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Archaeological Perspective on the Impacts of Caravan Trade Expansion in East Africa: Emerging Alternative Histories

Thomas J. Biginagwa
University of Dar es Salaam
biginagwa.thomas@udsm.ac.tz

Philbert Katto
University of Dar es Salaam
pkatto@ualberta.ca.

Abstract

The last two decades have witnessed an increase of archaeological research interest in the East African caravan trade, a topic that was traditionally exclusive to historians. Long-term empirical evidence currently generated by archaeologists continues to consolidate our understanding of the caravan trade, and helps to question some inferences previously drawn from colonial libraries. This paper presents archaeological evidence unearthed from the Northern and Southern caravan routes located in the corresponding areas in the contemporary northern and southern Tanzania. The paper engages material evidence to re-examine some of the consequences of the caravan trade commonly reported in historical writings. Doing so, the paper demonstrates the utility of considering material culture records in studying and re-writing Africa's recent past.

Keywords: *northern route, southern route, material culture, historical archaeology, Tanzania.*

1. Introduction

Studies on the East African ivory and slave caravan trade were conducted almost exclusively by historians up to about two decades ago (Beachey, 1967; Sheriff, 1987; Alpers, 1992; Rockel, 2006a & b). As most of these studies relied significantly on accounts of the nineteenth-century written by Europeans (e.g., Burton & Speke, 1858; Krapf, 1860; Johnston, 1879; Pfeil, 1886), they offer limited tangible evidence to allow broader interpretations of some aspects of the trade from varying scholarly perspectives. This limitation contributes to a narrow understanding of the topic (Wynne-Jones & Walsh, 2010; Mapunda, 2017; Rhodes, 2018), and a series of endless debates on some aspects of the caravan trade (e.g., Koponen, 1988; Kjekshus, 1996; Håkansson, 2004). Lane (2010) notes that while most historical studies on the caravan trade have tapped on an extensive body of archival sources and oral histories, the level of detail and specific relevance of the available information prior to circa 1850 AD is far less reliable. Relatedly, there is a limited information on the general livelihoods of pre-1850s local communities to be tested to determine if their material lives changed as a consequence of the expansion of the caravan trade after the 1850s.

Archaeology and allied disciplines such as paleoecology, zooarchaeology, geoarchaeology, and bioarchaeology have ventured into studying the caravan trade. These studies are generating substantial empirical evidence of the trade, which helps

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consolidate our understanding of it, and facilitates critical review of some inferences in the perspectives of European accounts. For example, Biginagwa (2012) analysed faunal remains from four former caravan halt settlements in Lower Pangani in north-eastern Tanzania to determine possible changes in the exploitation patterns of domestic and wild animals as the caravan trade expanded during the nineteenth century, and whether any of the discerned changes might indicate efforts to increase meat production. The study sought to assess the argument that the expansion of caravan trade from the mid-nineteenth century triggered the intensification of food production as local inhabitants took advantage of the exchange opportunities brought by passing caravans (Håkansson, 2004). Had such intensification occurred, it may have initiated significant ecological transformation such as severe soil erosion (Håkansson & Widgren, 2007). Contrary to most scholarly expectations, Biginagwa (2012) found no evidence of any major transformation in culling patterns or herd management strategies. Instead, the study revealed considerable continuity of animal economies between the pre-nineteenth century and later levels before the studied caravan halt-settlements were abandoned in the early twentieth century.

Some archaeological and palaeoecological studies using the landscape historical ecology approach have also been conducted in the Eastern Arc mountains in northern Tanzania. These studies explored, *inter alia*, the likely timing of the initiation of agricultural intensification and the development of associated landesque capital such as irrigation channels and field terracing (Stump & Tagseth, 2009), vegetation response to climate change and human impacts (Mumbi et al., 2014), and the history and environmental consequences of soil erosion (Heckmann et al., 2014). Studies of regional vegetation sequences reconstructed from pollen cores recovered from the Usambara Mountains (Mumbi et al., 2014) and the Pare Hills (Heckmann et al., 2014; Finch et al., 2017) have indicated greater levels of upland forest disturbance after c. 1500 CE. This was inferred from increased presence of pioneer taxa, *Coprophilous* fungal spores, and charcoal percentages—all indicating forest clearance and cultivation. These studies uncovered a steady decline in overall percentage of *Podocarpus,* and greater variability in forest composition (ibid). All these intensified between c. 1740 and 1840 CE prior to the expansion of coastal caravan trade.

Moreover, a study by Finch et al. (2017) in north-eastern Tanzania shows that maize appears in the local pollen record from around 1740 CE, while in North Pare soil erosion increased significantly between the fifteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is potentially associated with changes in land uses, cropping regimes, and local demography resulting from the establishment of the Ugweno chiefdom (Heckmann, 2014). These changes were neither uniform nor linear across the Eastern Arc Mountains. Evidence for localised stabilisation of the soils, forest regeneration and reduction in herbaceous vegetation from the fifteenth century onward were also documented from different sampling sites. Similarly, the introduction of landesque capital in the form of stone terracing, irrigation channels and water storage ponds in the Pare Hills (Håkansson & Widgren, 2007) is reported as localised interventions for conserving land fertility (Heckmann, 2014). Sheridan (2002) argues that such practices were embedded within indigenous cosmologies and relational ontologies of human-environment connections.

He concludes that the practices were not a deliberate drive towards agricultural intensification in response to the economic opportunities provided by the expanding caravan trade during the nineteenth century.

Archaeological research elsewhere in eastern and south-eastern Africa continues to provide critically important long-term empirical evidence on changes and continuities in regional farming practices, diet, craft production, exchange networks, and consumption patterns (Biginagwa, 2012; Biginagwa & Ichumbaki, 2018; Mapunda, 2017; Walz, 2017; Wright, 2019). Archaeological studies are also contributing to assessments of the impacts of the caravan trade on elephant populations (Coutu et al., 2016), the expansion and transformation of the regional slave trade and slavery (Kusimba, 2004; Marshall, 2015; Rhodes, 2018), and responses to climatic events such as prolonged drought during the long nineteenth century (van der Plaas et al., 2019). This paper aims to contribute to the growing body of archaeological knowledge on the East African caravan trade by re-examining some of the widely perceived consequences of the trade regularly reported by historians. The paper focuses on three reported consequences, namely: (i) the emergence of trade routes linking the coast and the interior; (ii) widespread and quick adoption of coastal cultures in the interior; and (iii) increased value of imports and their consumption by the local populace.

This study is categorised as *historical archaeology*. As a sub-discipline and research approach, historical archaeology studies sites that can be interpreted with the aid of historical sources such as written documents, oral traditions, and historically dateable artefacts (Pikirayi, 1993; Reid & Lane, 2004; Schmidt, 2006). It integrates and interrogates archaeological sources with other non-archaeological sources that are broadly defined as 'historical'. Historical sources include various types of written texts and documents. Examples of these are formal histories, unpublished archival records, personal letters, newspaper accounts, pictorial and cartographic materials, different forms of orally-transmitted information, and information gleaned from historical linguistic analyses (Lane, 2007: 4). Archaeological sources include artefactual, ecofactual, structural and architectural remains; as well as their contextual, spatial, and temporal associations and characteristics. Non-archaeological sources include drawings, maps, and photographs. Oral information includes myths, oral traditions, praise songs, king lists, interview responses, and memoirs (ibid). With this approach, a total of five sites were investigated. These are Old Korogwe, Ngombezi and Maurui located along the Northern caravan route; as well as Mang'ua and Kikole lying along the Southern caravan route (Fig. 1).

This paper is divided into seven sections. Following this introduction is section two, which describes briefly the nineteenth-century caravan trade and outlines the reported consequences that are examined archaeologically in this paper. Section three describes the geographical and historical contexts of the study sites; followed by an outline of various methods used in collecting and analysing pertinent archaeological data in section four. Section five presents major findings, which are then discussed in section six. Section seven concludes the paper.

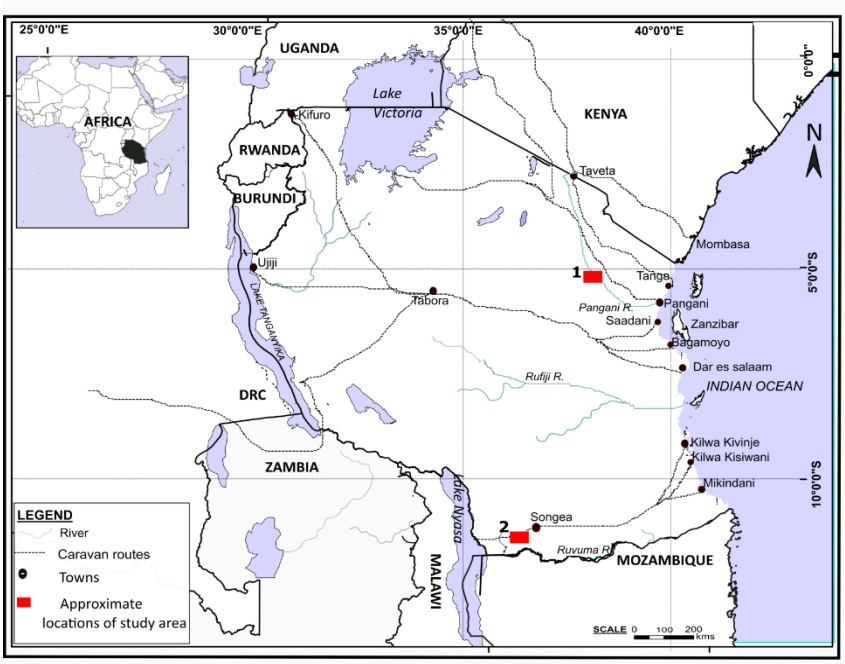


Figure 1: *A map of Tanzania showing the 19th century caravan routes and approximate locations of study sites along the Northern (1) and Southern (2) caravan routes*

2. East African Caravan Trade: An Overview

Trade in ivory and slaves expanded dramatically across eastern Africa during the nineteenth century (Sheriff, 1987; Alpers, 1992). Its growth was a result of the increased demand for elephant ivory in North America and Western Europe when the industrial revolution peaked (Beachey, 1967; Thorbahn, 1979). During that time ivory was the main raw material for manufacturing items such as piano keys, billiard balls, cutlery, umbrella handles, and hair combs (Thorbahn, 1979; Sheriff, 1987). These were some of the items greatly desired by the growing middle class as an expression of prestige and social status (Flanders, 2006). Ivory from East Africa was preferred because it was soft for carving and less expensive than ivory sourced from elsewhere (Beachey, 1967; Sheriff, 1987). Consequently, East Africa became a major source of ivory for the western industrializing world throughout the nineteenth century.

Ivory was collected from the East African interior by large caravans, each comprising up to a thousand individuals (Rockel, 2006a). The caravans were organised in the coast, and their trips to the interior were led by Arab and Swahili traders. The caravans consisted largely of professional porters (*wapagazi*) hired from the coast and the interior, women and children who served as cooks and companions, and some slaves captured in the interior to help the *wapagazi* to carry ivory to the coast (Beachey, 1967; Glassman, 1991; Fig. 2). The caravans required supplies that consisted of imported commodities from the global north. These included cotton cloth, glass beads, brass and copper wire, and muskets and gunpowder.

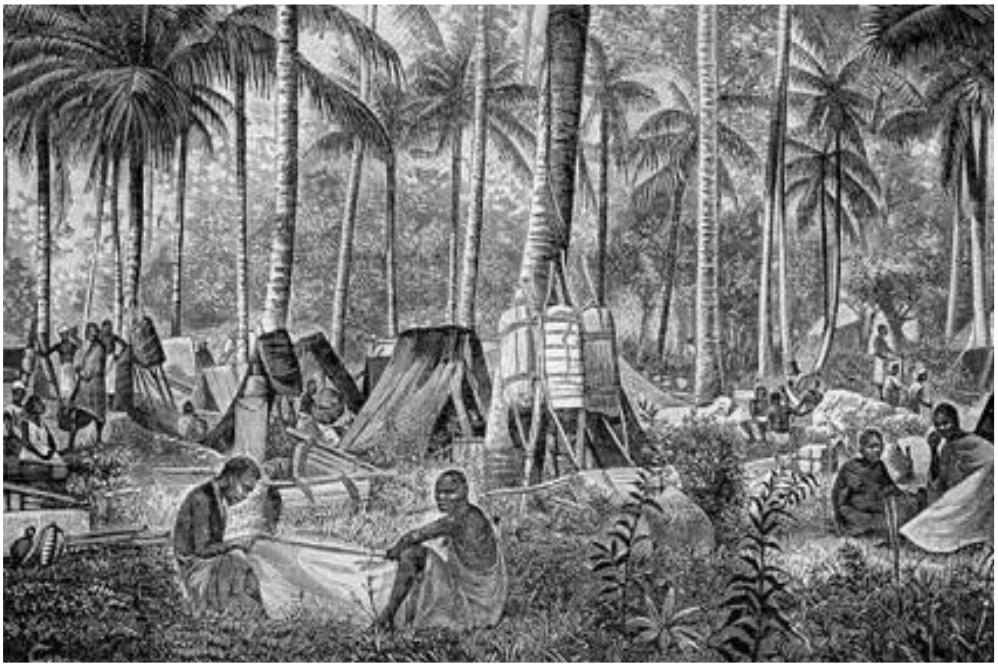


Figure 2: ***Nyamwezi Porters Resting in Coconut Palm Grove, Near Bagamoyo***
(**Source**: Le Roy, 1894: Plate 20)

These commodities were offloaded in Zanzibar and distributed to the coastal towns (Burton, 1859; Karklins, 1992). These were used to procure food, ivory and slaves in the interior through barter (Burton & Speke, 1858; Krapf, 1860). As a custom, guns were fired upon the arrival of caravans in villages to alert villagers to bring products for exchange with imported goods (Burton & Speke, 1858; Farler, 1882). The ensuing sub-sections describe three consequences of the caravan trade, which are the focus of this paper.

2.1 Emergence of Trade Routes Linking the Coast and the Interior

It is commonly reported that the expansion of caravan trade during the nineteenth century triggered the emergence of trade routes linking the coast and the interior (Beidelman 1982; Sheriff, 1987; Koponen, 1988; Rockel, 2006a& b). This implies there were no definite trade routes, hence no 'connections' between coastal and interior communities prior to the caravan trade. Some historians have long been reluctant to accept the existence of socio-cultural interactions between the coast and the interior prior to the caravan trade. They argued there was no demand for local products from the interior in the coast (Posnansky, 1975), and that political structures to organise the trade in the interior were absent (Unomah & Webster, 1976). However, some historians have attempted to demonstrate pre-caravan existence of early trade connections between the coast and the interior (e.g., Sutton, 1973; Feierman, 1974; Kimambo, 1996); calling them as 'down-the-line exchange'. However, their submissions have frequently suffered lack of tangible evidence.

A major tangible evidence of the caravan route is a chain of settlements in which the caravans traded with local inhabitants, including the acquisition of provisions. In the northern route (via Lower Pangani River Basin) such settlements, for example, included Kwa Mgumi, Sambwe, Zavuza, Panemo, Old Korogwe, Ngombezi, Maurui, Kwa Seungo and Mazindi (Johnson, 1879; Sheriff, 1987; Fig. 3). The settlements along the southern route, for instance the Kilwa coast – Lake Nyasa route via the present-day Selous Game Reserve included Matapatapa, Kikanda, Mingumbi, Chumo, Mbombwe, Mtumbei Kitambi and Tandawale, Mang'ua/Kikole, Ndongosi, and Ngingama (Pfeil, 1886; Leider, 1894). In this paper we present material evidence from a sample of these settlements to reveal the long-established connectivity routes between the coast and interior prior to the caravan trade. On the basis of archaeological evidence, we argue that the nineteenth-century corridors of trade and exchange systems were a continuation of centuries of previous operations (Walz, 2010; Biginagwa & Ichumbaki, 2018; Biginagwa et al., in press).

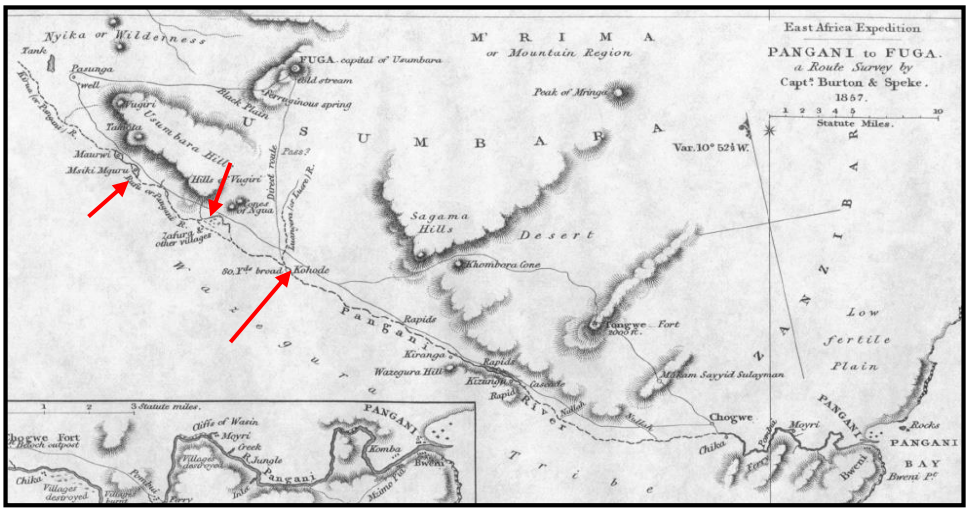


Figure 3: ***Sketch map by Burton and Speke (1858: 189) showing the 19th century island settlements on the Pangani River. The arrows point to the locations of the studied sites.***

2.2 Rapid and Widespread Adoption of Coastal Cultures in the Interior

The caravan trade has been regarded as responsible for the rapid and widespread adoption of coastal cultures in the interior. Clearly, historians of the East African caravan trade adopted the claim in the accounts of European travellers. For example, Charles New (1875: 319), who journeyed Usambara during the second half of the nineteenth century, once described Chief Semboja of Mazinde as "… appearing cloaked in the clothes of a coastal resident and lived in a rectangular (Swahili) house." Similar claims have been presented by later historians. One good example of this is Salimu's (1998: 85) remarks that "… some hinterland rulers rebuilt their capitals in coastal architecture, adorning their courts with coastal goods and even cultivating a taste for coastal food." Whilst not downplaying the fact, we caution the spatial-temporal generalisations such as this made in some historical texts. Archaeological evidence of this paper suggests that although the

widespread movements of people through trade and slavery during the nineteenth century may have meant that residents along the main caravan trade routes were aware of other cultural groups in the wider East African region, several do not appear to have identified completely with these groups, particularly those on the coast.

2.3 Increased Value and Consumption of Imports Among East Africans

As noted earlier, various items were imported into the East African coastal towns for discharge into the interior where they were used to procure various goods and services during the caravan trade. The procurement included paying porterage and tributes to local chiefs (Burton & Speke, 1858; Krapf, 1860 [1968]; Prestholdt, 2008; Pallaver, 2009). Two striking issues are evident in the historiography of the East African caravan trade regarding the consumption and/or utilization pattern of such imports among the local populace in the interior. One is the Eurocentric assumption that East African consumers were 'passive' recipients of 'trinkets' of no value, as once remarked by Krapf (1860: 185):

> What horrors and sins would be manifest if ivory, copal, and articles of commerce generally imported from Africa into Europe, could speak! How many slaves, how many women, how much palm-wine, how many objects for the gratification of lust and vanity, are purchased by the Galla, Wanika, Wakamba, and Suahili, with the ivory which they bring to the coast!

The second issue relates to the theories that link the control of the distribution and consumption of imported items of 'high value', commonly referred to as 'prestige goods' (for example glass beads) to the source of wealth and political power in developing states (Pikirayi, 2017), and the identity of emerging elites (Hayden, 1995; Stein, 2007; Marcus, 2008; Price & Feirman, 2010). A cadre of scholars have noted that those theories are closely related to the approach to external trade as a catalyst for social change, whereby access to exotic goods and external ties is seen as the preserve of emerging elites who use them to gain power (Wynne-Jones, 2010; Moffet & Chirikure, 2016). We present material evidence to caution against such blind generalizations. We argue that most exotic commodities desired by East African consumers were those that fitted their pre-existing cultural logic. Moreover, the distribution, use, and deposition pattern of exotic goods at the study sites are incompatible with the suggestive 'prestige goods'.

3. Geographical and Historical Contexts of the Study Sites

The Northern caravan route, also known as the 'Pangani corridor', had three major terminuses along the East African northern coast. These were Mombasa, Tanga, and Pangani (Sheriff 1987; Rockel 2006a; Fig. 1). The core route, along which the studied sites are in the present-day northern Tanzania, ran beside the Ruvu/Pangani River (Lower Pangani River Basin), and went as far as Kilimanjaro and Lake Victoria. It had branches going further north to Taita-Taveta, crossing what is now the Kenya-Tanzania border, and Lake Baringo (Koponen, 1988).

Archaeological excavations in the Northern route were undertaken at three abandoned island settlements of Old Korogwe (circa 40ha), Ngombezi (circa 35ha), and Maurui (circa 32ha). The three studied sites are located on River Pangani within the administrative boundaries of Korogwe District, about 110–115km inland from the Indian Ocean. The nineteenth-century European accounts report that these islands were inhabited by the

Zigua-speaking ethnic people who were agriculturalists and fishermen (Baumann, 1891; Fig. 4). These settlements were among the regular caravan halts in which the caravans obtained provisions before proceeding with their long marches to the interior and back to the coast (Burton, 1859; Farler, 1882).

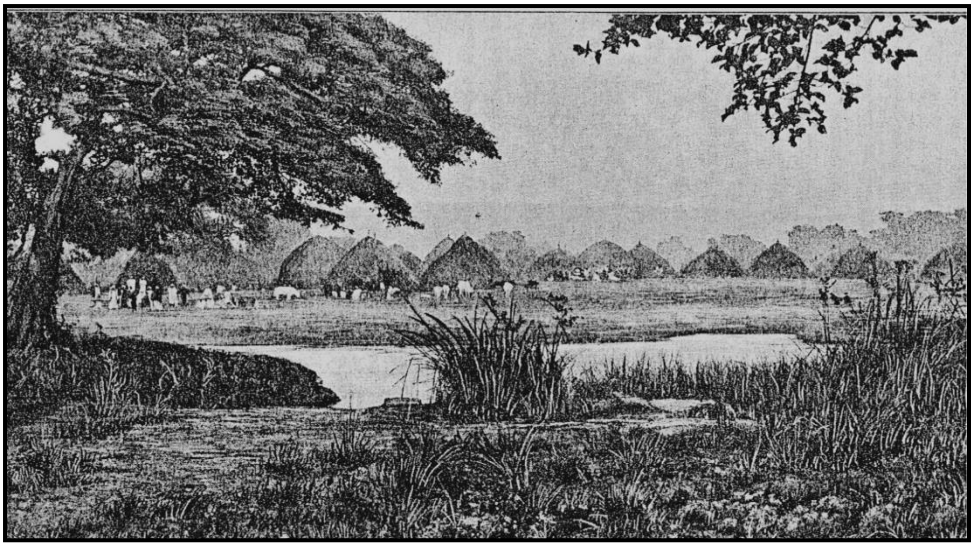


Figure 4: ***A 19th Century View of Old Korogwe Island from the Bank of River Pangani***
(**Source:** Baumann, 1890)

The Southern caravan route had major terminals in Kilwa, Lindi and Mikindani in the contemporary southern Tanzania (Fig. 1). From there, it passed through Ungindo, Umatumbi, Uyao and beyond to the eastern and western shores of Lake Nyasa (Koponen, 1988). Archaeological excavations along this route were undertaken in the abandoned settlements of Mang'ua (circa 40ha) and Kikole (circa 15ha). The two sites are almost 680km inland from Tanzania's southernmost coastal town of Mikindani. European accounts show that these were among the several regular caravan halts during the nineteenth century (Pfeil, 1886; Lieder, 1894). Unlike those along the Northern route, however, Mang'ua and Kikole were settled by Arab ivory and slave traders from the Kilwa coast, led by Rashid Bin Masud. They settled first at Mang'ua from 1890 to 1898, when they relocated to Kikole (15km east) to avoid the increasing German missionary presence in Peramiho, just 4km north of Mang'ua (Mapunda, 2004).

Lieder, a German traveller who journeyed Mang'ua on 17th February 1894 found the village consisting of about 150 huts and quite impressive (Ebner, 1987: 126). For Kikole, oral accounts maintain that the village consisted of about a dozen brick and mud structures, and probably over fifty wattle-and-daub huts (Mapunda, 2004). These two Arab settlements are marked by dozens of cultural floras, notably date palms, kapok, and mango trees (Fig. 5a). The remnants of collapsed rectangular mud and unfired brick houses are still visible at the core area of the settlement, to date (Katto, 2016; Fig. 5b).



Figure 5(a): ***A Section View of Remnant Exotic Flora at Kikole***



Figure 5(b*): The Remains of Masudi's Rectangular Houses at Kikole*

(**Source**: Authors' photos, 2014).

4. Methods

Excavations in the northern and southern caravan routes took place in 2008 and 2014, respectively. Excavation units at Ngombezi (2×14m), Old Korogwe (2×2m) and Maurui (2×2m) along the northern route targeted cultural mounds. In the southern route, 15 excavation units of various sizes were accomplished: 9 at Mang'ua and 6 at Kikole. These targeted various areas of the settlements such as open spaces, in and outside collapsed houses, activity areas, and garbage dumping places. All excavations followed depositional layers, further subdivided into arbitrary 10cm spits. The layers were subdivided to monitor vertical change of densities of artefacts (and artefact types), and also to track changes of deposits. Layers were differentiated basing on soil characteristics such as colour change, texture, and compactness. The Munsell colour chart was used to differentiate soil colour changes and soil descriptions. Each distinct layer of deposit was assigned a unique context number and described on pro-forma context forms. Features such as postholes (referred to here as 'cuts'), formed by the removal of deposits, were also assigned a unique context number and described.

Excavations were executed using hand-trowelling. Deposits were dry-sieved through a 5mm wire mesh screen. Sometimes a 2.5mm mesh was introduced when deposits were particularly fine, and in those layers that contained high concentrations of small finds such as glass beads. Materials from sieving screen were separated by type, labelled, and bagged appropriately. The materials were washed daily and allowed to dry before they were stored in clean plastic bags and carefully labelled. Charcoal samples for radiocarbon dating were collected from every level whenever encountered. These were treated with due care to reduce chances of contamination. Trowels were used to lift them from the

deposits, wrapped in aluminium foil, and kept in plastic bags. Three-dimensional location coordinates, where charcoal samples were obtained, were recorded. In each trench, photographs were taken with a digital camera after the excavation of each level had been completed, and whenever we came across a feature of interest. Additionally, the top of each newly exposed layer was planned and drawn to a scale of 1:20.

Upon the completion of excavation of each layer, the heights of the exposed deposits and cut features were recorded using a compact level. Levels were recorded across the excavation unit at 0.5m intervals as a minimum. For each trench, at least two wall profiles were drawn at 1:20 scale, and levels recorded at 0.5m intervals for the top of the basal natural deposits. Global Positioning System (GPS) readings were taken with a Leica SR20 differential GPS, and were used to establish permanent and temporary benchmarks at the site. These benchmarks, herein referred to as 'datums', were typically located at ground level on the upslope side of excavation units. Additionally, an area of approximately 500m around the excavation units was mapped using a Leica Total Station Theodolite. The plan recorded the excavation units, archaeological scatters, and permanent topographic features such as rivers, streams, trees, and mounds. Finally, all the recordings—including the excavated layers, samples collected, photos taken, section profiles, and plans and levels—were assigned individual reference numbers and cross-referenced within the excavation recording file.

All local potteries were fully analysed. Information recorded in a computer spreadsheet included contextual information (trench number, layer number, and artefact number), sherd dimensions (maximum length, width, and thickness - both in mm), sherd fabric and temper, surface treatment, body part, vessel form, decoration type or types, decoration placement, and ceramic types. Rim form, lip shape and lip stance were also recorded. Fabric was determined by breaking off a small section of a sherd to reveal the type of clay and temper used. The colour of the core, inner and outer margins of a sherd was recorded following the procedures outlined by Orton and Hughes (1993). Temper (the non-plastic material added to clay to prevent shrinkage and cracking during drying and firing of vessels) was recorded after examination (using hand lens) of the cross-section of a fresh break. Temper materials were also visible on sherds that had rough surfaces, which were caused by post-depositional taphonomic factors, and on those sherds that had untreated (unburnished) surfaces. Where present, different types of surface treatment on ceramic vessels were recorded and coded as follows: burnished (1), polished (2), pigment-stained (3), slipped (4), painted (5), and graphite-coated (6). The nature and mode of decoration, and types of motifs and their placement on a vessel, were also recorded and described.

Where vessel forms could be reconstructed from the diagnostic sherds, they were classified into various types following the schemes devised by Wynne-Jones (2009). The reason for adopting Wynne-Jones' ceramic classification scheme is that archaeologists have until now not developed ceramic classifications for the post-Swahili period in the large area of East Africa. Thus, Wynne-Jones' scheme remains the most comprehensive and a more recent one. The analytical attributes for glass beads included method of manufacture (hand-drawn or wound), structure (simple or compound), shape (cylinder, barrel, sphere), and size and colour. This follows the popular criteria proposed by bead analysts who have worked on trade glass beads recovered from various sites in East Africa (e.g., Chittick, 1974; Horton,

1996; Wood, 2002). The non-glass beads recovered were mainly made from marine bivalve and land snail shells. The determination of shell species were made by Prof. Kasigwa of the Department of Zoology, University of Dar es Salaam.

5. Findings

This section presents major archaeological findings providing impetus for a reconsideration of the three outlined consequences of the nineteenth-century caravan trade. Stratigraphic data and radiocarbon dates are presented first to unravel the occupation timeframe of the studied caravan halt settlements. These settlements are key markers of caravan routes as described in the preceding sections. Therefore, these two forms of evidence are important in evaluating the claim that settlements (hence 'routes') lying along the caravan routes would have emerged only during the nineteenth century subsequent to the caravan trade. Secondly, features and artefactual evidence are presented to refute claims that coastal-interior trade connections would have emerged only during the caravan trade. They also refute the generalised claim that the caravan trade triggered the rapid and widespread adoption of coastal cultures in the interior. The results of the analysis of imported trade goods are also presented to re-examine claims about the increased value, and consumption, of imports by Africans. The findings from Ngombezi, Old Korogwe and Maurui—all along the northern route—are presented first. Those from Mang'ua and Kikole along the southern route follow.

5.1 The Northern Caravan Route

5.1.1 Stratigraphy and Occupation Timeframe

Excavations in all three study settlements exposed deep and continuous stratigraphy. Trenches were dug to depths of 3.5 m, 3.6 m, and 5m below ground levels at Ngombezi, Old Korogwe and Maurui, respectively. Remarkably, the stratigraphy of all the studied settlements revealed pre-caravan, caravan, and post-caravan occupation phases. The pre-caravan trade settlement phase was evident in the basal levels of excavation units. These levels typically lacked imported trade items such as glass beads and porcelains. Instead, they were dominated by locally produced artefacts, notably ceramics and shell beads.

A charcoal sample (Wk-25718) was collected from the base of the anthropogenic deposits at 3.30m below mound surface at Ngombezi. This provided a date of 238±30 BP at the 95% confidence level, which on calibration suggests that the earliest structure on this island was erected in the mid-seventeenth century CE. Similarly, a charcoal sample (Poz-59494) from the base of the anthropogenic deposits (500 cm) at Maurui yielded a date of 630±30 BP, suggesting (on calibration) that the initial occupation of this island may have been as early as the fourteenth century CE.

The caravan trade occupation phase was marked by the presence of imported items, the prominent being glass beads. These begin to appear just below the middle levels of excavation units and continue higher up the stratigraphy. Their appearance thus marks the beginning of the involvement of these settlements in the caravan trade. The post-caravan trade, which is the final settlements phase, marked a significant decline and ultimate disappearance of imports. This was mostly marked in the top levels of excavation units, roughly 0-20cm below ground level. In synthesis, it is clear that the occupation timeframe of the studied settlements predates the nineteenth century.

5.1.2 Features and Artefacts

Two distinct phases of settlement activity were exposed at Ngombezi. One phase is that indicated by a sequence of wattle-and-daub houses built in the initial occupation phase (pre-caravan trade phase; Layer 13) that were subsequently demolished. Another is that of house construction (caravan trade period; Layer 9). The houses of the latter phase were of circular in shape as evidenced by aligned postholes overlaid with thick layers of daub, suggesting collapsed house walls (Fig. 4). The exposed postholes along with daub imply the existence of circular wattle-and-daub houses at Ngombezi during both settlement occupation phases. Although postholes were not encountered at Old Korogwe and Maurui, the recovery of a large quantity of daub similar to that from Ngombezi signifies the existence of similar houses there. The exposed features suggest that the pre-nineteenth century traditional Zigua house design (Lane, 1997) was not substantially altered in response to increased exposure to coastal influence brought by the caravans at the height of the trade.

In terms of artefactual assemblages, local pottery dominated at the three sites (Table 1). The vessels were similar across the sites and comprised of *globular jars, necked jars, open pots, closed bowls, open bowls, large storage vessels* and *cups*, in that order of abundance. The decorations on the vessels from all the settlements were similar. They consisted of diverse motifs made by incision (scored lines), impression (punctuates) and raised nipples; all scored below the rim (Fig. 5A). Remarkably, some decorative motifs resemble those of 'Group B' pottery reported from South Pare hills (Soper, 1967), some sites in Mombo (Walz, 2017) dating AD 900–500 (Walz, 2010), and in coastal sites where they date between 8th–11th century AD (Mjema, 2015). The observed similarities suggest the pre-nineteenth century communities in the wider Pangani River Basin were demographically 'fluid', meaning that the movement of people between places was common. Kimambo (1996) notes the fluidity and concludes that communities occupying different ecological zones in the wider Pangani River Basin traded and exchanged goods and produces, including pottery, prior to caravan trade.



Figure 4: ***A section view of a 1x14m trench at Ngombezi (excavation in progress) showing dense layer of house daub in Layer 4 (A) overlaying the postholes (B) exposed in Layer 9*** *(Authors' Photo 2008)*

Table 1: Cultural Materials Yielded from the Northern Caravan Routes

Cultural material	Studied sites			Total Amount
	Ngombezi	*Old Korogwe*	*Maurui*	
Local pottery	32,857	3,966	15,150	51,973
Imported pottery	2		1	3
Local beads	279	34	220	533
Imported beads	2,034	474	47	2,555
Bones	20,565	4,325	9,779	34,669
Cowries	128	11	12	151
Metal objects	33	9	3	45
Smoking pipes	7	2		9
Worked bones	6		3	9
Musket barrel		2		2
Daub (kg)	2,440	28	12	2,480

Source: Biginagwa and Ichumbaki (2018)

Imported pottery has been documented as having been abundant in several nineteenth century coastal Tanzania mainland sites such as Pangani, Saadani, Bagamoyo, Mbwa Maji, Kilwa Kisiwani, Kilwa Kivinje, and in Unguja Ukuu, and Mgoli (the last two in Zanzibar). Despite this, only three pieces of imported pottery were recovered from the studied settlements, two from Ngombezi and one from Maurui. Both belong to the late *sgraffiato* type, an import from the Persian Gulf (Fleisher, 2003) between the tenth and fourteenth centuries AD (Horton, 1996). This striking absence of imported pottery at the studied settlements in Lower Pangani suggests that inhabitants retained their preferred material traditions, possibly due to cultural practices they had despite their exposure to imported goods.

A total of 3,088 beads were recovered from all the three studied settlements (Table 1). Imported glass beads (Fig. 5B) constituted 82.7% (n=2,555). The rest (17.2%, n=533) were local shell beads. The latter were made along the coast and parts of the interior (Fig. 5C). Almost 90% (n=480) of shell beads were made from marine bivalves (*Anadara* spp.), and the remaining 10% (n=53) from land snail shells (*Achatina* spp). Excavation recorded the concentration of shell beads in the basal levels, suggesting that they were in use before the arrival of glass beads. Shell beads are also reported at the sites located further north of the studied sites such as those around Mombo (Walz, 2010), and in the Pare Hills (Soper, 1967). This suggests their wider geographical distribution.

Shell beads were also common in several coastal sites such as Pangani, Kilwa, Manda and Shanga, occurring in the earliest occupation levels dating from the 9th to 12th centuries AD (Chittick, 1966, 1974; Horton, 1996; Mjema, 2015). These appeared prior to the arrival of glass beads. Therefore, the presence of marine bivalve shell beads at the studied settlements signifies that trade and exchange between the people of the hinterland and coastal communities predated the nineteenth century caravan trade. Other archaeologists working along the coast have noted the trend of marine bivalve shell beads declining and subsequently disappearing higher up the stratigraphy as glass beads were introduced (Chittick, 1966; Horton, 1996; Walz, 2010). Walz (2010) argues that there was a general decline of shell bead production along the coast during the 'Swahili Golden Age' (AD 1250/1350–550) because coastal communities were exposed to new objects that were important for display and consumption during this time. The objects were such as glass beads and decorated Swahili bowls.

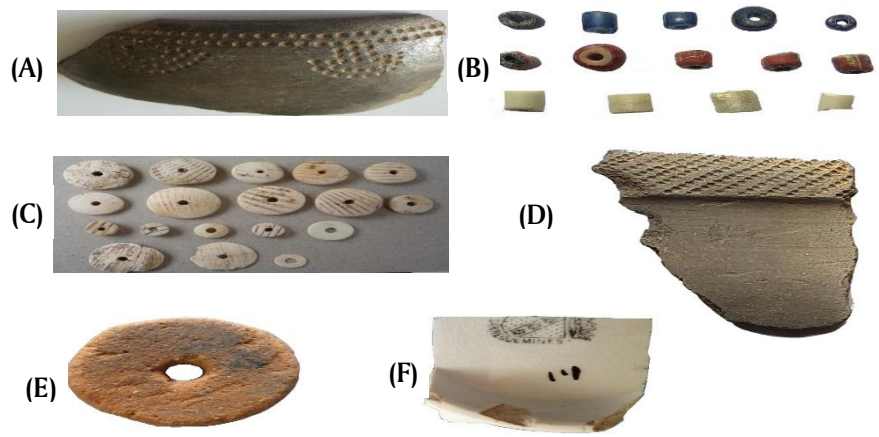


Figure 5: ***A Sampled of Various Artefacts Discussed in the Text***

The inhabitants of the studied settlements in the Lower Pangani preferred white beads (57%), followed by Indian red beads (23%), and then blue ones (17%). The implication of the different colours is discussed below. Almost 99% of the glass beads were drawn and only 1% wound. The majority (77%) had simple structure with a colour of single layer, and the rest (23%) had a compound structure of multiple layered colours. The dominant shape (80%) was cylindrical, which is a straight-sided profile with a long axis parallel to the perforation. The rest (19%) were barrel shaped, with a slightly convex profile.

5.2 The Southern Caravan Route

5.2.1 Stratigraphy and Occupation Timeframe

The maximum depths excavated were 1.1m and 2.4m below ground level at Mang'ua and Kikole, respectively. Similarly, Mang'ua and Kikole revealed three occupation phases. The pre-caravan phase was determined in the basal excavation levels. These levels were marked by the absence of imported items. Instead, the basal levels yielded local ceramics and metallurgical remains (slag and tuyeres). Daub was also recovered at both settlements; suggesting the presence of circular wattle-and-daub houses similar to those recorded at the sites in the Northern caravan routes. The caravan trade phase overlies the pre-caravan levels and features a variety of imports such as glass beads, imported pottery and some coins. The latter were exclusive to Mang'ua. Rectangular houses of the Swahili or coast origin and indigenous circular wattle-and-daub houses appear to have co-existed during this phase. The post-caravan phase is evident in the uppermost levels, which yielded modern materials including plastics, textiles, and few glass beads.

5.2.2 Artefactual Evidence

Local pottery dominated both settlements (Table 2). The ceramic vessels included *open pots*, *necked jars*, *bowls*, *globular jars*, *large storage vessels* and *carinated pots*. Some local ceramics from the pre-caravan trade basal levels at both sites overlap the Early Iron Age pottery. This includes that reported in distant sites such as Mwavarambo in Malawi and Kapwirimbwe in Zambia dating AD 900–1000 (Robinson & Sandelowsky, 1968).

Table 2: Cultural Materials Yielded from the Southern Caravan Routes

	Studied Sites		Total
Cultural material	***Mang'ua***	***Kikole***	
Local pottery	4158	1392	**5550**
Imported pottery	15	13	**28**
Bones	134	57	**191**
Imported beads	309	74	**383**
Metal objects	26	65	**91**
Daub (kg)	4	15	**19**
Glass	70	84	**154**
Slag	1	168	**169**
Tuyere	-	76	**76**
Gourd	-	8	**8**
Textile	-	2	**2**
Spindle whorl	-	1	**1**

Source: Katto (2016)

Similar pottery has also been reported at Mihawara site in the Upper Rufiji River Basin (Msemwa, 2001) some 400km north of the study sites. Characteristically, this seemingly widely-distributed pottery tradition is dominated by necked vessels with thickened rims. Beneath the rims are incised oblique lines or herringbone bound by a single line of false-relief chevron stamped above or below them (Fig. 5D). The pottery assemblages from the two sites contain a few bowls decorated with 'arc-incised' motif, a common decoration style reported at sites along the Swahili coast dating between AD 1700–1900 (Chami et al., 2004; Croucher, 2006; Wynne-Jones, 2010; Biginagwa, 2015). Added to the list of artefacts is a ceramic *spindle whorl* (Fig. 5E), which is commonly associated with the textile industry at East African coastal sites (Chami, 1994; Horton, 1996).

Unlike the studied sites along the northern routes, Mang'ua and Kikole accorded relatively abundant recovery of imported ceramics (Table 2). Almost 97% of these were recovered from the core area of the settlements where the houses of Rashid Bin Masudi and his fellow Arabs were located. These are pieces of ceramic cups, saucers, serving platters and bowls. They are glazed with painted and printed decorations of bright pink, blue and sometimes black bands. Some of the ceramic pieces of the imported vessels show the vessels bore the manufacturers' trademarks at the base. The trademarks include '*Opaque de sarreguemines*' and '*Societé Ceramique*' (Fig. 5F). These are similar to those identified by Biginagwa (2015) in Kilwa Kivinje. These markers inform that the recovered vessels were made in Lorraine, France; and Maastricht, Holland, respectively, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

In total, 383 glass beads were recovered from the two Arab settlements of Mang'ua and Kikole. The majority (91%) were drawn type, and the rest (9%) wound. Those with a simple structure were the majority at 71%, while 29% had a 'compound structure' (multi-layered colours). Unlike those from the northern route, the dominant shape of the glass beads at Mang'ua and Kikole was barrel (89.2%), followed by spherical (5.2%), elliptical (2.6%), and cylindrical (2.3%). Those with white colour dominated (46%); followed by 'Indian red' (27%), then blue (20%).

6. Discussion: Emerging Alternative Histories

Unlike colonial libraries, material evidence continues to unearth new knowledge on issues previously misrepresented, overlooked, and/or debated by historians of East African caravan trade. With reference to archaeological evidence, it is now clear that many of the settlements that marked the caravan routes and served as halting places were established long before the nineteenth century. Radiocarbon dates place the occupation timeframe of the settlements along the northern route as far as the fourteenth century AD (Biginagwa & Ichumbaki, 2018). This timeframe contradicts the views that these settlements emerged only during the nineteenth century because of the expanding caravan trade.

The presence of various artefacts at the studied settlement that are comparable with those from distant regions suggests emphatically the existence of multi-directional trade contacts and exchange between the hinterland and the coast prior to caravan trade. Our findings are similar to those of Walz (2005, 2017) from the sites of Mbugani and Ulimboni located further north of this paper's study area. There, Walz unearthed evidence indicative of the incorporation of the inland settlements into the trade networks linking them with the coast from as early as the end of the first millennium AD.

Scholars have already noted that East African consumers were fairly selective of imports during the nineteenth century (Prestholdt, 2004; Croucher, 2011). Our research is among the first to provide archaeological testimony to this end. While there were many glass beads at the studied sites in Lower Pangani, for example, they were extremely scarce in other 19th century sites such as Kwa Fungo in Muheza (Lane, 1992, 2011), Mgoli in Pemba (Croucher, 2006), and at Mang'ua and Kikole in southern Tanzania (Mapunda, 2004; Katto, 2016). The opposite is true for mass-produced European ceramics (Katto, 2016).

Two important points emerge from the observed pattern of imports at the studied settlements. First, the observed trend suggests that it was not always the case that local communities' preference for imports increased as they were steadily drawn into the new global exchange network. Second, the differences in the imported material types found in different sites signify the degree to which local peoples' voices were being heard within the large international trade network (Biginagwa, 2014). The presence of particular items at these sites say more about what the locals wanted to acquire rather than what was being brought to them for exchange (Prestholdt, 2004). In other words, one could argue that local consumers were not simply passive receivers of 'trinkets', but consumed particular commodities that were compatible with pre-existing cultural logic (Croucher & Weiss, 2011; Chirikure, 2014; Moffet & Chirikure, 2016). Thus, the preferences of East Africans were important in shaping the globalisation of trade systems during the nineteenth century by determining the items of trade in the system.

Biginagwa's (2012) ethnographic study on the use of glass beads by contemporary Zigua inhabiting Lower Pangani may help to interpret the archaeological pattern described above. Biginagwa found that, among the Zigua, beads are primarily worn, especially by women, as decoration, often in a mixture of different colours. They are worn around the neck in strings, or in bands around the hands and feet, and even as an open sided cloak. Special beads are worn at specific times and only by married women. These

beads, often red in colour, are threaded onto a piece of string and worn by women during their menses to inform their husband that they are in their cycle, and so are unable to make love. These beads are worn slightly above the umbilicus (the area called by the Zigua '*bumbunya'*). Immediately after the menstrual period ends, the women replace the red beads with different beads, often wearing more than one string and of different colours. These are worn around the waist to sexually attract their husbands and stimulate them during sex.

White beads ('*usalu ung'aile*') are used for various purposes (Biginagwa, 2012). Children are dressed in white beads for protection in various stages of their growth. If a child takes too long to sit up on own, a string of white beads and traditional medicine are tied around the waist. The child is made to wear the white beads on the feet if the development in mobility is limited, and around the neck if the neck muscles delay to stabilise. In general, white beads are believed to help protect children from being accessible by witches who could harm their growth. Thus, the positive cultural association of white and red beads among the contemporary Zigua may account for their popularity and dominance in the archaeological assemblages from the studied settlements in Lower Pangani.

The general lack of popularity of imported ceramics, especially in Lower Pangani, tells that these items did not penetrate the logic dominated by local pottery. It would be too simplistic to argue that imported ceramics were perhaps more expensive than glass beads, for example. It rather makes sense to argue that the Zigua of Lower Pangani accepted only what fitted their cultural logic. Imported ceramics were not their most desirable commodities. Such ceramics, for example, could not be useful in brewing beer for the ancestors, in rainmaking ceremonies, and other cultural events at the heart of Zigua communities. The imported ceramics were then more of a token than anything much to these communities. Had they acceptance, they would be abundant as they were in several other East African coastal Swahili settlements (Biginagwa, 2015).

Finally, a note on the 'prestige goods model' in relation to the argument that imported items were highly valued by East Africans during the nineteenth century. As Smith (1999: 113) points out, prestige goods in archaeological contexts are identified through the "… evaluation of their scarcity at a site, or a region, and/or the distance to a source of supply." The context of their deposition is also crucial for archaeological interpretation, for prestige objects are often found in contexts that suggest that the people there had a high status (Ames, 2007). It is clear that the distribution, use, and deposition of these items, notably glass beads, in the studied sites indicate the incompatibility of the artefacts with the inherent culture; and therefore incompatible with the pattern suggested by the prestige goods model.

We argue that if glass beads, which were the common import in all studied settlements, were 'prestige goods', one would expect to find them in large quantities in the Arab ('elites') settlements of Mang'ua and Kikole than in the commoners' settlements of Ngombezi, Old Korogwe and Maurui. Instead, the opposite is true. Furthermore, the depositional pattern of glass beads at Ngombezi, Old Korogwe and Maurui indicates that the use of glass beads

evolved from the use of locally made shell beads. Thus, the distinction between local and foreign beads obscures the local significance of glass beads, which were adopted into existing cultural frameworks described above (Thomas, 1991; Stahl, 2010).

Africanist scholars who have criticized the 'prestige goods' model (Chanaiwa, 1972; Mudenge, 1988; Wynne-Jones, 2010; Chirikure, 2014) have argued that people with wealth and knowledge, the ancestors, religion, lineage and individual entrepreneurship, among others, formed the basis of prestige and power in most pre-colonial African societies; and not 'exotic goods'. In a study in Ujiji (the caravan terminus on Lake Tanganyika) and Uvinza (a nearby salt production site) settlements along the central caravan route, Wynne-Jones (2010) found that power was chiefly based on the control over salt production, including the ritual significance of the Uvinza salt works, and not access to imported goods.

7. Conclusion

This paper has revealed the risk of producing misconstrued histories when historical research is predominantly driven by documents. We have shown how previous historians of the East African caravan trade generalised and exaggerated some impacts of this trade on local communities with the narratives of 'transformation'. We concur with Wynne-Jones (2010) that the impacts of caravan trade should not be generalised across space and time; instead, a thorough assessment should consider socio-cultural and ecological parameters given that the operations of the trade in the wider East African region were diverse.

A misconstrued history is risky because it can mislead us in understanding our identity as products of our past and present. This can contribute significantly to the erosion of our own confidence and before others. Additionally, misconstrued history can trigger social disruptions. Rhodes (2018), for instance, discusses how the nineteenth century European accounts left ideological traces that structure how slavery is misrepresented in Zanzibar and the consequence of it to date. In those accounts (e.g., Burton, 1872), slavery is presented as a simple story wherein indigenous African communities were exploited by merchants from the Arabian Peninsula. Rhodes notes that such narrative was useful to Europeans' colonial ambitions as it set the foundation for an image of European mission designed to rescue an exploited continent from Muslims. Meanwhile, research continues to reveal that Muslims were not the only foreign group involved in slavery in East Africa (Lane. 2011). Records indicate that slaves supported the Madagascar plantation economy of colonial France. The Portuguese also enslaved Africans during their colonial control of the Swahili Coast in the fifteenth through seventeenth century (Freeman-Grenville, 1962: 162).

Rhodes (2018) observes that the zonation of urban environs (*mitaa*) in Zanzibar today is based on social divisions that were erroneously depicted by Burton (1872). Burton ascribed the Stone Town to Arab elites (slave masters) and wattle-and-daub settlements located in Ng'ambo to slaves and 'indigenous people'. Burton's zonation scheme is substantially flawed and contradicts observations by other travellers on the island, e.g., Christie (1876) who reported the cohabitation of slaves and masters in several settings both in Stone Town and Ng'ambo. Despite the contradiction, Burton's description became the colonial gold standard for defining Zanzibar, and persists to this day in the form of the UNESCO designation of the Stone Town World Heritage Site.

The consequences of the misrepresentation of slavery in Zanzibar still resonate. For example, Glassman (2010) notes that the ruling Revolutionary Party (the successor of the Afro-Shirazi Party) perpetuates the narrative of a racial community with a shared history of oppression under Arab exploitation. On the contrary, the narrative developed by the Arab-centric wing promotes the historiography of the civilizing Arab influence, the significant facet being the introduction of monotheist Islam. This ideological legacy, according to Rhodes (2018), allows claimants to either African or Arab heritage to justify (often violently) political activity as the right and inevitable result of slavery.

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