

Field Work Report

A Comprehensive Overview of Field Activities and Learnings

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Uvidunda Mountains Cultural Tourism Enterprise

Executive Summary

This ethnographic research investigates the traditional culture of the Wavidunda people, focusing on its historical background and current relevance in daily life. Fieldwork was conducted in Uvidunda Ward, Kilosa District, Morogoro Region. The ward comprises three villages Udunghu, Chonwe, and Vidunda. The study aimed to explore the preservation, practice, and transmission of traditional cultural values among the Wavidunda community.

The research team collaborated with experienced local research assistants previously involved in cultural studies in the area. In Vidunda Village, Mr. Peter Mkwahembo a local researcher and co-author of books on the Vidunda language assisted in identifying elderly participants through random sampling for oral narratives. In Chonwe Village, the fieldwork was supported by a knowledgeable local resident named God, who is deeply familiar with Vidunda traditional culture and helped identify key informants. In Udunghu Village, the research assistant was Octavian Manupi, a trusted and experienced individual known to other researchers, who also applied random sampling to identify participants for interviews.

These field assistants were instrumental not only in identifying informants but also in locating significant cultural and historical heritage sites. Data collection methods included questionnaires, audio and video recordings, participant observation, and photographic documentation. These ethnographic tools provided a comprehensive understanding of the cultural practices, beliefs, oral history, and challenges facing the Wavidunda culture today.

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1. Introduction

Traditional culture represents the foundation of a community's identity and existence. Across the world, however, traditional cultural systems are under threat due to rapid advancements in science and technology. These developments have contributed to the deterioration and marginalization of indigenous cultural practices and languages.

The Wavidunda are a small ethnic group residing primarily in Vidunda Ward and partially in Kidodi Ward, where they often participate in local markets, transporting goods such as cassava and bananas in hand-woven bamboo baskets. The group inhabits areas situated at altitudes ranging from 600 to 1,500 meters above sea level, in the Uvidunda Mountains, which also serve as the source of important rivers like Msowero, Mhovu, and Tundu.

Historically, the Wavidunda are believed to have migrated from the Wahehe ethnic group. The name "Vidunda" means "mountains," and upon settling in the Iyungi Mountains, they became known as "people of the mountains." Despite their rich oral history and cultural uniqueness, the Wavidunda have received limited academic and governmental attention.

In the 2020/21 Tanzanian parliamentary budget speech, the then Minister of Information, Arts, Culture and Sport Harrison Mwakymbe, identified the Wavidunda as one of the endangered language least documented ethnic groups in Tanzania. Furthermore, linguist Kersten Legère has classified Vidunda as an endangered language. However, the threat extends beyond language traditional practices, rituals, and heritage sites are also at risk of being lost due to lack of documentation and preservation initiatives.

The absence of cultural awareness, inadequate preservation mechanisms, and the gradual loss of traditional artifacts are not only cultural losses but also missed opportunities for cultural tourism and intergenerational knowledge transmission. Legère's 2002 research indicated that Vidunda Ward had an estimated population of around 1,000 people, spread across the villages of Chonwe, Vidunda, and Udunghu.

This research aims to fill the gap in existing literature and contribute to the documentation and safeguarding of the Wavidunda cultural heritage. It emphasizes the role of traditional knowledge in shaping identity and calls for initiatives to preserve and promote this cultural legacy.

In Tanzania, it is estimated that there are approximately 150 distinct ethnic groups, each contributing to the country's rich diversity of cultural traditions and heritage. Among these, the Wavidunda are one of the least documented tribes, despite having a unique cultural identity rooted in their mountain-based way of life.

Historically, the Wavidunda have practiced cultural traditions that shaped their livelihood, values, and governance in the Uvidunda Mountains. One of the most notable figures in their history is Chief Lwanda Ngwira, a courageous and knowledgeable leader who played a significant role in guiding and protecting his people. Chief Ngwira is remembered for his bravery and resistance against colonial rule refusing to submit to colonial demands, which ultimately led to his execution alongside members of his leadership council. His legacy is a symbol of cultural pride and resistance among the Wavidunda.

This study arrives at a critical time—to preserve what remains of the Wavidunda traditional culture and to revive appreciation and respect for their cultural heritage. By documenting and

promoting these traditions, the research seeks to restore cultural dignity, encourage intergenerational transmission, and recognize the ancestral legacy that continues to shape the identity of the Wavidunda people today.

3. Research Diary: Daily Activity Report

Day 1: Monday, 5 May 2025

Location: Vidunda Village

The researcher travelled from Mikumi Town to Vidunda Ward using public transport, disembarking at Kidodi junction. From there, a motorcycle was used to navigate the mountainous terrain 2 km of steep concrete road followed by 3 km of rough and slippery paths due to the rainy season. Despite the challenging road conditions, the researcher arrived safely at the Vidunda Ward office.

Upon arrival, the researcher introduced himself to the Vidunda Ward Councillor and the Village Executive Officer, presenting the official research permit and explaining the objectives of the fieldwork. A copy of the permit letter was submitted to both offices.

Later that day, the researcher met with Peter Mkwanhembo, a local researcher and co-author of three books in the Vidunda language (including *Nhelo dza Wavidunda* and *Aho Katali*). Mr. Mkwanhembo helped the researcher understand the geographical layout of the village using maps and shared supporting documentation.

The researcher also conducted an initial interview with the Vidunda Village Chairman, Lazaro Gabriel Kiboga, who provided insights into cultural practices such as rituals, communal respect, traditional architecture (e.g., *Msonge* houses), and hospitality customs (e.g., welcoming guests by slaughtering chickens). He emphasized the cultural value placed on respect among community members, especially between children and elders.

Day 2: Tuesday, 6 May 2025

Location: Vidunda Village

Fieldwork began at 9:25 AM with a visit to the Ward office to gather data on the village area. Vidunda is largely an agrarian society, cultivating crops like cassava, beans, bananas, and vegetables. The ward is also implementing a project supported by the African Wildlife Fund involving avocado tree and beehive distribution.

Following a recommendation from the Ward Councillor, the researcher met Charles Adrian Mgoda (popularly known as witchdoctor Magumbira), a renowned traditional healer from Chonwe. Dr. Magumbira was in Vidunda collecting his beehives and agreed to an interview. He shared detailed information about Wavidunda rituals and mentioned the sacred site of Nzilaha, which houses the grave of Chief Lwanda Ngwira. Seven individuals were interviewed, and all data was recorded following guidelines from Shimuli Muli Company Ltd.

Day 3: Wednesday, 7 May 2025

Location: Vidunda Village

The researcher visited Vidunda Center, where locals gathered to drink traditional brews. Guided by assistant Mr. Mkwanhembo, the researcher proceeded to Kikoboga Hamlet, employing random sampling to select five respondents, including both men and women. Most

interviews were conducted in Chividunda (the local language). The terrain was slippery due to rain, making travel between scattered hilltop households physically demanding.

Day 4: Thursday, 8 May 2025

Location: Vidunda Village

Heavy rainfall restricted field movement. The assistant researcher guided the researcher to a nearby household where an elderly woman was preparing Ugimbi Komoni (a local brew). Despite the weather, five people were interviewed in Kikoboga and Kisumbi Hamlets.

In the downtime, Mr. Mkwahembo shared rich oral history and discussed his work in preserving the Vidunda language, including translating the Bible into Chividunda and compiling folklore. These conversations were also recorded.

Day 5: Friday, 9 May 2025

Location: Vidunda Village

The rain left the ground wet, but the researcher, guided by Peter Mkwahembo, visited Izumo Waterfall in Kisumbi Hamlet, a potential cultural tourism site. The journey included hiking and navigating slippery rocks to reach the waterfall's base.

Later, they visited Izimbo of Mkwahembo, near an ancestral graveyard, where the researcher introduced himself to the ancestors as part of traditional protocol. In Luguru Hamlet, the researcher met the leader of the Luguru Traditional Dance Group to plan video documentation of Sagga Rhumba and Siranga Drum performances.

Day 6: Monday, 12 May 2025

Location: Tundu Village, Kidodi Ward

The researcher met Solana Patric Sawana daughter of Vincent Ngwira, granddaughter of Chief Tengasule Ngwira (Joseph Bwanafedha), who shared oral stories of her grandfather, his resistance to colonialism, and rituals related to **Tengasule**. A retired teacher (her son) provided a six-page narrative document detailing the Ngwira clan's history narrated by Bint Vicent Ngwira. The family shared a rare black-and-white photo of key historical figures including Furahisha Ngwira, Maria Ngodiko, and Vicent Ngwira. Audio interviews and photo documentation were collected.

Day 7: Tuesday, 13 May 2025

Location: Vidunda Village

The researcher attended a Village Development Committee meeting, where some participants helped identify further informants. Maduila was interviewed and shared history on Chief Ngwira's leadership and the title "Mndewa", used for traditional chiefs. He also explained ritual practices involving the Mn'gongo tree and the original Vidunda settlement in Iyungi Mountain. Later, the researcher was taken to visit an iron-smithing site in Luguru Hamlet in Vidunda village.

Day 8: Wednesday, 14 May 2025**Location: Vidunda Village**

The researcher visited the renowned traditional healer Dismas Mwananyanga, known as Kibwagajila. Though no prior appointment was made, he welcomed the researcher warmly. He spoke about his grandfather, Bernard Mwananyanga, an earlier ritual leader in Vidunda, and demonstrated the use of an Izimbo a traditional healing basin filled with herbal infusions.

Day 9: Thursday, 15 May 2025**Location: Vidunda Village**

Kabwagajila accompanied the researcher to the grave of Chief Joseph Ngwira (Bwana Fedha), famed for impressing colonial visitors with his wealth. They also visited Ibwedunghu, a red rock cliff historically used to punish accused witches. On the return, the researcher encountered a Matombo resident cultivating spices. Later, i recorded a drum practice session by a local group preparing for performance documentation.

Day 10: Friday, 16 May 2025**Location: Vidunda Village**

The researcher awaited the Shimuli Muli video team, expected at 2:00 PM but delayed by transport issues. A new appointment was scheduled for the following morning. The team would record performances of Mhwendu and Domole drum traditions by the Tinigu Traditional Drum Group.

Day 11: Saturday, 17 May 2025**Location: Vidunda Village**

At 8:30 AM, the researcher and the Shimuli Muli recording team traveled to Vidunda using three motorcycles. The team recorded linguistic cultural expert Peter Mkwahembo, as well as Binti Peter, a basket-weaving artist. Later, they visited Izumo Waterfall and recorded Sagga Rhumba and Siranga Drum performances at Luguru Hamlet. The session extended into the evening due to delays and concluded with a nighttime descent from the hills.

Day 12: Sunday, 18 May 2025**Location: Vidunda Village**

The Shimuli Muli team recorded traditional Mhwendu and Domole dance performances in front of the Village Office. Since it was Sunday—a non-working day—many community members attended. The event also featured performances by the Vidunda Secondary School Traditional Dance Group, presenting Mkwaju Ngoma and Saga Rhumba. The recordings captured vibrant community participation and a festive atmosphere.

Day 12 – Monday, 19 May 2025

Location: Vidunda Village

Activity: Visit to Ibwedunghu Historical Site

Today, I visited the Ibwedunghu site, a historical location once used for the execution of individuals accused of witchcraft in Vidunda Village. The village drum beater, Msahala, guided me to the site, which borders their farm. Nearby, I also observed the Ibwedunghu Waterfalls.

Day 13 – Tuesday, 20 May 2025

Location: Chonwe Village

Activity: Visit to Nzilaha Sacred Ritual Site

The Vidunda tribe has a significant ritual site known as the Lwanda Ngwira site, located at the base of the Iyungi Mountains. To reach Nzilaha, situated approximately 7 km from Chonwe Village, one must traverse Njia ya Mistu. During the bean season, motorcycles can be used; otherwise, walking is necessary.

Photography is prohibited at the sacred site, a rule I respected. Upon arrival, I was welcomed by the Mwannyanga family, caretakers of the site. I was instructed to drink water and spit four times as a gesture of respect. Elders discussed the purpose of my research and affirmed my positive intentions. I conducted participant observation and recorded audio from three individuals.

Day 14 – Wednesday, 21 May 2025

Activity: Rest Day and Literature Review

After the strenuous hike the previous day, I took a break to collect reference materials for my research. Fieldwork assistant Peter Mkwahembo provided me with a book titled *Aho Katali*, which contains stories of the Vidunda people. I also found another book online titled *Nhelo za Wavidunda* and read a pamphlet by Visenti Ngwira, titled *Masimulizi Kutoka kwa Binti Visenti Ngwira Ukoo wa Ngwira*.

Day 15 – Thursday, 22 May 2025

Location: Vidunda Village

Activity: Visit to Clay Pot Artist

I arrived in Vidunda around 11:26 AM and met with research assistant Peter Mkwahembo to visit the last remaining Vidunda woman who practices clay pot making. Due to her remote location, we hiked approximately 3 km to reach her. She was working on her farm, uprooting weeds to allow beans to grow. After seeking her permission, we interviewed her about clay pot making before allowing her to return to her work. On our way back, we took a shortcut via Udunghu Road descending toward Kidodi.

Day 16 – Friday, 23 May 2025

Activity: Rest Day

Due to the previous day's extensive hiking and rainfall, traveling to Chonwe Village was challenging. I spent the day resting and reading *Aho Katali*, co-authored by Peter Mkwahembo and Karsten Legere.

Day 17 – Tuesday, 27 May 2025

Location: Chonwe Village

Activity: Hiking and Arrival

I embarked on a hike from Vidunda Village to Chonwe Village, recording the distance traveled. Due to the rainy season, motorcycles were unable to cross, so I walked. Research assistant Peter Mkwahembo was attending a funeral in Kidodi, so I arranged for someone else to accompany me. We began our journey around 1:00 PM and arrived at Chonwe Village Office near the dispensary at 5:19 PM. I met my host, Godfrey Malindo, near the Chonwe Roman Catholic Church at 5:45 PM. He introduced me to his family, and I spent the night at his home.

Day 18 – Wednesday, 28 May 2025

Location: Chonwe Village

Activity: Visits to Elders and Sacred Sites

I woke up around 6:37 AM. Mr. Godfrey Malindo took me to an elder nearby to record audio and observe traditional Vidunda cultural practices. We then visited the Lufinywu Waterfalls, a site where individuals accused of witchcraft were hanged. Later, we met Selestine Visaga, a local traditional healer residing in Chiwangara Hamlet. He inherited his healing methods from his grandfather, Babu Memba, who transmitted knowledge to Visaga. He explained that spirits disturbed him, leading him to accept the role of a healer. He discovered Babu Memba's grave on Kidozi Hill. At his house, we found a stone used for grinding cereals, known as *Luala* in Vidunda.

Day 19 – Thursday, 29 May 2025

Location: Chonwe Village

Activity: Interview with Smoke Pipe Carver and Exploration of Historical Cave

I woke up around 6:20 AM. My host and research assistant took me to an elder who carves smoke pipes. I interviewed him about the techniques and tools used in carving. I inquired about a cave where the Vidunda people allegedly hid during the Maji Maji War. However, my host was unaware of its location. Some respondents in Vidunda Village mentioned a cave on Iyungi Mountain. Despite efforts, we could not locate anyone who knew its exact location.

During my visit, I learned that a Vodacom tower had been erected at the peak of Iyungi Mountain, which is approximately 1,500 meters above sea level. I hiked 4 km from Chonwe Village Office to the peak.

Day 20 – Friday, 30 May 2025

Activity: Return to Vidunda Village

I woke up around 6:49 AM. My host's wife served me tea, and I expressed my gratitude for their hospitality. She informed me that an elder knowledgeable about Vidunda history was on sick leave in Msimba Village, Ngapa Hamlet. She suggested that I visit him in Mikumi for more information. I thanked them and descended to Vidunda Village, covering a distance of 11.5 km, and arrived around 3:30 PM.

Day 21 – Monday, 2 June 2025

Location: Udunghu Village

Activity: Motorcycle Ride and Meeting with Elder

I took a motorcycle from Msowero to Udunghu Village. The road was challenging and dangerous during the rainy season, with the motorcycle driver advising me to disembark and walk on steep slopes. The journey took about an hour and a half. In Udunghu Village, research assistant Octaviana Manupi guided me to an elder who shared information about the Vidunda people. We visited a local brew seller and met Kilepirian Mnyamani, who spoke about a historical conflict between the Wambunga and Vidunda at a place called Itengule in Udunghu Village. He explained that during the war, the Vidunda used Lukungu medicine for protection and to defeat the Wambunga. The Lukungu was applied to butchered sheep, and when the Wambunga consumed the meat, they quarreled and fought among themselves, leading to the Vidunda's victory.

Day 22 – Tuesday, 3 June 2025

Location: Udunghu Village

Activity: Visit to Chizua Waterfalls

The Chizua Waterfalls, located in the Uvidunda Mountains bordering Msowero and Udunghu Villages, is a cultural attraction. The waterfalls are situated 3.6 km from the starting point. The Uvidunda Cultural Tourism Enterprise has developed and organized tourism at this site. I visited the waterfalls and met a local elder, Manupi, who resides near the site. He shared a legend about a large snake that once lived there, believed to have been taken by chains and pulled into the sky. The name "Chizua" is derived from a Bantu word meaning "place of the sun." I also met with the waterfalls manager, who reported that 730 tourists visited the site in 2024. The Uvidunda Mountains Cultural Tourism Enterprise contributes to the development funds of both Msowero and Udunghu villages. A survey by Kilosa District Council confirmed that the waterfalls lie on the boundary between the two villages.

Day 23 – Wednesday, 4 June 2025

Location: Udunghu Village

Activity: Visit to Idete Hamlet

With the assistance of Octaviana Manupi, I traveled to Idete Hamlet in Udunghu Village to meet an elder knowledgeable about the origin of the Vidunda people and the meaning of the name "Vidunda." Manupi, being well-versed in Vidunda history, also mentioned the Vidunda Clan, which constitutes the tribe, including individuals like Mtemikwira.

Day 24 – Thursday, 5 June 2025

Location: Mikumi Village

Activity: Visit to Edith Nyako, Daughter of Late Chief Mndewa Louis Ngwira

During my research, I learned from the Mikumi councilor about the presence of Edith Nyako, the daughter of the last Vidunda Chief, Louis Ngwira, residing in Mikumi Mjini Hamlet. I visited her home and found that she was ill, having recently been discharged from the hospital. She expressed interest in sharing stories about her father but mentioned that she needed permission or to consult with her brother in Kihonda, Morogoro. While conversing, she showed me three photographs of her late father and his son in front of the last Tanganyika governor, Richard Turnbull, taken in Kilosa between 1940 and 1950. She also shared other pictures of Chief Louis Ngwira participating in community ceremonies. She recounted that when the government abolished chieftaincy in Tanganyika in 1963, Chief Louis Ngwira returned to his teaching profession. Edith Nyako then took me to Kidoma Chekeren Hamlet cemetery, where Chief Louis Ngwira is buried. We travelled by tuk-tuk to the cemetery behind the Mikumi Water Supply office, where his grave is located. Chief Louis Ngwira passed away in 2005.

3. Supervisor's Brief Report

In order to understand the importance of culture and how it can contribute to the sustainable growth of the community, research is crucial. The researcher was familiar with the ethnic groups in the area and the method of identifying three individuals from different villages to assist with the fieldwork. This approach allowed the researcher to collect valuable and relevant data.

Dividing the fieldwork into ten-day periods for each village was an excellent strategy, as it helped prevent mixing data from different villages. The data collection process, including recording and note-taking, clearly demonstrated the researcher's thoroughness in visiting and engaging with the communities in Chonwe, Vidunda, and Udunghu Villages.

Since Kilosa District is home to three main tribes—Vidunda, Sagara, and Wakaguru—I would recommend extending the fieldwork to include these other two tribes, which are less documented and may be endangered in terms of cultural preservation. Expanding the research to include these groups would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural diversity within the district.

The recording of audio and video during the traditional drum performances is a significant contribution. It will not only help to document the traditions but will also serve as an invaluable resource for Kilosa District's cultural profiling. Such documentation can be used for future cultural preservation efforts, educational purposes, and even potential tourism development.

Paula Katololo

Kilosa DC Cultural officer

RECODING

AUDIO RECORDINGS

Recording 1

- **Date:** 7 May 2025
- **Location:** Vidunda Village
- **Description:** Vidunda Rituals
- **Format:** Audio
- **Link:** [Listen](#)

Recording 2

- **Date:** 7 May 2025
- **Location:** Vidunda Village
- **Description:** Origin of the Wavidunda People
- **Format:** Audio
- **Link:** [Listen](#)

Recording 3

- **Date:** 12 May 2025
- **Location:** Vidunda Village
- **Description:** Christianity in Vidunda
- **Format:** Audio
- **Link:** [Listen](#)

Recording 4

- **Date:** 9 May 2025
- **Location:** Vidunda Village
- **Description:** Courtship and Marriage in Wavidunda
- **Format:** Audio
- **Link:** [Listen](#)

Recording 5

- **Date:** 9 May 2025
- **Location:** Vidunda Village

- **Description: Ritual Site and Izimbo**
- **Format: Audio**
- **Link: [Listen](#)**

Recording 6

- **Date: 21 May 2025**
- **Location: Chonwe Village**
- **Description: Local Food Preparation**
- **Format: Audio**
- **Link: [Listen](#)**

Recording 7

- **Date: 15 May 2025**
- **Location: Vidunda Village**
- **Description: Marriage Song**
- **Format: Audio**
- **Link: [Listen](#)**

Recording 8

- **Date: 15 May 2025**
- **Location: Vidunda Village**
- **Description: Domole Drum Dance**
- **Format: Audio**
- **Link: [Listen](#)**

Recording 9

- **Date: 15 May 2025**
- **Location: Vidunda Village**
- **Description: Mhwendu Drum**
- **Format: Audio**
- **Link: [Listen](#)**

Recording 10

- **Date: 15 May 2025**
- **Location: Vidunda Village**

- **Description: Ibwedunghu Witchcraft Hanging Site**
- **Format: Audio**
- **Link: [Listen](#)**

Recording 11

- **Date: 8 May 2025**
- **Location: Vidunda Village**
- **Description: Vidunda Bible**
- **Format: Audio**
- **Link: [Listen](#)**

Recording 12

- **Date: 3 June 2025**
- **Location: Udunghu Village**
- **Description: Vidunda Clans**
- **Format: Audio**
- **Link: [Listen](#)**

Recording 13

- **Date: 3 June 2025**
- **Location: Udunghu Village**
- **Description: Lukungugu – Traditional Protection Medicine**
- **Format: Audio**
- **Link: [Listen](#)**

Recording 14

- **Date: 3 June 2025**
- **Location: Udunghu Village**
- **Description: Wavidunda and Wambunga War**
- **Format: Audio**
- **Link: [Listen](#)**

Recording 15

- **Date: 3 June 2025**
- **Location: Udunghu Village**

- **Description:** *Kuhalila* – Inheriting the Widow
- **Format:** Audio
- **Link:** [Listen](#)

Recording 16

- **Date:** 21 May 2025
- **Location:** Chonwe Village
- **Description:** Nzilaha – Main Ritual Site of the Wavidunda
- **Format:** Audio
- **Link:** [Listen](#)

Recording 17

- **Date:** 21 May 2025
- **Location:** Chonwe Village
- **Description:** Researcher Invited to Nzilaha Ritual Site
- **Format:** Audio
- **Link:** [Listen](#)
-

VIDEO RECORDINGS

Recording 18

- **Date:** 9 May 2025
- **Location:** Vidunda Village, Luguru Hamlet
- **Description:** Izumo Waterfall
- **Format:** Video
- **Link:** [Watch](#)

Recording 19

- **Date:** 9 May 2025
- **Location:** Vidunda Village
- **Description:** Basket Weaving by Magdalena Daudi
- **Format:** Video
- **Link:** [Watch](#)

Recording 20

- **Date: 9 May 2025**
- **Location: Vidunda Village**
- **Description: Izimbo Demonstration**
- **Format: Video**
- **Link: [Watch](#)**

FIELD NOTES

Field Note 1

Date: 5 May 2025

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Location: Kikoboga Hamlet, Vidunda Village

Topic: Wavidunda Traditional Songs and Dance

Description

- Wavidunda tribe is enthusiastic about traditional songs and dances.
- Different songs performed for different occasions (marriage, hunger, grinding millet, harvesting, etc.).
- Interviewee: DaFrosa Michaeli, chairperson and traditional dance leader (Tinigu).
- Examples of songs:
 - Marriage ceremony song (lyrics included).
 - Hunger expression song ("sironga we sironga we...").
 - Grinding millet song ("mbele wele mbele wele...").
 - Songs for virgin girls ready for marriage.
 - Songs for harvesting and carrying millet sacks.

Thematic Insight:

Songs are a vital part of cultural expression and celebration in Wavidunda community, reinforcing social values and community identity.

Field Note 2

Date: 5 May 2025

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Location: Vidunda Village, Kikoboga Hamlet

Topic: Cultural Religion and Rituals

Description

Village Chairman Lazaro Kiboga explained Vidunda religious beliefs and rituals. Wavidunda worshipped a God called *Mlungu*, believed to dwell on mountains. Rituals were performed at Iyungi Mountain and Nzilaha site, including large clan rituals led by the Mwananyanga family, who inherited witchdoctor roles from ancestors.

Two ritual types exist: major public rituals at Iyungi Mountain and ancestor rituals at graves or trees (Mkamba and Mngongo) when a body is missing. Rituals involve local brew made from finger millet, prepared by boys who have not started menstruation.

Thematic Insight:

Wavidunda spirituality recognizes a supreme God (*Mlungu*) and respects ancestral spirits through ritual performances, highlighting ethical cultural beliefs.

Field Note 3

Date: 6 May 2025

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Location: Vidunda Village, Kikoboga Hamlet

Topic : Traditional Healer Bernard Mwananyanga

Description

Bernard Mwananyanga was a renowned traditional healer and witch doctor who led rituals for rainmaking and treating diseases like leprosy. He married Maria Mbago from Uluguru and was buried at Nzilaha in 1949.

His ritual practices and healing knowledge were passed down generations within the Mwananyanga clan, including to Frederick Mwananyanga and then Charles Adrian Mgoda (*Magumbira*), who continues to perform rituals.

Thematic Insight:

Bernard Mwananyanga shaped traditional healing and ritual leadership in Vidunda, establishing a lasting lineage of healers.

Field Note 4

Date: 6 May 2025

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Location: Vidunda Village, Kikoboga Hamlet

Topic Traditional Burial and Body Preservation

Description

Elder and local midwife Constansia Raphael Katinyila explained traditional burial practices. The body is rubbed with kerosene and salt, and a piece of bread is placed on the umbilical cord. Men carry the coffin; women participate in burying women, but not men.

Children's bodies are covered with cluster plant leaves (*Mnyonyo*), and their fingers are tied with ropes to preserve the mother's fertility. Post-burial rituals include announcements and a 40-day mourning period involving symbolic sticks representing family relations.

Thematic Insight:

Traditional burial practices show respect and care for the deceased and reinforce cultural values around fertility and mourning.

Field Note 5

Date: 7 May 2025

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Location: Vidunda Village, Kikoboga Hamlet

Topic :Origin of Wavidunda

The researcher interviewed Vidunda language expert Peter Mkwahembo, co-author of three books on the language. According to him, the word "Vidunda" derives from the Hehe word meaning "mountain." The Wavidunda ancestors migrated from the Uhehe land, following the Ruaha River to Chonwe Village.

The Wavidunda are ethnically related to the Hehe and Luguru peoples, and are Bantu speakers. Vocabulary comparisons show many similarities between Vidunda and Hehe languages (e.g., *malenga* means water in both).

Thematic Insight:

The Wavidunda and Wahehe are relatives, sharing linguistic and cultural roots.

Field Note 6

Date: 8 May 2025

Location: Vidunda, Kikoboga Hamlet

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Topic: Vidunda Language

Description:

The researcher conducted participant observation and literature review on the Vidunda language, a Bantu language spoken primarily in Morogoro Region, Kilosa District, especially Vidunda Ward. According to Karsten Legere, Vidunda is a minority language with an estimated 10,000 speakers (2002 census). Later estimates suggest around 12,000 speakers in Vidunda, Udunghu, and Chonwe villages (Gutharie, 2010).

The researcher interviewed Mr. Peter Mkwahembo, co-author of several Vidunda language books with Prof. Karsten Legere. Mr. Mkwahembo contributed to Bible translations and has years of experience translating between Vidunda and other languages. He noted the Vidunda language is endangered due to Swahili dominance and loss of strong vocabulary.

Recent 2022 census estimates Vidunda Ward population at 13,628, with approximately 20,000 speakers nationwide (according to Mr. Mkwahembo). Observations show increased use of Swahili among children and families, with less use of Vidunda at home and in greetings. Mr. Mkwahembo highlights preservation efforts including folklore, storytelling, and writing books such as *Aho Katali*, *Ndawo za Kividunda*, and *Nhelo tza Vidunda*.

Thematic Insight:

Language represents community identity; the endangered status of Chividunda language urges collective efforts to preserve it.

Field Note 7

Date: 9 May 2025

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Location: Vidunda Village, Kisumbi Hamlet

Topic Traditional Artist and Handcraft

Description

Researcher visited iron smith and basket weavers in Vidunda, observing traditional craft practices such as making hoes (*nyengo*), baskets (*Vidoto*), and clay pots. Basket weaving involves colorful designs and cultural symbols.

Artisans like Bint Magdalena William Daudi create baskets using local materials like *midulu* (sedge), which grows in wetlands.

Thematic Insight:

Traditional arts and crafts reflect Wavidunda creativity and connection to natural resources.

Field Note 8

Date: 12 May 2025

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Location: Kidodi Ward, Tundu Village

Leadership and Ruling of Ngwira Vidunda

An interview with the granddaughter of Vincent Ngwira revealed the history of the Ngwira clan, including Chief Kizumile Ngwira who migrated from Mafia. Leadership lineage includes Lwanda Ngwira, Tengasule Ngwira, and Furahisha Ngwira, with important resistance to colonial rule.

The clan is related to Zaramo, Mluguru, Mvidunda, and Mhehe peoples. Lwanda Ngwira married into the Mtemikwila clan and settled at Iyungi Mountain.

Thematic Insight:

Leadership of Lwanda Ngwira established the foundation for ruling Wavidunda, passing through several generations of chiefs.

Field Note 9

Date: 12 May 2025

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Location: Kidodi Ward, Tundu Village

Topic Christianity and Wavidunda

Description

Interview with Vincent Ngwira's granddaughter revealed the introduction of Christianity in Vidunda through dreams and missions in early 1900s. Tengasule Ngwira was directed in a dream to embrace Christianity, leading to the first Roman Catholic mission in Kikoboga (~1910).

Christianity coexists with traditional culture; Sundays are for rest and church, while evenings often involve social drinking of local brew (*ugimbi*).

Thematic Insight:

Christianity has influenced Wavidunda culture, coexisting with traditional beliefs and social life

Field Note 10

Date: 13 May 2025

Location: Vidunda Village, Kikoboga Hamlet

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Topic: Farming Methods in Vidunda

Description:

During the fieldwork, the researcher conducted participant observation to document traditional farming methods employed by the Wavidunda community. The community predominantly uses traditional cultivation methods on the mountains, with some farmers utilizing terraces. However, those who have gained exposure to modern techniques use terraces for better water retention and soil conservation.

A notable initiative introduced by the Kilombero Sugar Company is agroforestry, where tree planting is incorporated into farming practices. This involves the cultivation of various tree species alongside crops. Recently, the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) has introduced a project that encourages mixed farming by planting avocado trees, as well as the introduction of fishponds for tilapia farming. These measures aim to increase food supply and provide additional income for households.

The Wavidunda community has also capitalized on the use of river water for irrigation. They have cleared land to plant beans in the dry season (July–October), using piped water from the River to irrigate the downslope bean farms. Farming is generally done on a small scale, with individual farmers managing small plots on the foothills of the mountains. Common crops include beans, bananas, and garden vegetables like tomatoes and okra.

Historically, the Wavidunda people lived in the mountains and subsisted primarily on bananas. However, the introduction of tree planting by the Kilombero Sugar Company has led to the development of a more diverse agroforest. This program has also made the Uvidunda Mountains an important source of irrigation water for neighboring sugarcane plantations in the Kidodi and Ruhembe valleys.

Thematic Insight:

The Wavidunda community's evolving farming practices reflect a blend of traditional and modern agricultural techniques. The introduction of agroforestry and irrigation systems is reshaping the local agricultural landscape, with potential implications for food security and income generation.

Field Note 11

Date: 15 May 2025

Location: Vidunda Village, Kisumbi Hamlet

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Topic: Traditional Treatment and the Narrative of Dismas Mwananyanga (Kabwagajila)

Description:

During this field observation, the researcher focused on traditional healing practices in the Vidunda community, specifically through the narrative and practices of a well-known witch doctor, Kabwagajila (Dismas Mwananyanga). The Wavidunda people are known for their reliance on traditional healers, with many seeking out Kabwagajila due to his renowned skills.

Kabwagajila shared his personal narrative about how he came to acquire his healing abilities. According to him, his journey began when he fell gravely ill and was close to death. During this near-death experience, he encountered the ancestors, who assigned him the task of becoming a witch doctor. He explained that while lying sick, he was wrapped in a kaniki (black cloth) and was told to make Izimbo, a traditional healing vessel made of clay. The Izimbo is used to hold medicinal roots and water, and it is placed on rare quartz stones, which are believed to protect against thunder and lightning. This ritual was initiated by his ancestors, who entrusted him with the medicine to treat back ailments (Uti wa Mgongo).

Kabwagajila also shared a significant experience in which he went into the forest and begged at the grave of Bernard Mwananyanga, another well-known figure in the community. He stated that, through his intervention, no one in Vidunda died from the COVID-19 pandemic, attributing his success to his spiritual connection and traditional healing knowledge.

The witch doctor also described a traditional ritual of thanks that is performed by the community. This ritual involves offering black goats and millet, with the millet being ground by women in a mortar. The prepared millet is used to make a local brew, and the ritual culminates in a visit to the grave of Bernard Mwananyanga.

The researcher also visited the grave of Joseph Ngwira, known as Bwana Fedha, located in Severine Nyanga's compound in Kisumbi Hamlet in Vidunda Village. Kabwagajila mentioned that Bwana Fedha had dreamed of bringing Christianity to the region and had played a key role in the spread of Roman Catholicism. The grave was marked with a cross, symbolizing his Christian faith.

Finally, the researcher visited two Izimbo sites: one belonging to Mkwanhembo and the other to Kabwagajila. These sites are important in understanding the spiritual and healing practices of the community.

Thematic Insight:

This field note underscores the deeply spiritual and ritualistic nature of traditional healing in the Vidunda community. The practice is intertwined with ancestral beliefs, and the healing vessels (Izimbo) and rituals reflect a strong connection to both the physical and metaphysical realms. Kabwagajila's narrative illustrates how traditional medicine and spiritual practices are still central to the Wavidunda people's lives, even in the context of modern challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Field Note 12

Location: Vidunda Village, Kikoboga Hamlet

Date: 15 May 2025

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Topic Traditional Dance Performance

Description

During the participant observation, the researcher worked closely with the fieldwork assistant, Mr. Peter Mkwahembo, to observe and document the traditional dance performance by a local group known as *Tinigu*. The *Tinigu* group performed two distinct traditional dances: **Domole** and **Mhwendu**, both accompanied by indigenous drum performances.

According to random interviews with local elders, these dances have deep cultural roots in the Vidunda community. The chairman of the *Tinigu* group, Mr. Darfrosa, confirmed that the origins of the traditional dances, especially *Mhwendu* and *Domole*, go back to ancient times.

1, Mhwendu Drum Dance

The *Mhwendu* performance is distinctive for its use of rough bamboo and wire spokes, which are rubbed together to produce a sound. The performer, typically a woman, also ties a *njuga* bell around her foot, creating a rhythmic noise as she dances. The *Mhwendu* dance has an intricate footwork pattern and is considered both a lively and expressive form of storytelling.

2, Domole Drum Dance

The *Domole* performance involves two large drums, traditionally made from hollowed-out logs and covered with skins of monitor lizards or even pythons. These drums are accompanied by shakers, whistles, and women singing, while they perform the *vigelegele* (a rhythmic chant) and stomp their feet in a circular formation. This dance is used in important communal events such as marriage ceremonies or the ritual of "showing off" a virgin girl (*Mwali*) for potential suitors.

Threats to Traditional Dance:

The chairman of *Tinigu* emphasized that these traditional dances are now endangered due to the influence of outside cultures and the younger generation's shift towards other, more modern dances. The youth in Vidunda are increasingly drawn to popular dances such as **Siranga** from the Wasagara, **Mkwaju Ngoma** from the Wazaramo, **Mdundiko** from the Waluguru, and **Sagarhumba** from the Waluguru. These dances, although also traditional, use different instruments, such as large drums, small drums, marimbas, and pieces of iron slabs.

The researcher also observed the performance of **Mkwaju Ngoma** and **Sagarhumba**, which are performed by the Luguru Traditional Dance Group from the nearby Luguru Hamlet in Vidunda Village. These drum dances involve a different style of movement, with emphasis on body manoeuvres and style, particularly foot-stepping and shoulder movements, which appeal to the youth for their energetic and contemporary feel.

Observations

Through the participant observation, the researcher was able to witness the *Domole*, *Mhwendu*, *Sagarhumba*, *Siranga* and *Mkwajungoma* dances performed. It was evident that while the older generations value and maintain *Domole* and *Mhwendu* traditional practices, the younger people are more inclined to participate in the newer forms of dance that have gained popularity due to their exposure to modern music and dance styles.

Thematic Insight

This field note highlights the tension between tradition and modernity in the Vidunda

community, particularly with regard to cultural practices like dance. While the elders continue to pass down the knowledge of traditional dances, the younger generation's adoption of new dance forms points to the broader cultural shifts happening in Vidunda, influenced by external forces and changing preferences.

Field Note 13

Date: 21 May 2025

Location: Chonwe Village

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

TOPIC: Historical Sites

Description

The researcher conducted a participant observation, which included a 5 km hike to visit the **Nzilaha Hamlet** in Chonwe Village. This site is significant to the Vidunda people due to its deep historical and ritual importance. The researcher paid respect at the **Nzilaha Ritual Site**, which is closely linked to the ancestors, particularly **Lwanda Ngwira**, a prominent historical figure within the Vidunda community. The site, however, has specific cultural taboos. Photography is prohibited, and the researcher was instructed not to take any pictures during the visit.

Upon arrival at the site, the researcher was introduced to the ancestors in a ritualistic manner, including a symbolic act of **spitting water** in two directions (left and right) before drinking from a calabash, a traditional container. This ritual, part of the Wavidunda customs, emphasizes respect for the ancestors and the land.

Historical Sites and Significance:

1, Nzilaha Ritual Site (Lwanda Ngwira's Grave):

This site is significant because it marks the burial place of Lwanda Ngwira, a revered ancestor of the Vidunda people. The grave is located beneath a large Mtamba tree, which is considered sacred by the Wavidunda. The Mtamba tree serves as a focal point for various rituals, including sacrifices made during times of natural disaster (e.g., locust invasions).

2, Iyungi Mountain:

The Iyungi Mountain, where Lwanda Ngwira and many of the Vidunda ancestors lived, holds great historical and spiritual importance. The mountain provided safety for the Wavidunda, as its difficult terrain made it challenging for invaders to access. The mountain is believed to be the dwelling place of the Wavidunda spirit, and its forests serve as a critical catchment area for water, supplying rivers such as Msowero, Tundu, and Mhovu, which are crucial for irrigation in the Kidodi Valley Sugar Plantations.

3, Bernad Mwananyanga's Grave:

Located near the Nzilaha Ritual Site, Bernad Mwananyanga's grave is an important historical marker. He was the first witch doctor to lead rituals in the Vidunda community during the time of Lwanda Ngwira. His role in religious and spiritual leadership was integral to the Wavidunda belief system.

2, Inyonge Site (or Inyonjele):

According to a narrative by Binti Vincent Ngwira, the site of Inyonge, also referred to as

Inyonjele, is another historical location in Nzilaha Hamlet (Chonwe Village). This is where Lwanda Ngwira and his two messengers, Mwaruembe and Kibunji, were hanged. Unfortunately, the researcher was unable to visit this site due to a lack of specific knowledge about its location. It is believed to be situated near the Nyamalenga Waterfalls, but no exact coordinates were provided by the locals.

3, Ibwedunghu Cliff (Vidunda Village, Kikoboga Hamlet)

The researcher was able to visit the Ibwedunghu Cliff, a 90-meter-high red cliff. This location holds historical significance as it was used by the Wavidunda to execute people accused of witchcraft. Those found guilty were pushed off the cliff as part of the community's judicial process. This form of punishment reflects the historical practices of the Wavidunda in addressing social and spiritual threats.

4, Lufinywu Cliff (Chonwe Village):

Another historical site of interest in Chonwe Village is the Lufinywu Cliff, where similar punishments for witchcraft were carried out. The use of these cliffs for executions speaks to the traditional judicial methods of the Vidunda people and the perceived danger of witchcraft in their society.

Challenges in Research:

Although the researcher was able to observe and document several historical sites, some significant locations remain inaccessible or poorly documented. For instance, the Cave used as a hideout during the Maji Maji War remains undiscovered due to limited information available from local sources. There were also discrepancies in the narratives shared by different community members, making it difficult to locate some of the sites with certainty.

Thematic Insight:

This field note highlights the interplay between history, culture, and spirituality in the Wavidunda community. The preservation of historical sites such as Nzilaha Ritual Site and Iyungi Mountain is critical to understanding the Wavidunda's identity and their connection to the land. These sites not only serve as physical landmarks but also as living symbols of the community's spiritual and cultural heritage. The lack of clear documentation for certain sites, particularly those related to Maji Maji War and witchcraft trials, underscores the challenges of preserving and transmitting oral histories in the face of modernization.

Field Notes 14

Date: 21 May 2025

Location: Chonwe, Nzilaha Hamlet

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Topic: Traditional Foods of Wavidunda

Description

During the participant observation in Chonwe Village, the researcher explored the traditional foods of the Wavidunda community, guided by local elders and fieldwork assistants. The Wavidunda people have a rich tradition of food preparation, where various locally grown crops are used to create meals that are both nutritious and free from chemicals. Many of the foods hold cultural significance, often prepared with care and passed down through generations.

Traditional Foods and Preparation:

The traditional foods of the Wavidunda people are based on locally available crops such as cassava, finger millet, millet, banana, beans, and mahimbi (a type of local dish). The preparation methods of these foods vary, with some dishes requiring special techniques and combinations of ingredients. The following are some of the key traditional foods:

1, Kidunye:

A popular and nutritious dish made by mixing cassava and beans. It is a staple food in the Vidunda community, known for being healthy and chemical-free. Kidunye is rich in carbohydrates and proteins, making it an important part of the daily diet.

2, Mahimbi:

Mahimbi is a roots , which takes a full day to prepare. The millet is often mixed with beans for added flavor and nutritional value. The preparation process is considered labor-intensive but is seen as a communal activity, often shared with family and neighbours.

3, Traditional Local Brew of Uhemba

Uhemba millet is used to make a traditional local brew made from millet and cassava. It is an important part of social gatherings and ceremonies. The brewing process is highly valued within the community, and the brew is considered an essential offering during communal rituals.

4, Nyakatwanga (Vegetable)

A type of vegetable known as Nyakatwanga is often boiled and mixed with sesame seeds or groundnuts. This dish is typically served with ugali (a common East African staple) or other foods such as cassava, mahimbi, or millet ugali. It is known for its rich nutritional value and versatility.

5, Ubambiko (Porridge):

Ubambiko is a traditional porridge made from immature maize that is ground on a wooden mortar. The resulting mixture is cooked into a porridge that is commonly eaten for breakfast. This porridge is an essential part of the Wavidunda's morning routine and is made fresh each day.

6, Libumunda (Banana Bread)

Libumunda is a local banana bread made from ripe bananas that are peeled, mashed, and then baked. It is a popular snack or dessert, often served during community celebrations. The sweet and hearty bread is highly regarded by the Wavidunda as a comfort food.

7, Ugimbi (Local Maize Brew)

Ugimbi is a local brew made from maize. It is prepared by cooking the maize and then fermenting it to create a slightly alcoholic beverage. This brew is commonly consumed in rural areas for relaxation or ceremonial purposes. Komoni is another term used for this maize-based brew, and it is widely enjoyed by the community.

Thematic Insight:

The traditional foods of the Wavidunda are deeply tied to their cultural and social practices. These foods not only provide essential nutrients but also strengthen community bonds, as many of them are prepared and shared collectively. The foods play a significant role in maintaining the health of the community and are integral to the Wavidunda's identity. In

addition to their nutritional value, these foods are prepared using sustainable methods that rely on locally sourced ingredients, reinforcing the community's connection to the land and its traditions.

These traditional meals foster a sense of togetherness and participation, as food preparation often involves multiple people coming together to cook, share, and enjoy the dishes. This communal aspect of food preparation contributes to the strength of the community, allowing the Wavidunda people to maintain their cultural heritage while supporting one another through shared activities.

Field Note 15

Date: 21 May 2025

Location: Chonwe Village, Nzilaha Hamlet

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Subject: Traditional Courtship and Marriage Practices of Wavidunda

Context:

During the participant observation and interviews conducted with members of the Wavidunda community in Chonwe Village, it became evident that traditional marriage practices are deeply rooted in the culture of preserving the community's ethnicity and values. The practices surrounding courtship, marriage, and the role of women in the Wavidunda community serve as a reflection of their cultural identity and commitment to maintaining social ethics and respect.

Marriage and Courtship Practices:

1, Endogamous Marriages (Within the Same Tribe):

The Wavidunda community traditionally avoids intermarriage with other ethnic groups, which they believe helps preserve their cultural identity and the uniqueness of their ethnicity. Marriages typically occur within the same clan, ensuring that families share common ancestry and cultural practices.

2, The Role of Nyakanga (Traditional Female Elder):

When a girl reaches the age of marriage, her family isolates her for a period of time to prepare her for womanhood and motherhood. During this time, a respected elderly woman, known as Nyakanga, mentors the girl. This practice is part of an important rite of passage where the girl learns the responsibilities of womanhood and how to take care of a family. The isolation serves as a form of protection and moral upbringing, ensuring that the girl is not exposed to male influence or sexuality before she is deemed ready.

3, Symbolism of the Isuni (Iron Dowry):

In the past, the dowry exchange involved a traditional item called Isuni, an iron item used as a symbol of trust and commitment. This item was given to the girl's family by the boy's family, symbolizing that both parties trusted each other, and that the girl would remain faithful until marriage. The use of Isuni has now evolved into the exchange of money as the dowry, but the principle remains the same it is a demonstration of the commitment to building a life together.

4,Public Announcement of Readiness for Marriage:

Once the girl has completed her time of isolation and instruction by the Nyakanga, the community publicly announces her readiness for marriage. This is done through traditional dances, such as the Mhwendu or Domole drum performances. These dances serve as a way of showcasing the girl's transition into adulthood, as well as the community's approval of her readiness for marriage.

Mhwendu: Involves a traditional drum performance using bamboo and wire, producing distinctive sounds that signify the girl's readiness for marriage.

Domole: A performance with two drums made of monitor lizard skin, where women sing and dance in a circle, celebrating the event. These dances are often performed during important ceremonies, such as marriage announcements.

Thematic Insight:

The Wavidunda community's marriage practices highlight the strong cultural foundation in the community. The traditional practices serve not only to preserve their ethnicity but also to promote ethics, trustworthiness, and respect. The Nyakanga's role in mentoring young girls reinforces the values of womanhood, family care, and responsibility. The community believes that these practices ensure that their people grow up with a strong moral foundation, contributing to the ethical fabric of the community.

Through these customs, the Wavidunda people promote social cohesion and respect for both the individual and the family unit, establishing strong traditions that continue to guide their societal structures today. These practices also serve as a way of maintaining cultural integrity, allowing the younger generation to understand and value their roots, while at the same time preparing them to take on responsibilities that are central to the community's survival and continuity.

Field Note 16

Date: 21 May 2025

Location: Chonwe

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Topic: Cultural Tourism Attractions

Description:

During participant observation from 5 May onward in Vidunda Ward, the researcher identified several cultural tourism attractions spanning three villages. Attractions include:

- Hiking to Iyungi Mountain Peak
- Visiting sacred ritual sites at Nzilaha
- Visiting the grave of renowned witchdoctor Bernad Mwananyanga
- Nyamalenga Waterfalls in Chonwe
- Mhululu Waterfalls in Vidunda Village

- Ibwedunghu Waterfall
- Experiencing traditional food preparation and cuisine
- Learning about traditional healers and the legacy of the Mwananyanga clan through Kabwagajila Izimbo rituals

The researcher also noted the potential for spice tourism by cultivating cinnamon, cloves, and other spices to attract visitors for farm visits and tastings.

Thematic Insight

Vidunda's cultural heritage and natural landscapes offer untapped potential for sustainable cultural tourism development.

Field Note 17

Date: 2 June 2025

Location: Udunghu Village

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Topic: Traditional Practice of (Kuhalila) Wife Inheritance

Description:

Using random sampling, researcher interviewed Mr. Octavian Manupi on the practice of wife inheritance after a husband's death. Traditionally, the widow could be inherited by a relative of the deceased husband (e.g., brother) to care for the family. Three sticks (from uncle, relative, and neighborhood) were presented for the widow to choose who would inherit her.

Over time, ancestors' guidance led to changes forcing remarriage was viewed as unethical. Widows who remarried had to leave the original home and start anew with their new husband.

Thematic Insight:

Traditional wife inheritance practices adapted over time due to evolving ethical considerations.

Field Note 18

Date: 2 June 2025

Location: Udunghu Village

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Topic: Tribe War between Wavidunda and Wambunga

Description

Interview with elder and village committee member Mr. Octavian Manupi revealed a historic conflict between Wavidunda and the neighboring Wambunga tribe from Ifakara. The war started due to a unique virgin girl born with four breasts in Wavidunda, suspected of witchcraft by the Wambunga. When Wambunga attempted to claim the girl, conflict arose.

Wavidunda ultimately won the war, relying on witch medicine called Lukungugu, as they had inferior weaponry compared to Wambunga. The war was fought at Itengule (meaning “camp”). At the time, Wavidunda resided at Iyungi Mountains.

Thematic Insight:

The Wavidunda people fiercely defended their rights and autonomy, demonstrating resilience and the role of traditional medicine in conflict.

Field Note 19

Date: 2 June 2025

Location: Udunghu Village

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Topic: Wavidunda Clans

Description:

Through interviews with elder Octavian Manupi, the researcher documented the clan structure of the Wavidunda tribe. Noted clans include WaBena, WaKumbaye, WaTemikwira, Wahafigwa, WaPonzela, WaNyakuloka, and WaLilanghani. The clan system forms sub-communities linked by ancestor worship and social responsibilities such as communal support during burial ceremonies.

Thematic Insight:

Clan affiliations sustain social cohesion and collective problem-solving in Wavidunda society.

Field Note 20

Date: 2 June 2025

Location: Udunghu

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Topic: Trees and Traditional Culture of Wavidunda

Description:

Interview with Octavian Manupi and observations show how certain trees hold cultural and ritual significance. For example, some trees bear fruits believed to promote fertility when burial occurs beneath them. Other trees are used for traditional medicine and water conservation. The Mtamba tree is sacred and central to major rituals at Nzilaha ritual site.

Mr. Peter Mkwahembo noted that planting ficus trees is believed to raise the water table.

Thematic Insight:

Wavidunda people live in harmony with nature, practicing conservation and reverence for sacred trees integral to their culture.

Field Note 21

Date: 5 June 2025

Location: Mikumi Town, Mikumi Mjini Hamlet

Observer: Makene Ngoroma

Topic: Narrative of Louis Ngwira

Description:

Researcher participated in a narrative session with Binti Vicent Ngwira about the Ngwira clan and Wavidunda history. The session highlighted controversy surrounding the last chief, Louis Ngwira, favored by British colonialists over the rightful heir of Furahisa Ngwira.

Louis Ngwira's leadership (1950s) caused family tensions. After the chieftom ended in 1963, Louis returned to teaching. He died in 2005 and was buried at Kidoma graveyard. Researcher viewed photos of Louis Ngwira and his handwritten records of his children's birth and marriage dates.

Thematic Insight:

Colonial influence affected traditional leadership succession and clan dynamics in Wavidunda history.

5 Suggestions for Future Improvements in Ethnographic Fieldwork**1. Involving the Supervisor at the Field Site**

Fieldwork should include proper guidance on the modes of data recording and note-taking. In this study, the semi-structured interview guidelines were not well aligned with the actual

context, which limited the participants' responses and prevented them from expressing more. For example, audio recordings, videos, and pictures proved to be more flexible and captured broader data compared to the structured interviews, which took more time and yielded less detailed information. Therefore, supervisors should regularly follow up on the data collection process to ensure better results.

2. Identifying Emergencies in Advance

The recording team should be able to identify potential risks and emergencies ahead of time and plan for solutions to avoid wasting time in the field. For example, transportation delays are common and can significantly affect the schedule. Preparing alternative transport options in advance can help manage such disruptions.

3. Availability of Recording Gadgets

Ethnographic fieldwork requires various gadgets to properly record data. For example, filling out questionnaires differs from recording interviews using audio devices. Most of these gadgets are electronic and require charging. In mountainous field sites like Vidunda Ward, it is important to ensure that all equipment is fully charged to avoid losing valuable data.

Field teams should also be prepared with alternative charging options, such as power banks, to avoid any disappointment or disruption during data collection.

4. Proper Equipment Management

All recording studios and field teams should ensure their instruments are fully functional and well-charged before heading to the field. Equipment such as audio recorders, cameras, and laptops should be tested in advance. The team should also carry extra batteries and power banks to maintain efficiency in remote areas where electricity might not be available.

5. Early Preparation and Respect for Community Time

The recording team must prepare early by organizing transport and equipment and arriving at the field site on time. Delays or failure to show up after arranging with the community (e.g., villagers who stop their work to participate in video recordings) can be very discouraging. Such occurrences may result in loss of trust, and community members may become reluctant to participate in future research.

6 Challenges Faced and Solutions

1, Access to the Community

a. Infrastructure and Roads

The road to Vidunda Ward is steep and only partially paved, with much of it being rough terrain. During the rainy season, these roads become slippery and dangerous, especially for

motorcycles. Vidunda Ward lacks a proper car road beyond the 4 km from Kidodi to Vidunda Mission. After this point, access to villages like Chonwe or Udunghu is only possible by motorcycle, which is challenging during the rainy season.

Solution

Field research should ideally be conducted during the dry season, allowing better access to the field sites and facilitating smoother data collection.

Cooperation from the Community

a. Awareness of Research Benefits

Some members of the community perceive researchers as individuals who come to make money from their data. This perception has hindered cooperation, as some respondents are reluctant to provide information, fearing it will be exploited.

b. Access to Cultural Information:

Elders are the primary holders of traditional knowledge, but due to age and health concerns, they may not always be available. For instance, one elder who could provide key historical information about the Wavidunda community was not in the village and was only reachable through his daughter in Ngapa Msimba Village.

Solution:

Building stronger relationships with the community and explaining the research's benefits can improve trust. Additionally, conducting follow-up visits or arranging interviews with elders who are not locally available can ensure access to valuable information.

1. Rainy Season

Conducting research during the rainy season made data collection difficult as many villagers were busy with farming activities. This also complicated logistics and transportation, making it challenging to gather data from all respondents.

Solution

Future research should be planned to avoid the rainy season, ideally in the dry months, to improve data collection efficiency.

4. Language Barrier

During the ethnographic fieldwork, the researcher encountered significant difficulty in understanding the Chividunda language, which was the primary language spoken by the local community. This language barrier created several problems:

1, The researcher struggled to follow conversations and local expressions accurately. There was heavy reliance on a translator, which sometimes led to misinterpretation or loss of meaning, especially in culturally nuanced contexts. This limited the researcher's ability to build direct rapport and trust with community members.

2, Delays occurred in data collection and verification because every interaction required translation.

Solution

To overcome this challenge, the researcher adopted several strategies:

1, Basic Language Learning:

The researcher committed to learning basic Chividunda phrases and vocabulary to facilitate daily communication and demonstrate respect for the local culture. This helped reduce over-reliance on the translator and improved direct interaction.

2, Use of a Trusted Local Assistant:

Instead of a formal translator, the researcher collaborated with a bilingual local assistant who was familiar with both the Chividunda language and the cultural context. This person acted as a cultural broker, not just translating words but also explaining meanings and social nuances.

7 Lessons Learned

1, Cultural Deterioration

The Wavidunda community's culture is deteriorating rapidly. If no action is taken, many cultural practices, customs, and artifacts could disappear. For example, some of the traditional artifacts I inquired about had already been destroyed or sold as scrap.

2, Elders' Willingness to Preserve Culture

Older individuals are eager to share their knowledge and provide information for cultural preservation. However, they expressed concern that the younger generation does not appreciate or practice traditional customs, often considering them outdated.

3, Cultural Resources as Tourism Attractions

The cultural and historical resources in the community, such as artifacts and heritage sites, hold significant potential for cultural tourism. Developing these resources could help preserve cultural practices and provide a source of income, thereby reducing poverty in the community.

4, Cultural Clash Between Generations

The younger generation's embrace of technology has led to a cultural clash, particularly regarding practices like the Nzilaha ritual. The younger people view it as witchcraft, which complicates the preservation of these customs.

8 Conclusion

This research is timely and crucial for preserving the endangered Wavidunda culture. The findings will help to understand where the community stands and guide future efforts to preserve their traditional practices. From the data collected, it is evident that many artifacts that should have been preserved are already lost, particularly from the Ngwira Chief clan,

which now only has a few old pictures and some artifacts held by the Ngwira family. The government, in collaboration with stakeholders, should conduct research to preserve traditional cultures for future generations.

9 Recommendations

I recommend that this ethnographic research include efforts to collect rare artifacts, which should be preserved in a museum. The fieldwork should also be allotted more time, as one month was insufficient. Some key respondents live outside the study area, but their data is crucial, and it took time to arrange interviews. Therefore, the research should last at least 45 days.

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10 Appendices

Appendix 1 NARRATIVE OF NGWIRA CLAN BY BINT VICENT

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BDaiZC3Kr2Z3tgOV0EOENeBBnJtYvAdT/view?usp=drive_link

Appendix 2 Pictures



Grave of Tensasule Ngwira (Joseph Bwanafedha)



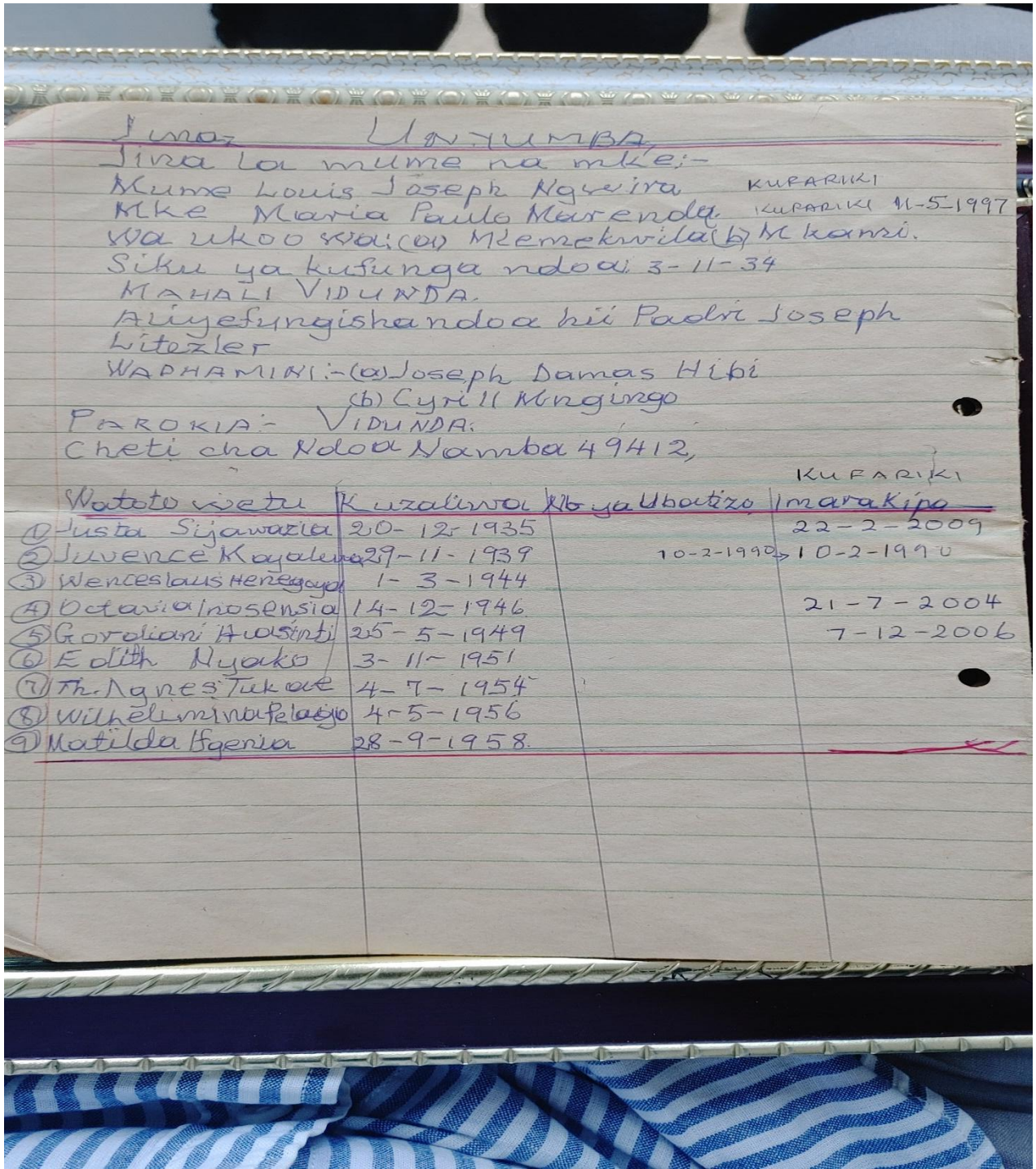
From Righ Dismass Mwananyanga famous witchdoctor as Kabwagajila



From right is Third Chief Furahisha Ngwira, Maria Ngodiko his wife, Vicent Ngwira and Bint Vicent Ngwira



Picture of young Chief Louis Ngwira in front of last Tanganyika governor Richard Tarnbull
Picture courtesy Edith Nyako



Picture of hand writing of last Chief of Wavidunda Louis Ngwira wrote memory of his children Courtesy to his daughter Edith Nyako



han

Picture of famous witch doctor Bernard Mwananyanga, Picture Courtesy Dismass Mwananyanga



Picture of Izimbo of Mkwahembo

