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Region: East Africa/Mozambique
Time Period: 15th – 19th centuries

The maritime cultural landscape at Cabaceira Pequena: reconsidering maritime archaeology on the Swahili Coast

Abstract –

In northern Mozambique, archaeological research has contributed to a deeper understanding of historic maritime connections and their influences on Swahili history and landscape. When considering several aspects of daily practice and the ontological principles of coastal peoples, scholars have argued that traditional views of 'landscape' must be seriously reconsidered at the water's edge. This paper reviews an ongoing debate in the literature surrounding Swahili maritimity and the emergence of maritime cultural landscapes in East Africa. This discussion will help frame the interpretations of recent archaeological evidence in Northern Mozambique while considering the *longue duree* of maritime practices on the Swahili coast.

The sea covers more than two-thirds of the total surface of the earth, and half of the global population lives within 50 miles of the seashore. Nevertheless, many histories and archaeologies remain continental in focus and landlocked for all intents and purposes. Human development is typically characterized by the interactions between humans and their environment, but that environment is interpreted very narrowly in terms of land. For example, human societies are categorized as hunter-gathers, forgetting fish trappers and beachcombers. We speak of pastoralists but fail to mention sea nomads or sailors. And we speak of cultivators, ignoring fishermen who likewise cultivate their marine environment (Sheriff 2015, 15).

On the Swahili coast (Figure 1), defining and exploring the maritime cultural landscape has served to nuance often overlooked human relations with the ocean (Breen and Lane 2003). Initially coined by Christer Westerdahl, maritime cultural landscape emerged from a need to conceptually unite the remnants of maritime culture encountered at sea and on land. By considering several aspects of daily practice and ontological principles of past and present coastal peoples, some scholars argue that the landscape must be seriously reconsidered at the water's edge (Westerdahl 2011; Tuddenham 2010; Breen et al. 2001). Maritime archaeology's close attention to the oceanic relationships that shaped coastal society has fostered a growing literature on maritimity, which refers to the level or degree a society, culture, or group engages with the sea or ocean (Westerdahl 1992).

But does living by the sea make a society maritime? This question has recently been a source of controversy among scholars of the Swahili coast. In a 2015 paper, Jeffery Fleisher and several co-authors consider criteria laid out by Westerdahl to address lingering chronological questions related to the emergence of the Swahili maritime cultural landscape. In considering Westerdahl's framework, the authors argue that although coastal East Africans engaged with the oceans in deep time, in practice, Swahili civilization should be considered "maritime" only after circa C.E. 1000 (2015, 101). Chap Kusimba and Jonathan Walz argue that this characterization of Swahili as a maritime society only reinforces an essentialized depiction of the coast that hides the numerous non-maritime characteristics of Swahili society. Despite efforts to unite land and sea, scholars' efforts have often reinforced the dichotomies between oceanic and terrestrial frames.

My archaeological research and observations in northern Mozambique have begun shaping a slightly new approach to the maritime cultural landscape. Several daily practices at Mozambique Island and Cabaceria Pequena emphasize the continuities between oceanic and terrestrial landscapes. These practices, like dhow construction, have deep histories in the Indian Ocean and have been largely subject to particular forces like the monsoon winds or the everyday flow of the tides. Here I argue that closer attention to contemporary practices on the Swahili coast will further our understanding of East Africa's maritime cultural landscape.

I begin by tracing the genealogy of the concept of maritimity in Swahili coast studies and maritime archaeology more broadly. This extended genealogy allows us to think more richly about spaces and practices that blur the land/sea binary. I then turn to a case study in northern Mozambique that allows us to see the possibilities of this blurring and its implications for thinking about maritime cultural landscapes. This paper will approach the maritime cultural landscape in northern Mozambique employing several different layers of data to consider the development of Swahili maritime society from the vantage point of an area often overlooked in Swahili coast studies.

Cabaceira Pequena, in northern Mozambique, is a peninsula north of Mozambique Island. In 2018, excavations uncovered archaeologically rich deposits surrounding a stone ruin dated to the 16th century. The emergence of various stone towns along the coast of southern Tanzania (Pawlowicz 2009) and northern Mozambique (Pollard, Duarte, and Duarte 2018; Oliveira 2020) 500 years after the initial rise of Swahili polities in Kenya and Tanzania suggests the possibility of better understanding the Swahili world and its diverse interactions with the maritime cultural landscape.
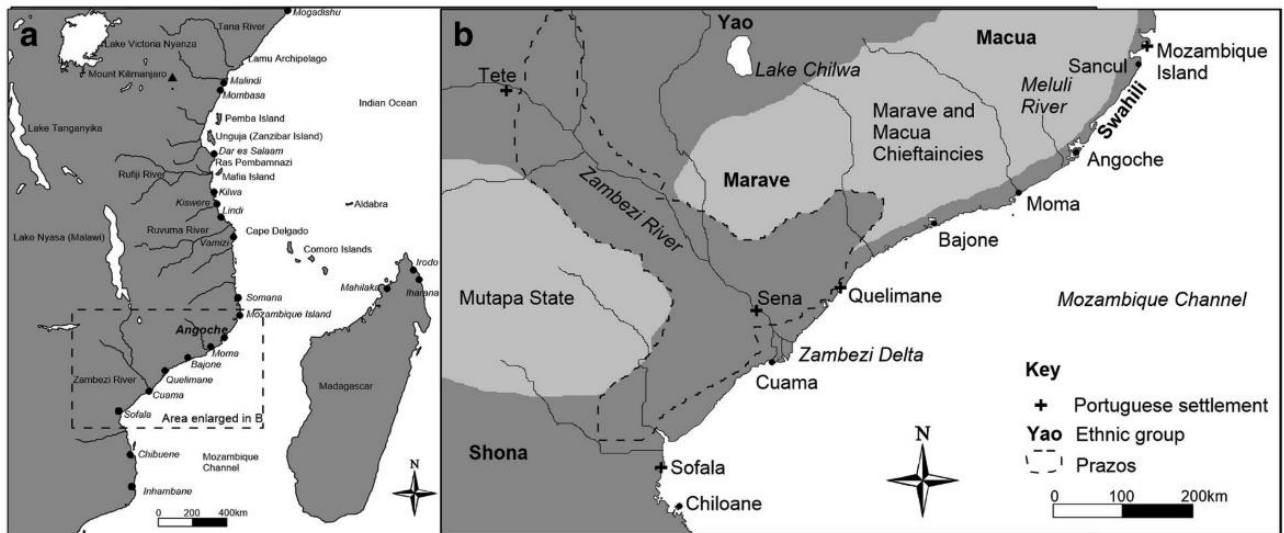

Figure 1. Map of East Africa and Mozambican Coast. From Pollard 2018.

Assessing the Maritime Coastal Landscape

The maritime cultural landscape concept arose from the need to conceptually unite the scattered remnants of past societies on land and at sea. For Westerdahl, the maritime cultural landscape can be nominally defined by a society possessing a combination of the following: (1) human utilization 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 (1992, 5).

Westerdahl's intervention reflects a broader anxiety within maritime archaeology and its various subbranches, like nautical archaeology, underwater archaeology, or shipwreck archaeology. While maritime archaeology has traditionally been interested in human activity and behavior at sea, many of its principal methodologies and practices reinforce a false dichotomy between land and sea (Gould 2000). Archaeology has typically viewed terrestrial and oceanic ecological landscapes as separate spheres of activity or influence. Moreover, in archaeology, humanity's relationship with the sea has long been ignored or treated as a marginal interest. Westerdahl's intervention should be understood as part of a broader critique of maritime archaeology's lack of theorization regarding societies characterized by a special relationship with the ocean.

The degree to which society engages with the sea – or, as Westerdahl might put it, the degree to which it maintains a maritime cultural landscape – can be summarized as a measure of their maritimity. According to this logic, living near or on a coastline of any body of water does not automatically make a group a maritime culture. This means that

beyond engaging with the sea for a wide range of political-economic activities, several critical ontological or cosmological principles which organize the universe make specific references to the ocean (Westerdahl 2006). Fleisher et al., building on Westerdahl's framework, consider "a society 'maritime' if, beyond providing resources and facilitating trade and communication, the marine environment influences and is influenced by broader patterns of sociocultural organization, practice, and belief within that society" (author 2015, 101).

Applying Westerdahl's concept of the maritime cultural landscape and maritimity, Fleisher et al. define the Swahili maritime cultural landscape and conclude that its emergence in 1000 CE reflects several transformations in Swahili material culture, political economy and ideology (2015, 101-103). They argue that before the year 1000 CE, while maritime activities like fishing and boating were part of a coastal society, transformations in coastal meaning and practice suggest a moment "when the ancient Swahili began to practice a maritime lifestyle and so began to articulate a maritime identity" (101). These shifts include (1) the abandonment and alteration of coastal settlements in the 10th and 11th centuries C.E. and the dissolution of a ceramic horizon that once bridged the coast and hinterland, (2) the emergence of unique material cultural, indicative of intensifying exchanges between the Swahili coast and the Indian Ocean, (3) the advent of deep sea fishing and long-distance voyaging made possible by essential advancements in nautical technologies, and finally (4) significant changes in architectural practices and style indicative of emerging oceanic orientations.

Swahili civilization, then, and its unique articulation of networks between Africa and the Indian Ocean, came to constitute a "maritime society" as its orientation transitioned outwards and across the sea. Between the 11th and 15th centuries, hundreds of coastal villages and towns emerged along the coast, with some, like Kilwa, eventually becoming larger commercial centers. Demand for African commodities like ivory and gold fueled a growing class of Swahili patron clans and lineages that used complex kinship networks to their advantage. For Fleisher et al., the coral stone ruins scattered across East Africa's coastal landscape are physical manifestations of the changing orientation to the sea.

These recent conclusions and reinterpretations of Swahili history have not gone uncontested. Kusimba and Walz argue that the characterization of Swahili culture as a maritime society only after a certain period overemphasizes the oceanic features of Swahili society. Their critique reminds us that several continental connections were still central to Swahili society, even as overseas trade and exchange increased after 1000 CE (2018). In Ichumbaki's reply, he points out that the authors are not seriously considering the deep history of East African populations and their interactions with the sea. For example, he considers the prolonged occupation of Zanzibar as evidenced by later stone age flakes found at Kumbi Cave (2017). Although the physical traces of this ancient history now only constitute the terrestrial part of that ancient landscape, it is safe to assume that those who occupied Zanzibar even 20,000 years ago had a maritime cultural landscape.

Although Westerdahl's scholarship offers a framework for theorizing maritime societies, this discussion has occurred within a particular lens – maritime archaeology and the most apparent forms of tangible heritage. Here we arrive at one of the critical weaknesses of the maritime cultural landscape used and applied so far. This discussion has failed to consider the growing literature concerning sub-Saharan African landscapes and gardens (Beardsley 2016). African gardens and landscapes have long been ignored in the broader field of landscape studies. This absence is more confounding since Africa is

home to the oldest human landscapes. Considering how human designs and intentions shape the world should be central when approaching how humans –past and present – shape their surroundings and negotiate various forces of nature and society (Gundaker 2016).

Many maritime landscapes are as actively curated or anthropogenic, as terrestrial ones. Human actors often gardened and manipulated intertidal zones to sustainably maximize resource extraction. Beachcombers and fish trappers, for example, follow and map the flow of the tides to manage the daily transition of land to ocean. The current literature on maritime cultural landscapes on the Swahili coast requires further elaboration on the subtle and complex relationships humans develop with inanimate objects, landscapes, and forces of nature.

Exploring the various ways people have *worked through* the maritime cultural landscape of the Indian Ocean provides a critical structural foundation for ongoing and past processes. Inspired by other ethnoarchaeological projects in East Africa (Schmidt 1997), the various observations made regarding the Indian Ocean world over its many centuries point to long-standing structures and systems. This means that when considering the contemporary and past maritime cultural landscape, we should focus on practices (like dhow construction) that have long associations with East Africa. This will further our understanding of how coastal societies manage and understand their landscapes and bring attention to the often-overlooked role of water and waterways in broader human history.

Thinking through Prins

The historian Edward Alpers opens his chapter "Imagining the Indian Ocean*"* by considering the proto-ethnographic voyages of Allan Villers and William Holden in the first half of the 20th century. Alpers writes that although both Villiers and Holden wrote in the twentieth century, their sentimental observations recapture a pattern of maritime trade that marks the entire history of the Indian Ocean (2014, 2). Before the steamship, traders and sailors were subject to the monsoon cycles. Monsoons, prevailing winds that annually shift in direction, served as a jet stream to various locations across the Indian Ocean. Even today, long after the Age of Sail, it is still common to find old sailors who speak Swahili in the port cities of Yemen or Oman. These men reminisce about the days when half the year was spent in East Africa, their calendars structured by the shifting cycles of oceanic and climatic forces (Sheriff 2010).

Like the rest of East Africa's coast, Mozambique Island was entangled within a more extensive system of networks that linked disparate parts of the Indian Ocean. Although we can see periods of intensification between a semi-continuous chain stretching back thousands of years (Beaujard 2015), the layered histories of this oceanic system provide critical insight when considering the *longue durée* of human activity before the opening of the Atlantic system and globalization in the 16th and 17th centuries (Sheriff and Ho 2014). For those who place Europe at the center of global development in world history, the term "Indian Ocean world'' is typically associated with African and Asian cultures, which in most conventional Eurocentric histories are portrayed as inherently possessing social and political obstacles to modernization (Campbell 2014). However, embedded within the Indian Ocean system is a history that reveals its central role in developing contemporary political and economic structures (Chaudhuri 1985).

Dutch ethnographer A.H.J. Prins's monograph Sailing from Lamu offers a slightly different conceptualization of Swahili maritime culture that can be put into productive conversation with Westerdahl and Fleisher et al. My analysis will suggest an

approach incorporating the underlying logic and frameworks that order Swahili understandings of the world, inspired by, and borrowing from, Prins' definition of Swahili as a maritime society within what is now understood as the maritime cultural landscape. This will also require putting maritime archaeology's concerns with landscapes in closer conversation with a growing body of literature from cultural landscape studies in sub-Saharan Africa (Beardsley 2016). I also hope to highlight Prins's consideration of maritime life at Lamu; these include Swahili conceptualizations surrounding time and space, shipping as culture-shaping events, and place-naming and place-making on the coast, the sea, and the islands. Several historical processes which characterize the Indian Ocean are also critical in shaping this maritime cultural landscape, including longstanding kinship ties between East Africa and the rest of the Western Indian Ocean (Ho 2004; Rothman 2002)

   Sailing from Lamu offers insight into several important concepts we may begin to frame as "native terms." Within Prins writings, we see how although he is not speaking in terms of landscape, his attention to how the maritime environment mediates professions and occupations, languages and metaphors, art and religion serves as a conduit for understanding the broader maritime landscape. Although his ethnography captures a particular moment in Swahili history, his case study points to practices that likely have roots in deep time while also being attentive to various ways the ocean and seas permeate everyday Swahili thinking.

   The advantage of Prins's definition of maritime culture lies in his close attention to how the maritime landscape structures Swahili's political economy and society. For Prins, maritimity "shows itself overtly in, for instance, the many dhow scribbles on walls: on white-washed walls in pencil, on weathered walls in many a ruined site in scratching" (4). In his introduction, Prins opens by considering maritime culture, writing that "it is legitimate to ask how we know whether a culture (defined as a patterned set of recurrent *events*) is, or is to be considered maritime" (1965, 3). Prins points to how Swahili poetry and its numerous metaphors implicate the ocean. He draws attention to the fact that Swahili religious poetry often uses images of fish, sea, and waves where the Arabic original does not. He terms "pointers" to maritimity as:

> Regular use of nautical similes or maritime proverbs in the colloquial language – especially from those who are not sailors. Children playing with toy boats are common on the coast; men building ships models in their leisure hours; the integration of sea and ship in the make-up of functionally non-maritime institutions (such as votive offerings, initiation, mortuary practices); the (degree of) elaboration of myths concerning the sea; the occurrence of maritime patron-saints; the spending of leisure hours near the waterfront, crowds gathering at launchings, arrivals and departures of ships; the attitude toward fish, and so on, and so forth. (4)

Beyond the linguistic metaphors or the numerous other ways the sea permeates Swahili sociality, a maritime society should also have a quantitively oceanic political economy. Prins estimates that mid-20th century Lamu's economy was at least 60% maritime based on a variety of factors, but well summarized in his breakdown of the cargo on the average vessel:

Maritime (shipping, mangrove, fishing) - $60,000
Terrestrial (agricultural, cattle, mat making) - $27,000

Residual - $13,000

The maritime cultural landscape at Lamu consists of habitual practices, elaborated rituals, geographies, and a political economy oriented towards the sea. Here we must take seriously the numerous considerations and dispositions necessary when living and profiting from the ocean.

The products of many of these maritime practices also become socially imbued symbols indexed in history and language. For example, dhow construction at Mozambique Island persists in what some might call a traditional fashion. *Pangaios,* or dhows, are wooden sailing vessels used in many variations throughout the western Indian Ocean. Before steamships, they were the vessel of choice for most commercial activities. The nautical architects who reside on the island and along the shores of the mainland continue to construct this type of watercraft without blueprints and electrical power tools. Most measurements are made with the eye. While in many other parts of the Western Indian Ocean dhow construction has ceased or is considered endangered heritage, on Mozambique Island, we can still observe how the dhow becomes more than merely a transporter of goods, but an animated means of social interaction, relations, and practices (Sheriff 2014).

Several other habitual practices on Mozambique Island and Cabaceira Pequena illustrate the various entanglements between oceanic and terrestrial environments we are interested in highlighting. For example, the ropes that rig each dhow's triangular lateen sail are collected from coconut fibers, woven in a pattern, and buried underneath intertidal zones for an extended period. When these fibers emerge as solid intertwined ropes months later, they are ready to bear several hundred pounds of mast and sail. The burning of *Cal,* the limestone plaster used to cover the interior walls of Swahili stone houses, requires harvesting marine and terrestrial resources. At night large pyres structured by wood and filled with coral rag burn in towering furnaces all along the coast.

A defining feature of maritime societies is their dietary reliance on fish. Moreover, the daily catch slowly travels from town to village well into the hinterland. This critical part of people's diet and political economy is structured around the daily transformation of the coastal ecology. For eight weeks, we sailed from Mozambique Island in the morning to the archaeological excavations at Cabaceira Pequena. Depending on the tides, the walk to CP-2 archaeological site could vary between five minutes and one hour. This dramatic shift in the landscape takes place cyclically every 12 hours – between these moments, the intertidal zones become places where we can clearly see the fluidity of the maritime cultural landscape.

Figure 2. Cal-lime pyre

The burning of *Cal,* the limestone plaster used to cover the interior walls of Swahili stone structures require harvesting marine and terrestrial resources (Fig. 2). At night, large pyres structured by wood and filled with coral rag burn in towering furnaces all along the coast. Burning coral stone is still popular as many older men on Cabaceira Pequena expressed how lucrative organizing even one burn can be. Even an individual fisherman can organize a burn every few years, making it a critical opportunity to accumulate capital. This plaster was a central part of Swahili architectural practice but even had its uses in mending pottery. Archaeological evidence suggests that applying a layer of cal-plaster was a popular way of making ceramic vessels watertight.
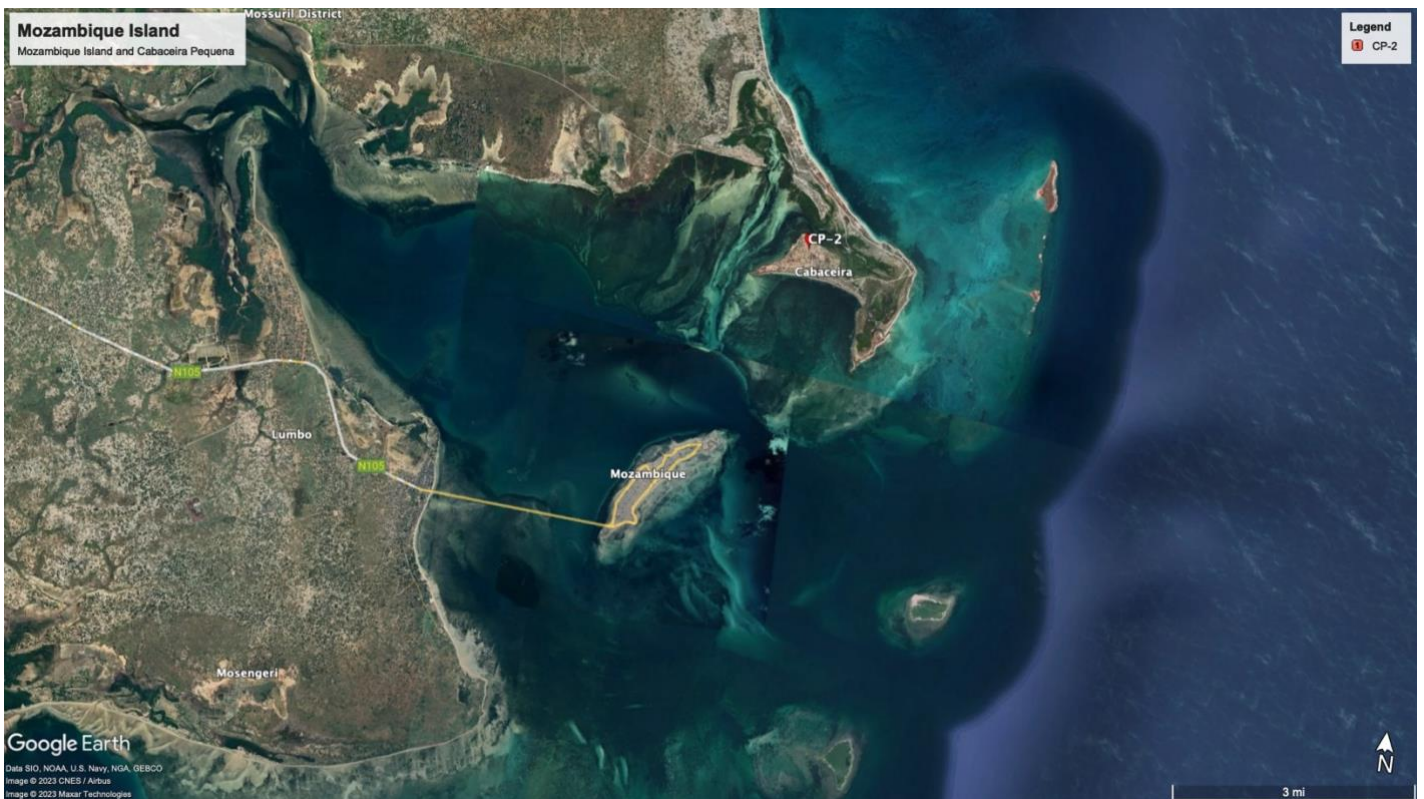

Figure 3. Map of Mozambique Island

Cabaceira Pequena excavations as maritime archaeology

In this last section, we will consider the archaeological evidence at Cabaceira Pequena, considering our discussion of the maritime cultural landscape. This will require contextualizing Mozambique Island and Cabaceira Pequena (Fig. 3) and highlighting contemporary practices (like beachcombing at low tide) that reflect long-standing Swahili understandings that collapse the land/sea dichotomy. Considering these practices will also help interpret the distribution of archaeological material at Cabaceira Pequena and gain a deeper understanding of the Swahili maritime cultural landscape.

The southern zone of the Swahili coast has received less scholarly attention than its northern counterparts, particularly on the Mozambican coast (P J J Sinclair et al. 1993; P. Sinclair 1991). Mozambique's place on the Swahili coast appears marginal in the literature because of publication biases in English (Morais 1984). Nevertheless, several archaeological sites along Mozambique's northern and central coasts suggest a cultural horizon of considerable complexity (Duarte 1993; P. J. J. Sinclair et al. 1993; Pawlowicz 2013; Martinez 1990). At Mozambique Island, we can address several critical questions surrounding the Swahili coast from outside Kenya and Tanzania. The bias of Swahili archaeology towards the largest and most elaborate stone towns in Kenya and Tanzania has often obscured the diversity of historical trajectories in East Africa.

To better approach the concept of maritime cultural landscapes, my case study demonstrates how closer attention to existing practices or ideologies surrounding social (re)production and ontology may better shape our understanding of past and present maritime cultural landscapes. This paper will show how attention to long-standing practices and ideologies can be one way of understanding how Swahili society conceptualized and designed its maritime cultural landscape. By using these concepts to understand the ordering of the landscape at emerging towns and villages on and around Mozambique Island, we can better understand some of the motivations and processes fueling the growth of new towns in Northern Mozambique in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Before the arrival of the Portuguese, trade between India and East Africa was based on, amongst other things, the exchange of gold from southcentral Africa and ivory for cotton cloths from India and glass beads from both India and Venice (Alpers 2009). By the time of Portuguese arrival in the Indian Ocean – in which they first interacted with Swahili polities in East Africa – the Indian Ocean World system had experienced several centuries of semi-continuous interaction, including the spread of Islam through several significant diasporas. The circulation and flow within Indian Ocean networks depended on complex systems of kinship networks, whereby successful Swahili traders cultivated and exploited various real or fictive relations (Pearson 2003).

In March 1498, Vasco de Gama – on his first voyage to India – reached a Swahili coast town on Mozambique Island. He described the residents as Muslims, with a sultan who recognized the lord of Kilwa as his sovereign (Greenlee, Velho, and da Costa 1942). Every year after, well into the 19th century, Mozambique Island and Cabaceira Pequena served as primary stops between Goa and Lisbon. In the 19th century, Mozambique Island attained "city" status within the Portuguese empire and served as the capital of Portuguese East Africa until 1897. Cabaceira Pequena, the peninsula directly north of Mozambique Island, is home to a small community, some of them longtime residents, but many displaced people who settled during the recent Mozambican Armed Conflict (1977-1992).

After the colonial capital was transferred to southern Mozambique and the development of Nacala Bay (one of the deepest ports in East Africa) during the middle of the 20th, Cabaceira Pequena, along with Mozambique Island, became a periphery in the

Portuguese colonial order. The ruins of 19th-century Swahili mansions along the waterfront of Cabaceira Pequena are haunting reminders of its past economic and political centrality. This "peripheralization" speaks to the complicated political-economic process that defines our contemporary global capitalist system. The idea of Mozambique Island as a periphery reinforces certain stereotypes while masking the ongoing links and connections that serve as a critical part of the current Indian Ocean system.

In 2018-19, my archaeological research around Mozambique Island aimed to understand underlying settlement occupation patterns and, by extension, the socially constructed maritime cultural landscape. My observations of several daily occurrences forced me to consider how people on Mozambique Island and Cabaceira Pequena interact with a world in a constant state of flow. Archaeological and documentary evidence illustrates a wide range of diachronic transformations on Mozambique Island and neighboring Cabaceira Pequena, beginning in the 15th century and continuing in the present. These transformations included the reorganization of the Swahili political landscape, part of broader regional and global processes that enmeshed East Africa into a broader world of Indian Ocean connections (Wynne-Jones and La Violette 2018).

The current evidence suggests that Cabaceira Pequena's emergence as a stone town precedes the arrival of the Portuguese by no more than one century. Oral history from local imams explains that the original inhabitants of Mozambique Island relocated to Cabaceira Pequena after the occupation of the island by the Portuguese. The material uncovered around the stone ruins increased dramatically in the 16th and 17th centuries and continued into the late 19th century.

Regionally, Cabaceira 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 regionalization at the beginning of the second millennium, followed by a re-integration period by the second half of the 15th century. Inhabitants at Mikindani developed a new local style of ceramics that diverged from broad trends on 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 utilizing 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 cultural horizon and has emphasized the need to consider 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 regionalized approach to understanding cultural transformations, specifically concerning the development of maritime culture. Long-distance maritime connections and the intensification of activities within the Indian Ocean 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 re-oriented Cabaceira's inhabitants towards the sea.

Cabaceira's Stonehouse in an Anthropogenic Landscape

The Cabaceira Pequena archaeological site was first recorded in the summer of 2018. Subsequent pedestrian surveys revealed archaeological material scattered throughout most of the western half of the peninsula. At least seven sites were recorded, but more research is necessary to better define the extent of occupation on the peninsula in the 15th and 16th centuries. One coral stone structure endures on the outskirts of Cabaceira Pequena village (Fig. 4). The stone ruin and surrounding areas were named

CP-2 (Cabaceira Pequena Site #2), and between October and November of 2018, a small excavation took place around CP-2 to date the ruins and surrounding area. Eight weeks of excavations uncovered a sequence of archaeologically rich but shallow deposits of material culture. The area excavated at CP-2 represents a tiny portion of an emerging Swahili/Makhua town in the 15th century, which continued to grow well into the 19th century.

A few people in Cabaceira Pequena reported stone houses slowly being torn down for building materials, as coral stone from 19th-century ruins is used as the foundations for new homes. The under-secretary of the village at Cabaceira Pequena included mentions of several stone houses as the residences of "big chiefs." It seems reasonable to assume that if multiple pre-colonial structures existed, their ruins would have been used for new buildings. It is unclear why the stone ruin at CP-2 remains. However, the archaeological rich deposits surrounding the edifice suggest intense activity and attest to the growing wealth and connectivity in the region.

The material recorded at the site included locally made earthenware, imported ceramics (including stoneware and porcelains from the Persian Gulf and mainland China), 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 at CP-2, the occupation of the site is contemporaneous with, if not earlier than, the original construction of the edifice.

The placement of this site on the landscape can be understood when thinking through the various ways we have considered the maritime cultural landscape. With the slow rise of steady demand for commodities on the East African coast, residents on and around Mozambique Island likely saw increased trade and exchange opportunities. The emergence of towns like CP-2 depended on an understanding of the maritime cultural landscape. Mangrove swamps are actively curated environments where specific parts of the intertidal zone are managed to perform various activities, from ship careening to fish trapping and beach combing.

Figure 4. Stone ruin at Cabaceira Pequena

The Material Evidence

The material culture found at Cabaceira Pequena indicates the intercontinental connections and networks that characterized various Swahili stone towns that dotted East Africa's coast at the end of the 15th century. At Cabaceira Pequena, most of the decorated local ceramics collected correspond with what some archaeologists have described as Swahili-style or Sancul-style pottery (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 re-deposited at the end of the excavation. Most 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 15th-century wheeled ware bowls (see Wynne-Jones 2016, 153).

The importation of prized stoneware from distant places like Persia or China demonstrated the wealth and status of its owner and reaffirmed their oceanic networks. For examples in West Africa during the emergence of the Atlantic system, where previously marginal deities or forces associated with the sea became central (Northrup 2002, Law 1994), on the Swahili coast, the location of architecture and the value of the imported stone and glaze wares reflect an intensification of interactions with the maritime cultural landscape. Before the regular traffic of monsoon shipping was possible, East Africans maintained a maritime cultural landscape, albeit a simpler one, where only specific aspects of life were likely articulated through oceanic forces – like beachcombing or fishing. Over time, the increase in regular trade and exchange would lead to various new relationships that further brought continental Africa in relation with the Indian Ocean.

The 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. Collecting or controlling prestige objects in society can catalyze social transformations, as only specific individuals can access these commodities. It also can lead to discussions regarding inequalities on the coast (Constantin 1989) and further an understanding of how coastal communities define themselves – whether in opposition to groups in the hinterland or in coordination with other groups along the coast.

Those individuals who could travel great distances, or employ subordinates to travel for them, likely succeeded when they employed specialized knowledge and relationships with worldly 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 participate in the long-distance exchange acquired valuable objects, which justified their privileged status through the objects themselves. Producing a maritime Swahili cosmos was linked to the ability and capacity to acquire prestige objects from abroad.

Stories, myths, traditions, and histories were reproduced and framed within a vibrant coastal environment, as demonstrated by the advent of deep-sea fishing and long-distance travel (Fleisher et al., 2015). Besides using the ocean as a highway for goods and ideas, the ocean provided various food and construction materials. It was ideologically central to Swahili beliefs in northern Mozambique. Prestige objects, like imported porcelains, glass beads, or elaborate textiles, became central components of social and

material life at Cabaceira Pequena. Like other Swahili polities along the coast, residents of CP #2 would have utilized these highly prized ceramics in feasting rituals, public ceremonies, burials, and offerings (Fleisher 2010).

Conclusion

   Since they were first coined in the early 1990s, "maritimity" and "maritime cultural landscape" serve as guiding frameworks for ethnographers, archival historians, and archaeologists interested in assessing several qualities of coastal culture. As a concept, the maritime cultural landscape provides a critical lens to interpret past and present maritime society, unlike typical conceptualizations of the landscape that characterize the earth's physical geography as a stage where political and economic activities are made possible. Maritimity then serves as an almost measurable quality, which assesses a society's or culture's level of engagement with the sea.

   The advent of a new maritime landscape in northern Mozambique followed a different trajectory than polities towards the north of the Swahili coast. More evidence is necessary to better explore why these transformations were slower 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 coast intensified. In northern Mozambique, new research should actively question the hegemonic influence of Kenyan and Tanzanian scholarship on Swahili studies and carefully reconsider Swahili identity within a complex of social and ethnic diversity.

   The various oceanic forces that historically shaped life in coastal East Africa continue to shape various practices in northern Mozambique. The recent interest in maritime cultural landscapes on the Swahili coast has focused our attention on the various ways people have interacted with coastal ecologies. Swahili civilization arose out of a particular moment when intensifying oceanic activities created the conditions for the emergence of hundreds of stone towns and villages. Today, the various ruins which scattered East Africa should be understood through a maritime lens, which requires specific attention to the various practices that support maritime society.

   In the contemporary, the tides and winds still shape several critical human interactions. At Mozambique Island and Cabaceira Pequena, we can better approach the concept of the maritime cultural landscapes. My case study demonstrates how closer attention to existing practices or ideologies surrounding social (re)production and ontology may better shape our understanding of past and present maritime cultural landscapes. Attention to long-standing practices and ideologies can be one way of understanding how Swahili society conceptualized and designed its maritime cultural landscape.

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