

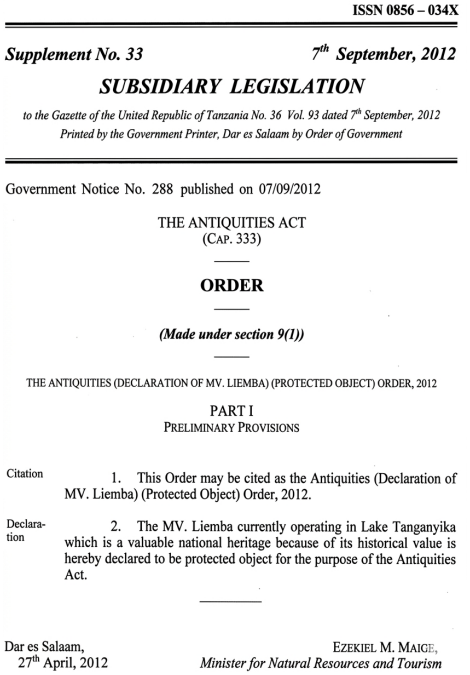
On the shores of Lake Tanganyika, is a small isolated village whose contacts with civilization for its needs, for the most part, are through Liemba's biweekly visits.
[Photo: MariaTriza Kabibi, January 2012]

The Liemba's Declaration as a Protected National Heritage

– Its Relevance to Tanzania, the Future of the Liemba and Lake Tanganyika and its People

(**Eng. Joseph Malima Bhwana**[1])

Eventually, the historical motor vessel Liemba that has operated regular sailing schedules on Lake Tanganyika for nearly 100 years is now listed as one of protected national heritages in Tanzania. In a Government Notice No. 288 (shown herein) published on 7th September 2012 in the official government gazette of the United Republic of Tanzania, the Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism made a declaration order dated 27th April 2012 under Section 9 (1) of the Antiquities Act, Cap. 333, stating, "***The m.v. Liemba currently operating in Lake Tanganyika which is a valuable national heritage because of its historical value is hereby declared to be a protected object for purpose of the Antiquities Act.***"



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THE ANTIQUITIES ACT
(CAP. 333)

ORDER

(Made under section 9(1))

THE ANTIQUITIES (DECLARATION OF MV. LIEMBA) (PROTECTED OBJECT) ORDER, 2012

PART I
PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS

Citation 1. This Order may be cited as the Antiquities (Declaration of MV. Liemba) (Protected Object) Order, 2012.

Declaration 2. The MV. Liemba currently operating in Lake Tanganyika which is a valuable national heritage because of its historical value is hereby declared to be protected object for the purpose of the Antiquities Act.

Dar es Salaam, 27th April, 2012

EZEKIEL M. MAIGE,
Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism

Goverment Notice declaring m.v. Liemba to be a protected national heritage object

The Liemba joins other national cultural heritages[2] enumerated as follows:

(a) Archaeological or paleontological sites such Olduvai Gorge, Laetoli Footprints, Isimila Stone Age site, Engaruka Ruins;

(b) Historical sites such as Kaole Ruins, Kunduchi Ruins, Kilwa Kisiwani Ruins, Songo Mnara Ruins;

(c) Historical towns such as Bagamoyo, Kilwa Kivinje, Mikindani;

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1 Eng. Joseph Malima Bhwana, a private engineering consultant, served on the Board of Directors of Marine Services Company Limited (MSCL; today TASHICO) as its member from 2002 to 2011 and continues to actively and extensively concern and engage himself in many matters regarding m.v. Liemba.

2 http://www.mnrt.go.tz/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=72:cultural-heritage-resources-&catid=42:antiquities&Itemid=155 (accessed 19 October 2012)

(d) Traditional settlements such as Kalenga in Iringa and Bweranyange in Kagera;

(e) Historic buildings like colonial administrative buildings (BOMAs) in many Districts in Tanzania;

(f) Sites with special memories like Colonialists' Cemetery, cemeteries of World War I and II fallen soldiers and defensive walls; and

(g) Natural features and structures such as Mbozi Meteorite, Amboni Caves and Kondoa Rock Art Shelters, to name only a few.

How can m.v. Liemba, an old ship floating on the waters of Lake Tanganyika, be accorded an equal heritage status with the likes of ruins of Kilwa Kisiwani and Songo Mnara which are not only Tanzanian national heritages but also UNESCO world heritage properties? Dr. Donatus Kamamba[3] responds to the question: ***"The answer is to be found in Tanzania's Cultural Heritage Policy of 2008 and the Antiquities Act of 1964 and its amendment of 1979, by which the Parliament recognizes that sites wherever located in this country and which are on the Antiquities Director's list, without prejudice to local communities' interests or ownership, constitute a National Cultural Heritage for whose protection, it is not the duty of the local communities alone, but also of the nation as a whole to cooperate."***

He proceeds to mention the following about the Liemba: ***"The significance and importance of m. v. Liemba have been recognized and appreciated, due to the following reasons: -***

(i) Historically, it is an important landmark which demonstrates the relationship between Tanzanian and German Governments and many more local and foreign institutions in the 20th century and later. It also demonstrates both social and economic development of the people along its route on Lake Tanganyika;

(ii) Its use values are invaluable as it has been used to fulfil military, socio-economic, administrative and many other duties and objectives on Lake Tanganyika since colonial times to today; and

(iii) It has a huge age value as it is a long serving ship which is still in operation to date."

Without doubt, the long unique association that the people of Lake Tanganyika and its neighbouring areas have had with the Liemba, which is unprecedented anywhere in Africa and probably in the world was one of reasons the Antiquities Division of the Government of Tanzania found it befitting to declare the vessel a treasured and a protected national heritage. Generations, over several decades, have seen the Liemba serve virtually non-stop on Lake Tanganyika, save for periods when it was scuttled by its colonial German owners and when it was on the verge of being scrapped before being rehabilitated by a British engineer in the 1970s.

The easily explicable bond between the Liemba and the lacustrine inhabitants of the Lake Tanganyika basin in the four countries of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania and Zambia is a vividly live connection of the past, the present and the future. It is a result of historical, cultural, social and economic links in the region that the Liemba has been providing persistently, dominantly and, at times, single-handedly for almost a century now. From a gunship and a carrier of troops and military supplies to its

[3] Dr Donatus Kamamba was the Director of Antiquities (1997—2017) in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism of the United Republic of Tanzania.

present-day role as a passenger and cargo ferry, the Liemba obviously holds an immense historical value to the Lake Tanganyikans.

The author, who hails from northern Tanzania on the shores of another African Great Lake but like most Tanzanians, read and learnt a lot about the Liemba in his early school history, geography and civics classes and has since then found Liemba's intriguing episodes and stories to be extremely popular amongst the people of Tanzania and neighbouring states. His fond association with the Liemba earnestly began in 1964 when he travelled to Kigoma accompanying his parents on a visit to relations in Kalemie (then: Albertville) in the then neighbouring Congo (Leopoldville). He was graced with an exciting ride on the Liemba.

The first-hand childhood experience has never faded from his memories. The oneness, the unanimity, the love, the harmony, the interlinked trading transactions, the blooming cultural and generational connections and the common language Kiswahili albeit in different dialects and tones have perpetually characterised the bond the ship has managed to forge into the peoples of Lake Tanganyika over years of its existence. Forty-five years later, while on a working trip on the Liemba from Kigoma to Mpulungu, the author with his family encountered the same universally emotional feeling on board. To him, the Liemba and Lake Tanganyika and its people have always been in a thriving relationship which is inseparable for a multitude of very good reasons. It was, therefore, in the esteemed wishes of Lake Tanganyikans and Tanzanians in their entirety, that this almost century-old affiliation is meritoriously honoured and prolonged further into next generations.



Birthday girl MariaTriza Kabibi offering a biting to Dr. Michael Berg, chairman of Run Liemba, on board the Liemba. Her father, the author of this article, and his wife are in the background. Liemba continues to host many social meetings for Lake Tanganyika local folk and visitors. [Photo: Papa-Fredrick, 16/01/2012]

Professor Joseph Mbwiliza[4] wrote in August 2012 in an unpublished article "Liemba: The Legendary Queen of Africa's Inland Marine Vessels":

A proposal within government circles for example, has been floating around since for the past three years that the vessel is declared a national heritage. This is a brilliant idea since the vessel meets the UNESCO criteria to be declared as such. It is a decision that would demonstrate the government's forward looking policy on the future of the Liemba. The decision would therefore strengthen the government's bargaining position with prospective collaborators as well as in soliciting donor support. However, we need to caution here that a national asset such as the Liemba when it is declared a national heritage should not be treated and managed as a museum artefact. A technically rehabilitated Liemba need not be decommissioned out of service. What would be

[4] Professor Joseph Mbwiliza is a Tanzanian scholar, politician, and public servant. He has served as a Member of Parliament for Kasulu Constituency in Kigoma Region for ten years, was a member of the CCM National Executive Committee for twenty years, and held government roles including Deputy Minister of Energy, Water and Mineral Resources and Kilimanjaro Region's Regional Commisioner. He was a Professor of African History and Politics at the Open University of Tanzania until his retirement in the late 2010s.

required is a collaborative management plan which takes into account the conservation concerns of the Division of Antiquities, the National Museum and UNESCO.

A decision to declare the Liemba a national heritage will undoubtedly add value to the ship as a tourist attraction, a tourist destination so to speak in its own right. When properly marketed the ship could arouse curiosity among German and British younger generation but also marine engineers and researchers.

I therefore share the sentiments of one of the several BBC commentators who said the following:

"…. Incredible that the ship is still in commercial service! ……. Imagine labour being cheaper there, so it would not cost much to maintain the ship in terms of manhours, welders, iron and paint. The engines are not old. It would not be cheaper to build a new ship. This ferry could also be big tourist attraction. More profitable to maintain …." BBC NEWS, Berlin, 29 August, 2011.

Dr Donatus Kamamba, over and above that, asserts: *"It is through these values that ultimately, the recognition of the m.v. Liemba has been blessed by the authorities …….. and as a national heritage, good wishers of the Liemba within Tanzania and those outside Tanzania are requested to support the proper restoration, preservation, presentation and utilization of the ship for the benefit of not only this generation but also the coming generations. Together we stand to conserve our legacy through cultural heritage resources."*

This recent elevation and declaration of the Liemba to a national heritage status, although overdue, will proceed to make the Liemba a significant attraction component in the infant but now blossoming Western Tanzania Tourist Circuit. Western Tanzania, with its unique social, economic and cultural interlinks with other neighbouring countries is endowed with a good number of virtually unexplored national parks and many commanding sceneries. Multilaterally, immense benefits are to be derived from the emerging and increasing tourist opportunities that the Liemba and Western Tanzania will begin to offer.

The future of the Liemba shall now be properly planned and executed and may be used to serve as a nucleus or launch pad for other marine transport services and associated infrastructure and socio-economic projects on Lake Tanganyika and its surrounding region. For all intents and purposes, the ship's iconic status will understandably attract enormous attention worldwide. The positive multiplier and accelerator effects to the economy of the region are reckoned to be massive and will usher in a new era of prosperity. Activities related to the Liemba will lead to a knock-on effect to substantially alleviate poverty, presently a common phenomenon amongst the natives of Lake Tanganyika basin. Fittingly, as has been in the past, Liemba shall remain the peoples' symbol of survival and an ever-buoyant lifeline abundant with all-round opportunities.

The Liemba, by being declared a national heritage, now invites more far-reaching thought and consequent multi-faceted involvement from all quarters worldwide for its seemingly bright future and the greatness of Lake Tanganyikans and their global friends. May the ship continue also to serve as a vessel for peace, harmony and stability in the Great Lakes Region! The Liemba shall live for more decades to come. Let future generations reap massively from the monumental Liemba's magnanimous past that is to be well conserved, restored and documented.