

# A Catalogue and Inventory of Cultural Heritage Sites, Artefacts and Features in Kisumu City and Its Environs in Lake Victoria Basin, Kenya

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**Abstract** Most of the cultural heritage sites, artifact and features are under constant threat from human activities and natural processes. Oral traditions of these sites are under threat. This threat is occasioned by the lack of appreciation of oral traditions as authentic transmitter of history. KLIP is keen at conducting documentation of the existing oral traditions related to these sites both in print and audio for future generations. The most serious problem faced is the grabbing of cultural heritage sites for human activities. Extensive conditional survey and documentation should be undertaken to assess their condition and facilitate their conservation, preservation and restoration for sustainable use by the local communities living around them. Even though some of these sites are gazetted and managed or protected by the National Museums of Kenya, there is very little community involvement in their management and use. This work highlights the state of knowledge, and the condition of some of these cultural heritage sites as well as areas for future research.

**Keywords** Catalogue, Inventory, Cultural heritage, Sites, Artifacts, Features, Conservation, Preservation, Kisumu city, Environs, Lake Victoria Basin

## 1. Introduction

Kisumu and its environs have very rich cultural heritage ranging from paleontological archaeological and historical to cultural sites. This work presents information regarding some sites in Kisumu and its environs. A few sites are gazetted (under the protection of the National Museums of Kenya). However, the majority of sites in this region have been identified but not mapped or well documented. Archaeological and paleontological research has mainly been undertaken in the region. Preliminary survey of this region has revealed numerous sites in Kisumu, Bondo, Homa Bay, Migori and Siaya Counties that are yet to be located and mapped.

Under enormous threat from urbanism and westernization, as well as general heritage deterioration through cultural and natural processes and rapidly declining economic growth in traditional areas such as fishing and agriculture, Kisumu City nonetheless boasts of diverse cultural heritage resources that are uniquely and spatially distributed on the landscape laced with scenic landforms that traverse the city and its environs. As one moves across the city into the Lake Victoria shores, a myriad of cultural and natural features and artefacts dot this

unique lacustrine region of western Kenya. Unfortunately, the majority of these sites, artefacts and features are under serious threat (Figure 1) from both cultural and natural processes. The most serious problem is the grabbing of gazetted sites. An urgent conditional survey and documentation should be undertaken to assess their condition and facilitate their conservation, preservation and restoration for sustainable use by the local communities living around them. Even though some of these sites are gazetted and managed or protected by the National Museums of Kenya, there is very little community involvement in their management and use.



**Figure 1.** Change of Use Due to Human Activities

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Some of the varied cultural sites and resources are shown in Figure 2 below.

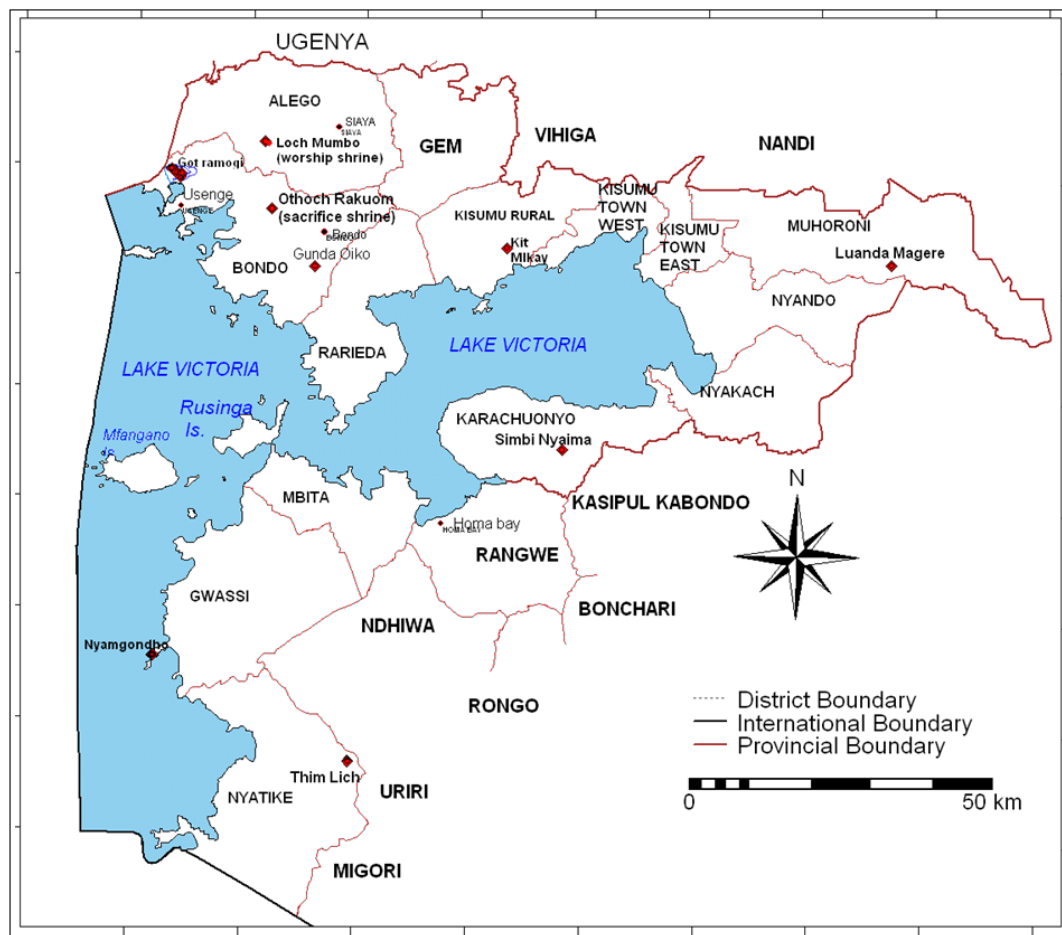


Figure 2. Cultural Heritage Sites in Kisumu and its Environs in Kenya

## 2. Study Objective

To document and produce a catalogue of the various forms of cultural heritage sites, artifacts and features in Kisumu and its environs, Kenya.

## 3. Methodology

This work aimed at mapping the locations and spatial distribution of cultural, historical and archeological sites, artifactual remains and features in Kisumu and its environs. Mapping is the key to accurate recording of surviving features and artifacts (Renfrew and Bahn, 1991). Foot survey was used to identify sites because it is the most effective means of locating sites and producing the most complete records (Hester, 1976). Topographical maps also led to the identification and mapping of sites and features. GIS was also used to locate the positions of the sites. Conditional survey was employed to assist in the assessment of the preservation state of the sites and associated artifacts. Both oral interviews and focus group discussions were used to get information about the sites. Actual observation across the sites also assisted in the assessment of the site content, quality of preservation and associated challenges. Spatial

analysis and thematic analysis were used to analyze various forms of data collected.

## 4. Research Findings and Discussions

Knudson, (1978) defined a site as any area of the landscape, which has evidence of past human activities or occupation. The notion of a site as a spatial concentration of artifacts (by-product modification of natural environment) as well as myths and legends were adopted in this study. Proponents of this approach include Heizer and Graham (1967), and Fagan (1981). An alternative approach considers sites as places where artifacts, features, structures, organic and environmental remains are found together, was brought forward by Renfrew and Bahn (1991). In the new approach, a site is studied in relation to geomorphological forms and the immediate environment (Zvelebel and Macklin, 1992).

Features are those aspects of cultural heritage sites that are too large, bulky, or difficult to be presented from their original context to the laboratory for in-house analysis and are therefore simply recorded, photographed or drawn (Knudson, 1978). Artifacts on the other hand, are humanly made or modified portable objects (Fagan, 1981) such as pottery, stone tools, bones, iron implements, sculptures,

ethnographic remains and many others.

### A. Cultural Spaces in Kisumu City

They include Aguch Kisumu, Oile Park, Jubilee Markets, Social Halls, Kisumu Museum. Places such as Aguch Kisumu, Oile Park, Jubilee Markets, Social Halls and Kisumu Museum represent varied values to urban users ranging from livelihood spots like market places to green urban spaces which reduce and control environmental pollution as well as provide recreational functions for unemployed urban dwellers, and social gatherings such as table-banking women's groups. Initial mapping reveals the value of everyday social and recreational spaces which reveal values associated with cultural heritage and nourish the lives of residents and visitors, including Aguch Kisumu and the cultural infrastructure of the city – found in the cinema, disco, hotels, markets, clubs and restaurants.



Figure 3. Jubilee Market in Kisumu city

### B. Historical, Archaeological and paleontological heritage in Kisumu and its Environs

Historical, archaeological and cultural sites-Thimlich Ohinga, Seme-Kaila, Muguruk, Kit-Mikayi, Abindu, Luanda Magere. Historical, archaeological and cultural sites include Thimlich Ohinga, Seme-Kaila, Muguruk, Kit-Mikayi, Abindu, Luanda Magere – bear testimony to the rich and varied histories of the area. The values attributed to such sites are not uniform, with differences between elder and youth populations in terms of how they see their roles – or not – as custodians of the past. Beyond the sacred, natural heritage and conservation sites are also important, such as landing beaches and forests, like Dunga, Musoma, Lwangi, Impala Park, Got Ramogi, Riat Hill and Abindu.

#### Abindu Sacred site

The site is on a hilly ragged terrain which extends from Kajulu to Ojola and is part of an extension of Nandi Escarpment, 12 kilometres North-West of Kisumu City. It offers a picnic site and a beautiful scenic landscape of the Lake Victoria shores with its wetlands and beaches. The site has numerous wild animals such as birds, unique insects, reptiles and mammals. Archaeological remains,

unique sacred symbols, artistic design and engravings (rock arts) and the presence of religious and symbolic inscriptions attract various religious pilgrimages to the site. It offers unique cultural identity and rituals, as well as traditional herbal medicines and super-natural healing powers.

Community narratives have many elements. Witchdoctors go to the site to communicate with ancestral spirits and cast spells from those possessed with evil spirits. Sorcerers also visit the site to exorcise the evil spirits from those who are possessed. Customary marriages are consummated through traditional weddings that are performed at the site by both Independent African Christian Churches and Traditional Medicine men. Wizards frequent the site draw their power from the supernatural forces at the site as well as to practice their witchcraft. Narratives from community informants indicate that the site traces its cultural significance from 1970s, when the community received a visitor who had strange, and unique behavior. The stranger had several identities and would transform from a human being to either, a wild cat, leopard or hyena (KTN, December, 15th 2012).

#### Kit Mikayi site

The name means '*first wife's rocks*' in Dholuo language. It is a large rock with three rocks on top that is fascinating, unique and attractive to travellers along the Kisumu- Bondo road, about 12 kilometres from Kisumu City. It is a historic site relating to Luo traditions and narratives. At Kit-Mikayi, beliefs and traditions associated with this large rock are varied. Some believe that *Mikayi* went up the rocky hill weeping when her husband took a second wife. In another version, an elderly man, Ngeso, had a great love for the natural stone and named the stone the first wife (*Mikayi*). In yet another narrative, the rock formation reflects the Luo culture of polygamy with the stones depicting the huts of the first three wives. The site is seen as a source of blessings, wealth, rain, marriage and love, spiritual cleansing and meditation. During dry spells elders converge at the entrance of the rock for meditation, where a wondrous snake '*Nyangundi*' is said to have controlled access to the rock. The rock sends visions to people as far as Alego, Usonga, Asembo, Sakwa, Gem, Uyoma, and Yimbo on the need to conduct sacrifices and avert calamities: drought, divorce, separation cases to appease supernatural forces. Its holy water is said to possess therapeutic and healing powers, hence a popular pilgrimage site. Tourists visit the site as a recreational facility to: climb the rocks, view sunsets and enjoy traditional Luo songs and dances. This supports community empowerment and sustained livelihoods for women and youth. It is significant as ecological and cultural conservation site.

#### Muguruk Middle Stone Age Site

The site is situated on the east bank of the Muguruk River at a point of 250 meters upstream from the bridge where the Kisian Pau Akuche road crosses the said River. The site lies 3km north of the shores of Winam Gulf of Lake Victoria. Muguruk is a Middle Stone Age site which was discovered in 1936 by Rev. Archdeacon Owen. The site was gazetted in

1982 and is managed by the National Museums of Kenya.

The topography of Muguruk is controlled by Ombo phonolite from which artifacts were made. The artifacts of Ojolla industry (Sangoan – Lupemban) are overlain by those of Pundo – Makwar industry (Middle Stone Age Industry). The Ojolla industry consists of heavy – duty tools component (choppers, picks trimmed slabs and cobbles) finely made lanceolate points, large bifaces (handaxes) and a light duty component made up of unifacially – retouched flakes. The Pundo Makwar industry is made up of flaking debris from radial core reduction and formal unifacial scrapers made on these flakes.

A construction firm owned by Hayer and Bishan Sons LTD has grabbed most of the site from its original size of two acres and reduced its size to a mere 80m X 80m in areas. The company should return the land to the National Museums of Kenya and stop quarrying activities at the site.

#### **Kapurta Prehistoric Site**

The site is situated to the north of Ainomotua River and west of Two Trees hill in Nandi District, Rift Valley Province. The site is 227 acres in area. The land where the site is situated was grabbed by the former President's (Arap Moi) Aides during the distribution of ADC land in the area. Mr. Ali Noor (The Director of ADC at the time) completely refused to return the land to the Kisumu curator. The DC was also unable to return the land since the allocation was done in Nairobi under the presidential prerogative. The land was to be used by the grabbers as farmland but it is too sterile and full of fossils to produce anything. It should be returned to the National Museums of Kenya before the site is completely destroyed.

#### **Songhor Middle Stone Age Site**

M.L. Pickford discovered the site in 1975. It is situated on the foothills of the Nandi escarpment, former Nyanza province in Western Kenya. It lies about 2.5km, southwest of Songhor Miocene site. Songhor consists of mainly fluvial deposits that are overlain by a tuff (2.5m thick) containing Middle Stone Age tools and fauna. Upon this tuff is grey clay deposit with occasional Pleistocene non – diagnostic quartz artifacts. Stone artifacts include cores, scrapers, and bifacial points. Levallois points, flake fragments, hammer stones and angular waste made from lava and quartz. The stone tool assemblage is typically Middle Stone Age in the low frequencies of retouched pieces, points both bifacial and levallois. The makers of this industry used the disc – core technique in flake production.

Sally Mc Brearty recovered few animal species such as buffalo, waterbuck rhinoceros and wildebeest in early 1980s. The animals are large but not extinct. The inhabitants were hunters who preferred large animals for butchering.

#### **Rusinga Island Site**

Rusinga Island has a palaeontological site and Tom Mboya mausoleum. These sites are situated in Mbita Division in Suba within the former Nyanza Province. The sites are gazetted and protected by the National Museums of

Kenya. The BPS coordinates of the site include S00°24'22.6 and E0340°8'53.7 at an elevation of 1167 metres above sea level. Rusinga Island has a Miocene site dating back to about 17 million years ago. The site became world famous in 1948 when Dr. Mary Leakey found the skull of Proconsul Africanus. Of particular interest is the site commonly known as the pot – hole in the area R 114. This site has yielded a skeleton of proconsul Africanus and many other fossils of animals that lived on the island 17 million years ago. It is argued that these apes could have been the precursor of man. Attempts to grab the land (site) by the locals were suppressed by the Kisumu curator who managed to repossess the site.

#### **Songhor Palaeontological Site**

The site is situated in Nyando in Kisumu County. The site was gazetted in 1982. It is 78 acres in area. It is a Miocene site dating back to about 19 million years ago. There were a large variety of animals living there. The fossil hominoids collected from this site range from small to bigger apes. Eight species of hominoids have been identified. There is enough evidence that the proconsul Africanus also lived at this site. The new survey (2000) that was carried out by the National Museums of Kenya altered the boundary of the site. Complaints have been put forward that the survey should be done again. One respondent said that on one side, we have lost our land while on the other hand; the locals have lost their land to us. The locals want to be compensated for the loss if another survey cannot be done”.

#### **Fort – Ternan Palaeontological Site**

The site is situated in Kericho County which is located within the former Rift Valley Province. It is 21.56 acres in area. It was gazetted in 1982. The site is under the protection and control of the National Museums of Kenya. It lies on the Kavirondo Rift, a crack on the earth's crust that runs at right angles to the main Great Rift Valley. This side crack was one of the visible features of the Rift Valley and was formed about 10 million years ago. The site lies in the shadow of a great volcano, a protrusion that remains of Kenyapithecus Eickeri that lived at this site about 14 million years ago in 1961. A variety of habitats including woodland provided our ancestors with livelihood. The hominid jaw of Kenyapithecus was smaller than that of the proconsul. Fort Ternan jaw and teeth seem to be similar to Ramapithecus. Fort Ternan is the only site where the beds associated with “Rangwapithecus” material have been dated directly and the only area in which well – dated and well – studied older hominid species are found. Over the years, more than 10,000 fossil specimens of antelopes, giraffes, rhinos, plants and crocodiles have been found.

#### **Kanam – Kanjera Sites**

Kanam is situated along the shores of Lake Victoria on Homa Peninsular around Homa Mountain. The site was gazetted in August 1933. In 1932, Louis Leakey's expedition discovered a fossil human mandible together with Pleistocene fauna and pebble tools in the early Pleistocene Kanam beds



at Kanam West. Initially, it was thought to be australopithecine. Doubts were thrown against this specimen, and Leakey suggested that the fossil was that of *Homo Sapiens* but later Leakey supported Sir A. Keith's view of australopithecine. Today, they are seen to be Neanderthaloid. Recently researchers found palaeontological bones dating between 1 and 6 million years ago at the site.

Kanjera is 4kms, northeast of Homa hills along the shores of Lake Victoria and was dated to 2.2million years ago. Oldowan stone tools together with abundant animal fossils of buffaloes, hippos, elephants, giraffes, lions, wild pigs and many other smaller animals of savanna environment have been recorded unlike other Oldowan sites where the hominids lived in forested areas, the early hominids at Kanjera lived in savanna environment. Several cranial and post cranial fragments were found in-situ in association with Acheulean handaxes. Louis Leaky also found femoral and cranial fragments of five hominids from the exposures of Middle Pleistocene lakebeds at the site. These were classified as *Homo Sapiens* dated to about 5,000 years ago. There is a lot of encroachment by the local farmers who still do not recognize the cultural importance of these sites. Most farming activities take place around and within the sites consequently destroying the material remains. The locals should be removed from these sites in order to avoid further destruction of the site.

#### **Chianda Miocene Site**

This is a very rich palaeontological site in Chianda village, Madiany Division, Bondo Sub County. Numerous well – preserved fossils have been exposed through cultivation and erosion. However, this site is one of the few important prehistoric sites in Bondo Sub County. The site should be gazetted and protected by the National Museums of Kenya.

#### **Ugunja Site**

These site is situated along the water rapids in Nzoia River (0 12N, 34 16/2 E), 2Km west of Ugunja town. This is a Late Stone Age hunter gatherer site that has exposed human skeletal remains due to sand harvesting and erosion. This significant site will soon disappear if serious measures are not enforced.

#### **Wadh Lang'o Site**

The site is situated in Lower Nyakach, Kisumu County; Southwestern Kenya, along Sondu Miriu River at Sang'oro village. The GPS coordinates of the site are S00021'20.2" and E034048'43.5" at an altitude of 1145 meters above sea level. It is sheltered to the east by Nyakach – Nyabondo plateau and bordered by Sondu Miriu River to the west. South of Wadh Lang'o and Sondu Miriu River drops through a steep gorge and the site itself is situated alongside the resultant rapids. The rapids were good areas for trapping fish moving upstream hence their ecological importance.

Wadh Lang'o was discovered in 1999 by a team of researchers from the National Museums of Kenya. The site measures approximately 350m X 200m with its long axis running north south roughly parallel to the river. Pottery,

worked stone, and faunal remains litter the surface. Test excavations were carried out in February 2000 and May 2001, which documented along, rich Holocene cultural sequence spanning from Late Stone Age to Later Iron Age period. These excavations revealed well preserved deposit with abundant charcoal, numerous bones, ceramics, beads, iron implements, lithics, hammer – stones, grindstones, hearth and a human burial. Wadh Lang'o is the only site in Western Kenya with well – preserved stratigraphically superimposed rich Holocene cultural sequence. Currently the site is being destroyed by the construction of a hydro – electric power plant at Wath Lang'o site.

#### **Gogo Falls Site**

The site is situated along Kuja River at Gogo Falls in South Nyanza. Peter Robertshaw discovered it in 1983. The earliest deposit contains Oltome pottery associated with stone tools made mainly from quartz and volcanic rocks. Other materials from this horizon include wild faunal and shellfish remains. This level was mixed with obsidian lithics of the ashy midden indicating serious site disturbance.

Domestic stock such as goats, cattle and sheep were numerous in the thick ashy midden that was associated with Elmenteitan pottery. Stone tools of this period were made from obsidian. Burial practices were provided by a skeleton of an infant individual found lying in a tightly contracted position covered by a pile of rocks. It appears that hunting continued alongside domestication.

Urewe pottery was found in the topsoil but was also mixed with Pastoral Neolithic level. Urewe ware was found in association with iron implements but evidence of iron metallurgy was absent. Other materials recovered include ornaments and grindstones. Later Iron Age material was observed. Later research work documented other occupations such as Middle Iron Age.

Information from Gogo Falls is problematic since the site is severely disturbed. Mixing of occupation levels cannot allow secure dating of the occupation sequence. Local farmers are destroying the site through cultivation. Future farming activities should be stopped.

#### **Aora Pundo Site**

The site was discovered by a team of researchers from the National Museums of Kenya and Dr. Tom Plummer in the year 2000. It lies 4kms southeast of Homa hills, close to the flood plain of Awach River along the shores of Lake Victoria. The site is about 800meters wide with the rich deposits of about 3 meters in thickness. It has not been dated. Test excavations revealed abundant fauna of both small and large animals. Numerous Late Stone Age lithics such as backed pieces, burins, scrapers, cores, flakes, points and notched pieces were also recorded. The lithics were made from a variety of raw material but chert was predominant. Other raw materials include quartz, basalt, quartzite and gneiss. Human bone remains were also found both on the surface and sub – surface levels. Lungfish dominated fish bones. Shellfish remains, six potshards and white beads were also recovered. Preliminary analysis suggests that the hominid teeth from

this site belonged to *Homo Sapiens*.

Aora Pundo is probably the most extensive and richest Late Stone Age site in the Eastern and Central Africa. Previous researchers had identified Aora Pundo as a palaeontological site but it turned out to be an archaeological site.

### Shell Midden Sites

Louis Leakey was the first archaeologist who identified and test excavated shell midden sites at Kanam and Kanjera in Rachuonyo District South Nyanza region during the early period of 1930's. Later researchers like Peter Robertshaw discovered many shell midden mounds at Luanda and White Rock Point in South Nyanza region. Seven new shell midden sites were discovered at Usare (in Madiany division) and Yimbo (in Usigu Division), in Northern Nyanza region by Fredrick Odede (Western Archaeologist) and Dr. Paul Lane (Director – BIEA) in the year 2000.

The shell midden mounds are prehistoric rubbish dumps composed mainly of the shells. Mixed with the shells are bone remains, broken pots, stone tools and other refuse. The earliest occupation of these shell middens is associated with Kanyore (Oltome) pottery. Stone tools from this level include a variety of scrapers, and small backed pieces used as points of arrows and burins made from locally available raw material. Their inhabitants greatly exploited shell fish such as bivalves, gastropods or oysters. They also depended on fish from the lake. Fish species represented include lungfish, catfish and tilapia. Animals hunted include hippos, buffaloes, antelopes, crocodiles, bush pigs and elephants.

The Kanyore people were hunters, gatherers and fishermen who practiced hunting and gathering economy. There was no domestication. The dating of this period is problematic since a wide range of dates has been presented i.e. between 4,000 and 8,000 years ago.

Other occupations above the Late Stone Age hunter – gatherers are Early Iron Age and Later Iron Age observed at Kanam. Urewe ware made and used by early Bantus was found immediately above the Kanyore level at the same site. Roulette decorated pottery of Recent Iron Age period occurs at the topsoil. This potter (L.I.A) is similar to modern Luo vessel forms. The shell midden sites are threatened by farming activities. The local community members should be advised to refrain from destroying these sites.

### Got Ramogi site

The region surrounding Got Ramogi and beyond is a melting pot of rich and varied archaeological site depicting the lives and migration patterns of the Nilotes, dating to thousands of years back. One such site is exemplified in the area of Ulowa, at the foot of Got Ramogi. In addition to Ulowa, there are several naturally sheltered settlements having shrines in the region of Got Ramogi and beyond, for example, Gunda Pudha (Fig. 4 and 5) and Bur Gangu which is famous for iron artefacts. These sites provide excellent opportunities for archaeological tourism.



**Figure 4.** Gunda Pudha in the outskirts of Bondo Township



**Figure 5.** An Archeological Site in Ulowa

### Thimlich Ohinga Stone-Walled Site

It is positioned at S00°53'29.5" and E034°19'36.6" at an elevation of 1290 metres high. The site is 44km west of Migori town and situated in Kadem in Migori County, Southwestern Kenya. It lies approximately one degree South of the equator and 34.25 degrees East longitude. The archaeological site was declared a national monument in 1983 under the Antiquities and Monuments Act. Thimlich Ohinga refers to the "frightening dense forest" or the "forested look of the hill: endowed with a series of striking stone walled enclosures. The site has six skillfully constructed enclosures built of stone on an area of 52 acres. Thimlich Ohinga is just one of the stone – built enclosures spatially distributed across South Nyanza region. No fewer than 52 enclosures are presently known from 139 localities in South Nyanza region.

The dating and origin of these enclosures is confusing. Oral history suggests that the Late Iron Age Bantus built them 500 years ago. However, carbon 14 dating of charred bones from early 1980's test excavation at Liare valley (initial name of Thimlich Ohinga before gazettelement in 1981) showed that the Ohingni were built about 300 years ago during the Recent Iron Age period. The construction of the enclosures was made possible due to availability of loose surface rocks on the hills which reduced transport costs, communal lifestyles which necessitated labour mobilization and urgent security requirements such as protection against cattle raiders, external invaders and wild animals. Early researchers such as Chittick, Gillman and Lofgren compared

Thimlich Ohinga with the famous Great Zimbabwe ruins of Southern Africa but without any serious archaeological material evidence.

In terms of architectural characteristics, the enclosures were built using intersecting, curved and zigzagging walls made of loose stones of various shapes and sizes. The blocks were used without any dressing or mortar. The walls are rough and the course line is indiscernible. The walls range from 1.0 to 4.2 metres in height and have a base of larger blocks but no dug foundation. The walls are dotted with buttresses for general stability. Gates are similar in size at about 1.0 to 1.5 square meters. The gates have roof lintels and lock holes. The base of the gates is twice as thick as the rest of the wall of the structures. Long slabs are laid horizontally on either side of each gate. There are also watchtowers for viewing the surrounding landscape. Roof lintels of main gate of each enclosure have a unique rock engraving quite distinct from those of other structures. The enclosures have interior partitions and external extensions. The interior has smaller enclosures that were used as cattle kraals and house depressions are located close to the wall of the enclosures. An industrial area with remains of blacksmithing activities is situated in the north east of Kochien's main enclosure. A bao game board is engraved on a stone slab found on the northeastern section inside Kochien's enclosure. Associated archaeological material remains include hammer stones, grindstones, pottery, charcoal, beads and faunal remains. These are fortified prehistoric settlements (hill – forts) that were used as defensive mechanism against external enemies, cattle raiders and attack from wild animals.



**Figure 6.** Thimlich Ohinga Site in Migori

### Seme-Kaila Stone-Walled site

This Historical settlement enclosure site is situated at Kaila sub-location in Seme Sub-county of Kisumu County, Kenya. The site consists of six stone-walled enclosures that are situated on Got Kaila in Seme, 4 kms northwest of Holo market in Kisumu County. The protective hill-forts were used by early Luo ancestors as defensive mechanisms against external human aggression and attack from wild animals. The settlement arrangement within the enclosures depicted Luo settlement cosmology lined along the walls of the prehistoric settlement structures. The enclosures are littered with archaeological artefacts such as pottery and stone tools. A sacred tree used as a shrine exists in one of the enclosures, where supernatural forces of the ancestral spirits and the gods are said to live. Elderly men, led by medicine

men, lead in offering sacrifices to appease the gods and avert calamities and misfortunes such as drought and famine facing the local inhabitants. The enclosures are places of past human habitation where people lived a communal form of lifestyle for labour mobilization and security reasons. Initial attempts have been made to form a Community-Based Organisation where women and young people are part of the governance committee. The cultural events are informative learning grounds for most of the management members of Seme-Kaila to engage in eco-ventures such as traditional dressing, basketry, pot-making, traditional dances and songs, drama, performing art, and sports.



**Figure 7.** Asembo Stone-Walled Enclosure Site

The enclosures are positioned at S00°11'00.2" and E 034°20'18.0" with a height of 12.4 metres above the sea level. Fredrick Odede discovered the structures in 1998 during an archaeological survey around Got Rambugu in Asembo region. There are 12 stone built enclosures that are roughly circular with interior partitions used as cattle kraals and stock pens. The walls are not high (11/2m) and are made of undressed stone without the use of mortar. They have wide gates without roof lintel. The structures are currently undergoing serious site destruction through cultivation and re-use of material remains by the local inhabitants. Oral information identifies these structures with either the Luo or highland nilotes "the Lang'o people.

### Sakwa Stone Structure Site

Sakwa stone enclosures are situated on Got Abiero and Rasoti hills in Bondo Sub County.. There are three stone built enclosures in Sakwa region. The enclosures are 11/2m high. Interior partitions consist of stone lining and rock pillars. The walls are made of undressed stone without the use of mortar. The gates are natural passes rather than well – defined gates with roof lintels or watchtowers. These *Ohingni* are situated on hilltops that have a clear view of the surrounding landscape. Associated material remains include pottery, grindstones, hammer stones, bones, raised house floors and human burials or stone cairns. They have not been dated and their origin is still uncertain. Despite their significance, the hill forts are currently undergoing destruction through cultural activities and natural processes.

### Gunda – Buche (Earthworks in Northern Nyanza)

*Gunda – Bur* is abandoned place of past human habitation surrounded by roughly circular banks and ditches that acted as defensive mechanisms during the later prehistoric settlement into the region. The earthworks are spatially



distributed in Bondo and Alego – Usonga Sub Counties. Four earths – build structures have been located in Sakwa. The GPS coordinates of Kipasi site are S00°09'57" and E034°15'57.0" at an elevation of 1203 meters above the seal level. Oiko site is situated at S00°09'06.0" and E034°15'53.7" at an altitude of 1222 meters above the seal level.

The structures are known locally as “Gunda Buche” or Ohingini. Gunda – Bur are roughly circular enclosures comprising of ditches and banks on either side or one side. They were used as defensive mechanisms to trap external enemies, cattle raiders or wild animals during the later prehistoric settlement into the region. Material remains litter the surface of their interior sections. Such materials include pottery, lithics, grindstones, hammer stones, animal bones, human remains and evidence of house floors.

Majority of these structures are not partitioned but a few structures have interior partitions or external extensions such as Oiko structures in Sakwa region, Bondo Sub County. The structures were constructed through piling up of the earth material dug from adjacent ditches. The dating and origin of Gunda Buche is still uncertain. Test excavations have not been carried out within these enclosures. Moreover, oral history provides conflicting information regarding their origin and date. The present inhabitants around these structures suggest they were built by non – luos. A historical gap surrounds these structures. The history of the locals is not connected to the origin of the earthworks. However, another version ties Gunda – Buche with the ancestors of the local inhabitants. The earthworks are currently under serious threat from human activities such as cultivation, quarrying, construction and re – use of the archaeological materials in the homesteads of the local people. The community members around these structures should be made aware of their cultural importance. These earthworks should be gazzetted and protected by the National Museums of Kenya.



**Figure 8.** *Gunda Buche: Architectural Features C. Cultural and Sacred Sites*

### Siaya County

1. Olua tree in Alego
2. Holly Got Adodi
3. Mysterious bull hill of Manga and Magere
4. Holly site of Migingo
5. Bull rock grave of Podhe

### Bondo County

1. Got Ramogi in Usigu division in Yimbo region
2. Got Abiero in South Sakwa

3. Got Naya in Uyoma region, Madiany Division

### Kisumu County

1. Kit Mikayi
2. Luanda Magere
3. Grave of Ramogi Ajwang'

### South Nyanza Region

1. Simbi Nyaima
2. Nyamgodho wuod Ombare
3. Soklo Kipenji hill
4. Odino holly ground

### D. Myths and Legends (Sacred sites): Abindu, Kit Mikayi, Simbi, Luanda Magere, Got Ramogi

A number of sacred sites - Abindu, Kit Mikayi, Simbi, Luanda Magere, Got Ramogi – are considered highly by members of certain communities, used for prayers and developed as sites for cultural or eco-tourism. Modern icons also play their role in evoking intangible connections between past, present and future, symbolised in ‘heroes and heroines’ such as Jaramogi, Achieng Oneko, Odera Akango, Argwengs Kodhek, Henry Okullu, Barack Obama, Odede Rachilo.

### Luanda Magere

The site is located at GPS Coordinates of S00°0'14.6" and E035°6'30.6" at a height of 1203 meters above sea level. Long time ago before the coming of the Europeans in our country various ethnic communities used to fight wars among themselves. At that time, heroes of war commanded a lot of respect.

Magere came from Kano clan known as Sidho. This man was a hero of heroes. Magere was a polygamist. The people of Kano were neighbours to the Lang'o. The Lang'o executed night cattle raids on the Kano people who retaliated by invading the Lang'o at daytime. During the time of Lwanda Magere, there were many heroes but there was no one who could sit down smoking his pipe while his servants carried his weapons. When his group was at the verge of defeat, he would instruct his servants to hand him his spears and immediately the enemies would start falling. During his life, he killed so many of his enemies that could not be counted. Magere's body was a rock (Lwanda) and that is why his enemies could not easily kill him. His enemies even thought that he was a mystery and could not be killed. The Lang'o thought of a way to kill him but failed. After many years, they decided to give him one of their very beautiful daughters to marry. One day, Magere became ill and asked his Lang'o wife to pierce him with a razor. He asked her to pierce his shadow instead of his flesh and blood oozed out. His wife immediately knew that his strength and life was in his shadow. The elder wife was dismayed at Magere's revelation of his secret to his Lang'o wife and exclaimed: you have stepped on fire! This was because she was aware that the second wife was given to Magere to discover the secrecy of his strength. The first wife had opposed the marriage between Magere and his Lang'o wife but he



dismissed the issue as sheer jealousy. The Lang'o wife disappeared and went back to her people. His first wife advised him not to go to war anymore in the future but Magere refused and insisted that he would rather die like a hero. After receiving the information, the Lang'o organized a raid. On that day, Magere killed so many people that he got tired and could not run. At that moment, one person turned and speared his shadow and he fell down only to disappear and turn into a rock. Kano people went back very sad while the Lang'o celebrated. However, many of them were still doubtful since he had just turned into a rock. They thought that he could change into something else or resurrect. A foggy environment marked Magere's death. The rock that Magere turned into is still present. Today, the place is treated as a sacred site. Whenever Kano people are going to war or hunting, they sharpened their spears on this rock. Kano people relied on Magere's strength so much that a saying was coined for it as follows: when one becomes notorious in Kano he is asked whether he is Magere who was never questioned.

#### Nyamgondho

Nyamgondho in Nyandiwa, just below Gwasi hills on the shores of Lake Victoria is also a legendary area. It is said that the poor man, Nyamgondho by sheer luck fished an old woman from Lake Gwasi. The old lady requested to be taken home and Nyamgondho complied since he was not married. She asked him to build granaries and the following day the whole home was full of livestock and wealth. He married more wives and he became respected. One day he came home late in the night drank and abused the old lady. The following morning the lady was annoyed and left Nyamgondho's home. She started going towards the lake and all the wealth followed her. Nyamgondho followed behind and died on the shores of the Lake. Today, there is a tree that represents him.

#### E. Traditional Practices and Beliefs

These are important including religious beliefs, dances (traditional, Afro-music, European music and dances in different localities in the city) and festivals, such as Dunga Fish Night, Got Ramogi, Migwena and Suba. Festivals can take an educational form, or be themed, for instance, engaging Yawa dancers or cultural events initiated by the Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology. Food is a critical contemporary manifestation of cultural heritage, embodied in eating patterns, fishing culture and food types (fish and ugali). Mapping intangible cultural heritage reveals comedy, fashion, storytelling, arts and crafts, clothing and traditional and contemporary dress. Heritage is found in beach and fishing communities, but also in colonial architecture and infrastructure – around the prison, railway and port, housing and cemetery.

**F. Social and Recreation sites:** Aguch Kisumo, Cinema, Disco, Hotels, Restaurants, Markets, Clubs



Figure 9. Aguch Kisumo in Kisumu City

**G. Natural Heritage/Conservation sites:** Landing beaches/Forest ie Dunga, Musoma, Lwangni, Impala Park, Got Ramogi Hill, Riat Hill, Abindu

**Dunga Beach destination**, is a fisherfolk village located five kilometres from the Central Business District (CBD) of Kisumu City. Dunga Beach and Wetland is known for its unique ecological attractions due to its rich biodiversity, about 800 bird species, recognized as an Important Bird Area (IBA) and place of international importance for bird conservation covering 5000 Hectares at Tako River Mouth on Winam Gulf of Lake Victoria. Some of the bird species recorded include: threatened *papyrus Yellow Warbler*, *Papyrus Gonolek*, *White-winged Warbler* and *Papyrus Canary*, *Carruthers's*. The wetland provides a fish breeding grounds for the fish and hippos. Eco-finder Kenya and Dunga Eco-tourism Association (DECTA) have been promoting and conserving natural and cultural heritage of Dunga, and supporting grass-root led interventions for community empowerment and the improvement of livelihood security. Eco-ventures already established the following: tour guiding, kayaking, boat racing, bird watching, sport fishing, fish nights and festivals, basketry, pottery, traditional food cuisines (culinary), traditional dressing and clothing, cultural museums, landing fish banda, beach markets and wetland board walks attracting domestic and international tourists, more popular with education tours. Historically, it has one of the colonial railway lines with terminal port. Dunga is an informal urban settlement as well as a rural enclave. The site is a fish landing beach, with fishing as the main economic and cultural practice of the inhabitants. The Beach Management Unit (BMU) governs the operation of the fishing activities, where women and youth are part of governance and enterprise initiatives.

**H. Land of Heroes and Heroines:** Jaramogi, Achieng Onoko, Odera Akango, Argwemngs Kodhek, Okullu, Obama, Odede Rachilo

Two mausoleums have been built for two Luo heroes namely Tom Mboya and Jaramogi Oginga Odinga.

#### Tom Mboya Mausoleum

It was built in honour and remembrance of the late Tom

Mboya. This is a burial place of Tom Mboya. It has information on the family and Luo history. Tom Mboya's role as an international agent of Kenyan government is also presented. The transfer of this mausoleum to the care and protection of the National Museums of Kenya has led to its proper management and conservation. The Mausoleum will form an infrastructure of the greater museum to come on the Rusinga Island.

#### Oginga Odinga Mausoleum

This was built at Jaramogi Oginga Odinga's home in Nyamira, Bondo Division in honour of the late veteran politician. The site has all the information on Luo traditional culture. Political, social and economic developments in Kenya are well presented. Powerful political figures in Kenyan history are also displayed. It also exhibits the family's involvement in Kenyan politics in post – colonial era. Exhibition of traditional Luo cultural materials such as clothing, weapons and ornaments constitute the greater portion of this mausoleum. There is also a library. The late Hon. Odinga is laid in a beautiful sheltered grave in front of the main mausoleum. The mausoleum is not under the National Museums of Kenya but it would be well managed if it were put under its management. It could be the best place for Luo Traditional Cultural in Western Kenya.

**I. Events, and Festivals:** Traditional events and festivals i.e. Tero-Buru, Traditional dances, Annual festivals ie Dunga Fish Night, Got Ramogi, Migwen, Suba



**Figure 10.** Traditional Luo Festivals

Educational Festivals: music, drama: primary and secondary and universities.

Theme Festivals: Yawa dancers, Miss County Tourism, Jooust Tourism and cultural week.

**J. Food Culture:** Feeding patterns, production, fishing culture, fish and ugali, food typology i.e. breakfast, lunch; culinary; delicacies; eating spaces

**K. Music and Dances:** Traditional, Afro-music, European

**L. Talent Promotion Performances:** Comedians, drama and dance troupes, fashions, modelling, Narratives

**M. Art and Craft:** Pottery, basketry, fine art

**N. Clothing and Dressing:** Skins, beads, Traditional and contemporary

**O. Religious Practices and Beliefs:** Traditional, Afro-Christian, Muslim, Budha, Hindu

**P. Colonial Heritage:** Colonial Prison, Uganda Railway and Port, Railway Housing, Colonial Cemetery



**Q. Lake Victoria Beaches and Fisher fork communities:** Musoma, Dunga, Kisumu Port





## R. Transport Facilities and Regional Connectivity for Cultural Tourism



## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study had documented a catalogue and inventory of various forms of tangible cultural heritage in the form of sites, artifacts, and features as well as intangible cultural heritage such as festivals, traditional dances and songs, myths and legends in Kisumu and its environs. Several cultural heritage sites laced with various forms of artifacts and features are spatially distributed across Kisumu and its environs. They range from paleontological, archaeological, historical, and cultural heritage sites situated in the midst of natural and man-made ecological settings along the Eastern shores of Lake Victoria of Kenya. Paleontological sites exhibit evidence of fossilized bone remains dating to millions of years ago. Archaeological sites display artifactual remains spanning from stone tools, bone remains, shell middens, Early to Late Iron Age tools, pottery, charcoal remains as found at Kanam and Kanjera, Wadh Lang'o, Gogo Falls, Muguruk among others. Historical sites are endowed with both tangible and intangible cultural heritage such as dry stone walls, earth works, pottery, beads, iron implements (tangible heritage) as well as myths, and legends (intangible). Cultural sites are generally sacred sites usually visited by various religious groups to worship and engage in fasting and meditation. These are sources of herbal medicine and associated supernatural forces where different religious groups, both traditional and African-Christian in nature come to obtain spiritual powers or divination.

The recommendations include the need for further

extensive and general survey covering the whole of western Kenya region. There is need for site conditional survey to establish specific conditions of each and every site. Conservation and preservation of the numerous endangered cultural heritage sites in Kisumu and its environs. Infrastructural developments should be of high priority to allow accessibility and visibility of these sites. Awareness creation regarding the values of cultural heritage sites is of great significance to future generations. Capacity building among the key stakeholders is required for proper management of these sites. Marketing and branding of the various cultural heritage sites, their associated features and artifacts for cultural tourism promotion. Need for creation of networks, partnerships and collaborations among the key stakeholders such as local community, policy makers, academia, private practitioners, international community among others.

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