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INDEX

Editorial

1

Jaime Almansa Sánchez and Elena Papagiannopoulou

Mutual Education. Towards a model of educational co-creation around the archaeological heritage of Mexico

Jaime Delgado Rubio

Communicating Cultural Heritage Resources to the Public: Experiences from the Makonde of Mtwara Region, Tanzania

Festo Wachawaseme Gabriel

Reflecting on evaluation in public archaeology

Kate Ellenberger and Lorna-Jane Richardson

Points of You: Historical graffiti and pop culture: A public archaeology perspective

Alberto Polo Romero and Diana Morales Manzanares

Review

Antipatrimonio

Nekbet Corpas Cívicos

Review

Archaeogaming

Daniel García Raso

Review

Yacimiento pixel

Jaime Almansa-Sánchez

Communicating Cultural Heritage Resources to the Public: Experiences from the Makonde of Mtwara Region, Tanzania.

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Abstract

Communicating cultural heritage to the public has gained popularity in many African countries and the world at large. However, little efforts have been done to promote the practice of public archaeology in Tanzania. The main reason is the dominance of conventional archaeology which is mainly meant for academic consumption. In this kind of practice, the participation of local communities has been passive. This paper explores local communities' understanding of cultural heritage resources focusing on local communities in the Mtwara Region of Tanzania. The results of this study reveal that little effort has been made by archaeologists and cultural heritage professionals to create awareness among local communities on matters related to archaeology and cultural heritage resources. Apart from discussing the state of local communities' awareness on archaeology and cultural heritage resources, the paper also discusses the importance of communicating cultural heritage resources to the general public and the need to engage local communities in the conservation and preservation of cultural heritage resources.

Keywords

cultural heritage resources, archaeology, public, local communities, conservation, tangible heritage, intangible heritage.

Introduction

Different communities perceive cultural heritage differently, depending on their respective historic and cultural background (Msemwa 2005). Some scholars (Pikirayi 2011) relate cultural heritage to 'tradition'. Traditions in this context constitute "distinct group or culture specific beliefs, customs, ritualistic and ceremonial practices transmitted over generations, in most cases through word of mouth" (Pikirayi 2011: 85).

The need to protect and manage cultural heritage resources has become increasingly globally apparent in recent years (e.g., Cleere 1993; Schmidt and McIntosh 1996; Serageldin and Taboroff 1994). Nevertheless, at the beginning of the 21st century, this objective remains a mere aspiration for many African nations. Scholars have identified a number of barriers to the protection and management of Africa's past. Although these obstacles vary from one country to another, the most prominent ones include physical and cultural factors such as weathering, erosion, vandalism, and looting; lack of protection due to the absence of management programs and legislative frameworks; the lack of adequately trained personnel; political unrest; inadequate funds; absence of research on preservation techniques and methods; lack of community awareness of the value of cultural heritage resources; the lack of appropriate equipment for information storage and conservation facilities/space, among others (Brandt and Mohamed 1996; Karoma 1996; Mabulla 1996; R. McIntosh 1996; S. McIntosh 1993; Mturi 1996). This scenario reflects the case in Tanzania where a number of heritage resources remain unnoticed, neglected or mismanaged and sometimes under-utilized, regardless of their historic and cultural value. The public remain unaware of cultural heritage resources which are integral to them. It is with this observation that I concur with Sulas *et al.* that "attention to African heritage reveals insights that can allow a re-evaluation of principles and best practices developed elsewhere, giving a crucial perspective on supposedly universal discourses of global heritage" (Sulas *et al.* 2011).

The aim of this study conducted in the Mtwara Region is twofold. On the one hand, it investigates local communities' understanding of cultural heritage resources. On the other hand, it examines local

communities' involvement in the conservation of cultural heritage resources in the Mtwara Region. Using the Makonde community of the Mtwara Region as a case study, this paper argues that local communities have a greater role to play in the conservation of cultural heritage resources of the country. The bottom line of this argument is that, local communities are key stakeholders of cultural heritage resources and they should become fully engaged in their conservation, development, and promotion. It is a bit unfortunate that, overall, little attention has so far been given to the involvement of local communities in heritage studies, especially in Tanzania.

Study Area and Research Background

The Mtwara Region forms part of the Swahili coast which also includes the offshore islands of Comoro, Zanzibar and Pemba as well as northern parts of Madagascar (Chami 2005; Horton 1996). It borders the Lindi Region to the north, the Ruvuma Region to the west, the Indian Ocean to the east and is separated by the Ruvuma River from Mozambique in the south (Figure 1). The region occupies 16,729 sq. kms or 1.9% of Tanzania Mainland area of 945,087 sq. kms (Tanzania Tourism Board 2012). The majority of the indigenous people of the region are of Bantu origin. The most dominant ethnic groups include the Makonde of Newala, Tandahimba, Masasi, Mtwara – Mikindani Municipality, and Mtwara rural. Other groups included are the Makua of Masasi and Mtwara rural, and the Yao who also live in Masasi (Tanzania Tourism Board 2012).

During the colonial period and after independence, little was known about the archaeology and cultural heritage resources of Southeastern Tanzania. Probably the earliest archaeological research in Southern Tanzania, particularly in the Mtwara Region, concerning early human settlement is that of Whiteley (1951) on the rock paintings of the Mtwara Region, especially in Masasi (Kwekason 2011). It is only very recent that some archaeological research has been conducted there (e.g. Pawlowicz 2011; Kwekason 2011; Ichumbaki 2011; Gabriel 2015).

This paper contributes to previous knowledge about archaeology and cultural heritage resources available in the Mtwara

Region, both tangible and intangible, with a focus on community awareness and the state of conservation of cultural heritage resources. Tangible cultural heritage resources which were identified during this study include the Mikindani historical site with a number of dilapidated monuments, the colonial infrastructure legacy, such as the railway route from Nachingwea in Lindi to the Mtwara port, and the old Mikindani harbor which was one of the trade centers along the East African coast. Also included are monumental remains such as the graveyard at the ancient settlement of Mvita, an old mosque, and other architectural mounds dating contemporaneously with the neighboring Mikindani historical site. There are also legacies of the Mozambique Liberation Movement such as tombs and the military camp site at Naliendele village. Wood carving and sculpturing are also among famous cultural heritage traditions and an integral part of the identity of the Makonde communities. All these tangible cultural heritage resources found in the Mtwara Region are of great cultural and historical value, especially as far as the colonial history of the region is concerned. The Makonde communities of the Mtwara Region are also rich in intangible cultural heritage resources. These include traditional beliefs and ritual practices such as *jando* and *unyago*, witch-craft, traditional medicine, traditional dances, and oral narratives.

Most of the above cultural heritage resources in the Mtwara Region are in danger of disappearing given that little effort has been made to conserve them from colonial times to the present partially due to western influence. Currently, a number of development projects are being directed by the government in collaboration with foreign investors. Apart from its wealth in natural gas resources, which has created investment opportunities, the Mtwara Region is becoming attractive to many other industrial investment opportunities. These include the Dangote cement industry, the fertilizers industry, and the Mtwara Corridor Spatial Development Initiative (SDI) aiming at promoting trade and investment in the region. The initiative will potentially transform southern Tanzania and adjacent northern Mozambique. The SDI is being promoted by the governments of Tanzania, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and South Africa and hinges on the development of the deep-water port of Mtwara and the road to Mbamba Bay on Lake Nyasa.

There are many other infrastructural investments in response to the socioeconomic development taking place there. The establishments of these projects pay little attention not only to the salvaging of cultural heritage resources but also to the development and promotion of cultural heritage resources that are available. There are no efforts made to integrate cultural heritage with natural resources for the economic development of the region. Instead, natural resources are given priority at the expense of cultural heritage resources. Consequently, most of the cultural heritage resources available in the Mtwara Region are in danger of disappearing due to a lack of rescue measures during the operation of these development projects. This situation calls for a need for mutual collaboration between professionals and the local communities in the conservation and management of their cultural heritage resources.

Local Communities' awareness on archaeology and cultural heritage

On the African continent, archaeology has demonstrated that humankind started in Africa and that some of the world's oldest civilizations are found on this continent. Yet, many people in Africa are still unaware of the significance of archaeology (Mire 2011). This state of unawareness about archaeology can be attributed to the lack of involvement of local communities in matters related to archaeology and cultural heritage studies. The necessity for public involvement in heritage conservation and management has been raised since the 1970s, when "Public Archaeology" by Charles McGimsey III was published, and Pamela Cressey's work in Alexandria conducted. They were trying to advocate the notion of community archaeology. In the UK, efforts by a small group of archaeologists to address an inclusion of the public into archaeological practices were also made around the same time. The origins of and the interest in engaging the public in archaeology was described as being caused by economic expansion and numerous development projects which prompted the feeling that heritage was fragile, finite, and non-renewable (Tunprawat 2009). According to Pikirayi (2011), community and public archaeologies are the ones where interactions and collaborations with 'indigenous' people are

critical for their success. The indigenous populations the world over have become increasingly engaged in the theory and practice of archaeology and increasingly vocal about issues of sovereignty and cultural heritage, as part of a concerted effort to gain control over archaeological and political uses of their past (Ndlovu 2010; Pikirayi 2011).

During the colonial period, the traditional way of managing cultural heritage sites was seen as outdated. The western approach was given priority and regarded as natural, more advanced and therefore progressive (Ndoro 2001a). The management of archaeological sites during the colonial period was mostly protective and administrative in nature (Bwasiri 2011; Msemwa 2005; Mulokozi 2005; Ndoro 2001a). This is also evident in the Mtwara Region where some monuments are preserved through reuse. For example, the government of the United Republic of Tanzania entered into an agreement with the British Non-Government Organization called Trade Aid to lease a historic building famously known as Old Boma to be used for community development projects (Kigadye 2011). This building, which was a derelict ruin in the late 1990s, has been restored into a modern tourist hotel while maintaining its originality in terms of structural form and materials. This approach to the management of archaeological sites ignored the role of the communities and community values associated with sites (Bwasiri 2011).

Little effort has been made to ensure that local communities are well informed about the touristic value of the monuments around them and their responsibility to conserve cultural heritage resources. Initially, archaeologists and heritage managers viewed local communities as reservoirs of cheap labour for fieldwork rather than consumers of knowledge of the past (Chirikure and Pwiti 2008). A general aspect of archaeology which intersects with the public takes the form of outreach through museum displays and researchers presenting their work in schools, as well as through the public media. The idea is to educate the public about the past so that its relevance is appreciated (Pikirayi 2011). Cultural heritage managers need to be sensitive to traditional views and values, and to employ terms with an awareness of their implications in various cultural settings (Watkins 2005). Although the past and

heritage in general is perceived differently by professionals and local communities, its value to the public remains significant.

Archaeologists, indigenous people with whom they work, and the increasing number of indigenous archaeologists, all inherit shared and overlapping legacies from the past (Smith and Jackson 2006). There is no one general perception of heritage resources. That is to say, different communities perceive cultural heritage differently, depending on their respective historical and cultural background (Msemwa 2005). Cultural heritage resources remain important to societies throughout history, regardless of the territory on which they are located. These assets contribute to world education, research and tourism (Mabulla 2005; Mturi 2005; Karoma 1996). Some of these assets, such as the stone town of Zanzibar, the rock arts sites of Kondoa, the ancient Swahili towns of Kilwa Kisiwani and Songo Mnara, the Olduvai Gorge, and the Laitoli hominid footprint site, are valued not only locally but also by the global community for their outstanding universal value. Tanzania, like some other African countries, has taken some initiatives to conserve and manage cultural heritage resources. For instance, the Antiquities Department has renovated various historic buildings of Bagamoyo Historic Town, Kilwa Kisiwani, Songo Mnara, and Zanzibar Stone Town. The renovations done at Bagamoyo were accompanied by training of local people (Kamwela 2009) who later became instrumental in renovating other buildings of Kilwa Kisiwani, Songo Mnara and Zanzibar Stone Town (Mturi 1996; Kamwela 2009). Notwithstanding the restoration projects at Bagamoyo, Kilwa and Zanzibar, these initiatives are sporadic. This is due to the fact that there have been no systematic efforts to manage, conserve and restore important cultural heritage resources in other parts of the country including the Mtwara Region.

Cultural heritage resources are not only an identity to the communities responsible but also have economic significance. If well conserved and developed, these resources could help in poverty alleviation to the local communities, especially through cultural tourism. Regardless of the difficulties and challenges in developing cultural heritage tourism especially in Africa, the need to preserve cultural heritage resources is not only a cultural requirement, but also an economic and developmental necessity (Mabulla 2005;

Masao 2005; Kamwela 2009). Knowing the relevance of cultural heritage resources in reconstructing the histories of societies, past, present and future generations must always be vigorous in undertaking conservation and management measures through various means.

Given the relevance of cultural heritage resources to the present communities, there is a need to formulate policies and legislation and establish institutions responsible for the conservation and management of cultural heritage resources —both tangible and intangible. This is what is lacking in the Mtwara Region whereby, regardless of the cultural potential of the region, no measures have been instituted to conserve cultural heritage resources. Surprisingly, even the Antiquities Department, which is responsible for management and conservation of cultural heritage resources in the country, has no representative officer in the Mtwara Region. This makes it difficult to enforce policies and laws guiding cultural heritage management hence creating a loophole for destruction and vandalism.

Conceptualizing Heritage and Methodology of the Study

The term 'heritage' refers to the human-made, natural and historic character of the material and symbolic elements of life, as well as the intrinsic productivity of social action. It is most often a set of conditions adopted by a cultural grouping to meet the basic requirement of that group (Edson 2004). It can be presented as a socio-cultural process in which negotiated relationships are formed between legacies of the past and stewards of the present, and the product of such relationships is an ethos of conservation and subsequent preservation for future generations. Conservation means the physical intervention in the fabric of building structure to ensure its continued structural integrity. Conservation also includes intangible heritage resources such as indigenous traditions, i.e. cultural – specific beliefs, customs, rituals, and ceremonial practices that are retained and transmitted over generations (Pikirayi 2011). The aim of conservation is to safeguard the quality and values of the resource, protect its material substance and ensure its integrity for future generations (Kamamba 2005).

Cultural heritage, in particular its tangible aspect, has received great attention in many countries. However, the other aspect, namely intangible, which represents the vibrant dimension of this heritage has not received the same amount of attention and care, hence preservation and protection are needed (Mursi 2008). This is contrary to the case in the Mtwara Region where cultural value is very much given to the intangible as compared to tangible cultural heritage resources. Even when there is any attention and care given to tangible heritage resources there must be some underlying intangible values. For example, it was noted that ancient tombs in the ancient settlement of Mvita were respected by local communities because of the cultural attachment to their deceased relatives. Therefore, they regard the graveyard as a sacred place and occasionally perform some ritual ceremonies in honor of their deceased relatives. The intangible cultural heritage, in fact, is the accumulative outcome of socio-cultural traditions which are inherited by individuals and communities (Mursi 2008). Different cultural practices among the local communities in the Mtwara Region are meant to communicate and preserve intangible cultural heritage resources which they inherited from their long-gone-grandparents.

The intangible aspects of cultural heritage are perceived as products of collective memories, values, practices, material, and spiritual expressions that regulated lives and guided actions of the past societies (Juma *et al.* 2005). Included also in cultural heritage resources are oral traditions, customs, languages, music, dance, rituals, festivities, traditional medicine and pharmacopoeia, the culinary arts, and all kinds of special skills connected with the material aspects of culture, such as tools and the habitat (UNESCO 2001). Other aspects not mentioned in the UNESCO definition include social systems and beliefs, social relations, philosophies, ideas and values, and traditional knowledge. These aspects of society are usually perpetuated through daily life and activities, social situations and institutions. They grow, change and die as the social situation demands (Mulokozi 2005). Given the breadth and depth of cultural heritage as a concept, this study focuses on some inheritable aspects of culture with both tangible and intangible elements. African concepts of heritage have always embraced spiritual, social and religious meanings, myths, and strong relationships with ancestors and the environment.

The study collected primary data by way of interviews, archaeological survey, ethnographic observation and focus group discussions, and secondary data respectively. Through archaeological survey and ethnographic observation some archaeological and cultural heritage resources were recovered, and their conservation status was assessed. The secondary data collected include information from published articles related to the Mtwara Region and cultural heritage resources from different journals, reports, brochures, magazines and newspapers.

Dialectical Perceptions upon Cultural Heritage Resources

Learning from both western and African perspectives of cultural heritage resources, one finds that the concept of heritage has expanded considerably in the past three or four decades. Previously confined to architectural and artistic masterpieces, heritage has evolved to include landscapes, industrial and engineering works, vernacular constructions, urban and rural settlements, and intangible elements like temporary art forms, skills, and ways of life. This expansion reflects an increasing understanding of how heritage and culture permeate societies and take many forms and levels of importance and value (Powter and Ross 2005). The Makonde communities' understanding of cultural heritage resources is very much rooted in intangible heritage. This was revealed from their perceptions of the meaning of cultural heritage resources. For example, in one of the group interviews, one informant had the following perception of the concept of "cultural heritage resources" or "rasilimali za urithi tamaduni" as it is commonly understood in Kiswahili:

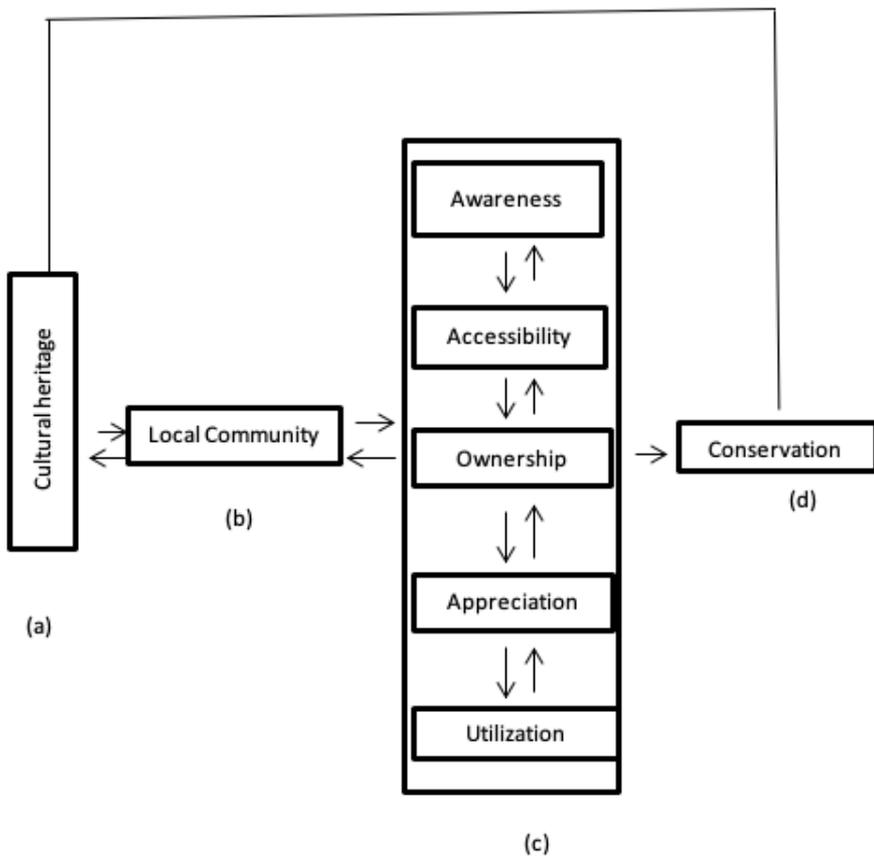
Rasilimali za urithi tamaduni ni mambo mbalimbali ya kijadi au ya kimila yaliyofanywa na wazee wetu kama vile matambiko, Jando na Unyago, pamoja na ngoma za asili. Kulikuwa pia na miiko mbalimbali, – Mfano, mtoto akitoka Jando alikuwa haruhusiwi kuingia nyumba ya baba yake. Ilikuwa pia ni mwiko kwa watoto kuhudhuria shughuli za mazishi. Hayo yote ni mambo ambayo ni ya zamani lakini bado yanaendelea kufanyika mpaka sasa japo si kwa kiwango kama cha zamani¹

¹ Interview notes, group interview with elders, 15/04/2015 at Nanguruwe village in Mtwara Rural district

Translation: [Cultural heritage resources are various traditions or customs which were performed by our ancestors such as ritual offerings, *Jando* and *Unyago*, and traditional dances. There were also different taboos, for example, a boy coming from *Jando initiation* was prohibited to enter his father's house. It was also a taboo for children to attend funeral ceremonies. All these things are ancient but are still done today, although not to the same extent as in the past].

Similar perceptions were also given by other local community informants during interviews and focus group discussions. Generally, a total of 36 (60%) out of 60 informants who responded to the above question confined the meaning of cultural heritage resources to intangible cultural practices. These mainly included cultural practices like *Jando and Unyago initiation*, traditional dances, taboos, sacrifices, sacred places, traditional games (e.g. *Ndingi, Bao, Mdomo*), traditional food, traditional medicine, and witch-craft. Eighteen (18) informants (30%) confined the meaning of cultural heritage resources to past histories and oral narratives.

According to Thomas King (2008), heritage means many things but it is safe to say that it always has two core characteristics: value, and time depth. Whether natural or cultural, tangible or intangible, in order to be considered heritage, something must have been around for a while and be regarded by someone as valuable. While agreeing with King's viewpoint of value and time depth, I argue here that heritage also includes a sense of awareness, accessibility, ownership, appreciation and utilization by custodian communities. These are important aspects not only for the definition of cultural heritage but also for the sustainable conservation of cultural heritage resources. That means, heritage has to be understood by the custodian communities and they should be able to access it, feel they own it, appreciate its value and utilize or communicate it for generations. These five concepts should be equally considered if we are to realize a sustainable conservation of cultural heritage resources (Figure 2).



(a) Independent variable (1) (b) Independent variable (2)
(c) Intervening variables (d) Dependent variable

Figure 2: A model on the interrelationship between community and cultural heritage resources conservation (By the Author).

The results of this study show that the Mtwara Region is rich in cultural heritage resources both tangible and intangible, although intangible cultural heritage resources, such as ritual practices, are highly respected among local communities of the Mtwara Region, especially elders. The practice of cultural traditions and ritual ceremonies among the Makonde communities of the Mtwara Region not only enhances awareness but also constitutes a means to access, own, appreciate and utilize these cultural heritage resources, especially among youth. It is in conformity with this view

that this study concurs with some scholars (Chirikure and Pwiti 2008; Pikirayi 2011) that there is a need to redefine the value and relevance of archaeology by upholding community interpretation of cultural heritage, community inclusion in site management and an understanding of cultural heritage situated within the community. The interviews and personal observations that were conducted in this study clearly indicate how local communities cherish and access cultural heritage resources. This was very much revealed at the Mvita tombs (Figure 3), where local communities in this area sorrowfully explained their attachment to the deceased and their great concern over conservation of the graveyard. In their views, cultural practice is considered a means to conserve and communicate the past to the present generations. For example, one informant had the following views on the cultural attachment to their deceased relatives;

Hapa kijijini kwetu tuna makaburi ambapo wazee wetu pamoja na watoto wetu wamepumzika. Maeneo haya tunayaheshimu na tunayathamini sana. Kila mwaka wanaukoo wote hukusanyika hapa mara moja kwa mwaka kwa ajili ya ibada na tambiko kuwakumbuka waliotangulia

Translation: [Here, at our village, we have a graveyard where our elders and our children have been rested. We really respect and value these areas. Every year all clan members meet for religious and other ritual practices in memory of our ancestors].

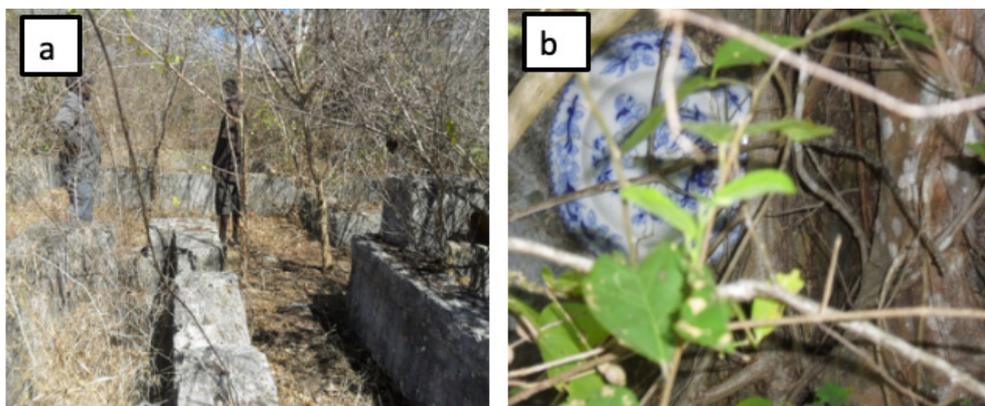


Figure 3: Mass tombs (a) in the Mvita graveyard and a Chinese Porcelain (b) on the tomb's Pillar.

Conservation Status of Cultural Heritage Resources

Most often, communities living around tangible heritage resources are not involved in research and management of such places. The involvement of communities in such undertakings would be important in ensuring the continued, long-term survival of these resources (Mabulla 2005). For example, it was observed that local communities living around the Mikindani site are not included in the discussion by professionals and the government on the cultural value of the monuments. As a result, these monuments are being vandalized through stone quarrying for the construction of modern houses, hence the need to conserve them. A similar case was also observed at the ancient settlement of Mvita where the graveyard and the old mosque were in poor state of conservation so they were used for materials rather than conserved as well.

The intangible cultural heritage resources found in the Mtwara Region are integral to the history and cultural identity of the Makonde communities. It was noted from local communities' responses and secondary sources that some intangible cultural practices were used as part of informal education in the society. For example, after being circumcised, Makonde male youth aged between nine and sixteen years were taught basic life skills comprised in a model of initiation

rituals popularly known as *Jando*² (Gabriel 2015). Another set of initiation rites known as *Unyago*³ was also practiced to celebrate the coming of age of girls and during wedding ceremonies. Older women spent weeks teaching the young ones basic life skills likesex and conjugal life. Both models of initiation rituals were accompanied by folk music. This traditional way of mentoring male and female youths is still practiced, although nowadays a bit swayed by Western influences. For example, some local informants attested that, in the past, the Makonde traditional dances and songs were dominant during the *Jando* and *Unyago* ceremonies, but today we see very little of these, as modern music popularly known as “Bongo flavor” is highly supported in the community, especially by youths, and plays a large part in these ceremonies today.

In order to assess the level of local communities’ awareness, accessibility, ownership, appreciation and utilization of cultural heritage resources, local communities were asked to explain what they understand about cultural heritage and mention the types of cultural heritage resources that are available in their areas. This was done through group interviews and focus group discussions with representatives of the local community. Participants were asked open-ended questions that required them to freely explain what they understand about the subject matter but also mention what they think are cultural heritage resources according to their understanding. The objective was to identify and document the cultural heritage resources among the Makonde communities of the Mtwara Region and the way people value, conserve and interact with these cultural heritage resources. Most of the cultural heritage resources that local community members mentioned were intangible, such as *Jando* and *Unyago*, traditional dances, traditional beliefs, such as witch-craft and traditional medicine, ritual offerings, and other traditional practices. *Jando* and *Unyago* ceremonies take place every year and the majority of the community populace do participate in these initiation ceremonies popularly known as *kualukwa*’ in the Makonde language, meaning

2 Apart from being a circumcision ritual and informal training for boys into adulthood, the *Jando* ritual was also used as a forum for punishing boys who went through *Jando* in the past but their behaviours remained as before.

3 The *Unyago* ritual for Makonde, Makua, and Yao women does not involve genital mutilation as it is done in other communities, but it involves all training a woman needs to make her a mature and responsible person.

to become a 'grownup'. Apart from attracting many people, both male and female, of all ages, these ceremonies are accompanied by eating and drinking of local foods and drinks. Participants in these traditional performances appear in dirty clothes, and sometimes their bodies are smeared with mud and whitish powder⁴ looking like they are possessed by spirits (Figure 4).



Figure 4: An ecstatic traditional dance (a) and (b) during Jando and Unyago ceremonies. (Photo by the Author).

The aim of conservation is to safeguard the quality and values of the resource, protect its material substance and ensure its integrity for future generations (Kamamba 2005). The majority of the informants who were interviewed on the conservation status of cultural heritage resources in their areas regretted that most of these resources were disappearing. For example, some of them were of the opinion that there is a loss of interest in caring about cultural heritage resources among the majority of the members of the local communities. The archaeological survey and ethnographic observation revealed that some cultural heritage resources were deteriorating without any rescue measures being taken. These included the dilapidating Mvita and Mikindani Historic

⁴ This powder is believed to be ritual flour made of sorghum. It is famously used in any ritual practices or ceremonies among the Makonde, Makua, and Yao communities. But, nowadays, people use any whitish-color powder.

Site monuments (Figure 5), the collapsing colonial railway route⁵ (Figure 6), and the old mosque of Mvita (Figure 7).



Figure 5: Erosive activities at Mvita site (a) and deteriorating monuments (b) at Mikindani historical site. (Photo by the Author).



Figure 6: A water run-off through the demolished colonial railway. (Photo by the Author).

⁵ This railway route that started from Nachingwea in Lindi Region and continued on to Mtwara Region was built by colonialists and has been vandalised by brick manufacturers and in some areas people have constructed houses for settlement.

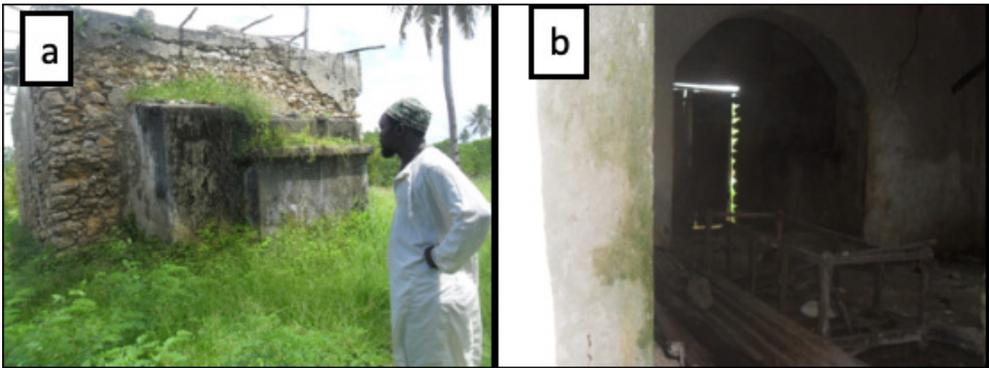


Figure 7: Mvita ancient Mosque outside view (a) and inside view (b) in a deteriorating state. (Photo by the Author).

Some intangible heritage resources, such as the initiation ceremonies *Jando* and *Unyago*, taboos, and other ritual practices, have also lost their meaning as compared to how they were practiced in the past. In some interviews, the informants explained how circumcision rite has lost its meaning upon being practiced by medical doctors and not the traditional *Ngariba*⁶. All traditional principles, which in the past accompanied circumcision rituals, have been abandoned in favour of modern practice, as it was noted by one informant:

Zamani Jando lilifanyika kwa usiri mkubwa sana kwenye maeneo yaliyotengwa maalum kwa kazi hiyo hasa msituni. Vijana waliweza kukaa huko hata miezi miwili wakifundishwa mambo mbalimbali ya utamaduni na utu uzima. Hivyo haikuwa tu kwa ajili yatohara bali iliambatana na mambo mengine ya kimila kamasehemu ya kuwapokea vijana kwenye kundi la watu wazima. Sikuhizi watu hawazingatii hilo badala yake Jando linafanyika majumbani kitu ambacho siyo sahihi.

Akina mama hawa kuruhusiwa kuwaona vijana wao wakati wa Jando lakini siku hizi hilo halizingatiwi kwasababu Jando linafanyika majumbani. Wakati mwingine watoto

⁶ According to Swahili – English Dictionary the word means local circumciser

hutahiriwa hospitalini wakiwa wadogo na wanapofikia umri wa kualukwa ndipo huchezwa ngoma⁷

Translation: [In the past, *Jando* initiation was secretly performed in a place chosen specifically for that purpose, mainly in forests. After circumcision, the initiates could remain in the camp even for two months or more, as it also involved other traditional practices and training to the youths as a sign of accepting them into adulthood. Nowadays, *Jando* initiation has lost its meaning as it is openly practiced within people's homes without observing any secret as it was in the past. Women were prohibited to interact with their youths during *Jando* initiation but nowadays they can interact with them as many people conduct *Jando* initiation in-house. In some cases, children are circumcised during their childhood in hospitals and *Jando* ceremonies are performed later on, when they reach the age acceptable for *Jando* initiation].

The fact that the abandonment of customs and traditions has created an enormous impact to the communities was also a concern to some of the informants (e.g. Mr. Fadhili Mohamed and Rajabu Mharami). They attribute some social problems currently facing the communities to 'a cultural curse' resulting from not adhering to cultural and traditional principles as it used to be in the past. This has resulted into many social instabilities leading to the loss of a sense of humanity in the society. It has also led to inhuman actions such as killing criminals by using fire or poison, assassinations and many other inhuman or harsh treatments. These had never been practiced in the past as cultural norms guiding the communities' ways of life could not allow it. So, the informants' opinions showed clearly that the rate of adherence to conservation of cultural heritage resources, both tangible and intangible, has been decreasing with time due to various reasons as mentioned above.

Some of the elders were of the opinion that, in the past, there were taboos which had to be observed by every individual in the community. Whoever went against these principles would, with no mercy, be punished by ancestral spirits. They mentioned

⁷ Field notes, interview, 23/11/2012, at Naliendele village in Mtwara - Mikindani Municipality.

some taboos which were strictly unbreakable in the past, though nowadays no one cares about them. For example, comments from one of the elders rightly encapsulate the state of affairs:

Palikuwa na kisima cha maji katika kijiji chetu kikiwa na samaki wa maajabu. Tulikatazwa kumvua samaki huyo kwani ndiye aliyesababisha maji yapatikane pale kijijini. Kuna muda watu walidharau maelekezo ya wazee wakamvua yule samaki kwa ajili ya kitoweo. Matokeo yake kisima kile kilikauka nakutowe kakabisa na sasa tunahangaika na ukosefu wamaji. Pia zamani tulikatazwa kukata baadhi ya miti kwani ilitumika kwa mambo ya kimila lakini pia kama chanzo cha mvua. Leo hii hakuna anayejali mambo haya japo yalikuwa na maana kubwa.⁸

Translation: [There was a water-well in our village with a miraculous fish. No one was supposed to fish it out because it was believed to be the source of water in the well. However, with time, people ignored this prohibition and fished it for food. Consequently, the well went dry and that is why we are now suffering because of inadequate water supply. Similarly, in the past it was prohibited to cut down some trees. These were used for ritual practices and were an important source of rain. Today, no one bothers about all these taboos although they were all meaningful].

The local informants also attested that there were some sacred or ritual places which were still conserved, respected and accessed for ritual practices. For example, it was noted from one of the group interviews in the Nanguruwe village that the community respected the mythical *Limbende*⁹ ritual site. It is found in the Nanguruwe village, about 30 kilometers south of the Mtwara town.

8 Group interview with elders - 07/04/2013 at Mtendachi village – Mtwara Rural.

9 Limbende is the name of the ancient traditional leader of the Makonde ethnic groups living in the Nanguruwe village in Mtwara Rural District. According to the narratives, this local hero died long ago (probably early 19th C). His grave is still preserved to date and he occasionally appears to his people in the form of a huge snake and visits the clan members at their home for food and drink.

The power of *Limbende* is handed over through inheritance among the *Limbende* clan, whereby whoever inherits the traditional headship becomes the 'cultural figure' of the community. This person is fully respected and takes charge of all cultural matters in the community. If anybody in the community wants to undertake a ritual performance, he/she is obliged to consult this person, who is the chief custodian of traditions, for permission and instructions. This traditional leader holds key social responsibilities and he/she is respected by the community. Every year, the local communities, particularly those belonging to the *Limbende* lineage, do visit the *Limbende* site and perform some ritual practices at the site. These annual ritual practices are conducted for the purposes of offerings to their ancestors, especially the legendary *Limbende*. The ritual practices are normally accompanied by clearing and cleaning of the burial site as a sign of love, conservation and respect to their ancestral spirits. One informant had the following views on the importance of cultural heritage resources, using the example of the *Limbende* myth:

Urithi tamaduni ni muhimu sana kwa jamii kwani kama ukihifadhiwa vizuri na kurithishwa toka kizazi hadi kizazi unaweza kuwa chanzo cha amani na usalama kwa jamii. Kwa mfano, katika kijiji chetu cha Nanguruwe huwezi kuona balaa lolote likijitokeza kwa kuwa kijiji kinalindwa na wahenga wetu hasa Limbende. Amini kabisa kuwa kijiji chetu hakina balaa la aina yoyote iwe ni ajali, majanga ya asili au wanyama wakali.¹⁰

Translation: [Cultural heritage is very important to the community in that, if well conserved and transmitted from one generation to another, it can be a source of peace and security. For example, in our village (Nanguruwe) you cannot find any misfortune because our village is protected by our ancestors, especially *Limbende*. Believe it that our village is free from all dangers such as accidents, natural calamities and dangerous animals because our ancestors cannot allow this].

¹⁰ Group interview with elders, 03/07/2013 at Nanguruwe village in Mtwara Rural District

It was clearly noted from the words of the informants that their understanding of the past was directly linked mostly to intangible cultural heritage resources. Sometimes they also included natural landscapes such as trees, rocks, water bodies and caves, which are believed to be of cultural significance to local communities. For example, there were some reactions from the informants which emphasized the conservation and protection of the natural environment, particularly huge trees which they believe are a home for their ancestral spirits. The following excerpt supports this argument:

Zamani tulifanya matambiko kwenye mti ule mkubwa wa msufi ambapo tulichinja kondoo wa kafara. Damu yake ilimwagwa kwenye mti kama sehemu ya kuwatuliza wahenga na kuomba neema. Kwa sasa miti hii ya asili inakatwa ovyo hasa na serikali kwa ajili ya miradi ya maendeleo. Matokeo yake wote waliohusika na ukataji wa miti hiyo wote wameshakufa kwasababu ya hasira za wahenga. Tunachokuomba wewe kama mtaalamuu peleke taarifa serikali ya wilaya kuwa wawekezaji wakija hapa Mjimwema wasijaribu kukata miti hii ya matambiko vinginevyowatatashida¹¹.

Translation: [In the past, we used to perform rituals under that big kapok tree where a lamb of offering was slaughtered, and its blood sprinkled around the tree to appease the spirits and ask for their grace. Nowadays, there has been a tendency of cutting down such traditional trees due to the establishment of development projects by the government in collaboration with investors. As a result, whoever was involved in cutting down the traditional trees died as the ancestors' wrath turned upon them. It is our request to you as an expert of cultural issues to advise the district government that when investors come to *Mjimwema* village they should not dare to cut down our traditional trees, as this would result in dire consequences].

¹¹ Group interview with elders, 18/04/2013 at Mjimwema village in Mtwara – Mikindani municipality.

The above claim, in a way, supports what Joost Fontein says, that "within the limits of certain fixed markers – like the names of certain people and places, as well as ancestors, totems and praise names, and well-known stories about past events – individuals are sometimes able to exert a high level of agency to renegotiate and manipulate stories according to their collective, and individual interest. Their authority within their own communities, clan, and beyond, depends on their kinship and descent ties, their status and age, their political allegiances, and their reputation as knowledgeable of the tradition" (Fontein 2006: 47).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The argument of this paper is that the issue of communicating cultural heritage resources to the public, particularly in Tanzania, is of paramount importance. The experience from the Mtwara Region as discussed in this paper shows that little efforts have been made by the government and other professionals to sensitize and involve the local community in the conservation of cultural heritage resources, especially tangible ones. It has been discovered that, in some ways, local communities' understanding of cultural heritage resources is somewhat different from professionals' perceptions. While local communities' perceptions of cultural heritage resources are dominated by intangibles, professionals' perceptions are dominated by tangibles. As a result, local communities are less aware of the value of tangible cultural resources around them such as the Mikindani Swahili monuments. This contributes to the poor state of conservation of these resources. The results of this study also show that, if well involved, local communities can play a significant role in the conservation of cultural heritage resources. This study has revealed that a number of cultural heritage resources, both tangible and intangible, are deteriorating at an alarming rate. While tangible heritage is deteriorating due to lack of awareness among local communities, intangible heritage is likely to perish due to the impact of western cultures. Some people, especially among the young generation, tend to ignore traditional cultural practices in favor of western cultures.

Collective efforts are needed between archaeology and heritage professionals on the one hand and local communities on the other to enhance cultural sensitization and sustainable conservation of cultural heritage resources. Archaeology, as Innocent Pikirayi says, should no longer be regarded as the science of generating knowledge about the past, but rather of how that knowledge is, and should be, communicated to and utilized for the benefit of the public and local communities (Pikirayi 2011). Archaeologists should educate the public on the projects they are conducting. It is through education that opportunities for a more equal environment may open up. Creating a transparent environment can create a culture of trust where the public may feel more comfortable with archaeologists. Through community involvement archaeologists will be able to get complementary knowledge before arriving to conclusions about the past. If the local communities are educated about cultural heritage resources and well engaged in conservation strategies, they will feel a sense of ownership of these resources. Therefore, collaborating with descendant and local communities and other stakeholders along with creating diverse public education programs remain important goals for all prominent archaeological organizations – both academic and professional.

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60 - Festo W. GABRIEL - *Communicating cultural heritage resources...*

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