

Rediscovering Community Archaeology in Africa and Reframing its Practice

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Community archaeology and heritage work have a long history in Africa, a history embedded in the practice of ethnoarchaeology, studies of indigenous knowledge systems, and the collaborative study of oral traditions and other intangible heritage. This paper reviews some of the intellectual legacies that foreground community approaches today in Africa. Whilst top-down approaches have tended to characterize many projects in recent history, the requirements of outside development agencies often force archaeologists into collaborative compliance that communities are not ready to embrace or where histories of land alienation complicate best efforts to engage communities. An alternative community approach arising from a grassroots initiative in Northwest Tanzania is discussed to illustrate how collaboration may lead to mutual research and heritage development that contribute new knowledge to African history and archaeology and improve community well-being.

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Reflection and rediscovery

Thirty years ago I shared with a mostly American audience some common practices in African archaeology that privileged local needs and sensibilities — one of the first explicit recognitions of a collaborative approach in the practice of archaeology in Africa, namely:

One of the most critical issues facing archaeology in Africa (and North America) today is the need to perform research on problems that are significant to the historical self-identity of living peoples, particularly those descended from the prehistoric and historic populations we study. As anthropologists we cannot continue to perpetuate Western paradigms that militate against local historical sensibilities. This is particularly true of the practice of archaeology in the colonized world; it is even more poignantly relevant in Africa because of the colonial history of the West on that continent. (Schmidt 1983, 63)

My point in citing this passage is to refocus attention on research that emphasizes local historical identity as a key benefit to emerge from collaborative research amongst archaeologists, heritage workers, and communities in Africa. This perspective has been an integral part of African archaeology for decades, although it was not named or consciously recognized as community archaeology. Rather, it was a holistic anthropological inquiry using archives, archaeology, and oral testimonies — the latter depending on the participation if not the initiative of African peoples who engage heritage studies and archaeology. Following a full review of the ethnohistorical and ethnoarchaeological research carried out in Africa up to 1983, I concluded in the same *American Antiquity* essay that,

[...] ethnoarchaeology and historical archaeology in Africa have pioneered perspectives that are sensitive to history, symbolic systems, and the historical sensibilities of local peoples. This further suggests that *when cultures in Africa participate in the interpretation of their own past*, we can begin to build a self-enriching tradition of archaeology free from the domination of Western paradigms and appropriate to the African setting. (emphasis mine; Schmidt 1983, 75)

This insight into archaeological practice in Africa was not self-consciously intended to complement what we would now call community archaeology, but it certainly anticipated by several decades the importance of integrating local historical knowledge, namely: ‘Bringing this knowledge to the foreground and acknowledging ethnohistoric data as central for including Indigenous views in interpretations are both aspects of a decolonizing archaeology practice’ (Atalay 2006a, 275). Long an unrecognized if not a subaltern practice in African settings, we may now openly acknowledge its place in the lineage of thought related to what has become known as community practices. There are a variety of ways in which these perspectives are represented in the literature, including public and participatory archaeology rubrics. Here I consider both archaeology and heritage together as community actions in Africa, because in my research in Northwest Tanzania (Kagera Region) heritage sites are the focus of collaborative research that often have archaeological components, with their archaeological dimension seen by some people as an integral part of their heritage.

My very first step as a young archaeologist was to collect oral traditions and oral histories about the Haya people in Northwest Tanzania for a full year before I put a spade or trowel in the ground, building a collaborative approach that privileged the way that the Haya thought about and related their histories. I was a neophyte in the midst of a sophisticated system of oral record keeping that depended on rigorous transmission of oral accounts and sacred places that acted as mnemonics — parts of the sacred and political landscape such as shrines, burial places, and royal palace locations (Schmidt 1978, 2006).

Forty-four years ago, this participatory community approach fit well with local cultural sensibilities and was in keeping with my apprenticeship to the most knowledgeable keepers of oral accounts, allowing me to reach a deeper understanding of Haya history (Schmidt 1978). These relationships led, organically, to more detailed collaborations and dynamic planning and strategizing over potential sites where archaeological investigations were considered as a possible form of joint inquiry.

More than five decades later, such approaches are appropriately being heralded in settings around the globe as the future of archaeology — a collaborative or public archaeology that incorporates the participation and initiative of communities for their benefit. This trend, specifically called Community Archaeology and Community Heritage, are much needed perspectives that balance the scientific objectives of archaeology driven by professionals and brings a new, local perspective to bear on what constitutes heritage at a local level. The most positive attributes out of this increasingly popular agenda is a focus that continues the goals followed more than five decades ago in Africa — a privileging of local needs, foremost of which is to overcome representations of local history that arose out of colonialism.

Decolonization

Decolonization of archaeological practice looms very large in community archaeology and heritage work because it addresses issues of power and control of archaeology — who initiates archaeological research or heritage work, who sets the research and interpretative agendas, and who controls the dissemination of results (see Atalay 2006a, 2006b; Schmidt and Patterson 1995; Smith and Wobst 2005). The last issue may be one of the most difficult to address. It was the focus of our introduction to *Making Alternative Histories* (Schmidt and Patterson 1995), where we argued that specialized esoteric language of archaeological reports alienated people whose history was being studied, and that it drove a significant wedge between archaeologists and the communities in which they worked — a theme reiterated recently by Chirikure and Pwiti (2008) in their review of African community experiments. Participatory approaches have grown in popularity over the last two decades around the globe and in Africa (e.g. Abu-Khafajah 2010; Atalay 2012; Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008; Cooke 2010; Dowdall and Parrish 2001; Marshall 2009; McDavid 2002; Murimbika and Moyo 2008; Silliman 2008), but archaeological practice that unites rather than separates archaeologists and local people in the field has been much slower to follow the academic rhetoric underwriting such views. In spite of the multiple resolutions and codes of ethics, such as those implemented by the World Archaeological Congress insisting that communities must be brought into the process of archaeological planning, execution, and writing, we have far to travel to deliver the goods.

Sonya Atalay (2006b, 2012), one of the most effective advocates amongst the community of Native American archaeologists, writes compellingly about the need for archaeology to develop new methodologies and new theoretical approaches based on community initiatives in archaeology and heritage work (see Kuwansisiwma 2008). This perspective resonates with initiatives taken by communities in Kagera, Tanzania — engagements that are a relatively infrequent genre of community participation, yet that hold great promise in the valourization and revitalization of histories shredded through colonialism, globalization, and trauma. When archaeologists try to implement ideas, Atalay is quick to note that it is a slippery slope when archaeologists try to implement *their* ideas of fulsome community engagement based on reciprocity and mutual benefits. She strongly believes, as do I, that community engagement is the way of the future in archaeology and that archaeologist-driven

projects not accounting for the needs of the community are practices that retain colonial legacies of non-consultation and separation of ‘subject peoples’ to the directives and desires of a science often practiced in the interest of imperial interests, whether the early twentieth-century colonial state or the postcolonial state. Lest we forget, Bruce Trigger (1980) made similar points in his seminar article on science and history in Native American settings.

A slippery slope enters the picture when archaeologists, well-intended and earnest to apply such a philosophy, try to put it into practice and find that some communities have no interest in the archaeology of their past nor in heritage work in their midst. Or, they may find that the communities where they would like to establish collaborative programmes mistrust archaeologists, manipulate them to their economic advantage, or provide only token forms of collaboration. Each of these scenarios — only a small sampling of what one might expect — present soul-searching challenges and sometime impossible difficulties. Basically they speak to the issue of what happens when outside agendas for participatory approaches are presented to a community, rather than what happens when a community comes to life with its own agenda. The direction from which the initiative flows will often influence success and engagement.

Atalay’s (2012) recent review of her attempts to engage very different genres of communities provides some useful insights into some of the difficulties and successes that emerge in community-oriented research. Her review provides a device through which insights into top-down and bottom-up collaborations can be applied to Africa and other world regions. She starts with how she tried to interest communities around Çatalhöyük, Turkey, in archaeological research. She admits that her initiative — and her refreshing honesty in describing it as her initiative rather than the communities’ initiative — did not elicit positive reactions. No one in these five communities initially saw any benefit in archaeological research. It was only after an extensive and complex educational campaign that local people slowly began to see ways that they could participate.

Despite its best intentions, the Çatalhöyük experiment started with top-down practice whilst it espoused participatory engagement. This is not an anomaly. In fact it is the common template for projects that want community engagement. It was not the community that came to Hodder, Atalay, or other archaeologists engaged in research. People in the villages from which labourers were drawn did not seek ways to engage archaeology. It was archaeologists affiliated with the project after it had been up and running for years who took initiatives to the villagers, engaging in extensive efforts at education about archaeology. Some of these top-down initiatives led to positive results. This is a powerful case study because it illustrates how much hard work is in store for archaeologists who recognize the importance of participatory archaeology benefiting descendants and local people but where such communities display little or no interest in archaeological inquiry. Most archaeologists working in rural areas of Africa, Asia, or the Americas can expect similar disinterest on the part of local people unfamiliar with archaeology, unless we modify our approach to work with communities in developing training and other educational perspectives before projects are launched. To engage with communities in this manner before launching projects presents some stiff challenges of the sort that Atalay shares.

Her study sets out a stark prescription for extensive preparatory work. It also causes us to ask — how might the Çatalhöyük project have avoided the disengagement of nearby communities over the long term? One answer, I believe, lies in capacity building before a project begins or at least from the very beginning of projects; that is, training local people how and *why* archaeology is conducted and what kinds of questions are appropriate. It also means working together with those associated with the project in whatever role they play — labourer, technician, manager — about how *they* interpret the research results — be they archaeological finds or heritage management plans. This should be a prelude to more complex interactions and on-site training that privilege the intelligence and potential contributions of the labour force.

An important part of any collaborative project is the exercise of a reflexivity that questions privileging scientific goals over local participation, and examines the degree to which we are willing to accept that intelligent people will respond enthusiastically to skilled training if they are invested with trust. I find that local farmers are much more skilled in many archaeological tasks than advanced archaeology students. They quickly recognize changes in soil colour and texture, recognizing odd features such as micro-inclusions of clay, and practice an archaeology that has much finer motor-control of tools than most university students and even some professional archaeologists. I sometimes pair university students with locally trained archaeologists, with the latter acting as trainers. We must also ask if mental restraints in our thinking — no matter how reasonably justified — are a form of denial, a way of exclusion that seeks comfort in expeditious research results over the more demanding but ultimately more satisfying task of inclusion and full training, not just in sieving, flotation, sorting — all tasks that require lower levels of training. Given that most rural folk are better equipped to deal with the basics of archaeology than are university students, then why are they not included from the beginning and invested with trust to increase their confidence and sense of ownership?

Investing trust in local collaborators — an African legacy

A recent initiative taken in Kagera Region during 2008 by the leadership of Katuruka village (Schmidt 2010) to restore, preserve, and reclaim their heritage cannot be explained by formal training in archaeology at university level or the presence and active involvement of a developed infrastructure, such as an active Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) dedicated to cultural heritage and preservation. Rather, such spirited awareness may be traced back to the extensive participation of Katuruka residents in the archaeology of heritage sites within their community between 1969 and 1984 and their clear awareness that archaeological goals were linked to the oral traditions told about sites. The original research programme effected several decades earlier was guided and jointly designed by elders, building on and complementing local values and needs — now part of the legacy of local engagement. Through this period, several of those who were talented in archaeological inquiry went on to lead excavations and supervise major regional surveys, clearly understanding the goals and helping to design the day-to-day methods that were appropriate to the local circumstances as well as finding sites of major

importance (Schmidt and Childs 1985). Memories of these engagements and the significance of the archaeology previously conducted in the community by community members lived on through time to create informed knowledge ready for additional development.

The methods that were developed with Haya collaborators and communities during the 1969–84 period were later taken into the university classroom, laboratory, and field schools when the formal teaching of archaeology was launched in Tanzania in 1985 (Schmidt 2005). Amongst the innovations introduced into the instructional programme at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) was the idea, soon formalized as a requirement, that students design their field school research project. The faculty felt that it was critical that students, as the most important stakeholders, take ownership of the research programme in which training occurred. Initially the intake of students was so small that all could participate as a group, but soon students were required to present individual proposals, the best designed of which would be chosen for collective treatment leading to field school research.

There were detractors who said, ‘How can you expect naive students without any significant prior experience to design research projects?’ Our response was simple: that we were not looking for precise and theoretically informed projects — those would come through instruction and growing confidence through time. Rather, we were looking for innovative ideas that drew on local histories and ideas about the past where archaeology could contribute. We encouraged our students to think out of the box, asking them to move beyond established, colonial, and normative research ideas that could be challenged by research in new regions and sites. Once a basic research idea was accepted and discussed at length, then students were asked to design a research strategy that would be used to obtain information that they needed to test their ideas. The next step was implementation, close guidance, and modifications as the research strategies were applied in the field. Constant discussion about the adequacy or inadequacy of strategies and tactics built a sense of empowerment and ownership in students, who by their second year were eager to test their ideas in a new setting. This approach stands in stark contrast to most western field schools, where students are plugged into faculty-determined agendas to perform rote tasks that often help advanced academics achieve their goals.

Within the Tanzanian setting, then, capacity building unfolded in two dimensions: 1) with local people in the field, stakeholders and collaborators who assimilated and engaged archaeological research as trusted associates; and 2) with students a decade later, given freedom to exercise their informed but creative imaginations and to take ownership of research ideas and results. The two are irrevocably linked, the first setting the scene for the development of the second. I recently learned from a Senior Lecturer of Archaeology at the UDSM that this training practice was still drawn upon occasionally despite much larger enrolments and, moreover, that the staff considered it a centrepiece of their former training programme. I suspect that the investment of trust in students is one reason that the UDSM now has one of the most productive archaeological research teams in the African continent today and produces more MA and PhDs than any other institution. This history also helps to explain why the scene was set for an enthusiastic initiative for heritage preservation and development in Katuruka in 2008, with an emphasis on the emotional qualities of interanimation

(Basso 1996) that occur in the presence of ancient places and sacred shrines. The elders understood that archaeology and heritage were significant to the health of their community. They envisioned that if heritage work focused on a well-known archaeological site with a high level of significance, then they would follow an expeditious route to realize heritage development goals that were brewing for years. It was serendipity that I happened upon the scene in 2008, when my reappearance after more than two decades away crystalized these long held views into rapidly formulated plans (see Schmidt 2010).

Heckenburger (2008) describes the development of a similar process in Amazonia, where initially he worked alone but by the 1990s trained his local collaborators as fully qualified archaeologists who understood archaeological principles and wanted to put them to work for the benefit of their community. Since then his collaborators have co-published professional papers about the archaeology they helped to perform in their communities. Elsewhere in Brazil these principles were translated into university pedagogy for field schools.

Paying respect to our ancestors and others

Given the growing interest in community and participatory archaeology over the last decade, it is easy to forget the ground-breaking work in community approaches of archaeologists over the last half century. One early example of community engagement is Thurstan Shaw's investigations at Igbo Ukwu in southeastern Nigeria in the mid-1960s. As a colonial era archaeologist, Shaw did not justify the Igbo Ukwu excavations in the language of postcolonial theory, as decolonization through community archaeology, but he did involve himself in several activities that have since become hallmarks for community and public archaeology elsewhere. First, the Igbo Ukwu excavations of a royal burial and associated shrines occurred as the result of an invitation to Shaw on the part of local administrative authorities in 1958, based on a report about discoveries in the community. From the beginning, the excavations were not part of Shaw's research agenda. His reputation as someone who worked easily within Nigerian cultural settings paved the way for his engagement with the community, along with his personal ties to people in the community. Igbo Ukwu is distinctive for Shaw's integration of the community into the project from the very beginning, along with a wide array of other stakeholders, including the local chief, district officer, police, land owners, and Federal officials. This was partly by necessity to deal with difficult and mercurial negotiations for permission to excavate sites under multiple ownership as well as threats of looting. The village setting of the excavation meant intimate daily contact with the members of the community, many of whom participated as trained labourers in the excavations conducted in the yards of several land owners who also provided guidance in finding sites and performed rituals to propitiate the ancestors.

The clearest and most significant contributions that Shaw made to public and community archaeology were his diverse publications about the site. He followed academic expectations by publishing a comprehensive two volume report (Shaw 1970), but perhaps more importantly he also published an accessible book written in plain English that appealed to a wide audience (Shaw 1977; see Schmidt 1983). In

other words, he demystified archaeology for Nigerians, making it easy to understand whilst simultaneously featuring a spectacular shrine with very early and remarkable bronze objects. Through this approach he created an identity with the mission of archaeology amongst a large Nigerian audience. This is an enduring legacy, public/community archaeology at its best, very early in its practice in Africa.

The real milestone in community archaeology in Africa is Merrick Posnansky's investigations at Begho in Northwest Ghana (Posnansky 1979, 2004, 2009, 2010). Starting in 1970, this project first investigated the impact of trade in a medieval to modern era (1200–1900) town in Northwest Ghana organized into different quarters attributed by oral traditions to different ethnic-linguistic groups. The archaeology conducted at Begho from 1970 to 1979 demonstrated that different artisanal skills were represented over time, including ivory carving, as well as iron, textile, and brass production that were linked with Saharan trade. Beyond the substantive contributions that long-term archaeology at Begho made to African archaeology and history, Posnansky's research at Begho brought community archaeology into the spotlight (2004). Parallel to his conventional archaeological investigations, Posnansky developed a long-term ethnoarchaeological study that deeply involved the local community over a period of 28 years until 1998. Initially the research agendas were collaborative with Ghanaian researchers but over time the residents in the community — from multiple walks of life — were brought into the research as critical participants in the research. As Posnansky (2004, 34; emphasis mine) describes:

During all this time we have worked closely with different sectors of the local community, with the chief and his elders, amongst whom I have the honor to sit as the Ahohohene, literally 'Chief of the Foreigners,' who include the Dagarti laborers, the schoolteachers as well as people who may have come from villages only a few kilometers away. We have consulted with the town development committee and with various political committees, which have changed their names over the years in reflection of the prevailing political ideology such as the local committee for the Defense of Revolution in the 1980s. *These bodies have assisted us* with the data to assess population, numbers of inhabited houses, education statistics, festival observance, rubbish disposal, etc. This local help, together with our periodic visits, enables us to have a better control over basic data than the two official census exercises that have taken place since we started our surveys.

Posnansky's longitudinal study focuses on processes of change, including population change, the expansion of the physical village, and changing farming practices amongst others. The gaps in visits by researchers to the contemporary village of Hani made the participation of the community members critical to this long-term study. Success in documenting change depended on devoted engagement by community members over a long period of time, a gradual process in which community archaeology and research expertise flowered. This marks the Begho/Hani project as one the best illustrations of community archaeology at work in Africa, long hidden from recognition because of its early implementation and because it was not represented using the tropes of more recent community archaeology.

What insights develop out of top-down Africa?

When we look at the current literature about community archaeology in Africa today, we are struck by the scarcity of substantive examples that illustrate the recognition of these earlier principles at work in African practice. An overview by Chirikure and Pwiti (2008) takes a global perspective by examining community archaeology in other parts of the world and relating them to conditions in southern Africa. Chirikure *et al.* (2010) discuss the same case studies using a heritage management trope. These are useful exercises, for they show a paucity of archaeological practice and heritage work with community participation in a significant region of Africa. These studies mostly examine southern African cases. Southern Africa is a large region with a long history of heritage work and is therefore a field of inquiry that is deservedly important for the continent. In either case — archaeology or heritage management — there is little evidence presented of communities that fabricated and participated in the activities, or took initiatives or contributed to and were integrated into development and research agendas. Africa appears to have fewer recent cases illustrating active initiatives and engagements by communities. This illusion results from two trajectories: 1) quality projects that are not widely reported (e.g. Keitumetse 2002; Mayor 2013; Muringaniza 1998; Ndlovu 2005; Negussie and Wondimu 2012); 2) significant projects that are in their incipient stages or recently reported (e.g. Abungu 2012; Apoh 2013; Pikirayi 2011); and 3) an emphasis on projects that previously encountered problems — poorly demonstrating the viability of community engagement.

A central theme that emerges in the southern African overviews is that participatory approaches are about ‘giving power to the local communities in all aspects of heritage, including research and management’ (Chirikure *et al.* 2010, 31). This is an important principle that incorporates ideas of social justice, but it also reveals a fundamental problem in heritage work as it is currently being conceptualized in contemporary Africa. The notion that power must be *given* to the local communities assumes a higher agency — someone or some entity *with the power and* sufficiently enlightened to bestow power on communities. In other words, agency lies outside the communities.

Under this way of thinking, communities are bestowed power, a top-down approach that runs the risk of dependency, and creates a separation between communities and those who decide which local actors have the greatest potential to be ‘empowered’. This is not unique to African archaeology or heritage work; it is an issue that infuses much of the development discourse today, with an abundance of rhetoric about empowering communities by those who set the ideological agenda and hold the purse strings, usually outside of archaeology and heritage studies and management.

Chirikure and Pwiti provide some important insights into the top-down approach that has informed so much of Africa. They examine case studies where community participation has been implemented, and it is important to understand that implementation comes from agents *outside* the communities. Herein lies the most vexing problem of community archaeology and heritage work in Africa — outside imposition of participatory frameworks. They also make the excellent point that heritage professionals, when reporting on participatory aspects of heritage work, have been required to downplay failures, as they often represent institutions funded to

implement such programmes. Sadly, when heritage work has a required participatory component compelled by another, usually foreign institution, it is virtually inevitable that such a top-down action will result in frustrations and failures. What then, can be done to overcome the imposition of participatory frameworks from outside the communities and to *engender enfranchisement within* local communities to take initiatives? I will return to this key question in the final part of this essay.

Perhaps the most instructive case study is Old Bulawayo, the first capital site of King Lobengula just outside of contemporary Bulawayo, Zimbabwe (Muringaniza 1998). Intended as an educational and tourism theme park, the royal compound was reconstructed at the initiative of the National Museum and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) in partnership with archaeologists and the community using documentary, oral, and archaeological evidence. The descendant community lived on the site and was described as having equal decision-making powers with archaeologists and the NMMZ, the two other primary agents and those responsible for initiating the project (Gilbert Pwiti, personal communication 2013), though are told that it was a local initiative (Chirikure and Pwiti 2008). They describe the ground rules of the project (2008, 473): ‘The most important feature of the Old Bulawayo Project, when compared with other archaeological projects in the world, was that local communities and in particular the Khumalo people could veto decisions made by the archaeologists.’ One is moved to ask if one partner having veto power over other partners overwhelms the idea of collaboration, where discussion and negotiation should prevail. This leaves the impression that arbitrary decisions may occur.

This case study successfully isolates an important dilemma that influences many heritage projects where there are differing perspectives amongst key partners in collaborative work. At Old Bulawayo differing views on the orientation of the door of one house led to the local view prevailing over archaeological knowledge. The building was reconstructed according to this perspective, but as discussions continued, the local partners admitted that they were incorrect. There is no certain blueprint to handle such differing perspectives, except to continue discussions until a consensus is reached based on full review of the evidence. In fact, multivocal views were not achieved; the authors appropriately acknowledge that a plaque *should be mounted* to explain the discrepancy between the reconstruction and the archaeological evidence. At the heart of this dilemma are different views on authenticity and the role of science in heritage work — unresolved idealizations held by different partners.

There is a clear need to overcome a significant dependency on top-down approaches, for inevitably they are taken with good intentions but without the extensive preparatory work that is required to develop a true sense of ownership in projects at the community level. There are few examples of grassroots initiatives. In light of this history, the Katuruka initiative and other grassroots initiatives in Kagera Region of Tanzania help to unveil the circumstances in which it may be possible to aid, assist, and work alongside communities with positive visions but that lack the skills and means to realize their goals.

If, as heritage workers and archaeologists, we come to find that no one in a ‘community’ identifies with a heritage property or that local people display a disinterest in archaeology or heritage work, or when conflicting economic, political,

and social conflicts dissipate a unified perspective, then ‘community’ may indeed become ephemeral, lacking concreteness, as Chirikure and colleagues (2008, 2010) point out at the Khami World Heritage Site in Zimbabwe. To unlock understanding of where community is situated and how it is defined requires close observation of the source of community initiatives. Are they coming from the top, from archaeologists or heritage managers *to* the community, or are they emanating *from* the grassroots? I want to speak to these questions using Katuruka village, where a grassroots initiative by community members has led to new perspectives on what heritage means locally and how such local understandings figure into reconfigurations of identity in a globalized world.

An indigenous approach in Northwestern Tanzania

Elders in Katuruka village of Northwestern Tanzania took me aside during a social visit in 2008 to insist that I should return to their community to help them reclaim their history (Schmidt 2010), an insistence that came with conditions and explicit caveats. They had witnessed the degradation of their community’s respect for the past, respect for traditional religion and other social institutions, and respect for elders by youth. The crisis of respect in Haya life has been long developing because of incremental devaluation linked to colonialism, Christianity, and globalization (Schmidt 2012). Christianity in particular has deeply denigrated principles of respect at multiple social levels because traditional authorities responsible for enforcement of ethical codes, well-being, and peace were demonized by Christian churches.

Since 2008 I have worked to assist Katuruka villagers in their research into oral traditions and to help them develop a major royal capital site and ancient shrine as a heritage destination for limited domestic and foreign tourism. I employ a discourse-based approach that captures what people say in their daily discourse about reclaiming their intangible heritage as they restore their ancient sacred and historical places. Out of such analysis comes a better understanding of *when* local heritage concepts emerge, how they are socially acted out, and when and under what conditions ethical values are articulated in making heritage and human rights claims (Schmidt 2012). In Northwest Tanzania, local heritage work puts ethical principles to work within heritage activities that incorporate embodied actions. I focus on the discourse of heritage workers in multiple settings in two Tanzanian villages, with the goal to understand how people make heritage claims in their daily lives through conversations and in more public, rhetorical pronouncements about heritage. I find that social practices of ethical theories unfold in *specific* settings (Meskell and Van Damme 2008), as during the revitalization of heritage places of deep meaning and the recovery and preservation of oral traditions in Katuruka.

One of the most potent changes introduced by Christianity amongst the Haya is in *senses of place*, where powerful emotions and social memories well up when places of meaning are encountered along the paths and in the homesteads — places where kingdom, clan, lineage, and family histories are encapsulated on the landscape. Christian teachings explicitly identified ancient shrines and other religious places as the devil’s residences, a view that continues to threaten places with centuries of meaning once embodied through oral recitations and ritual performances. Under such

conditions, sacred shrines such as Kaiija — a sacred shrine tree that we informally call the Tree of Iron — began to fade from consciousness.

Symbolically and ritually associated with iron working and dating to 2500 years ago, Kaiija — the place of the forge — was celebrated as the central place of reproductive power, a key trope derived from iron production and linked to political legitimacy in the region. Many genres of texts led us to the ancient Kaiija shrine, now celebrated in the archaeological literature as an extraordinary axis mundi for the Eastern Bantu reproductive and productive worlds (Schmidt 1978, 2006, 2010). This and other sacred places associated with past kings and key religious leaders and ancestors were given the official blessing of neglect in 1963 when the new independence government abolished chiefs and kings. No longer were subsidies from government available for kings to maintain shrines so critical to the integrity of the kingdoms. This would be fatal for Kaiija's upkeep and the social memory attached to it. Without a ritual official to conduct the new moon rituals, no animating social action occurred at the shrine.

Without regular rituals, local tribute, and royal support to maintain the primary shine and all its ancillary shrines, little vitality resided in these once evocative and potent places after the 1960s. People began to look upon shrine trees as undermining their economic interests, with the shade from the huge canopies inhibiting the growth and ripening of banana plantings. Residing since childhood near the shade cast by Kaiija, one Timothy Njuma (a fictitious name) decided to remove Kaiija in the late 1990s, failing to heed warnings about probable punishment and dying from a terrible ordeal meted out by the ancestors to those disrespecting this heritage. He did the unthinkable. By pounding iron spikes into Kaiija, covered with salt, he killed the huge shrine tree and paid the price for such evil-doing: he went mad and could be heard raving in his locked room for months before he finally died.

No one would discuss this cultural travesty in 2008 when I revisited the village, save one quick mention within the first minute of my arrival. It took nearly two years before people felt comfortable discussing a history that took away their identities, erased their spiritual senses of place, and besmirched the memory of a neighbour and kinsman. This and many other erasures of ancestors from the landscape ushered in a disquieting sense of dread and loss further exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic that was sweeping through their villages at the same time (e.g. Ndeki *et al.* 1992; Rugalema 1999).

The significant reduction in the numbers of elderly males because of HIV/AIDS opened fresh opportunities for elderly women to rise into positions of leadership by organizing aid societies — replacing traditional clan responsibilities — for funeral expenses and other assistance.

When village elders decided in 2008 that they would form a committee to address heritage issues, they articulated their desires during that first meeting around a sense of loss accelerated during the HIV/AIDS crisis (Schmidt 2010). Its social effects were then obvious everywhere: overgrown fields where prosperous farms were abandoned, collapsed houses, multiple grandchildren living with a single grandmother, the death of complete households, and a huge number of youth and few remaining elders. A repeated reference in heritage discourse was the need to educate people about the antiquity of their villages and to use the

archaeological evidence from 1970 excavations to teach the youth and others about the history of technological innovation that marked their ancient history.

Other key issues also took centre stage: 1) talk about creating a heritage tourism site was clearly lodged in a larger discourse about tourism and heritage within the region; 2) a desire to reclaim their heritage, which they articulate as oral traditions, respect for the ancestors, and learning about sacred places; 3) detailed discussions about researching and documenting living oral traditions today, with the aim to create a permanent archive for future educational goals. Quite vehemently, they insisted that heritage thinking focus on economic well-being, such as how idle youth could gain employment as tour guides and simultaneously become teachers of the past: *‘Perhaps if we restore these shrines and the palace, with a museum inside, we could attract tourists to visit this important place. Our young people could be employed to take them around the site and we could train them in the oral traditions that were once told here’* (Schmidt 2008–2011 field notes).

When I returned in 2009 at the behest of the villagers, my mission was to understand local ways of constructing heritage — how people thought about and talked about heritage. I was more concerned with how heritage ethics were put into action and made vital through daily embodied practice. I wanted to understand the reasons that people give for wanting to reclaim a heritage, the emotions they express when engaged in reclaiming their relationships with the ancestors, how they struggle to talk about how their ethical codes of yesteryear were erased by the Christian church, what they fear from the diminishment of respect and prosperity, and why they want to reclaim economic security through their recuperation of past heritage institutions and practices. I also wanted to understand how Katuruka residents think and feel when they build traditional houses to serve as shrines, and thus embrace ritually potent, spiritually elevated, and historically meaningful places belonging to lost ancestors.

Following Keith Basso (1996), I call this practice the revitalization of interanimation or *re-interanimation* — knowledge that comes alive, with emotion, in the presence of places of spiritual and emotional meaning. As participants in the village embarked upon their daily tasks, they made new pasts by cutting and weaving elephant grass, by fetching building poles, and by cutting thatch for shrines. As they worked they reviewed and explored why they were acting out their ideas about social practices tabooed by churches that saw traditional houses as the abodes of the Bacwezi spirits. They also openly discussed why they were embracing heritage values distinctive to their historical past as well as inserting archaeology into their heritage discourse, now accepted as an important part of heritage in their contemporary world. My role in this mutual research is to wrap together and present to other audiences these diverse threads of discourse and the daily practice of heritage values that mark the contingent historical contributions that the Haya make to heritage discourse more broadly.

Heritage tropes

Haya elders reframed their claims to a past through heritage tropes of their own making. The elders saw that with the valorization of heritage, economic security

would come hand in hand with education into indigenous knowledge. They discussed and strongly argued on behalf of: 1) restoring sacred places — seeing this as heritage work; 2) creating a local museum that memorialized the antiquity and significance of the history of iron production in the area, including the archaeology about it; 3) developing a heritage tourism site with multiple implications, including the building of a sense of self-worth and well-being in the community; and 4) instilling a sense of pride and identity in the community about the significance of local history.

They rapidly designed and set out a programme that could be acted on daily to recuperate respect for the past. Such daily practice took multiple forms and led to a high degree of heritage consciousness within certain sectors of the community. Amongst the first actions were: 1) restoration and revitalization of a sacred shrine belonging to Mugasha, the god of the waters and storms; 2) a village organized census to determine the effects of HIV-AIDS on the community; and 3) identification of all keepers of oral traditions and oral history.

HIV/AIDS and social disruption

The results of village censuses confirmed initial impressions about the absence of elderly males. The severity of HIV/AIDS over the previous 25 years was stunning. Nearly half of the older generation of males — those over 65 years — were lost since 1978, when there were 97 males for every 100 females over 65 years of age. By the 1988 census this proportion dropped to 54:100, recovering a little 15 years later because of intervention programmes to 58:100 in 2003, but returning to 54:100 at the time of the village census. This is enormous demographic change. Since elderly males were once the keepers of oral traditions and knowledgeable about landscape histories, a severe rupture in the chain of transmission at this scale is devastating to the integrity and vitality of oral testimonies and helps explain another reason for the steady erosion of sacred places on the cultural landscape. After the completion of the village censuses, several members of the committee gathered together to compile a list of expert keepers of history. I was surprised by the appearance of women's names, filling about half the list — not experts in oral traditions but in oral histories about social relations in the community. In the past, women were not recognized as experts in a field of knowledge dominated by males, but with the loss of so many male keepers of history, women are now recognized for their abilities to remember social histories.

With the initiation of interviews for oral traditions and histories, I removed myself as outside expert, diminishing some of the anthropologist's place of power (see Rizvi 2006). Interviews were conducted by village elders, who were free to explore whatever subjects appeared to be germane to the knowledge of those with whom they spoke. The results of these interviews provided some very significant findings. Some women, because of naturally good memories and confidence gained as single heads of households, brought forth important subaltern histories. Their testimonies are vivid, as when an 86-year-old woman complained: *'I can be sick here and die. Even my brother did not come once when I summoned him. No one will bring you food these days. I am on my own, I plant my own plot without help'* (Katuruka Interviews 2009–2011).

Subaltern women's history

Elderly women command an intimate knowledge of social interactions in the community and clear historical reminiscences about their neighbours and kin. Now elevated to history keepers, their newly recognized expertise reflects their deep knowledge of people and events they have witnessed in their life-times. After long interviews with two women, we came to understand that a woman named Njeru lived in the former royal palace of King Rugomora (c. 1650–1675), where Kaiija tree is located, between 1900 and 1963 (the latter date marks the abolition of kings and chiefs in Tanzania and is approximate for Njeru's departure). Njeru cared for the regalia of the dead king and also maintained the burial estate of King Rugomora. She married the dead king in 1900 as a virgin, conducted the monthly new moon ceremonies (ritual renewals) in the shadow of Kaiija shrine on behalf of the ancient kingdom over which Rugomora once ruled, was given the same respect and tribute as a king, and could deeply influence the welfare and well-being of her neighbours who widely admired her beauty and respected her. As historical narratives about this important historical figure were unveiled, so too did an awareness develop amongst women that they had much to add to local history and to the heritage project. These narratives, never before recorded, deeply enrich the texture of the history of the royal compound and mark this local initiative into collaborative research as distinctive in subaltern studies.

These new female participants in Katuruka's heritage work now to advise the project on an interpretative trail that includes Njeru's place of royal residence as well as her menstrual house. Thus, heritage work in Katuruka has come to insert women of importance into heritage claims, along with their appearance in historical narratives. A heritage that valorizes important historical women is now emerging. It is claimed by contemporary elderly women, who enacted it through their daily practice by embracing and caring about heritage in the community.

As subaltern histories rose to the surface of local inquiry, so too did the insistence that the committee keep to its original agenda to create a museum that would commemorate the technological history and antiquity of Katuruka, drawing deeply on archaeological histories. The elders' goal to build a small museum was realized in 2010 with the construction of a traditional *omushonge* house in the exact location where oral traditions held that King Rugomora held consultations with his advisors and his spirit mediums. Known as Buchwankwanzi, this house was later used by Njeru to curate the royal regalia. It was precisely in this place that the 1970 excavations recovered many artefacts and features suggestive of intense ritual activities as well as deep time connections to Early Iron Age activities. The construction of Buchwankwanzi was a daily activity that ran for nearly a month, with visits from scores of villagers, most of whom never witnessed the construction of a traditional house.

Re-interanimation reprised

The heritage interventions pertaining to these shrines mark their *re-interanimation*, a phenomenon that includes the recursive quality of places and their relationships to human actors. As Basso (1996, 55) observes: 'As places animate the feelings and ideas of persons who attend to them, these same ideas animate the places on which

attention has been bestowed.’ Such participatory heritage work in Katuruka is considered by some as liberation from the strictures of Christianity enforced for more than a century. The willing participation of villagers in the shrine and Buchwankwanzi revitalizations is a clear declaration that even devout Christians no longer accept the idea that they must not participate in senses of place.

Motivations for these *re-interanimations* are linked to the rise of disenchantment over what people see as the failure of the Christian church to mediate the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The church is closely identified with western medicine, having introduced it to rural and urban communities. Western medicine and the church provided no relief from the ravages of the disease, leading many people to question, as they witness the moral decline of their villages, if they and their direct ancestors erred in accepting the precepts of the church. Discourses about Jesus as alien to Haya cosmology are increasingly common, with sometimes biting commentary mixed with frustration and bitterness, a profound depth of disenchantment as Haya Christians measure their present against their pasts as they work and talk in the place where spirit mediums once gathered in the service of their king.

Revitalized knowledge and heritage

In early 2011, the committee began to take new directions. Discussions with visitors showed that both local and foreign guests *‘wanted to see more things, such as furnaces — not just look at a place in a field where there were once furnaces’*. The committee requested excavations to expose ancient iron smelting furnaces so visitors could visually experience the 2000-year-old technology, *‘to make the ancient remains clearer and more obvious’* (Schmidt 2008–2011 field notes). This desire to bring archaeology into the heritage talk and planning writes archaeology into a plan to concretize history. Archaeology organized by the committee became a focus of the project in the summer of 2011 when test excavations uncovered remains of 2000-year-old furnaces. As these were unveiled, villagers gathered by the scores at the excavations to participate in the discoveries.

Working together with trained archaeologists from the village, we observed several positive participatory developments: 1) village citizens mobilized to assist with the construction of exhibit shelters and the relocation of a major, traditional road, readily signing over rights of way; and 2) local secondary school students visiting Katuruka responded with great enthusiasm and excitement to the tour exhibits. This last development points to the project’s capacity to satisfy the right to an education that incorporates local histories that value senses of place. The absence of local history in the secondary or primary curricula is a target that the project and regional and district authorities are taking on in 2013, with Katuruka heritage as the educational medium. Students visit these potent places and begin to develop their own senses of place through repeated visits. This experiential learning is accompanied by a dedicated website with academic resources, curricula, videos, and other images as well as teacher resources (www.tanzaniaheritage.org). The people of Katuruka, through their own distinctive wisdom, devised a community solution to a long-standing human rights issue in Tanzania — a hegemonic nationalist history that has helped to erase local heritage.

As Haya villagers engage in therapeutic heritage work (Meskell and Scheermeyer 2008) through the recuperation of oral traditions and histories and as they begin to daily engage in their *re-iteranimation* of places, their senses of sacred places are being restored incrementally. Their ethical practice incorporates the recovery of interpersonal respect as well as respect for places of meaning that were once dominant in their moral lives. And, their initiative and determination to reclaim and remake a heritage severely eroded by change over the last 120 years marks this community as distinctive in the annals of African archaeology and heritage work. That they incorporated collaborative research — oral traditions, oral histories, and archaeology — into their development agenda speaks to a vision arising from familiarity with these genres of heritage from both indigenous culture and lived experience.

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