Meeting Future Challenges for a Sustainable African Archaeology: Are We Sufficiently Resilient that We Won't Get Fooled Again?[i]

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Abstract

The Pan African Archaeological Association meeting of 2022 examined the resiliency of African societies when meeting varying traumas and disasters. Resiliency draws on the past to suggest strategies for the future, especially climate change and its transforming impacts. Here I look—by means of a keynote address—at past practices of African archaeology to draw out several issues that must be met if archaeology on the continent is to follow a sustainable future. I set out five steps for a transformed practice of archaeology in Africa, with ancillary observations—such as embracing epistemic humility—for a more open and less hierarchical approach to our practice.

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A Theme for the Future

I'll tip my hat to the new Constitution
Take a bow for the new revolution
Smile and grin at the change all around
Pick up my guitar and play
Just like yesterday
Then I'll get on my knees and pray
We don't get fooled again
***Won't Get Fooled Again*, The Who, 1971**[1]

It is a great privilege to share my thoughts on African archaeology, examined through a kaleidoscope-like lens that takes us into the past, present, and future. I am grateful to deliver this keynote address in the country where my archaeological research career began in 1969. It seems only recently that I helped launch the archaeology program at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) in 1985. I have observed with great interest as it has grown into one of Africa's foremost archaeology and heritage programs. To all those who have worked so hard over the last four decades to create such excellence, Hongera! (congratulations): the late Amini Mturi, Felix Chami, Fred Kaijage, Jonathan Karoma, Emmanuel Kessy, Paul Lane, Adria LaViolette, Audax Mabulla, Bertram Mapunda, Fidelis Masao, Seth Nyagava, Charles Sanane, and many others.

Allow me to enlist you in a programmatic safari, a journey that explores our past and imagines our future in African archaeology as we meet in Zanzibar, a place with many pasts, trying to shine a light into the future for a new generation. In a recent interview conducted by my friends and esteemed colleagues Chapurukha Kusimba and Innocent Pikirayi (Kusimba & Pikirayi 2020), I focused on several issues that I believe need attention if we are to improve the practice of archaeology on the African continent. First, the need for genuine, full involvement of local communities: We hear lip service (and self-praise) about community involvement in our research, but the practice has far to go to catch up to where communities initiate the research, set the agendas, and work side by side with archaeologists to create well-grounded research. Second, I examine local capacity to conduct research: There have been good, solid attempts to build local capacities to

study and represent the deep past, yet there are serious shortcomings that must be addressed if Africa is to avoid the increasing trend of becoming a research ground for Western scholars, with African scholars playing second fiddle. Third, systemic collaboration: Though some Western scholars include African scholars as authors in their scientific papers, such acknowledgements are too often token rather than substantive, a practice that amplifies inequalities and creates a tiered system that ensures Western domination. If African archaeology is to be sustainable into the future, African scholars will need to design and execute research from the very beginning.

These approaches better meet the needs of African peoples while diminishing colonial approaches that use an investigator-centric approach. Fourth, African archaeology begs for deeper inquiry into African theories of the past: Western archaeology has been consumed with demonstrating the viability of its theories and methods, satisfying the academic needs of individuals and rarely the needs of African peoples. A new perspective is needed to unveil local epistemologies and ontologies through complementary anthropological inquiry, a process critical to the future health of African archaeology. Fifth, writing accessible accounts for non-scientific audiences: This challenge starts with answering how many contemporary Africans would understand the articles published by the *African Archaeological Review* (AAR), *Azania*, or the *Journal of African Archaeology* (JAA)? If we cannot answer "Many" or even "Thousands", then we are failing to communicate how our research is relevant to Africa and Africans. We need good science, but not at the expense of our discipline becoming so esoteric that only a few scientists comprehend

the evidence, which is another face of the colonial project. Parallel publications that feature readable narratives will increasingly define how successful archaeologists of Africa are in making their research relevant to contemporary African societies.

Community Archaeology and its Future in Africa

I start with community archaeology and the increasing popularity of its practice, a topic to which my colleagues Innocent Pikirayi, Kathryn W. Arthur, and I have devoted attention (e.g., Pikirayi & Schmidt, 2016; Schmidt & Arthur 2018; Schmidt & Pikirayi, 2016; Schmidt, 2017). I begin with a few examples of what community archaeology is NOT and what it might become (Pyburn, 2009). It *is not* helicoptering community engagement, where a researcher pops into a community, urban or rural, with a group of students eager to have local people help excavate a site and then disappears to write up the experience as a successful public archaeology exercise that stresses the goals of investigator rather than community members. It *is not* arriving with a research project already formulated and asking the elders to approve it, along with a few local participants. It *is not* hiring local cooks, laborers, and drivers to "economically assist" in accomplishing personal research and then representing that exercise as community archaeology. It *is not* 'community performance' where school children are taught basic skills to embellish researcher-driven archaeology as a training exercise. Add to this list of issues a lack of familiarity with community histories and values—a baseline requirement necessary to understand community heritage needs—and we have a recipe for misrepresentation and exploitation. If we take the time to scrutinize community archaeology studies, then we

will too often find disquieting self-congratulatory perspectives, mostly positive descriptions of results, little critical appraisal, and a disturbing acceptance of the notion that archaeologists or heritage experts know best how to drive community collaboration.

These are a few examples of how community archaeology is dressed up to look authentic. Let me turn now to what other colleagues and I see as a committed and truly engaged community archaeology. To start, there are disquieting issues embedded in this discussion, foremost amongst them is how we open ourselves to a collaborative posture that is receptive to local ways of believing and seeing. For too long, the collaborative trope has targeted permission to conduct research, a "consultation" for projects conceived elsewhere and presented to people for their approval. Let us be clear. This is not collaborative, nor is it community archaeology. When we embark on an archaeological project, do we first ask: What do you—the residents or descendants of this region—want from this research? What do you want to learn? Nevertheless, the questions should and must penetrate deeper than I have just suggested, requiring us to position ourselves to understand what people want *without having to interrogate them*. These questions pertain to our positionality and familiarity with the community, whatever its constitution. How may we learn, through our daily interactions with a community, what values they hold that resonate with an archaeological inquiry that may help them resolve local historical questions? How may we learn to privilege the knowledge of others more steeped in the ways of the past?

To answer these questions, we will need to rethink and redesign how we do research. To consider these questions, a degree of intimate familiarity with community members is required. We cannot assume a posture of learning without living with, eating with, and staying amongst people over extended periods—not a couple of days or weeks but over months, if not years. I am pointing to *deep-dwelling, longitudinal research* that may take years and even decades (e.g., Arthur, 2019; Ogundiran, 2020; Pikirayi, 2019; Schmidt, 2017). We become part of the community, living in a rhythm that complements that locality. Then, and only then, will we be sufficiently positioned to recognize and accept questions to research that have meaning. If we fail to accommodate ourselves to the grassroots and if we fail to understand and develop mutually significant research questions, then we will have failed to address the needs of African peoples by privileging our scientific goals above their needs.

Is there a recipe for success along this path into the future? Of course not. Each circumstance comes with its distinct potential and disappointment. In some cases, communities may be newcomers to a region or neighborhood or simply show no interest whatsoever in archaeological inquiry and heritage conservation and study--a potential disappointment if not frustration. Under such circumstances, our role as educators kicks in, with interactions that patiently explore the potential and possibilities of mutual collaboration. In yet other instances, we may be greeted with eager enthusiasm and knowledge about what archaeology may offer to enhance local knowledge and answer pertinent questions. Such positive responses do not always mean easy progress or conflict-free

collaboration. Local political factions and hierarchical and kinship relationships often tie together coalitions and alliances that may seek to gain economic advantage or ways to privilege a historical interpretation at the expense of others (Schmidt, 2017). Long-term, prior familiarity helps to understand such possibilities and to find ways to avoid or finesse such dilemmas.

To complete my remarks about collaboration, I focus on a problem that falls under the rubric 'bogus collaboration'. Increasingly, we see in publications the inclusion of co-authors of dubious legitimacy. If we look closely at the lists of co-authors, we realize that some do not merit standing as co-authors, let alone collaborators. It is becoming common to include as co-authors those who issue permits, give access to museum collections, or facilitate the logistics of research. Such activities do not merit co-authorship, nor is it appropriate or ethical to elevate such individuals to co-authorship. This is a new form of patron-client relationship practiced by Western scholars building networks of clients they reward through co-authorship., a practice that is regularly occurring in paleoanthropology and other highly technical scientific studies. It is a practice that rewards loyalty without merit and degrades scholarly attribution. While some African scholars struggle to gain recognition for their hard work, others gather citations and institutional rewards for authorship under false pretexts. The practice is a form of colonialism in new clothes—keeping people loyal in return for undeserved rewards. The line is not difficult to draw—those who make substantive contributions by helping to design the research, spending long days in the field leading excavation teams, conducting analysis, and writing—are those deserving recognition.

Goals of Science and Communicating Research Results

Let us turn now to what motivates us in African archaeology—what our goals are, what we want to contribute to the field, and what we want to contribute to African peoples. We have multiple and diverse goals ranging from producing substantial scientific reports on what we excavate to meeting the needs of our varied audiences. Let's examine the first goal—scientific reports. Over the last half century, we have witnessed increasingly scientific approaches to our research: metallographic analyses, SEM analysis of artifacts, ancient DNA, residue analysis, isotopic analyses, and the list goes on. These efforts are critical for assessing the attributes of what we study beyond descriptions of artifacts, their typologies, and their chronologies. Yet, and I challenge you to do this, if you pick up a scientific report and read it aloud to your family or members of your neighborhood, how much of it would come across as a narrative that is understood? The question is not rhetorical, and the answer is disturbing—none of them would have a clue about what all the specialized jargon means. In other words, it's unintelligible to even a well-educated lay person.

Then we must ask: Who are we writing for? What is the purpose of our writing? Yes, we need to be on solid scientific ground and publish in the best peer-reviewed journals. Yet simultaneously, we need to recognize that only a select few will ever read these publications. Go to your local university library and examine the check-out record of African archaeology monographs. It is sobering to learn how few readers there are. Alternatively, consider professional papers: while predatory services with websites like Academia.edu tout the number of views papers receive

on their client sites, citation indices tell another story: papers are read and cited primarily by those whose practice is in the same scientific domain (e.g., aDNA) or the same archaeological region (e.g., West Africa, of even as specific, say, as Ghana). Do the public, for example, of Togo, Botswana, or Kenya consult websites and read academic papers on the websites of Academic.edu or Google Scholar, where academics may upload papers about their country or region? They have never heard of these websites or how to access such resources intended for an elite research audience.

Even if there was wider knowledge about how to access our research, would there be an iota of understanding about what we are trying to communicate and its possible significance to a non-professional reader? Should you be struggling for an answer to this question, let me answer it for you: No, what that reader encounters is mystifying language intended to reach a few expert professionals. After the expenditure of tens of thousands (even hundreds of thousands) of dollars, the investment of thousands of hours in fieldwork, analysis, and publication, is this acceptable? While some may argue that it is a gross misdirection of resources or that it advances scientific archaeology no matter the cost, its disappointment lies in its failure to meet our most compelling obligation—to produce work that is credible and meaningful to the people whose histories we study.

There is no escaping the recognition that we are engaged in a historical enterprise (Deagan, 1988; Lightfoot, 1995; Schmidt & Mrozowski, 2013), that archaeology is the practice of history using scientific approaches. So, how do

we improve our practice? How do we make our findings intelligible to our most important audience—those whose ancestors created the record we are so privileged to study? We do it by writing accessible accounts, by writing parallel narratives that drop the clumsy citations, that erase the mystifying lingo, and that take care to create a narrative that sheds the confusing tables and charts and instead translates the significance of our studies into plain and intelligible language (e.g., Kaindoa 2013). I can hear voices protesting already—oh, but that will not count toward tenure and promotion, or that will be thought as frivolous by colleagues, or that will divert attention away from real research, etc. These protests, however pale when we think of the African people left behind—those who created the record and are left asking, "What did those people find when they dug here?" If this question is asked about our work, then we have failed. We are no better than the colonial archaeologist who excavated and disappeared.

Let me point to several examples of how we can overcome this disability and gain the respect and understanding of African audiences. At the University of Dar es Salaam, a heritage studies program actively addresses the need to translate heritage issues to the public. By using song and dance in heritage videos played on Tanzanian TV, the program has effectively raised consciousness about the rapidly disappearing heritage of the country. These efforts speak to the need to relate research in a manner that is appealing and that creates a supportive public base of support (e.g., Ichumbaki 2016a, 2016b). Such approaches enhance understanding of how archaeology and heritage figure into daily lives.

Importantly, these initiatives have been accompanied by a series of thematic archaeology programs on Tanzania TV that highlight important archaeological research in language that any Tanzanian viewer can relate to (e.g., Ichumbaki 2018, 2020). By using popular media and social media in this manner, archaeology in Tanzania is meeting the challenge of being relevant to its African audience.[ii]

This initiative naturally takes me back to my research about the iron working in the Kagera Region of Tanzania, reflecting on my research to share concerns that arose after the publication of "Complex Iron Technology in Africa" (Schmidt & Avery, 1978). I came to realize that despite the interests of news media around the world in our research, there was little understanding among lay people and Tanzania citizens, let alone the Western world (where folks thought that African ironworkers were primitive and incapable of any technical skill). Taking two years away from my research, I embarked on a journey to translate our research results into film, culminating in the *Tree of Iron* as well as a Kiswahili version of the film, since screened many times on Tanzania TV (O'Neill, Muhley, and Schmidt 1988). Through this medium, we were able to take significant archaeological and technological research and turn it into images and narratives that bought the message to millions of people in ways that are impossible through scientific publications alone.

I am not suggesting that this 35-year-old experiment be a model for others to follow. Rather, my point is that there are attractive, alternative ways to translate research by dissemination of summaries via social media, by the production of snappy TV shorts that capture the core of a

research finding, by the publication of local pamphlets distributed to residents of villages and towns, and by publication of books suitable for classroom use and popular consumption. These examples and myriad other approaches are part of our social responsibility as archaeologists of Africa. Many are already engaged in these forms of communication that share and make accessible the importance of archaeological research in African communities, large and small (e.g., Aleru and Adekola 2016; Mayor and Huysecom 2016; Ogundiran 2012, 2020). Sure, it takes a lot of extra effort. Traditional academic approaches, however, need not be given lower priority. Scientific studies remain important because they build a body of evidence that is permanent and prevails into future generations; they are foundational to building a complex tapestry of history. Yet it is abundantly evident that if those approaches *alone* fail to meet the needs of the people whose ancestors provided the guidance and substance for our studies, then we have failed in our mission to serve the interests of African history.

Seeking Epistemic Humility

We have great potential in meeting these challenges in our future practice. The makeup of the participants attending the PanAf meetings in Zanzibar tells us how far African archaeology has come in the last fifty years, with so many young and talented African archaeologists eager to make significant contributions. I have looked at some of the issues and possible directions that a younger generation may take to avoid some of the mistakes and pitfalls of their ancestors in the discipline, myself included. I have one more piece of advice in this regards, advice that I struggle to follow, advice that will serve you well, advice that may be tough to

implement but essential if the future is to see the successes that we hope for. Be humble. Do not think for a moment that because of your university training, your MA or PhD, your lectureship or professorship that you know any more about the past than a resident of a village, say, in western Botswana or an elder in northern Yorubaland.

Shed the arrogance of the educated expert who breezes into the field, ready to educate residents about the real history of an area or region. We carry privilege by virtue of our background, whatever our color and chosen ethnicity, by being dressed differently, driving upscale vehicles, speaking differently (whatever the language), and engaging in sometimes mystifying activities. This separates us and establishes an immediate hierarchy that is too often seen as conveying an advantage to the researcher eager to get into a trench.

I am suggesting here that African archaeology, any archaeology for that matter, will be more successful if we practice *epistemic humility*. This is a concept that emerges from the recent book *Archaeologies of Listening* (Schmidt and Kehoe 2019), where Alice Kehoe and I bring together more than 120 years of mutual experience to highlight a key ingredient to the practice of anthropological archaeology—set aside your trappings of privilege, of education, of leadership, of expertise and start listening to what others have to say about the past. Prepare yourselves to learn from those who carry different knowledge and knowledge systems. Epistemic humility addresses, constantly, the knowledge that comes with being humble, and being open to being a student, not a teacher or expert. That is the first step.

The second step goes deeper, right into one's epistemic background as a Western-educated (this includes African archaeologists educated in that tradition) scientist/humanist—the readiness to recognize the fragility of your epistemological stance, preparing for its potential crumbling in exposure to other epistemologies, other ontologies (world views), the readiness to accommodate and modify one's epistemic stance vis-à-vis other ways of knowing. In other words, practice a reflexive science that admits its dominance while simultaneously accepting and being open to other ways of knowing that depart from our Western tradition, a process that Pyburn (2009:167) captures succinctly: "Archaeology is demonstrably a product of high colonialism which, at the very least, mandates….reflexivity and humility…"

This may sound like hard work, *bending* how we know knowledge, hacking away at the Jericho-like walls of entrenched Western ways of knowing. It is hard work, that needs to be an integral part of our research portfolio if we are to meet the challenges of understanding African theories of the past. I enjoin you to embrace this future in which we move together to plump the depths of *how local knowledge is constructed* and what we may usefully learn from that process to address representations more appropriately about the African past.

What is Inclusion?

As we move forward to transform our archaeological practices, an integral part of what we do is a reflexive consideration of how we treat our professional colleagues and collaborators, an enormously important part of the larger community we practice. One of our goals must be a

review of past and current practices and an assessment of their need for change. This process is an integral part of postcolonial archaeology—an examination of colonial legacies in our practices. If we are to step out of the colonial shadows of our discipline, then we must confront the need for more robust and inclusive authorship of our work when local collaborators are instrumental in knowledge production. Gone are the old days of anthropology when the lone "collector" mined knowledge from scores of informants and then wrote books and articles about what they "discovered". Or the archaeologist who seems to have been out in the bush shoveling and laboring in the hot sun alone in an individualistic pursuit of the GREAT DISCOVERY without local assistance. "Who now," I hear some say, "We're not like that! It's difficult to make local people authors when they do not write or when universities and journals deny their credibility."

It is difficult, but it is not as difficult as some imagine. Let's take an example from the Amazon, where enlightenment on these issues seems to have taken a stronger path: Michael Heckenberger's research with the Kuikuro shows the great advantages of privileging collaborators by featuring them as co-authors on major scientific papers that address the documentation of ancient plazas and road networks in the Amazon forest (Heckenberger et al. 2003, 2008). Heckenberger recognized that his findings would have been impossible without the collaboration of the Kuikuro and thus, they play a central role in publications. We are often faced with similar conditions, yet we tend to submerge such recognition out of fear of rejection. This is a false fear arising out of colonial milieux in which the expert is the sole authority. We must steadfastly reject the notion

that local authorship will be rebuffed and stand up for the integrity of our collaborators. It is not easy, yet these challenges must be met.

I want to share a short vignette that illustrates the inclusion of local authors and unanticipated surprises about their perspectives on the matter. As I was engaged in community research—where local people initiated and designed an oral tradition and sacred site restoration project in the Kagera Region of Tanzania—we came to realize that two women held unknown, critical information about rituals surrounding the dead king Rugormora Mahe (d. 1680) held every new moon. These ritual performances were central to understanding how the spirit of the dead king lived in a snake that was at the center of a fertility-infused ritual of renewal centered on the New Moon. The testimonies proffered by Ma Eudice Bambanza and Ma Zuriat Mohamed opened a new understanding of ontologies that imbue animals with living human spirits and give them agency in ritual as well as daily affairs (Fig. 1 & Fig. 2). Their revelations opened new ground for understanding the role of other ontologies in structuring the archaeological record, a significant if not major event. It was inappropriate that their roles be minimized, treated as acknowledgements and footnotes.

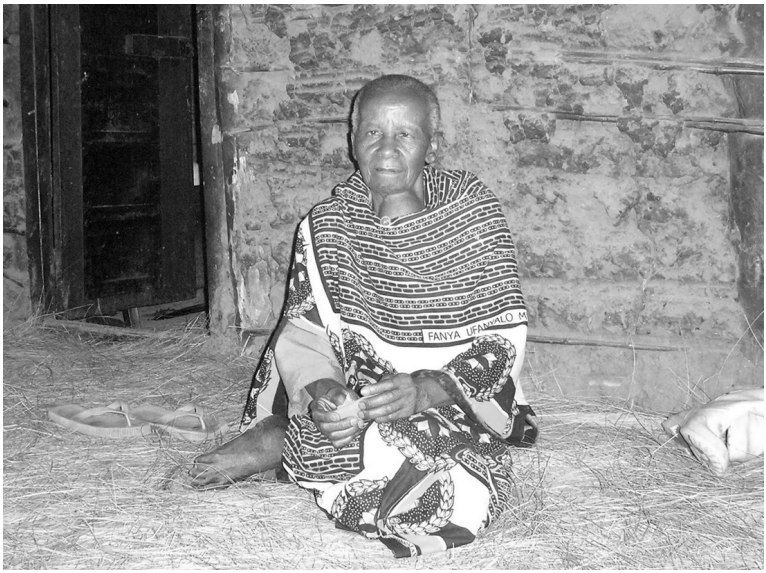

Fig. 1: Ma Eudice Bambanza, oral historian of eye-witness accounts of royal ritual performances.

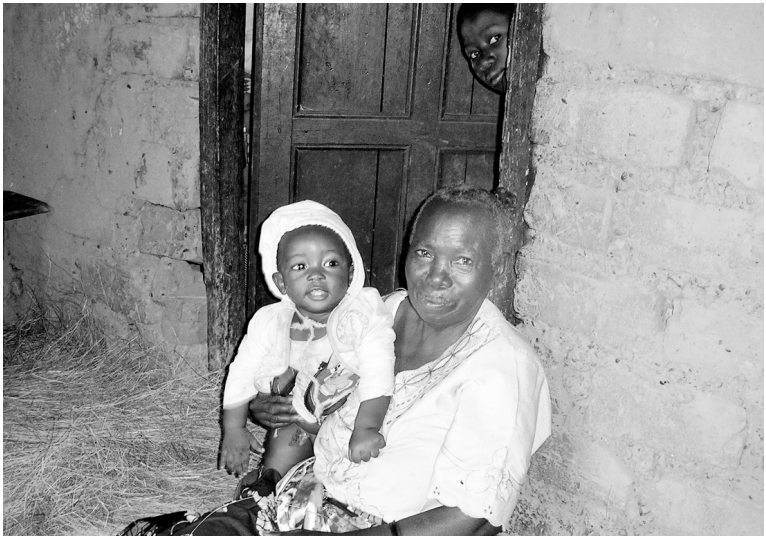

Fig. 2: Ma Zuriat Mohamed of Katuruka village, a witness to the royal spirit possession of a snake.

To resolve this dilemma, I went to them with a pre-publication draft featuring long passages of their narratives linked with my commentary. I asked them to be co-authors. Their reactions varied but were consistent with their roles in Haya culture. One asked why in the world would I want to do that, as I had written it, not she. As I explained that her words were the printed words she read on the page, she came to see her agency and slowly, reluctantly agreed. The second woman was more forthright. She said, no, she saw no purpose in being an author; that was my business. I respected her view. Her neighbor and a senior elder collaborator, however, insisted that we return later to explain the implications for the village if her name was left off. So, we returned, and once she had heard him out, she shrugged and said if that was what we wanted, then she would agree.

These reactions align with cultural values and experiences that deny women significant roles in relating historical narratives; they illustrate that our desires for inclusion may counter local sensibilities. In retrospect, I am pleased that another collaborator persisted. Both women were already acknowledged as experts by their male counterparts and now their contributions are permanently enshrined in the memory of the village. Such small steps into the future of inclusive archaeology are examples of how our work may gain legitimacy and gain a following among those it impacts the most—the people we work with. It is a worthy and natural pathway into the future of a decolonized practice.

Opening Archaeological Minds

The discussion I have presented risks sounding too abstract and possibly outside the experience of some. The latter is potentially auspicious, for if you have been challenged to think about these issues and their applicability to your research, I will have succeeded in a small way. I now address the notion that these concerns are abstract by presenting a substantive example of what it means to engage other epistemologies—ways of knowing what you know—and ontologies—world views and how they structure daily lives, political and economic activities, ritual life, and religion (Arthur, 2019; Schmidt & Arthur, 2018). I turn back to the knowledge of Ma Eustice and Ma Zuriat to bring this point home.

As some may know, the legend of King Rugomora Mahe was closely tied to a great iron tower that he built during the 17th century at the sacred shrine of Kaiija, a massive ancient Ficus tree. We knew from oral traditions and archaeology that he co-opted an ancient sacred site memorializing iron working and dating to the second half of the 1st millennium BCE, replete with an Early Iron Age forge at a shrine whose name means 'the place of the forge' (Schmidt, 2017). The takeover of the shrine by Rugomora's dynasty was political, territorial, economic (controlling iron production by associating the king with its origins), and historical motives that when acted out created the illusion of great antiquity and legitimacy by association. In other words, King Rugomora and Kaiija shrine tree became associated as one entity. This is the process we call associative identity (Ricoeur, 1977). The unfolding of these altered relationships is significant, for they illustrate the

malleable and dynamic qualities of ancient sacred places in the Kagera Region.

What we did not understand—until we heard the narratives of these two remarkable women—is that the reign of Rugomora at the sacred Kaiija tree never ended. It persisted up until the mid-20th century through the agency of spirit snakes and spirit mediums. After King Rugomora's body had rotted in a beer boat, his spirit emerged as a snake that was thereafter a central agent in rituals of renewal during the New Moon. These rituals were interwoven with the imagery of reproductive iron working as well as the constancy of the moon's renewal and a snake's shedding of skin, not to mention its phallic qualities. As the living human agent in charge of Rugomora the snake, the chief female ritual official, Njeru (meaning the white sheep), prepared herself for each new moon. Naked and smeared with butter fat, she sat quietly as Rugomora, a rock python, entered her lap, his spirit animating the ritual performance of renewal and fertility of the kingdom (Schmidt, Bambanza, and Mohamed 2017).

The ontology of animals as living human spirits is outside our current scientific ontology that denies such phenomena; despite such denials, some are intrepidly developing new ways to relate other ontologies to the material world (e.g., Alberti & Bray, 2009; Arthur 2019; Zedeño, 2009). Agency that structures the physical world is played out in ritual performances: structures were built to house the snake, daily routines required his feeding with milk, the medium's compound was structured to feature the spirit snake Rugomora during the New Moon. Schedules, provisions, labor, dance, ritual incantations, and prayers were

conducted by prescribed traditions in circumscribed space—all of which speak to how this ontology structured life and thus structured what we may hope to find in the archaeological record (Schmidt 2018). Such ontological insights warn us that long-term inquiry is critical to our practice, that we should never assume that we have found all there is to know. It was humbling to learn that new evidence emerged after researching and writing about this site for forty years. These revelations were unveiled by changing local attitudes of male knowledge keepers toward women, accepting them as experts in historical knowledge. This provokes us to refocus on the subaltern narratives, the hidden perspectives, that open new avenues of practice. Despite unfamiliarity with incorporating other ontologies into theory-making and practice, their presence is not as hard to understand as may initially appear.

Let me cite another brief example—a student project that examined faunal remains of mixed French-Native American households, the results of which presented an interpretative dilemma: in the north country of Michigan when fur traders were killing beavers by the tens of thousands, the absence of beaver meat in the diet of mixed marriage households puzzled the student researcher. What about a food taboo, I queried, curious if the Native women could not eat beaver as they would be eating living beings. Research into the early ethnographies confirmed that a local ontology held that beavers were living beings, a phenomenon that likely structured the archaeological record. One may imagine the plethora of settings in Africa in which food taboos prevented the consumption of animals that were clan or lineage totems—biasing the faunal remains studied by

archaeologists and misleading those unaware of the power of ontologies to structure behavior and physical space.

Final Remarks

These are more than cautionary tales. If we continue to ignore the role of ontology in our practice, then we will be openly declaring that *our ontologies* will continue to privilege what we can see, touch, and quantify—a sure way to erase African history. We should make no mistake that there is a significant denial among Western students of Africa that studying other ontologies threatens history. For example, a colleague asserts that historical engagement with other ontologies is insidious, threatening historical protocols and methods, viz: "…to call for the incorporation of local conceptions within western interpretations is to risk undermining one's authority as an historian because the historical method requires the rejection of any conception of reality that conflicts with one's own" (Stump 2013:276). The confident, imperial authority of this statement is staggering in its disdain for the history of others, its absolute certainty that there is only one reality. The historical method maintains the opposite of what is proposed—that we must consider, evaluate, and understand how history is made in many different settings. The implications of a view that African ontologies contaminate our history-making denies how African history is made—within ontological frames that we best understand if we are to do an archaeology that captures African ways of representing the past.

When we do grapple with how to understand and incorporate African views of history into our archaeological practice, then we may be excoriated for not addressing "…whether or how this has avoided compromising the

tenets of western historical knowledge…" (Stump 2013: 277) In other words, we must admit that there is only one knowledge system, an arbitrary 'making of rules' that valorizes the West above all other knowledge systems. These are the kinds of arguments that we may anticipate in the future, arising from a deeply entrenched Western-centric approach to archaeology and history. If we pay them heed, then we have lost our way and the potential to bring African archaeology into a new era of African-based knowledge systems and worldviews. We must be determined to resist such rulemaking to ensure that we "Won't Get Fooled Again" (The Who 1971).

I have touched on only a few issues and new directions among the many facing African archaeology today and into the future. Among other issues that need attention is more work to be done around the continent to make African archaeology self-sufficient and homegrown without dependence on outside researchers and their funding sources. While there have been great strides forward over the last four decades, let us not forget that investment in local expertise is far from adequate, particularly at the post-graduate level, a deficiency matched by insufficient investment in archaeological facilities and equipment at many institutions.

Finally, be pragmatic and recognize that the practice of African universities advancing their MA and PhD graduates into faculty positions risks intellectual stagnation and the exclusion of new ideas that depart from the taken-for-granted paradigms that characterize some archaeology departments. Cross-fertilization is critical to growing and developing new perspectives and research agendas that

meet future needs. Such changes beg to be addressed by a new generation of African archaeologists bold enough to change business-as-usual hiring practices at African universities.

I end with a question: How may one's personal and *collective goals* be met while adding to the rich tapestry of deep African history while also meeting the needs of people who for too long, have been stripped of and blockaded from their histories? The answer lies within each person. I have pointed out several pathways that may help in that quest for a better future in African archaeology, one that realises the dreams of the continent to be understood and represented in a manner compatible with indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing the world.

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