



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

*Unguja Ukuu Zanzibar:*

## *Chronological, Geochemical and Bimolecular Analyses of East Africa's Indian Ocean Trade*

**SEMINAR PRESENTED BY THE CENTRE FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SCIENCE (CAS)**

**DATE: FRIDAY 27TH MAY**

**TIME: 12:30PM-1:30PM**

**VENUE: 41.G03a , UOW**

**PRESENTER: DR ALISON CROWTHER**

Alison Crowther is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the School of Social Science, The University of Queensland. She completed her PhD at UQ in 2009 on the spread of agriculture in the Pacific through starch residues on Lapita pottery. She then held research fellowships at the Universities of Sheffield and Oxford in the UK. Alison has been working in eastern Africa since 2010 as part of the ERC-funded 'Sealinks Project', investigating the origins and development of Indian Ocean trade and interaction. Her fieldwork in this region has covered a vast expanse of the Swahili coast and islands, including the mainland coasts of Kenya and Tanzania, and the islands of Pemba, Zanzibar, Mafia and Madagascar. Her interests include the archaeobotany of early agriculture in East Africa, Indian Ocean trade and crop transfers, and residue analysis of ancient food processing technologies.

### **SEMINAR OVERVIEW:**

Biological and cultural diversity around the Indian Ocean have been shaped by a long history of maritime trade and interaction, which saw the long-distance movement of goods, people, and other biological species to new and often far-flung regions. Many aspects of eastern Africa's role in early transregional trade, especially the timing and influence of Asian connections, remain ambiguous. A major issue has been the limited application of archaeological science methods to construct precise chronologies for the trade, to source goods such as beads, metal and ceramics to their point of origin, and to confirm reports of early exotic plant and animal introductions. In this seminar, I present the results of new chronological, geochemical and biological evidence produced through renewed archaeological investigations of the site Unguja Ukuu on Zanzibar. Unguja Ukuu (c. 650-1000 CE) is one of the earliest known trading ports in eastern Africa south of Somalia and was thus a crucial port of call for trade goods entering and leaving the region. The results of our research inform about eastern Africa's entry into the world of Indian Ocean exchange and commerce, and provide insights into an increasingly expansive and complex set of Old World trading networks.

