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Local Communities' Perceptions of Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Resources in the Mtwara Region of Tanzania

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Abstract

This paper examines local communities' understanding of archaeology and cultural heritage resources. This study was conducted among the Makonde communities of the Mtwara Region of south-eastern Tanzania. The paper presents and critically discusses local communities' views upon the meaning of archaeology and cultural heritage resources in general. The study used community-based methods by use of interviews, archaeological ethnography and focus group discussions. The results of this study reveal that the local communities in the Mtwara Region are not aware of the meaning of archaeology regardless of the number of archaeological researches that have been conducted in the region. Their understanding of the past is very much confined to intangible cultural traditions which are inherited and practised from one generation to another. Some conclusions are provided which undoubtedly indicate that according to the local communities' perceptions cultural heritage resources are mainly characterized by intangible cultural practices and beliefs. As this study unveils, in this case tangible heritage resources have less importance to the local communities. This is contrary to the professional or academic conceptions which provide a dual focus on conservation and protection of tangible cultural heritage resources.

It is only very recently that we see some studies being conducted focusing on intangible cultural heritage resources.

Keywords

Archaeology, Cultural Heritage, local communities, Tangible heritage, Intangible heritage

Introduction

The recognition of cultural heritage resources as having universal importance was first granted in the 1954 Hague convention which affirmed that "damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the world". It thus introduced into international law the notion that cultural heritage is of general importance to all humankind, irrespective of where that heritage is situated. This recognition established a conceptual basis for subsequent UNESCO conventions. The World Heritage Convention is based on the premise that "parts of the cultural and natural heritage resources are of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole". The destruction or deterioration of cultural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world (Forrest, 2007). In 1997, Tanzania launched its first cultural policy with provisos on language, arts and crafts, cultural heritage management, recreation, culture and community participation, education and training as well as the management and financing of cultural heritage activities (Karoma, 2005). The new policy, which was prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture, was launched in Tanzania's administrative capital, Dodoma, on 23rd August 1997. Shortly after its official launch, the Antiquities Unit of the Ministry of Education and Culture (recently the name changed to Ministry of Education and Vocational Training) was shifted to the

Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT) together with those aspects of the new Cultural Policy which dealt with movable and immovable tangible cultural heritage. Involved in this shift were phenomena such as paleoanthropological, archaeological, as well as historical sites, including buried and above-ground structures and features, artefacts, monuments, antiquities, interred remains, cemeteries, and others (Karoma, 2005).

It is not the intention here to explore in detail the policy statements guiding cultural heritage resources in Tanzania but rather to highlight a few which are in tandem with the objectives of this study. A focus has been given to evaluating the kind of cultural heritage resources mostly stipulated in the policy provisions against what is commonly understood by the local communities. Part of the policy provisions states that "Cultural heritage sites shall be used as educational resources and tourist attractions". The realization of this statement will entail the scheduling of more sites than those currently being used for touristic and educational purposes. This will in turn necessitate substantial investment in research, curriculum development and production of educational materials in the form of booklets, site guides, brochures, books, pamphlets, films, videotapes, photographs and posters. Juma *et al.* (2005) note that heritage sites are endowed with great educational value. This intrinsic knowledge and the policy knowledge geared toward making the public appreciate the need to conserve the heritage can be organized to deliver long-term results.

Study Area

Mtwara Region forms a 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 Lindi region to the north, the Indian Ocean to

the east and is separated by the Ruvuma River from Mozambique in the south (Figure 1). To the west it borders Ruvuma Region. The region occupies 16,729 sq. km or 1.9% of Tanzania Mainland area of 945,087 sq. km (Tanzania Tourist Board, 2012). The majority of the indigenous people of the region are of Bantu origin. The most dominant groups include the Makonde of Newala, Tandahimba, Masasi and Mtwara Rural. Other groups included are the Makua of Masasi and Mtwara Rural, and the Yao who also live in Masasi (Tanzania Tourist Board, 2012). The Mtwara Region, particularly the three districts of Mtwara - Mikindani Municipality, Mtwara Rural and Masasi, is among the fastest growing regions in Tanzania and currently there are plans by the government to transform it into an industrial region, especially after the discovery of gas and oil reserves in the region.

A number of development projects are being directed in the Mtwara Region by the government in collaboration with foreign investors. Apart from its wealth in gas and oil resources which have created investment opportunities, Mtwara Region is becoming attractive to many other industrial investments, including Dangote cement industry, fertilizers industry, and 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 socioeconomic growth taking place in the Mtwara Region, all of which endanger cultural heritage resources. The establishments of these projects pay little attention to salvaging cultural heritage resources available in Mtwara Region. They also come with some restrictions that ostracize the custodian communities from accessing their cultural heritage resources.

Consequently, most of the cultural heritage resources available in these investment zones are in a danger of disappearing due to lack of rescue measures during the operation of these development projects.
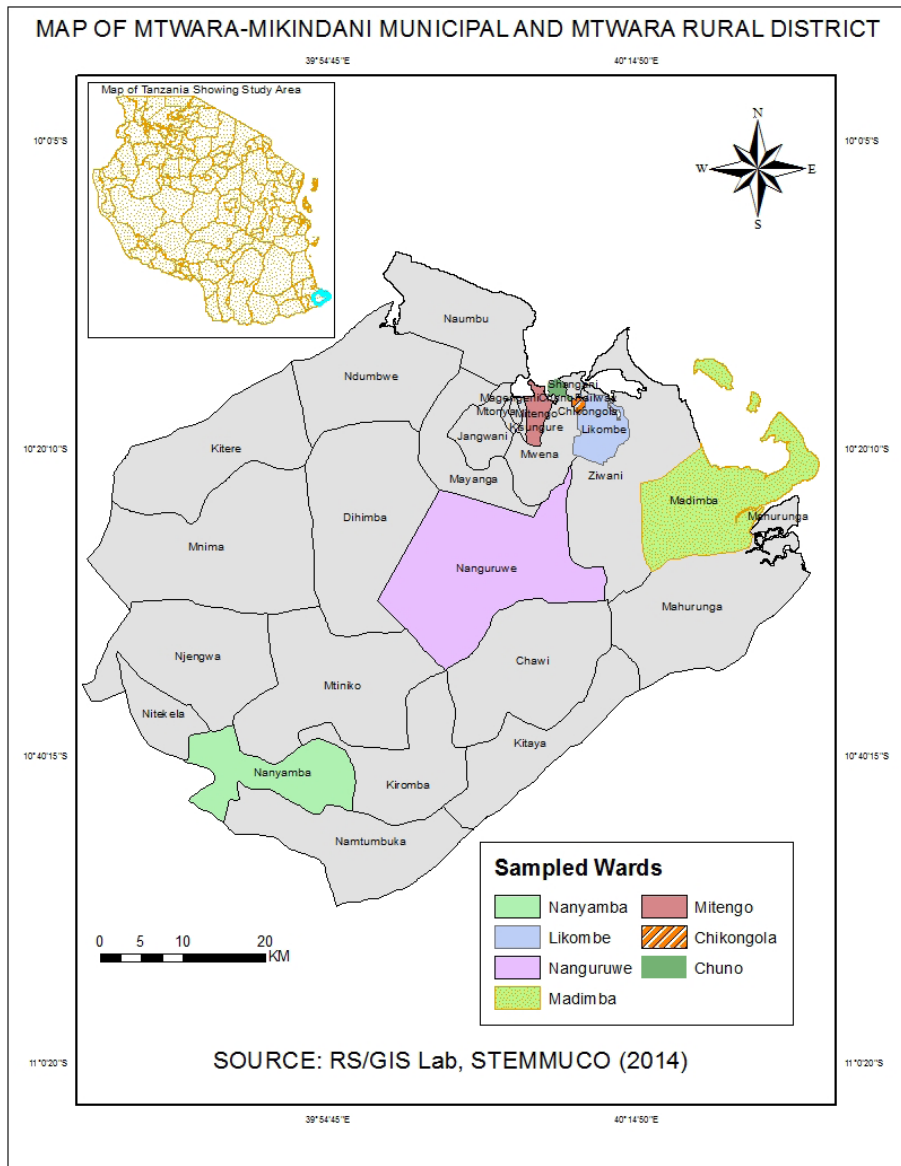

Figure 1. A Map of Tanzania showing the location of Mtwara Region. Source: GIS Unit – Stella Maris Mtwara University College (STEMMUCO)

Cultural heritage potentials found in the Mtwara Region, particularly the research area, include the Mikindani historical site monuments, the colonial legacy heritages such as the colonial economy infrastructural remains like the railways from Nachingwea in Lindi to the Mtwara port. Others are Mikindani old – harbour, monumental remains such as the Mvita graveyard, old mosque, and other architectural mounds. There are also remains and narratives related to the Mozambique Liberation Movement legacies, such as tombs and campsites at Naliendele, and many other traditional and ritual practices. This study was conducted in selected areas of the Mtwara municipality and Mtwara rural.

Theoretical Approaches to Community Archaeology

The theoretical approach of this study is based on the premise that archaeology is a colonial enterprise (Smith and Wobst, 2005) where "local communities have been systematically excluded both from the process of discovering their past and in the construction of knowledge concerning their heritage" (Moser *et al,* 2002: 221). In general practice, indigenous archaeology employs all of the basic elements of archaeological theory, namely those associated with culture-historical, processual, and post-processual approaches. At the same time, its character has been influenced by the broadening discourse in anthropology and, somewhat later, archaeology that began to take shape in the late 1970s (Nicholas, 2008). Given the multi-faceted nature of archaeology as a discipline, this study was guided by two theoretical approaches, namely critical theory and constructivist theory.

Critical Theory

More recent philosophical developments have produced debates among post-processualists, who emphasize the political and public aspects of archaeology, and the more traditional empiricists. The proponents of the post-processual 'critical theory' argue that when

the past is interpreted and becomes history, it tends to become ideology (Leone *et al*., 1987). In this vein, public interpreters realize that the meanings they impose on the past are particular to their own cultural and social background. With this awareness, they can help their audiences appreciate that many, if not all, of their preconceived notions about time and space are actually part of their own, modern, historically-based ideology. Thus, audiences can appreciate that knowledge about the archaeologically-revealed past is useful in giving meaning to the present.

However, some American archaeologists, such as South (1997), have reacted to the critical theory approach by calling it an 'anti-science fad.' South (1997) warns archaeologists against going too far in accepting the conclusions of critical theorists, that there are no facts or truths in archaeology, and that the past is not knowable with any integrity. If the past has no integrity, he says, then anyone's interpretation is as good as anyone else's and the interpretation would be open to anyone's political or ideological whims. This study adapted critical theory by providing an open engagement of the community in reconstructing the past by equally incorporating their perceptions in the interpretation and conclusions of the findings of this study.

Social Constructivist Theory

The central argument by constructivists is that knowledge arises from people's social, cultural and historical experiences. No knowledge is neutral, objective and absolute or value-free (Dei, 1996). Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in a society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding (MacMahon, 1997). The implication of a constructivist approach (Ballantyne, 1998; Copeland, 1998) is that individuals are constantly constructing and reconstructing meaning as they interact with the world, negotiating thoughts, feelings and actions. A constructivist

would assert that events do not exist 'out there' but are created by the person doing the construing. Something exists, but we cannot perceive it completely objectively. Hence, there is no such thing as an independent reality which we can know, describe and communicate in an absolutely true sense. What we experience is a dynamic interaction of our senses, perceptions, memory of previous experiences and cognitive processes which shape our understanding of events. Individuals actively create experience and meaning which contribute to a form of personal construction of the world (Copeland, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

The cultural heritage of a country constitutes what has been invariably categorized in numerous UNESCO documents as the cultural heritage or property of a country. The underdevelopment of archaeology in Africa has meant that the newly emerging discipline of cultural heritage management is also underdeveloped. The discipline aims at both the protection and preservation of cultural heritage and ensuring that the planning and undertaking of socio-economic development activities does not result in the destruction of both identified and unidentified cultural heritage resources (Mturi, 2005). Tanzania is endowed with abundant and diverse archaeological and paleontological resources, spanning from the Pliocene to the present. These cultural heritage resources have been underdeveloped, mishandled, mismanaged and underutilized (Karoma, 1996; Mabulla, 1996; and Mturi, 1996).

Furthermore, the general public, which is the primary custodian of these resources, has been denied their cultural right to participate in the management of cultural heritage resources (Mapunda and Msemwa, 2005). Instead, the conservation and protection of archaeological and cultural heritage resources in general seem to

be the task of archaeologists and cultural heritage professionals. In these conservation and protection endeavours, the intangible cultural heritage resources have been neglected in favour of tangible cultural heritage resources. As a result, the cultural heritage wealth embedded in intangible cultural heritage practices and beliefs, though highly appreciated by local communities, receives unnoticeable attention from professionals. This study investigates local communities' perceptions regarding archaeology and cultural heritage resources and uncovers how local communities' knowledge and experiences are of utmost importance to understanding the past.

Research Questions

This study was conducted under the following guiding questions;

(1) What were the local communities' perspectives on the archaeological research conducted in the Mtwara Region prior to this study? – This question was asked on the assumption that sometimes archaeologists do their research out of communities' knowledge. By asking this question one could get to understand local people's awareness and perceptions upon archaeological research particularly in the Mtwara Region.

(2) What do you understand by the concept 'cultural heritage resources'? – There are various scholarly meanings attached to cultural heritage resources (Msemwa, 2005; Mturi, 1996; Pikirayi, 2011). This question sought to get the meaning of cultural heritage resources from the local communities' viewpoint in order to see whether their views merge with or diverge from the existing professional meaning of the concept. The question was also designed to determine the manner in which local communities in the Mtwara Region value cultural heritage resources.

Methodology

The methods of data collection used in this study were in favour of both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected by way of interviews, archaeological survey, ethnographic observation, and focus group discussions. The secondary data collected includes information from published articles related to cultural heritage resources from different journals, reports, brochures, magazines and newspapers. The internet was another source of information with a valuable contribution to the secondary data. This study depended on multiple sources of evidence but is mostly rooted in the views of the local communities of the Mtwara Region of Tanzania. Generally, the case study method results in fruitful hypotheses or questions along with the data which may be helpful in testing or answering them, and thus enables the generalized knowledge to get richer and richer (Kothari, 1990). To enhance effective investigation into the research problem, this study used the case study method.

Data Collection Procedures

The construction of a research instrument or tool for data collection is the most important aspect of a research project (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). This is because anything you say by way of findings or conclusions is based upon the type of information collected, and the data you collect is entirely dependent upon the question you pose to your respondents. This research project intended to investigate the state of community archaeology and cultural heritage resources in the Mtwara Region with specific focus on local communities' perceptions of tangible and intangible cultural heritage resources. To achieve this objective, multiple data collection techniques were used, namely oral interviews, archaeological ethnography, focus group discussions and archival sources.

Interview Schedule and its Conceptualization

This study adopted the personal interview method which requires the interviewer to ask questions face-to-face with the other respondent or respondents (Kothari, 2004). This kind of interview had to take the form of direct personal investigation, with the interviewer collecting the information personally from the sources concerned. A semi-structured in-depth interview method of collecting information was used to elicit information from key informants. These interviews entailed a set of questions used to guide and focus the data collection process. This went concurrently with recording all information by use of interview schedule form, field-notebook and digital tape recorder for future retrieval and triangulation. The purpose of the interviews was to elicit information along the main lines of inquiry: local communities' perceptions on cultural heritage resources. This was the main guiding theme in the interview process to solicit answers to the research questions.

Sixty (60) informants were interviewed either individually or as a group depending on the nature of the appointment and the type of the information needed. For example, interviews in households were held with groups of family members. In some cases, interviews were conducted with a group of local community leaders. Thus, apart from individual interviews, interactions with more than one informant at a time are present.

Archaeological Ethnography

Archaeological ethnography, as Lynn Meskell notes, is a holistic anthropology that is improvisation and context dependent. It might encompass a mosaic of traditional forms, including archaeological practices and museum or representational analysis, as well as long-term involvement, participant observation, interviewing and archival work (Meskell, 2005). The ethnography that is carried

out in relation to archaeological locales needs to be multi-sited (Marcus, 1995) and engage with multiple stakeholders. It needs to examine the intersections between local and global economies and to find ways of engendering long-term sustainable change through the use of the materiality of the past, in partnership with varied local interest (Hodder, 2003).

It was conceived in this study that for archaeological materials to 'speak' reliably and in an understandable language, the descendant local communities of a culture concerned should not be ignored in the identification and interpretation processes of the archaeological materials and the past in general. Archaeological ethnography in this study was undertaken with full involvement of representatives from local communities in the research area. Archaeology may now be defined not as the study of the material remains of the past, but rather as a particular mode of inquiry into the relationship between people and their pasts, and in this case engagement of local communities is mandatory (own emphasis). The aim is to listen to and incorporate local voices. Archaeological survey and local communities' participation in the interpretation of archaeological materials enhanced mutual interpretation of cultural heritage resources for interactive knowledge creation rather than reactive approach.

Archaeological ethnography provided space for cultural heritage site visits in which a number of archaeological sites and other cultural heritage attractions were studied. These include the Mikindani historical site monuments (Figure 2), the Mvita graveyard (Figure 3), the Naliendele cemeteries for the Mozambique freedom fighters (Figure 4), and other traditional performances (see Figure 5). Ritual places and other symbolic traditions and places with cultural values were surveyed, recorded and equally discussed as part of primary data alongside the interviews. Multiple conversations were held with local

communities, while engagement, interventions, and critiques centred on materiality and temporality. This space encourages the downplaying of the distinction between past and present, and between diverse publics and researchers of equally diverse backgrounds (Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos, 2009).

Figure 2. Monumental ruins at the Mikindani Historical Site in a deteriorating state.

Figure 3. A graveyard (a) and a mosque ruin (b) at Mvita ancient settlement attached by vegetation.

Figure 4. The Mtwara Regional Commissioner Hon. Joseph Simbakariya during a visit to the Naliendele cemeteries in which the Mozambique freedom fighters were buried.

Figure 5. Makonde women (a) and men (b) performers during a traditional dance.

Results and Discussion

This study used community-based approaches under which local communities of the Mtwara Region were potential stakeholders in the research process. Their participation in the study was of paramount contribution from data collection procedures to data interpretation. The results of this study unanimously reveal how community engagement is a key requirement in the reconstruction of the past. It is through community engagement that one gets not only local communities' perceptions but also a platform to educate the local communities on matters related to archaeology and cultural heritage resources in general. For example, when asked to define the concept 'cultural heritage resources', the local communities had dialectical perceptions probably different from what is conceived in the professional meaning of the concept.

Local Communities' Perceptions on Archaeological Research

A majority of the respondents could not understand what archaeology is and they were not aware of the archaeological research conducted in the region. This implies that conventional archaeology has left little impact on local communities' understanding of archaeology. Conventional archaeological approach, which has been a common practice by professional archaeologists in Tanzania, has been isolative to the local communities. As a result, local communities remain alien to the field of archaeology. To overcome this isolative tendency, collaborative research approach is a necessity as it is both an investigative and educative approach which could lead to a better understanding of the past. The ultimate goal is to create open collaboration whereby goals are developed jointly, information flows freely, stakeholders are fully involved and "voiced", and the collaborative effort recognizes not only the differences between scientific and other – particularly local

or traditional – belief systems, but also the way mutual goals and dialogue can emerge from the research enterprise (Watkins, 2000).

In one incident, local communities strongly resisted archaeological excavation in their area. Some of them were suspicious of a hidden agenda behind the research project and were worried that the research was meant for precious materials or to confiscate their land. Local communities were suspicious that the archaeological research was in connection with a gas project which they were against. Regardless of having all necessary official research clearance documents and the prior consultation with the village government officials, all efforts to convince the local populace went astray. After a long discussion and negotiation, one of the local communities' ring leaders suggested that the excavation work stops and give time for local communities to convene a meeting with the researchers.

After ten days, a meeting was convened for further discussion on the intention of the research as well as responding to some questions from the audience while educating them on the importance of conducting this research. This conforms to some scholarly opinions that "Archaeological information can be technical and so it requires special techniques and efforts to make it understandable by the general public. Those of us who have been entrusted with the care of cultural heritage resources have an obligation to raise the level of knowledge to local communities. This can help them understand and realize the merits of scientific research in order for them to support archaeological conservation programmes. The past is not an exclusive preserve of professionals; the lay people also have the right to know about their past and even to be involved in research programmes" (Juma and Hamis, 2005).

Local Communities' Understanding on Cultural Heritage Resources

The data from this study indicate that the local communities' viewpoint is mostly centred on intangible heritage resources. For example, one finds that from the local communities' viewpoint cultural heritage resources have been perceived as cultural practices and identities which are inherited and transmitted from one generation to another. This is revealed by local communities' responses to the question that required them to explain what they understand of 'cultural heritage resources'. To a large extent the local communities' awareness of cultural heritage resources is rooted in their inherited intangible cultural and traditional practices. What they consider to be cultural heritage resources include cultural practices such as *Jando* and *Unyago*, traditional dances, traditional beliefs such as witchcraft and sorcery, as well as many other cultural norms.

Some traditional beliefs were associated with cultural landscape including natural environments such as ritual trees, some rivers, forests, rocks, rock shelters and mountains as manifestations of sacred places. These features often serve as places of worship and other forms of ritual practices. God and the divinities are worshiped through sacrifices, offerings, prayers, invocations, praises, music and dances (Mbiti, 1969, 1975). These traditional practices were basically dominant elements in the meaning of cultural heritage resources according to the local communities' perceptions. This contravenes the conventional understanding by professionals whose viewpoint on cultural heritage resources favours both tangible and intangible heritage resources. For example, cultural heritage resources according to some scholars comprise some kind of inheritance to be kept in safekeeping and handed down to future generations. It is a linkage with group identity and it is both a symbol of the cultural identity of a self-identified group, be it

national or people, and an essential element in the construction of that group's identity (Blake, 2000).

Responses from the informants ascertained that the local communities' meaning of cultural heritage resources mostly favours intangible cultural heritage resources in expense of tangible heritages. This is different from what is seen in the professionals' conception where both tangible and intangible cultural heritage resources are taken care of with emphasis given to the conservation of tangible cultural heritage resources. For example, professionals view heritage as "tangible, immovable resources, (e.g. buildings, rivers, natural areas); tangible movable resources, (e.g. objects in museums, documents in archives); or intangibles such as values, customs, ceremonies, lifestyles, and including experiences such as festivals, arts and cultural events" (Watkins and Beaver, 2008).

Contrary to this professional conception, the local communities' meaning of cultural heritage resources includes all intangible cultural practices that are known to, appreciated, owned by and presented to the local communities from one generation to another. It is from these two conceptions that this study conceives that cultural heritage resources must have both tangible and intangible cultural indicators with emphasis given, though not limited to awareness, appreciation, ownership and presentation characteristics. In other words, cultural practice becomes a heritage given its transferability from one generation to another. However, it becomes a resource only when there is a sense of awareness, appreciation, ownership and presentation among the custodian communities. It is so unfortunate that the Antiquities Act of 1964 (amended in 1979), which is the basic legislation for protecting and preserving Tanzanian cultural heritage resources, provides less consideration to intangible cultural heritage resources. The Act does not recognize heritage sites identified only by living heritage values, such as sites of spiritual or religious significance. The Act only covers and gives

protection to the physical features and objects in these sites, hence its limitation (Bwasiri, 2011).

Both tangible and intangible cultural heritage resources were recovered in the study area and each of them had a significant cultural meaning to the local communities. Most of the tangible cultural heritage resources, apart from having intangible cultural attachments, also present historic emergences of the study area. The study findings also unveiled a number of intangible cultural practices with different cultural embodiments. For example, initiation rituals played a significant role in shaping adolescents in many Tanzanian ethnic groups despite colonial regimes fighting against what they termed as 'uncivilized traditions'. After being circumcised, Makonde boys aged between nine and sixteen years were taught basic life skills which are comprised in a model of initiation rituals popularly known as *Jando*. Another set of initiation rites known as *Unyago* was also practiced to celebrate the coming of age of girls and during weddings. Older women spent weeks on teaching the young ones about basic life skills including sex and conjugal life. Both models of initiation rituals were accompanied by folk music. This traditional way of mentoring youths is still in practice, the only problem being that today it is too much occupied by Western influences hence lacking the traditional meaning and authenticity.

It has been discovered in this study that some cultural heritage resources in the Mtwara Region are in deteriorating state due to lack of rescue measures. For example, the Mikindani historical site is in a danger of deterioration due to stone quarrying vandalism in the area. The data on initiation practices show that the circumcision rite has changed to a great extent. In the past, it was purely done under traditional principles but presently it is affected by modern inventions. A number of factors were noted to have influenced this transformation of initiation practices: First, it was noted that medical technological innovations are among the driving factors

that have transformed the circumcision rite. Due to the emergence of communicable diseases such as HIV-AIDS, the traditional practice of circumcision rite has been discouraged to avoid infection, as the practice would involve the same circumcision instruments among the initiates. Second, globalization has been mentioned as another cause of the transformation of traditional initiation practices. Due to the diffusion of Western cultures, most of the traditional principles and practices have been absorbed by new inventions. For example, in the past, traditional dances and rituals were solely practiced and dominated in all initiation ceremonies. Today, the practice has taken a new form whereby Western-based dances are also performed during the initiation ceremonies. Third, ignorance of the traditional practice of initiations has been considered to be another cause of embracing modern practice of initiation. This is due to the fact that most people are fond of Western cultures to the point of losing interest in their traditional cultures. Consequently, they adopt a new form of cultural practice which is neither traditional nor Western. This has caused cultural downturn whereby traditional practices have lost their authenticity at the expense of Western cultural practices. Special attention needs to be given to these precious cultural heritage resources, if our dream is not only to sustainably conserve them for our own sake but also to induce the cultural wealth of the past to the present and future generations.

It is worth noting that cultural heritage resources can be well understood and sustainably managed only if local communities' awareness, appreciation, sense of ownership and presentation are promoted and emphasized. The cultural performances and ritual practices which were observed in this study are indicators of the local communities' awareness, appreciation, ownership and presentation of cultural heritage resources. Collaborative efforts are needed to rescue cultural heritage resources by sensitizing local communities to adhere to the traditional principles of cultural practices.

Conclusion and Future Direction

Looking at the Tanzanian context as revealed by the results of this study, one finds a plateau of missing links between professional archaeological practitioners and the local communities' understanding of archaeology and cultural heritage resources. There has been a great disparity in the undertaking of archaeological research in Tanzania in terms of themes, paradigms and spatial coverage. It is at this point that the statement of the problem for this study was anchored. Community-based archaeological programmes are at their early stage in Tanzania, as the majority of the local communities have not been involved in the archaeological research programmes. This calls for a need for multiple community-based archaeological researches in Tanzania, through which local communities' knowledge shall be part and parcel of the reconstruction of the past. Community archaeology is based on the premise that better archaeology can be achieved when more diverse voices are involved in the interpretation and presentation of the past. This does not mean compromising the scientific nature of archaeology, but rather simply realizing how research integrates with society (Pardoe, 1992; Tunprawat, 2009) and that it can be used to challenge the inequality of dominant historical paradigms (Schmidt and Patterson, 1995). A thorough investigation is needed into the impact of the conventional archaeological approach on the local communities' understanding of archaeology and cultural heritage resources in general. Experiences from the Mtwara Region through this study have shown that most of the local communities are not aware of what archaeology is all about. This may — among other factors — be due to the lack of a collaborative and informative approach when conducting archaeological research. Community involvement in archaeological research early on and throughout the process is essential for awareness purposes and sustainable conservation of cultural heritage resources.

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