

Archaeological Reconnaissance of Saadani village and its adjacent areas

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Abstract

This paper presents results from an archaeological reconnaissance and ethnographic inquiries conducted in Saadani and adjacent villages of Chumvi, Matipwili, Uvinje and Mkange. The archaeological potentials of these villages have, for a long time, been neglected by researchers in favor of other coast towns, such as Kilwa, Bagamoyo and Zanzibar, among others. Accumulated data reveal the presence of Swahili and Post Swahili settlements at Saadani, but evidence from surrounding landscape, in particular, Kwa Mkunde site at Mkange village, suggest that the northern coast of Tanzania was occupied ever since the Later Stone Age period. This paper therefore, calls upon further archaeological investigation at Saadani and surrounding landscape, so as to shed more light on the cultural genealogy of the study area.

Keywords: Swahili and post-Swahili settlement, Saadani Village, Adjacent areas, Culture History

Introduction

This paper stems from archaeological reconnaissance carried out in Saadani and its nearby villages of Saadani, Chumvi, Mkange Matipwili and Uvinje in August, 2013. The study aimed to examine the state of archaeological sites reported by Chittick in 1975. Chittick reported the presence of archaeological sites at Mkadini and Winde villages. The material culture from both sites was characterized by glazed and unglazed potteries, described by Chittick (1975) as Sassanian-Islamic ware or Sassanian ware (Chittick, 1975; Chami 1998; Bigambo 2013). In 2012, a field school of the University of Dar es Salaam, carried out an intensive archaeological investigation so as to establish the cultural chronology and genealogy of Saadani. Further studies on the surrounding landscape was undertaken in August 2013 by the authors in order to expand the coverage of the

study area and to broaden our current understanding of the history of human settlement in the northern coast of Tanzania.

As noted above, Saadani and the surrounding landscape has received little archaeological attention. Even though some researchers have conducted pilot studies at irregular intervals, results from those studies remain unrevealed. However, in 1977, the Department of Antiquities made an intensive documentation of archaeological and other cultural resources across the Saadani landscape. The Department of Antiquities aimed to highlight the archaeological significance of Saadani, and identify actual threats facing the heritage resources due to the rapid increase of human occupation in the area (Antiquities Report, 1977). In due regards, Bigambo (2013) made intensive assessment of heritage resources reported by the Antiquities and developed a management plan for cultural heritage resource at Saadani. This paper reports other potential sites that were recorded at other adjacent villages, such as Uvinje, Saadani Chumvi, Matwipwili and Mkange in August 2013.

Study Area Profile

The village of Saadani is located within the vicinity of Saadani National Park (SANAPA) in Bagamoyo District, Coast Region (Fig. 1). It is bordered by Tanga Region in the North and Indian Ocean and adjacent island of Zanzibar to the East (Mwaipopo-Ako, 2001, Bigambo, 2013). The village is situated at latitude $6^{\circ} 2' 55''$ S and longitude $38^{\circ} 46' 33''$ E. Saadani Chumvi village is located ($6^{\circ} 2.7' 04''$ S and $38^{\circ} 46.5' 25''$ E), almost 10 km North-East of Saadani. Mkange ($6^{\circ} 4' 00''$ S and $38^{\circ} 33' 00''$ E) is located approximately 30 km along the Saadani- Msata road. Matipwili ($6^{\circ} 13' 56.4''$ S and $38^{\circ} 42' 36.84''$ E) is located almost 25 km South along the Saadani- Bagamoyo road, and Uvinje ($6^{\circ} 2' 42.3''$ S and $38^{\circ} 46' 31.5''$ E) almost 15km North-West of Saadani Village.

Like other places across the East African Coast, annual precipitation range between 800 mm and 1000 mm, and annual temperature range is between 23° and 28° C (1997; NBS, 2007). The dry seasons are not very severe, since the relative humidity is quite high all year around (Tobler, 2001). The soils are heavy, black clay-rich or black cotton soils and reddish loamy, sandy especially

in valleys (Milewski, 1993). The soils are classified as ferruginous tropical soils or ferrosols of sub-humid regions. They are prone to erosion because of their tendency to form surface cap. But despite this tendency, they are suitable for growing a variety of crops including: sisal; groundnuts; sorghum, maize, soy beans, castor and cassava (Kauzeni, 1979; Blösch and Klötzli, 2002; Bigambo, 2013).

Geologically, the study area is found on the Mesozoic-Quaternary marine, which include much clay but little coral rag, and in some areas, particularly along the larger rivers and estuaries, there occurs alluvial floodplains with recent deposits (Griffiths 1993; Milewski 1993). On the areas adjacent to the coast, the geology is mainly made up of relatively new marine sediment, such as coral sand and clay (Figure 1).



Figure 1: A Map of Saadani and Adjacent areas (Adapted from Bigambo, 2013).

Research Methods and Results

Two principal methods were employed in data collection; ethnographic inquiries and archaeological surveys. Ethnographic inquiries involved oral interviews with key informants from each village and group discussions. The aim of ethnographic inquiries was to retrieve valuable first hand information pertaining to area's history; also to help in locating new archaeological sites. Archaeological reconnaissance survey was carried out in order to affirm information given by key informants; also to assess site's significance and setting site's boundaries. The following are research findings from five villages surveyed (Table 1).

At Saadani, villagers provided a story about the origin of their village and the origin of the name Saadani. According to the local informants, the name Saadani came from the mispronunciation of the Swahili term *saa-ndani*, made by an Indian-Banyan trader, meaning that his clock was inside. A myth was also provided which linked to the name of the Uvinje village with a person who was cut into pieces in order to bury him in a grave. He is believed to have been the tallest person ever seen; part of his body (legs) were buried at the grave known as Uvinje, which measures to about 16 m long, other parts were taken to other villages.

In terms of archaeological surveys, the first area to be surveyed was Saadani village, Survey focused mainly on areas along the beach, so as to examine gullies or erosional surfaces which could be of importance in observing the exposed layers and assessing the nature of deposition and content of archaeological materials.

Dense surface scatter dominated by potsherds were recorded close to a Sanctuary, at Saadani Safari Lodge and German Boma. Collected pottery was 30 pieces of Swahili tradition (SW), and 45 pieces of Post Swahili Ware (PSW) and seven pieces of Imported Ware (Figure 2). The area of Uvinje village has German historic buildings and Post-Swahili potsherds, suggesting that it was settled after 1500 A.D. Other potential findings were recorded at Mkange, where two sites, namely, Java and Kwa Mkunde were documented. The Kwa Mkunde site is located approximately 10 km South-East of the village center. Collected samples include stone artifacts, probably the Later Stone Age (LSA), cultural tradition (Figure 3), but detailed studies including test excavation are encouraged in order to make meaningful assertion.

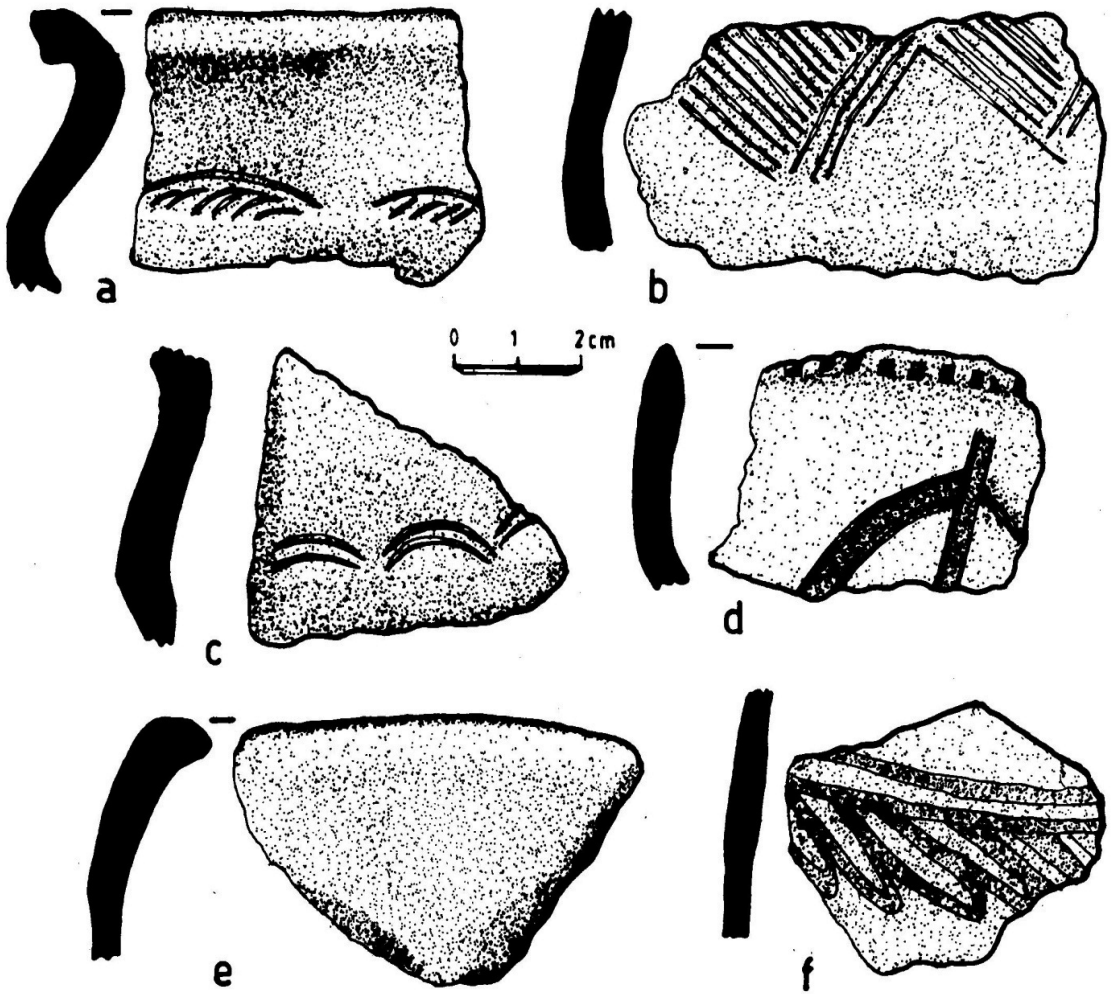


Figure 2. Saadani Village Pottery. a-d: Post-Swahili Ware, e-f: Imported Ware

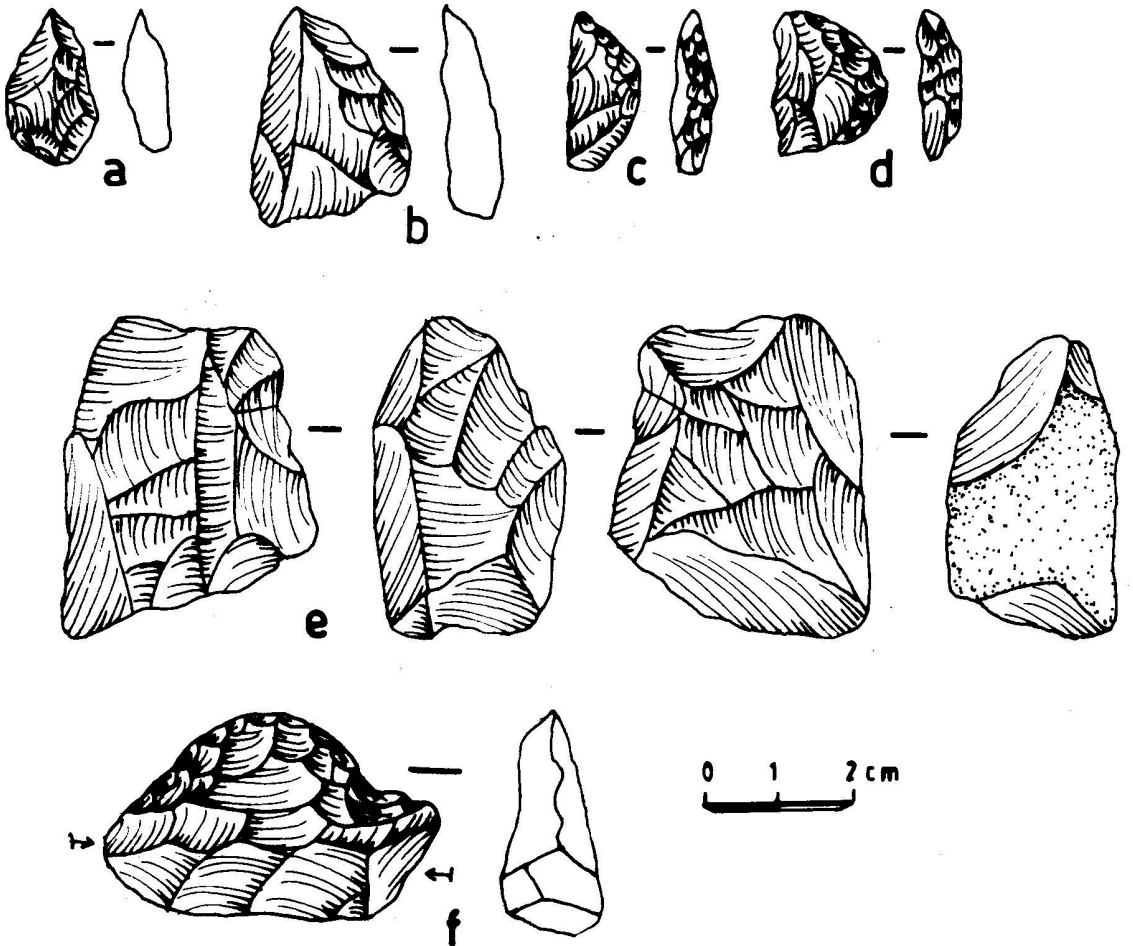


Figure 3. Kwa Mkude Lithic Artifacts.

a-b: points, c-d: backed pieces, e: cores, and f: scrapers

Site Name	Pottery			Bones	Lithic	Beads
	SW	PSW	Imported ware			
Saadani	30	45	6	13		52
Uvinje		9				
Matipwili		7				
Mkange		11			38	
GRAND TOTAL	30	72	6	13	38	52

Table 1: Inventory of archaeological materials from four surveyed villages

Discussion

The findings from Saadani village suggest that the village settlement was confined to a few places. Others had not observed archaeological materials. The presence of Plain, Swahili, and Post Swahili wares in the area, suggests remarkable cultural continuity. Cultural sequences in some sites of the Coast of Tanzania have been established showing cultural continuity. (Chami 1996; Chittick 1974; Kwekason 2009).

Elsewhere, in Mkange, the case is quite different. Both Post Swahili wares and Later Stone Age sites were discovered at almost 10 kilometres from Mkange center. Generally, the research results demonstrate that Saadani and Mkange were habited from the Stone Age period, and later on.

Conclusion

Site survey and ethnographic inquiry were essential methods of data collection in this study. Majority of data collected were dominated by potsherds and lithic materials, and few numbers of beads and animal bones. Based on the frequency and distribution of archaeological materials in the surveyed villages, researchers made several observations. First, material distribution in these villages varies in quantity, some of the villages seem to contain high amount, while others have

few numbers (Saadani and Mkange leading other villages with large number of archaeological materials). Second, with an exception of Mkange village, the pattern in other villages (Uvinje, Chumvi and Matipwili) show that as one moves away from Saadani center towards nearby villages, the surface scatters of archaeological materials keep decreasing. This tendency leads to either, presence of few archaeological materials or total absence in those nearby villages. Third and last, judging from the amount of materials discovered in Mkange village, there is a need to conduct an archaeological excavation in this village in order to provide more insight into the unknown cultural history of the village.

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