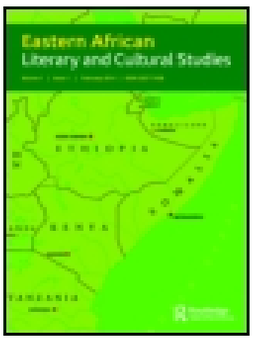

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Mozambique Island, Cabaceira Pequena and the Wider Swahili World: An Archaeological Perspective

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ABSTRACT

When the Portuguese reached Mozambique Island at the end of the fifteenth century, they encountered a populated coast of diverse communities integrated within a wider Swahili world. Swahili society was in its fundamental nature cosmopolitan, and incorporated arts, cultures, peoples, and beliefs from Africa, India, the Middle East, and the Far East. Although Swahili archaeology is well established in Tanzania and Kenya, there is still little understood about northern Mozambique and its role in the Swahili world. This paper presents preliminary results from recent excavations on the northern coast of Mozambique, as well as interpretations from known archaeological sites, to better assess the nature of Swahili society on the northern Mozambican coast at the time of Portuguese first contact. This paper also raises questions about the nature of Swahili culture in northern Mozambique and its construction of a maritime cultural landscape centred around oceanic connection in the Indian Ocean Trade Network.

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Introduction

The Swahili Coast was a collection of independent polities that stretched across a large portion of the East African Coast. From about 800 CE to the early modern period, the people and cultures of the littoral zones of East Africa have been interlinked in a vast exchange network of commerce, ideas, and religion (Kusimba 1999; Horton and Middleton 2000). These independent polities developed strong commercial, religious, and cultural ties with local, regional, and inter-continental entities (Horton 1987). Swahili society was cosmopolitan and incorporated elements of the art, language, and peoples of other cultures and continents. Swahili elites and religious leaders sought knowledge and religious understanding from various sources from across the Indian Ocean Trade Network (IOTN) (LaViolette 2008; Wynne-Jones and LaViolette 2017). Dependent on the seas, the winds, and the stars, these interconnected polities flourished within the Indian Ocean world.

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Proto-Swahilis of the first millennia CE were not necessarily a 'maritime' society (Fleisher et al. 2015). Rather, the oceanic connections and traditions we associate with the coast today were specific transformations that developed as sailing technologies improved and connections across the Indian Ocean intensified, particularly with the spread of Islam. Characteristics that are recognisable parts of Swahili society today are a product of many centuries of cultural transformations on the coast which over time reoriented coastal societies towards the sea. This maritime orientation was the consequence of many years of social, cultural, and ideological change that took place along the littoral zone of East Africa (Fleisher et al. 2015; Ichumbaki 2017).

The southern zone of the Swahili coast has received less scholarly attention compared to its northern counterparts, particularly on the Mozambican coast (Sinclair et al. 1993; Sinclair 1991). Despite this, there are a number of important sites that have contributed to our understanding of the wider Swahili world. On the Cabo Delgado and Nampula coast, some sites included Swahili settlements such as Angoche, Mozambique Island, the Quirimba Islands, and Somana. Even as far south as Sofala and Chibuene, important coastal trade centres mediated between continental Africa and the wider Indian Ocean world (Sinclair, Ekblom, and Wood 2012; Ekblom et al. 2014). But there are uncertainties regarding the origins, identity, and relationship these coastal groups on the Mozambican coast had with the rest of the Swahili world. It is becoming increasingly clear that communities along the Nampula and Cabo Delgado coast had a different historical trajectory compared to their northern contemporaries.

Archaeologists and anthropologists have attempted to described and theorise maritime cultures, along with the merit of using identifiable attributes within, what some have termed the maritime cultural landscape (Westerdahl 1992). The characteristics outlined by Westerdahl have recently been applied to the East African Coast, as scholars now debate the origins of Swahili maritime society (Fleisher et al. 2015; Kusimba and Walz 2018). In the following pages, I attempt to use new and established archaeological evidence to address the current thinking about the northern Mozambique coast and its relationship to the sea. In 2019, I conducted a series of excavations at Cabaceira Pequena, a small community directly north of historic Mozambique Island, at an archaeological site recorded as CP-2. Evidence recorded from this site will be used to construct a similar framework for understanding Swahili maritime transformations as previously defined by Fleisher et al. 2015.

This paper seeks to show that although the Swahili coast was a cohesive amalgamation of independent polities, at the same time Swahili society was a diverse set of different communities that followed unique historical trajectories. By presenting the preliminary results and interpretations of recent excavations on the Nampula coast, this paper assesses Cabaceira Pequena's relationship with the rest of the Swahili world at the time of Portuguese arrival in the late fifteenth century. The evidence presently suggests that by the time of Portuguese arrival

at Mozambique Island, Cabaceira Pequana was a coastal community with a maritime cultural landscape, but it did not follow the same historical trajectory as its northern counterparts. This will lead to a discussion regarding the development of a maritime society on the southern Swahili coast, specifically in northern Mozambique, and will address the ideological transformations that were likely co-produced during this period of dramatic social change.

Swahili History and the Maritime Landscape

Many hallmarks of Swahili coast culture today are not representative of the dynamic history that has taken place on the East African coast. Archaeological and anthropological research in the last 30 years has provided new evidence for re-imagining the development of the Swahili Coast. Recognising the cultural-historical and political issues surrounding Swahili identity and history, many scholars have attempted to focus on questions surrounding Swahili origins and transformations over the past 2000 years (Horton and Middleton 2000; Wynne-Jones 2016; Horton 1987). Linguistic and archaeological research have reaffirmed certain aspects of Swahili history, while providing new insights and critiques on other, sometimes politicized Swahili narratives.

The use of Swahili as an ethnic category is a somewhat recent phenomenon. Swahili history has been subject to constant re-interpretation and has been influenced by a wide variety of historical and socio-political forces (Chami 1998; Horton and Middleton 2000). These forces include contemporary government policies that at times emphasise African indigeneity as a means for national unification. In reality, many aspects of Swahili society that today represent the coast are in fact cultural attributes from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For example, like in many parts of Africa, the strict socio-ethnic categories that exist today are a product of the relatively recent cultural historical events, including, but not limited to, the codification of ethnic and racial categories by colonial officials (Ray 2018, 70). In fact, until recently, many coastal communities would identify themselves based on city of origin or current residence, rather than a singular ethnicity (Nurse and Spear 1985).

There have been attempts to periodise Swahili history, in accordance with larger trends that took place along the east African coast. According to Kusimba, the Swahili chronology can be divided into four major periods, beginning with early Bantu-speaking agricultural communities from 100 BCE to 300–1000 CE, followed by a period of consolidated growth between 1000 and 1500 CE, and finally from 1500 to 1950 (Kusimba 1999). Other studies — looking from a more historical than archaeological perspective — break up Swahili chronology into three main phases. These studies start much later than Kusimba's with an initial phase beginning only at 800–1100 CE, a developmental phase between 1100–1300, and a golden age from 1300-1600 (Sinclair and Hakansson 2000). Both of these chronologies emphasise important shifts in Swahili society at the

beginning of the second millennium CE, which include the first examples of coral stone architecture along the coast, coinciding with the spread of Islam.

From 1000 CE to the present, Swahili society underwent important cultural transformations; this included the decline of older coastal centres, such as Chibuene on the southern coast of Mozambique and the rise of new polities such as Kilwa in southern Tanzania (Sinclair, Ekblom, and Wood 2012; Fleisher et al. 2015). The advent of deep-sea fishing, long-distance voyages, an increase in the number of ports along the coast, and new architectural practices — such as the construction of buildings in the vicinity of the sea — are some of the defining historical and archaeological characteristics that became common along the coast after 1000 CE (LaViolette and Fleisher 2009; Fleisher et al. 2015; M. Horton 1987). These changes along the coast could be interpreted as both transformations caused by an increase in trade and exchange activities throughout the Indian Ocean world, as well as changing ideology that reoriented Swahili civilisation to the sea.

Recent studies are now prompting renewed interest in re-examining the chronological history of the Swahili, specifically in regards to the coast and its everchanging relationship to the ocean (Fleisher et al. 2015; Spear 2000). Scholars from across different disciplines — including literature, history, archaeology, and environmental studies — are increasingly interested in understanding cultural diversity and evolution through a broader study of landscape. Tim Ingold has defined landscape in what it is *not* (1993, 153). He writes that this concept is ' … not "land", it is not "nature", and it is not "space" … ' but rather that landscape should be thought of as simply, 'the world as it is known to those who dwell therein' (Ingold 1993, 156). Although a simple idea, a broader understanding of landscape has allowed archaeologists to better theorise human relationships with past environments.

Within the same theoretical framework, Westerdahl has applied the concept of landscape to past societies which have been characterised by their special relationship with the ocean (2011). These seafaring cultures are said to have possessed maritime cultural landscapes. It should be noted that living on a coast or shoreline does not automatically make a culture or group a maritime society. For Westerdahl (1992, 5), a maritime cultural landscape is nominally defined by a society possessing a combination of the following: (1) human utilisation of maritime space by boat; (2) a tradition of using sea and its resources; (3) terrestrial features and infrastructure for the support of seaborne practices; (4) the naming of topography with reference to the sea; and (5) attention to the sea in sailing routes, shipping zones, oral traditions, and ritual practices.

In Fleisher et al., the authors, applying Westerdahl's framework, consider a culture to be 'maritime; if, beyond providing resources and facilitating trade and communication, the marine environment influences and is influenced by broader patterns of socio-cultural organisation, practice, and belief within the society' (Fleisher et al. 2015, 101). To emphasise the importance of thinking

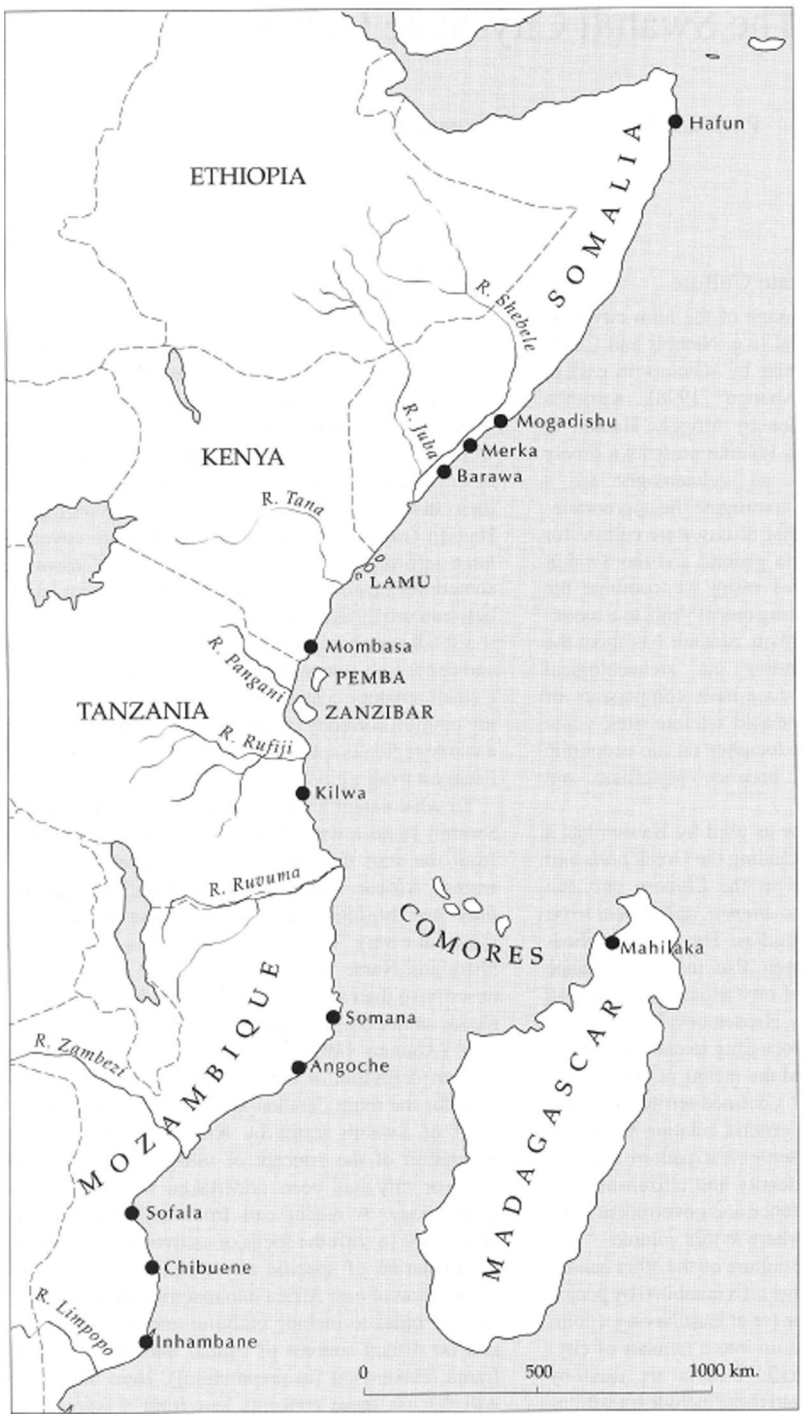

Figure 1. Map of Swahili Coast. From Sinclair and Hakansson 2000.

oceanically I emphasise that at an ontological level, a maritime society is one that recognises the sea and ocean as a kind of cosmological pillar that supports vast array of histories ideologies, networks, and landscapes (Westerdahl 2005).

Numerous ethnographic studies emphasise that in maritime societies the sea plays a fundamental role not only in communication and economy but also in social organisation and ideology (Conte 2008; D'Arcy 2006; Breen and Lane 2003). More simply put, the ocean is a central entity in society — an active agent that gives and takes like other actors within the cultural landscape.

These maritime transformations are not universally clear throughout the coast, especially on the southern end. Current research suggests that these socio-cultural transformations may have taken place, but closer to the middle of the second millennia (Pawlowicz 2013; Sinclair 1991; Sinclair et al. 1993; Madiquida 2007; De Torres Rodríguez et al. 2016). Although the northern Mozambican coast had contact with other locations in the region, evidenced by the presence of Early Tana Tradition ceramics at Chibuene (Fleisher and Wynne-Jones 2011), the adoption of many aspects of recognisable Swahili culture and many of the hallmarks of a fully integrated maritime society, as defined previously, developed later.

Northern Mozambique and the Swahili World

Archaeological excavations in Mozambique and southern Tanzania indicate that coastal peoples at the southern zone of the coast slowly adopted aspects of a Swahili culture, language, and the Islamic faith from the fifteenth century onward (Madiquida 2007; Duarte 1993; Sinclair 1991; Pawlowicz 2013). It is also worth noting that in northern Mozambique, although many communities share similar practices and ideologies with the rest of the Swahili coast, they do not consider or call themselves Swahili, nor do they speak Kiswahili; an early indication of the diversity that would have been encountered within the Swahili world at the time of Portuguese arrival.

Northern Mozambique has been a recognised part of the Swahili world since the earliest days of Swahili historiographies and a number of different sites make up a small corpus which scholars can now reference (Morais 1984; Sinclair 1991). The southern end of the Swahili coast has also been subject to the longest contact with Europeans, and in the case of Mozambique Island, colonisation begins roughly around the time of Portuguese arrival (Disney 2009; Greenlee, Velho, and da Costa 1942). Once more, archaeology in this region has lagged behind its northern neighbours, yet there is a renewed interest and necessity to understand the Swahili phenomena from outside Kenya and Tanzania. Archaeological sites like Somana, Foz do Lurio, Lumbo and Sancul, and now Cabaceira Pequena and Quirimba Islands, on the northern coast of Mozambique have provided most of the information regarding the later Iron Age in this region, while Adomovicz's work in Nampula is still the primary source for both late Stone Age and Early Iron Age sequences. These chronologies are based on the stylistic variations of ceramic material through time.

Early Iron Age sites from Nampula province are subdivided into two major temporal-stylistic groupings: Nampula tradition towards the interior sites of the

province, and Monapo tradition along the coast (Adamowicz 1985). Both of these ceramic styles replaced earlier pottery styles that had affinities with Kwale tradition in Tanzania and Kenya (Sinclair et al. 1993; Pawlowicz 2013). Later Iron Age sites along the coast have also been characterised by two main traditions. The Lumbo Tradition, dated to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, has been found on both the coast and interior (Sinclair 1991). The Sancul tradition in northern Mozambique has been dated to the later sixteenth century, but according to Sinclair evidence for Sancul style stretches 'from more than twenty newly reported sites dated at the mouth of the River Lurio to the twelfth century, at the Armazia site to the seventeenth century and at Muhecani to less than 250 years ago' (Sinclair 1991, 189).

Sancul style pottery is characterised by red-painted open bowls and wheel-thrown ceramics. The characteristic decorative motifs of these ceramics are raised appliqué decorations as well as a variety of incised and impressed motifs (Madiquida 2007). These ceramic chronologies are still not universally accepted (Sinclair et al. 1993) and can be insensitive to internal variability within ceramic styles. A more nuanced approach to ceramic typology will likely be required to better understand changes in ceramic style and motif over time in northern Mozambique.

At Angoche, which lies south of Mozambique Island, recent research has indicated strong ties with the IOTN, and archaeological survey has confirmed a longer term Swahili occupation (Pollard, Duarte, and Duarte 2018). Further research will be required to better grasp the origins and development of this precolonial community at Angoche. To the north of Nacala, the Somana archaeological site is the clearest example of Swahili style architecture south of Kilwa (Duarte 1993). Somana is a small islet off the coast of the mainland, and its ruins may be the oldest example of Swahili stone architecture in Mozambique. This Swahili monument was previously excavated in the 1980s by Ricardo Duarte, but his excavations were limited to the islet alone (limitations due to war-time Mozambique made excavating on the mainland almost impossible). Although short in duration, his excavations did find locally produced ceramics, along with some imported goods (Duarte 1993). Somana could provide more insights regarding these maritime transformations in northern Mozambique, but renewed excavations are necessary to reassess the nature of this site's occupation and eventual decline.

Mozambique Island, along with neighbouring Cabaceira Pequena, have long occupational histories both from the precolonial and colonial periods. Mozambique Island served as capital of Portuguese East Africa until the early twentieth century. Before the Portuguese, Mozambique Island's occupation is still debated, although recent archaeological evidence (Duarte, forthcoming) has shed more light on the subject. It is likely that the island had intermittent populations throughout certain times of the year for fishermen; perhaps it was even a meeting point for mainlanders living on opposite end of Mussoril Bay.

Figure 2. Map of Mozambique Island and Cabaceira Pequena. CP-2 is located to the north of Mozambique Island. Image from Google Earth.

Archaeological evidence recorded from these recent projects have found locally produced ceramic styles definitively linking the mainland to the island.

Cabaceira Pequena, a peninsula that lies north of Mozambique Island, is home to a small community of Makhuwa-speaking people, some descendants of long-time residents, but also now including many displaced peoples that settled during the recent Mozambican Civil War (1977–1992). Historically, it was also an integral part of the Portuguese colonial apparatus alongside Mozambique Island, which served as both port and capital of Portuguese East Africa. After the colonial capital was transferred to Lourenço Marques (modern-day Maputo) at the end of the nineteenth century, and with the eventual growth of Nacala Bay into the main port in the North during the middle of the twentieth century, Cabaceira Pequena, along with Mozambique Island, became a periphery in the colonial, and later postcolonial, world.

The Cabaceira Pequena archaeological site was first recorded in the summer of 2018 after pedestrian survey revealed that archaeological material was scattered through much of the western half of the entire Cabaceira Pequena peninsula. At least seven sites were recorded, but more research is necessary to better define the extent of precolonial occupation on the peninsula. Local inhabitants report stone houses slowly being torn down for building material, with coral stone from colonial ruins being used as foundations for their homes. It seems reasonable to assume that if there were multiple precolonial structures, their ruins would have been used for new buildings.

At the outskirts of the village, one coral stone structure is still standing, and was identified in a July 2018 survey; the house and surrounding areas were named CP-2. From October to November of 2018, a small excavation took place around CP-2

Figure 3. Front facade of ruined stone house at CP-2.

to better date the ruins and surrounding areas. After eight weeks, excavations uncovered a sequence of extensive, but shallow, deposits of archaeological material. The area excavated at CP-2 represents a very small portion of the precolonial and subsequent colonial period occupations of Cabaceira Pequena. Included in the material recorded at the site were locally made and imported ceramics, glass beads, nails, shells, and large quantities of coral stone debris and residue, likely used to make *cal-lime* plaster. Although we have yet to excavate the area inside the house, I think it is safe to assume that based on the architectural style of the coral stone structure and the material excavated around CP-2, the occupation of the site is contemporaneous with, if not earlier than, the original construction of the edifice.

In total, 29 1 × 1-metre test units were excavated at CP-2, in two separate operations. Operation 1 was closest to the house, while Operation 2 was conducted about 15 metres to the north-west of the abandoned structure. Archaeological deposits and middens were shallow, with the majority of archaeological material being present between 0-50 cm of most excavation units. The stratigraphic sequence of CP-2 was relatively simple with only one major occupation layer, characterised by high concentration of archaeological material, followed by a sandy stratum in the lower strata where archaeological material was mostly absent. Later European porcelains found in the upper strata of the site also suggest that the area was occupied well into the later nineteenth century. Although charcoal samples were collected, they have yet to be submitted for C^{14} dating, but the date range for CP-2 can be established through comparative ceramics analysis.

The overwhelming majority of the decorated local ceramics collected at CP-2 correspond with what some archaeologist have described as Swahili tradition or Sancul tradition (P. Sinclair 1986). At CP-2 over 7,000 ceramic and porcelain sherds were recovered and recorded, the overwhelming majority being small undecorated body sherds. All collected ceramics were weighed and counted, and undecorated body sherds were redeposited at the end of the excavation. Most of the locally produced decorated ceramics consist of general crosshatching motifs on the necks and shoulders of open bowls, and red-painted open bowls. Many of these decorative motifs also shared affinities with ceramics found at Kilwa-Kiwasani including fifteenth century wheeled ware bowls (see Wynne-Jones 2016, 153).

Sancul style pottery dominated CP-2's assemblage, characterised by red-painted open bowls (Figure 5) alongside well fired wheeled-ware, Kilwa molded-ware, and blue-and-white Chinese porcelain. As an assemblage, the evidence suggests that the major occupation period of the site likely began towards the middle part of the second millennium (fifteenth to seventeenth centuries) and continued into the nineteenth century. Other objects that were common at CP-2 included imported luxury items, such as Chinese porcelains, glass beads, and ceramics that were produced in other regions along the Swahili coast. The overwhelming majority of imported porcelain from CP-2 was identified as blue-on-white, characteristic of phase IV period porcelains, as described by Zhao and Qin (2018).

The presence of highly prized imported Chinese porcelain, appearing stratigraphically alongside locally produced ceramic styles, is an indicator of the presence of a well-connected, precolonial Swahili settlement at CP-2 (Duarte 1993). The historical record indicates that when Vasco de Gama landed on Mozambique Island

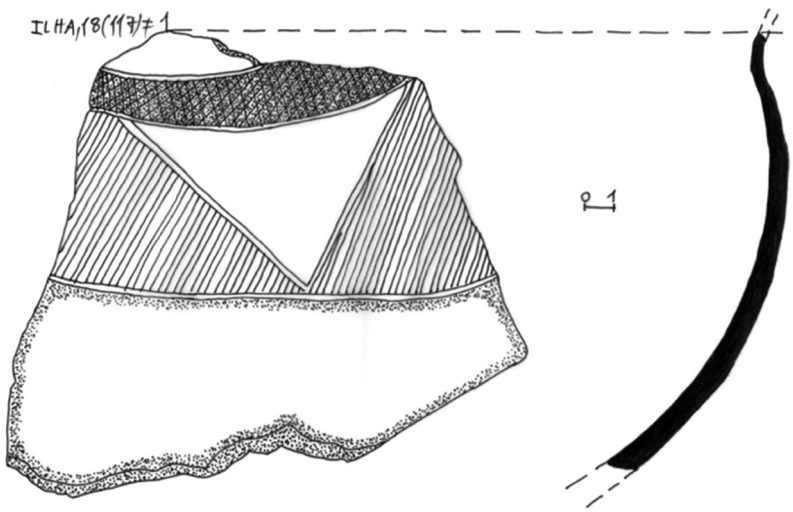

Figure 4. Sancul-style pottery; also, sometimes called Swahili-ware. Drawing by Crimildo Chambe.

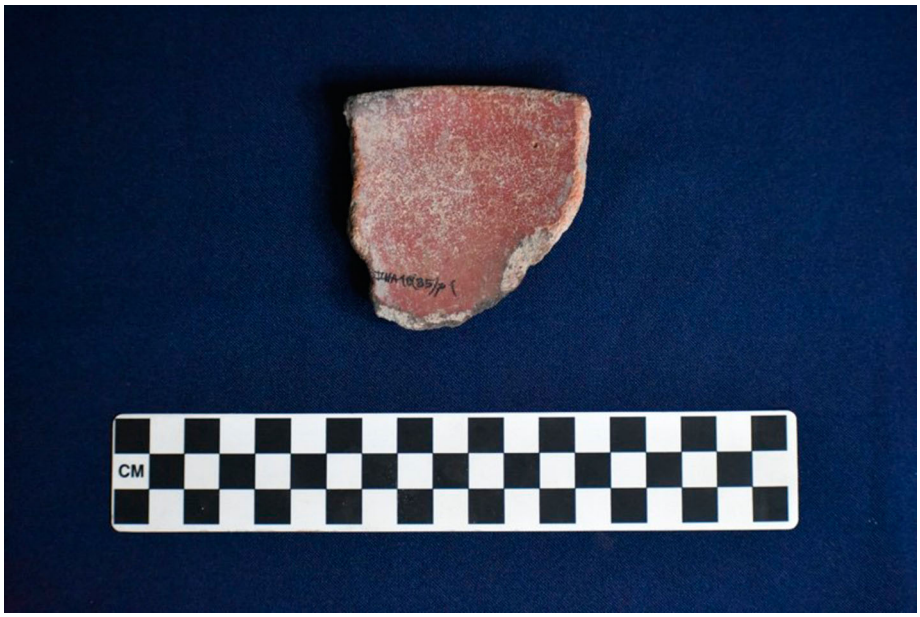

Figure 5. Red-painted open bowl, characteristic of Sancul-style, or sometimes called Swahili-ware.

in 1498, the major populations centres were on the continent (Disney 2009; Greenlee, Velho, and da Costa 1942). Now, the archaeological evidence suggests that the world de Gama encountered was teeming with activity and long-distance, foreign trade — both by land and sea. Once more, the excavations as CP-2 from this field work indicate that the inhabitants of Cabaceira Pequena were participating in what scholars have recently theorised as a Swahili maritime society (see Fleisher et al. 2015).

We can compare Westerdahl's criteria for a maritime society to what was found at CP-2. First, the Swahili style stone house at CP-2 is located less than 20 metres from the shoreline, with at least two cycles of high and low tide every 24 hours. This would have made an ideal place for careening ships to load and unload cargo, or to make repairs if needed. Second, the appearance of highly prized imports and regionally traded commodities are signs of the rich maritime trade that began at CP-2 during the latter half of the fifteenth century. The location of the ruins, along with archaeological material present around the house, indicate that the occupants of CP-2 were utilising the ocean for trade and exchange by boat. The presence of shell middens and coral stone deposits also indicate that CP-2 villagers relied heavily on marine resources for everyday economic activities.

The coral stone edifice that still stands at CP-2 is an important indication that inhabitants were thinking within an oceanic framework. It seems obvious that a coastal community might build their permanent architecture near the sea; the ocean serves as a resource for food, materials, and transportation. But the amount of oceanic activity happening at CP-2 in the fifteenth century onwards, coupled with the increasingly active role that foreign commodities played

within many east African societies, points to a new ideology that perhaps prioritised a maritime cultural landscape. However, this is not to say that hinterland connections diminished; more research is required to better understand the relationship between both cultural landscapes — land and sea.

Discussion

Regionally, Cabaceria Pequena appears to follow common trends already noted by some archaeologists. For example, looking north to southern Tanzania, Pawlowicz's work at Mikindani has provided evidence for overall southern regionalisation at the beginning of the second millennium, followed by a period of 're-integration' by the second half of the fifteenth century. Inhabitants at Mikindani developed a new local style of ceramics that diverged from broad trends in the northern coast; these styles are similar to the Lumbo tradition found in northern Mozambique (Pawlowicz 2013). By the middle of the second millennium, inhabitants of Mikindani were producing and utilising pottery with many affinities to Swahili-ware, which also shares similarities with Sancul style pottery found at CP-2. This has called into question the nature of a singular Swahili identity, and has emphasised the need to considered multiple historical trajectories along the coast (Pawlowicz 2012; Madiquida 2015).

These stark stylistic and chronological similarities between northern Mozambique and southern Tanzania suggest the need for a more regionalised approach to understanding cultural transformations, specifically with regards to the development of a maritime culture. Long-distance maritime connections, and the intensification of activities within the IOTN during the middle part of the second millennium at sites like Cabaceira Pequena — evidenced by the presence of imported prestige items — are indicative of transformations that reoriented Cabaceira's inhabitants towards the sea.

That being said, there is still disagreement regarding these Swahili maritime transformations, and their root causes. Kusimba and Walz have critiqued the lack of evidence regarding the 'nonmaritime' components of the Swahili landscape, specifically arguing that scholars have tended to ignore evidence from the hinterland (2018, 430). At times, it does seem that when prioritising a maritime landscape approach to the past, there is a risk of minimising the role that Swahili polities played as mediators between the Indian Ocean world, and the interior of the continent. In the case of Mozambique, little work has focused on the relationship between communities of the interior and the communities on the coast, which makes it difficult to fully encapsulate the diverse mosaic of Swahili identities (Kusimba and Kusimba 2005).

On the other hand, the case could be made that within a mosaic of cultural variations, even within a single group or polity, decisions were made by certain groups or peoples to prioritise an oceanic worldview over more traditional landscapes. This is most evident when communities chose to construct new buildings

in coastal areas such as the Swahili-style architecture encountered on the Mozambican coast (De Torres Rodríguez et al. 2016; Madiquida 2007; Duarte 1993; Pollard, Duarte, and Duarte 2018); examples of which appear to have been built as recently as the eighteenth century. More to the point, I would argue that whatever the circumstances of a novel maritime landscape, those communities living around Mussoril Bay, likely re-imagined a new cosmology that fundamentally changed their relationship with the sea.

This social reorientation was partially driven by the importation of prestige objects at Swahili stone towns, which became a fundamental aspect of Swahili cosmopolitanism (LaViolette 2008; Wynne-Jones 2016) and can provide insights regarding shifting Swahili cosmologies. Scholars have increasingly shown the active role that objects play within cultures at any given place or time (Marx 1977; Appadurai 1988; Latour 1996). Moreover, this active role of objects within Swahili society can shed light on how new relationships with distant lands, peoples, and objects redefined social relationships over time. Helm's (1993) work on long-distance trade and its effect on cosmology and society can shed light on our Swahili context. The collection or control of prestige objects in society can act as a catalyst for social transformations, as only certain individuals would have had access to these prestige objects. It also can lead into discussions regarding inequalities on the coast (Constantin 1989), and further an understanding of how coastal communities on the coast defined themselves — whether in opposition to groups in the hinterland or in coordination with other groups along the coast.

Those community members who could travel great distances, or employ subordinates to travel for them, were likely most successful when they employed specialized knowledge or relationships with world and other-worldly entities (Helms 1993, 107). For example, not all inhabitants at Cabaceira Pequena would have had access to, or participated in, long-distance trade. Those that could, participated in long-distance exchange and acquired valuable objects, which in turn justified their privileged status through the objects themselves. Moreover, the production of a maritime Swahili cosmos was linked both to the *ability of* and *capacity for* acquiring prestige objects from abroad, along with the reshaping of social roles and beliefs along the coast.

Stories, myths, traditions, and histories were reproduced and framed within the context of an animated coastal environment, as demonstrated by the advent of deep-sea fishing and long-distance travel (Fleisher et al. 2015). Besides the use of the ocean as a highway for goods and ideas, the ocean provided a wide variety of food, material for construction, and was ideologically central to Swahili beliefs in northern Mozambique. Prestige objects, like imported porcelains or glass beads, would have become central components of social life at Cabaceira Pequena. Like other Swahili polities along the coast, residents of CP-2 would have utilised these highly prized ceramics in feasting rituals, public ceremonies, burials, and offerings (Fleisher 2010). Highly prized objects would have been prominently

displayed in mosques and stone houses of the elite and the edifice that still stand at CP-2 does include a niche, although not as elaborate. This is characteristic of Swahili stone houses, where valuable items would have been placed over many generations (Wynne-Jones 2016).

Again, the advent of a new maritime landscape in northern Mozambique followed a different trajectory compared to polities towards the north of the Swahili coast, and perhaps under a different set of circumstances. There are explanations for why these transformations were slower to take place in the southern end of the Swahili coast; perhaps for many centuries this region was more focused on developing connections with traders and groups in the interior (Pawlowicz 2012). Predominant economic activities such as extracting gold and ivory from areas within the continent may slowly have shifted towards more oceanic activities as naval technology improved, and trade along the coastal intensified. But more research is necessary to better understand these differences. More specifically, in this region of northern Mozambique, new research should actively question the hegemonic influence of a 'Swahili Civilization' and be careful to better define Swahili identity, and diversity.

These regionalised cultural shifts are also indicative of the diversity of Swahili coast society and identity. Although I would agree that the coast was a cohesive mosaic of peoples and groups with similar cultural values and practices, like Islam and interest in long-distance trade, this does not mean they were one hegemonic group or cultural unit. The Swahili coast was realistically composed of competing factions, clans, or lineages, which dominated respective polities at different periods of time. At Cabaceira Pequena for example, inhabitants likely spoke a number of different languages, among them Swahili, Proto-Makhuwa, and Arabic. As mentioned before, a singular Swahili identity is a very recent construction of the nineteenth century, and does not represent the diversity of peoples and languages that made up the tapestry of cultures we recognise as Swahili today. Moreover, Swahili society likely carried a tension between regionalism and social cohesion which played out in inter-site and intra-site customs, practices, and worldviews.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to demonstrate that Swahili culture, and specifically the Swahili culture of the northern Mozambique coast, underwent certain transformations related to their development into a maritime society. A recent focus on maritime archaeology and maritime cultural landscapes has offered scholars from across different disciplines new perspectives regarding the interaction between human cultures and the seas. Important papers, including Fleisher et al. 2015 have provided frameworks for detecting and theorising the transformations of maritime societies on the Swahili coast. This framework, provides space for further discussion regarding the ideological and ontological shifts associated with social transformations much like the one that took place along this coast.

The central ontologies of coastal East Africa should be considered in the broadest terms for classifying the Swahili. These shared beliefs and practices are what made the coast a cohesive collection of different groups that spread across thousands of kilometres of East Africa's coastline. These long-distant maritime connections, and the intensification of activities linked to the oceans, are indicators of transformations that reoriented Cabaceira Pequena towards the sea. The archaeological evidence collected at Cabaceira demonstrates, like other areas of the Swahili coast, the ocean became an ontological mainstay, and those that could successfully interact with the ocean likely gained status and prestige (Westerdahl 2005).

We can imagine that these ideological transformations produced a cohesive maritime cultural landscape with the ocean at the centre. This new ocean-centeredness likely included a reorganised cosmography that balanced the location of important superordinate centres from around the Indian Ocean world with other ideologies and beliefs. In the simplest sense, the ocean played a key role in driving the economic success of merchants and elites along the African coast, and created new links and partnership with cultures from across the Indian Ocean world. But in a wider sense, the ocean was a critical actor in the transformations of Swahili society and actively produced new histories, ideas, and connections between humans and sea.

Like the people on Mozambique Island today, the people of Cabaceira Pequena in the fifteenth century likely had a complex and interdependent relationship with the sea. As scholars continue to study the Swahili coast and its multiple histories, we must begin seriously to consider the ocean as an active agent in the Swahili maritime-cultural landscape, and understand the ocean's role as an ontological mainstay in a Swahili universe.

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