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Defining Cultural Heritage among the Makonde of Tanzania

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Abstract
This paper examines understandings of cultural heritage resources among communities in the Mtwara region of Tanzania, and suggests possible measures for their sustainable conservation. It explores the extent to which local communities are engaged in the conservation of cultural heritage resources, and investigates the levels of awareness and understanding of cultural heritage in the region. In this regard, the paper presents and discusses some of the research findings showing how local Mtwara communities view and understand cultural heritage resources. Community-based methods were used in the process of data collection including interviews, archaeological ethnography and focused group discussion. These revealed both tangible and intangible cultural heritage resources to be in a poor state of conservation. The research suggests this situation stems from a wide range of causes including a lack of awareness of the value of cultural heritage resources, as well as the impact of modern economic establishments. The tangible and intangible cultural heritage resources in Mtwara region are deteriorating at an alarming rate and no measures are being taken to rescue these precious resources.

Résumé
Cet article est un produit d’une recherche menée dans la région de Mtwara de la Tanzanie. Il porte sur la compréhension et la conscience des ressources du patrimoine culturel par les communautés locales de la région de Mtwara et discute quelques résultats de recherche portant sur la signification des ressources du patrimoine culturel selon les communautés locales. Les méthodes communautaires ont été utilisées dans le processus de collecte de données, comprenant entretiens, ethnographie archéologique et discussion avec les groupes cibles. À part les ressources potentielles du patrimoine culturel trouvé à Mtwara, des niveaux inquiétants de conservation ont été constatés en ce qui concerne les deux ressources du patrimoine culturel tangible et intangible. Cette situation découle d’un large éventail de causes, y compris un manque de prise de conscience de la valeur des ressources du patrimoine culturel, ainsi que l’impact des établissements économiques modernes. Les ressources du patrimoine culturel tangible et intangible à Mtwara se détériorent à un rythme alarmant et il n’y a pas de
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mesures prises pour sauver ces précieuses ressources. Cet article dévoile la compréhension par les communautés locales des ressources du patrimoine culturel et propose des mesures possibles pour la conservation durable des ressources du patrimoine culturel dans la région de Mtwara.

Introduction

The Mtwara region forms part of the Swahili coast and includes the offshore islands of Comoros, Zanzibar and Pemba as well as the northern parts of Madagascar (Horton 1996; Chami 2005). 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 2.1). To the west it borders the Ruvuma region. The region occupies 16 729 km² or 1.9 % of Tanzania’s mainland area of 945 087 km² (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 are the Makua of Masasi and Mtwara rural, and the Yao who also live in Masasi (Tanzania Tourist Board 2012). The Mozambican Makonde groups inhabit the northern part of Mozambique in the Cabo Delgado province. Their core area is the Plano Alto de Mueda, the high plateau rising to about 600 m above sea level from the southern bank of River Ruvuma. On the northern bank, in Tanzania, the Tanzanian Makonde have their traditional homeland on a similar high plateau in Mtwara, the Makonde Plateau (Saetersdal 1999). It rises from the northern bank of the river and is traditionally viewed as the core area of the Tanzanian Makonde groups. However, the area is shared with other ethnic groups: the Makua, Mwera, Yao, Matambwe and Swahili communities on the coast.

The political as well as the cultural history of the Makonde community is poorly documented and little is disseminated. Like their once hostile Makua neighbours, they were portrayed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as raiders and looters of the new beleaguered colonial coastal settlement (Alpers 1975). The Portuguese established effective occupation in northern Mozambique within a decade of the Berlin Conference, but complete control was only imposed subsequent to an attempted German invasion in 1917, when the boundary between German East Africa and Mozambique was formally drawn. The Makonde suffered severely from European incursions into their territory. Most of the 50 000 Mozambicans who died while serving as porters during World War 1 were Makonde. A flu epidemic in 1919 exacerbated the situation, creating what the colonialists perceived to be a labour shortage in northern Mozambique (Vail & White 1980: 211). Increased exactions by the Portuguese administration were never passively endured by the Makonde, who strenuously resisted taxation, forced labour and forced growing of cotton through sabotage, arson,
occasional insurrection and flight, either to Tanganyika or into the wilderness to form new communities (Stephen 1990). Following the discovery of gas and oil, Mtwara is among the fastest-growing regions in Tanzania. There are government plans to transform the area into an industrial city and economic centre for the country. Apart from gas extraction and ongoing oil exploration, Mtwara is endowed with a number of cultural heritage attractions that are both tangible and intangible.
Meanings and forms of heritage

The term ‘heritage’ can be presented as a sociocultural process in which negotiated relationships are formed between legacies of the past and stewards of the present. The product of such a relationship is an ethos of conservation for future generations (Milliken 2012). Thus ‘heritage’ in this sense is not so much a ‘thing’ as it is a process in which we relate to things (Howard 2003; Smith 2006). Regardless of how ‘heritage’ is defined, there are certain classes within which we can place items of heritage. Dallen and Boyd (2003: 3, cited in Watkins & Beaver 2008) see heritage as ‘tangible, immovable resources (such as buildings, rivers, natural areas); tangible movable resources (such as objects in museums, documents in archives); or intangibles such as values, customs, ceremonies, lifestyles and including experiences such as festivals, arts and cultural events’.

Heritage therefore can be divided into two categories. The first category is that which presents itself in a material, tangible form: archaeology, art, movable objects, architecture and landscape. The second category is referred to as ‘intangible’ cultural heritage. This designation was conceived so that certain realities that remained unseen over a period of time, and that did not fit as part of any other established heritage category, could be recognised and taken into consideration (Barillet et al. 2006).

Mapunda and Msemwa (2005: 264) note that ‘a cultural heritage resource, that is an historic monument and at the same time a work of art whether an historic building, garden, ensemble or site that results from a creative design process can be defined on the basis of specific concepts’. According to Msemwa (2005), different communities perceive cultural heritage resources differently, depending on their respective historic and cultural backgrounds. In most cases, local communities’ understandings of cultural heritage resources have been confined to intangible heritages. The concept ‘cultural heritage resources’ as used in this paper refers to those tangible and intangible remains/legacies due to human activity or practices, which are of importance or significance to our understanding of the history, culture and achievements of past societies, and which together constitute the cultural heritage of a country or of humankind in general.

The Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) in 2003 defines intangible cultural heritage as ‘the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage’ (Section 1, Article 2: Definitions). It would include such elements as material culture, ritual culture, symbolic culture and even language-as-culture, values and beliefs, while in some circumstances, ‘ideologies and meanings’ might also be included (Blake 2000). Other aspects not mentioned in the Unesco definition include social systems and beliefs, social relations, philosophies,
ideas and values as well as traditional knowledge. These aspects of society are usually perpetuated through daily life and activities, social situations and institutions. They grow, change and die as the social situation demands (Mulokozi 2005). This study focuses on some inheritable aspects of culture with both tangible and intangible characteristics. It is due to this inheritability characteristic that the term ‘cultural heritage resources’ has been adopted in this study.

**Conceptualising cultural heritage resources and antiquities laws in Tanzania**

The recognition of cultural heritage resources as having universal importance was first established in the 1954 Hague Convention when it 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’ (Forrest 2007: 129). It thus introduced into international law the notion that cultural heritage is of general importance to all humankind, irrespective of where that cultural heritage is situated. This recognition established a conceptual basis for subsequent Unesco conventions. It has been stated by the World Heritage Convention that loss through cultural deterioration or disappearance of cultural heritage assets constitutes an impoverishment of the heritage of all humanity (Joffroy 2005). The World Heritage Convention is based on the premise that 'parts of the cultural and natural heritage are of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole' (Unesco 1972: 1). The destruction or deterioration of cultural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world (Forrest 2007). Regardless of Tanzania’s richness in cultural heritage resources, this paper argues that Tanzania has adopted the Unesco recommendations and conventions on a piecemeal basis by concentrating on the conservation of tangible cultural heritage resources, while little effort has been given to the conservation of intangible cultural heritage resources.

In recent years, cultural heritage has come under increasing danger in all regions of the world through the intensification of a globalising economy. Heritage in both the developed and developing worlds is endangered by national and transnational free market development. Neo-liberal policies of deregulation, privatisation, cost cutting and individualism are frequently criticised for giving low priority to preserving heritage for future generations (Manuel 2004). Tanzania is custodian of an impressive array of globally significant cultural heritage resources that range from the Pliocene era, about four million years ago, to the present (Karoma 1996). Apart from outstanding tangible archaeological sites such as Laetoli, Olduvai Gorge, Isimila, rock art sites, iron-working sites and architectural monuments along the coast and in the interior, Tanzania is also rich in intangible cultural heritage resources. Mtwara is one of the regions in Tanzania endowed with a number of cultural heritage attractions, both
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tangible and intangible. However, conservation of these cultural heritage resources has been affected by changing socioeconomic processes and cultural dynamics in both local and global dimensions.

Traditional practices by the Makonde of Mtwara are no longer performed in the same way as in the past. This is due mainly to culture change caused by cross-cultural interaction from within and outside Tanzania. Some scholars (such as Liebenow 1971) suggest that factors such as the geographical isolation of the Makonde and the obstacles posed by the physical terrain may be given to account for the Makonde's lack of response to modernisation (Gallagher 1972). In recent years, these factors no longer appear pertinent, as the influence of globalisation especially after the discovery of natural gas in Mtwara has led to an integration of traditional life into modern life among the Makonde. This unavoidable wave of multi-cultural interaction has affected both tangible and intangible cultural heritage resources of the Makonde community. This study reveals that most of the Jando and Unyago ritual principles\textsuperscript{1} are no longer adhered to by the majority of local communities. For example, the circumcision rite, which is a fundamental symbol of Jando among the Makonde, is now performed in hospitals rather than in traditional settings as was done in the past. The ritual flour, popularly known as mbepesi\textsuperscript{2} in the Makonde language, is rarely used in ritual performances as it was in the past. This is due to western cultural influence, which undermines traditional practices. In this case, the conservation of intangible cultural heritage resources of Makonde communities has been compromised.

The current ritual practices and other traditional performances among the Makonde community have lost their authenticity when compared to the way they were carried out in the past. The community members who were interviewed in this study admitted that there was a noticeable impact of cross-cultural interaction on their traditional way of life. Many see little promise of a future for their cultural, and particularly intangible, heritage resources amid continuing cross-cultural interaction. In their view, it has been a challenge to maintain their traditional way of life in the face of multi-cultural influences. This study observed that elders of the Makonde community remained optimistic that their cultural heritage resources would be maintained regardless of cross-cultural influences. However, this view was contrary to that expressed by the youth, who were mostly advocates for western culture.

The cultural heritage found among the Makonde community of the Mtwara region particularly (and the Mtwara municipality and Mtwara rural district) includes the Mikindani historical harbour site, as well as remains of colonial infrastructure such as the railway from Nachingwea in Lindi to the Mtwara port. Others are monumental remains such as the graveyard, old mosque and other architectural mounds in the Mvita ancient settlement (Gabriel 2015). There are also remains related to the Mozambique liberation movement legacy in Tanzania, such as tombs, campsites
and sacred places. The Mtwarra region is also rich in intangible cultural heritage resources such as traditional dances, traditional medicine and witchcraft, oral narratives, songs, memoirs, indigenous technologies, especially sculpturing technology, and many other ritual practices such as Jando and Unyago ceremonies. However, little effort has been made to safeguard all these cultural heritage resources for the benefit of present and future generations. The reason behind the poor conservation of these cultural heritage resources should be attributed not only to reckless national policies but also to lack of community involvement in conservation strategies. The existing legislation, though still effective, lacks clear guidelines for the involvement and participation of communities (Kamamba 2005). As Lipe (1977) correctly observed, archaeologists need to persuade the public about the scientific and societal values of protecting and conserving cultural heritage resources. Also, the public needs to be informed about the enormous untapped potential contribution of heritage resources to both the national and the local economy (Mabulla 1996).

The International Council of Museums’ code of professional practice emphasises that heritage resources should be protected so that they can last forever (ICOM 1989). A legal framework for the protection and conservation of national antiquities has a long history in Tanzania although its efficiency is yet to be realised. In 1937 the colonial government made two major decisions regarding heritage resources. First, it established a museum in Dar es Salaam called the King George VI Memorial Museum, and second, it passed the Monuments Preservation Ordinance. The museum – which in 1962, a year after independence, was renamed the National Museum of Tanzania – was charged with collecting, preserving, displaying and interpreting for the nation all movable heritage property, be it archaeological, palaeontological, historical or ethnographic.

The Monuments Preservation Ordinance, on the other hand, empowered the governor to declare and gazette structures of historical significance such as monuments, and areas and sites of archaeological, scientific and historical significance as reserved areas (Mapunda 2001). In 1957, the government established an agency, the Antiquities Department, charged with the task of conserving immovable cultural property such as archaeological and palaeontological sites and monuments. Seven years later, the Monuments Preservation Ordinance was repealed and replaced by the Antiquities Act of 1964. This Act, with major amendments made 15 years later under the Antiquities (Amendment) Act of 1979, remains the principal legal document for the management of heritage resources in Tanzania to date (Mapunda 2001). Regardless of all these legal initiatives, the conservation of cultural heritage resources in Tanzania remains inadequate given the poor conservation status of heritage resources in the country. For the purpose of this paper, focus has been given to the way local communities understand cultural heritage resources and the importance of engaging them in conservation initiatives, using the Makonde community of Mtwarra as a case study.
Local communities’ perspectives on cultural heritage resources

This section examines local communities’ understanding of the concept ‘cultural heritage resources’. The examination was guided by a question that required local communities to explain their understanding of the concept. The question intended to assess local communities’ perceptions of cultural heritage resources as opposed to professional or academic conceptions. In addition, the question intended to assess how local communities, particularly the Makonde community, value and conserve their cultural heritage resources, especially intangible heritage.

Archaeology in Tanzania has to a large extent been exclusively dominated by professional practices, with little attention given to local communities’ involvement. This tendency not only creates dialectical understanding but also hinders the sustainable conservation of cultural heritage resources. The interviews with local communities revealed that their understanding of cultural heritage resources is confined to intangibles as compared to tangibles. The tangible cultural heritage resources that were mentioned are associated with ritual practices. For example, some ritual practices are performed in the Mvita graveyard (figures 2.2 & 2.3) as a sign of intangible aspects attached to tangible cultural heritage resources.

Sixty informants were interviewed to represent the local communities of the research area. As expected, in some instances the informants’ responses differed from one another. For example, in one of the group interviews, the following understanding of the concept ‘cultural heritage resources’ or ‘rasilimali urithi tamaduni’ as commonly understood in the Kiswahili language, was given:

Rasilimali urithi tamaduni ni mambo mbalimbali ya kijadi au ya kimila yaliyofanywa na wazee wetu kama vile matambiko, Jando na Unyago, pamoja na ngoma za asili. Kulikuwa pia na miiko mbalimbali, – Mfano, mtoto akitoka Jando alikuwa haruhusiwi kuingia nyumba ya baba yake. Ilikuwa pia ni mwiko kwa watoto kuhudhuria shughuli za mazishi. Hayo yote ni mambo ambayo ni ya zamani lakini bado yanaendelea kufanyika mpaka sasa japo si kwa kiwango kama cha zaman.3

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

A total of 36 (60 %) of the 60 informants who responded to the question about cultural heritage resources confined their understanding to intangible cultural practices. These mainly included Jando and Unyago rites, traditional dances, taboos,
sacrifices, sacred places, traditional games (such as Ndingi, Bao, Mdomo), traditional foods, traditional medicine and witchcraft. Eighteen informants (30 %) confined their understanding of cultural heritage resources to past histories and oral narratives. For example, one of the informants had the following views:


Wazee wa vijiji hivi viwili waliishika mkutano na kuchagua wanne miongoni mwa wawili kwa ambao walitaka mafichoni. Wakati wazee wa vijiji hivi viwili walimshuhudia maji, walipoondoka tu yule ndege alishuka na kuchagua wanne maji. Walipokua watu wa Mvita waliwachukua vijana wana watu wa Magomeni na Mtawanya waliwachukua vijana wana watu wa Magomeni.

**Figures 2.2 & 2.3** A scatter of a cat carcass (left) and goat bones (right) slaughtered in the graveyards at Mvita ancient settlement. Photograph: F. Gabriel (2013)
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baina yao… Hapo ndipo wanakijiji wakajua kuwa ‘UZEE DAWA’ (Old is gold) kwa maana kuwa wasingelikuwa wazee vita ingetokea na madhara yangekuwa makubwa. Hivyo hadithi hii inaonesha kuwa palipo na wazee haliharibiki jambo.4

Translation: In the past our elders had stories that had a number of lessons for the community. For example, let me tell you the following story that was very popular. There was a huge bird that the Makonde called Nantimpwamedi in their language. She stirred enmity between two villages, Magomeni and Mtawanya, that shared a water source, to the extent of almost causing war between them. Whenever one of the villages finished fetching water, the bird came down and stirred the well dirty. When the other village came and found that the water was dirty they thought the other village had stirred it up. All this time the bird would remain hidden and observe how people were complaining. There came a time when youths from the two villages declared war against each other. However, elders of the two villages advised them to be patient as an amicable solution to the problem was sought. The elders of the two villages convened a meeting and chose four of them (two from each village), who were supposed to hide around the well and find out what was happening. While in hiding, women from Magomeni came to fetch water and left without dirtying it. After they had left, the bird came down from the tree and stirred up the water. Soon after came the people from Mtawanya. They found the water dirtied and became angry with the people from Magomeni village. All that time the elders were observing all from their hiding places. The next day they took four young men, two from each village, and went with them to the hiding place so that they could witness what was dirtying the water. The young men witnessed how the huge bird stirred up the water and realised that no one from either village was responsible for the malicious act. They were remorseful and communicated the news to their villages, thus ending the hostilities. It is at that point that people admitted that ‘old age is gold’, meaning that with elders nothing can go astray.

From the story above one finds that to some local community members, cultural heritage resources are confined to the wisdom embedded in the traditional narratives they inherit from their ancestors. Apart from the wisdom communicated through folklore, cultural heritage resources were also attributed to the day-to-day cultural formation of the youth. Elders in the community had the responsibility of watching the steps of their children in various social aspects. For example, in one of the group interviews, one participant had the following view:

Wakati wa chakula wazee walikuwa makini sana kuangalia jinsi watoto wao wanavyokula. Kwa mfano, mtoto akionekana kukata tonge kubwa mzee angeweza kumuuliza ‘mnakula na nani? Au tonge hilo litapita mdomoni?5

Translation: At meal time, parents would closely monitor their children’s table manners. For example, when a child took a big lump of food, the elders would reprimand him by asking ‘with whom are you eating?’ or ‘will that lump go through your mouth?’.
Another participant said:

Wakati wa Jando, vijana wa kiume walifundishwa mambo mengi ya kimila ikiwemo namna ya kutunza familia zao. Walifundishwa pia namna ya kuwa jasiri na wa kawakamavu kwa lengo la kutoa ulinzi kwa jamii. Hata watoto wa kike na kwenye. Unyago wao walifundishwa maadili mbalimbali yanayowahusu akina mama ikiwa ni pamoja na namna ya kuishi na waume zao.6

Translation: During the Jando rituals, young boys were taught a number of cultural issues including how to take care of their families. They were also trained on how to be strong and courageous in order to protect their community. Similarly, young ladies in their Unyago ritual ceremonies were exposed to women-related morals, including how to take care of themselves and their husbands.

Another informant expressed the following views on what is meant by cultural heritage resources:

Mambo ya kale ni masimulizi ya mambo ya zamani kama vile namna wazee walivyosuluhisha matatizo kwenye jamii kwa kutumia mabaraza ya wazee. Inahusisha pia miiko hasa nyakati za Jando ambapo wazee waliwafundishwa watoto mambo ya jadi kwa njia ya misemo na nyimbo. Lakini pia vijana wakishinda kwa miiko wakavyoendesha jadi kwa njia kama walombo.7 Hakuna tambiko lililofanyika pasipokufanya pepezi kwa kutumia unyago unaojulikana na mwenye chakula. Hii ilifanyika ili kuomba dua kwa wahenga ili lisitokee balaa lolote kwa wana Jando lakini pia ili wapone haraka.8

Translation: Cultural heritage comprises narrations of ancient ways of life, such as the way elders solved social problems through their councils. It includes taboos especially during Jando rites where youths were taught cultural norms by elders using educative sayings and songs. In Jando rituals, errant initiates were punished by their traditional mentors popularly known in the Makonde language as walombo. It was customary for all Jando and Unyago rituals to be preceded by mbepesi. This was a ritual offering given to the ancestors using finger millet flour, and was done to ask for blessings from the ancestors for quick recovery of the circumcised youths and to protect them from evils.9

Although the study area had a number of built heritage resources, the informants did not give much value to them as compared to intangible cultural heritage resources. Even at the Mikindani historical site, which is rich in built heritage, informants’ responses were dominated by intangible cultural practices. What they knew about the Mikindani historical site was the Arab history, slave trade and German colonial history in the area. It was noted that the local community in the Mikindani area accorded little attention to monumental buildings.

Mambo ya kale ni kama vile historia ya Waarabu waliotawala hapa Mikindani kwa miaka mingi pamoja na historia ya biashara ya utumwa. Lakini baadaye walikuja wajerumani ambao ngome yao kubwa ikiwa ni pale Boma.10
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Translation: Cultural heritage resources include the history of Arabs who ruled Mikindani for many years as well as the history of the slave trade. Later on came the Germans whose administrative base was at the Old Boma.

As revealed in the interview excerpts above, local communities’ understanding of cultural heritage was mainly confined to intangible heritage resources. Typically, traditional dances, initiation ceremonies such as Jando and Unyago, traditional foods, witchcraft, traditional medicine, local beliefs and taboos, ritual practices such as mbepesi and other traditional practices characterised their responses. There were a number of ritual sites in the research area that were mentioned by the informants as sacred places for ritual practices.

Cultural identity of the Makonde ethnic group

The cultural identity of the Makonde people is predominantly symbolised by their most important cultural functions: their initiation rites. Through initiation rites the young Makonde persons are transformed into adult members of society. As Tore Saetersdal (1999: 130) notes, ‘intricate patterns of scarification are applied to the male and female initiates’ bodies thus subjectifying the individuals into culturally meaningful symbols. The symbols are governed by strict traditional rules and reflect Makonde culture’.

Other forms of bodily mutilation are performed, such as filing of teeth into points and the application of a wooden lip plug (ndonya in the Makonde language) in females. Such decorations are found mostly among the Maconde of Mozambique although they are not as common as they were just a generation ago (Saetersdal 1999). The masks used in these rites mirror the tattooed face of the Maconde female ancestors and are a symbol of the matrilineal order of society, continuation and cultural knowledge (Duarte 1987). This kind of identity expressed by way of bodily mutilation is not as popular among the Tanzanian Makonde. According to local informants, the culture of tattooing faces by Makonde people follows a practice in which tattoo motifs were designed according to clans for the sake of identification of blood relatives. Each clan had its own decorative patterns to differentiate it from other clans. When commenting on this, one of the informants had the following views:

Chanjo kwa wamakonde ilikuwa ni zaidi ya urembo bali pia kitambulisho kwa watu wanatoka ukoo mmoja kwani watu walichanjwa kwa namna mbali mbali kufuatana naukoo … Hii ilisaidia hasa wakati wa mtawanyiko wa watu kujua wale ambao ni ndugu wa ukoo mmoja.

Translation: Tattoos among the Makonde people went beyond decoration as it also served as a symbol of identification among people belonging to the same clan. This was because the tattooing styles were based on clans so that people could identify each other, especially during migrations.
The Makonde have cultural performances which, according to the local communities, not only link them to their ancestral spirits but also create a social bond among community members of all ages and genders. Some cultural performances by local communities, popularly known as ‘Makuya’, are performed annually in the form of a competition among the Makonde, the Makua and the Yao. These traditional performances in the local communities’ viewpoint were beyond recreational performances in that they were accompanied by several other messages in the form of songs, gestures, inspirations and ethics. It is a forum in which cultural performers and their audience (the public) are able to learn about their cultures and cultural principles. These performances are carried out in a purely traditional way using traditional instruments and traditional clothing (figure 2.4). In the words of one of the traditional dancers:

Ngoma ya namna hii pamoja na kuwa kiburudisho lakini pia ina mafundisho mengi kwa jamii. Mfano, kama unavyoona mavazi na zana zitumikazo ni za asili hii ikiwa na maana kwamba tunatakiwa kuthamini utamaduni wetu. Nyimbo zinazoimbwa ukizisikiliza kwa makini zina ujumbe muhimu sana kwa jamii hasa vijana ambao hawathamini utamaduni wao.

Translation: The dance of this kind though it is an entertainment it also has a lot of lessons to the society. For example, as you can see the dresses and instruments are cultural in nature meaning that we should value our culture. The songs are full of valuable message to the community, particularly youths who do not value their culture.

Conclusion
It has been revealed by this study that local communities’ understanding of the concept ‘cultural heritage resources’ is largely confined to certain cultural practices, traditional performances and life experiences. All these entail social togetherness and identity,
reconciliation, cleansing and a linking bridge between the local communities and their ancestors. Cultural practices and traditional performances create and strengthen social bonds among local communities. These cultural practices and traditional performances among the Makonde community are important heritage resources that have been passed down from generation to generation. However, this study discovered that interest in cultural practices and traditional performances has been declining over time, especially among youths. It was also observed that the meaning and value of cultural heritage resources has changed over time. This has been partly caused by culture changes due to social interaction, particularly the influence of western culture. Therefore, to the Makonde community, cultural heritage is all about their past life-ways, which are reflected in the present life and will continue to mark their future life. As Michael Brown (2005: 49) states, heritage management should ‘balance between heritage as a resource for all humanity and as something that belongs to, and remains controlled by, its communities of origin’.

Notes
1. *Jando* refers to a circumcision rite for male youths while *Unyago* refers to female initiation ceremonies. Both are accompanied by ritual practices that prepare initiated youths for adulthood.
2. This ritual flour, whitish in colour, was smeared on the bodies of ritual performers. Nowadays people use any white-coloured flour instead of the ritual flour.
3. Interview notes, group interview with elders, 12 June 2013, at Mtendachi village in Mtwara rural district.
4. Interview with an old man, 13 July 2013, atziwani village in Mtwara rural district.
5. Group interview with elders, 25 June 2013, at Mdui village in Mtwara rural district.
7. A supervisor of the *Jando* ritual who acts as a traditional mentor to the initiates.
8. Group interview with elders, 26 June 2013, at Ziwani village in Mtwara rural district.
9. *Mbepesi* is a popular ritual practice among the Makonde, Makua and Yao of Mtwara region.
11. The name Maconde with a ‘c’ has been used to refer to Mozambican Maconde and with a ‘k’ for Tanzanian Makonde.
12. Interview with Mzee Raphael Nandipa (75 years old), 18 July 2013, at Mbae village.
13. Makuya is an acronym for Makonde, Kua and Yao, the ethnic groups of Mtwara region.
References


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