the site. Chittick's ceramic collection included celadons and Islamic monochromes of 15th and 16th century date.

Bur Gao Site I was surrounded by a masonry wall 2.5 m high that enclosed about seven hectares (Chittick 1969:fig. 5). Odd features within the subrectangular compound are the re-entrant walls about midway along the southeast and southwest walls; another is the way that the wall at the northern corner was re-directed in a semicircular curve to avoid and exclude some tombs, almost as if the masons encountered the tombs by accident as they neared the corner of the quadrangle. A fine pillar tomb was excluded in this way, the design of which includes a two-tier frieze of niches, the lines of which were broken at the centre of the east wall below the pillar by a larger recess, in a way similar to the frieze on the short wall of the domed tomb of Site II (Chittick 1969:pl. XIX, XXa; Grottanelli 1955b:237). Grottanelli illustrated a pillar tomb without provenience that probably belongs to the group outside the walls of Site I or to the structures of Site II (1955a:fig. 20). Otherwise, besides the re-entrant walls the only structure within the walls of Site I is a domed tomb, almost square (4.17 X 4.04 m), oriented approximately 356°, covered with a low dome, and entered through an arched doorway in the east wall (Chittick 1969:pl. XXb, XXIa, fig. 6). Of the few sherds Chittick found at Site I, most dated to the 19th century and none earlier than the 16th. He felt that the archaeological deposits at Site I are shallow. Site I is somewhat atypical of coastal sites, lacking as it does surface traces of habitations or mosques. Its design might have been inspired by the walled site of Munghia farther north (Chittick 1969:118-120), but stylistically and chronologically it is more closely related to the "Segeju defensive walls" of southern Kenya and northern



Tanzania (Chittick 1969:5-7; Wilson 1980a:38-41).

Bur Gao Site III occupies a defensive position on Mabruk Hill. The site consists of nothing more than a drystone breastwork at the base of the hill and the remains of a wall of coral rubble set in mud encircling the crest of the high ground (Chittick 1969:128-129). Site III may be Brenner's ruin at I°12', which he identified as a fortified position on the top of a hill located one mile from the coast (1862:362).

It is worth noting, considering the importance of a Mount Mangua in many of the Shungwaya traditions of Mijikenda origins, that a Buri Manga (Manga Hill) is found about 2.5 km from the coast at approximately I°17'. This area might reward archaeological attention.

South of Bur Gao the coast recedes monotonously in a south-southwesterly direction towards the Kenya border. In contrast to the coast to the north, this 58 km stretch lacks offshore islands, seasonal creeks, and protected anchorages. The reefs render approach to the land difficult if not impossible for large vessels, but coasters of shallow draught take advantage of the waters whose force has been broken by the shoals for navigation and fishing. Traversing the distance on foot one encounters a series of white sandy beaches, sometimes covered with a considerable depth of seaweed, alternating with low rocky headlands (FitzGerald 1898:448). Seasonal waterholes occur along the coastal hinterland almost all the way from Bur Gao to Kiamboni, which during the rainy season and for some time thereafter must have relieved people from worry about want of water. Nevertheless, an unreliable permanent water supply and the inhospitable coastline perhaps were significant factors discouraging settlement in the area.

The small walled site of Veku, also called Shungwaya Ndogo,

is the first site along the coast south of Bur Gao, reportedly located at the base of Veku Hill (Elliot 1926:357; Chittick 1969:129).<sup>2</sup> The first hills encountered are those behind Shaka la Sia (Isiaca Lassai), which Owen's map labelled Rozier Peak and Rozier Hill. Brenner listed a site at I°20', which is this location, said to be called Dschamku "after the nearby lake", actually the group of seasonal waterholes behind the coast (1868:362). Shamku (Shah, Shee or something else mkuu?) and Veku are similar words but not obviously related (Veku - and Vekwaa - are Bajuni kabila; Grottanelli 1955a:203; Nurse 1980). Brenner noted the ruins of buildings and "a still well-preserved minaret", presumably the pillar of a tomb. The attraction of the location might have been the waterhole at Shaka la Sia, which FitzGerald found unkept and its water brackish, although he did not mention ruins in the area (1898:447-448).

Mnarani is the next site along the coast, past the cape of Ras Waravole (shown probably incorrectly on some maps north of Shaka la Sia) and about half way between Bur Gao and Kiamboni. At Mnarani FitzGerald saw the fallen pillar that gives the site its name on a low knoll behind cape Mnarani, but recorded only that he "found it to be well built of coral stone with a thick outer plastering of lime", without mention of the tomb from which the pillar almost certainly fell (1898:446).

Mbarabala, where there is a pillar", is at the north end of a high rocky ridge at Ras Shangwani, which parallels the coast two or three kilometers north of Ras Gome la Hekwa - "a very conspicuous object, standing out as it does abruptly from the surrounding coast" (Elliot 1926:357; FitzGerald 1898:444). FitzGerald reported rainwater pools at both Hekwa and Mbarabala (Kombara Bala). Brenner confirmed Mbarabala (his I°30') as a watering place and might have corroborated the presence of a pillar tomb by mistakenly identifying a



"mosque with minaret".

The walled settlement of Miandi is the next ruin known, located about two kilometer north of and perhaps a little inland from the anchorage at the beach of Ras Kwa Odo (Cuado, Odo). The remains include a finely plastered mosque, with the stubs of square interior piers visible, pillar tombs, and the remains of other structures (Elliot 1926:358; Brenner's I<sup>0</sup>32'). Elliot commented that one of the long fallen pillars was particularly fine, and suggested that a visit to Miandi is worthwhile in spite of the difficulties and the delapidation of the buildings.

Kiamboni, the southernmost site on the Somali littoral, appears to extend along the shore for some distance. Kirkman noted "a striking pillar tomb and the remains of a considerable settlement" (1964:51). FitzGerald wrote of walking past Kiamboni from the south (1898:443): "Proceeding along a very rocky coral seashore, I came upon a high stone pillar and a ruined mosque and tombs, then a little further on I found more ruins, and about a mile beyond still more. These last included an old stone archway ..." Kiamboni is Brenner's site at I<sup>0</sup>36'; at the time of FitzGerald's visit it was the site of an important water source.

#### Settlement Patterns

When considering the settlement patterns of an area such as the Jubaland coast it is convenient to distinguish between the settlement patterns exhibited at such individual sites as those just surveyed, and the patterns revealed by an analysis of the distribution of sites in a given region (Allen 1980, 1981); Wilson 1980b, 1982). The study of individual sites reveals what may be termed community settlement patterns. When one compares the spatial organization of

a number of sites, those traits idiosyncratic to individual sites are separated from those features common to the communities of the society investigated. The study of community settlement patterns yields information concerning many aspects of social organization, for there is necessarily a spatial dimension to many social systems. The study of the inter-relationships of the structures and features at individual sites to elucidate patterns of settlement at the community level succeeds best where detailed research has been conducted at some of the sites in the area. One way to approach the problem of making meaningful comparisons in spite of the relative scarcity of site maps, building plans, and other relevant information concerning the sites of southern Somalia is to classify the sites on the basis of size. Implicit in this method is the suggestion that sites similar in size and composition may be compared to each other and analyzed as a group, that the Rasini mosque as a site has more in common with the Borali bin Bwana mosque than either has to communities such as Ngumi or Bur Gao II, which in their complexity share more characteristics with each other than with the smaller sites.

The author has proposed a classification of the coastal sites of southern Somalia and Kenya based on the size of the sites, and it is convenient to continue with this classification (Wilson 1980b), although the original list requires modification based on more complete knowledge of the Jubaland sites (Table I). It is important to remember that each class of sites represents a different type of settlement, or at least a different level of community development along a sort of continuum from the smallest to the largest sites (Wilson 1982). The sites of Class 5, the smallest ruins, most often represent hamlets. The most obvious remains usually consist of a mosque, a mosque and some tombs, or the tombs by themselves. Domestic structures were of mud and thatch



Table I. Classification and situation of the sites of coastal Jubaland

	Class 3 (2.5 - 5 ha)	Class 4 (under 2.5 ha)	Class 5 (isolated mosques & tombs)	Other
Mainland sites (22)				
Creek	Bur Gao II	Bagdad	Borali bin Bwana Kudai Puluni	Bur Gao I (extensive enclosure)
Shore	Kiamboni	Koyama Chini Ngumi Chini Veku Miandi	Stirikani Rasini (& Kwa Bunu) Shea Mnarani Mbarabala	
Bay or Headland		Old Kismayu	Gondal Ndoa	Kismayu Fort
Inland		Simba Hill		Bur Gao III (defensive walls)
Island Sites (6)	Ghedeni Ngumi Chula	Chovai	Koyamani	Kismayu Island (unknown)

construction, and consequently surface remains of these are difficult or impossible to perceive. On the basis of contemporary examples, the settlement pattern would have been either one of a compact hamlet near the mosque or of a dispersed hamlet and homestead type within reasonable walking distance of the mosque. Class 4 sites were small settlements, usually with a few masonry houses as well as a mosque and perhaps some tombs. Sometimes the settlements were walled. The population represented by the sites of Class 4 might not be larger than that in areas of Class 5 settlement, but it was slightly more concentrated, with some persons living in masonry houses. The Class 3 sites represent medium-size settlements, with numerous domestic and often funerary remains, one or more mosques, and often a town wall. A greater extent of community organization is necessary and evident compared to the smaller sites. The sites of Classes I and 2 may be called towns, the ruins characteristically displaying a Friday mosque and some smaller mosques, many masonry houses that, as at Gedi, are sometimes more complex than the domestic structures of the smaller sites, cemeteries with contiguous tombs as well as tomb enclosures within the settlement precincts, and town walls. Thatch and a wide variety of other perishable materials were undoubtedly used frequently in construction at sites of all classes, and while this observation does not invalidate a classification based on standing masonry and the extent of archaeological deposits, these "unseen" components should be kept in mind when considering the sites.

Once a satisfactory preliminary classification of sites is proposed, one may proceed to an analysis of regional settlement patterns. The study of regional settlement patterns seeks to discover and explain the distribution of sites in a given area. The focus is on regional cultural adaptations rather than the micro-environmental situations explored



through a study of community settlement patterns. Table I divides the 28 sites by island or mainland location, and distinguishes four mainland situations in which the sites are encountered. One fifth of the sites are located on islands, but what is important to note is that islands accommodate three of the five largest (Class 3) sites. Bur Gao Creek shelters two of the three largest remaining ruins of the area, isolating Kiamboni as the only large site not on an island or Bur Gao Creek. Four-fifths of the sites are located on the mainland in situations that may be classified as positions on creeks partially tidal (6 sites, 27% of the mainland sites), on bays or the headlands defining bays (18%), on stretches of unbroken shoreline (45%), or inland from the coast (9%). Considering the last two categories first, whereas at some point it is probably worthwhile to distinguish between sites near the shore from those slightly back from it, the three sites that may be affected (Koyama Chini, Stirikani, Miandi) have been listed with the sites on the coast until their precise locations are established. Only the Simba Hill site(s?) and Bur Gao III lie unarguably inland, the former found as it is about 3.7 km from the coast at Rasini and about 2.7 km from Anole Creek to the west (in other words, between two waterways), and the latter standing on the landward side of a hill about 0.6 km from the coast. The coastal sites can be divided into a northern group lying across the narrow water from the Bajun Island chain (Koyama Chini, Ngumi Chini, Stirikani, Rasini, and Shea), and a southern group facing the open sea (Veku, Mnarani, Mbarabala, Miandi, and Kiamboni). Although little is known of these sites, an obvious distinction is that three walled settlements occur amongst the southern sites with perhaps nothing comparable in the northern group. Of the remaining mainland sites, Old Kismayu and Gondal are located on or near headlands at each end

of Kismayu Bay. The only two sites actually located on bays are Kismayu Fort and Ndoa, the last found on a sheltered shore behind the Kiembo cha Bur Gao at a spot where the shallow foreshore dries out for some distance at low tide. Creeks characteristically harbour sites along the East African littoral, and each effluent south of the Juba is no exception: the mosque, tombs and perhaps other structures at Bagdad on the south bank of Chovai Creek, the mosques of Borali bin Bwana and Kudai flanking the mouth of Anole Creek, and the major ruins and smaller sites of Bur Gao.

On the islands, the ruins at Ghedeni on Koyama Island and at Chula stand to the northwest, near the approaches to the islands from the inner channel. The Ngumi ruins also overlook the channel, with the cemetery off to the southwest. Koyamani is toward the eastern dunes of Koayama, and Igome la Yuu occupies the southern end of Chovai. The size of Kismayu Island suggests that it did not harbour a major site, whatever the nature of the ruins there, and Ambuu, Darakas, Chandraa and the other islets may lack sites. Discussing the locations of individual sites as groups yields insights into specific environmental adaptations, such as those encountered on islands, creeks or shorelines. To understand regional patterns, such topical analyses must be integrated to give the general configuration of site distribution in the area. To facilitate this approach, the coast between Juba and Kiamboni can be discussed as three geographical provinces: the Juba River - Kismayu Bay area; the Bajun Islands and the shore-and-creek system opposite; and Bur Gao and the southern mainland. The northern area from the Juba mouth to Ras Mtoni is characterized by a sort of lack of pattern, with no site yet discovered near the only major river of southern Somalia and with no large sites around the only feature that can be called a bay in the



entire region. One might expect sites near the river mouth, given the fertility of the Juba valley and the opportunity for navigation upon the river in spite of the sandbar at the mouth. Old sites could have been destroyed by fluvial or marine action or concealed by dunes; alternatively the course of the river might have shifted, creating a new mouth. Concentrated survey has yet to be carried out in the area. Perhaps Old Kismayu, offering the shelter the mouth of the river lacks, functioned as the port for the river, with much of the old site cannibalized for construction in the present town. The fort might also have been taken down for building material. The reported ruins on Kismayu Island might also have had something to do with the function of Kismayu as a port. The site at Gondal does not fit easily into the development of Kismayu as a port or with the patterns of settlement farther south. Perhaps it was simply a small community taking advantage of the shelter of the bay and the proximity of Kismayu. No other sites are known until Koyama, about 25 km south.

Patterns of a different sort of settlement emerge from a consideration of the sites of the Bajun Islands. The largest sites occur on the main islands of the group, situated towards the inner channel and the mainland, near landings where available or at the point of easiest approach. Minor sites are located on the mainland opposite each of the larger islands, situated on the shore across from Koyama and Ngumi and occupying positions around the creeks near Chovai and Chula. The only true group of sites occurs around the lower reaches of Anole Creek, where the Rasini mosque and the Kwa Bunu tombs stand opposite Chula, with Simba Hill inland and the mosques of Kudai and Borali bin Bwana at the entrance to the creek. Major determinants of settlement along the Bajun Island chain probably include: the inner channel, which

facilitated communication; the reefs, with their rich marine resources; the islands, which offer security; the creeks, providing an avenue to the interior and special environmental zones for exploitation; the somewhat richer agricultural soils of the mainland; minerals, such as salt, for domestic use and export; and to some extent the natural plant and animal communities of both islands and mainland.

Development of the Bajun Island area becomes clearer when the chronological assessments must be tentative until fuller survey is accomplished and excavations undertaken. As it now appears, settlement on the islands predated development of the mainland as that is reflected by masonry constructions. Ngumi might date from the 15th century, with settlement on Koyama and Chula perhaps dating from the 16th century and Chovai inhabited somewhat later. In contrast, the mosques at Bagdad and Rasini and the Kwa Bunu tombs appear to date from the mid-18th century, and the mosque of Borali bin Bwana to the late-18th century. The order of settlement in the Bajun Islands, therefore, seems to favour a model whereby the islands were settled and developed in the 15th - 17th century period, from which the habit of building in coral rag and lime-based masonry spread to the mainland in the 18th century. This apparent utilization of mainland resources was the pattern followed recently: the people of Koyama working land around Osboda opposite Ngumi; those from Chovai and Stambuli (on the mainland) cultivating on the Mcho wa Yamani; and those from Chula farming on Anole Creek (Grottanelli 1955a:127). The evidence of chronology, site distribution, and contemporary usage suggest that the mainland sites were founded from the island communities, in order to expedite exploitation of mainland resources. The natural attractions favouring settlement at Bur Gao include the good, protected anchorage, the navigable creek,



and the relatively fertile soils along the creek's banks and beyond. With these conditions, it would indeed be odd not to find major sites in the area such as Bur Gao Sites I and II. The ceramics and architecture of Site II indicate that it, like Ngumi, dates from the 15th century period, and therefore may be seen as one of the two or three locations in Jubaland from which subsequent settlement might have spread. The function of Bur Gao Site I (and III, for that matter), has yet to be determined.

South of Bur Gao the positioning of sites can be explained partially by their coincidence with water supplies: Veku most probably with the waterhole at Ras Shaka la Sia, Mbarabala with the rainwater pool there and at nearby Hekwa, and Kiamboni with the apparently good permanent source there. Mnarani might not have had its own water supply, but it lies near the inland seasonal pools of Shamku. There is no mention of water at Miandi, but the site stands at not too great a distance from the landing at Ras Kwa Odo.

Overall, the coast of Jubaland appears on the basis of present information to have been inhabited as a secondary population dispersal, perhaps from such areas of primary settlement as the coast of the Benadir ports to the north or the Lamu archipelago to the south. However, traces of pre-15th century occupation possibly remain undetected. The tentative identification of a 9th - 10th century Sasanian-Islamic sherd from Chula provides a single intriguing clue. Site survey and even test excavations can sometimes miss deeply buried early deposits; this and the paucity of archaeological research on the southern Somali coast simply underscore the urgency of comprehensive survey and test excavations in the area.

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> It is appropriate to refer to the area by the old name Jubaland in spite of its colonial associations, mainly because the name of the old province automatically includes the hinterland behind the coastal strip. British Jubaland encompassed the area from the Juba River to Kiunga, now about 12.5 km inside Kenya, although for present purposes the international border is taken as the southern boundary. The Juba valley formed the northeastern edge of the province, with the other two lines of demarcation running from the Lorian Swamp to Dolo on the river on the northwest side and to Kiunga on the southwest (Elliot 1913). By using a term that suggests a relationship between the littoral and the immediate hinterland, and evokes the possible influence of the fertile Juba valley for the coastal area to the south, I wish to acknowledge at least implicitly the importance of these two major environmental zones in the history of the coastal strip.
- <sup>2</sup> The survey and excavations on the sites between Bur Gao and Kiamboni undertaken by Hilary Costa Sanseverino recently were unknown to me at the time of writing. This paper has not been modified in light of the discoveries, and should be read in consultation with the report on the investigations of the south coast sites published herewith.



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