

# Urban transitions in the Zanzibar archipelago

## ITAMBUWE MIJI YA KWANZA YA UNGUJA

Unguja, one of the islands of the Zanzibar archipelago, was home to the earliest towns in eastern Africa. Unguja Ukuu, from the 7<sup>th</sup> century onwards, was an important settlement for craft and trade across the Indian Ocean. Tumbatu, from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards, was a town with grand stone architecture, houses, and a large mosque. Both towns were home to a Muslim population from an early date. This research is investigating life in these early towns, and the ways they used their environment for food and for technological production.

In June-July 2017, the first season of archaeological investigations explored two locations at Unguja Ukuu. Excavations focused on areas of housing at the site.

### Mapping:

We mapped areas of activity across the site, focusing on exploring areas of housing which have not been explored in the past. We also began creating a map of activity areas at the site, including iron working, bead manufacture, and coastal zones linked to fishing and shell collection.



### Excavating houses:

An entire house of the 8<sup>th</sup> century was excavated, and mapped spatially. We found evidence for domestic activity inside the house, and collected bones, shells, and plant remains to understand diet and resource use. We also collected artefacts like local and imported pottery and soil samples for laboratory analysis, to continue studying the technologies used by Unguja Ukuu's inhabitants.



### Future work

Future work will expand this approach with excavating another house at Unguja Ukuu and explore similar questions at Tumbatu.

The project wishes to express its sincere thanks to the community of Unguja Ukuu for being so welcoming and sharing their knowledge. The help of the Department of Antiquity, Zanzibar, is also gratefully acknowledged.

The research project is led by Stephanie Wynne-Jones (University of York, UK; Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, Uppsala; UrbNet, Aarhus University) and Federica Sulas (UrbNet, Aarhus University). The research visit in 2017 was funded by UrbNet, Centre of Excellence of the Danish National Research Foundation, Aarhus University, and the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study.

Unguja, moja kati ya visiwa vya Zanzibar archipelago, ilikuwa na miji ya kwanza kwa Africa Mashariki. Mfano Unguja Ukuu kutoka karne ya 7<sup>th</sup>, ilikuwa mji maalum kwa watu kuishi, kutengeneza vyombo vya chuma na shanga, na kufanya biashara na watu wa nje. Tumbatu, kutoka karne ya 11<sup>th</sup>, ulikuwa mji mkubwa uliokuwa na nyumba kubwa, na mskiti mkubwa na maridadi kwa wakati wake. Miji yote hiyo ilikuwa nyumbani kwa waislamu. Utafiti huu unahusiana zaidi na kujua watu wa miji hiyo walivyoishi, na walivytumia mazingira yao katika chakula na matumizi ya teknolojia.

Kwenye miezi ya sita na saba 2017, watalamu wa Mambo ya kale walifanya utafiti katika mji wa unguja ukuu na walichimbuwa maeneo mawili tofauti kwa ajili ya kuangalia mabaki ya nyumba ambazo zilikuwa zimefukiwa chini ya ardhi.

### Kuchora ramani:

Tulitembea maeneo yote ya mji, kuangalia sehemu tafauti na tuliona eneo la nyumba, ambalo huenda ikawa lilikuwa jaa la kutupia takataka, na eneo ambalo huenda ikawa kazi za uhunzi zilikuwa zikifanyika katika eneo hilo bda ya kugunduwa mabaki mengi ya chuma, shanga na viu vingine. Pia, imechorwa ramani nzuri, na kuona maeneo ambayo yalikuwa na kombe nyingi za zamani.

### Kuchimba nyumba:

Tulichimba nyumba nzima toka karne ya 8. Tulipima maeneo ambayo palikuwa na jiko la kupikia, na tulipata mifupa mingi na maganda ya kombe kujua watu hao walikuwa wakila chakula cha aina gani. Tumepata vitu vingi vikiwemo vyungu n.k na tutaendelea kutafiti zaidi kwa kutumia teknolojia ya kisasa kutambuwa umri wake na kujuwa teknolojia waliokuwa wakiitumia katika miji hii.



### Kazi za baadae

Mwaka ujao, tunategemea kuendelea na kazi hii ya utafiti hapo hapo Unguja Ukuu vile vile tutaenda na Tumbatu kwa ajili ya kuangali mabaki mengine ya nyumba za mawe zilizokweka katika kisiwa hicho

Tungependa kusema asante sana kwa watu wa Unguja Ukuu kwa msaada wao na tumekaribishwa vizuri sana katika kijiji chao. Vile vile tunashukuru kwa msaada mkubwa tulioupata kutoka Department of Antiquities, Zanzibar, na tunashukuru sana. Viongozi vya utafiti huu ni Stephanie Wynne-Jones (University of York, UK; Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, Uppsala; na UrbNet, Aarhus University) na Dr Federica Sulas (UrbNet, Aarhus University, Denmark).

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