



NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF KENYA

WHERE HERITAGE LIVES ON

REF: NMK/UN/2/1

16 January 2020

Director,
World Heritage Centre UNESCO
7, Place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris CEDEX 07
France

Dear Dr. Rössler,

**RE: STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT FOR THIMLICH OHINGA
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE (1450REV)**

I herein submit the state of Conservation Report for Thimlich Ohinga Archaeological Site which was inscribed as World Heritage Site in 2018. Thank you for the continued support to World Heritage in Kenya.

Yours sincerely,

Mzalendo N. Kibunjia *PhD, EBS*
Director General

THIMLICH OHINGA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE, KENYA
(1450REV)
STATE PARTY REPORT ON THE STATE OF CONSERVATION OF
THIMLICH OHINGA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE
January 2020

Executive summary

Thimlich Ohinga Archaeological Site, was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2018 on the 42nd session of the World Heritage Committee under criteria (iii), (iv) and (v). The WHC adopted the following statement of outstanding universal value:

(a). Thimlich Ohinga archaeological site is a dry-stone walled settlement, based on a complex organization system of communal occupation, craft industries and livestock that reflects a cultural tradition developed by pastoral communities in the Nyanza region of the Lake Victoria basin that persisted from 16th to mid-20th centuries.

(b). Thimlich Ohinga is the largest and best preserved of these massive dry-stone walled enclosures. The Ohinga appear to have served primarily as security for communities and livestock, but they also defined social units and relationships linked to lineage based systems.

(c). Thimlich Ohinga is an exceptional testimony of settlement patterns and spatial community relations in the Lake Victoria Basin, which documents the successive occupation by different people from various linguistic origins during an important episode in the migration and settlement of the Lake Victoria Basin between the 16th and 17th centuries. It also gives reference to habitation patterns, livestock cultivation and craft practices prevalent in communal settlements at this time.

Issues which require attention and the response from the State Party;

1. **Acquisition of extra land for more effective conservation.** The process of acquiring the land in question is ongoing and it is hoped that formal procedures required for actualization of this process will be completed in the first quarter of this year (2020). The process of acquiring land for public use is lengthy and involves many stakeholders. There already exists a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the National Museums of Kenya and the local landowners as guided by legal experts. Negotiations have been ongoing with both government officials mandated with the issue of land ownership and the local owner of the land to be acquired. Some of the activities which have already been undertaken include survey and mapping of the land to be acquired, ascertaining the original land registration details including the

bona fide land owners and contacts with the National Land Commission to guide on the process. In addition, the initial demarcation was made in 2017 as a proposed extension of the buffer zone but the final and formal demarcation will be made and approved upon the completion of this process.

2. **To establish a single database to compile documentation regarding archaeological excavation results, conservation activities and associated oral traditions.** A database has been established at the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) Archaeology Laboratory in Nairobi. All excavated material have already been accessioned and catalogued under the SASES (Standardized Africa Sites Enumeration System) **Ref: GtJb 10, Accession Number 3827**. All the materials ever recovered from Thimlich Ohinga site are documented in this database under the aforementioned accession number. The file have all site information including links to all publications for all the research that has been undertaken within this site.

3. **A monitoring system based on precise indicators, assessment methods and responsibilities.** This has been established and the action plan as per the management plan is already under implementation. The National Museums of Kenya is also actively collaborating with the Migori County Government and the local community in the maintenance, monitoring and development of the site. A Memorandum of Understanding with the County Government of Migori is underway and quarterly reports for the site through the Site Manager are published and presented to the Management at the National Museums of Kenya Headquarters in Nairobi on a timely basis.

**WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE DECISION 42 COM 8B.14 FORTY-
SECOND SESSION (MANAMA, BAHRAIN, 2018)**

Thimlich Ohinga Archaeological Site (Kenya) (1450rev)

Decision: 42 COM 8B.14

1. Having examined Documents WHC/18/42.COM/8B.Add and WHC/18/42.COM/INF.8B1.Add,
2. Inscribes **Thimlich Ohinga Archaeological Site, Kenya**, on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (iii), (iv) and (v)**;
3. Adopts the following Statement of Outstanding Universal Value:

Brief synthesis

Located 46 km northwest of Migori Town in the Lake Victoria region, Thimlich Ohinga archaeological site is a dry-stone walled settlement, based on a complex organization system of communal occupation, craft industries and livestock that reflects a cultural tradition developed by pastoral communities in the Nyanza region of the Lake Victoria basin that persisted from 16th to mid-20th centuries.

Thimlich Ohinga is the largest and best preserved of these massive dry-stone walled enclosures. The Ohinga appear to have served primarily as security for communities and livestock, but they also defined social units and relationships linked to lineage based systems.

The property comprises four larger Ohingni, all of which have extensions. The main Ohinga is referred to as Kochieng, while the others are Kakuku, Koketch and Koluoch. The dry stone wall enclosures are constructed in a three-phase design with separately built up outer and inner phases, held together by the middle phase. Stones were placed in an interlocking system that enhanced overall stability without use of any mortar or cement. The walls are built of neatly arranged stones of various sizes and without mortar, ranging from 1.5 m to 4.5 m in height, with an average thickness of 1 m.

Thimlich Ohinga is an exceptional testimony of settlement patterns and spatial community relations in the Lake Victoria Basin, which documents the successive occupation by different people from various linguistic origins during an important episode in the migration and settlement of the Lake Victoria Basin between the 16th and 17th centuries. It also gives reference to habitation patterns, livestock cultivation and craft practices prevalent in communal settlements at this time.

Criterion (iii): Thimlich Ohinga provides an exceptional testimony to settlement traditions in the Lake Victoria Basin. It illustrates shared communal settlement, livestock cultivation and craft industry patterns,

