



Using Archaeology to Remake History in Africa

PETER R. SCHMIDT

A major intellectual concern of African as well as some Africanist scholars since about 1965 has been how to liberate historical knowledge in Africa from the paradigmatic constraints of European historiography and the colonial library (Mudimbe 1988). Attempts have been made to develop new avenues of inquiry, new sources of historical evidence, and new theoretical perspectives. Each of these developments, beginning with an emphasis on African oral traditions and oral history and more recently finding expression in Marxist critiques of African history, has led to important new ways of constructing the African past. Each in its own way, nonetheless, is constrained by theoretical or analytical frameworks that arise out of European epistemologies or that remain bounded by evidence contained within the colonial library.

A prominent paradox in African historical studies is that archaeology's potential for developing alternative histories has not been fully realized. Because most of ancient African history is accessible only through archaeological approaches, there is compelling reason to refocus attention on archaeological constructions of the past as a means to build an independent, authentic, and distinctly African history. At the same time, archaeology is a distinctly Western activity. Its governing paradigms and epistemologies often conflict with African historical needs, views of the past, and ways of structuring time and space. Thus the paradox unfolds: a repertoire of techniques and approaches that promise significant ways of recuperating African pasts heretofore obscured is accompanied by theoretical assumptions that are often out of tune with African sensibilities, needs, and structures. One goal of this chapter is to explore the role

archaeology might play in developing alternative histories in Africa and, at the same time, to examine the range of constraints that so far have inhibited this development.

Achieving this goal entails an analysis of the tensions between Western academic archaeology and African academics and folk who both live and make their histories. Is a resolution of the paradox possible? Can African scholars transform archaeological methods to fit their own theoretical positions? Is it possible to chart new pathways along which such developments could occur, and if so, in what domains of inquiry might these new pathways be found? Does Western scholarship have the capacity to listen to and learn from such African departures?

These concerns arise out of my more than two decades of extensive archaeological research and teaching in Africa, primarily in Tanzania but also in Gabon and Cameroon (fig. 6.1). As an American academic, I brought to my first African research in the late 1960s a grounding in history as well as training in the “new” archeology with its logical positivism and regional approach. Although these were my initial intellectual predispositions, my work with oral traditions, indigenous cosmologies, and symbolic systems in Africa profoundly affected my scientific attitude from the beginning of my first fieldwork experience. These experiences inevitably transformed my thinking, taking me beyond processual and postprocessual concepts and leading me naturally to an “angle of vision” from which I aim to deconstruct “taken-for-granted” interpretations of the African past. My approach emphasizes the importance of African contexts and distinctive values of time and space in negotiating interpretations of the African past while it also searches for archaeological signposts that point to common paths of experience—that is, it remains an anthropology concerned with cross-cultural patterns.

It is also important to ask how African and Africanist archaeologists might come together in the development of an archaeology that meets scientific standards yet also conjoins with African values, knowledge, and concepts of time. This essay will emphasize practice and agency as well as discuss some of the problems practitioners of archaeology have confronted in Africa during the post-independence period. Although some imperial and colonial practices of archaeology have been discussed by others (Posnansky 1982; Robertshaw 1990; Trigger 1984, 1990), the issues are worth reexamining inasmuch as African archaeology continues to accept colonial relationships and many Africans and Africanists continue to think and practice in colonial paradigms.

My discussion also includes a short history illustrating how the potential for alternative histories through archaeological agency has been



Figure 6.1. Africa. The enlarged area shows regions discussed in chapter 6.

impeded by colonial underdevelopment, financial constraints, and ideological debates. And I examine other, more profound contradictions: the domination of archaeology by history, archaeology's use and abuse in nationalist enterprises, and archaeology's potential to overcome interpretations arising out of the colonial library—yet its suppression, in one case, by a radical group of historians. Because my knowledge of these dynamics is based on direct experience in eastern Africa, my analysis focuses mostly on that region. The struggle to establish archaeology in Tanzania is one example that illustrates well the tensions among varying interests in a developing African country, but it also highlights the considerable successes that have been achieved in making alternative histories from archaeology. I discuss several of these successes, ending with what I see as an arena for possible rapprochement between Western and African archaeologists.

Defining the Problem

The Nigerian literary theorist Abiola Irele has refocused attention on the dilemma facing historical and other scholarship in Africa today: how to find independent expression while working with the Western scholastic tradition (Irele 1991). He speaks of an ideological imperative within the context of "objectivity." The search for an independent voice in Africa that makes important contributions to the modern world must develop, he reasons, from "the necessity to take charge of the knowledge that has been produced and continues to be produced on and about our continent, to take charge of this knowledge in [an] autonomous discourse" that contributes to the continent and to the world (Irele 1991:58). Irele's recent thinking on this issue acknowledges a debt to earlier African historians whose work on indigenous history and institutions repudiated the colonial thesis (1991:59). This process of refutation, nonetheless, was often conducted within the frame of the colonial experiment. Although the counterdiscourse restricts the vision of a truly authentic African voice, Irele sees in it a positive quality: when the West functions as subtext, the process of refutation creates a collective introspection that fulfills the conditions of historical reflection (Irele 1991:62).

One impediment to the development of an independent African historical and archaeological science is the economic marginality of African scholarship in the whole of intellectual and scientific inquiry in the world today. Irele (1991:64) sees this sort of marginality as characterized by a dependence on the Western frame of inquiry and on a sci-

entific protocol determined by the Western tradition. But the roots of this marginality and dependence are profoundly related to the absence of sufficient wealth for the production of *African* knowledge and the dissemination of that knowledge throughout the world. More profoundly, until conditions change, African historical scholarship will remain dependent upon validation by the Western academy for its legitimacy. This issue is magnified in the case of archaeology, a form of inquiry that demands a significant material base capable of sustaining multidisciplinary research and publication.

The issue of economic dependency in the practice of archaeology in Africa is central to the questions addressed in this chapter. That economic conditions will change sufficiently to support a flourishing African scholarship and dissemination of knowledge is highly improbable in the near future. What alternatives arise in the face of this improbability? One step, Irele suggests, is to move toward full collaboration between Western and African scholars, a collaboration reaching beyond the role of the African as native informant. The African scholar, precisely because he or she is so familiar with Western theory and concepts, is uniquely placed to influence the reconfiguration of theory.

Before action can accompany this idealized program, we must overcome more fundamental and debilitating conditions of dependence and absence of equity in African archaeological inquiry. Such conditions of dependence are largely economic but are also manifested in a derivative psychological disposition arising out of a long tradition of Western scientific dominance that goes unacknowledged. Most archaeological research in Africa remains dependent upon funding from foreign investigators and sources. This legacy is part of a colonial syndrome well illustrated by the major role played by outside funding in the Leakeys' "early man" investigations.

The Leakey enterprise at Olduvai Gorge demands reflection. First, the impact and influence of generous funding on research at Olduvai brought results that altered remarkably the very structure of thought about the origins of humans. Money applied to science produced historical knowledge of enormous importance, but under conditions of some mystification for African populations.

The important and highly visible Leakey investigations assured the dominance of colonial archaeology in postcolonial eastern African and served as a powerful model of how archaeology should be funded for much of the continent, a model that influenced how African governments treated and viewed archaeology in subsequent decades. Archaeology became the preserve of large, European-dominated expeditions

funded from abroad, replete with a confusing array of exotic names for new finds. While some expeditions created a new view that Africa was the womb of humankind and new governments scrambled to identify the discoveries with their nationalist agendas, the project itself remained distinctly alien to most Africans.

Archaeology came to be regarded by the African elite as an endeavor requiring the participation and usually the leadership of foreign institutions. The identification of archaeology with both nationalist agendas and colonial institutions created a peculiar kind of continuity in the status of archaeology from the colonial era to the postcolonial. This model also gave rise to the notion that African governments need not invest in constructing pasts, because funding was available from other sources. Dependence on external funding came to be accepted as natural, a condition that assured low priority to governmental funding of studies of the ancient past, especially in the face of other growing development concerns. Internal priorities such as health and agriculture have continually required heavy investment, leaving little money for museums in many African countries. Meanwhile, international economic crises, especially the impact of oil prices, have ravaged African economies (Musonda 1990). The tradition of foreign research money, combined with internal economic failures (many of which were also related to mismanagement of centrally controlled economies), has created a milieu of dependency that subjugates African initiative.

National versus Ethnic Tensions: The Politics of Archaeology

While the current distribution of resources militates against the development of an independent African archaeological voice, archaeology's methodological focus itself creates tensions that sometimes obscure its historical potential. This process can be seen clearly in South Africa, where the political implications of archaeological research provide a cautionary tale, ironically, for other regions of sub-Saharan Africa. One reason archaeology has not been high on the agendas of many African governments and their political parties is that it has not been seen as compatible with a nationalist program or with a particular political ideology.

In South Africa, archaeology has presented powerful but poorly disseminated contradictions to apartheid-related claims that Africans had not settled much of the southern part of the continent long before Boer settlement (Hall 1990). Archaeological documentation of settled ways of life by Bantu-speaking peoples in the first half of the first millennium A.D. has defeated part of the Afrikaner ideology that underpinned

claims to land and superiority. Archaeology's social impact, however, has been partially offset by its application among specific ethnic groups, further differentiating ancient as well as recent histories and making each ethnic group easier to distinguish on cultural and historical grounds. This process of separation and differentiation was easily exploited by the apartheid state: it fit neatly with the divide-and-rule policy of apartheid and the creation of homelands for each ethnic group. Martin Hall (1984a, 1990) has directed attention to some of the practices of white archaeologists in South Africa, such as the use of a culture-area approach (see Maggs 1976; Mason 1986), that inadvertently contributed to and amplified a political policy of ethnic separation. The absence of self-consciousness among otherwise well-intended, liberal white archaeologists in South Africa also led to serious logical errors easily exploited by the apartheid state. For example, the projection of contemporary and historic ethnographic configurations onto archaeologically determined segments of the past creates a false picture of an unchanging, static past, forming an illusion of primitive continuity (Hall 1984a; Schmidt 1983a).

Some African countries, such as Tanzania, have held a conscious policy of national integration based on common history and language. Tanzania's Swahilization policy has been a remarkably successful unifying device. Tanzania has also stressed its recent nationalist history—the common fight against colonialism and the growth and success of the first nationalist political party. This is a history that all peoples of the country have in common. It is easy to understand that, in the search for commonality and national unity, any history focusing on regions and idealizing ethnic accomplishments could be perceived as a threat to nationalist goals.

One expression of such concerns can be read in the removal of ethnically oriented museum displays in Tanzania's national museum during the early 1970s (Bertram Mapunda, personal communication 1992). Ethnic emphasis in the context of a national museum was seen as contrary to the nationalist (and socialist) project. Such a strict interpretation can easily set up political tensions with archaeological research that focuses on particular regions to build regional culture histories. The construction of culture histories for previously unresearched areas and the increasing use of ethnoarchaeology inevitably identify archaeology with specific ethnic groups. Thus it is easy for archaeology to appear to elevate ethnicity at the expense of national unity. Archaeologists and their work are also subject to being manipulated in interethnic jealousies and conflicts. Foreign archaeologists may be vulnerable if their research does not fit the silent ethnic agendas of those who wield power over research,

and African researchers may be particularly vulnerable to unscrupulous superiors who have an ethnic ax to grind.

If there are tensions over ethnic and national identification with archaeological research in African countries that reached statehood in the 1960s, these tensions are not new to the arena of African history. An early example is the contradiction that arose when nationalist history created kingdoms and empires as new “myths” of African identity and unity intended to counteract the primitivist constructs of the colonial past. The idealization of the kingdom as a symbol of complexity and accomplishment obscured relationships of dominance and exploitation in the past. At the same time, the identification of the people with rulers in the historical past set up an attractive model easily appropriated by the political elite in the postcolonial era (Neale 1985; Temu and Swai 1981: 83). This nationalistic agenda sometimes created bizarre contradictions, compelling at least one student of history to question, “Was [the site of Great] Zimbabwe really an appropriate symbol for the freedom fighters of Rhodesia?” (Neale 1985:47). Neale’s question discloses the contradiction between a symbol replete with royal attributes and hierarchical characteristics and its appropriation by democratic freedom fighters.

The question about Great Zimbabwe, however, ignores an even more serious historical problem: the identification of the ruins of Great Zimbabwe with the majority Shona people. Contradictions inherent in the inequalities of past state(s) at Great Zimbabwe pale in comparison with the contemporary ethnic tensions that the Great Zimbabwe monument, as a symbol, brings to the surface. The appropriation of this archaeological monument as a symbol of state and nation-ness in Zimbabwe masks—while simultaneously heightening—the enormously divisive role that ethnicity plays in contemporary Zimbabwe. Conflicts between the Shona and Ndebele figure prominently in recent and contemporary political life and create questions about national unity and the legitimacy of the state. Martin Hall’s exegesis of interpretations of Great Zimbabwe, first by imperial interests and later by various nationalists, brings to light the political volatility of this site’s different representations (Hall 1984a:464). Interpretations of Great Zimbabwe’s indigenous origins and development again came under attack when white nationalists of the UDI regime (Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Great Britain by the white elite) charged that archaeologists sympathetic with such views were politically aligned with the black opposition.

Once the black opposition took power in 1980, there was a reaction to such white nationalistic prejudices. Hall quotes a poignant commen-

tary attributed to Zimbabwe's president by the journalist K. N. Mafaka, to the effect that it would be "a mockery of our culture to ask a white man to interpret the Great Zimbabwe" and that "whenever the white man's interpretation of Great Zimbabwe differs from that of our black scholars we will take our own" (Hall 1984a:464). Hall remarks that this is the mirror image of the earlier white nationalist sentiment, an interpretation that appears to have ignored local rights to construct history and therefore one that merits further scrutiny. If the issue is examined from the perspective that the interpretive history of the site, like the archaeological record of Zimbabwe, has been confused by Western imperial agendas, colonial speculations, and other Western ideologically informed "scholarship," then it is altogether reasonable to suggest that successive Western constructs should be discarded as useless and irrelevant cultural baggage. Until independence in 1980, Africans played no role in the interpretation of Great Zimbabwe, and even more recent cultural interpretations of Great Zimbabwe based on ethnographic accounts and structuralist models (Huffman 1981) continue to alienate Zimbabwe's history and affirm the incapacity of Western thought to represent local needs and sensibilities. In this context, Mafaka's account captures a declaration to take back Zimbabwe and to Africanize its historical interpretations. This is hardly a mirror image of white nationalist sentiment, which was an anti-African colonial enterprise.

Because many of the archaeological deposits of the central portion of Great Zimbabwe have long since been destroyed by "mining" activities and by archaeological quests remote from African history, few deposits remain from which African archaeologists may construct alternative views of areas such as the Great Enclosure, which, because of its impressive stone architecture, has elicited the most inquiry. The archaeological record is so limited that there is little room to negotiate a liberation from the idea of Great Zimbabwe as a royal site. One possible resolution of the contradiction inherent in employing a royal site as a symbol of national unity lies in evidence for "folk" culture held in the unexcavated outer precincts of Great Zimbabwe. These areas may contain evidence that would provide important insights into the majority of ancient Zimbabwe's population—the non-elite residents, craftsmen, traders, and functionaries. The remaining archaeological evidence and its likely socioeconomic associations may fit well with a nationalist and socialist agenda in Zimbabwe. It is virtually certain that future excavations at Great Zimbabwe will again follow an ideological program, but this time one determined by indigenous African scholars.

The Politics of Archaeology: Power over the Production of Knowledge

I want to return to the underdevelopment of African archaeological inquiry that I examined earlier within the East African setting and how it is linked to both nationalist history and the later growth of critical history. The contrast between East and West Africa in the development of an indigenous archaeology seems to parallel differences in the degree of their reaction to colonialist historiography. In West Africa, Nigerians led the way with a school of historical interpretation that spoke with much greater self-confidence and without a preoccupation with conferring legitimacy on the nation (Neale 1985). In eastern Africa, particularly Tanzania, the tone of historical discourse was defensive in posture, justifying in tone.

Part of this difference, Neale (1985) suggests, may result from a stronger educational history in the west and a correspondingly greater need in the east to establish an intellectual identity. Whatever the cause, it is instructive to observe that in anglophone West Africa, separate archaeology departments were established relatively early in three different locales: Legon, Ghana (1963), Nsukka, Nigeria (1963), and Ibadan, Nigeria (1966) (Nzewunwa 1990). In contrast, archaeology in East Africa remained underdeveloped until 1985, at best a small and subsidiary part of history departments. What accounts for such a remarkable difference?

The reasons for underdevelopment in Kenya appear to be political and ideological. Since the Leakeys' pioneering expeditions during the late twenties and early thirties, archaeology in Kenya has come to be equated with paleoanthropology; it has continued to be seen in the same way under the leadership of Richard Leakey. Inquiry into the past has been predominantly the domain of white Kenyan prehistorians and their European collaborators working under the aegis of the state-supported National Museum. This alliance between the state and a white-directed paleoanthropology fits nicely with Kenya's internal problems with power and ethnicity. The Kenyan state is a fragile instrument, always under severe threat from competition for power among several large ethnic groups. Any element that tips the balance toward one group over another is potentially a threat to the state.

Archaeology, if allowed to flourish at a regional level, can easily be identified with an attempt to valorize the history (which in Kenya can readily underwrite land claims) of one ethnic group at the perceived expense of others. The state's deep investment in the white intellectuals' pursuit of ancient human ancestors has been an ideal way to neutral-

ize regional histories. It uses an easily co-opted white minority, eager for local legitimacy, in an enterprise that is extra-ethnic: it focuses on a “population” devoid of ethnicity—indeed, devoid of humanness. State investment in this perspective creates a national identity from a period of history so remote that it imitates mythological time. Using a belief that is globally endorsed, the state can draw on the neutrality of ancient nonhumans to provide Kenya with a new universal myth of origin. This powerful new myth serves the Kenyan state well, and it is certain that no Luo or Kikuyu or Kamba archaeologist will be allowed to deconstruct one of the most important myths of the contemporary world. We can expect that the mutual advantages accruing from this alliance will persist until such time as political change creates a need for a new Kenyan history. Until that day arrives, we can expect that archaeology will remain firmly in the control of whites, who will develop clients who are either loyal to this project or are partially disabled by inadequate training abroad.

Any hope that archaeology will find an independent base in Kenya is unlikely so long as the current power alliances prevail. Though archaeology was instituted as a subsidiary course in the history curriculum at the University of Nairobi in 1970, it has remained in an underdeveloped state since then, capturing a few undergraduate students who have later studied abroad for higher degrees. The development of a fully constituted archaeology department is not in the interests of colonial institutions such as the National Museum and the British Institute in Eastern Africa, formerly known as the British Institute of History and Archaeology in Eastern Africa.

The British Institute is a curious colonial legacy, conceived by Sir Mortimer Wheeler and the British Academy just at the time when East African states were gaining independence. After its founding in 1960, the institute operated out of Dar es Salaam between 1961 and 1964, when it moved its headquarters to the comfortable “colonial” neighborhood of Choromo in Nairobi. In 1966 it established the journal *Azania*, which is devoted to publishing research primarily in East African archaeology and ancient history.

With its European-dominated agenda, colonial setting, European membership (until recently payable only in foreign currency), and almost completely European contributorship to *Azania*, the British Institute is a palpable symbol of the contradiction between a disenfranchised African population not enabled to construct its own ancient history and a foreign institute on African soil that studies African history and continuously produces knowledge satisfying mostly the European academy.

African participation in the research mission of the institute is rare, nor has the institute made an effort to change its mission so that it might incorporate training and collaboration with Africans in archaeological research (also see Okpoko 1991).¹ Although its research results have added much to empirical evidence for ancient history in eastern Africa, the British Institute's mission has been a colonial one that speaks to diffusionist goals (e.g., the Bantu Studies Project, which focused on Bantu migration) or goals that satisfy the historical research agendas of foreign academics (e.g., long-term British interests in the royal earthworks of Uganda). Africans, if they appear in the process at all, are peripheral, sometimes participating only to legitimize the research.

Some investigators associated with the institute have reflected on the contradictions inherent in this production of knowledge. One of the first expressions of a conscious effort to break from the colonial paradigm is seen in the 1966 publication of *Prelude to East African History*, a small book edited by Merrick Posnansky that developed out of a 1962 conference sponsored by the institute. According to the preface written by the institute's director, this work explicitly sets out to create a new perspective in African archaeology, one separate from a strictly colonial approach. Acknowledgments are made, for example, of the importance of historical linguistics and oral traditions in the construction of later "prehistory," although no chapter in the book illustrates how these new approaches are to contribute to the writing of history.

The importance of this book is its expressed goal to write an ancient history that appeals to local people. In this respect it indicates a consciousness of the need to accommodate the British Institute's archaeological mission to the changing political configurations in Africa. *Prelude* represents a transitional phase in that it is the first liberal view of a new role for African archaeology (Mapunda 1992), a view that has remained mostly unrealized and distinct from the paradigmatic trajectory that the institute itself was to take in subsequent years. Despite the ideas expressed in *Prelude*, a liberal view did not interpenetrate historical thinking or research at the institute. And the hegemony of the British Institute and the National Museum assured that archaeology in Kenya remained underdeveloped, with very limited opportunities for African participation.

The reasons for the underdevelopment of archaeology in Tanzania are different from but also similar to those in Kenya. The Kenyan expeditions to Tanzania's Olduvai Gorge were exclusively Kenyan and European affairs, so the several Tanzanian archaeologists who received higher-degree training outside Tanzania during the 1970s pursued their careers independently of the concession granted to the Leakeys at Olduvai.

by John Sutton as an optional course within the history syllabus, and it was never offered as a separate course of study. Archaeology's minor role as a subsidiary part of history complemented the prevailing attitude of the 1960s that archaeology was a handmaiden to history. As Sutton was to argue later, archaeology was "an historical technique" (Sutton 1973a:1); it added historical facts to diffusionist constructs coming out of Europe, such as those promoted by the Bantu Studies Project of the British Institute, which focused on Bantu expansion or migration. Although Sutton saw in 1973 that archaeology was drifting and in danger of underdevelopment, he nonetheless concluded that it was best that Tanzania not attempt to develop archaeology within the university but that the university instead seek cooperation with the government's Antiquities Division and the National Museum (Karoma 1990; Sutton 1973a, 1973b).

Sutton's observations (1973a) included the ideas that staff should be kept to one or two archaeologists, that training of archaeologists would need to be undertaken partly in foreign universities, that there was no justification for creating internal research facilities, and that student attachment to foreign projects could help supplement the students' local exposure. Paradoxically, Sutton noted that other universities in Africa were making progress in creating departments of archaeology and training their own archaeologists. He saw this contrast with the situation in eastern Africa as "serious," but his recommendations contradict that assessment. Moreover, his suggestion that archaeology in East Africa be established as a regional venture at the University of Nairobi in the context of colonial domination is curious.

Sutton's perspective on the underdevelopment of archaeology may have indirectly assured archaeology's further stasis at the University of Dar es Salaam. The then-prominent nationalist school of history found Sutton's recommendations for marginality congruent with their mission, which was proving that Africa had as glorious a history as Europe and that Africans had resisted European colonialism from its very beginnings. Archaeology had little immediate relevance in this agenda of reaction to colonial historiography, and its marginality suited the needs of this group.

Another important faction of the history department at the University of Dar es Salaam was engaged in demonstrating the authenticity of African voices in oral histories as alternatives to the colonial library (Kimambo and Temu 1969). There, following the lead of Vansina and Oliver, who were advocating the utility of archaeology in verifying oral sources (Schmidt 1983a, 1990), archaeology was seen to have a supplementary role to play, but in fact it was a role that was never given more than lip service. Thus, the negotiated ideology of the times incorporated

the legacy of the Leakeys' well-established position, Sutton's ambivalence and diffusionist perspectives, and the nationalist assumption that archaeology was a handmaiden to African history and another way to affirm the authenticity of African oral history. This negotiated position led to a cultural hegemonic view that consigned archaeology to the periphery, accepting it as historical but perceiving it as a mysterious and little-applied technique (Beaudry, Cook, and Mrozowski 1991; Bennett, Mercer, and Woolacott 1986; Sutton 1973a).

The ideological peripheralization of archaeology had profound consequences during the decade after 1973. Recommendations for developing archaeology at the university level were adopted during a 1973 meeting of Tanzanian archaeologists and were presented to the university repeatedly by the Antiquities Division, but no action was taken. When, after Sutton's departure, the only Tanzanian archaeologist in the university, N. J. Karoma, pursued the question and advocated the development of archaeology there (Karoma 1977), he was greeted with derision and challenged on the grounds that archaeology was not relevant to the socialist experiment.

By the late 1970s, a radical school of historians had come into prominence alongside the nationalists. Archaeology's position as marginal had already been negotiated when Karoma (1977, 1990) began to argue that the national interest deserved comprehensive training of students in archaeology. His arguments had been preceded by strong recommendations from the Antiquities Division for a full-fledged training program in archaeology and paleoanthropology. University colleagues turned a deaf ear, and Karoma was challenged in a departmental seminar by a Marxist historian who demanded: "Will archaeology feed the people?" (Karoma, personal communication 1990). The debate was acrimonious and attempted to portray archaeology as too resource-intensive—too consuming of the precious resources of the peasants—and as an overly empirical discipline. It was argued that the collection of material data or myriad "facts," which were themselves theoretical constructs, was a bourgeois enterprise antithetical to attempts to build a socialist society (see Temu and Swai 1981:111–52).

The reaction of the Dar es Salaam radicals may well have arisen out of their perception of archaeology as the collection of facts which themselves are produced under the aura of "science" and therefore take on a false objectivity (Bernstein and Depelchin 1979:24)—yet another expression of bourgeois historicism. Given the strong empirical foundations of African archaeology until the 1980s and its modes of production, it is understandable that archaeology could not escape the condemnation of this new hegemonic ideology. Even when it inquired into such un-

known domains as technology and the history of power struggles over, say, the control of iron production, if such inquiry emphasized innovation and achievement, then it could be characterized as “counterideological” and as taking its “terms of reference from the enemy” (Bernstein and Depelchin 1979:25). The opportunity for archaeology to negotiate a place within this prevailing consciousness was remote. Even if ideologically radical questions were asked, they were illegitimate because they were posed within a “bourgeois historiography” and lay outside materialist history (Bernstein and Depelchin 1979:36).

Such characterizations of archaeology betray some serious misunderstandings of its potential to operate in fresh intellectual territory. But the late 1970s, particularly in Africa, had not yet seen a self-conscious critical archaeology, although there was a radical archaeology that focused on ancient African culture with the aim of overturning the ruling paradigms that continue to dominate the structure of thought about ancient Africa (Schmidt 1978; Schmidt and Avery 1978). Unquestionably, a critique of theory-laden empirical archaeology in Africa, although not specifically articulated in print, was accurate and pertinent. Any quick review of publications—for example, in *Azania*—shows page after page of tables, drawings of ceramics, and esoteric discussions of artifact attributes and comparisons, mostly in the service of diffusionist constructs and local cultural histories.

Although such details make sense to the archaeologist, who sees them as essential parts of conventional archaeological reporting, format, implicit interpretation, and esoteric technical language, they converge to mystify historians and lay readers. Archaeologists of Africa have failed to acknowledge their theoretical groundings. Equally troubling, they have often failed to communicate with anyone other than a very small number of their own kind. In this respect, archaeological knowledge has little affected the historical thinking and perceptions of Kenyans, Cameroonians, or Tanzanians about their own pasts. The most significant impact appears to have been in Nigeria (Afigbo 1986; Okpoko 1986), where more popular accounts have been published and more attention paid to integrating archaeology into school curricula. Neglect of communication, however, has been the case in most African countries, suggesting that the production of archaeological knowledge fails to change the present and or to promise a better future.

These are some of the problems facing the construction of archaeology in Tanzania. Some critiques by the secular Marxists at the University of Dar es Salaam were predicated upon an incomplete understanding of archaeology yet accurately captured the empirical predilections that were a legacy of most British practitioners. Other issues point

out contradictions compelling some self-reflective dialectical analysis. Let us return to the Dar es Salaam group's assertion that attempts to "recover or reconstruct" precolonial history are counterideological and take their terms of reference from the enemy (Bernstein and Depelchin 1979:25).

Bernstein and Depelchin elaborated on this position to argue that opposition to denigrating colonial representations leads to romantic responses or to emphases on African achievement in reaction to claims of lack of achievement, but that both results are counterideological projects and must be confronted. I believe, however, that we have moved beyond the era when African historians romanticized kingdoms and empires, overlooking their conditions of domination, poverty, and exploitation. Archaeology in Africa has long been sensitized to these issues and rarely participated in such hyperbole, the case of Engaruka being one exception (Leakey 1936).

Bernstein and Depelchin (1979:40) hold that a counterassertion of achievement works from a European standard arising from social evolutionary theory, which assumes the retention of primitive survivals in Africa. Any assertion of equal or greater complexity, therefore, accepts the efficacy of this theoretical frame. This position initially appears to pose a dilemma. But the assertion itself is an ideological finesse meant to obscure a more profound problem: how can negative and pathological constructs arising out of the application of this theoretical base be deconstructed? Subsidiary dualities arising out of evolutionary theory, such as complex/simple, literate/illiterate, subject/object, civilized/savage, and scientific/intuitive, so deeply interpenetrate assumptions about the ancient African past that they must be disabled before it is possible to develop a liberated archaeology of Africa, an archaeology with its own theoretical niche compatible with Africa.

I have related elsewhere how historians of Africa accept and think of African technological inferiority (Schmidt n.d.). These unconscious, taken-for-granted notions were, ironically, also expressed in the thought of some Dar es Salaam radicals, who were preoccupied with why and how African technologies fit into capitalist relations of production in the colonial and postcolonial eras and how that fit contributed to the absence of innovations since precolonial times. Absence of innovation under capitalism can be assessed, however, only if precolonial innovation has been documented, a historical requirement obviously ignored. This failure to document early technological life was, at the same time, accompanied by vague and unsubstantiated acknowledgments that Africa had contributed to technological advance (Temu and Swai 1981:156). Such

disregard for the history of precolonial technology accepts the thesis of antecedent inferiority.

Archaeology has a demonstrated capacity to overcome different forms of this received knowledge, with its underlying assumption of inferiority. For example, a challenge to this intellectual position was mounted by researchers studying iron technology in northwestern Tanzania, studies that lay outside the paradigms of reaction or “reconstruction” (Schmidt and Avery 1978). Such projects recognize the fallacy of “reconstruction” and replace it with an active, self-aware *construction* of the past. The effect of such studies is to make new histories that independently collapse part of the dichotomous structure of Western thought—now also the thinking of many Africans—by presenting histories that not only contradict received knowledge about African technology but also have their own local integrity and theoretical expressions.

Those who engaged in attempts to establish the teaching of archaeology in Tanzania simultaneously took on the effort to remake historical thinking about ancient Africa. This project recognized the profound transformations caused by colonization of the historical mind of Africa, transformations reaching so deeply into contemporary historical thinking, self-perception, valuation, and interpretation that much more is required to counter them than the application of historical materialism to the colonial and postcolonial libraries. The absence of a self-reflexive critique by the Dar es Salaam clique meant that they did not realize that they themselves were trapped deeply in reaction and recovery (see Temu and Swai 1981), a perspective that afforded no new pathway.

After the initial debate over archaeology erupted at the University of Dar es Salaam in 1977, several events occurred that were to alter the development of archaeology in Tanzania. First, ethnoarchaeological and archaeological research that I had conducted over the previous decade in northwestern Tanzania had produced observations and discoveries that overturned several dominant interpretive paradigms of the history of African technology. This research demonstrated the development of an indigenous science that solved technical problems and conducted experiments within a mystical, ritualized setting that masked its scientific principles from all observers, especially those from the West.

International and domestic publicity surrounding these findings in the fall of 1978 affected the way African technological history was represented, which in turn impacted local and international perceptions of the African past. The Tanzania National Scientific Research Council took an immediate interest in the research, seeing in it a way in which Tanzanians could be sensitized to the relevance of science and technology in

the present and future. The ministry concerned with culture also took a keen interest, using the findings as a means to increase awareness that archaeology fit into a national education plan. But official action did not coalesce until the leaders of these institutions visited China during late 1978 and observed firsthand the power of antiquities in building a national socialist state, particularly through Chinese emphasis on the contributions of worker-artisans to remarkable royal sites (Trigger 1984). This experience illustrated the possibilities for archaeology in Tanzania, and the leaders of both institutions returned to Tanzania determined to push the development of archaeology within the university.

For the next two years, historians in the university continued to oppose archaeology, mostly behind the pretense of expense. During this time, however, an alliance between the leaders of the ministry and research council, on one side, and local and foreign archaeologists, on the other, led to the formation of an independent, nonprofit organization designed to recruit the financial backing necessary to establish archaeology at the university. The university was pushed by the ministry to create a plan to implement the teaching of archaeology. By 1986, a full curriculum was in place. This short history brings to light the political and intellectual forces engaged in the struggle for power over the production of knowledge about the ancient past.

Archaeology held demonstrated power to create new and socially responsible knowledge unconfined by the colonial library and also germane to creating new interpretations challenging the interpretive paradigms arising from the colonial library—the context in which historians exclusively worked. Archaeology was thus poised to co-opt the agenda of the radical group. Concern arose among the radicals over how this threat could be contained and countered.

The question “Does archaeology produce food?” was a legitimate query in the political milieu of Tanzania in the 1970s. But if the question is asked of other domains of production of historical knowledge, then we must recognize the failure of historical practice in Tanzania to provide new histories leading to changed identity and self-perception. In this respect, the once-vital nationalist school of history and its heir, the “Marxist” school of history at Dar es Salaam, have disappointed. The latter radical group provided an important auto-critique and an essential refocusing on questions of class and social relations of production in the colonial era, but it failed to go beyond this refocusing to produce history that serves the people, creates awareness of the causes of contemporary inequalities and injustices, and creates a sense of potential betterment in the future.

Alternatives for Making History in Africa

One idea that holds hope for the future is archaeological inquiry into scientific and technological accomplishments in African settings, with the goal of understanding how and why distinctive technological innovations and variations arose out of the African environment. Innovation need not be measured relative to events and developments in other world areas; it must first be comprehended within its own cultural and historical contexts. Only archaeology has the techniques required to document ancient processes of innovation and scientific experimentation. The importance of this project lies not in potential revelations that might impact modern science. Rather, it lies in the recognition that it is possible to unearth original African contributions to science and, as Irele (1991:68) put it, that “the fund of positive knowledge available to our traditional societies has yet to be seriously investigated and made available to the world.” Irele sees this project as an African contribution to human knowledge about the past in which Africa takes neither a dominant nor a subordinate place but contributes in a way that revalues and recuperates that knowledge.

The revaluation of African scientific experience is one way to remove the science/intuition dichotomy and its science/ritual variant that perpetually diminish the African experience. Revaluation focuses on the pragmatic lessons that can be learned from the ways in which stress and difficulties were overcome in the past and from understanding what “inherent scientific values” underlie and unify successful experimentation with the natural world. It discovers a confident socio-scientific posture in the past that offers a model of success which in turn can help people confront the contradictions of the present (e.g., development failures attributed to insufficient technological know-how) and meet the challenges of the future.

This perspective was one of the guiding principles behind the development of archaeology in Tanzania. Another important principle was that an African archaeology should produce its own historical knowledge under the leadership of African scholars who value the search for an archaeology appropriate to Africa. This requires the training of undergraduate students working on African problems at the B.A. level within an African setting, a goal also pertinent to higher-degree training that is currently met at only a few African institutions. It also requires a focus on research problems that have the potential to address important historical issues, issues that challenge interpretations about the past of African science, trade, technology, urbanization, environmental relationships, symbolic life, and so forth. The curriculum at the University of

Dar es Salaam incorporates a strong program of archaeological research design and implementation from the first year on, so students start early in their training to “think theory” and experience its relationship to field methods, laboratory analysis, and interpretation.

One proven way to proceed with student training was to continue making inquiries into the development of technologies that followed innovative tracks in Africa. The development of the preheating technique in iron smelting, for example, is a remarkable African contribution to technological innovation that demands to be understood more completely (Schmidt and Avery 1978). Techniques that overcame the presence of phosphorus in iron are another of the many aspects of ancient iron technology that invite further inquiry elsewhere in Africa (Childs 1995; Schmidt and Childs 1995). Archaeological evidence for the development of economic systems that degraded forested environments 1,000 to 2,500 years ago provides views reshaping previous ideas that African civilizations changed because of movements of ethnic and language groups. Such new views of the past encompass practical lessons to be learned from the early successes and failures of human societies to manage different environments and offer antidotes to nationalist tendencies to glorify complex societies in the past.

University-related research that first addressed these concerns in Tanzania took place in 1986 in the western Usambara Mountains, a locale suggested by students who observed similarities between the environment required for an early Iron Age technology as documented in western Tanzania and the well-watered Usambara Mountains of eastern Tanzania. Field research was structured so that students found most of the sites, among which was an early Iron Age iron-smelting site on the western and highly degraded slopes of the mountains. These finds were important in demonstrating that an early technology using preheating principles was also practiced on the opposite side of the country, in the area of an ethnic group (the Shambaa) that is close to and has some affinities with two of the most prominent ethnic groups (the Chagga and Pare) of eastern Tanzania (Schmidt 1988; Schmidt and Karoma 1987).

These initial research results, obtained under University of Dar es Salaam sponsorship, led to a perceptible softening of earlier subtle ethnic opposition to archaeology, with scholars from northeastern Tanzania taking particular interest in this trans-territorial phenomenon that linked widely separated parts of the country. The “national” characteristics of these discoveries, also represented in the ethnic diversity of the students pictured in a newspaper photo of the excavations, created for the first time an image of archaeology as a national enterprise with the power to make history that was African.

The success of the first research season was followed in the second year by research in an archaeologically unknown part of Tanzania's coastal zone, an area spurned by colonial archaeologists who were interested in the monumental sites of the littoral. The monumental sites, long known for their remarkable tombs, mosques, and coral houses, had come to be identified with the advent of urbanization and civilization along the East African coast. The growth of these complex communities was attributed to the arrival of Shirazi and Omani immigrants from the Persian Gulf during the first half of the second millennium A.D. This diffusionist explanation holds that Islam and trade were among the most important cultural forces leading to economic as well as community organization and coherence.

The history of archaeological research that incorporated this diffusionist package shows a steadfast fixation on the exotic, the imported, and the Islamic. Extensive archaeological investigations along the coast by Kirkman (1963) and Chittick (1974, 1984) at important urban "medieval" sites such as Kilwa, Manda, Mombasa, and Gedi had revealed evidence for earlier, first-millennium populations who also lived on these sites. But evidence of the earlier settlement was reported in very summary form, the ceramics were assigned pejorative labels such as "kitchen ware," and interpretation of the ancient remains was omitted (Chittick 1974, 1984)—an archaeological approach that effectively erased such communities from the landscape (see Handsman and Lamb Richmond, this volume). Whatever interpretation did occur denigrated these early communities through negative naming of artifact categories. No questions about socioeconomic organization, population size, political organization, affinities with other settlements, industry, or diet—all conventional questions of the era—were asked about these indigenous communities. The only germane research goals were those of explaining the influences of foreign populations on trade conducted by these communities and of elaborating histories by explicating the few written historical accounts that touched upon them.

The "foreign civilizing" paradigm, while offensive to the sensibilities of African populations (Trigger 1990), nevertheless was still very much in vogue for the East African monumental sites and in no danger of collapsing when the second year's research under the university's new archaeology program began in 1987. Student researchers and instructors selected a "dead" zone that they thought would not soon capture the attention of investigators: low-lying hills with several small lakes approximately 10 to 20 kilometers from the Indian Ocean and located about 100 kilometers south of Dar es Salaam. The results from that season are significant from several perspectives. They revealed for the first time

that during the late first millennium A.D., large communities with trade goods and practicing a local industry such as iron fabrication and possible fabrication of copper goods were located in the immediate hinterland adjacent to the littoral. These communities bore close affinities to the long-ignored communities buried under the coastal monumental sites and also found elsewhere along the coast (e.g., Chittick 1974, 1984; Kirkman 1963).

This research was also significant because it took place in an area in which there has been tremendous ethnic fluidity over the last century, with many ethnic entities located on the same landscape. The ethnic pluralism of the region and its significant change in ethnic makeup over the last century, when combined with the transformation of the landscape wrought by cashew farming, contributed to an erasure of history from that landscape. These characteristics meant that the archaeology could not be identified with a particular ethnic group and therefore could not easily be co-opted by any group. This in turn meant lessened political tensions over the development of ancient history for an area in which history had been mostly silenced.

Other research of consequence to making alternative histories in Tanzania occurred during the same year (1987) with the excavation of the Limbo site, an early Iron Age iron-smelting site located about 25 kilometers from the Indian Ocean. The Limbo site contains an enormous amount of industrial debris relative to other sites of similar antiquity in Africa (other than the famous factory site of Meroe in the Sudan, which dates to the early first millennium A.D.). Never before had evidence of very early iron production been uncovered within 50 kilometers of the eastern African coast, though several other sites, such as those in the western Usambara Mountains and in the Teita Hills of Kenya, fall within the 100- to 200-kilometer range. Excavations at Limbo have yet to uncover any furnaces used to smelt iron, but the industrial debris and other evidence indicates that this activity occurred at the site about A.D. 100–250 (Chami 1988a, 1988b, 1994; Schmidt and Chami n.d.).

Perhaps more important is the settlement context in which Limbo was situated. Survey in the same zone showed a light density of early Iron Age occupation sites, suggesting that the surrounding countryside supported sparse early Iron Age populations. A sparse population engaged in the production of large quantities of iron at the Limbo site suggests either that Limbo was the only iron-production site in the area or that iron produced there was in excess of the needs of the local population.

When these archaeological observations and interpretations are juxtaposed with historical interpretations of the ancient East African coast,

the importance of Limbo and its surrounding sites becomes clear. Early historical accounts of the coast have stimulated two millennia of speculations and false constructs about the economic history of this region, asserting that it produced “natural products” (rhino horn, ivory, etc.) and consumed manufactured products from abroad. How did this misunderstanding come about? Greek accounts made during the first few centuries of the historical era by authors working with secondhand reports have since been reworked and reiterated so often that the depictions found in the very early historiography of the coast have been accepted at face value and have gained widespread currency. Historians’ readiness to accept these early accounts has been amplified by the material inventory of trade provided by these early histories, an attribute that confers a false concreteness to the “evidence.”

This story of bias and transformation begins with *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, written in the first century A.D. (Casson 1989; Kirwan 1986). The *Periplus* is poor on descriptions of people but strong on descriptions of goods exchanged between local people and foreigners. The most important interpretations of the document made by historians of the twentieth century dwell on the lists of goods, particularly those made of metal—hatchets, daggers, awls, and lances: “These tools would mostly have been of iron, and indicate that the inhabitants of Azania had little or no knowledge of how to smelt this metal” (Chittick 1968:106; see Oliver and Fagan 1978).

This unsubstantiated assertion has been repeated in scores of subsequent publications along with the rest of the interpretive package, which includes the idea that the local populations lacked the knowledge and skills to produce iron (Kirwan 1986:104). This characterization of the East African coast as an economic and technological backwater has retained remarkable vitality and has remained unquestioned for as long as archaeologists have focused on monumental sites and the influence of foreign cultures. It is also an example of how the amplification of bias in the historical record can erase local histories—a process that Sued Badillo (this volume) captures for Puerto Rico. Because there is no historical evidence until the tenth century that contradicts this early portrait of East African economic capacities, the idea that the coastal areas and their immediate hinterlands were receptor areas for goods, ideas, and civilization has gained widespread acceptance.

This uncritical depiction of East African economic development and sociopolitical organization during the first millennium A.D. is not based on substantive archaeological evidence but on one ancient hearsay “historical” account and its myriad repetitions. When this construction of

history is considered against the Limbo site excavations and regional survey, a different and more compelling interpretation of hinterland history becomes possible. First, the volume of iron-smelting slag in the excavated portions of Limbo suggests a level of prehistoric iron production far in excess of that in well-known iron production sites dating to the early first millennium in western Tanzania (Schmidt 1983c; Schmidt and Childs 1985). The Limbo technology does not appear to be related to the Mwituu iron technology found elsewhere in East Africa at the same time (such as in the western Usambara Mountains). Its dating to the first two centuries A.D. suggests that it was contemporaneous with the other technological systems yet geographically isolated from them.

Settlement data for the area surrounding Limbo add an additional thread of evidence for an emerging interpretation that threatens the conventional history. We found only two small sites with apparently brief settlement histories contiguous to Lake Zakwati, east of Limbo (Schmidt et al. 1992). The poor, sandy soils and light density of settlement suggest that the primary productive focus of residents during the Early Iron Age was the economic activities seen at Limbo. Because Limbo shows a production capacity beyond what might be expected to serve local needs, we believe it represents iron production oriented to the early Indian Ocean trade (Schmidt and Chami n.d.). The Limbo industrial evidence defeats the idea that early populations lacked skills in iron production and shows that large iron-smelting sites were located close to the coast, well positioned to take advantage of the early documented coastal trade.

Historical interpretations that attribute the fabrication of early iron goods to people in Yemen using iron from sources in Europe and then distributing their goods into eastern Africa are questionable in view of this new evidence. The alternative view presented here fits nicely with later historical observations that raw iron was exported from the mainland to offshore markets, including Madagascar, for fabrication (Shepherd 1982).

The later export of raw iron to Madagascar and possibly to the Comoro Islands in the ninth and tenth centuries (Wright 1984) suggests that the history of East African production of iron for commercial trade in the Indian Ocean originated as early as the first or second century, when the *Periplus* was written. Thus these archaeological results produce substantive new knowledge about ancient technology and economy that fits with later Arab historical accounts recognizing East Africa as a source for iron in the early second millennium A.D. The tying together of these various threads helps explain where early traders were obtaining the raw products later reworked into tools, possibly on the Arabian peninsula,

and redistributed to Africa. A historiography originating in hearsay accounts illustrates the selective emphasis and omission of details that significantly biased later historical characterizations and effectively erased from history the economic life of a large region of Africa. This research illustrates the value of an angle of view that sets out to use archaeology to deconstruct negative historical interpretations of Africa. It hardly uses the enemy's own terms.

The success of this project, however, does not depend on any explicit ideological agenda. Rather, it depends on the substance of the archaeological findings and the inferentially derived interpretations that enrich their meaning (Wylie 1992b:220). In this instance, a political-ideological position pushed us to pursue inquiry into a "void" zone marked by its negative characterizations, its lack of monuments, and the erasure of a visible past. The results achieved came unexpectedly and in a form completely unrelated to the political-ideological consideration or design that motivated the research. This example captures the power of archaeology to overturn false constructs that negatively impinge upon contemporary self-perceptions. The production of historical knowledge through archaeology at the University of Dar es Salaam has surprised many of its critics and has demonstrated that research free of the colonial library has a unique power to make histories that are accessible and refreshingly different from the evolutionary, diffusionist ideas imposed on the African mind for generations.

In Africa today, the influence of positive, accomplished pasts re-valued in the present is essential in the face of economic demoralization and loss of social capital in the development experiment. Goran Hyden's (1992) recent findings about the loss of trust and mutual cooperation—of what he calls "social capital"—in Tanzania suggest the unfolding of a crisis of social confidence that may well trace its beginnings to deleterious images of an insufficient and inadequate economic experience in the ancient and recent past. The alarming erosion of social capital cannot be arrested solely by making a new economic history on the partial archaeological evidence just discussed. But a positive history can play an active role in the mentality of African economic development, helping to revitalize a base for the reclamation of social capital in the future.

The Search for an Indigenous Archaeology

I want to return to the question of making histories that provide hope for a better future and that open African capacities for development. Much of the research just discussed touches on these issues, and they are

also addressed by Bassey Andah, whose agenda clearly includes questions about control, identity, liberation, and the future (Andah 1990a:2):

Authentic excavators of African cultural history need to descend into the burrow of Africa's invisible silent times . . . and strive for control of the text of our experience. Such excavation is thus motivated by the need to have the power to force others to recognize our African presence and rights to be Africans and to own what God has given us: namely, our African continent and identity as Africans.

The language Andah uses in this text (1990a) emphasizes power and control over identity while also stressing that identification with “significant ancestors” is liberating, that it reveals how and why the past exists in the present and the value this has for a “future meaningful existence.” Andah sees the key to constructing an Africa with “an enlarged future” as lying in the process of regeneration, wherein Africans “return or journey back to our African homes, natural, social and spiritual, of our yesterdays [so] that our present will accede to merge with our past, and to emerge from the past in an enlarged future” (Andah 1990a:3).

We have seen in the language of both Andah and Irele an emphasis on revaluation, regeneration, and return. Irele, though not an archaeologist, echoes his fellow Nigerian's concerns with the past and with a fundamental renegotiation of ideological relationships and languages of power to reclaim and recuperate the past for Africa. For Andah, this journey back depends on the strength of “spiritual” bridge building, an assertion apparently contradictory to his hope that a revolutionized historiography will result from a history transformed from storytelling into a vigorous scientific search for the truth through anthropology (Andah 1990a:4).

The contradiction between spiritual bridges and scientific searches is momentarily disorienting, yet if I understand Andah properly, his message lies in the language he uses—metaphors of ritual grounds in the past, spiritual journeys, identity with ancestors—all drawn from the deep wellspring of African life, sensibility, and history. Andah is recasting the archaeological discourse so that it is reconfigured to fit African mental constructs, a bold departure that promises to threaten those who control the production of knowledge about the past in Africa. Andah's program gives notice that there are now groups prepared to challenge those who control the production of knowledge, inevitably leading to negotiation for a new language of hegemony. As he observes, power depends on language.

Elsewhere Andah argues that there is a history of Africa that is distinctly African and that those who study it need to be uniquely equipped

to unravel it. Andah explicitly argues that for any African history or archaeology to be relevant to an African audience, it must resonate effectively with an African cultural ethos. This view is more than the perspective that archaeology practiced in Africa must be aware of the historical sensibilities of the people among whom it is practiced (Schmidt 1983a). Andah wants to push beyond this perspective to suggest that African archaeology needs to incorporate other “rich sources” with the goal of “re-enacting African cultural history” in such a way that it departs from “an archaeological discipline that often tries to create what may not have existed, rather than discovering and describing people, what they did and what happened to them” (Andah 1987:vii). We see here a view that resembles a “folkways” approach intended to construct a more animated narrative of everyday African life.

Andah’s exploration of alternative methodologies assumes a commonality in the African experience, or an “African ethos.” Although some will argue that making this assumption risks reducing rich variability in cosmology, belief systems, and historical experience among African peoples to a simple commonality, such a reaction would miss the importance of Andah’s position. Though he fails to take his argument about what constitutes an African ethos farther, he makes clear that he thinks the cultural frames of reference in (most) reports and books written by Westerners about Africa assume that the “European cultural experience constitutes the image of universal man. As a result the framework is largely irrelevant for communicating the normative aspect of African cultural experience” (Andah 1987:viii).

Thus Andah’s concern—as an African archaeologist—is the search for a normative African epistemology of time and space to which African practitioners of the discipline can subscribe. What room is there in which an Africanist archaeologist can operate successfully under these conditions? It is abundantly apparent that Andah is not arguing for a relativist view that assigns distinctive meanings to each archaeological region. The most important understanding arising from his discourse is that inferential interpretations in Africa, if they are to be assessed as pertinent and meeting criteria of reasonable fit, must be based on deep cultural understandings.

Foreign investigators are on difficult ground here, for they lack socialization in African languages and cultures. I believe, however, that there are domains of inquiry that may reveal important new paths allowing the merging of Western methods with African experience. Here I take inspiration from Irele as well as from a challenge Mudimbe (1988: 198) sets out when he suggests that there be a “reconceptualization of

scientific method and the relationships that 'scientific knowledge' might have with other forms or types of knowledge." How then might we proceed to develop a science of archaeology that incorporates African ways of living and seeing?

Consulting with the ancestors and revisiting sacred ritual grounds, as Andah puts it, are essential components of African cycles of change and continuity that must be integrated into an African archaeology. For example, ritual events ordered by rhythmized time often leave behind clear and powerful physical signposts that are clearly remembered in the oral histories of African peoples. Such events are often remembered longer than events that may once have had a linear order, say, in clan genealogies, because such important ritual moments are marked by mnemonic devices such as sacred groves or trees that are preserved in the landscape today. Thus a royal shrine tree where a king was buried in a beer boat, or where a king was ritually buried during his installation rites, preserves the memory of the transformational event long after the waning of other oral records. Mnemonic systems present an enormously important extant record of rhythmized time in African cultures (Schmidt 1978). In many cases these indigenous African archaeologies are accessible to Western techniques of investigation. We must understand, however, the dynamics of social life that create the nonlinear characteristics of African ritual time, and our archaeology must be sufficient to account for a flow of events as rhythmic pulses that mark significant social and political transformations.

These ideas complement Andah's position and pose a challenge to both his fellow African archaeologists trained in the principles of Western archaeology and to those of us Westerners who have been exploring our own comprehensions of and reactions to African systems of thought and knowledge, insofar as they transform and inform our practice of archaeology on the continent. How do we respond to Andah's call for a new language within the African past? How can we carry out his more pragmatic suggestion that the past can inform African people about lessons the past holds for environmental management and appropriate ideologies of governance? The second question is more easily addressed than the first. Some archaeologists, including Africanists, are doing so by re-directing their study of past environments toward affecting management policy in the present and future (Marquardt 1994; Schmidt 1994).

But the question of a new language of archaeology, like that of a memory that returns to the African past, is an issue few archaeologists are prepared to face. Our distance from such issues is significant, even within the Africanist community. One measure of that distance is seen

in the separation between Africans and Westerners that continues in the production of knowledge. While Andah and his colleagues struggle to produce the only continuous indigenous journal of archaeology in black Africa, white archaeologists have recently joined together (Robertshaw 1990) to write a history of African archaeology that includes a contribution by only one black African archaeologist (see Okpoko 1991). This is symptomatic of widely differing access to global information systems, but more disquieting, it also signifies the de facto peripheralization of Africans in the writing and dissemination of their own histories. Until we overcome such fundamental problems, the possibility for Western archaeologists to be able to read, understand, and accept African archaeologies remains distant.

NOTE

1. At the Xth Congress of the Pan-African Association of Prehistory and Related Studies held in Harare, Zimbabwe, in June 1995, David Phillipson announced that an Institute project at Axum, Ethiopia, was incorporating training of African post-graduate students.