

Tanzania's Maritime and Underwater Cultural Heritage Assets: Strategies Towards Sustainable Conservation and Management

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Abstract

Tanzania has a long and unique maritime history. This shared history left various signatures which are needed by present and future generations for their cultural, scientific and economic significance. However, despite such maritime potentiality, very miniature has been done by scholars to research, identify, document and assess the cultural significance of the Tanzanian maritime and underwater cultural heritages. It was until recently that the country has started some initiatives to identify and manage her maritime and underwater heritage assets. This is done by the established Maritime and Underwater Cultural Heritage (MUCH) program which officially started in February 2009. Among others, the program initiatives has resulted to documenting some of the country's maritime and underwater cultural heritage assets as well as establishing a strong team from various Government's departments and institutions.

Introduction

Tanzania possesses cultural heritage assets that span from the 2.5 million years ago to the present. These assets include but not limited to Palaeoanthropological, Paleontological, Rock shelters with arts, Urban and Architectural complex sites, Ethnological and Historic sites. The assets do assist in understanding the origin and development of humanity both culturally and biologically. Also, the country is surrounded by water bodies at which human activities have had been taking place throughout history. These activities have left signatures that make Tanzania have important maritime and underwater cultural heritage (UCH) assets. They include historic towns such as Zanzibar, Bagamoyo, Kilwa, Pangani and Mikindani all of which rose as a result of commercial contact between the Tanzanian and others traders of the Indian Ocean.

Noting the assets' significance, the Government of Tanzania and other heritage stakeholders have taken some initiatives to protect them. These measures include the establishment of various legislations and institutions. Such legislations are the *Antiquities Act No. 10 of 1964* (amended in 1979) and the *National Museums Act of 1963* (amended and 1980). The institutions are such as the Antiquity Division (1954) and Archaeology section of the University of Dar es Salaam (1985) responsible for cultural heritage preservation, monitoring and research and training respectively. This paper therefore shall explore the potentiality of Tanzania in maritime and UCH and provide the current strategies towards sustainable conservation and management.

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Tanzania: Geographical Considerations

Tanzania covers the previous British protectorate and a Germany Colony which united together to become a republic in April 1964 (Chami 2009). It roughly stretches between 5° and 11° with approximated total population of about 40 million people (Census 2003). The country is bordered by Kenya and Uganda in the north; Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia in the south and Rwanda, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the west. In the eastern part, Tanzania is demarcated by the Indian Ocean which has been connecting it to the external world since probably the 6th century (Wheatley 1975; Chami 2002; Chami 2009; Christie 2011). The country is the custodianship of fresh water resources found in the form of lakes and rivers. Moreover, the coastal part has numerous bays, inlets, offshore islands and the associated archipelagos (Lane 2005; Christie 2011; Ichumbaki 2011).

Tanzania's Maritime and Underwater Potentialities

Maritime and underwater archaeology are two concepts which have been discussed and distinguished from each other, along with the related concepts such as nautical and shipwreck archaeology (Bass 1966; Gould 2000; Parker 2001; Lane 2005). Although maritime and UCH assets might be different, in this paper the concepts refer to material traces and physical remains of people who at one time engaged in maritime activities. These activities may range from cultural, technology, economic to other related practices. They include but are not limited to diverse features as harbour installations, tidal mills, fish traps, coastal settlements, submerged landscapes, naval defences and inundated sites (Lane 2005). This paper therefore, shall use either maritime or UCH assets to mean the same. That is, to refer to material traces, manifestations and physical remains that signify the interactions between past humans and water bodies such as ocean, sea, lakes and rivers (see Westerdahl 1992; Christie 2011).

Having a long coast from the north to the south and varieties of lakes and rivers, Tanzania has much to offer as a means to understand past maritime cultures. Although there has not been a maritime based study along the Tanzania's lakes and rivers, I believe there are important traces that tell a lot about past societies. For instance, there should be interaction among the communities surrounding lakes such as Victoria, Tanganyika, Nyasa, Natron, Rukwa and many others. A study by Nancy Alexander (2010) at Kanazi village near Lake Victoria in Kagera region for instance, shows how communities used water resources to sustain their livelihoods. In this study which aimed at explicitly establishing the subsistence strategies of the lacustrine society during the Iron Age period, Alexander found that fishing outweighs domestication as distinguished from many areas where domestication were preferred by Iron Age people. This is one of the evidence which shows that implementing maritime studies to the Tanzanian marine environments (lakes and rivers) may contribute much towards understanding the marine cultures. Thus, for a better understanding of the cultures of people

living near fresh water such as rivers and lakes, for that purpose Tanzania should be considered.

Apart from lakes and rivers, the coastal area has much and robust evidence of social and economic interactions among the communities of the Indian Ocean. However, very little has been done to reconstruct the maritime culture. Also, the majority of works done (Chittick 1965; Chittick 1975; Chami 1994; Chami 2002; Kwekason 2010) be it in the form of historical, ethnographical or archaeological are according to Paul Lane (2005:97), “are themselves not ‘maritime’ in nature”. In a nutshell, here are some of the maritime potentialities which should be considered for studying and finally reconstructing past human maritime cultures. These potentialities are found but unlimited to sites with robust maritime evidence such as Mbwamaji, Kunduchi, Bagamoyo, Mafia, Zanzibar, Pangani, Kilwa Kisiwani and Songo Mnara, Ngurumahamba, Mingoyo, Sudi and Mikindani, to mention just a few. All these sites have unique and strong histories that have not been studied in a maritime perspective. Some of these sites have been discussed elsewhere (see Chami 2003; Masele 2007; Ichumbaki 2009; Ichumbaki 2011; Biginagwa forthcoming) but neither exhaustively nor with a maritime focus. Therefore, I shall briefly explain a few sites and show their potential for study to reconstruct past maritime cultures. In this case sites of Kilwa Kisiwani and Songo Mnara, Sudi, Mikindani, Mingoyo, Ngurumahamba, Kitunda, Msanga, Mtandi and Mwingi shall be considered.

Kilwa Kisiwani and Songo Mnara

These are two islands with complexes of ruins. The islands were visited by the great traveller Ibn Batutta in 1331 – 1332 and described them as the most beautiful cities of the world (Chami 1994; Karoma 1996; Sasi 2006; Kimaro 2006). Due to their unique and outstanding history, the islands were declared World Heritage Sites (WHS) in 1981 (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>). However, due to both physical and human induced problems (Karoma 1996), the sites have been deteriorating year after year. To be able to solicit support from various partners to provide financial support and technical skills, the Department of Antiquities made a deliberate move to add Kilwa to the WHS ‘in danger’ list (Kimaro 2006; DBSA and AWHF 2009). The most significant ruins include numerous mosques, the prison, palaces, cemetery and tombs of the sultans. The ruins (mosques, palaces and residences) tell of the rise and fall of the islands under various colonial authorities’ influences.

The time at which settlement began in the islands have been controversial among scholars. For instance, Neville Chittick (1965, 1975) and Karen Moon (2005) argue that these islands were inhabited since at least the ninth century A.D. Moon (2005) explains that the islands, and especially Kilwa, were at one point ruled by an independent African Sultanate. According to her, Kilwa was at its most prosperous during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the present ruins are what remains of a great Swahili city-state. Other scholars (Sasi 2006; Chami 2009; Kwekasoni 2010) argue that communities lived within the islands as early as Stone Age periods (40K). These scholars use the recovered cultural materials running from

Later Stone Age (LSA) 40K – 1K, Early Iron Working (EIW 4th – 7th C) to days of active trading. Also, wattle and daub style² settlement has been dated to the beginning of the ninth century (Moon 2005; Kimaro 2006a). The islands became major trading centers and developed major trading routes linked to Persia and Southern Arabia in the north, as well as Mozambique in the south, and the interior. Gold, ivory, rhino's horns and slaves were amongst the traded products (DBSA and AWHF 1999:7). Materials such as earthenware, cowrie shells, carnelian and pearls of glass (Kimaro 2006b:1–3) are indicators of commercial and cultural exchanges between Kilwa and other inhabitants of the Indian Ocean. These are some of the evidence which show involvement of the Kilwa society in maritime business. However, nothing has been done in a 'maritime' perspective. It is a call by this paper to investigate this site and provide education for the local communities to better appreciate its rich maritime culture both in its proximity and to the wider Indian Ocean and global context.

Sudi

This is an important maritime site located at about 14 km north east of Madangwa junction on the Dar es Salaam – Mtwara road (Ichumbaki 2011). This site has important maritime cultural remains which include but are not limited to inscribed tombs of the 12th/13th century, old mosque of the 17th/18th centuries and old port of the 18th centuries. The site has irrefutable evidence that it was at one time (somewhere between 7th and 12th centuries AD) trading with China, India and many Arabic countries. Moreover, Sudi has signatures of a fight between Germans and other European nations which happened during the 1st and 2nd World Wars. Also, at this site there are courts used during both Germanic and British colonial period between 19th and 20th centuries. In addition, Sudi is one site amongst the area where wars of resistance (Maji Maji war of 1905 – 1907) took place (Ichumbaki 2011). This is a good and unique history which needs to be reconstructed in a maritime perspective.

Mikindani

A town situated along the protected bay in Mtwara region, southeastern Tanzania (figure 1). It is one of the Swahili historic towns that flourished between 15th and 19th centuries (Pawlowicz 2009). Mikindani's advantage was its location, whereby boats move fast along the coast due to strong monsoon winds. It was a trade centre with internal links whereby traders were coming from as far as Zambia, Malawi, Angola and DRC (Ichumbaki 2011). These internal links were destroyed due to interference from the Portuguese. However, once again the town became famous whilst the Sultan of Zanzibar (Seyyid Said) was ruling East Africa starting from 1840s. The major trade goods involved were ivory, skins, tortoise shells, copper, hides and slaves exchanged with clothes, household utensils and weaponry metals (Pawlowicz 2009:41–51). The town also experienced the influence of

² . Traditional houses built of wood and stones bonded together by using mud or clay

Europeans via the works of both missionaries and explorers. All these events resulted in growth and glorification of the town, for which the results are different architectural buildings. The buildings include Old Boma, the Agakhan House, the Gavonor's house, the bank house, Livingstone's house, old prison and the slave market.

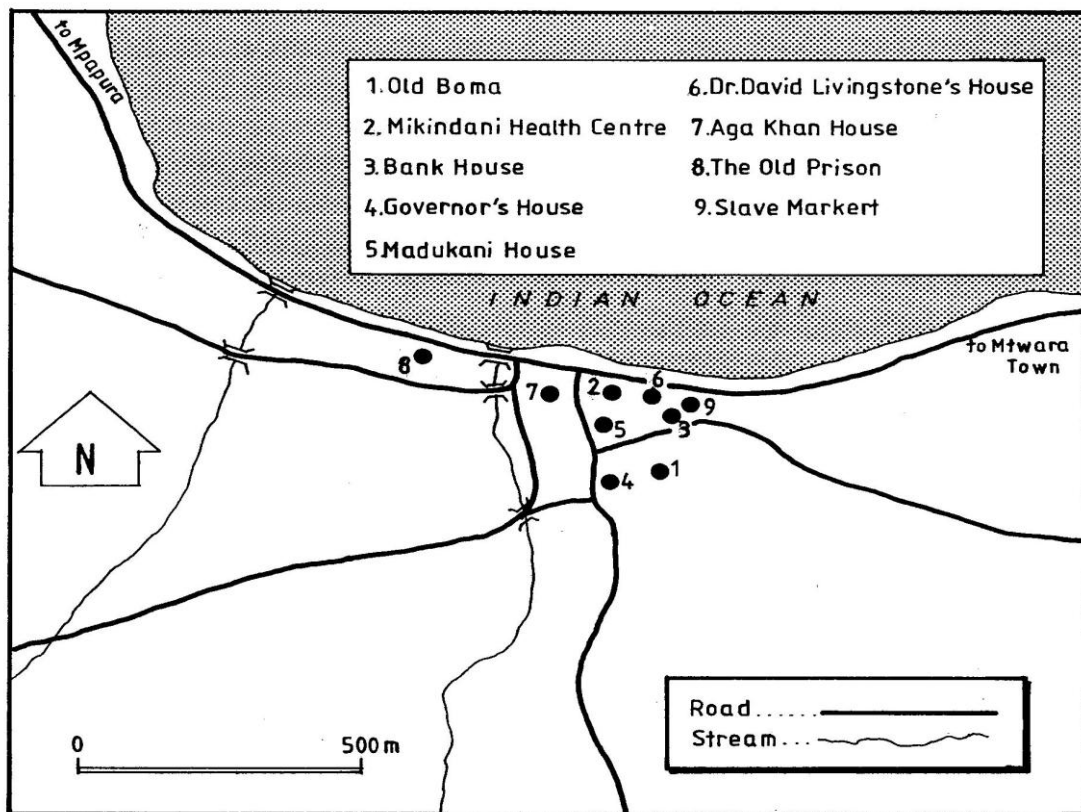


Figure 1. Map Showing Location of Mikindani and its Heritage Assets (Ichumbaki 2011)

Ngurumahamba and Mingoyo (Figure 2)

Ngurumahamba has tombs and a mosque. One of the tombs is famously known in Lindi and Mtwara regions. It is called *Kaburi la Mtu Mrefu* loosely meaning a grave of the tallest person. The so called *Kaburi la Mtu Mrefu* is a rectangular pile of stones measuring 16 m long and 4 m wide (Ichumbaki 2011). Meters from this tomb is a ruined mosque attacked by vegetations. Around the area there are scatters of potsherds of Triangular Incised Wares (TIW) traditions, European wares and LSA artifacts made from chert. Presences of imported ceramics such as European wares indicate the presence of interactions via the Indian Ocean.

Mingoyo is found at about 25 km from Lindi urban following the Lindi – Mtwara road. It is located at the landward end of the Lindi estuary and has been hypothesized to have small fortified trading stations built by French traders (Akinola 1969; Gray 1964; Lane 2005). Documentary sources (Lane 2005; Akinola 1969; Gray 1964) explain the area to have various trading

posts, warehouse and gun-boat of four cannons. A survey made by Elgidius Ichumbaki (2011) to this area identified heritage assets including the court built during the German colonial times (still in use), Swahili tombs mixed with Indian tombs and an abandoned jetty. The abandoned jetty is collapsing as only few pillars and walls remain. At about 100 m from the jetty towards inland there is a foundation. This foundation is orally explained as a collapsed sisal bundle warehouse (MA Athman). Sisal bundles from Mangawanga, Narunyu, Lua and other places of south eastern Tanzania were stored in this warehouse before being exported.

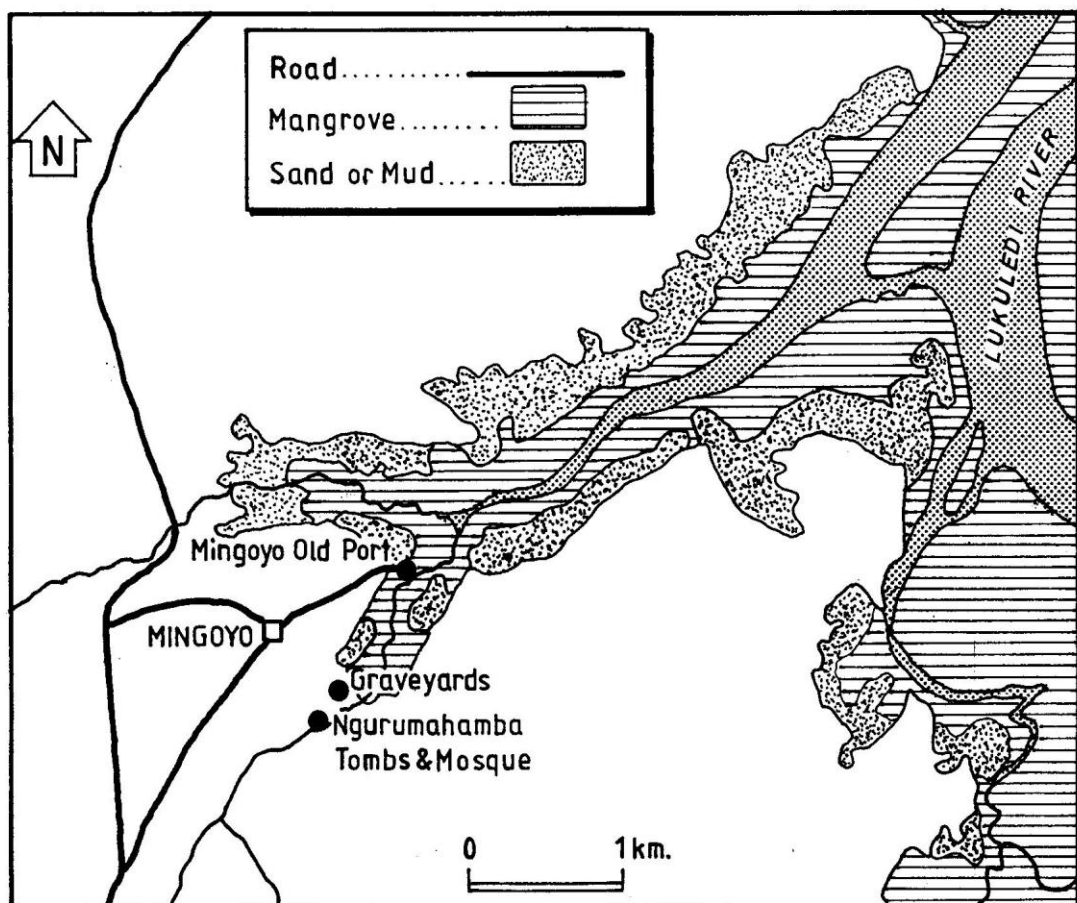


Figure 2. Map Showing Location of Mingoyo and Ngurumahamba Sites (Ichumbaki 2011)

Kitunda

This is another site which is rich in maritime heritage assets with technological, scientific and economic value especially within the area formally known as Kitunda Sisal Estate. These assets include an old port and ruins at various locations (see figure 3). The port which is now collapsing is the one used by the Germans to import necessary sisal production requirements and export sisal bundles. Apart from the visible historic port, the area has buildings of 19th and 20th century built of stones, lime, mud and

wattle. According to oral information it was at this site where charcoal run engine was firstly installed in the 1890s (YM Mpanjilu).

Msanga

An important site with maritime heritage potentials found to the east, about 8 km, of Lindi Municipality. The area has few tombs and many potsherds scattered over the landscape. One of the tombs is roofed and has triangulated decorations as well as Chinese porcelains. The pillared tombs found at this area are similar to those found at Kunduchi ruins site (Masele 2007) and may date to between 15th and 19th centuries. The majority of potsherds are of TIW tradition and few have incisions and fffing ted decorations. According to oral information, this area attracts many people who come to request good luck in their normal undertakings (YM Mbaraku). This means that, the area and its built heritage assets has both spiritual and cultural significance. Moreover, these tombs are located near the beach with white sands and coral caves. Thus, the area has tourism potential if well developed and promoted.

Mwitingi and Mtandi

Two maritime sites located close to one another. At this area there are big baobab trees (*Adansonia digitata*). The area is orally explained to be the port where slaves were brought before they were taken to other areas, probably Zanzibar, Mauritius and Reunion Islands (Ichumbaki 2011). How valid this information is has not been reconstructed. This marks a call for the need to undertake a maritime study to better reconstruct this unknown maritime history. The assets found at these two close areas are two ruined mosques and various tombs. However, about 75-90% of the mosques have collapsed and the area is currently used as a burial. Also, the mosques are in ruined state although sewage outlets of the Mtandi mosque are clearly seen. The local people do not know the age of the Mtandi mosque and have Thus come up with a myth that the mosque was built by an unknown architect (YM Mbaraku). It is probably due to this myth the mosque is used for spiritual purpose.

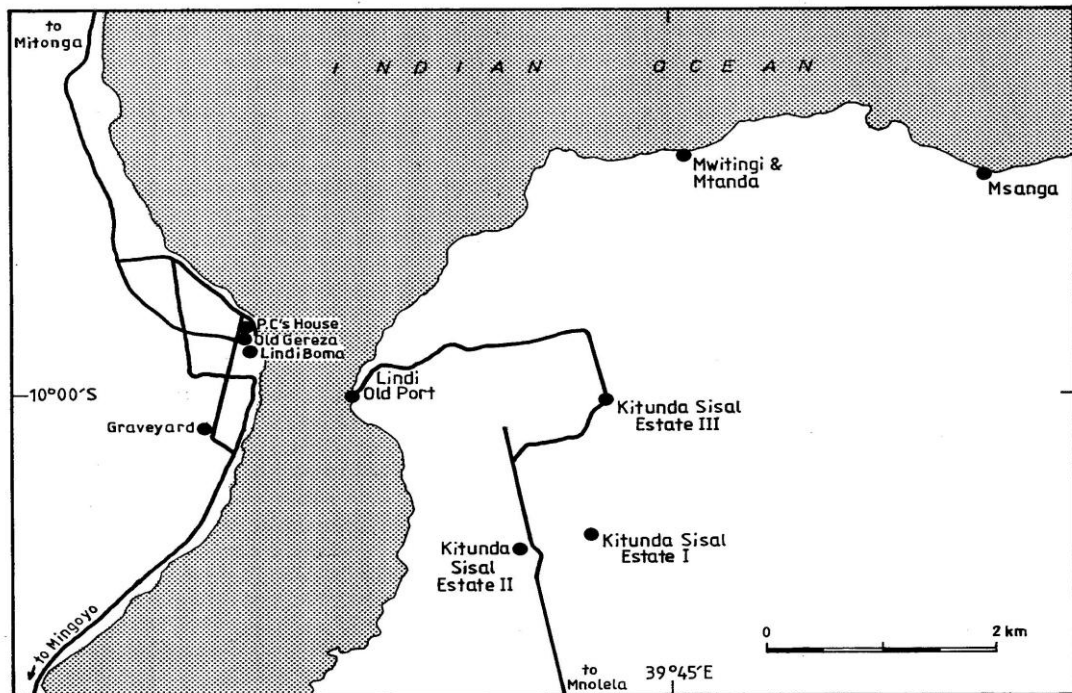


Figure 3. Map of Lindi Municipality Showing location of some Heritage Assets (Ichumbaki 2011)

Available Strategies towards Sustainable Management and Conservation

Despite all the evidence of Maritime/UCH assets, until very recently, Tanzania had not been able to either intensively research on or even document those which are known. Strategies and plans to establish a maritime program started in early 2000 and its real implementation began in 2008. Thanks to the Centre for International Heritage Activities (CIE) for initiating the program. In November, 2008 CIE representative, Robert Parthesius came to Tanzania and made initial informal communication with three bodies. These are Antiquities department – Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT), Archaeology Unit of the University of Dar es Salaam and National Museum of Tanzania. Also, Parthesius wrote the proposal to the MNRT to request for the establishment of the Maritime Archaeological Unit of Tanzania (MAUT). In early 2009 the proposal was accepted and strategies to establish the MAUT started. Important program stakeholders and ‘appropriate’ staff were identified and signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The identified stakeholders and the relevant staff were: MNRT – 2, National Museums – 2, Marine Parks – Dar es Salaam – 2, Marine Parks – Mafia – 1, Archaeology Unit University of Dar es Salaam – 2 and Archives, Museums and Antiquities, Zanzibar – 5. After finalization of all bureaucracies among the stakeholders, the implementation of the program began in February 2009. The program started with public lectures at the University of

Dar es Salaam between February and March 2009. Identified staff from the stakeholders attended Nautical Archaeology society (NAS) Part I training in Dar es Salaam and went for dive training in Zanzibar. The training was important as it provided trainees with dive qualifications. Also the trainees learned how to implement a site survey and compile a database and fill the site inspection form. Moreover, the trainees were also introduced to the UNESCO 2001 Convention for the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001 Convention). This training also provided a forum for the stakeholders' to meet and discuss the program's future prospects.

In December 2009, the team members were also brought together for one week. They met at the Dar es Salaam National Museum and House of Culture. The aims of the meeting were two: 1) to conduct NAS Part II training; and 2) complete the preparation of the Great Northern Shipwreck report (see Mahudi this volume). The meeting also initiated strategies to establish a database for the UCH of Tanzania. During this meeting, the trainees were equipped with more knowledge on maritime studies and each made a presentation on various aspects of Tanzania's maritime story. Moreover, the team members continued to undertake various training both within and outside the country. For instance, in April 2010, four members of the team went to South Africa. They were equipped with relevant knowledge for both diving, conservation and management of UCH assets. In November 2010 the team and other archaeologists from South Africa and Namibia, conducted a project at Kilwa Kisiwani and Songo Mnara World Heritage Sites. This project at Kilwa identified some potential sites for future research and raised public awareness. The report for this work is underway to be published. After the Kilwa project, the team met in Dar es Salaam and set up work plans for 2011. Among the planned works is to develop a database and do more surveys in Mafia, Kilwa and other sites.

In April 2011, the team met in Zanzibar for two days to initiate the development of a database. The meeting was conducted at the House of Wonders on 4th and 5th April 2011. It was purposely organized to familiarize team members on the establishment of databases for TMUCH. The team spent considerable time discussing the relevance of and developing the database. The samples from other countries like South Africa was also used as models for developing the database and the strategies for this still continue. Among other things, the workshop participants planned the survey in Mafia and agreed that some participants should be facilitated to attend the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Underwater Cultural Heritage in Manila. Generally, the team members in collaboration with other heritage stakeholders still have the duty to accomplish the following tasks: 1. Develop a comprehensive database for Tanzanian Maritime assets; 2. Request and convince the Government to ratify the 2001 Convention; 3. Do survey of other sites e.g Mafia, Kilwa, Pangani, Rufiji and others surrounding lakes of Tanzania; 4. Attend more training and conferences on maritime heritage; and 5. Introduce maritime related courses at undergraduate and master's degree levels. Other requirements and research avenues for the development of

maritime history of East Africa, and Tanzania in particular, are outlined by others scholars elsewhere (see Lane 2005; Christie 2011).

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