

A photograph of an archaeological excavation site. In the foreground, a large, circular pit has been dug into the reddish-brown soil. A wooden sign is placed inside the pit, reading "KINANSI FEATURE 35cm BELOW RIM". Four people are standing around the pit. On the left, a man in a blue and red tank top and green pants stands with his hands on his hips. In the center, a woman wearing a white hat and a dark shirt is writing on a clipboard. To her right, a man in a dark shirt and a headwrap looks on. In the background, another man wearing a yellow headwrap and a white shirt stands near some green foliage. The title "POSTCOLONIAL ARCHAEOLOGIES in Africa" is overlaid on the top half of the image in a large, yellow, stylized font.

POSTCOLONIAL ARCHAEOLOGIES *in* Africa

Edited by Peter R. Schmidt

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Photo by Felix Chami, University of Dar es Salaam.

Postcolonial Archaeologies in Africa

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This book is dedicated to the courageous students of archaeology at the University of Asmara, Eritrea. They, like their fellow students, have endured oppression, persecution, and profound disenchantment—unkind outcomes compared to their initial enthusiasm and excitement about archaeology. May we not forget their many individual sacrifices, and may we remember to always be vigilant in our pursuit of social justice for our collaborators, particularly our students.

Preface

The idea for this volume arose out of a multisession symposium (Postcolonial Archaeology) at the 2005 meetings of the Twelfth Congress of the Pan African Association for Prehistory and Related Studies held in Gaborone, Botswana. Organized by Sven Ouzman, Peter Schmidt, and Jonathan Walz, these multiple sessions also included papers by Ndukuyakhe Ndlovu, Alinah Segobye, Chap Kusimba, and Karega-Munene. While we did not then discuss prospects for a follow-up symposium to explore compelling themes asking for further elaboration, a chance discussion with the organizers of the 2005 Chacmool meetings at the University of Calgary (where I was present to give a keynote address on the play of tropes in archaeology) revealed their tentative plans to organize the 2006 Chacmool meetings around a postcolonial theme. I encouraged that direction and began to contemplate what was needed to crystallize the key issues and themes found within postcolonial critiques in African archaeology. Over the next several months, I agreed to organize a symposium that would bring together a complete representation of African and other scholars engaging postcolonial practice in Africa, including the previously mentioned participants from the PAA meetings in Gaborone, as well as Felix Chami, Roderick McIntosh, Michael Rowlands, and Augustin Holl.

As plans for the Calgary meeting unfolded, at the 2006 Society of Africanist Archaeologists (SAfA) meetings, also in Calgary, some of the original participants, including Segobye, Ouzman, Karega-Munene, and Schmidt, met to discuss our mission and to organize our presentations. We were joined in that planning session by Felix Chami, who was also present at SAfA. As we neared the Chacmool meeting date, however, it became apparent that, with the need to spread the few monies around to other regions of the world, we did not have the financial resources for a full panel of African colleagues. With the full concurrence of our African colleagues, we reluctantly and regretfully withdrew from the Chacmool conference, intent on finding the funding that would allow all of our African colleagues to participate in a series of seminars in face-to-face discussions. I and my collaborators are indebted to our Calgary colleagues for their initial inspiration and encouragement.

Subsequently, we presented the idea for a special conference dedicated to postcolonial thought and archaeology in Africa to the Center for African Studies at the University of Florida. The center committee on special events quickly endorsed sponsorship, and with additional support from Dean Dennis Jett of the International Center and Vice President Winn Phillips of the Division of Sponsored Research, we were able to move forward with our plans for a weeklong seminar in late March and early April 2007. We are very grateful for the support of the University of Florida and for the enthusiastic encouragement of Leo Villalon, director of the Center for African Studies. We are also grateful for the support of Ken Sassaman, chair of the Department of Anthropology, which helped sponsor Augustin Holl's attendance and separate presentation at the end of the seminar as the 2008 Distinguished Lecturer in African Archaeology.

The seminar was modeled after the advanced seminar format used by the School for Advanced Research. This format entails the distribution of papers several months before the seminar, which is broken into discussions of approximately three or four papers per day, with the last deliberations focused on common themes and how each paper might be revised to speak to key issues. The only departure from an SAR format occurred when a number of guests observed the meetings on the first day. We also included several invited guests with postcolonial interests from regional institutions. For the most part, these additional participants took the role of observers, leaving most of the discourse to the seminar invitees. Two of the invited guests—James Denbow and Florie Bugarin—because of the importance of their contributions to the seminar, were later invited to contribute papers to the edited collection. We also invited our colleague Faye Harrison at the University of Florida to participate as the author of a concluding overview chapter—from the perspective of a sociocultural anthropologist. Harrison's inclusion was exceedingly important, for her championing of the deconstruction of colonialism in anthropology is widely respected, as are her analyses of the marginality and subaltern status of minorities and women in anthropology. A champion of interdisciplinarity and intradisciplinarity, Harrison made invaluable contributions to the seminar discussions and the book.

The papers in this volume touch on a number of issues that often avoid scrutiny in African archaeology and the larger archaeological community. Because these issues are so pertinent to realizing a postcolonial critique in archaeology, the authors felt compelled to unmask the masquerade—speaking openly about the power relations that keep African archaeologists marginalized and writing without ambiguity about failed expectations in states such as South Africa and Eritrea. Several themes that better elucidate the tensions between the practice of archaeology and the needs of local communities, with all their attendant problems with disease, food, and civil disorder, rose to the surface. This disenchantment, as we now conceptualize it, speaks to one of the primary problems facing archaeology today—how to practice archaeology while also being aware of and involved in issues that are often life threatening to people with whom we work and who proffer their hospitality. These are profound issues of social justice that confront us on a daily basis. Disenchantment, of course, reaches far beyond the archaeological community. It is an integral part of the postcolonial condition in Africa today: disenchantment with little change in educational policy from colonial times to today; disenchantment over failed political and economic dreams; disenchantment over national institutions that prevent local engagement in heritage management; disenchantment over patronage systems in archaeology and heritage studies that filter and block talented young archaeologists from advancing their careers; disenchantment over corruption and its erosion of credibility in all levels of government and heritage institutions. All of these issues and many more are part of what affects daily lives in Africa today.

This volume seeks to build an archaeological culture of transparency that parallels the more popular call for transparency seen in democracy studies. An integral part of decolonizing African

archaeology, transparency unmask behaviors, policies, and practices that find their roots in the colonial experience. Deconstruction of colonial practices has long been a part of African archaeology, but the silence that hides many other derivative practices ensures, for example, the continuation of patronage networks and the disenfranchisement of young talent. Silence gives license to foot-dragging in improving training for black archaeologists in South Africa. Silence also masks state violations and abuses of human rights, including the right to a cultural past. And silencing very much comes into play when important research explaining change overturns deeply entrenched and essentialized colonial paradigms. How does this process unfold? By purposefully ignoring important alternative histories proffered by young Africanists and by misrepresenting the significance of new ways of seeing the past. Young (and older) African and Africanist archaeologists fight against such marginalization every day. This book presents an opportunity for us to hear the story of their struggles.

We owe much to Sven Ouzman, senior lecturer in archaeology at the University of Pretoria. As a co-organizer, Sven played a leading role in organizing the first postcolonial session at the 2005 PAA meetings in Gaborone, Botswana, to which the genesis of this book may be traced. Although he attended the planning session at the 2006 SAfA meetings in Calgary, Sven could not participate in our 2007 meetings at the University of Florida, having just taken his position at the University of Pretoria with all its attendant demands and duties. While his contribution is absent from this book, his research and teaching are an inspiration to all aspiring to practice postcolonial archaeology in Africa. A special word of thanks goes to Ed Tennant and Jonathan Walz, who helped organize the sessions. I am particularly grateful to Jonathan, who has been a steadfast colleague and marvelous collaborator. I am deeply grateful for having so many wonderful partners in this business we call African archaeology. My profound thanks go to all who so graciously lent their time to make this project a success, including two anonymous reviewers who contributed significantly to the improvement of the volume. My thanks, too, to Uzma Rivzi and Matthew Liebmann, who so graciously agreed to share a prepublication copy of their book *Archaeology and the Postcolonial Critique*. Finally, the contributors are delighted that the SAR Press is publishing this volume, the planning and execution of which resonates with the SAR mission. We much appreciate the encouragement and patience of Catherine Cocks, the SAR Press co-director and executive editor.

Little Lake Santa Fe, Florida
January 2009

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What Is Postcolonial about Archaeologies in Africa?

Peter R. Schmidt

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

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

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

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

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

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