

Research Paper

Zanzibar, where History and Culture also Mingles with India

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ABSTRACT

Zanzibar geographically located in East Africa Swahili coast as islands found a place of interest in map of periplus. It was first mentioned by Vaso Da Gama in 1499 and has been a key place in trade routes dated back to centuries. It is also found mention of many narratives from history. Since the affluence in trade and wealth, for about last two centuries, there has been a distinct connection with India that till today is reflected in various aspects such as buildings, language, community, culture and archaeology like pottery. An Indian community has been historically lived and flourished here even presently found many traces in rich cultures. Since Stone Town of Zanzibar designated as World Heritage site by UNESCO, it is a major tourist attraction and resembles the fragrance of history and cultures. This paper briefly describes Zanzibar and India connection through history, social and cultural archaeology.

Keywords: Zanzibar, India, Clove, Periplus, Stone Town

Tanzania is a large part of East Africa and includes the islands of Unguja, Mafia, and Pemba, all part of that forms Zanzibar. Its population is about 40 million people, and a surface area of 0.9 million square kilometers. A whopping 80% of the workforce is employed in agriculture, which generates over 40% of Tanzania's Economy. Zanzibar is the archiologpage in the east cost of Tanzania. The capital is Zanzibar city. Zanzibar is an autonomous region in Tanzania and having some of their own ministries. Like Tanzania it is also boasted with huge culture and heritage. Culture and heritage are interwoven to each other. It is a subject of interests to anthropologists, archaeology, sociologists, geographers, and historians in their own domains. The Arabic word for Zanzibar is Zanguebar, which means "the land of the Zanj" (black) (Sheriff & ya Nyaraka, 1995),(Jasiński, 2021).

Pearce mentioned in 1920 that it was Vaso Da Gama first mentioned of Zanzibar in 1499 by noting, "a large island called Jangibar which is peopled by Moors" (Endris, 2008). Brumann mentioned that many authors attributed that nostalgia is behind the heritagization. It is also reflected in the UNESCO heritage stone town of Zanzibar. In the historic city, cultural

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heritages in different ranges from colonial past are felt by the residents (Brumann, 2015). Slavery on the coast of East Africa and the island of Zanzibar during the clove boom in the middle of the nineteenth century is a prime example (Patterson, 2000).

Paul J Lane mentioned that the utilization of the document known as The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, Fig 1 which was created in CE 40, by successive archaeologists is possibly the most well-known instance. The Periplus provides descriptions of some of the exports from Africa, including ivory, ambergris, and enslaved people, as well as an account of a sea journey down the coast of East Africa from the ancient settlement of Rhapta to Opono, a commercial center situated just south of the Somali Peninsula. The text offers helpful information on the commerce as these were primarily nondurable raw materials, for which it is unlikely that evidence will be retained in archaeological contexts unless under unusual circumstances. It makes sense that it has been employed from the beginning of studies on the Swahili coast to support the evidence obtained from the archaeology of the variety of durable goods imported. (Lane, 2008).



Figure 1: Names, routes and locations of 1st – 3rd CE Periplus of the Erythraean sea
Source : https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Periplus_of_the_Erythraean_Sea

Based on the details provided in the Periplus in figure 1, Zanzibar would represent the most accurate predictions regarding the Menouthias Island's location (Lane, 2008). In the Swahili coast, as Adria La Violette argues that the numerous towns and hinterland settlements of the Eastern African coast share significant cultural similarities that emerged in the first millennium AD during what became known as Swahili culture. From what is now Somalia to Mozambique, the Swahili coast stretched for over 2500 km, taking in the Lamu Archipelago in Kenya, the Pemba, Unguja (Zanzibar), and Mafia Islands in Tanzania, the Comoros Archipelago, and western Madagascar. Travel and communication are made more accessible on the coast and between ports around the Indian Ocean rim thanks to this expanse's alignment with the western limit of the monsoonal wind pattern. With the help of rare texts and interpretations from historical linguistics, an archaeological study has contributed significantly to our understanding of the pre-Swahili history of the coast. Pre-/proto-Swahili sites from the first centuries AD, such as Unguja Ukuu in Tanzania, have been the subject of archaeological study. On these sites, there is evidence of small mixed-farming communities, some of which had fantastic trade connections with places far from the coast. The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, a merchants' manual, is the first documented account of the coast. A Greek sailor traveling aboard a Roman ship in AD 40 when he wrote The Periplus described trade along the Red Sea, Eastern Africa, and India coastlines. He

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makes mention of locations like Rhapta, which is believed to have been on the central Tanzanian coast and was the southernmost trading port for the Romans. In the southwest of the Arabian Peninsula, Rhapta is said to be under the control of the governor of Muza. However, subsequent historical and archaeological evidence refutes this assertion (LaViolette, 2005).



Figure 2: Map of Zanzibar by Oscar Baumann from 1892.

Source: <https://indian-ocean.africa.si.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/zanzmapMASTER.jpg>

The figure 2 depicts an old map of Zanzibar dated 1892, the wealthiness in nineteenth century prompted Seyyid Said bin Sultan in 1840 moved the capital from Muscat, Oman to here (Jasiński, 2021). Aside from descriptions of numerous landmarks and additional ports along this route of Periplus, the Periplus gives very little information about the societies that resided along the East African coast. Scholars have tried to link several of the established archaeological sites are connected to the ports and towns that are listed in the Periplus and Claudius Ptolemy's Geography, another important ancient work, by using the descriptions of some of the coast's physical features, like the Lamu archipelago and Mount Kilimanjaro, as well as the sailing directions that are also given (c. 150 CE). However, only a tiny percentage of these, including Rhapta, have been recognized (Lane, 2008).

Fragrance of History

“The buildings of the Stone Town, executed principally in coralline ragstone and mangrove timber, set in a thick lime mortar and then plastered and lime-washed, reflect a complex fusion of Swahili, Indian, Arab and European influences in building traditions and town planning.” – UNESCO (Source: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/173/>)

A significant driving force behind heritage tourism and heritagization, according to some scholars, is nostalgia. In a study of Stone Town, the historical core of Zanzibar City, and the breadth of colonial and revolutionary nostalgia experienced by the locals (Brumann, 2015). Zanzibar is nostalgic for the birthplace of Freddie Mercury, the Parsi-Indian descent rock band ‘Queen’ world star who met through an untimely death in 1991. The house where he lived in Zanzibar, 2, 3 and 4 till attracts the tourists from the world in this gorgeous Stone Town.

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Figure 3: Freddie Mercury house now converted as a hotel, view of the front door



Figure 4: A popular tourist attraction, Freddie Mercury House



Figure 5: Freddie Mercury House as a museum

Livingstone House in Zanzibar carries the fragrance of famous Scottish explorer Dr David Livingstone who is the first westerner crossed Africa by foot and credited with first spotting the Victoria falls in Zimbabwe. His famous last journey to search the source of river Nile started from Zanzibar when he reached from Bombay after a passage of twenty-three days. The figure 6 depicts the beachfront view where the Livingstone house is situated. The figure 7 is the illustration by himself which is available in his immensely credible work, *The Last Journals of David Livingstone, in Central Africa, from 1865 to His Death*, Volume I (of 2), 1866-1868, by David Livingstone, Edited by Horace Waller, 1875.

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Figure 6: The Zanzibar waterfront present views from Dr Livingstone House



Livingstone's House, Zanzibar.

Figure 7: Dr Livingstone house his own illustration from “The Last Journals of David Livingstone, in Central Africa, from 1865 to His Death”, Volume I (of 2), 1866-1868, by David Livingstone, Edited by Horace Waller, 1875

Source: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/16672/16672-h/166a72-h.htm#p003>

The figure 6 and 7 depicts the house of Dr David Livingstone, albeit it is now converted to a hotel in the beachfront, where from his last journey started to search the source of Nile in Africa.



Figure 8: Dr David Livingstone house now converted to a hotel

The figure 7 is present view of the house renovated and a get up change in painting however, his mostly used room in first floor is preserved and till attracts a significant tourist from different parts of the world.

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Indian Dispensary known as old dispensary on the Mizingani road is a major historical building restored by Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Zanzibar is another major tourist attraction. The figure 9 shows the present view of the building and the changed display board in the front. The old dispensary was commissioned in 1887 by an affluent Indian merchant Tharia Topan. An old fig tree on the waterfront, next to the Old Dispensary, is referred to locally as the Big Tree. It may be seen in many historical photos and is fairly visible from the harbour. Men making boats are now using the shady area beneath it as a workshop.



Figure 9: The Erstwhile Indian dispensary in Zanzibar on Mizingani road being used as Aga Khan polyclinic nowadays



Figure 10: The Palace now converted as a museum

Clove is a major agricultural product in Zanzibar since ages. Almost all of Indonesia's provinces grow clove, which is endemic to that country. The French administrator (Poivre) imported clove from Indonesia to Mauritius in the eighteenth century, and an Arab trader then took it to Zanzibar. Zanzibar and Pemba started growing cloves and now famous for cloves (Nurdjannah & Bermawie, 2012). An oxford journal paper of 1929 by Hollis cited Zanzibar produced nearly 88% of world supply i.e., 10,800 Ton (Hollis, 1929). However, Pemba if it is known as 'Isle of cloves' rather than Unguja, the largest island of Zanzibar (Andrew & Myers, 1996). India was the major country where the cloves, about half were exported from Zanzibar during 1914-1917 mostly to Bombay. Subsequently a clove grower association was established in 1927 however in 1937 was given a statutory monopoly power for purchase and sale of cloves which caused a resentment among the Indian business

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community resulted in boycotting of Zanzibar cloves in India. This resulted to revise the CGA role (Martin, 2012).

Edifice and Indian Connection

Indian community since long significantly impacted Zanzibar's ability to conduct business, and their long-standing presence in the region must be understood in the context of trade in the western Indian Ocean. Indian financial support was frequently used to support Arab businesses, and in Zanzibar, their settlement was welcomed. In the Hitchcock paper 2010, 18.5% of the entire population claimed to be of Indian heritage. The Sultan of Oman, Sayyid Said, developed a keen interest in Zanzibar and began making frequent, sometimes extended, visits to the island in 1829 and throughout the 1830s. By around 1840, it appears that the Sultan had made up his mind to settle permanently on the island, bringing with him a retinue of Arab officials and Indian businessmen and financiers (Hitchcock, 2002). It is reported that in 1870, number of Indians in Zanzibar was 2,440 whereas in 1873-74 the number was increased to 2898 (Goswami Bhatt, 2008). Currently understandably, nearly more than ten thousand Indian community are in Zanzibar whereas in Tanzania the total number exceeds 50,000. The flavour of community often reflects in the architecture of a region. Heritage city of Stone Town buildings resembles different types including Indian-influenced ones as cited by Hitchcock, displays in Table 1. Out of recorded 1700 plus structures, 534 number of structures reflect Indian patterns somehow. The figure 11 depicts the Indian style door featured in a typical building.

Table 1: In Stone Town, the different types of buildings (Hitchcock, 2002)

Traditional building types	Quantity of constructions
Indian storefront structures	546
Arab-inspired architecture	426
Indian-inspired homes	108
Swahili homes	92
Homes with European-inspired	74
Structures of European Civic Type	57
Mosques of Ibadi and Sunni Type	44

Many Indian groups opened their denominational schools in the early 1900s due to continuous efforts to open Indian schools in Zanzibar and because most wanted their community schools. Some of the prominent ones were, all Indian boys could attend the Gnan Verdhak Gujarati School when it first opened in the 1910s. All Indian boys were reportedly welcome to enroll in Devji Master School when it was registered in the 1910s. Members of the Indian National Association founded the Indian National School in 1923. To safeguard the rights of Indian traders, moneylenders, and urban landowners as well as the general welfare of the Indian community in Zanzibar, prominent Indian businessmen founded the Indian National Association (INA). The study by Wahab (Wahab, 1963) primarily focussed on Indian community participation in Zanzibar politics during the time from 1940-1963, however as he noted while their bodies resided in Zanzibar, the migrating Indians community of Zanzibar frequently had dual residences; their brains belonged to India.

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Figure 11: The Indian-style Zanzibar door features an openwork grating and floral designs on a semicircular lintel (Jasiński, 2021)

It is also conspicuous that Indian pottery was found in Zanzibar, moreover tiny silver coins were also discovered that somehow has had roots in India (Adebayo, 2022). James Lancaster, a director of East India company had also visited Zanzibar enroute to the east (Endris, 2008). During that time, the Zanzibar Archipelago served as the southernmost point of a transoceanic trading network that took use of monsoon of the Indian Ocean, a somewhat reliable seasonal wind system which probably has been used by seafarers in the area spanning at least two millennia. Under this regime, when the Asian continent warms up during the northern hemisphere summer, winds blow over the ocean from the southwest to the northeast, then change course as the Asian land mass cools during the winter. These consistent marine winds made a yearly cycle of trade and interaction between East Africa and Arabia, the Red Sea, the Arabian-Persian Gulf, Iran, and India possible. In particular, merchant ships known exonymously as "dhows" transported people from Arabia and the Gulf to East Africa along with commodities like dates, dried fish, and textiles before stocking up on mangrove poles, gum copal, ivory, rhinoceros' horn, and enslaved people for the return trip. The British naval captain G.I. Sullivan described Zanzibar as being "actually filled with dhows of every type....." after visiting it in 1868 (Cooper & Ghidoni, 2022). Unsurprisingly, in language setting also, in non-indigenous languages of migrants, Indian languages has found a commonplace in that of Tanzania and Zanzibar vis-à-vis Swahili and English (Era, 2006). Gujrati, Cutchi, Panjabi, Konkani, Goan, Dalda are found to be used in Tanzania and Zanzibar whereas Gujrati was in colonia times also was an optional language in schools in addition to English, Swahili and French (Mesaki & Bapumia, 2015).

DISCUSSION

In 2000, the extraordinary collection of palaces, merchant houses, and more modest homes for artisans in Stone Town received the honour of becoming a World Heritage Site, a formidable pride of Zanzibar that attracts tourists from all over the world. A legal and institutional framework for the Stone Town of Zanzibar World Heritage Site has been developed, including heritage legislation, management, and conservation and management plans. Historically, Zanzibar and connection to India dated back to thousands of years and last about one hundred and fifty years are remarkably distinct in different aspects due to archaeology, livelihood, agriculture and business. Trade between Zanzibar and India have been historically flourished over many years and decades if not centuries. Currently, many small business owners are also found habituating in the beautiful islands. Presently as well, the Forodhani park and Gardens night food market is the most well-liked gathering spot. People who visit Zanzibar are always fascinated by the variety of sensations and encounters that this cosmopolitan city, which serves as the entrance to East Africa, has to offer. Nonetheless, Zanzibar till carries the fragrance of historical India connection in many ways till today and waits to be discovered more in this world heritage city.

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Conflict of Interest

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