Postcolonial Archaeologies in Africa

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What Is Postcolonial about Archaeologies in Africa?

Peter R. Schmidt

The colonial roots of African archaeology vary widely, as much as different species of trees vary in their root structure, ranging from shallow (an analogy, say, for Angola) to those with deep taproots (Kenya or Senegal) to those with layered and thin dendritic structures (Eritrea). This heterogeneity defies generalization, for each history has important postcolonial lessons, no matter how deeply informed by colonial practice and theory. As a point of engagement for postcolonial critiques, Africa has been richly informed by postcolonial literature, with African authors such as Leopold Senghor, Chinua Achebe, and Ngugi wa Thiongo (Harrison, this volume; Patterson 2008) as well as foreign novelists such as V. S. Naipaul (e.g., 1979; who also sees imperialism's positive side) contributing much to our awareness of the colonial cultural hegemonies that continue to interpenetrate everyday life (Césaire 2001 [1953]; Fanon 1968 [1961]). Unlike many postcolonial theorists, African and Africanist archaeologists do not depend exclusively on written texts by colonial and post-colonial writers to assess how we might examine and understand colonial legacies that persist in past and contemporary historical representations, and in this respect we depart from positions where the postcolonial may be reduced to "a purely textual phenomenon" (Mishra and Hodge 1994 [1991]:278) focused on the power of discourse to make counterclaims. Clearly, archaeology with its materiality has a strong interventional role to play, providing an escape from this dilemma.

In Africa there is instead a long-running tradition within the practice of African archaeology that draws extensively on oral testimonies—learning from and valorizing the representations of local historians. Archaeologists in other world areas often find that the materiality of archaeology provides the only alternative sources, for example, to find and discuss subaltern lives, and that they continually confront the conundrum of "engaging with a colonial archive that by its very nature favors and supports analysis of the colonizer at the expense of the colonized, the elite at the expense of the subaltern" (Gullapalli 2008:58). Although Africanists constantly engage the

colonial library, their distinctive methodology—often drawing on deep-time oral texts—opens new theoretical perspectives in postcolonial studies, especially in the recovery and use of subaltern histories that challenge and help to deconstruct colonial narratives about the past, as well as provide truly multivocal views of the past (Schmidt 1978, 2006; Schmidt and Patterson 1995a, 1995b; Schmidt and Walz 2007). Because postcolonial thinkers have crafted important ways of seeing and understanding how colonial influences continue to manipulate the ways in which the postcolonial world is constructed, it is only fitting that we examine our own practices, now and over the last few decades, through a postcolonial lens.

Our examination here of multiple cases from different regions (geographies, ethnicities, languages) shows that colonial hegemonies underwrite inequalities in power relationships based on race, class, gender, and state treatments of heritage, museums, communities, and human rights—to mention only several areas of concern in postcolonial life—all of which illustrate that decolonizing the colonial mind is an ongoing task. Many of the contributors to this volume resonate with Faye Harrison's lifetime commitment to an intellectual activism that addresses issues of social justice in our own community as well as our host communities, to wit: "I have undertaken both scholarly work and professional activist service that I conceptualize as part of a larger project for decolonizing and democratizing anthropology" (Harrison 2008:8). For those engaged in postcolonial critiques, our challenge is to make diaphanous these continuous and deeply embedded colonial ways of doing and seeing, the residuum of the colonial *and* post-colonial experience.

Our angles of view will, however, vary according to the degree to which we can identify ourselves in a role of, as Harrison put it for herself as a black feminist anthropologist, subaltern positionality (Harrison, this volume). The subaltern condition for Harrison arises because of her inclusion in groups that are underrepresented as well as subjected to ideological othering. Some of the contributors to this volume clearly fit into the subaltern, each informed by his or her particular historical contingencies.[1] Harrison's exegesis of postcolonial theory (this volume) helps to make more transparent where archaeology in Africa may fit within a larger discourse on postcolonial thought. Her perspectives on anthropology also help to illuminate some important trends that we as archaeologists also see occurring in Africa today. She importantly brings to light, for example, Sally Faulk Moore's (1998) failure to respond to Archie Mafeje's (1997) critique that Western scholars tend to ignore African intellectuals (Harrison 2008:31). This is a key observation on the treatment of black African intellectuals, and it was clear to the seminar participants that this mentality is very much at play in the treatment of African archaeologists—starting with Cheikh Anta Diop of Senegal and Bassey Andah of Nigeria and continuing today with those who threaten to change the intellectual focus of archaeology, overturning Eurocentric obsessions with the colonial in historical archaeology and theories of foreign implantation of cultural institutions in deeper time (e.g., Holl, this volume).

What relevance does such postcolonial thinking have for the practice and theoretical application of archaeology in Africa? First, we must be perfectly clear that *postcolonial* does not refer to what has unfolded historically in the post-liberation period of African archaeology—that is, it is not a chronological marker, although the term has often been used in this manner (Harrison, this volume; Mishra and Hodge 1994 [1991]).[2] A further observation germane to this discussion is that the "post" in postcolonial studies does not signify a break from colonial practices and representations (Appadurai 1986; Harrison, this volume; Liebmann 2008; seminar discussions). While much of the substantive interest in African archaeology has developed in the period after independence, it is of concern here only if it touches on the persistence of the colonial project and how to deconstruct it through the application of an effective postcolonial critique and the practice of archaeologies that unveil colonial ways of representing the past. This book develops new

understandings of the postcolonial condition in archaeology by examining archaeological practice: how archaeologists are working to change their discipline in Africa, how their efforts have sometimes led to marginalization, and how they are engaging communities and building partnerships where they work. An assessment of practice must also consider the power relationships that continue to limit opportunities and that constrain good scholarship through systems of patronage and corruption. Postcolonial archaeology in Africa is very much a narrative about politics and power, as previously argued by Schmidt and Patterson (1995a).

These African trajectories parallel and complement but differ from other articulations of the postcolonial critique and archaeology summarized by Liebmann (2008) as the archaeological study of colonization and colonialism, archaeology's role in deconstructing colonial discourses, and the decolonization of archaeology through the ethical practice of archaeology. Our seminar papers treat the first topic as ancillary to our primary concerns, because the increasing focus of historical and diaspora archaeology on the colonial process submerges African histories under a colonial-centric bias that reifies European agency rather than African agency (see DeCorse 2001 for an exceptional approach that privileges African agency within a colonial context). We share Holl's concern when he argues in his chapter that the growing emphasis on colonial history by historical archaeologists uses metaphors that diminish African agency and deflect attention away from African archaeologies:

> The archaeology of European expansion…celebrates the successes of European nations in taking control of large portions of the planet over a short segment of time.… Not surprisingly, the negative connotations of the Africans' side of the equation have to be attenuated with metaphors. Some prefer terms like *cultural encounter*, *cultural entanglement*, or *embracing of modernity*. Others focus on *resistance*, *governance innovation*, and so forth. (Holl this volume)

But this problem runs much deeper. Holl's analysis of publication trends in African archaeology makes us realize that a steadily decreasing number of studies about ancient history and an enormous increase in colonial studies in archaeology are trajectories that carry with it an unanticipated price—the valorization of the colonial experience in Africa at the expense of knowledge about endogenous Africa before a European presence.

Because Africa was one of the most thoroughly colonized regions of the world, it provides important insights into how postcolonial critiques and practice can unveil diverse colonial ways of thinking, doing, and seeing that persist into the twenty-first century. In other words, Africa presents diverse colonial discourses that invite and require deconstruction. This examination is compelling for a number of reasons. First, it reveals hidden ways of organizing and performing archaeology that reflect power relations that silence, manipulate, and use archaeology to achieve goals derived from the colonial project. Second, a focus on Africa uncovers a number of themes and concerns that expand our understanding of postcolonial processes and trends, significantly enriching the insights gained from other world regions (e.g., Liebmann and Rizvi 2008). Thus what we proffer in this volume supplements other constructions and expands the scope and diversity of postcolonial archaeologies, deepening a literature drawn mostly from scholars working outside Africa.

Importantly, postcolonial studies reveal that the post-colonial period has not resulted in a miraculous release of once colonized peoples from colonial hegemonies. There has not been the revolutionary disruption and overthrow of colonial ways of doing and thinking that ipso facto come with political liberation. Thus any consideration of postcolonial Africa is very much one that examines the continuing influences of colonial hegemonies, in this case those found within archaeology—one important domain in which culture is constructed. Edward Said (1994:323)

observes that hegemony "is a system of pressures and constraints by which the whole cultural corpus retains its essentially imperial identity and its direction." This observation brings us naturally to a consideration of how to decolonize archaeology in Africa, a process much more subtle and elusive than political decolonization of African nations and not accompanied by a decolonization of intellectual paradigms or the way we practice archaeology.

One of the primary and curiously obvious indices of colonial ways of doing things in African archaeology is how edited volumes about African archaeology continue to be dominated by European and American authors, even several decades after scores of African archaeologists began to research and publish on the continent. This trend first aroused attention with the publication of *A History of African Archaeology* (Robertshaw 1990), a volume that unfortunately included only one black African archaeologist—a configuration remarked upon and criticized by Europeans (e.g., Alexander 1991), Africans (e.g., Okpoko 1991), and Americans (e.g., Schmidt and Patterson 1995a) alike. We might have reasonably expected some significant change over time, especially with the publication of the erudite and important milestone volume *African Archaeology: A Critical Introduction* (Stahl 2005), with 17 percent of the eighteen chapters authored by senior African archaeologists. This is certainly an improvement on past treatments, but it is simultaneously a revealing commentary on the continued marginal role of major African thinkers. If it is not a paucity of African acumen, then what explains such underrepresentation? Further inquiry reveals that most of the African contributors work in the European and American academies. Only one senior African contributor remains rooted in Africa. If it is not a paucity of African acumen, then what condition does this signify? If there is a deeper trust of things Western than endogenous perspectives arising out of the continent, then we may more confidently conclude that African scholars for the most part remain on the periphery, marginalized from the mainstream of scholarly discourse—a potent commentary on power relations between South and North that continue to mirror those of the colonial era (see Depelchin 2005; Temu and Swai 1981).

Our purpose here is to introduce a broader range of thinking into the equation of what postcolonial critiques and perspectives may be pertinently applied to colonial hegemonies that interpenetrate our practice of archaeology in Africa today. To do this we have gathered together a variety of scholars, including Americans of European and Asian descent (Bugarin, Denbow, McIntosh, Walz, Schmidt), a European actively engaged in African archaeology and material culture studies (Rowlands), a sociocultural anthropologist engaged in black feminist studies and the deconstruction of colonialism in anthropology (Harrison), African scholars situated in the Western academy and also actively engaged in African research (Holl and Kusimba), and African scholars who today live and produce histories on the continent (Munene, Ndlovu, Segobye, and Chami). In many respects, this volume is a continuation of discourses opened in *Making Alternative Histories* (Schmidt and Patterson 1995b) that address issues intersecting with postcolonial perspectives, including the contributions of several Africanists (Andah 1995; Schmidt 1995). With the success of the SAR advanced seminar format in mind, we gathered in an extended four-day seminar at the University of Florida to discuss predistributed papers and to arrive at common perspectives. A number of issues spontaneously arose in common. I now want to address the more poignant of these common themes.

Silencing Those Who Challenge Colonial Discourses

Many of us confront the exercise of power in silencing our and others' views on a daily basis, depending on the issues in which we are engaged. Silencing or modification of our voices may be influenced by the theoretical perspective, say, of a particular journal—to the point where we may

Figure 1.1
Map of Africa, with gray shading marking the countries discussed in this book. Illustration by Ed Tennant, courtesy of Peter Schmidt.

structure an argument to meet the theoretical proclivities of the journal editors and readers. Sometimes exacting standards are applied, particularly to the literature that must be cited according to peer reviewers, a condition that sometimes militates against scholars who are not in the Western mainstream and who do not have access to recent literature because of poorly funded libraries in Africa (Schmidt and Patterson 1995a). Silencing occurs when scholars proffer views that do not fall within the mainstream of Western scholarship, when peer review becomes a disguise to denigrate unorthodox viewpoints (Chami, this volume; Harrison, this volume; Kusimba, this volume). Within African cultures, silencing occurs when ruling houses use their power to silence subaltern history, as Rowlands (this volume) shows with the Grassfields of Cameroon (also see Stahl 2001; Trouillot 1995). Much more sinister are blatant attempts to silence those scholars who challenge well-established paradigms that took root during the colonial era and have held sway since.

Faye Harrison's penetrating analysis of "ethnographic authority" touches our concerns here, for the gatekeepers in the production of knowledge constantly assess the worth of texts, determining if they will be incorporated within the canon and then reproduced over time (Harrison ed.

1997, 2008). Beyond the common method of consigning work to the periphery by labeling it "controversial" or "inadequate," the most potent of the exclusionary dynamics is to ignore and to erase through silence. We struggled in the seminar to come to grips with personal testimonies that spoke to the systematic marginalization of our colleagues Kusimba, Ndlovu, and Chami by white, European gatekeepers.

Among the shifts seen in postcolonial archaeologies in Africa is the emergence of a discourse that uses autoethnography as well as autobiographical perspectives, both of which confer distinct advantages and points of leverage in decolonizing archaeology in Africa. These approaches more directly expose power relationships, hidden hierarchies, and ways in which contributions outside the canon are silenced. A necessary part of the decolonization process, they also invite misunderstandings, particularly by those who want critiques to fit within a normative framework of archaeological narrative. The escape from this conundrum, we believe, rests in the principle of transparency and open debate, not silence and fear of retribution.

Joost Fontein (2006), in a brilliant exegesis on this subject in his recent book *The Silence of Great Zimbabwe*, draws on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, wherein professional status and objectivity are invoked to diminish and marginalize competing, alternative ways of seeing the past (also see Depelchin 2005). It is a condition that many female archaeologists and anthropologists will recognize in the Western academy—where for decades their scholarship was either ignored or appropriated by male colleagues (Susan Kus, personal communication, 2008; Weedman 2001). How does symbolic violence affect production of knowledge in Africa?

The most poignant example we have among the seminar papers is Chami's experience with reactions of European colleagues to his research into the Neolithic along the East African littoral and offshore islands. This is research that contradicts the taken-for-granted colonial idea that human settlement along the East African littoral is linked to relatively recent in-migrations of other Africans and of foreigners from the East, as well as the related post-colonial notion that the Neolithic was limited to the Nile and Rift valleys in eastern Africa. Attacks on the credibility of Chami's archaeological practice (his methods, not his theoretical positions about other parts of African history) focus on excavation techniques. The most common are complaints that he has not conducted careful excavations and that therefore his data are unreliable and must not be trusted. These assertions, however, fail to marshal detailed evidence to substantiate such serious, discrediting claims. Rather, his antagonists continue to cast doubts about field methods, representing his work as "inadequate" or technically sloppy.

A recent and more chilling symbolic violence entails the assertion that all deposits more than 20 centimeters deep in Neolithic strata at Kuumbi Cave in Zanzibar (Chami 2006, this volume) have been significantly disturbed—an assertion that departs from earlier published observations and endorsements, thus creating questions about whom Chami can rely upon in a collaborative interpretation of these important findings. Because such critiques fail the test of specificity and lack sufficient justifications, they may be seen as possible attempts to control the agenda for what counts in archaeology and what will or will not be accepted. If Chami can be maneuvered to fill the role of the unreliable excavator or characterized pejoratively as an *unleashed nationalist* through successive iterations, then his position becomes subaltern, with his voice muffled and eventually his research agenda appropriated.

We may, perhaps, take hope from Harrison's important distinction, that "margin and periphery do not signify negation or absence of merit; instead they denote spaces in which resilience and resistance may engender the articulation of alternative perspectives" (Harrison 2008:15). Making alternative perspectives—what Thomas Patterson and I called "Making Alternative Histories" in our 1995 volume—is precisely the mission that Chami and Kusimba—among

many others—embrace. And Harrison is right: it takes significant resilience and resistance to sustain and defend postcolonial archaeologies in the face of such formidable opposition.

The chapter by Ndlovu takes us into another domain of silencing vis-à-vis a dominant apartheid ideology that has yet to be purged from South African archaeology. When Ndlovu describes for us the exclusive archaeology associations spread across South Africa, where an unspoken apartheid dampens black participation and inhibits discourse, then we come to a terrible awareness that black archaeologists in South Africa, despite considerable growth of democratic institutions and civil society, are thrust into subaltern roles. Some who control the educational establishment in archaeology in South Africa greet Ndlovu's articulations of concern and disenchantment over the archaeological establishment with skepticism and distain, dismissing him as a malcontent.

Elements of symbolic violence may also be recognized in Kusimba's experiences in challenging reigning paradigms arising out of colonial interpretations of African technology. Treatments of Kusimba's research (this volume) hold elements of symbolic violence that have submerged if not silenced his perspective on the development of iron technology along the Kenyan coast. His important discovery that steel production was conducted by the crucible steel process in the late first millennium as well as the second millennium CE has been diminished to a mere footnote in African archaeology. Kusimba's interpretation—that these materials represented local African technologists using technology from India—is important on two counts: (1) that local craftsmen successfully used this technology; and (2) that the technology derived from India, suggesting a more complex interaction between the two continents at the time. While archaeological context clearly sustains the idea that local ironworkers produced the crucible steel, a senior authority in African iron studies, and a collaborator, continues to privilege trade as the explanation for the presence of crucible steel (Killick 2001, forthcoming; Kusimba 2001, forthcoming, this volume; Kusimba, Killick, and Cresswell 1994)—an emphasis placing agency in the hands of outsiders and obscuring African ingenuity and agency. Africans in this equation are passive bystanders, incapable of participating—a direct legacy of colonial thinking (Harrison, this volume).

During our seminar discussions, we came to understand that silencing in Africa today may take a more clandestine but still deeply sinister expression—all too reminiscent of colonial authoritarianism. This is an issue explored at length by McIntosh in his discussion of "barons" who control much of the archaeological research in Francophone Africa, including access to research funding, training, and publication. McIntosh identifies their clients as *nos ancêtres*, contemporary African counterparts to colonial administrators who block access to educational opportunities. They are gatekeepers who also control access to research, thus impinging upon the well-being of nationals as well as foreign researchers.

Karega-Munene's discussion of the shortcomings of heritage legislation in Kenya, and its failure to acknowledge and address the human right to a cultural past, captures another form of silencing. By historicizing heritage legislation, Karega-Munene brings to the surface penetrating silences about human rights issues and heritage, silences that do not parallel the protection of civil, political, economic, and social human rights in a more recent constitutional draft (which ironically failed in referendum). His argument makes us realize that it is not state power being brought against such protection; rather, it is a deep-seated colonial legacy, a contemporary postcolonial mentality that prevents heritage stewards from advocating for such protections. While he proffers a remedy—more socially responsible promotion within the National Museums of Kenya—he also realistically acknowledges that change will come from local museums that are not part of the white settler legacy and whose caretakers have vivid social memories of human rights violations during the colonial past.

The currents of silence run deep in the archaeology of Africa. The realization that an official can exact future payment in the form of an international trip or other payoffs in trade for research permission depends on the silence of all participants. Imperial prerogatives are at work when young African researchers are extorted, threatened with banishment or imprisonment (Schmidt, this volume, chapter 6), or consigned to dark corners of museums and departments of antiquities without meaningful work (McIntosh, this volume). Local researchers and foreign researchers alike cannot afford to disclose a quid pro quo for fear that they may alienate a patron—one of *nos ancêtres*—and thus face permanent blacklisting. The exercise of power in such circumstances creates pulsing silences.

Eating the Young—Identifying a Colonial Legacy

Since the replacement of colonial officials responsible for archaeology, a new hierarchy of elders has arisen in the administration of archaeological research. While some are dedicated and devoted archaeologists, many others use their power to underwrite the advancement of careers based on the work of others, either through false coauthorships provided by foreign "collaborators"—a new wrinkle in paternalism—or by "eating the young"[3] (McIntosh, this volume), an insidious process that takes many forms, all of them an outgrowth of colonial practices (see Harrison, this volume; Obbo 1990). The practice of exploiting promising young scholars—having them do laboratory analyses and writing reports without attribution until they become so alienated that they depart for other opportunities—is common throughout the continent, but particularly rife in Mali. Such eating the young occurs when young and promising students with an interest in following archaeology find that conditions for training are hostile and the prospects for satisfying employment are minimal. Eating the young also extends to purposeful (and often successful) attempts to block the advancement of talented and ambitious young people who are seen as posing a threat to the established hierarchy. Sanctions against the talented commonly range from banishment to dusty archives without clear job duties to outright sanctioning by loss of position. Much more subtle and perhaps more insidious is when hostile cultural settings erode and denigrate commitment to a program of study in archaeology. Ndlovu (this volume) documents circumstances in South Africa—when his peers ridiculed archaeology and when funds promised for higher-degree studies in archaeology failed to appear—that led to his deep disenchantment.

Eating the young translates into very distressing experiences in South Africa in the post-independence period, when expectations about training African candidates in archaeology rose considerably. Optimisim flourished at the fourth World Archaeological Congress, held in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1999. Expectations ran high that South Africa's reintegration into the fellowship of global archaeology would mean increased support for black South Africans to study the subject. Despite the importance of this milestone event, such expectations have remained unrealized and the 1999 event rings hollow with the failure to reverse significantly the apartheid conditions that barred black South Africans from taking up the study of archaeology. Despite heartfelt efforts, South African academics have been unable to decolonize—beyond a few token cases—access to archaeological training in South Africa for black South Africans. The few individual successes pale in comparison to what is happening in Tanzania, Kenya, or Nigeria, where local archaeologists are trained with far fewer resources and personnel. When one considers that in the space of four years, fifty-four students were trained in archaeology at the BA level at the University of Asmara (Schmidt 2005), it is more than extraordinary that only a small fraction of that number have been trained in South Africa, where resources and infrastructure are so superior.

The South African case is complex, however, and dangerous to encapsulate in generalizations,

because many academics there genuinely want to change the profile of African archaeology from a white project to one that is increasingly organized and inspired by black Africans. But larger forces that ensure the continuation of colonial ways are at work. Faced with failures to recruit Africans into archaeology in significant numbers, scholars in South Africa blame lack of interest in archaeology, arguing that archaeology holds little appeal compared to professional subjects such as business. Such claims are feeble apologias that ignore remarkable success in recruiting young archaeologists in other African countries. Business and other professional careers are equally attractive in these other venues, yet students there have shown a passion for the study of their past. What is happening in South Africa to prevent parallel success?

Ndlovu's analysis finds the explanation in the cultural organization of archaeology—that archaeology is seen as a white man's enterprise, that archaeology clubs are mostly all white, and that black members, if there are any, feel uncomfortable and unwelcomed. Until there is a revolution from below in the way archaeology represents itself at the popular level, it will continue to be seen as the province of whites. Ndlovu also reveals that additional cultural issues flow from the white organization of archaeology throughout the country—that black peers see a fellow black who selects archaeology or heritage management (a white profession) as a "coconut": someone who is black outside but white inside. This situation leads to discouragement and alienation from the course of study.

Not willing to accept the marginalization so readily ascribed by the white establishment, Ndlovu and two like-minded black African colleagues have recently threatened resignation from the Association of Southern African Professional Archeologists (ASAPA) to get the organization to recognize the need to take action to transform archaeology (mostly in South Africa, where the great majority of members reside). Subsequently, Ndlovu and his black and white African colleagues have drafted a Transformation Charter to change the way black Africans are trained and advanced.[4] It is revealing to note that change is being promulgated at the insistence and initiative of several black members, two of whom are women. Without their initiative, colonial ways of marginalization—including training black archaeologists to act as clerks rather than perform mainstream jobs—would have likely continued. Subaltern status has been soundly rejected, with hope that at last change will occur.

Eating the young is the active play of power to prevent young people from following opportunities in archaeology. It knows no racial or national boundaries. Ndlovu also provides us with disturbing evidence for manipulation of job opportunities by those holding the purse strings, privileging African archaeologists from neighboring states over locally trained Africans, ironically creating a cadre of foreign black archaeologists at the expense of local talent. Eating the young takes on particularly dramatic characteristics when it plays out in the power politics of archaeology in places such as Mali and Eritrea. For those who have the temerity to disagree with nos ancêtres or a comprador (as in Eritrea), to impinge upon his "territory," or to question the whimsical declarations of ad hoc policy, the path may lead to interrogation by security police and personal harm, with some using the power of the state to enforce their will—potent testimony to the use of power to silence intellectuals (Schmidt, this volume, chapter 6).

Eating the young is an alien concept to most Westerners, who may initially reject the idea that this could be an active force in postcolonial Africa, simply because it contradicts the mentoring practices of higher education in the West. We want to emphasize that the examples cited by McIntosh and others in this volume are reasonable proxies for similar observations around the continent. McIntosh helps us better understand the centrality of the system of barons and nos ancêtres, a two-tiered system of patronage and influence in Francophone Africa that assures that retention of power and agenda setting will remain in the hands of the few barons in France at the

apex of the archaeological networks from whence patronage is dispensed. This is not neocolonialism; nor is it a new development of the post-independence era. It is simply business as usual, with an extraordinary amount of cultural hegemony being exercised by the once metropolitan colony. As McIntosh's exegesis so brilliantly unveils, it is the secondary barons, nos ancêtres—those big men sustained by the French barons—who have replicated the system at a local level and keep competition from young upstarts at a minimum by eating the young. He who survives is he who makes alliances with outside researchers, mostly American and English.

Disenchantment and Identifying Ethical Practice

Disenchantment may be a defining characteristic of the post-colonial era in Africa, across the plethora of different postcolonial experiences. Disenchantment with unrealized economic dreams and disenchantment with political failures and collapse of civil society are everyday uncertainties that are upsetting to confront. Disenchantment with political leadership, with corruption, with autocratic states, with human rights abuses—all of these inform the lives of Africans today, including African archaeologists and Africanists conducting archaeology in Africa (see preface). Among these disenchantments are the slow progress in mediating the profound social and medical problems caused by the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Denbow, Morongwa Mosothwane, and Nonfho Ndobochani, this volume; Karega-Munene, this volume; Segobye, this volume). These problems are such an overwhelming part of daily existence that they interpenetrate consciousness about the world in which archaeology is practiced.

It is our profound discomfort, our disenchantment about these vivid contrasts that often involve the state and local peoples as well as what may be considered ethical practice, argues Walz (this volume), that drives us to confront and try to resolve some of the tensions and contradictions between archaeological practice and the welfare of people with whom we work and live. How is it possible to do archaeology in a community where people are dying every day from the AIDS epidemic? These profound contradictions, these disenchantments have caused colleagues to engage social activism as an integral part of their professional lives—for example, Segobye's employment with an HIV/AIDS intervention NGO, Karega-Munene's involvement with human rights issues in Kenya, and Schmidt's development of a human rights and peace institute in Uganda. How do we reconcile our practice of archaeology with the daily funerals of our collaborators in communities where we work? Where in this process do we assume responsibility—as interactive members of the community—for overall well-being? As Walz importantly observes, decolonizing archaeology and community collaborations are key ingredients in bringing the present into the study of the past (also see Rizvi 2008b).

Walz draws some dramatic examples of where it is impossible *not* to engage the issues gripping the community. When an electoral polling station is situated contiguous to archaeological excavations, the very act of archaeology—with its own contests and tensions in a community where strangers are viewed with deep suspicion and excavation team members are seen as government agents—creates tensions that heighten when open and hostile political parades pass by the site. The tensions that arise between the assigned political identities of the archaeologists and the political contests within the local community ask for a postcolonial archaeology that enters the lives of local people as a way to diminish alterity. There are no universal answers to resolving these tensions; nor do such circumstances allow us to retreat to the protection of "science"—for science as refuge from engaging questions of well-being and social justice is simply another exploitative activity that replicates a colonial posture analogous to mining precious resources at the expense of laborers' health.

The papers in this volume present an alternative view on disenchantment: that such tensions between the social and economic conditions of the community and research agendas of archaeologists must be embraced as an integral part of our postcolonial practice as each individual finds his or her own path. The case study provided by Denbow and his collaborators illuminates the theme of embracing disenchantment. Imagine Denbow's initial surprise when he found a religious assembly using and building structures on the Khubu la Dintša site while he was conducting excavations not far away at the Botsutwe site. Rather than responding that such activities were legal violations or destruction of heritage resources, Denbow embraced the religious assembly as a legitimate presence on the site, recognizing that the worshipers had legitimate needs pertaining to communication with the ancestors, a growing requirement and concern with high rates of HIV/AIDS in the region. Disenchantment with failures to overcome the current AIDS crisis has turned people of Christian sects back to the ancestors for solutions, a phenomenon that oftentimes incorporates ancient places where ancestors are readily engaged. Archaeologists are increasingly encountering such syncretistic movements that connect with archaeologists and their inquiries (see Robertshaw and Kamuhangire 1996 for a Uganda example). Such settings, with their attendant archaeological concerns over the integrity of the record, are now opening the way to understanding long-term use of heritage sites—how heritage sites become places of refuge and longing under times of stress. A postcolonial archaeology embraces such encounters and goes beyond to understand how disenchantment about the uncertainty of the present draws on the stability and continuity of ancestral places.

Karega-Munene, a human rights advocate with training in law, argues in chapter 5 that archaeologists cannot ignore the call to address pressing local and national issues such as civil and political rights, as well as economic, social, and cultural human rights, as long as they are engaged with institutions invested with public education, such as museums. Seeing human rights issues as tightly linked to the study of the past, Karega-Munene argues that local, indigenous institutions such as community museums have the capacity to draw pertinent human rights lessons from the past to provide understandings of contemporary conflicts over human rights. He sees local museums as accessible institutions that may provide basic human rights education on a decentralized basis, drawing from the histories of oppression experienced during the colonial era while drawing parallels to state practices today. This is not a mission that state-supported schools or museums will support or advocate—leading to disenchantment over the failure of the state to exercise this responsibility.

Disenchantment with the exercise of state power against the interests of local communities leaves a long legacy of alienation in Africa, a central theme elicited during our seminar discussions and addressed in several chapters. Segobye (this volume) identifies a deep disenchantment in Botswana with national identities that have been concretized by the state forty years after independence. Cultural groups such as Kamanakao, SPIL, and Re Teng have arisen to counter what they see as Tswana (the ruling group) hegemony. Of particular interest to archaeologists is that these debates have engaged heritage values, specifically histories that have recently been constructed by archaeologists. These cultural and ethnolinguistic reclamation projects reaffirm cultural and linguistic identities that the state resists, creating tensions and adding to local disenchantment. As agents that actively promulgate alternative histories, archaeologists are drawn into these cultural disputes and may either try to play a mediating role or be identified by the state as underwriting discontent.

In her investigation of oral traditions among the Xhosa who live near the Middledrift Game Reserve in South Africa, Bugarin found deep, decades-old disenchantment with colonial land-grabbing and the South African state's appropriation of land, as well as more recent treatment of

Xhosa who had ancestral ties to land within the reserve. Long silenced, these subaltern accounts surfaced in the practice of a postcolonial archaeology that valorizes local renderings of history in a setting where fear of reprisal is now diminished.

As the newest state in Africa, Eritrea entered its post-liberation phase with high expectations that local communities would experience the self-rule that had been implemented as part of the revolutionary reform process. However, this development was very short-lived, and not long after independence, the state erased local governance reforms and appropriated most power in a Mao-like process in which decision making became top-down and local communities played a passive role of endorsement. The disenchantment issuing from this experience is palpable today in Eritrea. Such policy creates extraordinary tensions for a postcolonial archaeology committed to collaboration with local communities. Multiple disenchantments unfold when archaeologists are forced by the state and its agents *not to collaborate* with local communities, thus preventing communities from learning how to exercise power over the management of nearby heritage resources. Disenchantment arises from multiple sources: the community not consulted about or included in the archaeology, the archaeologist who is alienated by such constraints and perhaps by the censorship of colleagues who do not comprehend the power of state agents to manipulate archaeology, and a state that views archaeological engagement in the proximity of local communities as disruptive if not subversive to its development agendas.

These layered disenchantments provide several refractive insights into the role of the totalitarian state in Africa. While Eritrea is at the far end of the spectrum in its use of state power against the interests of heritage communities and archaeologists, it is by no means an isolated example. Walz unveils a vivid case of local community disenchantment with the state over the failure of Tanzanian state agencies to use their authority and power to stop the purposeful destruction of an important historic building in Pangani identified as a former slave depot. Local people, keenly aware of the building's important role as a trope for oppression by Arab slavers—precursors to colonial oppressors—express considerable discontent over the state's refusal to mediate local tensions between descendants of former slaves and the Omani descendants of former slavers, who are eager to see the structure destroyed. Archaeologists in postcolonial Africa daily confront the failure of the state to intervene in issues of great importance for local identity. Disengagement from such conflicts in which heritage plays a central role signals alienation from local interests, undermining trust and collaboration, while engagement aligns an archaeologist against state interests, a condition that may lead to termination of research, harassment, or other more serious difficulties, depending on how the state agents perceive such opposition.

Disenchantment in African archaeology will continue as long as barons set the agendas, nos ancêtres patronage networks remain in place, the state puts its interests before history and the people, and individual potentials are crushed. Deprivation of career potential mimics deprivation in medical attention in the villages; both take lives from productive activity. This point of tension, where different disenchantments intersect, is critical space for negotiation of solutions to our dilemma as anthropologists living in different cultures, receiving generous hospitality during times of stress and trauma.

In our seminar discussions, there was a plural view of archaeological responsibilities, either moral or intellectual, in the modern world. There were those who saw these engagements as inevitable and compelling (Denbow et al.; Walz) and those who felt that we should avoid moralizing and get on with doing archaeology without fanfare, in a way that is responsible to local communities (Holl). This latter perspective openly accepts that archaeologists will want to engage local communities but that they normally do not self-consciously discuss it. Indeed, Holl's point makes us realize that we rarely hear about much of what occurs. This is a problem

in the view of the symposium participants, who believe we need to know how the practice of archaeology in Africa is being changed. Key indices of transformation in our practice need to be brought out into open light and discussed. When colleagues learn of the eating of the young, they are often repulsed, yet such reactions should not inhibit us from a complete understanding of the power relationships that prevent the most talented, the most committed young African archaeologists from advancing. Holl helps us better understand how important it is in the Francophone world to find an official "baron" as a sponsor. Rejected by a primary baron, he survived because another "noble" in the hierarchy was willing to provide him protection and solace. Without "noble" assistance, he too may have been eaten young.

As a reprise to this discussion, we come to an important understanding of postcolonial archaeology in Africa when we actively engage the disenchantment that penetrates into the fabric of history and the way it is made and propagated, especially when the state muffles and even knowingly destroys the past or when a powerful local interest group erases history to maintain its prestige in the local community. The role of the state in people's lives—how justly they are treated and allowed to reach their potentials—appears to have its corollary in how the state regards and treats heritage. When there is a streak of arbitrariness, a tendency toward centrism and its corrupting access to resources, then heritage is only another domain to be colonized, as in Eritrea or Nigeria.

Disenchantment as an intellectual posture—a questioning of extant explanations for the role of archaeology in African life today—has become an integral part of practicing archaeology in Africa. It is an inescapable part of our practice and hence a necessary point of contemplation and the search for resolution.

Eliciting and Valorizing Subaltern Voices

One of the most important schools of thought to arise in postcolonial studies is subaltern studies—in which the voices of the suppressed and marginalized are rediscovered, revitalized, and given free expression. When the voices of the oppressed and marginalized are appropriated by anthropologists or archaeologists, then we simply perpetuate a system of colonial domination. For example, when local testimonies are represented in a generic, homogenized form, the voice of each informant is silenced. For years this was common practice in anthropology, with the use of anonymity justified as protection of informant welfare, especially when sensitive or politically volatile subjects were discussed. The universal application of such principles has done a great disservice to the identity of individuals and local groups with alternative histories. Oftentimes, local historians want to be identified, no matter how volatile the subject. The histories are theirs, and they want to be identified as those who hold such knowledge.

Conferral of ownership, then, is central to the valorization of the subaltern. Edward Said (1979:293) observes that "it is always better to let them speak for themselves, to represent themselves (even though underlying this fiction stands Marx's phrase…for Louis Napoleon: 'They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented')." Recognizing self-representation as a fiction leads to the conundrum posed by Spivak (1988), who questions how elite academics can speak on behalf of the subaltern while also recognizing that "ignoring the role of subalterns continues the imperialist project silencing the oppressed and marginalized of history" (Liebmann 2008:19).

Liebmann's analysis of this conundrum provides a helpful focus *away* from texts that were produced by colonial elites, silencing subaltern accounts. He points to the material record as retaining traces of all peoples—elites and marginalized groups—and thus opening space for

archaeologists to find the subaltern. He admits that Spivak's conundrum still prevails and warns that "claiming to speak for—rather than about—subaltern groups in the past (or present) runs the risk of perpetuating colonial representations" (Liebmann 2008:18). In South Africa, Martin Hall (e.g., 1999b) has been very effective in speaking *about* subalterns, using the material remains of those who were enslaved by colonials. Yet missing from these discourses is recognition that oral accounts—at least for Africa—make up a major corpus of subaltern accounts of interest to archaeologists. The vital issue here for African archaeology and archaeology in many other world regions is to listen to and relate the subaltern voice accurately, fully acknowledging ownership of texts pertaining to history and culture—a process altogether different from *representing* or speaking *about* the subaltern.

How can postcolonial archaeology provide an opportunity for subaltern voices—those who provide a dissonant way of seeing the past, outside of the "official" histories? The most efficacious method is for members of communities to provide their own ways of seeing and representing their experiences and beliefs—in the form of texts that are not truncated, abbreviated, edited, or regurgitated by outside investigators but faithfully and meticulously represented in all their complexities.

Multivocality and the Subaltern—Identifying Ways to Deconstruct Colonial Practice

One of the common tropes in archaeological discourse these days is the use of "multivocality." Now a virtual signature of post-processual and postcolonial thought in archaeology, the multivocality trope often has little relationship to the idea of multiple voices. Instead, the trope bundles together as multivocal a host of different sources—the materiality of archaeology, evidence from ethnoarchaeology, ecological evidence, and so on. The power of the trope is that it transforms these nonvocal and silent sources into multiple voices—all converging to provide a more powerful interpretative position. Part of the metaphorical tension that arises from this exercise resides in our awareness that these sources obviously cannot vocalize. They are dead, passive, and inarticulate. Rather, it is the archaeologist who speaks for each source of evidence, fashioning multiple voices from several strokes of one pen. Multivocality has thus grown into a rhetorical trope empty of meaning and mostly lacking agency other than the agency of the archaeologist. These trends, though, have recently been checked by a series of important papers that explore how multiple stakeholders with different interpretative positions fit into an interpretative archaeological dialogue (Habu, Fawcett, and Matsunaga 2008 [e.g., Atalay 2008; Blakey 2008; Joyce 2008]).

One of the issues that has steadily grown in postcolonial archaeology in Africa is the tension between this kind of rhetorical claim and the presence of multiple (sometimes hundreds of) local voices articulating histories that sometimes differ from those of interest to the archaeologist or the dominant metanarratives of a region. African archaeology is particularly sensitive to the value of oral traditions and other oral literature and history, and, as Segobye brings out in her chapter, archaeologists in Africa have had a long record of deep engagement with local communities through studying and learning about their oral literature, their cosmologies, and their technical knowledge systems—decades before community engagement became a catchphrase of contemporary postcolonial archaeology. These engagements, often at a time and residential scale far in excess of contact with "locals"—Meskell's (2005) isolation of another widely misused trope—result in mutual long-term learning (e.g., David 1992, 1998; Kusimba 1996a, 1999b, 2004; Schmidt 1978, 1997, 2006; Stahl 2001, 2004). A significant part of our intellectual tradition,

this perspective is depreciated, however, by continued failures to record adequately and to represent alternative narratives, as well as to accept indigenous ownership of history—what should be among our central concerns in postcolonial African archaeology. We fail to listen to narratives when a majority of investigators fail to speak and understand local languages yet present oral narratives as if they had complete command over meaning and context of the narratives. To lack fluency in local languages forty-five to fifty years after the independence of most African peoples simply reifies the colonial modus operandi—a distancing that maintains alterity and silences most of the meanings of local narratives.

Multivocality is also silenced when multiple testimonies—many with important differences—are summarized or when multiple oral traditions are reduced to the representation "oral traditions say…": a process that filters out contradictions and contestations to arrive at comfortable syntheses. This form of truncation, cutting out the critical variations of different historical testimonies, leaves a skeletal narrative that erases dispute and the texture of history. Multiple voices are reduced to a single narrative, bland and meaningless, a quintessentially colonial rejection of complicated disputes.

In some cases, multiple, differing oral traditions are set aside as too difficult to sort out, perhaps taking years of close study and comparison, an expected level of complexity for thick and contentious testimonies. But sort them out we must, looking at each variation and contradiction as being linked to religious, economic, and social identity over time among many different social groups. This is hard work on top of everything else the archaeologist has to do, but simultaneously it is at the heart of listening to, accurately transcribing, and privileging subaltern narratives that remain embedded in turgid complexity, or that are rendered mute by homogenous representations, or that are kept anonymous—with the owners unidentified and powerless. All of these are forms of appropriation that our postcolonial practice addresses in this volume.

A number of contributors to the seminar (for example, Bugarin, Denbow and colleagues, Kusimba, and Walz) draw extensively on oral traditions in their study of local histories.[5] What sets these discussions apart from the examples cited earlier is their meticulous treatment of collaborators—careful attention to full documentation of the text, full recording of the name of the collaborating local historian, and details on time and place—meeting the needs of local intellectual ownership as well as canons of historical documentation. Claims to multivocality without such standards end up as causalities to rhetorical practices that appropriate and erase local historical knowledge—uncomfortably parallel to colonial treatments of local knowledge.

Bugarin's treatment of Xhosa collaborators during her research in the Middledrift Game Reserve in the Eastern Cape of South Africa carefully attributes important local observations "about park management and the history of injustices due to colonialism and the apartheid years" (Bugarin, this volume). These testimonies—by virtue of their careful reproduction—capture dramatic language, for example, about how the British took land without asking for it and how, more recently, officials erected boundaries and at gunpoint demanded that people relocate to areas beyond their borders. Local Xhosa were no longer allowed to graze their animals in these areas, access sacred sites, or visit the burial grounds of their ancestors. Some were shot and others were beaten. These were the stories that Bugarin's collaborators wanted heard, and they made transparent their desire to use her to inform the world about what they consider to be inhumane policies implemented by the game reserve. Submerged subaltern texts until the end of the apartheid era, these testimonies have now emerged to permit a more nuanced, complex history of land use and identity to be fabricated—truly multivocal expression.

The complete documentation of local historical knowledge is an important but critical step in diminishing the "othering" of African collaborators. Walz's treatment of a wide variety of local

historical representations in northeastern Tanzania illustrates the power of fully attributed testimonies. His documentation of local collaborators' tales about snake myths and their association with highly contested places linked to natural disasters and cultural disasters (the coming of Europeans) captures a part of Tanzanian history missed by other prominent investigators who have worked in the same region. Not only does Walz's rendering of these oral traditions capture important subaltern histories, but he also privileges these emergent stories so that their historicity may be understood. Also, his research into the highly contested history of the Pangani slave depot touches on a highly volatile dispute—which in the past anthropologists would normally have used as justification to keep the identity of informants protected, thus avoiding placing them in jeopardy when their testimonies conflicted with other community sensibilities. Yet in Pangani, hidden attribution does not fit the historical discourse, which is an open part of a community debate—including fabrications and misrepresentations—that each side wants to be more widely known. Full attribution provides yet another way for us to assess political alliances and which individuals identify with different factions—essential knowledge if the historical fabric of a community is to be understood according to different social interests.

Multivocal oral representations, however, are sometimes overwhelmed by widely acclaimed fabrications that push local authentic accounts into subaltern positions. Bugarin in her chapter assesses the impact of Alex Haley's account of Kunta Kinte in *R00ts* and finds that Haley's fabrications have become a strong tourist magnet in The Gambia. Local festivals have even sprung up to further valorize and economically exploit the fiction of Kunta Kinte among visiting African Americans. She shows how this discredited history and all of its ancillary local fictions parallel the development of the Fort James slave depot at the mouth of the Gambia River on James Island as part of a larger international and national tourist enterprise—a neocolonial project propagated by UNESCO. The upshot is local communities that are disenfranchised from economic opportunities and alienated from their own histories—a deep source of disenchantment that allows us to understand that the manipulation of dominant narratives (be they serious distortions or outright lies) has changed little since colonial times. Bugarin importantly observes that archaeologists may play an important role in working with local griots to recover these now subaltern histories, thus ensuring that "newly cast hegemonic representations—themselves arising out of the colonial experience of oppression and poverty"—will not prevail.

With these postcolonial perspectives in mind, Kusimba's research into the slave trade in eastern Kenya takes on much greater vividness because of his collaborators' stories about places of refuge and ways people avoided detection during nineteenth-century slave raiding. As well, in a landscape that has been represented in colonial literature as culturally barren and physically inhospitable (Schmidt and Walz 2007), the oral texts provided by various ethnic groups show a widespread cooperative utilization of the *nyika* landscape and its eventual abandonment because of predatory slaving organized from the coast. This nuanced historical fabric of interethnic cooperation, when juxtaposed to today's continued reverence for sacred places on that same landscape, contradicts and deconstructs colonial and immediate post-independence historical discourses that deny local identities with the nyika, including any ties to places where sacred ancestors reside.

Kusimba's collaborators capture the trickery used by Arab slave traders and the direct impacts of slaving on local populations around Kasigau in southeastern Kenya. These histories fit closely with archaeological observations about the construction, use, and abandonment of dry-walled structures documented in remote rock shelters. These are extant social memories that capture profound bitterness about a nineteenth-century history that deeply informs ethnic relations in today's Kenya—an important intersection between postcolonial practice in the present and a revitalized past.

Yet other treatments privilege a genuinely multivocal approach, but within the professional community of archaeologists. Denbow's incorporation of student voices provides important insights and different angles of view into interpretative questions pertaining to excavations and local people. The title of his paper is a moving commentary from a student who exclaims, when she discovers that local people defy categorization into any one ethnic group, "Everybody here is all mixed up." Denbow then effectively plays off this statement, using the local ethnic stew as a metaphor for the possible intermixing and cultural hybridity of different peoples during antiquity. Multivocality used in this way becomes a powerful tool illustrating the dangers of oversimplifying the present and the past in Botswana.

The Museum in the African Postcolony

Some of the most visible and vexing cultural anomalies in postcolonial Africa are expressions of the colonial mind played out in national museums (e.g., Fogelman 2008 for Ghana), where there is still an overpowering tendency to objectify human subjects through the display of ethnographic items that are taken-for-granted tropes for various ethnic groups. Even more disquieting is the monolithic, unchanging way in which colonial-era exhibits are maintained, faded labels and all, without questions being asked about whether the exhibits fit the needs of the masses now that the colonial elite are gone or much diminished—all of which is testimony that museums are institutional means by which the grammar of colonial power continues its expression (Meskell 1998). The National Museums of Kenya (NMK), an otherwise highly developed institution in the spectrum of African museums, illustrates the static, unquestioning way in which colonial categories rule representation during the post-colonial period. As they move into much expanded and refurbished quarters, the staff planning exhibits remain focused on moving the old exhibits —not rethinking and reworking the entire sweep of colonial representations in that museum. This stasis, this absence of deconstruction of the colonial project in representation, creates a very real problem for local groups that are imagining new ways of representing their pasts.

In his chapter, Karega-Munene historicizes the NMK by examining its past and current clientele—always a white elite—once the colonial settler class and now white businesspeople and tourists. The NMK traces its origins and identity to key white settlers, and today it diminishes Kenyan history to present an idealized, white view of Africa. The museum has never formally acknowledged the Mau Mau revolution as the freedom-fighting movement that it was, silencing it as an apparently uncomfortable history. Only when Richard Leakey was director of the NMK did some minor mention of Mau Mau appear on the museum walls—random photographs of Mau Mau figures and events that were thumbtacked to walls in the temporary exhibition hall without labels or any identification, further mystifying violent colonial political engagement with African peoples.[6] Karega-Munene's treatment makes us aware of the significant need for deconstructing the colonial African museum today. How might this be done, what with the state apparatus as well as deep colonial thinking ensuring its continuity? He believes that the political inertia and colonial mentality that rule the NMK will not breed sufficient resistance to allow a postcolonial trajectory toward significant change. Local museums have already seized the initiative from the NMK, and they offer the best hope for future representations that are decolonized and responsive to local community needs. He points to a local museum in western Kenya that has highlighted local heroes—Mau Mau fighters from the neighborhood—who feature brightly and broadly in history exhibits. This local valorization of local resistance history holds important lessons for postcolonial archaeologists who are also engaged in projects to find and open local subaltern histories.

Schmidt's analyses of the National Museum of Eritrea (NME) adopts the view of an outsider in an institution fabricated during the euphoria of the immediate post-independence period. Created as a museum that celebrated the liberation struggle against Ethiopia, the NME developed its mission as a nationalist project, with ex-fighters developing exhibits of the famous innovative war matériel fabricated during the liberation struggle—a distinctive bricolage. These stunning insights into the lives of liberation *bricoleurs*, however, were juxtaposed to random ethnographic items that curiously, and perhaps presciently, (re)presented each of the nine ethnic groups within jail cells of a former colonial prison on the grounds of the former governor's palace. As an institution created to valorize and celebrate the liberation struggle, the NME was naturally focused on the immediate past—with idealized, romantic paintings produced by the ex-fighters as the centerpiece, along with very engaging items innovated for the war effort in the field. The archaeological exhibits, however, conveyed a sense of an ancient past that was both confusing and chaotic. One of the most compelling revolutionary war museums in the world during its short life (1992–1997), the NME was abruptly displaced from its quarters in the former governor's (later imperial) palace in downtown Asmara. An ideal setting from which to examine the colonial experience, the palace grounds soon became a presidential residence—co-opted by a leader who was on the rise from military liberator to dictator.

Lacking a colonial museum legacy afflicting most African national museums, the ex-fighters of the NME fabricated their nationalistic experiment from their personal experiences. The initiative crashed when the ex-fighters responsible for its organization lost control over the military exhibits. The most potent part of the museum remained intimately associated with the head of state—a now private domain that he keeps secret—its liberation identities blatantly contradicting his totalitarian rule. The centrist appropriation of national liberation icons in Eritrea is unparalleled in post-colonial Africa—not even serving the interests of a few elite as was the case in colonial times in much of Africa. The alienation of ex-fighters from the material culture that defined their identity, however, has had other implications. It has stiffened their resolve not to bend to other attempts to integrate them into a university-led educational and research museum, and it has made them determined to control all cultural agendas—regardless of negative outcomes and potential harm.

The fall from liberation philosophy to totalitarian ways is unfortunately no stranger to Africa. In Eritrea, however, any activism aimed at reclaiming local initiative in managing local museums, such as the Sembel archaeological site museum, may be met with outright repression and severe sanctions, possibly death by wasting away in a remote prison. Such circumstances make us examine praxis though another lens—one that must necessarily first take into account the welfare of colleagues and students who have shared an activist commitment.

Rowlands in his chapter leads us to a different understanding of imaginings and opportunities in palace museums in the Grassfields of Cameroon. His interests lie in understanding the curation of objects, materials, and knowledge in museums, archives, and even personal collections. He sees curation as materializing pasts or making them available for possession or ownership—something that might occur through ritual processes or though formal registration into a museum inventory. His emphasis on embodied ritual process as instrumental in infusing meaning is a perspective that depreciates the static representations of colonial museums while valorizing indigenous social processes through the "official" museums owned and operated by traditional central authorities—the Fons, or kings.

Acknowledging that museum technologies play a key role in the formation of national and local identities, Rowlands identifies a number of intersecting interests between the ritualized displays of museums located in Fons' palaces and more universal and globalized display technolo-

gies. He documents how external, transnational, and global organizations such as UNESCO set a global agenda for museum technologies that is readily appropriated "into existing local practices of managing relations between persons and things" (Rowlands, this volume). Local acceptance of support from an Italian NGO for the construction of four palace museums, replete with training and databases, sets the scene for how global forces are married to local needs and sensibilities. Colonial categories entered this dynamic syncretism when a local art historian selected all the pieces that he considered authentic traditional objects pertinent to marriage, law, rituals, funerals, and so on. Of great interest is how the Fons use the power of the museums to privilege royal histories and simultaneously subvert subaltern histories, particularly social memories of succession disputes.

Charged with the appropriation of outside objects for display and use, the Fons' appropriation of a Western museum for display creates an "uncanny" discomfort for a viewer who readily recognizes but cannot reconcile a conventional Western display of objects in that setting. Rowlands's analysis makes diaphanous such tensions, letting us see how globalization is working its changes within a framework of local needs. Thus a postcolonial analysis—like a colorful and intricately painted shadow puppet suddenly ripped from behind its screen—shows brilliantly the intimate connections of colonial and postcolonial relations between the state (and international entities endorsed by the state) and traditional kingdoms.

Conclusion

One seminar participant remarked after a long day of deliberations: "It is astounding how archaeologists moved into the post-colonial period with so little reflection on how much colonial baggage they were carrying in their books, packs, and heads." This comment—with its reflexive implications for change—provides a way into the future, a way to find postcolonial theory as a relevant undertaking in making alternative histories freed from the essentialized historical constructions of the colony. It also provides hope that we will no longer distance ourselves, as did earlier anthropologists, from the people with whom we work, too long cast as the Other. Rather, we embrace the problems and issues faced by our local collaborators, seeking to ensure their ownership of histories as well as an enhanced capacity to meet the challenges of a difficult world in which deprivation of human rights, food, shelter, and security are severe daily problems. Walz's concluding observation compels us to engage in critical self-examination: as long as we are either unable or unwilling to discuss the pasts we come to know by living in traumatized communities, our discontent will endure. Only when we embrace these differences by making them part of our own present and what we write about the past, collapsing differences and distance, will we begin to obviate our discontent and that of the people with whom we collaborate. What better reasons could there be for practicing a postcolonial African archaeology?

Notes

1. For example, Ndlovu's subaltern status derives from his being in a very small minority of black archaeology graduates in South Africa. As one of a handful of black graduates in archaeology during the post-independence period of South Africa, Ndlovu continues to struggle for legitimacy, for a voice in South Africa, where ridicule, shunning, dirty rumors, and a still vital apartheid structure in archaeology all work to silence him and keep him marginalized. At a different level of complexity, Chami's high visibility as a vital African archaeologist among colleagues in the developing world is simultaneously paralleled by his subaltern position vis-à-vis archaeologists in the Western world, where his work is denounced, shunned, and ridiculed in public meetings, while he is labeled with terms meant to discredit his

legitimacy. Bugarin's subaltern condition arises because as an Asian woman of color, she fits into still deep-seated categories that govern who has the authority to speak on behalf of blacks in South Africa—a role normally appropriated by white South Africans. Subaltern status also accrues for those African scholars who elect to join the Western academy (Holl and Kusimba). Witness the fact that of all the African archaeologists currently holding academic positions in the United States, none have exclusive appointments in a department of anthropology. Rather, all have appointments or joint appointment on the periphery of mainstream archaeology—in African American studies programs, museums, and other such ancillary areas. There are multiple means by which "othering" continues to be practiced. Being cast into a subaltern role is not a phenomenon affecting only minorities. Anyone who poses serious challenges to dominant metanarratives—essentialized thinking that gained currency during the colonial era and sometimes in the post-colonial period—should be prepared to enter the ranks of the subaltern.

2. Liebmann (2008) makes the helpful suggestion, which we follow, that the period after colonialism be referenced by the use of a hyphen, thus *post-colonial*. We here use a variety of other references, among them *post-independence* and *post-liberation*. Though Liebmann makes this important distinction—incorporated here—an editorial error during production converted all *post-colonial* references in his text to *postcolonial*.

3. While we credit R. McIntosh with coining this phrase, the concept is related to what Mbembe (1992:10) identifies as zombification in the postcolony, a process that "does not increase either the depth of people's subordination or their levels of resistance; it simply produces a situation of disempowerment (impouvoir) for both the ruled and the rulers." Eating the young as a metaphor captures the devouring of vitality and the future, much like the zombie metaphor with its image of a reanimated corpse that "feeds upon (and feeds to others) applause, flattery, lies" (11), certainly a condition that also infects those who eat the young in the service of personal interests, state interests, or baronial interests.

4. Ndlovu and his black colleagues initially made a detailed presentation to the ASAPA Council in late 2007, with a follow-up meeting to formulate a Transformation Task Team to draft a Transformation Charter, a manifesto calling for the ASAPA to support better training and job placement for black South African archaeologists. Chaired by Ndlovu and drawing on both black and white ASAPA members to draft the charter, the ASAPA Council participated in the drafting process while calling on members to contribute ideas for inclusion in the charter. First vetted in a special workshop held in March 2008, the Transformation Charter was then presented in a special transformation session during the General Business Meeting, where it was adopted unanimously (Ndukuyakhe Ndlovu, personal communication, 2008).

5. This is a common practice when historians use oral texts to write about Africa (e.g., Katoke 1975; Wilks 1975; see Vansina 1985:53–67 for protocols). Its use in African archaeology is rare at best, however. More recently and quite exceptionally, Joost Fontein's (2006) documentation of multiple voices that related disenchantment and downright anger (his term) over previous representations about Great Zimbabwe illustrates the level of documentation we advocate here, privileging testimonies, now texts, with proper attributions and context. The first systematic practice in African archaeology was attribution of informant testimony in Buhaya during oral tradition inquiries there between 1969 and 1984 (Schmidt 1978, 1983, 2006). All collaborators were identified by name, place, and date, along with verbatim texts of their testimonies. Local historians, when asked about being recognized by name, usually indicated that they wanted their names published. Their attitudes ranged from mild agreement to strong insistence that they be made part of the official record in keeping with their status as keepers of the past.

6. It follows that Richard Leakey might take an interest—even in this rather oblique manner—in the Mau Mau, as his father, Louis Leakey, was a central figure in intelligence gathering and the suppression of Mau Mau.

