

Land Use, Landscape History, and Locality on Pemba Island, Tanzania

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For the tenure of the fellowship, I intend to draw on a set of evidence that I collected beginning in 2008 in the Zanzibari Islands and the United Kingdom. I have begun to reread the material and to map out a set of essays around the landscape history of Pemba Island, which is tied to slavery, the mass production of cash crops (especially cloves), colonialism, and the Zanzibar revolution of 1964. Much of the material comes from the Zanzibar National Archives collections on the islands of Pemba and Unguja, the main islands of Zanzibar, which lie off of the coast of present-day Tanzania, and which I studied in 2008. The colonial reports begin in the mid-nineteenth century and end with the revolution. I also conducted a series of interviews about land use elders on Pemba Island, which I hope to incorporate into these essays. Finally, early in 2011, I gathered archival material in London's Friends House Library, a collection that holds the collected documents of the Quaker missions around the world. Beginning in 1896, the Society of Friends mission founded a mission on Pemba that took in a number of manumitted slaves.

The paper I write for the RCC symposium will draw on this evidence to focus on the ways people created, destroyed, and recreated their island landscape in distinct historical moments, beginning with the major ecological change that occurred on the island in the early nineteenth century with the conversion of agricultural land to clove plantations worked by slaves brought from the African mainland.