

University of the Witwatersrand
Department of Geography

Appropriation in a World Heritage Site

Mozambique Island's Visible and Invisible Complexities

Abstract:

Mozambique Island, situated in the North of Mozambique, was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1991, for its unique architecture, a testimony to the amalgamation of different cultural and scientific practices from the 16th century onwards. Generally this research is about a paradox: Mozambique Island has been recognised as a special place, and yet it is in a state of disrepair and buildings are being rebuilt and reconstructed in ways that are not consistent with the designation. Situated within the field of Human Geography, my research question *Why is the World Heritage of Mozambique Island in its present state* is answered through an exploration of the concept of appropriation and the importance of recognising the invisible and visible complexities of a locality. I argue that the complexities of Mozambique Island (viewed from differing scales) determine the perception of the islanders have of how World Heritage could potentially benefit them, which in turn, directly informs conservation, maintenance and management strategies (at community, city council, regional and national levels). The appropriation of identity and space only happens when the individual or group concerned think that they would benefit at some level from it. In the case of Mozambique Island, most subjects interviewed do not know what World Heritage is, how they could benefit from potential tourism associated with it and therefore why they should be putting extra effort into conserving it. Through a conversation between issues of World Heritage, identity, space, ownership, tourism and scale, I propose that in Mozambique Island there is a case of non-appropriation of its World Heritage due to its complexities, the main being: severe poverty, lack of education, bad governance, a culture of dependency and poor support from the national and regional government and UNESCO.

Submitted to the University of the Witwatersrand
In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Masters of Arts in Human Geography

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25th of May 2010

Cape Town, 25th of May 2010

I, VANESSA ULIA DANTAS E SÁ, do solemnly declare, in accordance with Rule G27 that this thesis is a construction of my own work. In addition, this thesis and all of its contents have not been used as a submission for any other degree or submitted at any other university.

Vanessa Ulia Dantas e Sá



Ilha de Moçambique

*

It is because I love you that I am here.

It is the sound of your boats going and coming from the sea for long nights,

The sound of your mosques calling me for prayer before the sun greets you.

It is because I love you.

And, that I do not ask to be loved back.

That is why I am here.

*

Vanessa, August 2009

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Acronyms

AAIM	<i>Associação dos Amigos da Ilha de Moçambique</i> Association of the Mozambique Island Friends
FRELIMO	<i>Frente da Liberação de Moçambique</i> Liberation Front of Mozambique
GACIM	<i>Gabinete de Coordenação da Ilha de Moçambique</i> Office for the Coordination of Mozambique Island
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
OJM	<i>Organização da Juventude Moçambicana</i> Organisation of the Mozambican Youth
RENAMO	<i>Resistência Nacional Moçambicana</i> National Mozambican Resistance
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WHC	World Heritage Convention
WHEL	World Heritage Endangered List
WHL	World Heritage List
WHS	World Heritage Site

Acknowledgements

I have started writing my acknowledgements countless times. I have written them in full, and later found them to be inappropriate, overemotional or too conventional. Somehow, when I pick up a book I think I might like, I love reading the acknowledgements. Perhaps because it shows another style of writing from the author, and it shows his and her emotions. In more fragile times, I've often cried reading the last paragraphs – to the mother, the wife, the husband and the kids.

So my long awaited acknowledgement list starts, instead of ending, by thanking the most important person in my life, Khalid Shamis, my dearest husband, who has endured bad and depressive moods, months of mourning over a termination and a miscarriage, others of overexcitement and, overall, a lot of anxiety around this report. He has continuously been strong, gentle, understanding and beautiful, showing me that my struggle is not who I am, that I have much to contribute to the academic world, yet through ways that I will carve, for myself. [Khalid thank you for teaching me about patience and perseverance.]



I thank my father for instilling in me the love of studying, for showing me the importance of being true to oneself, for all the hugs he gave me while alive, for making it clear that it is never too late. [Up to now I've done it for you, for your love and acknowledgement; from here onwards I'll do it for myself]. I thank my mother for her continuous love, for giving me the opportunity to study and for always believing in me.

My friend Sevi has been fundamental in all aspects of my life. The following people were a source of comfort, with whom I shared the joy and pain of this work: my brother Ricardo Iuri Dantas e Sá, my sister-in-law Inge Steinhoff, Aron and Kristy Turest-Swartz [thank you for all, in times of greatest need], Gabriela Aragão, Angie Mills, Nathalie Rosa Bucher, Nádia Nóvoa [you can do it], Elizabeth Mills, Brigitte Bagnol, Mona Moe Machava, Tiago Correia Paulo, Pedro da Silva Pinto and Leila Abdula [and Guga]. I'd like to show gratitude to Dr. Teresa Diswueit as through her guidance I found my writing voice and my love for sensual ethnography.

I would like to acknowledge my supervisor Professor Charles Mather who throughout the process continued to believe that I had something worth the department's small grant for fieldwork and that I would finish this report. His comments were fundamental to the quality of this report. I'm indebted to Kristy Turest-Swartz for the final proofreading of this report.

I have no words to express the glory of finally finishing this research report. May all the above-mentioned and those who I might have forgotten, be blessed with clarity in their endeavours, be them academic, romantic or creative – hopefully a combination them all.

To Jabal and Tahira,
the keepers of the gate, and
to Iba, Jamil and Malaika,
who I await with love.

