

Historic 11th century coins returned to Tanzania

By [In2EastAfrica Reporter](#)

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[Tanzania](#) has received coin collections from Kilwa and Kisimani Mafia, excavated in the area by the late Dr Neville Chittick, who worked in [Tanzania](#) as an archaeologist and researcher for many years.



The handing over ceremony of 1,446 Tanzanian coins was held in Dar es Salaam and were received by the Director of Antiquities, Mr Donatius Kamamba on behalf of the ministry of Information, Youth, Culture and Sports and witnessed by various media representatives and members of the National Museum of [Tanzania](#).

”What we are witnessing here today could not happen if it was not for the effort made by British Institute in Africa to curate the coins and return them to Tanzania,” said Dr Kamamba, adding that the occasion is one of the important events towards Tanzania’s effort to return its cultural heritage resources which have been deposited abroad even before colonial time.

He said the collection, which is one of the biggest and most important collections of Swahili Coast coins in the world, was handed over by the current director of the British Institute in East Africa Dr Ambreena Manji and Mr John Perkins, who played a major role to curate and document the coins.

Dr Kamamba said that the division of Antiquities in collaboration with the National Museum of Tanzania will ensure that the coins are sustainably preserved for the benefit of future generation.

He said as the government, Tanzania has very diversified and significant cultural heritage resources, but however stressed that these resources will be worthless if they are not sustainably utilized.

”The coins we have received and other cultural heritage resources should not be locked in cabinets, but should be used for various research and education,” said Dr Kamamba, adding that by doing so, our cultural heritage will be meaningful.

Among the coins is also a very rare silver coin from Kilwa, which probably dates to 10th or 11th century, and a large hoard from Mafia island. The collection also comprises a small quantity of coins from China, India, various ancient foreign Islamic coins and pre-colonial and colonial European coins.

He said the coins, majority of which were minted in the period from the 10th or 11th century to the end of the 15th century, were excavated and found in surveys by Dr Neville Chittick,

the first director of the British Institute in East Africa during an archaeological research from 1950s to 1960s.

Dr Kamamba further said that after the death of Dr Chittick in 1983, the coins were stored for safekeeping, and the current director of the British Institute, Dr Ambreena Manji and the institute's council made it a priority to curate the coins and return them to Tanzania.

On her part, Board Chairperson of National Museum of Tanzania Dr Costancia Rugumamu said the return of the old coins marks the beginning of ongoing efforts by the government to return its cultural heritage to promote tourism.

Dr Costancia who is also a Dean to the Faculty of Science at the Dar es Salaam University College of Education, said the returned archaeological artifacts also caters for learning instruments to gauge the level of historical development.

By ASHERY MKAMA, [Tanzania Daily News](#)

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