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'No Human Skeletons, No Shackles': Revisiting Local Interpretations of Mtumbei Kitambi Site in Matumbi Hills, Southern Tanzania

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Abstract

Mtumbei Kitambi site in Matumbi Hills, southern Tanzania, has generated contradictory interpretations among the locals. Its famous alternate name, Kwa Akida Mwidau, literally means a settlement of Akida Mwidau in Swahili language. Yet, much more mystery is attached to the place than the name suggests. The local people hold that it was a place where troublesome Africans were hanged to death during the nineteenth-century colonial incursions. Some reported seeing human skeletal remains, chains and shackles at the site. In the present, the locals avoid conducting any activity at the site for fear of disturbing human remains. Using historical archaeology, this article examines the local narratives to disentangle myths from the historical reality of the site. It scrutinises both oral accounts and nineteenth-century European documents against on-site material evidence to determine the historical facts. The article concludes by establishing that the bones interpreted by the local people as human skeletal remains are, in fact, donkey bones and metal objects—the latter hitherto mistaken for chains and shackles.

***Keywords*:** Historical archaeology, donkey shoes, trade outpost, Mtumbei Kitambi, Matumbi, Southern Tanzania.

1.0 Introduction

Many archaeological sites in Africa, including some of the world's most famous ones such as Olduvai Gorge and Laetoli in northern Tanzania, attracted professional archaeologists based on accounts and tips from members of local communities residing near those sites.[1] Pioneering non-local unprofessional archaeologists were also instrumental in unlocking the evidence of these sites.[2] In many cases, reporters come into contact with these sites while farming, hunting, collecting firewood, honey, and similar activities. For instance, the palaeoathropological site of Laetoli (dating 3.6 million years), which is famous for evidence of early hominin footprints signifying upright bipedal locomotion, was reported to Mary Leakey by Mr. Sanimu, a Maasai Moran who lived in Laetoli.[3] Likewise, the world-famous palaeontological site of Oldupai [Olduvai] Gorge (dating 2.3 million years) was

[1] E.B. Ichumbaki, T.J. Biginagwa, and B.B. Mapunda, "They Know More Than We Do, Yet We Appreciate Them Less Than They Deserve: Decoding Local Ontologies in Heritage Interpretation and Preservation in Southern Tanzania," *Journal of Community Archaeology and Heritage*, (2023): 1-19.

[2] M.D. Leakey, "Olduvai Gorge, 1911–75: A History of the Investigations*," Geological Society London Special Publications* 6, no. 1 (1978): 151-155.

[3] M.D. Leakey, "Introduction," in *Laetoli: A Pliocene Site in Northern Tanzania,* eds., M. Leakey and J. Harris (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 1–22.

reported by a German entomologist, Prof. Wilhelm Kattwinkel, who spotted some fossil bones projecting from the stratigraphy of the gorge when he was hunting butterflies.[4] Sometimes, reporters initiate the protection of those archaeological sites before professional archaeologists and other heritage practitioners come to know about them, attesting to the values the reporters attach to those sites.[5]

In fact, locals encountering archaeological sites do not necessarily wait for professional archaeologists to go and tell them about what the site was all about; they usually attempt to make sense of the sites and cultural materials they see and interpret what they entail based on their local knowledge and beliefs.[6] Some of the local people's interpretations are rather framed within the historical events rooted in their area. In East Africa, the historic slave trade and the Maji Maji War still resonate in local people's minds and lore, particularly in the most affected regions.[7] As a result, the interpretations some

[4] Leakey, "Olduvai Gorge, 1911–75."
[5] Ichumbaki, Biginagwa, and Mapunda, "They Know More Than We Do."
[6] S. Atalay, "Indigenous Archaeology as Decolonizing Practice," *American Indian Quarterly* (2006): 280-310; A. Matsuda. "When a Local Legend is (Mis)appropriated in the Interpretation of an Archaeological Site," *Archaeologies 6* (2010): 447-467.
[7] C.M. Kusimba, "Archaeology of Slavery in East Africa," *African Archaeological Review* 21, no. 2 (2004): 59-88; N.A. Rushohora. "An Archaeological identity of the Majimaji: Toward an Historical Archaeology of Resistance to German Colonization in Southern Tanzania," *Archaeologies* 11, no. 2 (2015): 246-271; T.J. Biginagwa, B.B. Mapunda, and E.B. Ichumbaki, "Multi-Directional Connectivity in

locals uphold about some archaeological sites in those regions are inextricably linked to these traumatic historic events. Mr. Francis Siza (79), for example, witnessed a bulldozer in 1984 unearth human skeletal remains of more than twenty individuals from a small confined space during a road construction through Lupilo Forest in Mbinga district in southern Tanzania.[8] He promptly surmised that the victims were slaves killed during the Arab-led slave trade in the region. Mr. Siza reburied the skeletal remains by the roadside and marked the reburial point with a large boulder on which he engraved the inscription: "*Wana lupilo wamelala hapa zaidi ya 20 ezi ya wahalabu*", loosely translated as "More than 20 Lupilo people [killed] during the Arab period are laid to rest here."

Sometimes, local people derive their interpretations of archaeological sites from myths. The Maasai myth about the footprints is a typical example. Recently Ichumbaki and his colleagues[9] testified that; the Maasai quickly claimed that the footprints that the researchers had exposed at Laetoli

Eastern and Southern Africa during the First and Early Second Millennia AD: Archaeological Evidence from Lupilo, Southern Tanzania," *Journal of African Archaeology* 19, no. 1 (2021): 72-89; H.O. Kiriama, *The Legacy of Slavery in Coastal Kenya: Memory, Identity, and Heritage*. (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022).

[8] Biginagwa, Mapunda, and Ichumbaki, *ibid.*

[9] E.B. Ichumbaki et al., "Local People's Interpretations of the Hominin Footprints at Laetoli, Tanzania," *Journal of Community Archaeology and Heritage 6*, no. 2 (2019): 122-138.

palaeoathropological site in northern Tanzania were of their legendary warriors named *Likalanga*. In the local Maasai narratives, *Likalanga* was born during an inter-ethnic warfare when a rival nearby community was killing the Maasai. Even though the Maasai were defeated, they kept their memory alive of getting revenge some days.[10] To avenge themselves, they summoned newly-born children to assist them in fighting their enemies. These hoped-for future saviours were isolated from the community and raised in distant places where they could not interact with any community members except elders who were teaching them the fighting techniques.[11] Oral traditions hold that *Likalanga* ate meat and drank blood and milk to grow bigger and bigger in readiness for fighting, hence became robust and heavier than other ordinary members of the society. Whenever he walked, his footprints left marks on the ground. Thus, the unearthed footprints by Ichumbaki and colleagues,[12] being relatively larger than those of the contemporary Maasai, made the Maasai 'confirm' their oral history that the legendary *Likalanga*, the hero warrior, truly existed.

This paper contends that regardless of the subjective nature of the interpretations about archaeological sites sometimes held by members of the local communities, archaeologists

[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Ibid*., 11.
[12] *Ibid.*

must listen carefully to them. Schmidt and Kehoe,[13] coined the term "the archaeology of listening" to emphasize the need for scholars to listen to local narratives for their interpretations and perspectives of the past. After all, in some situations, local interpretations have turned out to be correct after their views had been subjected to archaeological scrutiny.[14] Conversely, their views have been proven to be the wrong assumption not supported by tested archaeological evidence.[15] However, as Ichumbaki and colleagues,[16] further contend, in either case, local narratives about archaeological sites—whether correct or erroneous—are helpful in connecting the locals to the sites and, hence, holding them accountable for the protection and conservation of those sites.

The archaeological site of Mtumbei Kitambi in Matumbi Hills, the subject of this paper, became known thanks to local people's accounts.[17] Locals' interpretation connected the site

[13] P.R. Schmidt, and A.B. Kehoe, *Archaeologies of listening*, (Gainsville: University Press of Florida, 2019).
[14] P.R. Schmidt, "Oral Traditions, Archaeology, and History: A Short Reflective History," in *A History of African Archaeology* edited by P. Robertshaw (London: James Currey, 1990), 252-270.
[15] C.A. Folorunso, *Interrogating the Evidence: The Nigerian Cultural Landscape: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at the University of Ibadan on Thursday 25 October 2007* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 2007).
[16] Ichumbaki et al., "Local People's Interpretations of the Hominin Footprints at Laetoli," 12.
[17] Especially Mr. Abdallah Butoli Mweyo and Mr. Ezekiel Rwambo of Mtondo wa Kimwaga village where we camped during the 2007 field school.

variously with traumatic memories of the slave trade and brutal colonial rule in the region. According to the local narratives, this settlement had a macabre past, serving as a killing site for troublesome Africans.[18] Some locals refer to human skeletal remains of the victims and chains and shackles present at the site as evidence to support their claims.[19] This non-scientific interpretation raises many questions that demand answers, however. For instance, local narratives remain vague on when such killings happened—whether it was during the Arab-led slave trade or German colonial rule. Of greater concern, one wonders why this settlement should have also served as an execution site and not any other place in the vicinity. These vexing issues triggered this study in a bid to triangulate the local narratives about Mtumbei Kitambi with results from the historical archaeological inquiry.

This paper with recourse to evidence from the historical archaeological findings indicates that the bones that locals perceived as human skeletal remains present at the site had belonged to donkeys—not humans—and the metal objects

[18] Interviews with Mr. Butoli Mweyo, Mr. Ezekiel Rwambo, Mr. Kiyombo Killindo at Mtondo wa Kimwaga; Mr. Alhasa Ilumbo, Ms. Hawa Mohamed, Mr. Abdallah Ngaelwa at Mtumbei Kitambi; Mr. Uchape Upunda, Mr. Martin Kundangenda, Ms. Ashura Nangingite at Kibata – June 2007.

[19] Interviews with Mr. Kiyomo Killindo, Mr. Abdallah Ngalewa, and Mr. Kachepe Upunda at Kibata – June 2007.

they interpreted as chains and shackles were iron donkey shoes. These findings, therefore, debunk the belief that Mtumbei Kitambi was a killing site for Africans, as the locals claimed. Instead, evidence attests to how this settlement of an Arab trader from the Kilwa coast by the name of Mwidau had been home to numerous donkeys that served as beasts of burden. It appears that the Arab Mwidau did establish this settlement during the last quarter of the nineteenth century near what is today the Selous Game Reserve strategically to control the ivory and slave trade.

Following the 1884-5 Berlin conference during which European colonial powers divided up Africa in what has come to be known as the "Scramble for Africa", Germany took control of German East Africa (Deautsch-Ostafrika) in the African Great Lakes region as its colony. The colony comprised the then Tanganyika (now Tanzania), Burundi and Rwanda. The colonial authorities appointed Mr. Mwidau to the position of *Akida,* or local colonial agents, tasked with helping them to administer a group of villages in the Matumbi Hills area. Akida Mwidau adopted donkeys as his means of conveyance in executing his administrative duties including collecting taxes from the indigenous people. In the wake of the Maji Maji uprising, a rebellion initiated by the Matumbi ethnic group against the German colonial rule, Akida Mwidau found himself cornered and fled back to the Kilwa coast and, subsequently, to Songosongo Island. Because of the unbridled

power and often cruelty that the Akida wielded, his settlement and property he left behind, including the donkeys, could have been destroyed by the local mob of the Matumbi. As a German local agent, he was a sell-out to the community, hence their enemy.

For easy presentation of this research, the paper is divided into seven sections. Section two follows this introduction, describing the background of the study. The third section describes the geography and history of Matumbi Hills and the Mtumbei Kitambi site, the focal point of this paper. Section four presents the archaeological work undertaken at the site, including the survey and excavation. Section five analyses and interprets the archaeological materials, followed by a discussion of the findings in Section six. Finally, section seven entails a conclusion.

2.0 Research Background

In 2007, the author co-directed with Bertram Mapunda, a professor of archaeology, an archaeology field school for the University of Dar es Salaam undergraduate students in Matumbi Hills (Figure 1). The training research topic was the historical archaeology of the Maji Maji rebellion that allowed students learn about how to collect oral histories from local people about the rebellion, locate places (notably refuge sites such as caves) that feature in local narratives in connection with the object of the study, as well as recover the material evidence of the war (if any) through the scientific

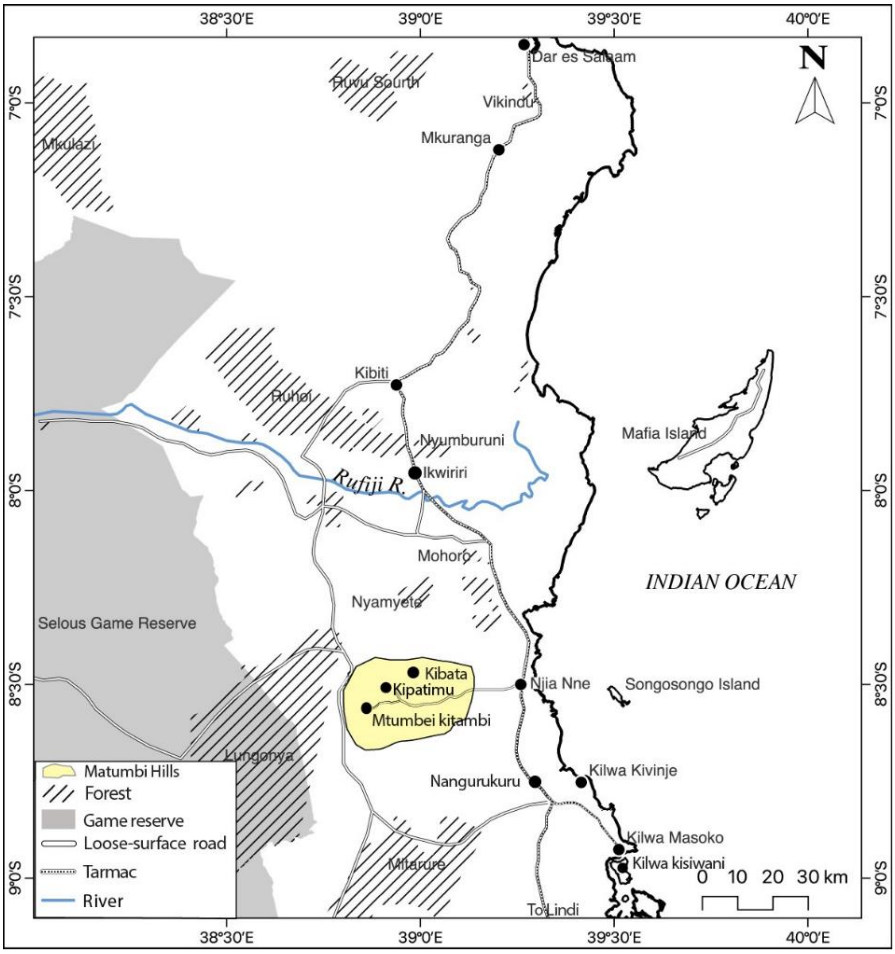
archaeological excavation of a sample of sites whose identification was informed by local narratives. Both students and instructors engaged fully in executing these activities. The site of Mtumbei Kitambi (Figure 1) repeatedly featured in local narratives as a settlement of an Arab going by the name of Akida Mwidau and as a place for hanging troublesome Africans.[20] Significantly, some informants had claimed to have seen scattered human skeletal remains, chains, and shackles at the site as evidence of the hanging of supposedly chained or shackled troublemakers.[21] Due to logistical and time constraints, the team did not explore this site archaeologically. However, one student, Nancy Alexander, recorded local narratives about the site under the author's guidance and visited the area briefly as part of data collection for her third-year independent project entitled "Archaeological evidence of the Maji Maji War in Matumbiland, South-eastern Tanzania."[22]

The author returned to Mtumbei Kitambi in December 2014, having included this site for further investigation under his Volkswagen-funded postdoctoral research project entitled "Archaeological exploration of the consequences of the nineteenth-century caravan trade expansion on the human

[20] Interviews with Mr. Butoli Mweyo et al., *op.cit*.
[21] Interviews with Mr. Kiyomo Killindo et al., *op.cit*.
[22] N. Alexander, *Archaeological Evidence of the Maji Maji War in Matumbiland, southern Tanzania* (University of Dar es Salaam: Unpublished Independent Project Report, 2008).

environment and subsistence strategies in southern Tanzania." To comprehend what could have been the function of the site in accordance with the accruing evidence and better assess the associated local narratives, the author approached the study through a *historical archaeology* lens, as briefly described in the subsequent paragraphs. The two-week research at the site involved an archaeological survey, archaeological excavation, and collection of additional oral histories about the site from nearby local residents. The author returned back to Mtumbei Kitambi in January 2023 for a three-day stint, during which he mapped the site and collected additional oral information to fill in gaps he had identified during the analysis of oral testimonies collected back in 2007 and 2014.

Figure 1: Location of the study site of Mtumbei Kitambi in Matumbi Hills, Kilwa District in southeast Tanzania



Historical archaeology as a research approach entails studying sites amenable to interpretation with the aid of multiple historical sources such as written documents, oral traditions,

and cultural material remains.[23] Historical sources in historical archaeology are twofold: "External" and "Internal."[24] External sources are those produced by outsiders as direct observers, transcribers, and copiers of verbal accounts provided by various visitors to foreign lands. The first-hand accounts published by Europeans who journeyed to East Africa exemplify external sources.[25] On the other hand, internal sources include a range of historical sources different African societies produce such as oral traditions and histories, myths, and personal anecdotes transcribed by professional historians and anthropologists.[26]

Wesler and Allsworth-Jones,[27] clarify that the defining factor of historical archaeology is the existence of, at least, two practically independent data sets that may be compared and applied as sources of hypotheses drawn from one and tested against the other. Doing so allows for a holistic view of the phenomenon under study and more rigorous testing of

[23] I. Pikirayi, *The Archaeological Identity of the Mutapa State: Towards an Historical Archaeology of Northern Zimbabwe* (Uppsala: Societas Archaeologica Upsaliensis, 1993), 36.
[24] I. Pikirayi, "Gold, Black Ivory and Houses of Stone: Historical Archaeology in Africa," in *Historical Archaeology*, eds., M. Hall and S. Silliman (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 230-50.
[25] *Ibid*.
[26] P.J. Lane. "Whither Historical Archaeology in Africa?" *Review of Archaeology* 28, (2007): 5-28.
[27]K.W. Wesler, and P. Allsworth-Jones eds., *Historical Archaeology in Nigeria*. (Africa World Press, 1998).

generalising formulations to materialise. This approach thus allowed the current study to collect local narratives (an oral source) about the site of Mtumbei Kitambi, compare them with nineteenth-century European accounts (a documentary source), and triangulated both against the material evidence (archaeology) to determine the site's function. The ensuing two sections describe the study area in terms of geography, history, and previous archaeological studies.

3.0 Matumbi Hills and Mtumbei Kitambi Site in Geographical and Historical Contexts

The site of Mtumbei Kitambi is within the broader geographical area known as the Matumbi Hills (Figure 1). The Matumbi Hills peak at 2,432 feet above mean sea level and cover a total area of about 400 square kilometres, most of which is dissected by numerous eroding valleys.[28] The Matumbi massif is Jurassic (142–212 million years old) and comprises shale sandstone known as the Matumbi series.[29] The upper hilltops are sandy or with rocky outcrops. There is a wide variety of soils in the valley bottoms derived from the parent sandstones and shale. These soils trap underground water to support forest vegetation in most valleys, as well as

[28]L.K. Stubblefield, *Management Summaries for 25 Coastal Forests in Tanzania*, no. 12, (Frontier Tanzania Report, 1994), 90.
[29] N.D. Burgess et al. "Preliminary Assessment of the Distribution, Status and Biological Importance of Coastal Forests in Tanzania," *Biological Conservation 62, no.* 3, (1992): 205-218.

cultivation and human settlements.[30] The northern and western faces of the Matumbi Hills capture most of the rain; meanwhile, several major seasonal rivers drain northwards into the Rufiji Basin.[31] Animals commonly found in the forested areas of Matumbi Hills include elephants, buffaloes, bush pigs, duikers, suni, and monkeys.[32]

The Matumbi ethnic group are the main occupant of the Matumbi Hills, hence the name. The word Matumbi means hills or mountain ranges in their language. As such, the Matumbi, or "Wamatumbi" in Kiswahili, simply mean "mountain people" or "mountain dwellers."[33] The Matumbi border the Ngindo and Mwera ethnic groups in the south, the Rufiji in the east and north, and the Pogoro in the west, across the Selous Game Reserve.[34] Oral traditions hold that the Matumbi people have been in Matumbi Hills for at least seven to eight hundred years after migrating north-east from what is now northern Malawi. This assertion is supported by the

[30] *Ibid*.
[31] G.P. Clarke, "The Lindi Local Centre of Endemism in Southeastern Tanzania," *Systematics and Geography of Plants* (2001): 1063-1072.
[32] A. Perkin, C. Leonard, and N. Doggart, *Landscape Profile: Kilwa*. Document Prepared as an Input to the GEF PPG Process to Develop a Full-Sized Proposal for the Tanzanian Coastal Forests (2008).
[33] B.B. Mapunda, "Encounter with an Injured Buffalo: Slavery and Colonial Emancipation in Tanzania," *Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage* 6, no. 1, (2017): 1-18.
[34] Mradi wa Lugha za Tanzania (hereafter MLT), *Atlasi ya Lugha za Tanzania* (Dar es Salaam: DUP, 2009).

archaeology of the area, particularly the local pottery. According to Mapunda,[35] pottery with ribbed motifs dominates the Matumbi Hills. Mapunda,[36] traces the origins of this pottery tradition to areas around the Lake Nyasa region (south-western Tanzania and northern Malawi) dated to the Late Iron Age (post-1500 AD).

Mapunda,[37] asserts that the Matumbi were not one people but an ethnic mosaic who come to the coast from the Lake Nyasa zone mostly through the ivory and slave trade, which have a long history in the region.[38] Reportedly, taking slaves from far inland areas was strategic for it ensured captives' greater disorientation—both cultural and spatial—on the coast, hence lessening the chance of successfully absconding and returning to their homelands. Today, *mnyasa* (a person for the Lake Nyasa region) denotes enslaved ancestry and can serve as an abusive epithet on the Swahili coast. The Matumbi emerged as runaway slaves from their putative owners at Kilwa-Kivinje on the coast[39] (Figure 1).

[35] Mapunda, "Encounter with an Injured Buffalo."
[36] *Ibid*.
[37] *Ibid*.
[38] J. Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*. (Cambridge: University Press, 1979).
[39] Mapunda, "Encounter with an Injured Buffalo."

European accounts of the nineteenth-century Matumbi Hills are extremely scarce. Fr. Ambros Mayer[40] revealed that only three Europeans had visited Matumbi Hills prior to the Maji Maji War in 1905, namely Count Pfeil (1886), a geologist named Bonhard (1897), and a geographer by the name of Schmidt (1898). Fr. Mayer's[41] brief report provides useful information on at least three key aspects relevant for the discussion in this paper. First is his observation that the Matumbi people were stubborn and difficult to deal with compared to their coastal neighbours. Fr. Mayer reveals that Arab traders had informed him about the difficulties they were experiencing in trading activities in Matumbiland. This includes the Matumbi's reluctance to be recruited as porters for trade cargoes. This observation is informative because it shows that coastal Arab traders were reaching Matumbi Hills for trading activities prior to the Maji Maji War. As revealed in subsequent sections, Akida Mwidau is likely one of the traders who had stationed in Matumbi Hills prior to his appointment as an Akida of the area. Second is Fr. Mayer's observation that by 1905, Matumbi Hills had a population of between 18,000 and 20,000 people who were under the rule of Arab Akidas, one of whom was Sefu bin Amiri, stationed at Kibata (the administrative headquarters of Matumbi Hills).

[40] Tanzania National Archives (hereafter TNA). *Tanganyika territory: District Book for the Kilwa District and Lindi Province* (Matumbiland in 1912 by Fr. Ambros Mayer) (Dar es Salaam: Printed by the Government Printer, 1928), 177.
[41] *Ibid.*

Furthermore, Fr. Mayer points out that there were 22 Jumbes who assisted the Akidas in administering the Matumbi Hills. Third, when the Maji Maji War broke out, the Akidas and the Jumbes fled back to the coast. Fr. Mayer's last two observations also feature in the local oral traditions, as presented in the subsequent sections.

The Matumbi Hills are historically famous because of the Maji Maji uprising (1905–07). The war was ignited by the Matumbi and soon spread to the whole of southern Tanganyika, drawing in over 15 ethnic groups.[42] The uprising began after the Matumbi uprooted cotton plants in a communal farm at Nandete village that had been cultivated under the order of the German colonial government. The uprising was catalysed by a medicine man, Kinjekitile Ngwale, who was a Ngindo by ethnicity. Possessed by a snake spirit and claiming to have been immersed in water for a day (before the start of the war), Kinjekitile proclaimed that the spirit gave him medicine that could enable the local Africans to defeat the Germans. The medicine, which consisted of water from the well in which he had been immersed, mixed with some herbal concoctions, was sprinkled on and consumed by the combatants in preparation for the war against the Germans.[43] The belief was that the medicinal water had the power to turn the opponent's

[42] Mapunda, "Encounter with an Injured Buffalo."
[43] *Ibid*.

bullet into the water once it hit a treated and "clean" combatant.[44]

Mapunda,[45] contends that the Matumbi initiated the Maji Maji rebellion and not any other ethnic group in Tanganyika that had similarly undergone severe pain and dehumanised by German colonial rule because they were 'injured buffalo'. Having liberated themselves from the yoke of enslavement at Kilwa coast (Kivinje), the Matumbi were unprepared for another form of humiliation and, thus, remained vengeful to anyone who reminded them of their bygone agonies, such as the Germans.

3.1 Oral and Documentary Accounts of Mtumbei Kitambi

The site of Mtumbei Kitambi is found in the village of the same name in the Kipatimu Ward, Kilwa district in Lindi region (Figure 1). The straight-line distance from Mtumbei Kitambi to the Kilwa (Kivinje) coast is about 70km, and more via the present-day road through Njia Nne (the junction), via Nangurukuru to Kilwa Kivinje township. The site of Mtumbei Kitambi is located just about 10 kilometres from the eastern border of the Selous Game Reserve. This site also goes by the name of *Kwa Akida* Mwidau among the locals in Matumbi Hills. Kwa Akida Mwidau or "a place of Akida Mwidau" was so

[44] *Ibid*.
[45] *Ibid.,* 13.

named because its occupier was Mr. Mwidau, an Arab from the Kilwa (Kivinje) coast. *Akida* is a Kiswahili name for a local ruler appointed by the German colonial government to help administer a group of villages on the coast and immediate hinterlands. Locals informed this study that Matumbi Hills had two Akidas during German colonial rule: Akida Mwidau and Akida Seif Bin Amiri, both Arabs. Akida Mwidau administered the four villages of Mtumbei Kitambi, Kandawale, Tipo, and Mtondo wa Kimwaga, whereas his counterpart, Akida Seif bin Amiri, stationed at Kibata, the location of the German Boma, administered the rest.[46]

As previously stated, local legends treat Mtumbei Kitambi as a place Akida Mwidau used to execute Africans sentenced to death for 'capital crimes.'[47] Locals have divergent opinions about who were the victims of the alleged killings. Some contend that they were slaves from the interior who had resisted completing their journey to the coast,[48] and some claim that the victims were the local Matumbi who disobeyed German-imposed colonial orders.[49] Some local narratives repeatedly mention the presence at the site of human skeletal remains as well as shackles and chains used to execute the

[46] Interviews with Mr. Butoli Mweyo et al., *op.cit*.
[47] *Ibid*.
[48] Interviews with Mr. Ngoteye Kapela, and Mr. Kimbeiya Upunda – June 2007.
[49] Interviews with Mr. Abdallah Butoli Mweyo, Ms. Aquilina Mpulu, and Mr. Mtakuja Kijimbo – June 2007

punishment.[50] Furthermore, some locals mentioned the presence of large old trees at the site, claiming that their branches were used for hanging the victims.[51] These trees are locally known as *mikakanungu* (plural), or *mkakanungu* (singular).[52]

Interestingly, locals have desisted from conducting any activity at the site due to the alleged presence of human remains that tradition and local beliefs require them to respect, or rather dread. Indeed, such "intactness" or rather the undisturbed nature of the site was proven at the time of undertaking this research. Almost the entire area reportedly to have been under the ambit of Akida Mwidau is still thickly vegetated with big trees, hence creating an impression of a kind of sacred forest (Figure 2). This scenario contrasts with the immediate surroundings, which have morphed into bare agricultural land for the commercial production of sesame. Oral tradition in the area consistently reports that Akida Mwadau unceremoniously escaped from the Matumbi Hills to Songosongo Island, off the Kilwa coast, in the wake of the Maji Maji War to save his skin after a service that the locals believed was treacherous.[53]

[50] Interviews with Mr. Kiyomo Killindo et al., *op.cit*.
[51] Interview with Mr. Alhasan Ilumbo, Abdallah Butoli Mweyo (Mtumbei Kitambi) – January 2023.
[52] Interview with Mr. Abdallah Butoli Mweyo – January 2023.
[53] Interviews with Mr. Abdallah Butoli Mweyo, Mr. Stephen Killindo, and Mr. Mtakuja Kijimbo, at Mtondo wa Kimwaga – June 2007.

Figure 2: A section view of a thickly vegetated site of Mtumbei Kitambi, excavation in progress. Author's photo, 2014

European accounts specifically for the Mtumbei Kitambi site are lacking. Biginagwa and Mapunda,[54] have noted the relative dearth of written accounts that could otherwise

[54] T.J. Biginagwa and B.B. Mapunda, "The Kilwa-Nyasa Caravan Route: The long-neglected trading corridor in southern Tanzania," in *The Swahili World, e*ds., S. Wynne-Jones and A. LaViolette (London: Routledge, 2018), 541.

facilitate historical archaeology research in southern Tanzania. The only piece of documentation about the site thus far is by Pfeil,[55] who described the nineteenth-century caravan route from Kilwa Kivinje (on the Indian Ocean coast) to northern Lake Nyasa via Matumbi Hills. In his accounts, Pfeil places Mtumbei Kitambi [a village misspelt "Mtembesi"] as the sixth stopping point, after which the caravans encountered the "bushland" (what is today the Selous Game Reserve). Indeed, Mtumbei Kitambi is just 10km away from the eastern border of the Selous Game Reserve. Before "Mtembesi" [Mtumbei Kitambi], the villages mentioned on this route after "Kilwa Kivindje [Kivinje]" are Ngamo, Nyenga, Kilembe, Mnyambondo, Juaunanga, Matumbi [Hills], Mtembesi**,** then "bushland." Pfeil does not provide any further details about the settlement of Mtumbei Kitambi. Also, several of these villages (though some names have changed) lie along the 40 km-long present-day dust road from Njia Nne on the Nangurukuru–Dar es Salaam Road (Figure 1).

Local narratives on Mtumbei Kitambi, however, have not been subjected to archaeological testing. In truth, Africans suffered significantly under the slave trade and brutal German colonial rule, including the deaths of many. However, the claim that Mtumbei Kitambi was an execution site raises many

[55] J.G. Pfeil, "Die Erforschung des Ulangagebietes," in *St. Petermanns Mitteilungen aus Justus Perthes Geographischer Anstalt 32*, ed., A. Petermann (Gotha: Justus Perthes, 1886), 353–62.

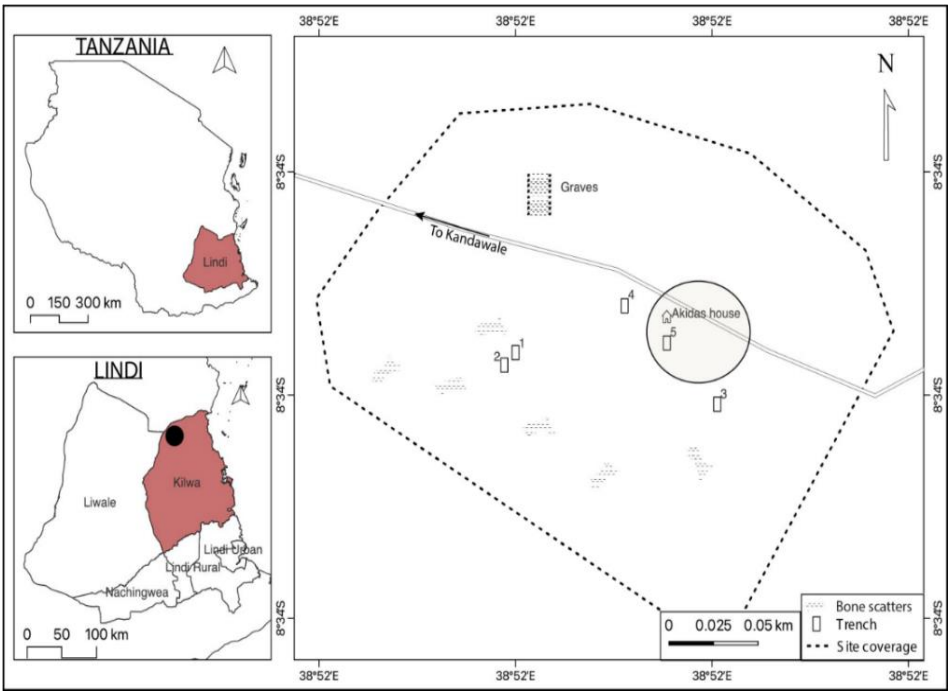
questions. In particular, one may wonder why these killings occurred at Akida's compound and the victims' bodies left unburied. The foul smell from the decomposing bodies of the victims would not allow the inhabitants of this settlement to settle, let alone deal with the fears that would emanate from seeing humans being killed regularly and their skeletons left scattered everywhere on the compound. The absence of records indicating that some slaves resisted reaching the coast and being killed somewhere in the coastal hinterland fuels scepticism. Indeed, these contradictions justified the conducting of this study to scrutinise the local people's interpretations of Mtumbei Kitambi site. The subsequent section presents the archaeology of Mtumbei Kitambi, against which the testing of the oral and documentary sources about the site's functions occurs.

3.2 Archaeological Exploration at Mtumbei Kitambi

The archaeological exploration at Mtumbei Kitambi from December 2014 to January 2015 consisted of both a survey and an excavation. The author and his team conducted a random foot walkover survey to determine the spatial extent of the site. The survey was guided by two local collaborators (Mr. Abdallah Butoli and Mr. Kyangi Yasin) in a bid to locate and characterise surface occurrences of archaeological materials such as artifacts, ecofacts, features, and structures, if any. An archaeological survey was useful in determining where to locate excavation units. In terms of results, the archaeological

survey established the area of the settlement to have measured about 5ha, with a large part of it lying on a gentle slope in the north-south orientation (Figure 3). Patches of burned bones were found in the southern half of the settlement towards the base of the slope. On the contrary, surface scatters of artifacts, notably local and imported ceramics and glass beads, were evident in the northern section of the settlement. A ruined rectangular wattle-and-daub house structure was also located, which our local research collaborators claimed to be Akida Mwidau's house. The survey also identified a graveyard located towards the northern end of the settlement (Figure 3). In all, eight graves were located, arranged in a single line of about 25m oriented north-south. Each grave has flat stone markers in a Muslim style. Taken together, the spatial distribution of archaeological material suggests the core occupation area in this settlement was confined to the northern half of the site, a determination also supported by archaeological materials yielded from excavations (below).

Figure 3: Layout of Akida Mwidau's settlement of Mtumbei Kitambi, showing the location of trenches excavated and other features mentioned in the text. The heavy dotted lines mark the approximate outline of the site.



In terms of archaeological excavations, five units were accomplished at the site (Figure 3). The trenches differed in size, mostly determined by the aspects targeted in each location within the site. Two trenches (1 & 2) were established in the southern half of the settlement to target patches of gutted bones identified during an archaeological survey. Two

other trenches (4 and 5) were dug just in the northern half of the settlement. One of the trenches (no. 5) was established just a few metres away from a rectangular ruined house identified during the archaeological survey, and another trench (no. 3) was established at about 30m due southeast from Trench 5 in the area we suspected to have been the front space of the compound. Trench no. 4 was set almost in the middle of the settlement, typically in an area with no archaeological material seen on the ground surface. Excavated depths in all the trenches ranged from 30 to 80 cm (Table 1), implying that the stratigraphy of the site is relatively shallow.

All the excavation units displayed insignificant stratigraphic soil colour changes, with dark brown humic soil (7.5 YR, 4/2) dominating across trenches. The final basal levels displayed a light brown soil colour (7.5 YR, 6/2). One charcoal sample for radiocarbon dating was collected from Trench 5 (very close to Akida's house) at a depth of 70 cm, which is the base of the anthropogenic deposit at the site. This sample was radiocarbon dated at the Poznan Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory in Poland (Poz-78580) and yielded a date of 170 ± 30 BP. This date suggests that this particular settlement was inhabited during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Although there are inherent difficulties in radiocarbon dating for post-1600 material, this date is acceptable for Mtumbei Kitambi because the site also yielded some cultural materials, particularly imported ceramics and glass beads, whose

manufacturing and arrival in East Africa fall within the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Table 1 presents the material types and their amounts yielded from excavation units at Mtumbei Kitambi.

Table 1: Cultural materials yielded from all five excavation units at Mtumbei Kitambi

Trench	Final Depths (cm)	Cultural materials							
		Bones	Local pottery	Glass beads	Imported pottery	Glass bottle	Iron object	Sea shells	Gun shells
1	30	2,813					5		
2	40	1,517					2		
3	60	27	178	13	7	3			2
4	70	49	14	10	5	2		1	
5	80	88	293	21	16	7		4	
Total		**4,494**	**485**	**44**	**28**	**12**	**7**	**5**	**2**

4.0 Analysis and Interpretation of Archaeological Materials

The spatial distribution of different types of cultural materials from the excavations is consistent with the observation made earlier based on the archaeological survey, that the northern section of the site was the core area of the settlement (i.e., where Akida Mwidau's house(s) were located) whereas the southern section was in the periphery. Table 1 shows that the only materials retrieved from trenches excavated in the

southern section of the settlement are bones and metal objects. The excavation in this area of the settlement targeted a sample of patches of bones to test local narratives—whether or not those bones were human skeletal remains.

The analysis of the bones recovered from the southern trenches revealed that the bones belong to *equidae* (i.e., donkeys). This animal species was identified on the basis of diagnostic skeletal elements that survived, albeit completely burned, notably metapodials, phalanges, and teeth. No single human bone was identified in the analysed sample. Even though the burnt nature of the bones analysed could not permit the identification of bone surface markers that could otherwise inform the human involvement in the deaths of these animals, the nature of carcass deposition in the two excavated trenches is consistent with the animals having died naturally. Afterwards, periodic fires burned the bones to the state in which we found them.

On the contrary, faunal remains retrieved from other trenches in the northern half of the settlement represented a wide range of animal species. Most of the maximally identifiable specimens (n = 53) belong to the medium-sized *antilopinae* species such as gazelles. These bones were not as badly burned as those of the donkeys retrieved from Trenches 1 and 2. Cut marks were also prevalent for several bone specimens, which signifies human consumption; in other words, food refusal. A small number of fish bones (n = 11) were also found

in the faunal assemblage, implying that the inhabitants of this settlement had access to fish, most likely dried ones, from the Indian Ocean coast. Chickens are the only domesticated birds identified in the assemblage (n = 5). Likewise, no single human bone was identified in the faunal assemblages retrieved from the northern section of the settlement. The abundance of wild species is unsurprising given the site's proximity to what is the present-day Selous Game Reserve. In other words, those animals were aplenty and easily accessible for consumption by Akida Mwidau and his followers.

Local ceramic is the second abundant class of cultural material yielded at Mtumbei Kitambi after bones, all from trenches 3, 4, and 5. Unlike Mapunda's findings from the broader Matumbi Hills,[56] most of the pottery yielded here were plain, except for three pieces signalling the "arc motif," a decoration which is common at the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' Swahili coastal sites such as Kilwa Kivinje,[57] and offshore islands such as Mafia and Pemba.[58] A

[56] Mapunda, "Encounter with an Injured Buffalo."
[57] T.J. Biginagwa. "Archaeological investigation at Kilwa Kivinje: a 19th century coastal caravan terminus in southern Tanzania," *Studies in the African Past* 12 (2015): 60-97.
[58] S. Wynne-Jones and B.B. Mapunda, "This is What Pots Look Like Here: Ceramics, Tradition and Consumption on Mafia Island, Tanzania," *Azania: Journal of the British Institute in Eastern Africa* 43, no. 1 (2008): 1-17; S. Croucher, "Plantations on Zanzibar: An Archaeological Approach to Complex Identities" (University of Manchester: Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 2006).

few potsherds informative of vessel forms revealed the presence of open pots and carinated vessels, the latter being the ones with arch-motif decoration styles. Due to the proximity of Mtumbei Kitambi and the Kilwa coast, these ceramic vessels could either have been locally produced in the Matumbi Hills by potters trained at the coast (hence the imitation of the coastal design styles) or were imported from the coast, or both. Yet, as hinted at above, the ancestors of the present-day Matumbi were runaway slaves from the coast of Kilwa.[59] Carinated pots, which are commonly found on the coastal sites of East Africa, also reportedly served the purpose of cooking fish and rice.[60] These vessels at Mtumbei Kitambi are suggestive of coastal culture (food and cooking styles) spreading to the interior during the nineteenth century.

In all, seven iron objects were recovered from trenches 1 & 2 located in the southern section of the settlement (Table 1). Two of these objects were directly associated with the corpses of the donkeys (Figure 4). These objects have been identified as iron donkey shoes (Figure 5). Their association with the donkey corpse denotes that these animals died at the site with their iron shoes on and were left unburied. This interpretation seems to be consistent with local narratives that the site occupant, Akida Mwidau, who likely owned these animals, left this settlement in a hurry and disarray when confronted with

[59] Mapunda, "Encounter with an Injured Buffalo."
[60] Wyne-Jones and Mapunda, , "This is What Pots Look Like Here."

imminent death following the explosion of the Maji Maji rebellion. These animals were likely some of his properties that he left behind.

Figure 4: Excavation of trench 1 is in progress, with donkey bones and iron donkey shoes exposed at a depth of 30cm below ground. Author's photo, 2014

Imported cultural materials unearthed from this settlement were glass beads, pottery, glass bottles, and gun shells (Table 1). Collectively, these materials are similar to those found at several nineteenth-century caravan trade terminals on the

East African coast, such as Pangani, Kilwa - Kivinje, Bagamoyo, Saadani, and Mbwa Maji.[61] Those goods have also been found in the hinterland and inland sites along the nineteenth-century caravan trade routes, such as Kwa Fungo, Old Korogwe, Ngombezi, and Maurui along the Tanzanian northern caravan route,[62] and Mang'ua and Kikole along the southern caravan route.[63] Some of these materials, for example, glass beads, were imported *en masse* from Europe (especially Venice) and the Arab and Swahili coastal traders used them to procure ivory, slaves, and other key products of the long-distance caravan trade in the interior.[64] Some of these imports also served as currency for procuring food and other services along the caravan routes in the interior. Finding these items at the Arab settlement in the hinterland is thus unsurprising because they had reached there through trade.

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[61] Biginagwa, "Archaeological investigation at Kilwa Kivinje."
[62] T.J. Biginagwa and E.B. Ichumbaki, "Settlement history of the islands on the Pangani River, northeastern Tanzania," *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa* 53, no. 1 (2018): 63-82.
[63] T.J. Biginagwa, and P. Katto, "Archaeological Perspective on the Impacts of Caravan Trade Expansion in East Africa: Emerging Alternative Histories," *Journal of Education, Humanities, and Science* 9, no. 3 (2020): 56–80.
[64] R. Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Equatorial Africa with Notes of the Lunar Mountains and the Sources of the White Nile* (London: Royal Geographical Society, 1859); K. Pallaver, "A Recognized Currency in Beads: Glass Beads as Money in 19th - Century East Africa: The Central Caravan Road," *Money in Africa*, (2009): 20-29.

At some stage, they became privy to the slave trade on the Indian Ocean. Finally, the presence of seashells (*Cypraea* spp.) at this settlement, along with fish fauna, is informative when it comes to how Akida Mwidau and his fellows at Mtumbei Kitambi were in regular contact with the coast.

Figure 5: Iron donkey shoes retrieved from Akida Mwidau's settlement

5.0 Discussion

The various sources engaged in this study, namely oral and documentary sources in conjunction with material evidence warrant the reinterpretation of Mtumbei Kitambi site with the highest degree of accuracy. Indeed, this marks the hallmark of historical archaeology. Evidently, Mtumbei Kitambi, rather than being a killing site for humans as local narratives claim, was the settlement of an Arab trader by the name of Mwidau. Convincingly, Mr. Mwidau relocated from Kilwa Kivinje to establish this settlement on Matumbi Hills for commercial reasons during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Indeed, this settlement appears on Pfeil's (1886) map that shows caravan halt settlements on the trade route from Kilwa Kivinje on the Indian Ocean coast to the northern tip of Lake Nyasa via what is present-day Selous Game Reserve. The proposition that this settlement was established during the last quarter of the nineteenth century also derives from the chronometric dating of radiocarbon fourteen (C14) as presented above, as well as the relative dates derived from some cultural materials retrieved at this settlement, notably imported glass beads and ceramics.

The timeframe for the foundation of this settlement coincides with the peak of the ivory and slave trade in East Africa following the exponentially rising demand for ivory in the

Western world,[65] and slaves for labour supply on the East African coastal plantations.[66] To meet the supply side, coastal Arab-Swahili traders began to establish trading outposts in the interior to facilitate the collection and shipping to the coast of these major commodities of the world market. Karin Pallaver,[67] observes that "during this period, as the resources of ivory [near the coast] were diminishing following the big hunting of the first half of the nineteenth century, the frontier of the ivory moved west…" Mtumbei Kitambi seems to be one of those trading outposts in East Africa. There are several others reported in historical documents, such as Mamboya in Ukaguru, Mpwapwa in Ugogo, Kazeh in Unyamwezi, Ujiji in Lake Tanganyika,[68] and Kasongo in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.[69] In 1857, Richard Burton reported that there were 25 Arab residents in Tabora,[70] whereas in 1872

[65] A. Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy 1770–1873* (London: James Currey, 1987).
[66] J. Glassman, "The Bondman's New Clothes: The Contradictory Consciousness of Slave Resistance on the Swahili Coast," *Journal of African History* 32 (1991): 277 – 312.
[67] K. Pallaver, "Nyamwezi Participation in Nineteenth-Century East African Long-Distance Trade: Some Evidence from Missionary Sources," *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 61, no. 3/4, (2006): 519.
[68] Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Equatorial Africa*.
[69] N. Arazi et al., "History, Archaeology and Memory of the Swahili-Arab in the Maniema, Democratic Republic of Congo" in *Antiquity* 94, no. 375, (2020).
[70] Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Equatorial Africa*.

David Livingstone reported their population to have increased to eighty.[71] These Arab-Swahili settlements mentioned above are located along what was the East African Central Caravan Trade Route. For the southern route, such settlements included Mang'ua, Kikole, and Ruanda in Ungoni.[72]

Various reasons for the establishment of Arab-Swahili trading outposts in the interior have been spelt out. Sperling and Kagabo,[73] contend that "the reasons were varied; for example, it might have been to secure a strategic or convenient location, or because of the availability of trade items or provisions, or the political influence of a particular chief or leader." Commenting on a similar settlement in Kaze (Tabora), Burton,[74] argued that "the central position and the comparative safety of Unyanyembe have made it the headquarters of the Omani or pure Arabs, who in many cases settle here for years, remaining in charge of their depots while factors and slaves travel about the country and collect the items of traffic." On the other hand, Pallaver,[75] contended that "the necessities to store and protect the goods, particularly

[71] D. Livingstone, *Living Stone's Africa: Perilous Adventures and Extensive Discoveries in the Interior of Africa.* (Washington: Hubbard Bros, 1872).
[72] B.B. Mapunda, "East African Slave Trade: Unravelling Post-Abolition Slave Coverts in the Interior of Southern Tanzania," *Utafiti* 5, no. 1 (2004): 61–76; Biginagwa and Mapunda, 2018, *op.cit.*
[73] D. Sperling, and J. Kagabo. *The Coastal Hinterland and Interior of East Africa*. (Ohio: University Press, 2015), 287.
[74] Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Equatorial Africa*, 180.
[75] Pallaver, "Nyamwezi Participation," 515.

during the rainy season, made the coastal merchants establish depots where the caravans could halt." These inland outposts also served as the main centres where porters were recruited.[76]

Back to Mtumbei Kitambi, it appears that after the Germans had the colonial mandate of reigning over German East Africa, inclusive of Tanganyika as their colony, appointed Mr. Mwidau to administer some of the villages on Matumbi Hills. Historians have reported that the Germans opted for an *Akida* and *Jumbe* governance system based on the appointment of school-educated, Swahili-speaking agents (mainly Arab and Swahili) rather than one based on the ethnic authority of the chiefdoms.[77] As such, the Germans appear to have exploited having Mwidau, who was already well-established in the Matumbi Hills area, serve as the *Akida*. By then, the Germans had chosen Kilwa Kivinje (Figure 1) as their administrative headquarters for southern Tanganyika. To Mwidau, an appointment to the position of Akida was probably more advantageous because the ivory trade that he was benefitting from had by then declined significantly in the 1890s and the slave trade was no longer in the vogue particularly with the onset of formal German colonial administration in the then Tanganyika as part of German East Africa. The German administration had enforced a ban on killing elephants for

[76] *Ibid*.
[77] Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*.

ivory by introducing game regulations in early 1896, along with the demarcation of game reserves in the colony.[78]

Having been installed as the Akida seems to have prompted Mwidau to opt for donkeys as his means of transportation at a time when the transportation infrastructure was severely underdeveloped. In fact, historical literature reports that the Germans preferred horses and donkeys as means of conveyance in executing their administrative roles in their colonies.[79] Rough terrain and large administrative areas necessitated that they keep their horse and donkeys in iron shoes. Indeed, archaeologists have reported that sites impacted by European colonialism typically signal the presence of iron donkey shoes, among several other objects.[80]

[78] R.D. Baldus, "Wildlife Conservation in Tanganyika under German Colonial Rule," *Internationales Afrikaforum* 37, no. 1, (2001): 73–78; B. Gissibl, "German Colonialism and the Beginnings of International Wildlife Preservation in Africa" *German Historical Institute Bulletin* 3, (2006): 121–143; W.B. Adams, *Against Extinction: The Story of Conservation*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).
[79] Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika.*; J. Koponen, *Development for Exploitation: German Colonial Policies in Mainland Tanzania 1884-1914*, (Helsinki: Finnish Historical Society, 1994); H. Sosovele, "Donkey Traction in Tanzania: Some Critical Issues," in *Donkeys, People and Development,* eds., P. Fernando and P. Starkey (*ATNESA*, 1996), 107-112.
[80] J.R. Walz, "Route to A Regional Past: An Archaeology of the Lower Pangani (Ruvu) Basin, Tanzania, 500-1900 C.E." (University of Florida: Ph.D. Dissertation, 2010), 318.

Oral tradition is consistent with the narrative that Akida Mwidau fled from Matumbi Hills in the wake of the Maji Maji rebellion in 1905, to avoid the noose of the Matumbi, who could have lynched him for being an agent of the oppressive German colonial administration. Archaeological finds at Mtumbei Kitambi are also consistent with the observation that Akida Mwidau left Matumbi Hills unceremoniously. The deposition of donkey corpses in his former settlement suggests that these animals died unattended to, without the carcasses being buried as a punitive measure against what they had deemed as a cruel German agent. Had the owner of the donkeys been around during their deaths, he could have removed the iron donkey shoes for re-use on other donkeys considering how expensive those items were at that time since they were probably being imported. This is to argue that the donkey owners could not dare to abandon all the iron donkey shoes as some were at their very early worn-out stage as established by this study (Figure 5).

Finally, a note on the values this study has added for the Mtumbei Kitambi site. In fact, this exploration has exposed the site's hidden values in addition to rectifying local accounts. To begin with, Mtumbei Kitambi has emerged to be one of the relatively few archaeologically researched locales of the nineteenth-century East African slave and ivory caravan trade. In fact, the inland Arab-Swahili trading outposts had been established in the second half of the nineteenth century

to adapt to the world's ivory trade dynamics. These trading outposts have not yet received archaeological attention despite getting mentioned in nineteenth-century European accounts as well as in some later historical studies.[81] As a result, this research has provided tangible evidence on the Mtumbei Kitambi that pinpoints one of the caravan trade routes of the nineteenth century. Even though some may imagine the caravan routes as physical pathways, Biginagwa,[82] contends that the proper physical markers of the routes are the caravan trade outposts and settlements such as Mtumbei Kitambi.

Second, Mtumbei Kitambi and several similar Arab-Swahili trade outposts mentioned in this paper serve as physical proof of the scope, extent, and direction of the nineteenth-century East African ivory and slave trade. These settlements may contribute to the settling of the scholarly debate surrounding the "ivory frontier thesis," which contends that as demand for

[81] For exceptional cases, see Mapunda, "East African Slave Trade" ; P. Katto, "Coast-Interior Connectivity During the Nineteenth Century: Archaeological Evidence of the Caravan Trade from Southern Tanzania" (University of Dar es Salaam: Unpublished MA Dissertation, 2016); C. Mgombere, "Archaeological Evidence of Crop Economies Practiced Along the Nineteenth Century Caravan Route in Southern Tanzania" (University of Dar es Salaam: Unpublished MA Dissertation, 2017); Arazi, "History, Archaeology and Memory of the Swahili-Arab in the Maniema."
[82] T.J. Biginagwa, "Historical Archaeology of the 19th Century Caravan Trade in North-eastern Tanzania: A Zooarchaeological Perspective" (The University of York: Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 2012).

ivory increased throughout the nineteenth century, traders shifted their extraction zone from the coast towards the interior. Proponents of this position argue that elephants were extensively dispersed and frequently observed in coastal areas throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, but they were eliminated, leading to successive exploitations further inland.[83] This perspective contrasts with that of Thorbahn,[84] who claims that elephants were hunted across a wide region in the middle of the century, not just along the coast. Thorbahn bases his claim on the premise that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, most of the ivory came from trading communities in the interior rather than from the coast. In fact, this discussion finds credence in the scholarly attempt to explain the effects of the ivory trade in the nineteenth century on the ecology of human resource usage in East Africa.[85]

[83] Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar,* 78; T.N. Håkansson, "The Human Ecology of World Systems in East Africa: The Impact of the Ivory Trade," *Human Ecology 32* (2004): 568.
[84] P.F. Thorbahn, "The Pre-Colonial Ivory Trade of East Africa: Reconstruction of a Human-Elephant Ecosystem" (University of Massachusetts: Ph.D. Dissertation, 1979).
[85] Håkansson, "The Human Ecology of World Systems in East Africa" ; A.N. Coutu, "Tracing the Links Between Elephants, Humans and Landscapes During the 19th Century East African Ivory Trade: A Bioarchaeological Study" (The University of York: Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 2011).

Finally, Mtumbei Kitambi and similar settlements provide verifiable proof of how some coastal cultures spread to the interior during the nineteenth century through caravan trade. Archaeological research at Mtumbei Kitambi (this paper) and Kikole,[86] reveals that coastal Arab-Swahili traders who moved inland introduced rectangular houses, cultivated coastal crops such as rice, mango, and date palm trees, and even used coastal cooking implements such as carinated vessels for cooking a variety of coastal foods. Rashid bin Masudi's residence at Kikole in south-western Tanzania, for instance, had a layout and orientation of houses comparable to those along the coast.[87]

6.0 Conclusion

This study revisited the local interpretations of the Mtumbei Kitambi site on the Matumbi Hills. The study has demonstrated archaeology's role in writing and rewriting history. Specifically, the study has corrected the misconstrued history of Mtumbei Kitambi as a site for the killings of disobedient Africans during the nineteenth century. The material culture from the site examined such as those referred to by locals, as evidence to back up their formulations, has refuted the local perception and interpretation. The study has additionally yielded new information on the site. It is now evident that Mtumbei Kitambi was a settlement established

[86] Biginagwa and Katto, "Archaeological Perspective on the Impacts of Caravan Trade."
[87] *Ibid.*

by a coastal Arab, Mr. Mwadau, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century as his hinterland outpost for ivory and slave trades. During this period, coastal traders were establishing such trading outposts in the interior as a strategy for ensuring an adequate supply of ivory in particular, whose demand on the world market had been extraordinarily high. This paper has discussed Mtumbei Kitambi and similar settlements, thus supporting the 'ivory frontier' thesis. This work has also highlighted and reaffirmed the value of historical archaeology. It has highlighted the significance of cross-examining written and oral sources against the material evidence since some individuals mistakenly treat historical archaeology as the archaeology of "things already known" in written and/or oral sources.[88]

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[88] F. Chami, "The Longue Durée of Zanzibar and western Indian Ocean Seaboard," in *Zanzibar and the Swahili Coast From ca. 30,000 Years Ago*, ed., F. Chami (Dar es Salaam: E&D Vision Publishing, 2009).