



## My memories of Kunduchi

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**I** first came to know about Kunduchi in 1977 when I was employed by the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) as a Tutorial Assistant in the then Department of Zoology and Marine Biology in the then Faculty of Science (FoS).

### Recruited at UDSM as a Marine Biology staff

When I reported for duty the then Head of Department Professor Abdulrahman Msangi informed me that I was going to join the Marine Biology Staff that included Prof. Philip Bwathondi, the Late Dr. Boniface Mwaieseje, Dr. Ian Bryceson and others. At that time, most of teaching was done in the Department's Laboratories and FoS's lecture theaters. It was at this time that I learned about another facility known as Kunduchi Marine Biology Station (KMBS) located on the shore of the Indian Ocean a few kilometers from the main campus. This was administratively part of the Department of Zoology and Marine Biology. It was headed by an Officer in Charge who was an Academic member of Staff appointed by the respective Head of Department.

The KMBS had only one building with one-storey annex and it was sandwiched between Kunduchi Beach Hotel and Kunduchi Marine Fisheries Research and Training Institute (KMFRTI). The building was used to offer a Diploma Course in Fisheries under the Fisheries Department of the then Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism of the United Republic of Tanzania. The station was mainly used for research activities, collection of teaching materials and conducting field practicals. Beside the basic laboratory glassware and equipment, the station had outboard engines for a rubber dinghy and a fiberglass boat. There was also a relatively big wooden boat named "Pomboo" which was fitted with an inboard engine. There were technical staff like Messrs Chania, Mkombachepa, Evans and Kacholema who were capable of driving and repairing boats and engines, respectively.

### Kunduchi experiencing erosional problems

The site where the KMBS is built was probably not the best because it is exposed to sea waves and prone to

beach erosion. Word has it that the initial chosen site for the station was at the fish landing area at Msasani, which is relatively well sheltered. The beach erosion at Kunduchi has cut back the coastline to the extent that it posed a threat to structures built on the beach. In fact, there was a period in the late 1990s when the Station's one-storey annex building was on the verge of collapsing as the sea had extended to less than 5 meters from the building. Owing to the threat posed by wave erosion to the beach properties around Kunduchi, owners of the Kunduchi Beach Hotel, which borders KMBS to the north, decided to reclaim the eroded part using stones aimed at limiting the movement of waves and sand particles. Fortunately, this move changed the shore wave movement dynamics that resulted in sand accretion (instead of erosion) near the station and the hotel. This process contributed to what eventually saved the annex building from collapsing. To date, the annex building sits comfortably at the distance of more than 50 meters from the seashore.

### Exposed to direct effects of waves

In addition to threatening beach structures, exposed shore at Kunduchi experiences big waves during strong wind conditions, which presents a problem of safe mooring of boats and other sea going vessels. Sadly, this is what happened when "Pomboo", the Station's wooden boat was damaged beyond repair in the fateful day after the staff including myself, had left for home after working hours. The strong winds caused the boat to drift to the beach, where it was battered by waves and broke into pieces. When we went to the station the next morning, we found pieces of wood strewn on the beach and half of the boat buried in sand. It was a sad day for the UDSM and KMBS staff.

### Lost part of UDSM land

The other sad moment for the KMBS came when it lost a piece of land to a privately owned hotel named Kunduchi Beach Hotel. The station shares a border with the hotel and for many years a wire fence marked the boundary between the two facilities. One day when we reported for work at the station we were surprised by seeing heaps of stone aggregates dumped outside

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the building. An enquiry into this situation revealed that the owner of the aggregate was our neighbor, the Kunduchi Beach Hotel. The hotel was going to build a new concrete boundary several meters inside a piece of land that for many years had been known to belong to the UDSM. Surprisingly, it was made evident that the Government through Lands Division had offered a private hotel a piece of land that belonged to its own academic institution. This conflict landed at the Office of the Commissioner of Lands who called for a joint meeting between the hotel and the University. I happened to be a member of the University team, which was led by the then Chief Administrative Officer, Prof. Daniel Mkude. What happened in that Office was an embarrassment to the UDSM. It came to be known that the piece of land in contention was not legally owned by the University. This is because although the University had an offer for the land, dating many years back, it did not process for the issuance of a respective Title Deed. This conflict became an eye opener for the University and from that day onwards it made sure that any land belonging to the University was surveyed and Title Deed offered for it.

### Special visitor

The KMBS has had a fair share of visitors. However, the most prominent one was Prince Akihito, the son of the Emperor of Japan. He visited the Station when he was on a state visit to our Country. During his visit to Tanzania, it came to our knowledge that Prince Akihito had an interest in studying fish and had published several papers on the subject. He was considered an expert in gobies and one species of goby (*Exyrias akihito*) has been named after him. This piece of information guided us in deciding that it would be a nice gesture if there was a display of mud skippers, the mangrove gobies, when Prince Akihito visited the station. A collection of live specimens of fishes was made and kept in the aquarium. On the day of his visit to the Station, Prince Akihito spent quite some time observing the fishes on display and was appreciative of the effort made to collect the specimens. In 1989 Prince Akihito became the Emperor of Japan. I may continue providing more stories about Kunduchi Campus. I could continue to provide more stories about Kunduchi Campus, but suffice it to say I have deep memories of the place which I will forever cherish ■



Buildings of the former Kunduchi Marine Biology Station. ©Rashidi Bilali