

Fishing Songs and Rhythms of the Ocean

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Abstract

This article explores how fishers express their relationship with the ocean through songs performed during fishing. During a fieldwork in Bagamoyo, I observed fishermen paddle to their fishing grounds, creating rhythms and sounds with their paddles, while singing along. The sounds of singing, paddling, and water splashing, as well as their body movements, created a beautiful display of their relationship to each other, their work and the ocean. Studies have shown that music can offer an understanding of social lives within a community, and its interactions with the environment. This study builds on such research in ecomusicology, ethnomusicology, and related studies; while focusing on how fishers relate to the ocean environment. The article draws on my PhD fieldwork in Bagamoyo in August 2024, where I collected a number of songs performed by fishermen in occupational contexts. The study was based on ethnographic fieldwork, using methods of participant observation, interviews, and focus group discussions, as well as filming and audio recording.

Keywords: *music, fishing communities, intangible cultural heritage, cultural diversity*

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1. Introduction

Studies have shown that music can offer an understanding of the social lives within a community and their interactions with the environment, as it binds people together at both verbal and non-verbal levels (Turino, 2008, 2009; Wallcot, 2016; Ichumbaki, Pollard, & Comte, 2019). This study builds on such research in ecomusicology, ethnomusicology and related studies; while focusing on how fishers relate to the ocean environment.

Since coastal communities have been identified as a priority research area in marine social sciences, this study helps to better understand the complex socioecological relationships of marine environments (McKinley et al., 2020). By interacting with the ocean, fishermen develop ideas for songs related not only to the sea, but also touching on themes such as love, emotions, beauty and relationships.

In 2003, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the Convention for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003). At that time, the global community realized the critical need for raising awareness regarding cultural manifestations and expressions that had no clear institutional and legal frameworks to safeguard them (Nicolas, 2005; Brown, 2013). Since then, there has been a considerable scholarly interest in studies

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on intangible cultural heritage (ICH), that include linking cultural heritage with local communities' development and sustainability—such as fishers' songs and music—as they navigate encounters with the ocean, and improve mental wellbeing during fishing activities.

This study discusses how fishermen express their experiences with the ocean through lyrics; but also how the sounds of the ocean and the ocean itself are an inspiration for composing and making music. The study supports efforts to preserve traditional music and intangible cultural heritage among the fishing and coastal communities. It highlights the importance of culture (in this case music), for understanding the Indian Ocean coastal communities of Tanzania.

I recall a conversation with a retired fisher, who explained to me:

“You might not find a whole song about the ocean or marine environment, but look carefully at the lyrics: there you will find a line or a few words in a song that mention the ocean or marine environment and ocean creatures.”

During my PhD fieldwork in Bagamoyo in August 2024, I collected a number of songs performed by fishermen in occupational contexts. Among the three songs I will present in this article, two songs—*Kwanza Tuombe Mungu* and *Salima/Lailata*—were recorded during a fishing trip; and one—*Ko Mrima*—during an interview with a retired fisher from Tumbatu who resides in Bagamoyo. The songs were chosen based on their themes: after discussions with fishermen and interviews, they gave an impression that the songs are important. Hence, these were picked in this study to represent a diversity of themes in fishermen occupational songs of the coast of Tanzania, and in particular, Bagamoyo.

2. Methodology

This study involved data collection methods commonly employed in ethnographic research by using participant observation, interviews, structured and semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). The study also used filming and audio recording to capture some songs. Some interviews were later transcribed and used to understand the meaning of a song, as it would not have been easy to grasp all information related to a song through a single observation or interview. The research was also aided by using secondary data in written form: from academic books and articles, to news articles and websites.

From my preparatory reading I adopted a modelling ethnomusicology (Rice, 2017) and ethnographic approach (Geertz, 1975; Thomas & Harden, 2008; Silverman, 2020), based on ethnographic anthropological fieldwork, to explore fishing occupational songs among the fishing communities of Bagamoyo. The approach focused on the understanding of intricate social phenomena and human behaviour based on the assumption that knowledge can only be achieved through social assemblies and/or constructions—such as shared meanings, experiences, narratives,

people's opinions, and language consciousness—which have particular meanings and reflections in people's lives: a methodology known as interpretive qualitative tradition.

In the interpretive ethnographic and ethnomusicology approach, a researcher takes an active role in engaging with the research subjects/participants, bringing their own understanding and worldviews of phenomena deriving from their own cultural orientations (Merriam, 1964). The underlying assumption is that an ethnomusicologist or ethnographer has to comprehend and interpret the life-world from the participants' perspectives, while being aware of, and reflecting on how, their own backgrounds as researchers might affect the interpretation of the phenomena under study.

In my study, I took this into account in the encounters with my research participants: I related their experiences and narratives to their cultural and religious values and beliefs, and the life-worlds of fishing that had a bearing on their identity, and in conceptualizing their music. The subjectivity and meaning-making about particular aspects of music expressions were carefully captured to acquire an in-depth understanding of the interaction of the people with the ocean world in Bagamoyo.

For an ethnomusicology fieldwork, Alan Merriam (1964: 32), an anthropologist and one of the four founders of the Society for Ethnomusicology, proposed what he called a 'simple' model that had three 'analytical levels': "conceptualization about music, behaviour in relation to music, and the music sound itself." The goal is to acquire a comprehensive and holistic perspective of the social phenomena under study (Fetterman, 1998; Higginbottom, 2004).

As a qualitative research, this study stems from the philosophical foundation of interpretative philosophy, which views knowledge as being based on people's views and opinions from everyday life experiences. Interpretivism, or *hermeneutic philosophy*, holds that reality is socially constructed; meaning that people give meaning to the world through language, culture, beliefs, and experiences (Halliburton, 1976). Through participant observation, interviews and group discussion methods, research participants were able to openly express their cultural understandings of music experiences and practices with the ocean-worlds. Staying for several months in the field enabled my participants to build trust with me, and speak up in details about both public and domestic domains of their music expressions. Therefore, participatory observation enabled me to be more engaged and familiarized with fishermen's life at work—before and afterwards—to get a better understanding of topics for interviewing and group discussions with fishermen and community members.

2.1 Participant Observation

Moreover, observation by physical presence to see, hear and feel things as a means of data collection was applied in this study (Stake, 2010). Observation helped me get insights into social practices that cannot be communicated in video- or audio-

recordings; or contexts that are experienced differently than when told through oral descriptions during an interview. Through participant observation I could collect data on important aspects, such as songs and sounds, time of day, the smell of a place as well as the mood; and the general atmosphere created by the fishermen when interacting with each other, and with their ocean environment. In this particular fieldwork, I observed performances of songs adapted from the ceremonial music of traditional dances and ceremonies from the Zaramo ethnic group, which lives in the Coastal and Dar es Salaam regions of Tanzania.

I followed fishermen on their fishing trips, observing them singing, to grasp relevant information, and complement the data collected from interviews. In this way, I placed myself as part of the social, sensory, and material environment (Pink, 2009) to gain insights into musical expressions and their relation to the ocean.

2.2 Audio and Video Recording

The difficulty in understanding the language used in some of the songs posed some methodological challenges. It was impossible to transcribe song texts directly. Recorded songs had to be played back to the fishermen for them to recite anew the words in each song, one by one. Consequently, I had to adopt what Gunderson (2010: 2) describes as a “two-way, inter-subjective research process” where descriptive and evaluative terms are collected and fed back to subsequent interviews for discussion, verification, clarification and interpretation. Through this process, it became clear that different fishermen singing the same songs occasionally had different interpretations and meanings; sometimes even contradicting the texts of these songs.

Also, some songs were in different Swahili dialects, for example, in the Kitumbatu dialect, which is known among some Kiswahili speakers, especially in Zanzibar and in Coastal Tanzania. The dialect is different from the official Kiswahili, which is spoken by the majority of the population in Tanzania; as well as taught in schools and higher learning institutions. The songs from my interview with the retired fisher from Tumbatu were in this special dialect.

I used Olympus Digital Voice Recorder WS-853 for audio recording of the songs and interviews during the fieldwork. The quality of sound captured by the audio recorder was good enough for transcription without missing a word. The recorder was placed in the middle of the boat during the fishing trip, hence it was able to capture the sounds of the fishermen on both the left and right side of the boat, as well as the ambiance.

Video recording was a challenge in terms of space and positioning of the camera. Though we used a good camera (Canon EOS R5 C Mirrorless Cinema EOS Camera), the positioning of a cameraman was a challenge due to the limited space in the boat. He had to stand at the very back of the boat, so most of the filming was done from that one camera angle. The intention was to capture the movements, sounds and voices of the paddling fishermen as well as the interviews that followed, so that one camera angle worked well.

The video and audio recording was meant to help the study capture the whole process, and have access to data and information that was not possible to capture through notes; and it also served as a reference during the analysis.

The boat conditions and wet ocean environment did not allow any note-taking with a pen and a notebook. I used my phone (iPhone Xr) a few times to take short notes (key notes/points of reference for interviews), as well as photos. Having a waterproof bag for the cameras and audio recorder helped protect the devices from being damaged by water. Though the ocean was calm (no big waves/storms), it was safer to have waterproof bags to protect the devices.

2.3 Researcher's Positionality in Ethnographic Fieldwork

To minimize biases, a researcher ought to honestly declare his/her conceptual journey. This is because a researcher is not a robot: s/he holds values, norms and often maintains the traditions and cultures of the community in which s/he grew up. Hence, the socio-cultural orientation of a researcher must be brought into context to help unpack the possibilities of researcher influence on the credibility and reliability of ethnographic findings. Since qualitative analysis is an interpretive process, issues to do with cultural orientation, prejudices, assumptions, and worldviews of a researcher can influence interpretation.

I grew up on the coast of Bagamoyo town, though my parents are originally Sumbwa and Nyamwezi from west Tanzania, Tabora region. Growing up in Bagamoyo, I was a minority among the Zaramo, Doe and Kwere communities. Their music and culture had a strong influence on me since my childhood. I learned the songs, drumming and music expressions of the Zaramo from my early childhood to adulthood. Being part of these communities, I also came to the realization that there are other cultures and ethnicities in Tanzania and beyond, apart from my own; and of the majority of Zaramo, Kwere and Doe of Bagamoyo.

I also had a privilege of living within a small community with a diversity of cultural backgrounds at the Bagamoyo College of Arts, currently known as Taasisi ya Sanaa na Utamaduni Bagamoyo (TaSUBa). The cultural diversity I experienced—in particular, the music traditions and expressions through students training, performances and festivals—opened my ears and eyes to the diversity of cultures and music. Through that exposure, I developed a sense of relating and distinguishing the music and sound of different ethnic groups and cultures of Tanzania, and beyond.

I am also a musician: I studied music in my undergraduate and graduate degrees. This professional experience and training have deepened my understanding and appraisal of various dimensions of music, including its role and function in a society.

In my fieldwork journey in Bagamoyo, I was very cautious not to allow my influences of growing up among the Zaramo, the Bagamoyo Arts College, as well as my worldviews to influence the way I interpreted and made sense of the narratives and experiences of the local people. As a researcher, I kept reminding myself that the question of knowledge production through the lens of ethnography occurs in an environment where a researcher and participants engage to co-produce a body of knowledge, and the interpretation of local perspectives about culture, as well as peoples' interactions in their environment.

In this regard, in terms of positionality, a researcher should develop intellectual self-awareness in the course of doing research so as to maintain the rigour and credibility of a study. Mason (2002) urged qualitative scholars to develop *active skills*; which include earmarking the central issues, working out how they might be resolved, and understanding the intellectual practical, moral and political implication of different ways of undertaking them. She defines reflexivity as thinking "... critically about what you are doing and why, confronting and often challenging your own assumptions, and recognizing the extent to which your thoughts, actions, and decisions shape how you research and what you see" (ibid: 5).

For example, during the fieldwork I had a conversation with a retired fisher, and commented on vocal and singing abilities of lead singers among the fishermen during the fishing trip. I criticized some vocal qualities based on music performance skills, and I thought some of the song leaders' vocal projections and singing skills were not as impressive as those of others. His response to that comment changed my whole understanding of how fishers perceive their music, as he retorted: "*You are not looking for singers, you are looking for songs.*"

The emphasis on reflexivity and the responsibilities of a qualitative researcher has also been commented on by scholars such as Archer (2007, 2010). Building on her work, Longhofer et al. (2012) argue that engaged research considers five positions when thinking about reflexivity/responsibility/or representation in qualitative research: (i) ontological, (ii) epistemological, (iii) methodological, (iv) theoretical (analytic), and (v) representational reflexivity. Too, they add that genuine engagement requires autonomous reflexivity.

In this study, I adhered to reflexivity from the process of writing the plan for my research, to the fieldwork; and finally in the analysis of the findings. The process of extracting themes was informed by a reflexive account of my position as the researcher, and the pattern of data. The theoretical reflexivity, methodological reflexivity, and data was central to, and informed, the analysis and presentation of the data. The views and voices of the participants/fishermen and local people in Bagamoyo were presented and analysed as they were generated from the fieldwork. Relevant methods were employed and a conceptual literature review was conducted. The data and views of the participants were placed in their cultural contexts.

I acknowledge that the influence of my presence, the camera and the audio recorder might have had an impact on the fishermen's performance during the trip. To minimize such influence, during the whole trip the fishermen were the ones who decided when and what to sing. Together, we created an atmosphere that made the fishermen comfortable enough to perform their activities without interference: whether they wanted to smoke cigarettes, sing, paddle, or sip a drink; as well as taking turns on leading songs. Everything that happened was treated as part of the experience; and documented without me directing it.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

From the beginning of research, I observed the Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA) Ethical Guidelines of 2011, and new guidelines as amended in 2021, towards engaging with research participants and the protection of human subjects so as to acquire relevant information. Written and oral informed consent was sought from each participant and key informant. I introduced myself and the rationale of the study to each participant. Also, participants were offered the opportunity to engage or withdraw from the research.

Further, the study received research clearance from the University of Dar es Salaam; and I had to undergo the process of seeking research permits from the respective regional, districts and local authorities in the fieldwork sites.

Since the study included audio- and video-recording, participants were made aware of the process; and a verbal agreement was reached for the material to be used only for academic purposes, and not commercially. Throughout the process, informants and cultural practitioners were involved to avoid misinterpretation and misconceptions. Similarly, the research participants were made aware of the research project; and how participating may expose them to certain risks, such as participating in the project without fully understanding what it means, and that what they say and do will be treated in a scientific analysis that draws more general and abstract conclusions that may feel foreign to them. To minimize the risk of any of this happening, as the responsible researcher I undertook to be available to provide additional information about the project and protect their privacy in various ways. Further, the participants were assured that the material collected would be treated confidentially, and participation will be hidden in various ways so that their information could not be traced back to them; and that should this happen, I would be available for further clarification.

Another aspect of the study that I had to pay attention to concerned the copyright of the songs and performances. The songs are considered to be communally owned, and are not individual compositions. Hence, they fall under community property, and are protected under the copyright law of Tanzania. Thus, under the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the protection of intangible cultural heritage, I committed to use the material in a respectful manner with the consideration of the integrity of the performers, the community, and its culture. For the purposes of this study,

consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development. Therefore, the fishermen were also compensated for their performance after an agreement between the researcher and themselves.

3. Singing While Paddling in the Ocean

When growing up near the beach in Bagamoyo, I used to hear fishermen singing while paddling. Sometimes we would see them from a distance; and sometimes we could only hear their voices, carried by the wind from the ocean.

During the fieldwork, I participated in a fishing trip during which I experienced how singing is performed. I was accompanied by a cameraman who helped me film the experience, with consent from the fishers. To organize my participation, I met the fishermen the day before, and we made some plans for what time to meet, as well as a meeting place.

We agreed on picking up the fishermen in the morning at a 'palm wine club' (*kilabu cha mnazi*). At 7:00 am, five fishermen got into our car; and we drove off to collect paddles and the rudder for the boat. We loaded all the gear in the car, and drove to the mooring site where we were met by two other fishermen who were preparing the vessel for their fishing trip. One of the fishermen, Dengwa, was scooping out water from the boat, which was almost a quarter filled with water; and that got me worried. I asked Dengwa whether the boat would work, to which he responded: "*We use it every day, and it will work today as well.*" I later learned that within the next few days, the boat would be repaired employing a technique called *kukarafati* (filling the leaking spaces between the conjoined wood pieces with cotton).

The original plan was to leave by 7:30 am, but because of the fog and the need for more light for filming, we decided to start at around 8:00 am. It took about thirty minutes of waiting. At 8:00 am, they were ready to start; and one of them waved, signalling me to walk over to the boat. When I got in, I realized the boat was still filled with water, and some was still leaking in between the wooden boards. I started scooping it out as the others were paddling. A few minutes after leaving the shore, Dengwa—the owner of the boat—suggested we bring along two young boys to help with scooping the water. They paddled back to shore, and after a short discussion, we picked up twin boys: Hassan and Hussein. As the boys jumped into the boat, they were instructed to scoop out the water off the boat while the rest kept paddling. As things seemed to be in control, the singing started; and it was a big relief, since the leaking continued throughout the whole trip.

The paddles were stuck in loops of ropes tied on both sides of the boat, about 1.5m and 2m apart, to make them stable and controllable. The fishers positioned themselves at each spot with a paddle, and that gave them enough space to move. The paddles produced a distinctive sound from the wood rubbing on the boat, which the fishermen used as an accompanying sound and rhythmic pattern to their singing.



Photo 1: Two boys scooping out water from the vessel as the fishermen sing and paddle. (All photographs by the Author).

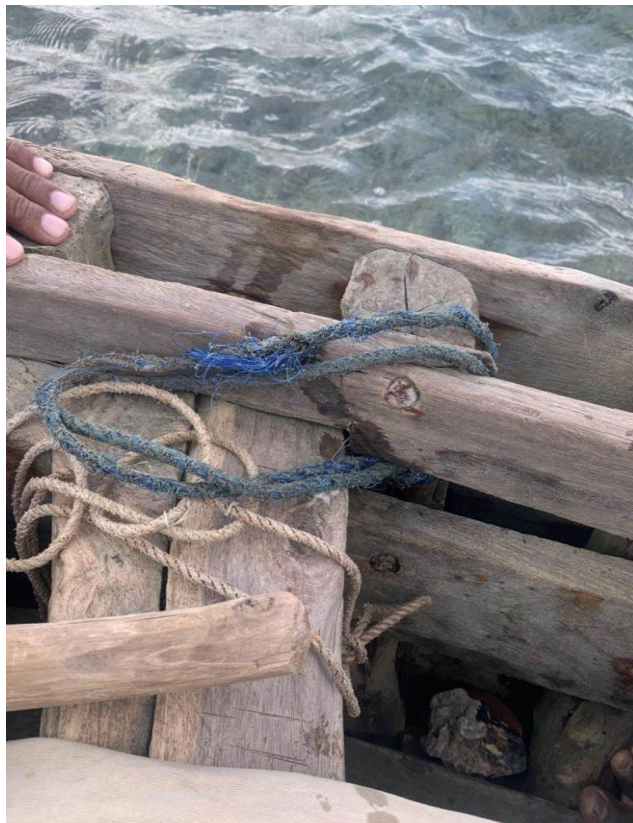


Photo 2: Paddles and their placement in the boat, held in place by ropes.



Photo 3: A paddle placed through the rope to support the paddling movement



Photo 4: Paddles after work

The whole trip took us from 8:00 to 11:00 am. The ocean was calm while they paddled. They kindly gave me enough time to audio-record the singing, film the paddling, and conduct short interviews with each fisherman/singer. At some point during the trip, Dengwa asked me a question, and the rest of the fishermen nodded in agreement/support. He asked me: “What made you think of recording this?” And he continued:

The boat engines are making the paddling unnecessary, as people nowadays will have a sail and an engine; and when there is no wind, they use the engine. There is no need to paddle, and the singing is becoming irrelevant. Perhaps we have to do this every once in a while, just to keep the tradition (Dengwa, a fisherman/singer, Bagamoyo, August 2024).

I will return to the changes in fishing vessels later on, but at this point I would like to reflect on this method of joining the fishers on their trip, which they seemed to value. I got the impression that the fishers enjoyed the process and experience of being filmed and interviewed. The ambiance was very relaxed throughout the trip. In between singing, they were having short breaks of cigarettes and drinks, while they kept paddling.

4. Spirituality and Morality as Content in Fishing Songs

The repertoire of songs on this fishing trip had different themes and backgrounds. In general, the themes covered issues relating to the ocean, as well as life on land. The themes included sexuality, marriage, and politics; as well as fishing practices, personified creatures or objects of nature, and supernatural beings and forces. The first and longest song was *Kwanza Tuombe Mungu*, through which fishermen sought God’s protection against all negative spiritual forces.

The songs performed were rhythmically in sync with the paddling movements and the sounds of the paddles. During the whole trip, four (4) different song leaders started songs in turn, and maintained the same key and voice range, so all could sing along comfortably. They sang in a *call* and *response* style. In this style, the lead singer sings a part, and the rest of the group responds to the melody by repeating what the lead singer sang (singing the same melody), sometimes slightly differently, but still responding to the lead singer by maintaining the same rhythm.

4.1 *Praying to God in Kwanza Tuombe Mungu*

The very first song of the fishing trip was *Kwanza Tuombe Mungu*, which translates to *First and Foremost, We Pray to God*. Let us take a look at the text of this song in Swahili, its variations in both lyrics and melody; and its contexts (all English translations of the songs are mine).

KWANZA TUOMBE MUNGU

Call: *Kwanza tuombe, Mungu we kwanza wee*
Response: *Hewala bwana*
Call: *Na leo Mapema kwanza tuombe*
Response: *Twendee leo, kwanza tuombe Mungu we kwanza wee*
Call: *Huyo bwana*
Response: *Na leo mapema kwanza tuombe*
Call: *Hayati maulana kwanza tuombe, Mungu we kwanza we*
Response: *Twendee leo, kwanza tuombe Mungu we kwanza wee*
Call: *Yarabi mapema kwanza tuombe*
Response: *Twendee leo, kwanza tuombe Mungu we kwanza wee*
Call: *Asubuhi kumekucha, tuombe Mungu we kwanza we*
Response: *Aeee kwanza tuombe Mungu we kwanza wee*
Call: *Kwa Baraka zake, Mungu wee*
Response: *Kwanza tuombe, Mungu*

VARIATION 1

Call: *Aeee, Baba na mama waombe nasi tuombe*
Response: *Aee nasi tuombe twamuomba yeye Rabana*
Call: *Aee kamwambie baba na mama waombe Mungu na Mtume,*
Response: *Waombe aoo,*
Baba na mama waombe, nasi tuombe twamuomba yeye Rabanna

VARIATION 2

Call: *Eee tuombe leo*
Response: *Twamuomba yeeye Rabanna*
Call: *Tuombe leo*
Response: *Twamuomba yeeye Rabanna*
Call: *Muombe bwana*
Response: *Namuomba yeeye Rabanna*

TRANSLATION

Call: First thing, we pray to God
Response: Yes, man
Call: First thing, we pray to God
Response: Yes, man
Call: And today, as it is early, first thing we pray to God
Response: Let us go today, but first we pray to God
Call: To the supreme God, first thing we pray
Response: Early morning, the sun has risen, first thing we pray
Call: Let us go, first thing we pray
Response: For God's blessings, first thing we pray.

VARIATION 1

Call: Father and mother pray for us and we pray for ourselves
Response: We are praying to God
Call: Tell father and mother to pray to God and the prophet
Response: We pray to God

VARIATION 2

Call: Let us pray on this day
Response: We pray to you God
Call: We pray on this day
Response: We pray to you God

In this song, the lyrical content extended a call to God, the Prophet, as well as the ancestors, for blessings as they pray for themselves. The singers acknowledge the blessings of their parents and ancestors; and by singing it first, the song gives them a sense of submission to the supreme powers. The prayer also gives them a sense of spirituality in coping with the challenges they may encounter while working in the ocean environment, including the poor condition of the leaking boat. This prayer song imbued a sense of spirituality, as explained by one fisherman afterwards: *"We experience the power of God through nature and the ocean."*

Here, the fishermen acknowledged the presence of spiritual powers in relation to the ocean, and submitted to God for His protection at all times during work in the ocean. The theme focuses on the relationship between the fishermen and spiritual beings and forces that exist in the ocean and marine environments. This particular song connects them to that spiritual environment, which has been described as *'Mazingira ya Kiswahili'* by a fisher in Kaole, Bagamoyo. The literal translation of *'Mazingira ya Kiswahili'* is 'Swahili environment'. While the term is used to denote a spiritual environment, it is intrinsic to the physical environment. In other words, in Swahili ocean worlds, the natural environment is "both physical/material and spiritual/immaterial" (Uimonen & Masimbi, 2021: 46).

During our interview, fishermen acknowledged the existence of spirits, both good and bad, in the ocean. The bad spirits are known to cause harm, such as drowning fishermen and swimmers, as well as capsizing vessels; while the good spirits protect them from various difficulties in the ocean.

One of the fishermen also acknowledged the practice of witchcraft among fishing communities. He said that some fishermen conduct rituals to protect their vessels against acts of witchcraft by people who envy them. Therefore, singing a prayer song is asking for God's protection against all misfortunes, including bad spirits, natural disasters, witchcraft, and any other evil challenges during a trip. The fisherman added that they also sing and pray for a good catch.

The song *Kwanza Tuombe Mungu* is a prayer song: the text is neutral and is not limited to any institutionalized religions, such as Christianity and Islam. Although the majority of the fishermen in this trip were Muslims, the song went beyond religion; and they considered the song to be neutral and spiritual. During interviews, the fishermen said they had learned it from their elders who used to sing it in the morning when they started work. In this context, the song functions as a prayer; while accompanying the paddling movement during a fishing activity.

This song brings a sense of *theology* that shapes how these fishermen understand God, self, nature, and community. It merges spirituality with daily labour; grounding theology in the rhythms of ocean life. Theologically, this prayer song reflects a rich interplay between *ancestral reverence*, *divine submission*, and *environmental spirituality*.

The singers' acknowledgment of their *parents* and *ancestors* reveals a theology rooted in *lineage* and *continuity*. It is a theological statement that spiritual strength, moral guidance, and blessings flow through *generational inheritance*. It resonates with practices of African traditional religions, and even Biblical genealogies, where the *faith of the ancestors* shapes present spiritual experiences (Odozor, 2019; Adamo, 2011). The act of singing the prayer *first*, before setting out to sea, signifies *ritual submission*: a theological practice of placing oneself under divine authority. This submission is both *protective* and *relational*; acknowledging the unpredictability of the ocean and the powers of divine or cosmic forces that govern it. Therefore, the submission is not a passive fear but an *active trust*; and a theological position where the divine is both transcendent (above nature) and immanent (present within nature).

The idea that God is revealed through creation means that the ocean becomes a *sacramental space* mediating divine presence. This is consistent with many indigenous and holistic theologies, where the *divine is embedded in the environment*, and not abstracted from it (McDuffie, 2019). Through this song, the fishermen reveal their perception of God's presence within nature; and how the two are inseparable: nature is not merely a creation by God, but also a *living sign* of divine power and presence.

The theme draws on a *relational cosmology* (Uimonen & Masimbi, 2021), where fishermen do not view the ocean as a mere resource, but as a *spirit-inhabited realm*. They see their work as a *sacred vocation*, and not just a means of economic survival. This relationship is *reciprocal and reverent*; underlining a theology where humans must approach nature with *respect*, *submission*, and *ritual preparation*.

4.2 *Morals and Sexuality in Salima/Lailata*

I was caught by surprise when I heard another fisherman starting the next song, *Salima/Lailata*. I had to turn quickly to the very back of the boat where the captain sat, and the rudder was placed. Next to the captain, my eye and my camera caught Mohamed starting a song. Luckily, I had not turned off my audio-recorder; so I was able to capture him singing the whole melody alone. Then the rest of the group joined him in response.

SALIMA/LAILATA

Call: *Salima nilikwambia, Tulia nyumbani, lakini hukunisikia sijui unataka nini*
Response: *Salima nilikwambia, Tulia nyumbani, lakini hukusikia sijui unataka nini*
Call: *Eeee Salima nilikwambia, Tulia nyumbani, lakini hukunisikia sijui unataka nini*
Response: *Salima nilikwambia, Tulia nyumbani, lakini hukunisikia sijui unataka nini*
Call: *Nini uzuri wa mwanamke Salima wewee, tabia nzuri nyumbani, we mama aa*
Response: *Nini uzuri wa mwanamke Salima wewee, tabia nzuri nyumbani, we mama aa*
Call: *Utapata kubwa donge Salima weee, likufae miashani, Salima mama aaa*
Response: *Utapata kubwa donge Salima weee, likufae miashani, Salima mama aaa*
Call: *Wanakuzubaisha, Salima mama, ni vijana wa kihuni, Salima mamaa*
Response: *Wanakuzubaisha, Salima mama, ni vijana wa kihuni, Salima mamaa*
Call: *Kweli watakuja kupa mimba, Salima wewee, huwaoni hasilaani, Salima mama*
Call: *Kweli Salima nilikwambia, tulia nyumbani, likini hukunisikia, sijui unataka nini*
Response: *Kweli Salima nilikwambia, tulia nyumbani, likini hukunisikia, sijui unataka nini*

VARIATION 1

Call: *Sooma, soma shule*
Response: *Soma, we mama*
Call: *Sooma, soma shule*
Response: *Soma, we mama*
Call: *Kumbuka elimu ni ufunguo*
Response: *Kumbuka elimu ni ufunguo*
Call: *Kumbuka elimu ni ufunguo*
Response: *Kumbuka elimu ni ufunguo*
Call: *Kumbuka wenzio wasiosoma*

VARIATION 2

Call: *Soma, soma shule*
Response: *Ooh Lailata*
Call: *Soma, soma shule*
Response: *Ooh Lailata*
Call: *Faida utaiona*
Response: *Oooh Lailata*
Call: *Lailata utasoma shule*
Response: *Ooh Lailata*
Call: *Kumbuka elimu ni ufunguo wa maisha yako Lailata*
Response: *Ooh Lailata*
Call: *Lailata utasoma shule*
Response: *Ooh Lailata*

Call: *Waangalie wenzio wasio soma, wanapata tabu, Lailata*
 Response: *Waangalie wenzio wasio soma, wanapata tabu, Lailata*
 Call: *Lailata utasoma shule*
 Response: *Ooh Lailata*
 Call: *Kumbuka elimu ni ufunguo, wa maisha yako lailata*
 Response: *Ooh Lailata*
 Call: *Lailata utasoma shule*
 Response: *Ooh lailata*

TRANSLATION

Call: *Salima I told you, stay home but you did not heed me, what do you want*
 Response: *A beauty of a woman, good deeds at home, Salima*
 Call: *You will be rewarded a big thing, to serve you in your life*
 Response: *Salima I told you, stay home but you did not heed me, what do you want*
 Call: *Those hooligans are deceiving you*
 Response: *They will impregnate you, and you will never see them again*

VARIATION

Call: *Learn at school Lailata*
 Response: *You will see the benefits one day*
 Call: *Remember education is the key to your life, Lailata*
 Response: *Look at the struggle of your fellows who did not acquire education*
 Call: *Remember education is the key to your life, Lailata*
 Response: *You will see the benefits one day*

The song *Salima/Lailata* had a variation in its melody, as well as a character name-change; from *Salima* to *Lailata*. The song maintained the character's gender (female), and it kept education as its main theme. The theme focused on education, as well as a warning to young girls to abstain from sexual relationships. The change in the melody created a variation of sound, but it kept the same rhythm; aligned with paddling movements and rhythmic patterns.

Sexuality appeared in the song *Salima/Lailata*: it warns young girls against engaging in sexual relationships. *Salima* is portrayed as a young school girl (teen) at the risk of engaging in sexual relationships, which are morally forbidden in the community. The fishing community of Bagamoyo, especially of Zaramo ethnic group, have a tradition of rites of passage for girls after they go through puberty. The tradition is known as *kuchezwa* (being initiated into womanhood). This rite of passage is conducted through ceremonies that involves education on their bodily changes, risks of conceiving, their culture, and what is expected of them by the community. They are also taught sexual education, such as on how to please their partners (when they get married). There are many songs that teach girls of morals, not least on incidents of young girls falling into being sexual objects and victims of predatory behaviours of men.

The song and the theme encouraging girls to focus on education and good manners resonates with many real world initiatives and cultural shifts: encouraging girls to see themselves as learners and moral agents; and not just caregivers or adornments. All this shows that internal community encouragement can be just as powerful as institutional support.



Photo 5: A fisherman signalling to his colleague to take a lead on singing

4.3 Careless Character in Ko Mrima

Let us have a look at the third song, *Ko Mrima*, which I learned from an interview with Mzee Ngwari Makame, a retired fisher from Tumbatu Unguja, who lives in Kaole, Bagamoyo. During the interview, he explained how he had acquired his fishing skills, at the same time as his skills in musical traditions; including composing and performing during fishing activities. Mzee Ngwari also talked about the particular music tradition of adapting songs from other traditional ceremonies and religious contexts to fishing activities.

I learned to sing as a young man as I was learning to do madema (trap fishing). I used to steer the boat from the port all the way to where the traps are located in the ocean. I used some landmarks to navigate in the ocean and I would get the traps up, take the catch (fish) and, put the traps back in the ocean. I would also learn how to repair my boat, and have it ready for the next day.

I have been a captain for night fishing boats (ring nets); I have been a captain for jarife (big nets, aimed for certain kind of large fish) boats; as well as a captain for kokoro (net ring fishing in shallow water). I have been a captain and a fisher for all such kinds of fishing.

All those different kinds of fishing that I have mentioned used songs: we always sang and paddled when the ocean was calm, and there was no wind for sail. We did not sing at any other times: only when there was no wind. The songs were also performed in the night for special occasions. They were performed at ceremonies that used to be conducted when people had returned home from fishing camps (dago). We would organize a ceremony, and the songs would be performed. We would use the occasion to communicate messages about people that have done us wrong, betrayals, and if there were any cases of wives cheating while the husband was away, we would sing about it.

(Fieldnotes by the Author)

Mzee Ngwari went on to sing several songs in dialects, and translated them into official Swahili. Through his translations I could understand the lyrics and their contextual meanings. *Ko Mrima* is one of the songs he sang and translated for me into Kiswahili, which I have translated into English.

KO MRIMA

Ko Mrima ko, Ko Mrima ko × 2
Hamisi Saburi, Hatambua achochuma
Kaja na waka na guo la kuazima
Ko Mrima ko, Ko Mrima ko × 2

TRANSLATION

In Mrima there, In Mrima there
Hamisi Saburi could not figure what he had earned
He came home with anxiety and borrowed clothes

Mzee Ngwari sang and demonstrated for me the paddling movements, so that I could get a sensory understanding of the songs in relation to paddling, since the songs are related to paddling activity. He continued singing and I accompanied him by imitating the paddling movement while humming the sound of the paddles.

As I imitated the paddling movement and sound of paddles cutting through the water, he looked at me with a smile and nodded, signalling me to continue accompanying him. I could feel it was a special moment for him; reminding him of the days he was a captain and a lead singer of a fishing boat; singing these songs and performing them during ceremonies in Tumbatu. As an occupational song, *Ko Mrima* warns and reminds fishermen of what is expected of them by their families and the community.

According to Mzee Ngwari's own interpretation of the lyrics and experience, cases such that of 'Hamisi Saburi' (the character in this song) are common among fishermen in fishing communities. Fishermen like Hamisi Saburi would camp in coastal areas, far from their homes. In the case of this song, they mention a place known as Mrima. During the camp they are supposed to save money for the whole period and bring it home to their families. However, some of them—like Hamisi Saburi—return home to their families with nothing. Mzee Ngwari described Mrima as a place in Tanga region (north coast of Tanzania). It is a popular fisher camping site (*dago*), known for how fishermen end up spending their income on women, and irregular activities such as smoking pot.

Mzee Ngwari explained that a fisherman could earn between TZS5,000–10,000 (USD 2–4) a day during the camping period. They can save to up to more than TZS50,000 in a month; and between TZS150,000–200,000 in three (3) months. However, that income is not guaranteed. Sometimes fishermen would not catch any fish; or they might get a good catch but the market price might be low, and jeopardize their incomes.

According to Mzee Ngwari and the fishermen I interviewed, fishermen's experiences contrast starkly between lean and peak seasons, with each often lasting for six months. During the lean Kaskazi months (December to February/March), incomes are low, and households struggle to meet basic needs. This pattern not only destabilizes livelihoods, but also pushes many into debt and food insecurity

(Makame et al., (2015). *Coping with income challenges*, families may resort to informal loans; with expectations of the money being paid back to the loaner when the fishermen return from the *dago* (camp). Many fishers cannot access bank credit; hence they must rely on informal systems, individual loaners, and sometimes boat owners: all of whom loan them, and get paid from fish sales; thus keeping them in cycles of dependency and vulnerability.

Ko Mrima is not just a musical accompaniment; it is a cultural institution reinforcing certain expectations: men should save for their families and uphold their reputation in the community. In a world of income volatility, *Ko Mrima* empowers through foresight and savings: which is not just prudent; it is morally and socially essential. It encourages fishermen to plan ahead, resist debt cycles, and sustain dignity. By embedding the importance of savings in a song, the community collectively upholds norms of responsibility, reinforces behaviours that build long-term resilience, and challenge structural vulnerabilities.

5. Performing Zaramo Ngoma

As mentioned earlier, the majority of the fishers in our trip were from the Zaramo ethnic group; and the songs they performed—in particular *Salima/Lailata*—reflected their ethnicity, cultural and musical backgrounds, and ‘*ngoma*’ (dance and music) traditions. The fishermen explained that their musical influences are based on social events, where members of the community would come together and participate in ceremonies that involve music. Through such events they acquire their music skills, which they can transfer and link to their fishing activities. Therefore, such occasions continue to be important platforms for music training, as well as community well-being.

Zaramo is a Bantu language speaking ethnic group that inhabits the regions of Pwani (Coast) and Dar es Salaam, in the east coast of Mainland Tanzania. Like other ethnic groups in Tanzania, the Zaramo are known for their *ngoma* (dance and music) tradition, which combines the culture of dance, music, songs and movement. *Ngomas* are normally performed during ceremonies and celebrations related to rituals, such as initiations; as well as rites of passage and other seasonal rites of the Zaramo.

The *ngomas* of the Zaramo have different genres, with different names, functions and instrumentation. However, they all share common rhythmic, melodic and harmonic structures that identify them as being of Zaramo origin. Their instrumentation is built with a variety of instruments: including membrane (drums, made of animal skins), idiophone (shakers, xylophones, percussion), and sometimes aerophone (wind/blowing).

According to Sanga (2020), *ngoma* among the Zaramo and other cultures also refers to broader ritualistic cultural events such as circumcision rites, pre-wedding and wedding celebrations, healing ceremonies, funerals, religious practices, harvesting ceremonies, political events, and entertainment or leisure performances. In most cases, singing and dancing are integral to *ngoma*, where the occasion might include

several other types of music and dances of the Zaramo ethnic group. Therefore, the composition of *ngoma* songs includes people with singing and instrumentation (drums and shakers) skills. Its practice reflects its central role in building social solidarity and tranquillity among the Zaramo community.

These cultural practices and functions go far beyond occupational songs, as musical performances construct and produce social structures and cultural values (Seeger, 1987). In much Western scholarship, music is mostly considered as an artform existing for its own sake; with little or no 'social' significance beyond its own impact. By contrast, like in many African contexts, musical practices among the Zaramo go beyond mere production of sound: they binds humankind to its environment in both production and diffusion.

5.1 Contextual Function and Adaptation

Music in African cultural tradition is usually performed according to function and context. As exemplified by the empirical material presented here, fishermen perform music in relation to their fishing activity, which shows how music-making and performance relate to specific activities, in this context to occupation. But there is more to music than its social function. We need to appreciate not only sound and accompaniment, but attention should also be given to the words; although others give more attention to the structure and form of the music than the words (Nketia, 1974). I found that the fishermen's selection of songs had both form and content in consideration: the songs had to rhythmically sync with paddling movements, and lyrically to remind them of social and community issues.

However, the songs are not purely functional. The lyrics often address themes of *community, social responsibility, ancestral memory, and environmental awareness*; thereby embedding *meaningful social commentary* into performance. This dual function reflects Nketia's observation that *music can serve both as structured sound for work coordination, and as a medium for communicating social values* (ibid.).

What complicates Nketia's dichotomy slightly is the way these fishermen songs seem to *resist a clear separation* between 'music' and 'text'. Rather than privileging one over the other, both *lyrical content and musical form are mutually reinforcing*. For example, the song *Salima* laments society morals on girls, and reminds them of the importance of education as well.

One important aspect of the fishermen's songs that I learned is that community life lays much more emphasis on group musical activities than on solo performances. Those who get together in such communal activities generally belong to the same ethnic or linguistic group, and the singing is not focused on individual or solo embellishments. A collective activity such as paddling is used to make provision of domestic songs, or encourage the use of songs as accompaniment to domestic activities. While the song texts provide significant changes in thoughts, moods, or feelings, it may be the music that defines or expresses the general character of the occasion, or the spirit of the performance. (Nketia, 1974).

This integrated approach suggests that, in this context, *music and language operate symbiotically*, not hierarchically. Moreover, the *communal nature* of these songs *reaffirm social bonds* and maintain group morale; thereby reinforcing Nketia's broader assertion that music in African societies is a *social activity rooted in collective experience*, rather than as an individual expression (ibid.).

6. Musical Forms of Rhythm, Melody and Harmony with the Ocean

I was curious to know how music relates to the fishermen's work, and what criteria they use in choosing songs for various fishing activities, and paddling in particular. The fishermen told me that they select songs with lyrics and melody that fit the paddling movements, and the rhythmic patterns of their trips on the ocean. Apart from that, they also select songs based on tempo. The tempo/speed of a song depends on the need to move fast or slow. They will sing songs with a fast tempo when needing to paddle fast, and inversely songs with a slow tempo if they are required to move slowly. Of the songs of different tempos, they said:

Fast tempo (speed) song or slow tempo songs will be sung depending on how fast we want to move at a particular moment. We choose a fast tempo song to move faster and sometimes moderate fast tempo or slower tempo songs to match our energy when tired, or when not in a hurry. However, even if we are tired, when a song leader starts a fast tempo song we have to respond fast and paddle fast, because the song is a signal for the movement to be fast (Fishermen / Singers, Bagamoyo, August 2024).

I asked one of the fishermen: "How do you relate singing and fishing?" His response was: "*Njaa zetu zinatufanya tuimbe*" ("Our dire needs make us sing"). Does this mean that they sing out of desperation?

However, later he admitted that singing makes them work/paddle more efficiently. Also, he acknowledged that singing helps them manage their energy in paddling, endure the pain of the hard work, and articulates their resilience to cope with their tough working conditions. In other words, music helps them get the work done. Another fisher added that music connects them together; and that they have some fun singing while paddling. He continued that, while singing gives them energy, at the same time it reminds them of their social realities and responsibilities, such as educating their children; or reminds them of the importance of education to make lives better. His comment reminded me of the song *Salima/Lailata*, with the theme of the need for young girls to focus on education.

6.1 Rhythmic Structures

All songs performed during the fishing trip and interviews have one thing in common: rhythms based on the movements of the paddles and the sound of the water as paddles cut through it. In general, the songs had simple rhythmic structures so that melodies could fit in a measure of those paddling movements. They sang in a call and response style; with the response either in beats per measure, or paddling movements or two (2) per measure of paddling, when they responded half of the melody sung by a leader. The rhythm and melody complimented each other well, so that the singers were able to do the singing and the paddling movements in sync.

The boat rhythm was steady but not quite constant: it was as if the boat was a live animal, responding to the gusts and lulls in the wind, the short waves of the current wind, and the swell of a regular wind. My sense of balance was highlighted by the waves and the floating movements. As I walked across the deck I was constantly adjusting to however small the movements were. Gradually, as I got used to the rhythm, my gait changed and my body adapted to the movements of the boat.

The fishermen have a sharp sense of balance and ability to be in sync with the movements and rhythm of the ocean. From their singing and movements, I learned that rhythm must be sensed and felt. This does not exclude that a rhythm can affect one mentally; it can, only that subsequently it must be analysed in its relationship to other rhythms, and in its sensuous and bodily effects. The rhythm of the fishermen and the vessel in relation to the ocean, and the sociocultural rhythm on board a vessel, show the necessity of a mutual rhythm to navigate in relation to the rhythms of the ocean, which are evidently of vital significance for fishing life.

The voice—as a physical, and as opposed to a semantic phenomenon—plays a significant role since it functions as a rhythmical epicentre that coordinates a potentially polyrhythmic (multi layers of rhythms) fusion of rhythms. The fishers singing while doing demanding tasks is another example of the voice as a coordinating, collectivizing, and even enhancing force. During rhythmic paddling and singing, a crew becomes one collective body.

6.2 Melodic and Harmonic Structures

The songs had different melodic structures based on their origins. The first song, *Kwanza Tuombe Mungu*, and the second song, *Salima/Lailata*: both had Zaramo melodic structures as they were adopted from ceremonial *ngomas* of the Zaramo. Also, the song *Kwanza Tuombe Mungu* had a melodic structure that appeared to be a combination of Zaramo *ngoma* with more influence from the paddling rhythm. The song *Ko Mrima*, introduced and performed by Mzee Ngwari, had a melodic structure that also reflected its origin of *Tari* traditional music and dance of Tumbatu, Unguja.

Fishermen sang their harmonies based on the Zaramo music harmonic structure, especially in the song *Salima/Lailata*. They created some beautiful two parts (two voices) harmony combination of the Zaramo oriented vocal harmonies. However, their main focus was on the participation of all fishermen in the singing; and not on all singing in unison most of the time. But they all sang in key (a musical term for group of pitches that forms a basis for a song) established by the leader of the song. A few times I could hear one or two voices singing off-key (not the same pitch as the song leader and the rest of the group) in some parts of a song. Mzee Ngwari who performed a solo voice during our interview did not mention any other vocal parts. He did mainly one voice, and no harmonies or another vocal part apart from the main vocal he sang.

6.3 Rhythmic Body Movements

Between the singing and the paddling, I observed some interesting body movements. The fishermen had their bodies in unison movement that seemed to mark the beats. I noticed their shoulders and backs dropping on a every single beat. They did it on every move of a paddle, or each paddle movement; so one could define it as a sort of dancing movement while seated.

7. Relating to the Ocean Through Music

According to the fishermen's own perceptions, they sing to navigate the encounters with the ocean, and to improve their mental wellbeing during fishing activities. The use of traditional fishing songs during fishing relates to what Gunderson (2010) -- in a study of songs used by small-scale farmers in cooperative farming in Shinyanga and Mwanza, Tanzania -- refers to as 'musical labour'. By comparison, in the context of artisanal fishing, *musical labour songs* motivate fishers to work hard towards acquiring fishing yields. Among other aspects, the singing helps the fishermen endure hardships, distract their attention from the hard labour, and makes time pass quickly. Singing also ignites their spirits and keeps them united; giving them room to voice their concerns and views on sensitive issues.

Apart from enhancing fishers' morale and motivation to work hard during a fishing operation, fishing songs advance the fishers' *spiritual attachment with the ocean* and its spirits. Fishers sing songs -- e.g., in *Kwanza Tuombe Mungu* -- to appease God, ancestral spirits, and the ocean world in general; thereby making artisanal fishing operation in Bagamoyo not only a livelihood endeavour, but also a cultural practice involving fishers as actors and the ocean as a cultural space of marine cultural heritage (Mwasuni, 2024).

Among the people on the coast of Bagamoyo, spirituality is also mentioned by Uimonen and Masimbi (2021) in a study that acknowledges ocean worlds that have been formed over more than a millennium of transoceanic connectivity. Communities in this coastal area acknowledge the existence of the many spirits that fishers have to take into consideration when entering the ocean, while placing their trust and hope in the divine intervention of the Creator of life Himself. In this study, fishermen also mentioned that in addition to making them work much longer, music also makes the fear of the unseen spirits of the ocean disappears. In this context, singing songs with themes derived from other different social contexts is also a way of shifting their minds to making things better on land through their pain and sweat.

The fishermen in Bagamoyo demonstrated that the ocean is not only a space and a source of their livelihood, but rather it also stands at the core of how the people view and make sense of the world through musical expressions. Through musical expressions, artisanal *fishers embody the ocean in* multiple life courses in metaphorical and figurative forms, to convey particular messages about aspects of social life such as sexuality, marriage, politics, fishing practices, personified creatures or objects of nature, and supernatural beings and forces.

The music also shows a connection and relationship of the fishermen to *the community and their culture*. They use it to express their musical ability and skills in transferring and adapting music from one context to another, and in relation with the ocean. Through traditional music the ocean is expressed as a living body which holds the lives of the fishers together culturally, geographically and economically (Mwasumi, 2024). These study findings are comparable to others that have shown how fishermen use music for different purposes, and in communicating messages concerning social or environmental issues. Also, the various themes of sexuality, personified creatures, marriage, and politics have been revealed in other studies on the music of the fishing communities in the Indian Ocean coast of Tanzania. For example, in their study on fishing songs of Kilwa, Lubao and Ichumbaki (2023) report on how such themes occur in the fishing activities of fishers in Kilwa Kisiwani, on the south coast of Tanzania. They also mention that fishers in the area use music for self-entertainment, as well as during rowing and hauling nets.

Moreover, the study found that the lyrical contents of the occupational (paddling) songs refer to history, the environment, skills, and daily life; as the songs carry messages of moral values associated with maritime knowledge, fishing traditions, local taboos, and restrictions. In general, communities tightly link their music to their environment (Nketia, 1974). In this case, through their interaction with the ocean, fishers develop a sense of knowing by means of movement and sound. The vibrations of the ocean can be understood through the senses epistemologically as an important avenue through which to understand the ocean (Wollcot, 2016). In my conversations with the fishermen, I learned that they can relate to, and interpret, the conditions of the ocean based simply on the sounds of waves and wind; and they can tell, even from a distance, if the ocean is rough or calm.

For example, I was informed by a fisherman that, during the *Kaskazi* (northeast monsoon) season, an experienced *nahodha* (captain) can detect how challenging it will be to cross or sail from one location to the other just by listening to the sounds of waves. He continued saying that some less experienced captains have capsized vessels during this time of the year because they are not able to use their senses (including hearing) well, and tell whether they should go sailing and/or fishing.

8. Conclusion

From what I learned, one should neither expect to hear music among fishers in coastal communities every hour of the day, or every day of the week; nor should one expect to hear music on every social occasion, or during every kind of collective activity.

The songs can be complex in their use of poetic images conceived in the style of proverbs. Therefore, it might be difficult to hear a song that talks of the ocean, and/or the marine environment. But between the lines, or in one or a few words within a song that has a different theme, you may hear the ocean being mentioned. One should also take note of themes that deal with general issues, such as philosophical

and religious topics, or with specific problems of man's existence in the universe. These are also environmental songs that relate to people's environment, as well as their encounters with various creatures, including unseen spirits.

The embodied knowledge of tradition and cultural heritage of fishing songs in fishing communities along the coast of Tanzania is disappearing due to some changes in fishing methods, especially the increasing use of fiberglass boats and boat engines, as observed during the fieldwork. These changes affect the tradition of paddling; and even replace the paddling and singing as this becomes more and more irrelevant when fishers use boat engines. Therefore, there is a need to protect this important heritage for the sake of the community's history, identity, and artistic and cultural expression.

The study sees a need for the government of Tanzania to recognise the importance of the preservation of this cultural heritage, which includes documentation in digital form. This is accordance with the policy statements of the 1997 Cultural Policy of Tanzania that state, among others, that: "The protection of our cultural heritage is a civic responsibility and shall be supervised by the Government. Members of the public, plus private and public organizations shall be sensitised to cultural heritage. The close links between culture, natural resources, the environment and development programmes shall be emphasized" (1997 Cultural Policy of Tanzania: 26). Apart from those policy statements, more effort is recommended to preserve these traditions, especially now with technology changes, especially fishing mechanisms and the use of boat engines that replaces paddling, and hence the singing tradition.

Moreover, there is a need for further research to ascertain and catalogue music and songs that could be integrated in enhancing local community development and marine ecological advancement. These could be utilized as a practical knowledge-base that promises the sustainability of artisanal fisheries. As a rich heritage base of coastal society, the music and singing tradition of fishermen could be revitalized to bring not only economic benefits via cultural heritage tourism, but also through binding members of the society to a shared heritage of resources, and building societal tranquillity. Also, there is a need for culture and fishery authorities to ensure sustainable community-based management of marine cultural heritage.

Additionally, this study recommends further research on the future of artisanal fisheries and their marine knowledge embedded in the singing tradition in Bagamoyo and coastal Tanzania in the context of how the new wave of BE affects not only artisanal fishers' livelihood strategies, but also the cultural dimension of the ocean in the context of changing ecological and socio-economic milieux.

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