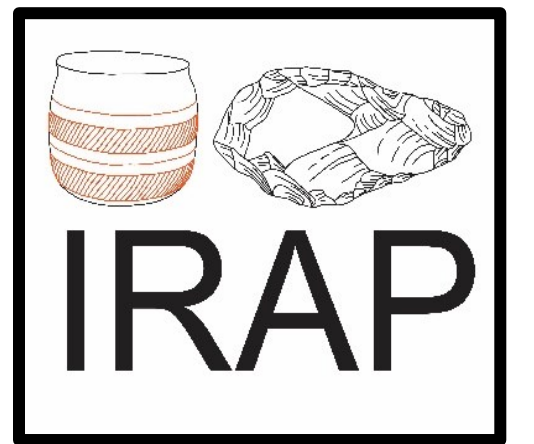


The Iringa Region Archaeological Project: Recent results and future plans

Pamela R. Willoughby, Department of Anthropology, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, T6G 2H4; Pam.Willoughby@ualberta.ca



Abstract

The Iringa Region in southern Tanzania has a long, relatively continuous record of human occupation, which starts in the Acheulean. Located in the Southern Highlands, Iringa has enormous potential for the resolution of key questions about the biological and cultural evolution of our own species, *Homo sapiens*, at the end of the Acheulean and during the Middle and Later Stone Age (MSA and LSA). Palaeoenvironmental sequences in many East African lakes have demonstrated that the MSA was associated with repeated episodes of catastrophic cooling and droughts, which might have led to demographic stress and to technological innovation. Our current and future fieldwork will be focused on the following questions. Did climate change and/or social, cultural or demographic factors underlie the evolution of the earliest modern people in this part of Africa? What does the archaeological record of Iringa Region illustrate about the behaviour of the earliest members of our species? Can a landscape archaeological approach help to answer such questions?

The Iringa Region Archaeological Project (IRAP) and its parallel cultural heritage programme CHIRP, or the Cultural Heritage in Iringa Region, were organized in order to study the Pleistocene and more recent history of this part of Tanzania. This poster summarizes recent field research results by members of both research teams, and outlines plans for the next field season (in 2018). We plan to continue to document the cultural heritage of Iringa through academic and popular publications, to produce posters and museum displays for local communities in Tanzania, and to work with the recently formed *Fahari yetu* (Southern Highlands Culture Solutions), a locally based group, in order to enhance both the academic and the cultural heritage components of our research.

Iringa Region and Magubike Rockshelter

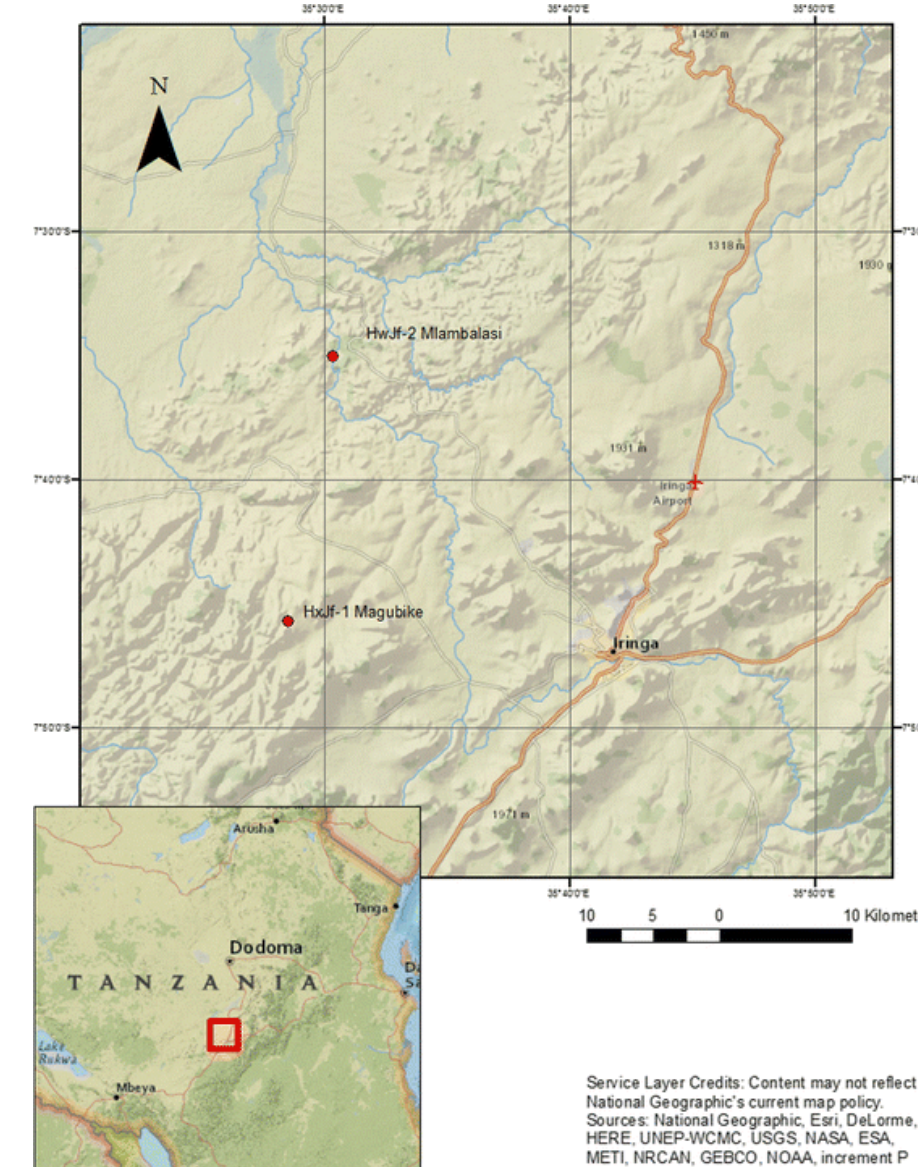
Iringa is a region in the Southern Highlands in Tanzania. It is known for its ancient rock outcrops, which have eroded out into caves and rock shelters. Starting around 200,000 years ago, people have used these places as their home and a place to carry out daily activities. The Iringa Region Archaeological Project (IRAP) was formed in 2006 to investigate the complete range of human history in this area (Willoughby 2012). At a rock shelter like **Magubike**, the entire post-Acheulean archaeological sequence is present: Middle Stone Age (MSA), Later Stone Age (LSA), Iron Age, Historic, and Recent / Modern.

Iron Age artifacts = iron slag and tools, ceramics, quartz and chert lithics, domestic fauna, OES (ostrich eggshell) beads.

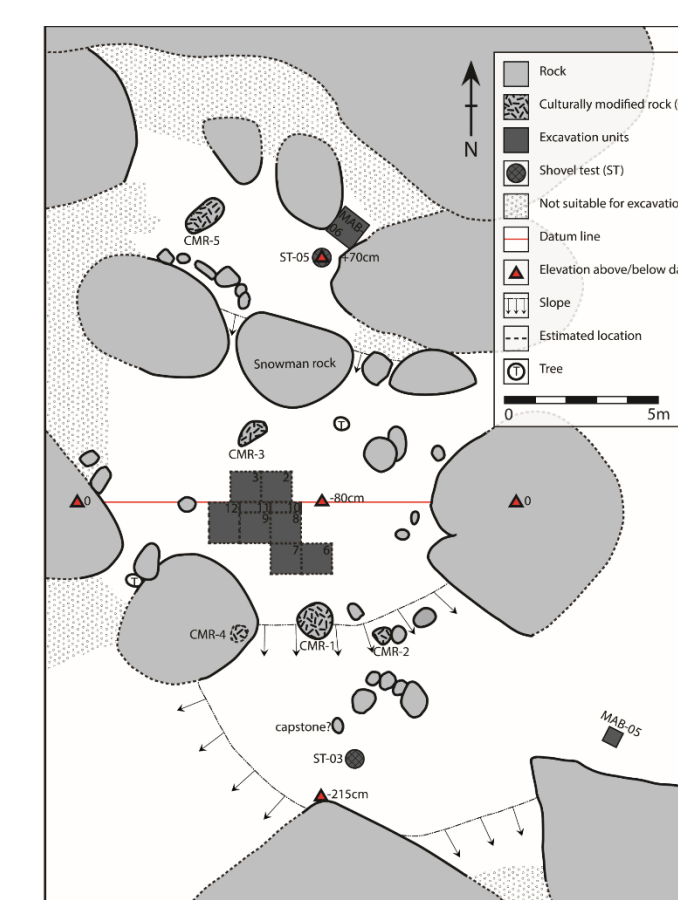
LSA = microlithic and macrolithic stone artifacts; mainly quartz, some chert; wild fauna; OES beads

MSA = stone artifacts, including scrapers, unifacial and Levallois points; wild fauna; OES beads.

Test pit	Year excavated	Dimensions and depth (* = not dug to bedrock)	Cultural sequence	N lithics	Other notable finds
1	2006	1 m ² by 180 cm	Modern, Iron Age, LSA, LSA/MSA transition, MSA	6,575	
2	2006	1 m ² by 50 cm *	Modern, Iron Age, MSA	938	
3	2006	1 m ² by 210 cm	Modern, Iron Age, MSA	11,417	6 human teeth in the MSA deposits
4	2008	1 m ² by 90 cm	Modern, Iron Age, LSA	1,417	
5	2008	1 m ² by 250 cm	Modern, Iron Age, LSA, LSA/MSA transition, MSA	44,468	
6	2012	1 m ² by 50 cm *	Modern, Iron Age, MSA	618 (estimated)	
7	2012	1 m ² by 130 cm	Modern, Iron Age, MSA	4,182 (estimated)	
8	2012	1 m ² by 200 cm	Modern, Iron Age, MSA	6,963	
9	2012	1 m ² by 180 cm	Modern, Iron Age, MSA	13,843	
10	2012	1 m by 35 cm by 190 cm	Modern, Iron Age, MSA	6,127	
11	2012	1 m by 35 cm by 190 cm	Modern, Iron Age, MSA	3,738	1 large Sangoan-like pick
12	2012	1 m by 1.35 cm by 200 cm	Modern, Iron Age, MSA; Possible LSA (we have two ostrich eggshell beads dated within the LSA range)	14,738	3 radiocarbon dated MSA ostrich eggshell beads: 31,810 ± 180 BP at 90 to 90 cm below surface (OxA-27627); 47,750 ± 750 BP at 70 to 80 cm below surface (OxA-27626); >50,100 BP at 90 to 100 cm below surface (OxA-27628) (Miller and Willoughby <i>Journal of Human Evolution</i> , 2014)



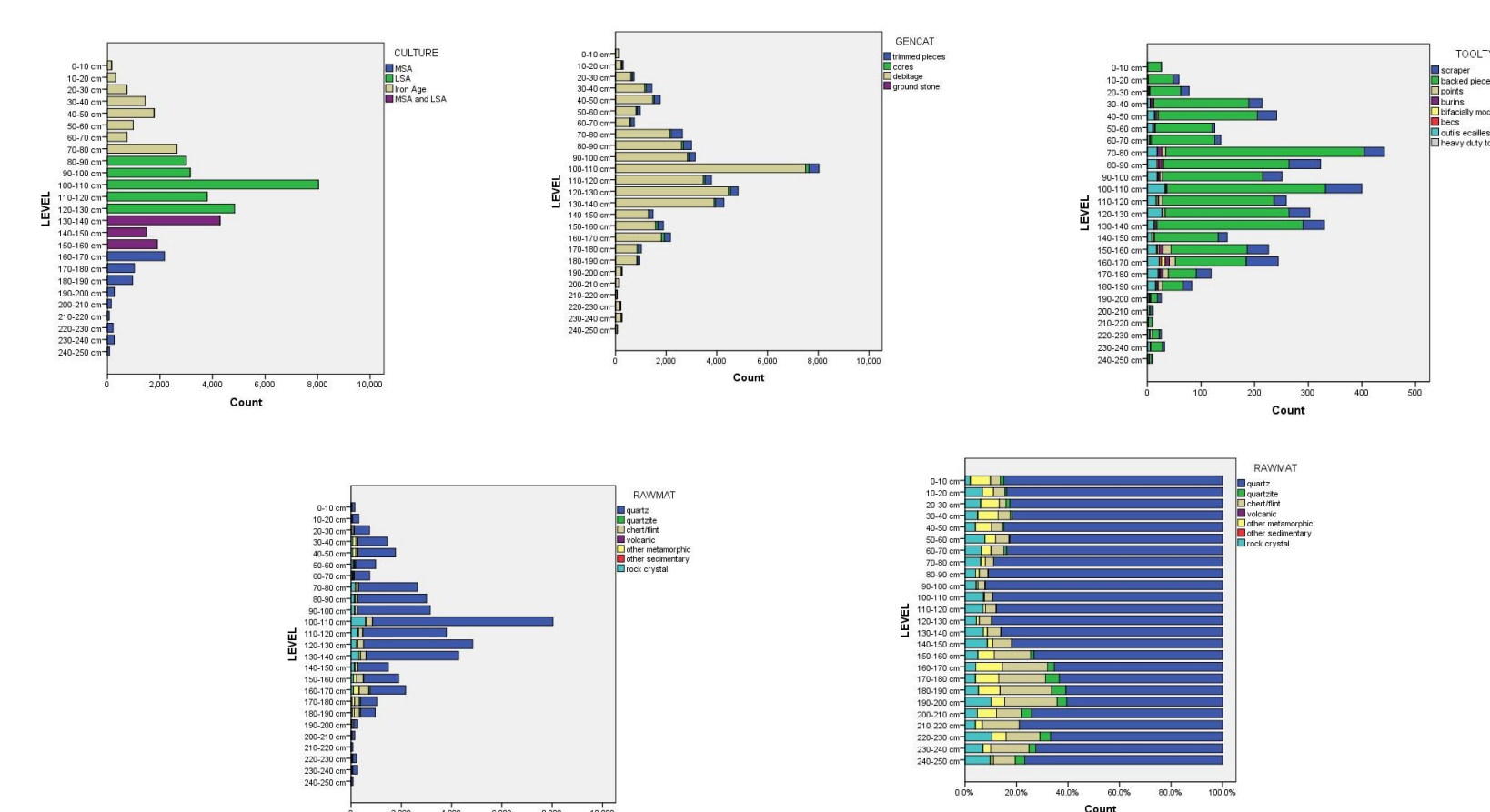
Map of Iringa (above left; prepared by J. Werner). Magubike rockshelter (above right).



Excavations at Magubike in 2012 (above left). Plan view of test pits at Magubike (above right; prepared by J. Miller).

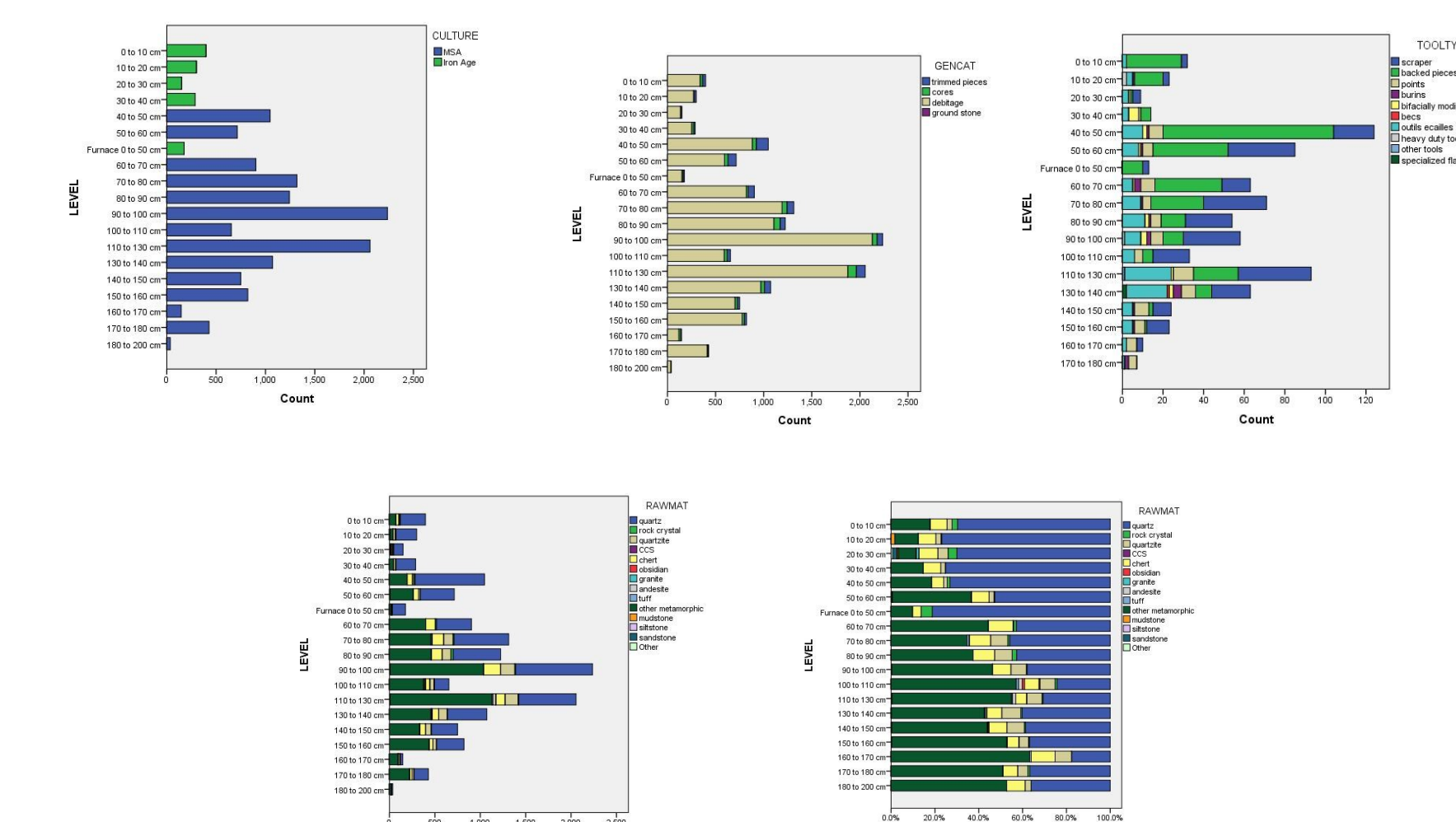
Magubike test pit 5 lithic sequence

Culture = Cultural designation; Gencat = artifact type; Tooltype = retouched tool type; Rawmat = Raw material (# and %).



Magubike test pit 12 lithic sequence

Culture = cultural designation; Gencat = artifact type; Tooltype = retouched tool type; Rawmat = Raw material. (# and %).



Other localities

In gullies which expose ancient land surfaces, artifacts characteristic of the Acheulean (handaxes, cleavers, picks) are found. A new open air Acheulean site, **Kitasengwa**, was identified in 2016. It appears to contain intact deposits. Artifacts observed on the surface include a Levallois core and numerous bifaces.



The Kitasengwa Acheulean site.



Many other rockshelters were recorded, most of which contain archaeological deposits.

A 2016 foot survey by Jeffrey Werner led to the discovery of a number of **chert outcrops**, which could be sources of some of the raw materials used to manufacture stone artifacts at Magubike and other sites.

Community based archaeology and *Fahari yetu*

Starting in 2008, at the request of local people, we started recording sites important to their history. We have also started to record their oral history, and aspects of material culture. This work has evolved into **CHIRP**, the Cultural Heritage of Iringa Region Project. It is a parallel project to the academic goals of our research, and is designed to leave a lasting contribution to the communities in Iringa Region.

In 2016 we also began collaborating with *Fahari yetu*, an Iringa organization promoting heritage conservation, led by **Jan Küver** of the Brandenburg Technical University, Cottbus – Senftenberg, Germany; and the University of Iringa. Among other activities, they have created a museum in the old German administrative center or *boma* (see photos below). They have enclosed important historic and archaeological sites, and have contracted people to protect them.

We are also working with the Division of Antiquities, Government of Tanzania, to identify and to record all sites of historic and cultural value. One of the first outcomes of this collaboration is the plan to designate the Magubike main rockshelter as a historic site.



Amy Reedman and Jennifer Miller with Iringa baskets.

Acknowledgements

COSTECH, Tanzania

Antiquities Division, Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, Government of Tanzania, for the excavation license and for the Antiquities officers who have worked with us in the field

Members of IRAP, past and present (Katharine Alexander, Katie Biittner, Pastory Bushozi, Benjamin Collins, Frank Masele, Jennifer Miller, Amy Reedman, Elizabeth Sawchuk, Jeffrey Werner)

The People of Iringa, especially of Magubike village, for their assistance

Funding

- Killam Cornerstone Fund, University of Alberta (2006 and 2008 field seasons)
- Support for the Advancement of Scholarship Fund, Faculty of Arts (2006, 2010, 2015, and 2016)
- Killam / SSHRC Bridging Fund (2016), Office of the Vice President (Research) (2016)

- Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Post-PhD research grant (2008)
- SSHRC Standard Research Grants (2008-2011 and 2011-2014)
- SSHRC Insight Grant (2017 to 2022)