

## ■ TANZANIA

### Archaeological Field Research at Ifakara, Tanzania

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## Introduction

This paper reports on field research conducted at Ifakara, east-central Tanzania (Figure 1). Ifakara is *terra incognita* archaeologically speaking because until this fieldwork research, nothing had been reported from this part of Tanzania. The field work was designed (1) to conduct an ethnoarchaeological survey with a view to assess public awareness of cultural heritage, (2) to conduct extensive archaeological survey to discover sites, and (3) to study modern iron smiths. This paper is based on preliminary analysis and presents results of the field research. Results indicate that Ifakara is archaeologically significant.

## Background Information to Ifakara

Etymologically, the name Ifakara is composed of two Ndamba words: *ufa* and *kara* which mean “land is destroyed” or “land is totally dead”. It was named during the invasions by Lipangalala’s group in 1860s when the Ndamba were in great fear and were driven out of the Kilombero River (Larson 1976). While on the way back home they were informing their fellows they met on the way to the valley that things had fallen apart because of the invasions. Later, during the colonial period Europeans couldn’t pronounce it correctly hence “Ifakara” instead of “ufakara”.

Historically, Ifakara has passed through different administrative districts. While from 1899 to 1917 it was part of Mahenge militarbezirk, between 1917 and 1936 it was under Mahenge District (Larson 1976). From 1936 to independence (1961), Ifakara became part of Ulunga District. Today (2008), Ifakara is

part of Kilombero District, Morogoro Region. It is both the division and district headquarters.

Ifakara largely occupies the central position on the fertile alluvial fan of Kilombero valley land. The population is heterogeneous. The indigenous people are largely the Ndamba, but the population today constitutes also the descendants of Lipangalala, Ndwangira and Mbulume, who as leaders from Zululand, invaded Ifakara in the late 1860s (Larson 1976:14). Other ethnic groups include Hehe, Sukuma, Bena, Gogo, Ruguru, Kyurya, Pare, and Chagga. In terms of religion, Christians outnumber Moslems and pagans because of early settlements of missionaries in the area.

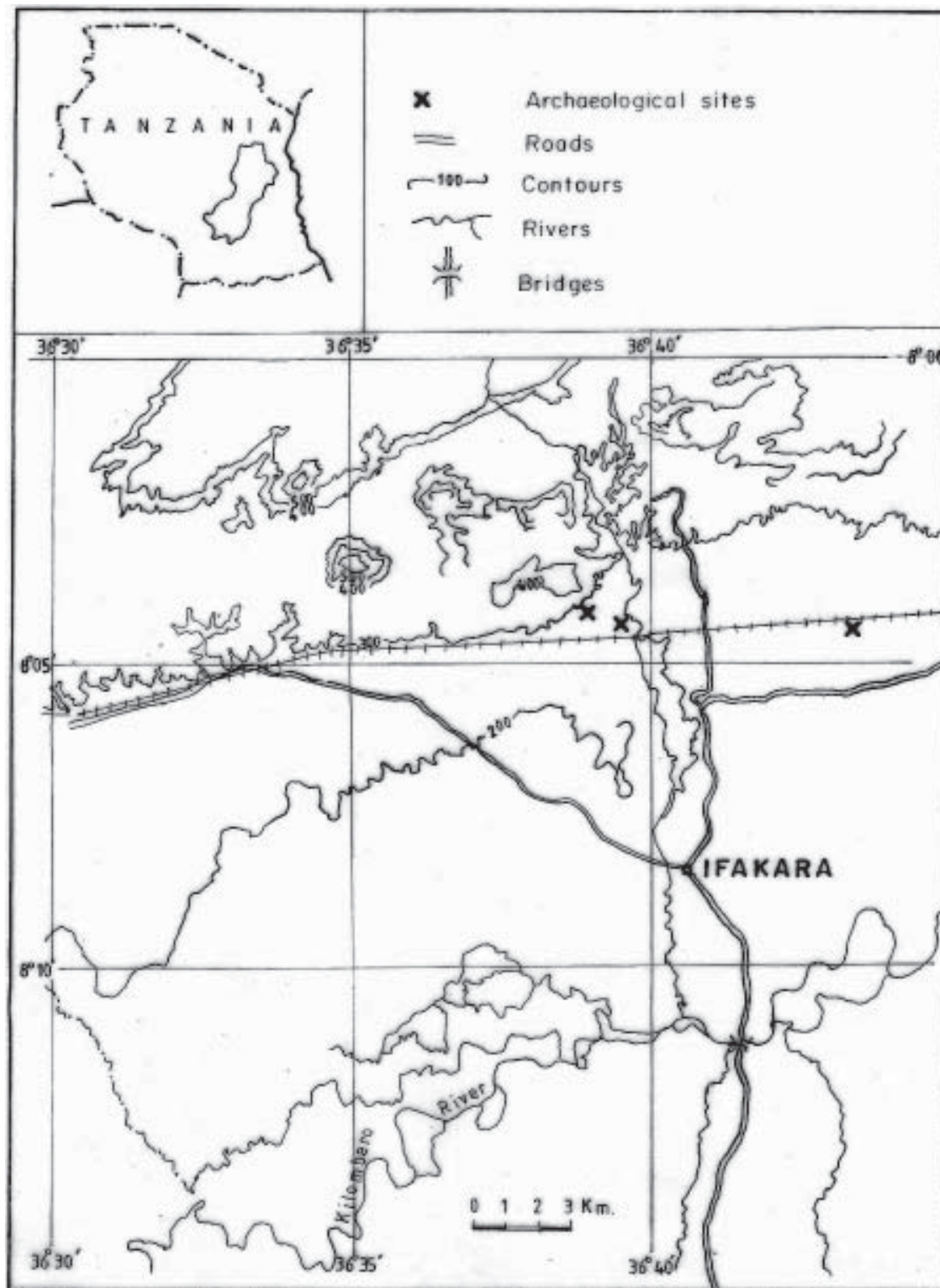
Fishing has always been the main economic activity of the Ndamba living along the Kilombero River. The river provides different fish species including prawns, sardines, ndipi, mbewe, kitoga, tilapia, mjongwa, catfish, sulusulu, bulu,juju, ngunga, ngufu, ngundu, nguyu, ningu and mbala. The Ndamba are distinguished from the Pogoro of Mahenge highlands and its lowland peripheries by their riverine economy and technology. The technological superiority of the Ndamba lies in their control of canoe transport and grasp of riverine lore, which enables them to slip into vast and complicated waterways and survive there for lengthy periods. For a long time, Larson (1976) notes, the Ndamba gained access to the fertile alluvial fans only during the dry season. Other subsistence activities include hunting and cultivation. Today, people also farm. While rice is the main food stuff, sugarcane, maize, millet and wheat are essentially grown for food and trade.

In terms of previous archaeological research, Ifakara has received no attention except for a cultural heritage impact assessment (CHIA) carried out on behalf of the Kilombero Valley Teak Company (KVTC) by Mary Leslie in the last two years.

## Ethnoarchaeological Research in Ifakara

In June 2008, an archaeological field school was conducted in the area. Village governments assisted us to get a list of elders for this study. We interviewed informants because they are known to assist in discovering sites (Fagan and DeCorse 2005). Of forty people interviewed, fifteen were indigenous

Figure 1. Map of research area.



**Figure 2.** Top left: Charcoal pieces. Top right: Smithing. Bottom left: Claud’s smithing hut. Bottom right: Iron tools



**Table 1.** Age Groups of Informants.

Group	Age Group	Number	%
1	<40	2	2
2	40-60	8	20
3	61-80	17	42.5
4	>81	4	10
5	unknown	9	22.5
	Totals	40	100

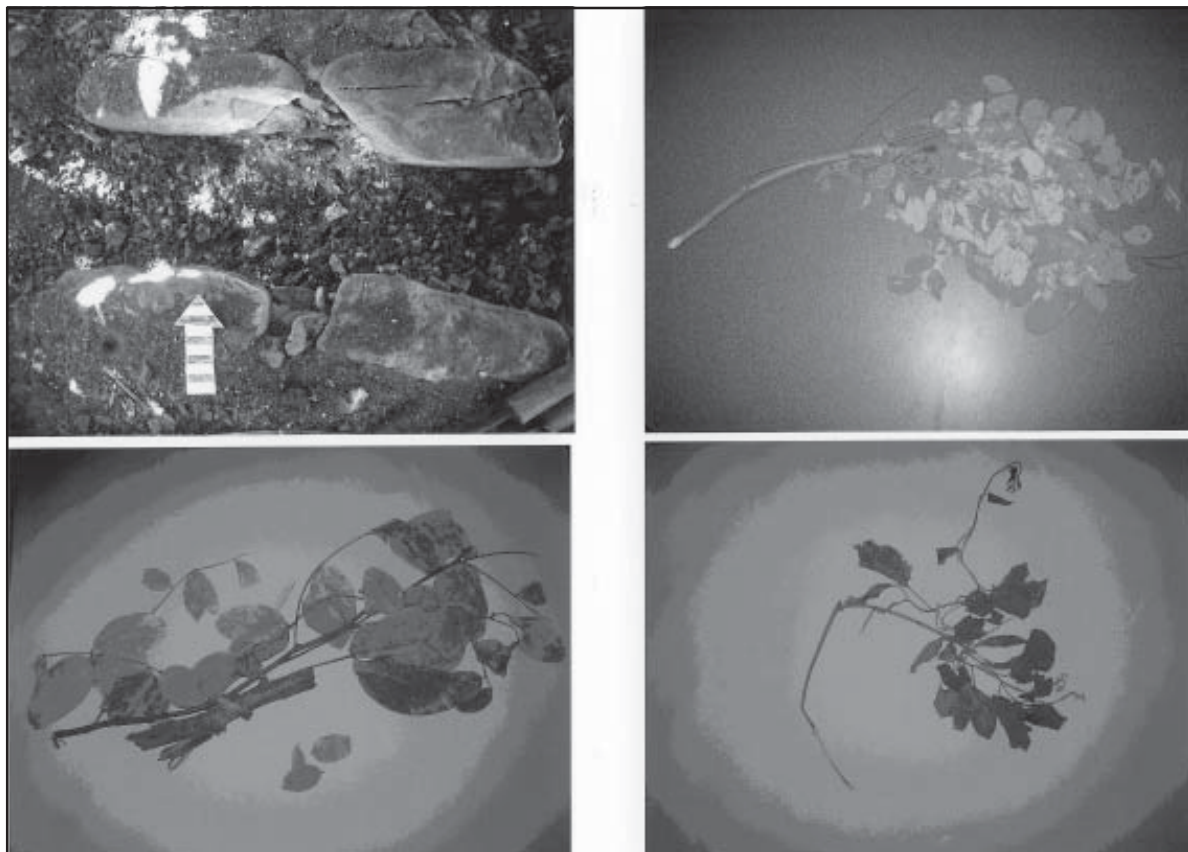
to Ifakara and twenty five were immigrants from places including Iringa, Mwanza, Kilimanjaro and Kagera. The age range of the informants is given in Table 1.

The following task was to assess public awareness of cultural resources in the area. Five mutually inclusive variables were applied (Table 2) because there was a possibility for one informant to belong to more than one variable. Based on such scores for the variables, it was important to carry out archaeological survey for reported sites and areas with a view to verify whether or not they had archaeological potential. The sites included Machipi hill ritual cave, Machipi farm site, Machipi modern iron smithing industries, Lumemo farm site, and Kikwawila site. The following are the results of the surface and sub-surface survey of the sites.

**Table 2.** Public Knowledge Variables

No.	Variable	Points	%
1	Completely unaware	27	51.9
2	Aware of ancient heritage technologies, such as iron technology, pottery technology	10	19.2
3	Aware of the history of Ifakara	6	11.53
4	Claimed ownership of heritage sites	5	9.6
5	Aware of heritage sites e.g. caves, smithing and ritual sites	4	7.6
	Total	52	100

**Figure 3.** Top left: Smithing hearth. Top right: Mkalati. Bottom left: Muwanga. Bottom right: Luwopola.



**Table 3.** Material from the Machipi Site.

S/No.	Material Type	Number	Weight (g)
1	Daub with wood impressions	3	222.0
2	Body sherds	10	330.3
3	Rim and graphite sherds	1	13.2
4	Graphited sherds	2	29.4
5	Decorated body sherds	3	35.3
6	Rim and decorated shoulders sherds	3	246
7	Rim and decorated on tip sherds	1	19.6
8	Rim and undecorated sherds	2	16.2
9	Decorated sherds on shoulders	1	18.3
10	Iron tool piece (traditional hoe?)	1	96.4

### Machipi Modern Iron Smithing Industries

Two smithing sites or hearths were found, one abandoned (Figure 2, top left) and the other one still in use (Figure 2, top right and bottom left). Both sites revealed a lot of scale slag, droplet slag, conglomerated slag and charcoal pieces. The following passage focuses on the results from the latter industry. The hearth is owned by Mzee Claud Mwainoma (Figure 2, top right) who inherited the technology from his parents. He started it in 1962 when he was twenty one years old. Scrap iron such as springs are the chief raw materials out of which tools like circles, knives, spears, arrows, nails, axes and other traditional tools are manufactured (Figure 2, bottom right). He said that when inserted into the hearth (Figure 3, top left) and red hot, a piece of say spring is taken out to an anvil. While assistant smith holds it, the chief smith strikes it several times with hammer. Such deformation continues until the intended tool is obtained and ready for use.

It was also reported that women are not allowed to enter into smithing hut as they could be affected some how. It is forbidden for anyone to sit on the anvils as well as to pass over or go between the hearth and anvil. One is not allowed to forge when his wife is pregnant to avoid abortion. Medicine is used in smithing process as it fastens iron heating. Charcoal is obtained from two tree species

namely Mkalati and Muwanga (Figure 3, top right and bottom left) because of calorific value including the fact that these species are strong, last long and produce no sparks. Mzee Claudi Mwainoma and Kazigudi Mhando reported to use Luwopola plant (Figure 3, bottom right) as medicine for protection against mishaps at the site.

### Machipi Ritual Cave

People living close to the cave believe that only old men are allowed to enter into the cave because such elders are responsible for ritualistic performances on their behalf. A day before the day of investigation the author was secretly informed on the presence of a big snake in the cave. While conducting archaeological survey, it was discovered that there were bees in the cave. It is these two factors which made it impossible to go in the cave for safety reasons. Observation from far away about 100m indicated the presence of the said cave. This has remained for further investigation in the near future.

### Machipi Site

This site is located at the foothills of Machipi Mountain series at 36°35'41"E, 8°00'08"S (GOT 1983). Investigation of this site involved conducting surface survey coupled with surface collection. Walk-over survey, conducted on a random basis yielded

**Table 4:** Surface Material.

Group	Material type	Number	Weight (g)
1	Bevelled and decorated rim potsherds (incised)	1	6.5
2	Decorated rim potsherds	1	19.6
3	Undecorated rim	1	12.6
4	Core tool	1	21.6
5	Burin	1	1.5
6	Scrappers	2	4.5
7	Flakes	2	4.2
	Total		

**Table 5:** STP2 Material.

No.	Material type	Number	Weight (g)
1	Flake fragments	33	39
2	Core scrapers	3	11.8
3	Whole side scrapers	3	11.0
4	Scraper fragments	2	11.4
5	Whole flakes	6	12.2
6	Burin	1	3.79
7	Point?	1	0.1
8	Daub pieces	16	100
9	Undecorated body sherds	5	74.8
10	Decorated (with incision) body sherds	1	10.4
	Total		

variable potsherds as presented in Table 3. Because of the abundant occurrence of materials on the surface, it was necessary to test the sub-surface. We dug one shovel test pit (STP) 1 measuring 50cm by 50cm (Figure 4, top left). The pit was sterile up to 60cm deep. Preliminary analyses paralleled with test pit results indicate that, this is not an ancient site; probably it is a post Swahili tradition dating from 16<sup>th</sup> century because Swahili has been dated to between 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries (Chami 2002).

### Lumemo Site

This site was shown to this author by two respondents, Mr Husein Ally Manjoro (60) and Mr. Muhando Kazigudi (70). It is located 100m from the flood plains of Lumemo River at 36°35' 42" and 8°00' 108" (GOT 1983). It lies a few meters from the TAZARA railway in the south and 500 metres from Lumemo River in the east. Investigations here started with walkover, which was later followed by test excavation. Based on the nature of surface in terms of visibility, we conducted systematic walkover survey

**Figure 4.** To left: STP digging. Top right: STP 2. Bottom center: Mrs. Mwananchi, a potter.



with the view to ensure good coverage as well as maintain efficient and accurate results. The activity yielded variable both Stone Age and Iron Age materials as presented in Table 4. These materials make Lumeno site archaeologically significant. Accordingly, we dug an STP (No. 2) in order to test the sub-surface distribution of materials and to estimate the age of the site. STP 2 measured 50cm by 50cm (Figure 4, top right). We reached the end at 70 cm, where concretions indicating a bed rock were encountered. Consequently, based on the material presented in Table 5, one would comfortably rate Lumemo site as ancient and archaeologically important given the occurrence of the MSA, LSA and Early Iron Age (Figure 5) materials.

**Kikwawila Site**

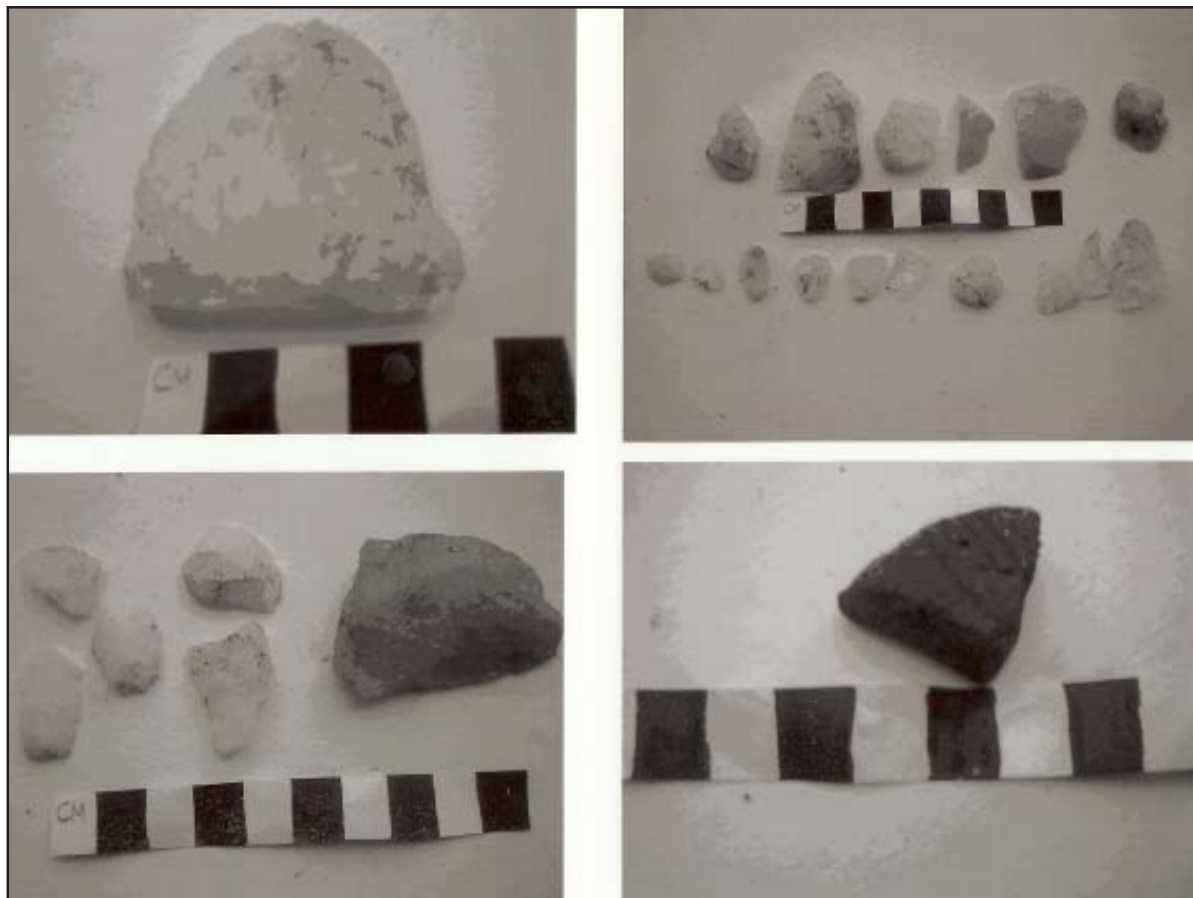
This site is located at 36°40'49" E and 8°00'07" S (GOT 1983). It is found in Kikwawila village about

300 metres from the Ifakara – Mikumi main road. Initially this area was thought to be a mere source of clays for potters from Ifakara (Figure 4, bottom center). Walkover survey led to the discovery of this site. Materials found are presented in Table 6.

**Discussion**

The results for this study reveal and present two separate aspects namely public archaeology and the archaeological significance of Ifakara. The former includes issues related to public awareness and ownership of relics. Based on the sample elderly people of Ifakara are not aware of archaeological heritage resources. This is because more than a half of the population didn't show that they understood and were aware of the presence of cultural materials. Because other informants showed this author material

**Figure 5.** Top left: MSA scraper fragment. Top right and bottom left: LSA lithic artifacts. Bottom right: Early Iron Age beveled pottery.



remains in abundance, it implies that while unaware the former may have destroyed and continues to destruct archeological remains say in their farms. Also, the archaeological survey results strengthen this because it led to the discovery of sites. This calls for the need to create awareness on cultural resources for the sake of rescuing them from multiplying forces of destructions. One approach which was put forward in the seventies is to involve the public fully in issues related to the importance of archaeological materials and management of such relics right away from community level (McGimsey 1972). This approach works because there are some people who are aware of cultural resources, which is a good start. For example, from Ifakara more than 25% of the population is aware of heritage sites and materials. In so doing, that will facilitate sustainable management of cultural resources in Tanzania.

The ownership of archaeological remains is problematic because while McGimsey (1972) writes that no one owns exclusive rights to archaeological relics, some respondents claimed ownership of cultural resources in their farms. Principally, the cultural resources of Tanzania are protected and managed by the Antiquities Act of 1964 as it reads from section 8 (1) that “all relics discovered in Tanzania whether before or after 1 August 1964 shall be the property of the republic provided that the director of antiquities may disclaim the ownership of any such relics accordingly”. Because all undiscovered Stone Age and Iron Age relics are not the property of the government at least from the Act, and the fact that Tanzania is *terra incognita*, it follows logically that while the government owns minority discovered relics, the majority of relics remain undiscovered and owned by occupiers of farms in Tanzania.



**Table 6:** Material from Kikwawila.

Group	Material type	Number	Mass (g)
1	Scraper fragment	1	40.8
2	Undecorated rim sherds (bowls)	2	42.6
3	(Red) painted sherds	1	18.3
4	Undecorated body sherds	24	228.4
5	Undecorated neck sherds	2	42.6
6	Decorated body sherds (incised)	1	29.4
7	Decorated (incision) rim sherds	1	14
8	Undecorated necked rim	1	10.4
9	Slag? Or Ore?	1	18.9

Because this is a problem to archaeological resources as well as researchers, one approach is to revise antiquities-related laws: (1) the Land Act No. 4 of 1999 Cap. 113 so that relics are recognized openly as part of land, (2) the Village Land Act of 1982 Cap. 114 section 29 to let relics be mentioned on the certificate of customary right of occupancy for the purpose of protection and management of cultural resources on or in their farms, and (3) the Antiquities Act of 1964 to redefine relics to include undiscovered ones especially those in farms of people granted right to occupy village lands. Also, there is a need to initiate special programmes on public archaeology for educating the public and create awareness to the communities on the relevance of relics to societies of today. Lastly, the results from ethnographic, surface and sub-surface survey have shown that Ifakara is archaeological significant. While its Stone Age materials resemble MSA and LSA cultures, the Iron Age materials belong to both EIA and LIA cultures. This implies that humans have inhabited Ifakaraland for more than 400K years ago. However, further investigation needed in the near future to expand and confirm on the history of the area because the present research was based on surface and test pits.

### Conclusions

Based on preliminary analyses of ethno-archaeological information from Ifakara, there are four things to learn. (1) Public archaeology is largely un-

developed, hence the need to accelerate efforts to educate the public on the importance of cultural heritage world as well as its management to present and future generations of Tanzania. (2) Unless communities especially ‘cultural peasant intellectuals’ are fully involved in archaeological works such as management of cultural remains or destructions of the heritage will continue because of ignorance. (3) While logically archaeologists pose that no one owns exclusive rights to an archaeological object or archaeological data, the antiquities-related laws are weak as discussed above including the fact that they are silent on both cultural impact assessment and community-based approach for sustainable management of cultural resources (Masele 2007). And so the need to solve such problems for the sake CRM becomes indispensable. Lastly, Ifakara is archaeologically important because of Middle Stone Age and Later Stone Age material in context as well as Early Iron Age pottery discovered through this study.

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