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GET OFF MY LAND!

Towards mutual understanding in archaeological field conflicts

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Abstract

Genuine community participation in research and conservation projects is crucial for sustainable protection, management and development of archaeological sites, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where the scientific value of such resources is less appreciated. Local people often become suspicious of and discontented with field researchers who do not inform them of what they are doing around their courtyard, just as they are displeased with government officials who impose conservation projects upon them. Their discontent often comes for good reasons: either the given research or project is not a priority to them or its objectives differ from theirs. As a result, a conflict of expectations emerges, often leading local communities into disliking the project and hence investing little or just superficial commitment to it. Such feelings may be expressed verbally in formal or informal gatherings or through indifference, resentment, or vandalism, all of which are detrimental to the proper management of the heritage resource in question. Using specific cases of researchers/administrators-villagers differences and conflicts of expectations experienced in various places in Tanzania, the paper discusses causes of such differences, critically examines the Community Participatory technique exposing its strengths and weaknesses, as well as suggests solutions and outlining potential benefits should villagers be genuinely incorporated in such undertakings.

Key words

Conflict, Tanzania, Communication, Community Participation, Commitment

INTRODUCTION

The past is perceived differently by different people as dictated by factors such as socio-cultural background and level of education. It is therefore important when archaeologists present the past to any given audience, say for purposes of public archaeology, to take such factors into account. This has been nicely put by Collin Renfrew and Paul Bahn who say:

When we ask what the past means, it is implicit in the question that we are asking what the past means for us, for clearly it means different things to different people. An Indian, looking at the great monuments of Moghul rule, may see things differently according to whether he or she is a Hindu or a Muslim, and a European tourist will look at these buildings with different eyes again. In the same way, an Australian Aborigine may attach a very different significance to fossil human remains from an early site like Lake Mungo or to paintings in the Kakadu National Park, than a white Australian. Different communities have very different conceptions about the past which often draw on sources well beyond archaeology (Renfrew and Bahn 1996:509).

Presumably, there is no contention regarding what Renfrew and Bahn postulate above; many people would agree that there are multiple perceptions upon any given phenomenon, be it archaeological, historical, anthropological or of any other discipline. It is, therefore, scientifically enriching and ethically laudable to tolerate other peoples' viewpoints as a means for enhancing socio-cultural forbearance and at the same time testing the validity of the viewpoint that one believes in. This needs to apply among scholars as well as between scholars and lay people.

Several times during field research I have encountered lay people who, through discussions, appeared to possess brilliant ideas regarding archaeology; ideas which, if adopted, could contribute significantly to the protection and conservation of heritage resources. Unfortunately, these people, most of whom are elderly, lack literary ability to translate the knowledge they have into a medium that can be accessed by a wider audience. Stranded as they are, without knowing where to take their ideas or whom to contact, such people become overjoyed when a researcher approaches them for information. This paper has been prompted by an incident of that kind which happened in Kondoa, Central Tanzania, in 2001. While inquiring about indigenous ironworking in the

area, I conducted five one-to-one semi-structured interviews. One of them, with Mr. Ibrahim Mruke (aged 73 then), ended up being extra interesting in several ways. First, the old man, who already knew that I would be coming, broke into tears of joy upon my arrival. The reason for his extreme joy was finding someone local (a Tanzanian) and young, being interested in understanding about iron technology, a subject he had tried in vain to influence his children and grandchildren with. "Who are you and where are you from?", asked Mr. Mruke in exclamation coming amidst tears and smiled after I had introduced myself to him and told him the purpose of my visit. "None of my sons and grandsons wants to hear about such things [indigenous iron technology]; they say the past is useless." He then thanked me for visiting him and promised to tell me whatever I wanted to know. This left me wondering, why was the old man so excited and pleased to have someone to share his knowledge with?

Second, the old man's expectation of my research objectives differed from mine, which became a disappointment to both of us. Routinely, at the end of a formal interview, I give the chance to my informant to ask me questions that he or she may have to quench his or her curiosity regarding the study in question. I did the same with Mr. Mruke, and he asked me about the end use of the information I was collecting. It was a familiar question, asked by most informants; and for that I reproduced my regular response:

I am collecting this information basically for documentation purposes so that future generations get to appreciate our past since the people of your generation, who know about ironworking are very few and are passing away very fast; soon we shall have no one to ask. But, once we put the information in books it will be there for years to come (authors' field notes).

No sooner had I concluded than I learned from Mr. Mruke's face that he was not pleased and satisfied with the answer. After a brief discussion, I understood what his wishes and expectations had been. He had expected that I was a government agent, seeking information for the purpose of re-establishing ironmaking technology using modern equipment so that our youth, including his grandchildren, get employment. He said:

Wazungu [White men] stopped us from producing our own iron because they wanted us to buy their iron, and today we

are independent, but still continue buying iron from them. Why don't you guys start factories, producing iron and selling it to Wazungu? When you establish factories our grandchildren will get jobs, they are becoming loiterers (authors' field notes).

It is this second part which was more interesting to me. First, I became disappointed with my answer which displeased my passionate informant; and second, I learned that our informants and the public at large have their own priorities in the matters that we, researchers, undertake. Unfortunately, we rarely bother understanding, let alone incorporating their ideas in our studies. Of course it is difficult to accommodate everything they long for, but that should not be used as a blanket excuse for ignoring their inputs. For instance, in this case, Mr. Mruke, speaking on behalf of his community which is hard-pressed by poverty and unemployment, expected researchers to conduct applied research that could help alleviate his people from their economic hardship, including unemployment, as opposed to conducting basic research. While this cannot be adopted wholesale, given that basic research is equally important, it is worth understanding the public's viewpoint that can contribute positively to the way we conduct our research. For example, a researcher recruiting field assistants from the village would probably be more appreciated by the local community than one who would import laborers from outside the village. In terms of research methodology, one can also learn from this instance the best questions to ask, the answers to give and which ones are likely to cause irritation and thus to be avoided, etc.

Influenced by this incident, this paper examines a selection of cases of dual expectations, philosophies, and perceptions experienced in archaeology and related fields in Tanzania. Often, these conflicts occur between villagers on the one hand and researchers and conservators on the other, although the latter two sometimes clash between themselves. When appropriate measures are not timely taken such conflicts tend to impact negatively upon site protection, conservation and management, as they exacerbate destruction through apathy, neglect, and vandalism.

CASES OF CONFLICTING EXPECTATIONS

There are various forms of conflicts that occur in the field between researchers and conservators on the one hand and local communities on the other. In this section we observe some cases randomly selected

to demonstrate forms and patterns of mismatched expectations. Most of the narratives used in the case studies derive from the author's own experience in the field or result from his interrogations with local people while conducting research in various places in Tanzania.

1. Re-excavating Excavation Trenches

Excavation is one of the most common methods archaeologists use to retrieve data buried under the ground. Where exactly one locates the trench depends on the objectives of his/her research, though more often than not researchers select places with high concentration of archaeological materials. The actual process of excavating is a meticulous one; it involves step-by-step study of materials of archaeological interest *in situ* before they are picked, bagged and labeled, and taken to the camp for cleaning and analysis. Sometimes the process involves photographing as well as drawing wall and floor plans. In addition, excavated soil is subjected to screening through wire meshes for retrieval of small objects such as beads and seeds, or sometimes the soil is subjected to flotation process for microscopic materials such as pollen grains.

The amount of care and rigor deployed in the process convinces many lay people that the researcher is looking for something very important; perhaps as important as, or more important than, precious stones or minerals—because artisan miners, who happen to be commonly known in some rural areas, *e.g.*, of Tanzania, are far less thorough and careful compared to most archaeologists. It therefore does not convince any reasonable mind that archaeologists are looking for dirt—including broken pottery, flaked stones (claimed to be Stone Age tools), beads, rusted metals, *etc!* Worse still, sometimes people who come to the dig to observe archaeologists in action collect materials from around the site similar to those unearthed by archaeologists and bring them to the researcher. But instead of appreciating the assistance, the latter would decline the offer for such excuses as “sorry, those are out of context.” Worst of all, archaeologists are disinterested with even brand new stuff (pots or beads) from the shop, claiming that they are not historical.

Both the care and rigor on the one hand and the refusal of materials submitted by local people on the other, subject the local people into a state of mistrust and curiosity. To rescue themselves from this state of affairs, bold and daring local people resort to digging the archaeologists' pits at night (after the archaeologists have left for

the day) or re-excavating back-filled pits, or places with marks (e.g., datum points), after the archaeologists complete works at any given site. When they do so, we archaeologists mourn for the destruction and lament and curse the ignorance of these people.

This kind of problem often occurs where researchers do not bother to inform the local people of their missions and goals. So long as they have research permits and they have introduced themselves to the various levels of authorities, the researchers consider that to be enough; other social and/or cultural obligations are none of their business. By the time they leave, villagers are as uninformed of the archaeology of their place as they were before the researchers arrived. On top, they are left with more questions than answers. For example, they would be wondering, who those people were, where did they come from, what were they looking for, what were they collecting in the bags, why have they marked some points, what do the marks mean and so forth. These and many other questions dominate talks, discussions and often prompt hot debates in *pombe* (drinking) places and other social gatherings in the village during and after the research.

Unlike cultural anthropologists, particularly those doing participatory observation who get compelled by their research methodology to intermingle with villagers in the evening clubs and thus get the advantage of detecting the villagers' feelings early enough, most archeologists are not so interactive. They usually spend their evenings in their tents writing notes or cleaning, cataloguing, and analyzing their findings; and if they need to drink, they have their own beer stocked at the camp. All in all, they miss the opportunity to hear the complaints from the villagers.

It is these debates which prompt daring villagers to excavate or re-excavate "our" sites. They do so in order to find out what we have been doing and hence, supply informed answers to their colleagues when they next meet or simply quenching their curiosity. However, what we need to bear in mind is that when the villagers do this digging, they, in principle, conduct their own research in the sense that they search for what they believe to be secretive materials archeologists find or bury in those places. It is through such digging that the local people quench their curiosity, erase confusion and test the trustfulness of archaeologists. While we archaeologists call this "site destruction" they call it "research"! Who is right and who is wrong, and who is to blame?

Archaeologists take the 'research' conducted by the curious villagers as destruction because it destroys "their" sites, and especially datum points which are generally assumed by the villagers to be markers of buried treasures, whether minerals or currency (Mapunda 2001). But for the village intellectuals, the digging out of datum points and sites is proper research strategy no less correct than that of the archaeologists. It is conducted for a good cause: to understand what the "strangers" had been doing in their land. The responsibility of minimizing or eradicating this mistrust is in the hands of the researchers. We need to engage local communities more closely with the research that we are doing by recruiting some of them in our work, inviting them to the site to witness what we are doing, providing explanations at the sites of what the research is about, showing them the materials we collect in the pits, giving them satisfactory reasons as to why materials collected out of context are useless in archaeology, and finally establish and show them how they relate to the site in question, be it scientifically, historically, socially, culturally or otherwise (see also Mabulla 2000, 2005; Mabulla and Bower 2010; Mapunda and Lane 2004), in order for them to appreciate its value and respect and protect it.

Evidently, not every archaeologist is good in public archaeology which requires, among other things, tolerance, patience, diplomacy, as well as mastery of local language, culture and norms. On account of that, it is advisable for a field researcher to have a designated public relations member among the crew. This would enhance the mission and save time as he or she would be handling public education while others concentrate on the core work. As Mike Pearson and Ramilisonina (2004) would argue, it is of added advantage if this person is local to the area. Apart from fluency in language, he or she would be familiar with the customs and interests of local people, hence knowledgeable of what, when and where to speak, and to whom. In addition, it would be easy for the local people to trust him/her rather than a stranger.

2. When Site Protection is Considered to be Wastage of Resources

Tanzania not only is one of the Third World countries but also ranks as one of the poorest countries in that group. "Even after four decades of independence," wonders Jehoveness Aikaeli (2011: 99), "Tanzania continues to be among the poorest economies in the globe (ranking 152 out of 179 countries recorded in the UNDP human development report, 2008)". This is attributed mainly to low income, especially in the rural

areas where more than 80% of the country's poor people live (Aikaeli 2011). The majority of the rural dwellers find it difficult to afford basic needs such as food, education, health services, and shelter without support from the government, NGOs, friends or relatives (URT 2010).

Ironically, Tanzania is endowed with abundant economic resources both natural and cultural, which if exploited strategically could alleviate the scorching poverty within a short period of time. Among the resources are minerals, forests, game parks, and heritage sites of world value such as Olduvai Gorge, Laetoli Footprints, and Rock Paintings of central Tanzania, and the built heritage along the coast including Kilwa, Bagamoyo, Kunduchi, Stone-Town Zanzibar and Pemba. For the cultural resources to be economically viable and sustainable they need heavy investments in terms of conservation, protection, and publicity.

However, evidence from various places in the country indicates that efforts to conserve and protect heritage sites by the bodies responsible for the tasks are received with different feelings by the communities living around the sites. For example, when conservators put fences and construct shelters to protect sites, villagers, the majority of whom live below poverty line, consider these measures as wastage of resources or at most inversion of priorities.

The situation stated above can perhaps be better exemplified by a case of rock painting sites of Kondoa, central Tanzania (World Heritage Site since 2007), where rock painting sites have been noted to vanish at an alarming rate due to both natural and cultural factors. The former include animal droppings, rainwater, seepage and exfoliation, whereas the latter include graffiti, touching, splashing with local brew (for ritual purposes), illegal excavation in the rock shelters, dusting and soot. In order to minimize destruction, especially that caused by direct contact with the paintings, such as illegal excavation, graffiti, touching, and splashing of brew, the Antiquities Division of Tanzania carried out a major conservation project between 1965 and 1968 (Antiquities Division 1965; Bwasiri 2011; URT 2004). The project concentrated on the rock-art cluster of Kolo-Kisese, focusing on a total of 14 sites considered to be at a high risk of destruction. In reality, it involved construction of cages of wire mesh on a timber framework resting on a stone foundation (URT 2004). These were constructed in such a way that they would allow people to see and photograph the paintings without entering the shelters (Mturi 1996). Emergency entrances were put in place in case of need to access the paintings directly, say for conservation purposes. Construction of protective cages was followed

by the opening of the sites to visitors through the construction of access roads and employment of guides (Antiquities Division 1965, 1980).

However, the project suffered heavily from vandalism from some members of the local community. Much of this had to do with poor operational approach. The philosophy governing the *modus operandi* of the project was the top-down model, by which government conservators, who "knew it all", came to the site with their tools, constructed the cages and, finally, instructed the locals on what to do and what not to do and off they went. As a result, within a decade, the project was reported to have been wastage on account of vandalism. In its Annual Report of 1976 and 1977, the Antiquities Division admitted that, "The acts of vandalism which included the removal of wire, nuts, timber and locks from the protective cages and the removal or destruction of signposts continued unabated" (Antiquities Division 1980: 8). Hence, the fragile paintings have, since then, been once again exposed to all sorts of dangers (Plate 1).

Unfortunately, none of the wrongdoers has ever been apprehended as the mesh and other materials used for the project were not different from those sold in regular shops for other purposes. But during general public interrogations people admitted that the stolen wire mesh would be used as window mesh or for grilling meat. The local people claim that the stealing was prompted by poverty. They argue that it is quite tempting to see that the wire, an expensive commodity in their standards, "is left to rust for nothing in the bush" (Simon Materu, the Chief Conservator of the Kondoa Rock Art site, in a personal comment on July 2012). The villagers' response shows clearly that site conservation is not a priority to them; that is why they do not appreciate the government's justification for spending so much money on the protection of heritage sites; hence, interpreting the project as wastage of resource.

However, we cannot undermine the fact that the local community was not fully involved in the project. As Mturi once noted, the local people in the area were completely ignorant of not only the project but also the tourism and educational role of the rock-art around them.

Because of deficiencies in the educational system, the rock-art of Tanzania and its significance as a cultural and tourist resource are unknown to the inhabitants in the areas with rock-art sites and to the public at large. Even at primary schools situated near rock-art sites, teachers and pupils were unaware of the existence of the sites (Mturi 1996: 187).

One other strange, yet real, philosophy ruling among the villagers is that vandalizing or stealing government (public) property is a light offence because they always have grudges with the government, claiming that it does not care about their needs. In addition, they believe that the government is so rich that it would not feel the loss of materials of such a low cost as the wire mesh (Simon Materu, pers. comm., July, 2012).



Plate 1: A wall stump that once was the base of a framed protection wire mesh at Site B1, Kolo (Photo by the Author, July 2012)

However, that does not mean that the rock shelters in general have no meaning to them. They do. They use them for ritual purposes. Some shelters (e.g., Mungumi wa Kolo) are held in oral account to be sacred and people still today offer sacrifices of animals, local beer, and other materials when faced with socio-cultural problems such as drought, chronic illness or infertility (Bwasiri 2011) (Plate 2). But unfortunately, as Bwasiri laments:

"...the present management system and legislation fails to recognize traditional practitioners (traditional healers, diviners and rainmakers) as having any rights to use the site for sacrifices to their ancestors. Failure to involve traditional practitioners and to honour and support their connection with

the site is presently causing conflicts in the management of this World Heritage Site” (Bwasiri 2011 :61-62).

Thus, from the villagers’ point of view, putting fences around the shelters means denying them access and implicitly undermining their religious beliefs. Thus, their vandalism is a form of protest. It should be noted that even though the locals continue with rituals at the sites, they do it secretly and hastily in fear of the conservation officers. Bwasiri notes that, “In the past, ritual ceremonies at Mungumi wa Kolo lasted a whole day, but nowadays they last a few hours for fear that the Antiquities officers at the Kolo office may take them to court if they are caught performing rituals” (Bwasiri 2011: 62).



Plate 2: A close-up photo (bottom) of a cooking hearth (above) recently used for ritual purposes at Mungumi wa Kolo site (Photo by the Author, July 2012)

This means of expressing discontent is not unique to Kondo. N.J. Karoma had noted the same from the Maasai communities living around Olduvai Gorge (Karoma 1996). Explaining vandalism that took place at the Douglas Korongo (DK) site, Olduvai Gorge, in the late 1980s where some people stole the roofing corrugated iron sheets, Karoma says: "In the case of Olduvai, arguments have been advanced that the destruction there is not a simple case of vandalism but that those responsible for the destruction were making a political statement" (Karoma 1996: 199). According to Antiquities regulations, "the Maasai are forbidden to take their cattle into the gorge" (Karoma 1996: 200) in order to control soil erosion and destruction of archaeological materials, especially bones commonly found at the site. Like the Irangi people of Kondo who were denied the right to perform rituals in some rock shelters, the Maasai interpreted this restriction as an infringement on their traditional grazing rights, hence vandalism for protest.

In both cases one fact is clear; the worldview and interests of the local communities had not been fully incorporated into the projects. Consequently, the projects came to be viewed as alien intervention, imposed by the government without integrating them into the villagers' socio-cultural and economic milieus (Mapunda 2001).

3. Display of wealth

Field archaeologists have almost always been thought of as treasure hunters. It often takes tons of energy to reverse people's viewpoint that archaeologists are for cultural remains. There are several factors which lead local people to this belief. The first is the perception local people have about the material remains that interest archaeologists. These are old, and by ordinary standard garbage or useless waste materials. Worse still, archaeologists would not be as interested with freshly made, good and fashionable materials as they are with the same of the archaic type! The second factor, which probably is more tantalizing, is that the "garbage" is sought after using huge amounts of resources often including a fleet of expensive jeeps; tented camps with expensive/imported foodstuff; relatively well-paid laborers; expensive equipment most of which may be unfamiliar to the local people such as total stations, magnetometers, flotation gear, etc. All these demonstrate clearly that the projects the archaeologists are engaged with are expensive. It, therefore, follows logically that archaeologists must be getting super profit (monetary) in return; they

cannot be investing such huge resources for nothing or for the sake of science alone, as they claim.

The third factor relates to data retrieval techniques: archaeologists are systematic, orderly and meticulous in collecting their data, and especially during excavation, as noted above. Retrieved materials are handled with the utmost care. They do this on the grounds that excavation is by nature destructive. Once a stratigraphic context has been disturbed through excavation it cannot be reconstructed. It is therefore important to record every detail so as to document the original (pre-excitation) context as closely to reality as possible.

However, the local people perceive the extra care archaeologists deploy during data collection differently. For them, it is another clear demonstration of economic worthiness of the materials in question. They believe that the materials which seem to be garbage must have some value known to archaeologists, who in turn do not want to make it known to the local people lest they become competitors in this mysterious yet real "business". There are times when local people collect and bring archaeological materials to camps for sale. Instead of showing positive response to the "commodities" brought at their doorway, archaeologists would contemptuously discourage the business with the excuse that the materials are out of context. And sometimes, naively one would request that he or she is shown the place where the "vender" got his/her precious commodities. The disappointed "vender" would often take such answers as yet another proof that archaeologists are not telling the truth, and that their request to be guided to the primary context would be interpreted as a cunning way of tricking people into revealing to them the location of the materials so that they go and get them in their own time.

The famous Early Iron Working site of Limbo, located 100 km south of Dar es Salaam, was found in 1987 through a local, Mr. Issa Salum Abdallah, who brought a piece of slag from his farm to the field school camp for sale. He landed his trust upon this author, who by then was a first year undergraduate student of the University of Dar es Salaam. After a lengthy sensitization education and discussion which was held in confidence, Mr. Abdallah was convinced that slag was a cultural material and that it had archaeological and not economic value. He led this author and the field school leader to the source area. The place had a high concentration of slag, mixed with tuyere fragments and pottery. The latter were typical Early Iron Age ceramics with thickened and beveled rims, which made the discovery an exciting

one for it was, and still is, the first Early Iron Working site found along the eastern African coast (Chami 1988; Schmidt *et al.* 1992).

Since then I have learned that we were lucky to be taken to the site by a curious informant. Usually, once one's expectations are declined he or she turns hostile (resulting from mistrust of researchers) and naturally becomes reluctant to show researchers where exactly he or she got the materials. It is for this that Mr. Abdallah has never stopped regretting his decision to show archaeologists the Limbo site. As more and more researchers visit the site, he more and more believes that it was a mistake to believe that slag is monetarily valueless! "People around here are laughing at me, saying how comes that I am not rich while rich people come with cars to my homestead every year" Abdallah lamented during a field excursion with postgraduate students in 2011. "On top" he continued, "you guys come to work in my land, you pay those who work on my land a lot of money, but I get paid nothing!"

Another example is drawn from Pemba Island where during a field school at Kaliwa, north of the Island, in 2004, we faced a tough conflict with one of the land owners of the area. After having spent the first two days of our arrival on formal introduction and reporting to the Sheha (local religious cum political leader) and setting up our camp, the third day was for actual work. The team of 14 students was split into two working groups, and each was assigned a separate area, to the north and south of the site respectively, about 200 m apart. We started excavating immediately because a survey had already been done two years before, so the site was known. While the southern group proceeded smoothly, the northern one did not. As soon as they completed laying out the plan of the trench, one old man came, introduced himself as the land owner and firmly asked the students to pack and get off his land. When this happened I was with the southern group. The student group leader attempted to inform him that they were students whose interest was to learn field techniques and that all necessary procedures had been followed to allow the team to work there. The man, whom we came later to learn his name as RB, insisted that the students should stop immediately and leave the place, and that he was not ready to listen to any lies. "Last time you came here [this was 2002, during survey, and completely different people] collected treasure [pottery thought to be treasure] from my land and left. This year you are coming back, digging in my land and you think I am a fool, I am not; I know exactly what you are after [treasure]. I want you to get off my land, now" demanded the old man.

The students were tantalized and did not know how else to educate and calm Mr. RB, while on his side Mr. RB also did not understand why the students were not obeying his orders. At this juncture he left and the students resumed work in the anticipation that Mr. RB had understood and consented. One student came to report the incident to me. I instructed that they should continue with work and in case he came back with the demands they should let me know so that I intervened. Half an hour later, the old man came back with a machete and looking fiercer than before, shouting that he would rather go to jail for murder than allow stubborn thieves steal treasure from his land in daylight while he watches. The students ran for their lives, some to where I was and called for my help.

I had no choice but to face Mr. RB. After a lengthy discussion and negotiations, I managed to calm him down, but asked students to temporarily suspend the work until the matter was completely resolved. Mr. RB and I agreed to postpone the discussion until the next morning when we would involve the Sheha. It did not take long for the Sheha the next day to convince Mr. RB that he erred by overreacting and interfering with legally permitted researchers. Mr. RB understood and apologized. However, I asked the Sheha to call a public meeting for informing his people about what we are doing in order to avoid recurrence of the incident. This was done in the afternoon of the same day, and the following day, Monday, we resumed work in Mr. RB's land, and the rest of the eight-week long field school proceeded peacefully.

4. Archaeologists as Victims of Coincidences

We have already noted that archaeologists often have difficulties in convincing people in places they conduct research that they are what they say they are, despite the efforts invested in explaining the truth of the matter. While often they are stated to be treasure hunters, there are also times when they have been confused with other groups of people, who often are negatively perceived in the given community. This association, which almost always is based on rumors, tends to impact negatively upon archaeologists, sometimes leading to serious interruption of the work plan or even total cancellation of the intended research. A few incidents can illustrate this.

While on research expedition to Mitomoni, along the Tanzania-Mozambique border in 2002, I was denied access to the village despite my having permit and letters of introduction from the Regional and

District authorities. I arrived at the village office with my crew of four members at around 4.00 pm, but we were told by the people living around the office that the Chairman had left the office some minutes prior to our arrival and was aware of our coming but did not want to meet with us. The villagers did not know why he avoided us. We were astounded. I sent a messenger for him to come for the routine introduction and handing him the regular documents. He sent back the messenger, saying that we were not accepted, we should leave. I sent back the messenger asking him to give reasons in writing as to why we are not accepted so that I can report the same to the District and Regional authorities who had granted us permit to conduct research at the village. It did not work. We then appealed to the Village Executive Officer (VEO) who, fortunately, allowed us to stay and promised to come the next day to sort out the matter.

When we enquired the villagers about the matter, after we had established the camp and invited people to come forth for job interviews (cooks, watchmen and field assistants), we learned that there had been a skirmish in the village about two weeks prior to our arrival involving army officers and some villagers and one of the officers was injured. So, when the Chairman saw us coming he thought that we had come to investigate the case. Even when the messenger told him that we were researchers he took it to be a plain lie; we were undercover investigators coming to apprehend malefactors of the skirmish, among whom the Chairman. The VEO allowed us in because he had not been involved in the fracas. Two days later, after assuring himself that we were really researchers and not undercover policemen, the Chairman surfaced, revealed the reason for the decision he made, apologized and asked if we could recruit his nephew as field assistant!

Very similar to the aforementioned incident, is a case which befell Edward Pollard in July 2012 when surveying around Kiswera Harbour, Lindi Region, in southeastern Tanzania. Edward, a maritime archaeologist presently based in Scotland, has uneventfully led several research expeditions along the coast of Tanzania, during the past ten or so years. Previously, he had concentrated his research in the areas of Kilwa and Bagamoyo, a World Heritage Site (WHS) and a potential WHS respectively, where the locals are much more used to the presence of researchers. During the time in question, he came for a one month follow-up research on several locations in the southeastern coast of Tanzania.

When he arrived at Kiswere village, the villagers needed a lot of convincing that he was not an investor. It should be noted that the conflicts over land between villagers and investors are commonplace in Tanzania today. Most of these investors get permission and title deeds from the top authorities at national level, often without the consent of the villagers at the site. When the villagers complain, the government officials do not attend to their queries because they know that they are the source of the problem. On account of this, some villagers decide to fight on their own against any form of land acquisition by foreigners on the grounds of investment.

Coincidentally, Edward became the victim of three incidents during his survey around Kiswere Harbour. First, a few months prior to his arrival, a white man (investor) had come to Kiswere village looking for land to build a hotel; his request was denied. Hence, Edward was easily taken to be of the same mission and archaeology was thought to be a mere pretext. Second, mining activities for cement had taken place during the last century near the village, from which the villagers reported that they had received little benefit. Therefore, even if his interest had been investment, they were not interested. Edward was informed that his usual transport means of boat hire to survey the coast and inter-tidal zone around Kiswere Harbour would cause further problems from suspicious villagers since it was unusual for a foreigner to use such means of transport. Lastly, politically, some villages are generally in favour of the opposition party. Edward experienced this at Jiwe la Mzungu village, about 12 km from Kiswere village, where the villagers did not like to be served with research permits along with a letter of introduction from the central Government in Dar es Salaam and turned him away. He, however, had a pleasant reception at the nearby Ruvu Bay village. He suspects the reason to be a political one; the village supported the ruling party.

It is worth noting that suspicion continued in Kiswere village despite villagers accompanying surveys and test pit excavations. Mr. Elgidius Ichumbaki, an Assistant Lecturer with the University of Dar es Salaam, who was leading a field school about 100 km south of Kiswere, visited the expedition and suggested that an open day should take place to show the villagers the equipment used, the finds, what can be learned from the material and what was going to happen to the finds after completion of fieldwork. Although this open day, which took place at the school, received a lot of local interest, there seemed to be some confusion and disappointment as some villagers thought it was

going to be a meeting where the researchers would be telling them what they found and that they would give them something in return for taking these artefacts away. After the open day, the villagers were still not completely convinced and the Kiswere Head teacher accompanied the researcher to Kilwa where the artefacts were to be left with the Antiquities Office. While discussing with the Head of Antiquities in Kilwa, the school master appeared happier that the researcher was not running off with, and profiting from, the artefacts. Fortunately, he reported this to the villagers so that future research can take place with less mistrust (information based on pers. comm., Edward Pollard, supplemented by Elgidius Ichumbaki, October, 2012).

A third case is drawn from Androy in southern Madagascar, where an incident similar to those narrated above is reported by Mike Pearson and Ramilisonina:

There is a powerful social norm of hospitality throughout the south but people are very suspicious of outsiders. Retsihisatse's [a local archaeologist] participation in the project enabled us to break through this barrier. We have come across many stories of misunderstandings and confrontations between Tandroy and outsiders, both Malagasy and European, which have occasionally resulted in murder. There have long been tales of how 'foreigners', especially white ones, will steal hearts, livers, and tongues. In 1993 a new rumour began that white people were head-hunting to extract brains in the search for an AIDS cure. The rumour started in association with two Frenchmen in a red car ostensibly on a fact-finding mission into primary education – of which there is none. Within this climate of suspicion it was only a matter of weeks before the description of the suspects matched our team and Landrover—the head-hunters were now pretending that they were looking for old pottery... (Pearson and Ramilisonina 2004: 230-1, emphasis added).

What all these cases have in common is that the archaeologists came to these places at the wrong time —coinciding with happenings that they had nothing to do with but still had difficulties exonerating themselves from. Worse still, one is taken by surprise, and self-defense usually has very little chance of success, especially when one

is a foreigner. There is no doubt that the difficulty is exacerbated by the nature of the disciple. As narrated in the cases No. 1-3 above, people find it difficult to believe that old pottery is all the researcher is interested in; there must be something more substantive than that. And he or she cannot prevent the speculations emerging on account of his/her arrival. The best solution in such cases is the deployment of local intellectuals as the go-betweens (see the case of Retsihisatse the Madagascan case above).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

There are a number of lessons we can draw from the cases narrated above that can help us minimize conflicts and therefore improve research performance and enhance site protection, conservation and management. One fundamental lesson learned is that the conflicts often emerging in the field are avoidable. The solution lies mainly in understanding the root cause of the problem at hand. For instance, we have noted that vandalism is not always an expression of ignorance of the value of the respective heritage resource on the part of the one who commits it. It may as well be a political or ideological statement. A villager or villagers may vandalize a heritage asset in order to express their discontent against decisions made by higher authorities or researchers without either their consent or their full knowledge of the significance of the given project. In either case, the appropriate mitigation measure would not be apprehension and imprisonment of the perpetrator, but rather identifying and addressing the statement the villagers are making.

The obvious solution that one would suggest today for problems related to vandalism, reserved cooperation, indifference, and other actions committed by the community in expressing their dissatisfaction with a given project is community participation. This commonly requires involving the community in planning and execution of the given project. But this is easier said than done. The technique is more complex than is generally conceived. For example, its *modus operandi*, which requires the local community to be educated on and/or sensitized to the respective projects prior to implementation, is inherently biased. It operates under the assumption that researchers and conservators are the "know-all" and the local community is *tabula rasa*, hence should be educated by the "know-all" group. Concepts such as *public sensitization*, *public education*, or *public awareness*, etc., which in fact imply public

dormancy, dominate this line of approach. This encourages the “know-all” group to impose rules and regulations on the community on the pretext that the latter lack knowledge, awareness, and expertise. There is no intention here to argue that local communities in space and time possess the same level of knowledge of heritage resources as formally trained archaeologists and conservators, but rather to advocate for balance. Education and sensitization should go in either direction. Archaeologists and conservators should also be prepared to adopt ideas and views from the local communities.

Another weakness is that the would-be educators/sensitizers, i.e., heritage officers, are people with vested interest in the project. Hence, both content and paradigm governing the teaching tend to be biased in favor of the trainers. In this way, community participation remains a lip service and is bound to be fruitless. A genuine participation has to assume the two sides as equals and that each has a substantive intellectual input into the project and therefore education and sensitization should be a two-way traffic.

Heritage officers responsible for community-based projects should be prepared to learn from the community in question very much as they are ready to educate. The cases above have shown clearly that it is not only the basic information that drives people’s decisions and actions in favor of or disfavor against a heritage project or site but also their worldview. A one-hour or a half-day sensitization seminar, which is all that the heritage officers often can afford (due to limited resources or time), is not enough to repeal a life-long paradigm or line of thinking the local communities would have. Instead, the methodology should consider integrating not only ideas but also the attitude of mind of the local communities into the projects and researches done in their area. The easy way to do that is to work as a team of equals, both contributing and agreeing upon objectives, operational procedures, and potential uses or benefits of the project.

Additionally, we have learned that economic hardship has a major stake in the conflicts that researchers and heritage officers have with local communities. When it comes to research, the latter are interested more in applied than basic research. In other words, they want research that can help them solve their economic problems, today and not tomorrow. More often than not villagers consider researchers’ and conservators’ goals to be irrelevant to them simply because they do not aim at alleviating poverty. Therefore, the least a researcher should do is to recruit as many paid laborers as possible from within

the research area. One should avoid recruiting casual laborers such as guards, cooks, and field assistants away from where the research is conducted.

Conservation projects should try as much as possible to include components of tourism that are likely to generate income and efforts should be invested in ensuring that income is generated and people benefit directly from it. Although many people would like to receive monetary dividends, this should not be encouraged. Instead, contributions should be made to projects in the village that require financial and/or material input from the villagers, so they can be relieved from the financial or physical burden. Therefore, these contributions would relieve them from either financial or labor input into the village-based projects.

Finally, researchers should learn to be patient and tolerant. One needs to understand that the villagers, as land owners, have the primary right over the land they occupy whether customarily or secularly. A researcher opting for confrontational measures on the grounds that "I have the papers; I am [therefore] right and they are wrong", tends to exacerbate rather than resolve problems. It is important to note that developing and maintaining a healthy relationship with the local people is a pertinent prerequisite not only for the success of the research in question but also for the subsequent sustainable conservation and management of the sites and materials found through the given research. Differences are bound to happen, but the choice of the appropriate step to be taken is very important for a field researcher. The case of Mr. RB of Kaliwa, Pemba, can be emulated for amicable solutions for researcher-villager(s) conflicts.

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