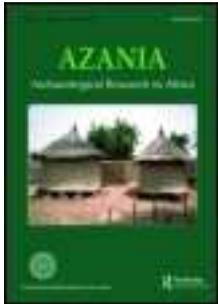


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Ethics in African Archaeology

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Ethics in African Archaeology

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As custodians of an important section of Africa's past and advocates for the value of the past in the present/future, archaeologists working in universities, museums and heritage agencies or as commercial consultants are in positions of high responsibility. Most often neither the scale of the work involved, nor its significance, are matched adequately by the number of people employed or the level of remuneration. Archaeologists struggle under recurrently difficult working conditions and yet manage to deliver astonishing levels of service across Africa. This paper considers best practice in African archaeology and then asks whether this is being achieved in all sectors of the archaeological discipline. It considers the set of ethical values that should underpin good practice in African archaeology and the actions that need to be taken to enact these values more widely.

Keywords: ethical behaviour; archaeological practice; *nyau* masks; caricatures; taboos

Les archéologues, qu'ils soient en poste dans des universités, des musées ou des institutions liées au patrimoine, ou qu'ils travaillent en tant que consultants dans des compagnies commerciales, sont les gardiens d'un pan important du passé africain, et plaident pour l'importance du passé pour le présent et le futur. En tant que tel, ces professionnels se trouvent dans une position de haute responsabilité. La plupart du temps, ni l'étendue du travail à accomplir, ni sa signification, ne se trouvent adéquatement reflétés au niveau des effectifs et de leur rémunération. Les archéologues se débattent sous des conditions de travail fréquemment difficiles, mais parviennent tout de même à fournir, tout à travers l'Afrique, une qualité de prestations remarquable. Cet article considère le niveau auquel nous devons aspirer en archéologie africaine, et demande si ce niveau est atteint dans tous les secteurs de l'archéologie. Il passe en revue les valeurs éthiques sous-jacentes à tout travail correct en archéologie africaine et propose les actions à prendre pour s'assurer que ces valeurs sont mises en œuvre de manière plus consistante.

Introduction

This is a paper about archaeological practice and ethics in African archaeology. It is written as a personal perspective on more than two decades of experience of African archaeology working with various organisations on different parts of the continent and facing a series of issues raised during my times of service on the councils of regional associations and the PanAfrican Archaeological Association. It is important to state that the views expressed here are my own and may not be shared by all within the organisations in which I have served. In writing this paper I thought much about the

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issues that surround the airing of dirty laundry in public, of speaking what is often left unspoken, but I believe that it is only by confronting issues, facing our demons, that we can work towards an African archaeology that meets our collective aspirations (Meskell 2005).

Africa has ancient ways of raising social ills in public fora, of giving a face to social problems and thereby forcing families, villages and societies to deal with them. I am in awe, for example, of the wise way in which the Chewa of Malawi confront their social issues through their *nyau* masking tradition. In Chewa belief, the *nyau* masked dancers are not people, they are spirits that come from the bush to remind people of the importance of honouring ancestral values that have evolved over generations. By confronting bad behaviour and reminding all of what this constitutes, the *nyau* dancers ensure the well-being of society (Boucher 2012). The Chewa say that bad behaviour brings all social ills: sickness, aggression, hunger, poverty, impotence and disharmony. It must therefore be exposed. It must be countered. There are hundreds of *nyau* masks and new ones are constantly created each to address new social concerns (Boucher 2012). The teaching is both in the features of the mask itself and in the song that is sung while it dances. Greed, for example, is given a face and ridiculed. One older mask depicts the colonial district commissioner, the man who collects money from all, who lives a life of opulence, but who fails to share in times of need. The mask still speaks an important message today, sometimes transformed into a contemporary local politician, and it continues to dance in many areas. AIDS also has a face. Promiscuity and unfaithfulness have always been practices that bring trouble to the home; the AIDS mask provides a reminder that this is still painfully true.

The *nyau* masks are about correcting behaviour. They lay down an ethical code for living and remind people of the consequences of breaking this code. They thus contain a local corpus of African ethical principles, but they go beyond this to teach about the ethical practice of African life. *Nyau* achieves a realisation of something for which the Dalai Lama called in his recent book: *Beyond Religion, Ethics for a Whole World*. The central point in this is the statement that 'Ethics is not simply a matter of knowing. More important, it is about doing' (Dalai Lama 2013: 103). Half of the book is about how to achieve this; the Dalai Lama places the onus squarely on the individual and challenges each of us to practise what he terms: discerning compassion. The other half of the book seeks to define exactly what this is and how we should apply it in our lives.

We live in fast changing societies where development and human interaction exist on a scale never seen before. But, no matter how much things change, some core ethical values, as so well exemplified by the *nyau* masks, stand as the difference between the future we seek and the future we fear. The call for openness, for transparency, for probity, for integrity, for people to speak the truth and act upon principle are some of the loudest calls we hear across the new Africa. One is told from the village to the city that the time has come to call politicians to account; that it is time for politicians to understand that they are elected to serve the people. And the people are right; indeed our politicians need to be kept on their toes..., but so do our archaeologists. This is what I address here. If we were to invent a new set of *nyau* masks for African archaeology, what would they depict? What would their songs identify as bad behaviour and seek to teach us? Drawing from our own personal experiences, each of us will have different answers to this. The discussion below is based on my experiences. Unlike the *nyau* dancer, I cannot hide behind the anonymity of the mask; in the Facebook age everything has a face, and perhaps this is right and best.

The university archaeology lecturer

Our lecturers and professors are in a position of the highest responsibility. They must foster the next generation of leaders for all sectors of society, including archaeology. They must continue the process, begun in the home and in schools, of inculcating the set of values and principles we want our future generation to hold. At university this means laying down a set of personal and professional values specific to the discipline chosen by students. Whatever ignorant conservative world leaders may suggest, the lecturer is far more than a conduit of technical knowledge and skills. By fostering a future set of professional values, ethical principles, as well as increasing knowledge and developing new technologies through research, lecturers can and do change our societies for the better. We all want the next generation to be better than our own: to have better education, to be more affluent and to have a higher quality of life. It is universities that act as the major drivers of such development because it is the creation of innovative thinkers that drives real social development. Politicians only affect (positively or negatively) the broader social conditions within which innovative thinkers create real and meaningful social change. Archaeology is no different: innovative thinking is forged or stifled in the universities and the vision and leadership of our lecturers is therefore of primary importance.

But are African archaeology departments living up to the high expectations we hold for them? As a lecturer myself I would like to say yes and the growth in the size and dynamism of our African archaeological postgraduate student body is a positive sign. However, there are signs that not all is right. Complaints raised with professional associations, privately whispered disquiet in hallways at conferences and (unfortunately rare) published comments (for a uniquely important set of papers see Schmidt 2009a) suggest that the university archaeology lecturer would be a regular subject in a *nyau* dance devoted to African archaeology. *Nyau* masks rarely evoke specific individuals; instead they are created to drive home a problem through an extreme caricature. Figures that I can imagine being created for African archaeology include the lecherer: this character would probably be male and would represent the lecturer who is more interested in seducing his students than training them. The lecherer rewards and promotes on looks rather than on ability. Instead of spreading inspiration he spreads disease, disenchantment, anger and jealousy. Another mask might be the sexist: this mask could be male or female and depicts the person who amasses staff and student teams around them all of the same gender. A variant of this mask would be the tribalist/racist/homophobe. These masks would show the dangerous and socially debilitating nature of prejudicial rather than merit-based inclusion and exclusion. A third mask type in this set could be the power monger: the person who is able to hoard all funding and opportunities for themselves through status and connections. An all too common mask, power mongers uses their position to create a patronage system with themselves at the centre. Rod McIntosh (2009) has provided details of how, in West Africa, power-mongers maintain their positions by ensuring that only favoured students get funding, are able to train on archaeological sites, get to work on foreign collaboration projects and so on.

Although focusing on different types of prejudicial behaviour, these mask all have essentially the same message: ability should be the sole criteria upon which our students should progress and receive opportunities. If you read this and agree that we have a need for one or all of these *nyau* mask then this should be a wake-up-call. All of postcolonial Africa inherited education systems that had historically selected (albeit to different extents) on the basis of privilege rather than ability. Liberation movements across the

continent stood against this and promised radical educational transformation. It is easy and correct to note the many problems inherited from the colonial education systems, but generations later we should have implemented a thorough transformation in our archaeological departments. Peter Schmidt suggests that this is not the case in many parts of Africa and that new prejudicial processes have been constructed on the foundation of older colonial ones (Schmidt 2009b: 8–10). That prejudicial practices may still exist in other sectors of society is no excuse. As stated so well in the Transformation Charter for South African Archaeology, penned by the Association of Southern African Professional Archaeologists (ASAPA), we should strive for ‘truly equal access and equal opportunity’ within archaeology and ‘achievement should be judged on the basis of merit, not on the basis of one or more of the factors race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, birth or any other factor that may lead to unfair discrimination’ (ASAPA 2009; Ndlovu 2009a; Smith 2009). This is a simple and clear matter of implementing a set of shared principles within our discipline. One vigilant generation can change archaeological practice forever.

Issues of quality are more difficult to caricature and perhaps to address, but I have seen one *nyau* figure dance in a village in central Malawi, called *mdzopendeka*, that has relevance. It represents a person in authority, typically a village headman, but could equally represent the archaeological lecturer. During *nyau* ceremonies *mdzopendeka* dances in an arrogant and confident manner; in response the women sing to him about his village collapsing, the people leaving and their houses becoming abandoned. Part of the intended message is that leaders who do not meet the needs of their people, who are incompetent, dishonest, corrupt etc. will be deserted and then will find themselves powerless. People will vote with their feet. Whilst typically a message for political leaders, the same message holds value for our universities. It is in our own interests to offer the highest quality of training that is well informed and relevant because, if we do not, our students will go elsewhere. Uncompetitive and out-of-touch departments will decline.

In terms of research, the knowledge-maker mask would probably be multifaceted. First, the aloof local researcher, who conducts what for him or her is research on a fascinating topic, but which is of no interest to or even offensive to the local or descendant community. I suspect this would be a common mask and I can imagine it dancing for attention in our excavation trenches. It would remind us that our research is funded by the same ordinary taxpayers among whom we work and that our work must therefore be rooted in social awareness and social engagement and be socially responsible. It would encourage the involvement of affected communities in the drawing up of research questions and in the choice of sites for research; it would push for the employment of more community members within projects, the initiation of local archaeological school programmes, the offering of bursary opportunities, the presentation of displays on the major findings in local languages etc.

In Malawi there is an existing *nyau* mask known as ‘the box will be empty’ and it was created in advance of the referendum on multi-party democracy called by former President Hastings Banda in 1993. There was huge excitement around the referendum and a massive voter turnout close to 65%. The mask predicted Dr Banda’s face as he opened the box containing votes in favour of the continuation of single party rule. The mask spoke what was unspeakable at that time: it predicted that the box would be empty. The mere creation and performance of the mask helped to further the cause of multi-party democracy in Malawi. I can imagine an archaeological equivalent, called ‘the book will

be empty'. This mask would be a caution to heritage agents awarding research permits to individuals with a track record of non-publication. Far too often permits continue to be awarded to researchers who have excavated important sites, sometimes many sites, but have failed to write up the work and publish it so that others can access and utilise the findings. The mask predicts that the book will be empty; in a sense this mask cautions that the incompetent knowledge-maker can become the knowledge-destroyer.

The museum curator

The African archaeological museum curator is an undervalued pillar of our societies. Generally underpaid and poorly resourced, s/he is the custodian of the moveable treasures of the past. Her/his task is to sustain our roots: to preserve and display the evidence of the foundation upon which our societies are built. Like a tree, a society growing upon weak roots will fall and will damage its neighbours when it falls. The archaeological museum is the institution within society tasked with securing our root system. It grounds us firmly in place and is the basis upon which our future is built. It is therefore core to our social fabric. And it needs to live up to this role: to present past objects, not as collections of nostalgic relics, but as meaningful route markers along a path of popular upliftment and betterment that is not global, but is particular to one place. The archaeological museum curator should therefore be not only the custodian and presenter of the past but also a purveyor of societal inspiration and purpose.

Few museums around the world live up to this challenging task. Some African museums have a proud tradition of being 'of the people, by the people, for the people', but it is rare to find a museum with a strongly expressed social agenda (but see Hall 2005). As noted by Karega-Munene (2009), too many are more like the dinosaurs in their displays: tired, old hangovers from an era that is long gone. One repeatedly hears 'insufficient funding' used as the excuse for not updating decades old displays that, instead of looking forwards, reflect discredited views from the past and thereby unwittingly perpetuate those views. And yet, a satisfactory update to a display can often be done within existing institutional budget limits simply by changing some text and images. All that is needed is the will to make the change. I can imagine one of the *nyau* masks of the museum curator draped in 1920s safari clothing with antique glasses and a pith helmet, lampooning a perceived inertia to update and change.

Perhaps the even greater challenge to updating and decolonising the museum is the task of making the displays socially relevant (Meskell 2005; Ndlovu 2009b). In many African countries ordinary citizens still see the museum as some quirky colonial hangover, and do not connect it to the conservation and promotion of their ancestral heritage. Although huge efforts have been made in many museums to change this, and in particular to develop dynamic schools programmes, true peoples' museum are still a rarity. I fear that another face of the *nyau* mask of the museum curator would therefore depict an aloof, well-meaning, person who is sadly out of touch and unresponsive to the bigger needs of society. I am concerned that this perception of museum curators is all too widespread within Africa and this is a face that we need to change if we are to win back the levels of political and financial support that can turn-around our museums and make them the national icons that they deserve to be.

A more controversial *nyau* mask might present the curator as a market stall trader, illicitly peddling the cultural heritage of the people. The commercial value of the collections held by museums make them common targets for illicit traders in cultural property. Indeed, this is at the forefront of my mind; as I write this section I am attending a

workshop on the 'Protection of Cultural Goods against Plunder, Theft and Illicit Trafficking' organised by the European and African Unions. I have just endured three days of harrowing accounts of how, during the past two years, museums have been the targets of looting during political instabilities in Egypt, Libya, Ivory Coast, Mali and Congo. Thousands of objects have been stolen and have disappeared into the shadowy networks of African art smugglers and collectors. Thanks to the good work of international customs agencies and INTERPOL a few hundred objects have been intercepted and returned, but the sad truth is that the majority will never be recovered. In most of the recent examples, unscrupulous traders took advantage of political instabilities and used these as opportunities to steal from museum collections. Many of the syndicates involved in these networks are the same ones that are involved in drug smuggling, elephant and rhinoceros poaching, even people trafficking. It is a relatively small but well organised group of international criminals. A few hundred people at most are involved. The resounding message of the European and African Union workshop was that these syndicates must be smashed at whatever cost. They fuel corruption, conflict and international crime. Major moves are planned to do this, through closer international cooperation and through the establishment of a unit dedicated to the investigation and eradication of all illicit trade in African cultural property. I sincerely hope that this unit comes into force and that it is provided with the staff levels, powers and financial means necessary for it to succeed.

Behind this organised crime lies a larger problem of museum break-ins and storeroom attrition that would be the real subject of this *nyau* mask because museum thefts have been on the increase in recent decades and many of these happen with insider collusion. I know of too many incidences where museum staff members have been caught in the act of selling accessioned objects. Few of these led to proper judicial prosecution; in most cases the matter was swept under the carpet after a swift resignation. These incidences are far from confined to poorer countries and poorly paid staff; I know of three cases from comparatively well-funded museums in South Africa. I have also encountered museum objects on sale in antique shops and markets. In an antique shop in Johannesburg I saw a set of six 1000-year-old Iron Age pots from the archaeological site of Sanga in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. One still had its museum accession number on its base. In this case the pots were confiscated and INTERPOL tracked down the source, found them to be a part of a wider illegal trafficking network and those concerned were arrested and charged. The archaeological profession and society at large should not tolerate any trade in objects that belong to us all and which are held by museums in trust for future generations. We should respond in the strongest possible way to any such violations of curatorial responsibility. One of the 30 international rights enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights is that 'Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits'. The attacks on national heritage that we have seen recently in Egypt, Mali and elsewhere are therefore also attacks on fundamental human rights and need to be dealt with accordingly.

The heritage agent

The heritage agent is in a comparable position to the curator, but now charged with the protection and promotion of the sites and monuments of the nation. It is tempting to define the distinction in terms of curators being responsible for moveable heritage and heritage agents being responsible for immovable heritage, but this is not a true division because the heritage agent is also responsible for protecting all moveable objects still

in situ on heritage sites. In most African countries, any site more than 100 years old automatically falls under the protection of the heritage agent (antiquities officer, monuments commission staff member or whatever other name is given to this person). The total number of sites in the custody of any one heritage agent is therefore bewildering, often in the tens, if not hundreds, of thousands. In a growing number of African countries heritage agents are not only responsible for tangible heritage, but are also charged with the protection of associated intangible and living heritage. This places the heritage agent in a position where s/he is inherently set up to fail. It is impossible to manage the full extent and richness of this heritage given African budget restrictions. The task therefore becomes not to protect everything that should be protected according to the law, but to do the best possible job within the limits of the resources available. Many heritage agents perform miracles; indeed some of our best heritage agents work with the least resources. Their success is fuelled by passion and dedication for their work.

Whilst the actions of many provide an inspiration to us all, the traits of a few heritage agents would also provide rich pickings for the *nyau* masked dancer. Heritage agents, as the people that issue archaeological research and excavation permits, are in a dangerous position of power over other archaeologists. They can control who gets access to which sites, for how long and on what terms. At times this power is abused. The nightclub bouncer might be one of the masks used to represent this: the bouncer is the gatekeeper to the club who lets in friends and anyone willing to pay bribes for the privilege of entry. Once let in, the bouncer tends to overlook the bad behaviour of the patrons. The bouncer mask might also be used for some museum curators to expose the worrisome selectivity over who gets to access to museum collections and on what terms. Another permit related mask would only be danced in Tanzania. This would be the tomb-raider mask. Tanzania has the only heritage agency to issue official excavation permits to treasure hunters (aside from permits issued elsewhere to semi-legitimate shipwreck salvage companies). Hundreds of rock shelter archaeological deposits have been destroyed in central Tanzania in the search for non-existent German gold alleged to have been buried after the First World War. The permits were issued on the condition that the treasure hunters share their loot equally with the heritage agency. Of course the loot will never be found since it never existed; it is the mythical pot-of-gold at the end of the rainbow. But, whilst this wasted human effort continues, irreplaceable archaeological heritage is destroyed. There will soon be no undisturbed rock shelter deposits left for professional excavation in this UNESCO World Heritage Site area. Tens of thousands of years of slowly deposited heritage, that has the unique ability to inform us about ancestors now long forgotten, is being dumped out of shelters every day. This is certainly a folly worthy of its own mask.

In a less serious, but also debilitating vein, is the Paris Hilton mask. This is the mask of the hotel-owning heiress who made her millions out of the subsistence allowances paid to her hotels by heritage agents. The money came from the daily allowances collected from African governments and from foreign researchers when heritage agents are travelling away from their office at conferences and workshops or conducting fieldwork. In many countries the legitimate request for an allowance to support food and accommodation costs while travelling has spiralled out of control and has become a salary supporting entitlement. The allowance, rather than the archaeological work at hand, is now the primary interest. I have encountered heritage agencies with rosters whereby the next person on the list gets the next allowance opportunity regardless of the nature of the opportunity. Secretaries and archivists have, as a consequence, been sent on nationally important archaeological excavations, while those whose careers could genuinely be empowered by this training opportunity are left twiddling thumbs in the office. At other

times accountants have gone to workshops about the conservation of historic buildings. Beyond this absurdity, the high rate of the mandatory subsistence allowance, in some countries well in excess of US\$100 per day, makes routine domestic fieldwork beyond local budgets and effectively grounds most heritage staff. Internationally funded research projects become the primary (and lucrative) field opportunities. Even when food and accommodation are provided, a high level of allowance is still mandatory in many countries. This practice negatively impacts upon even the most basic heritage work. The solution is to pay heritage agents a higher basic salary in recognition of the importance of their work while, above this salary, only actual out of office expenditures should be covered. The Paris Hilton mask, almost certainly in Gucci high heels and feigning to excavate in an archaeological trench, would be a particularly fitting marker of the ludicrous endpoint of this unchecked practice.

The commercial consultant

Contract archaeologists either in private employment, working at cultural/environmental resource management companies or people consulting outside of their formal employment currently earn more than the sum all of those working as archaeologists in universities, museums and heritage agencies taken together. Whilst largely hidden from public sight, they form a vast industry. The African continent is now amongst the fastest developing in the world, with an unprecedented boom in mineral exploitation, and this places a huge responsibility upon those consultant archaeologists who are responsible for identifying and mitigating the archaeological impact of all major developments. Almost all African countries have heritage legislation that requires archaeological impact assessments and mitigation prior to large developments, be this roads, dams, mines, urban or industrial expansion etc. Even in the few that do not (e.g. the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Swaziland) most international companies working in those countries insist upon assessments and mitigation for their projects so as to protect their international reputation. Major development projects create a massive amount of archaeological work, indeed often more than African based archaeologists are able to take-on. In the last few years we have seen German and British teams working in the Sudan, an American team in Ethiopia, a British team in Lesotho, French teams in various West African countries and a Belgian team in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, all working on archaeological mitigation in advance of large development projects. The African archaeological consultant, whether locally based or consulting from outside Africa, is therefore crucial to our discipline. They are the people whose recommendations determine whether large numbers of African archaeological sites are preserved or destroyed.

Consultants sit between the developer and the archaeological heritage; their role is to make fair and impartial recommendations based on rigorous on-site observations and with a good knowledge of the current state of archaeological research in the area. But, the level to which consultants are responsible for destruction is constrained; their recommendations alone do not necessarily have the power to stop developments and it is not always fair to hold them culpable if important sites are destroyed. Minerals and mining legislation explicitly trumps environmental and heritage legislation in most African countries and this can allow developers to push ahead with heritage destruction against the explicit recommendations of the consultant. Even UNESCO World Heritage Sites can be threatened by mining developments as we have seen at the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape in South Africa (Swanepoel and Schoeman 2010; Meskell 2011; Swanepoel 2011). And yet, as first level guardians of archaeological interests in the development

process (heritage agents, because they are generally off-site, are second level guardians), consultants often have to play the role of whistle-blower on the excesses and abuses of developers. This places them in an awkward situation where their own future employment can be jeopardised by their acting according to best archaeological practice. Consultants therefore regularly face an ethical dilemma where they must choose between serving the commercial interests of their clients and acting in the best cultural interests of the nation. Striking an ethically acceptable balance is a key task for the consultant and we should be extremely thankful that the vast majority of passionate archaeological consultants working in Africa get this balance right.

The *nyau* masks related to consulting archaeologists would, I suspect, dominantly relate to occasional failings in managing this ethical conflict between the interests of the client and the interests of archaeology. The one-eyed man mask, wearing an eye patch that partially also obstructs the second eye, would caution us of the dangerous incentive to see only a section of the whole and therefore to produce recommendations based only on a limited fraction of the actual archaeological value of the area. It would remind us of the need to see all sections of the area to be affected; to be on-site when the ground is cleared and the earth moving equipment breaks soil; to be properly informed about the current state of knowledge of all aspects of the archaeology of the area and to recognise the significance of all aspects of the archaeology that are affected. The bricolage mask would be made up of pieces of other old masks mashed together into one and would represent the consultant whose reports are produced by cutting and pasting from older reports. It would serve as a reminder that the task of the report is to describe, map and illustrate the particular values of the site affected and that any amount of padding with background data does not change this task. The hard-of-hearing mask, with cotton wool in one ear and a large Victorian ear trumpet in the other, would evoke the consultant who does an excellent visual and scientific study, but who fails to listen to the interests and views of local people. Determining the significance of a place and the preparation of recommendations can only be done after extensive local consultation (e.g. Esterhuysen 2009, 2012; Segobye 2009). This mask would emphasise that listening is as (if not more) important than observing during the daily work of the archaeological consultant. Not surprisingly, the importance of leaders' listening to advice and opinions is a strong theme also in traditional *nyau* masks, and one that has a long history (Boucher 2012).

Other masks

The range of other potential masks is huge and I shall only add just a few here that seem to merit special attention. The Archaeology Student mask would wear sandals, a slightly stained t-shirt and ripped khaki shorts; it would emphasise the value of sobriety, the dangers of plagiarism and the need for conscientiousness and dogged persistence. The Parent of the Archaeology Student mask would lampoon the parent who counselled his child to become a dreary desk-bound accountant or lawyer and thus missed the opportunity to live the enjoyable and rewarding life of archaeological service to society. The Heritage NGO Worker mask, carrying a Louis Vuitton travel bag and wearing Prada sunglasses, would perpetually run workshops across Africa on every archaeological topic imaginable. The workshops would diligently train all and sundry on good archaeological practice and would soak up so much of everyone's time and money that no one would ever conduct even the most basic of archaeological work. This mask hits home to me; I genuinely fear that we are becoming workshop nations. We must not lose sight of the fact that, as so well stated in the Dalai Lama's (2013) recent book, it is in doing and not in

talking that we create a legacy for future generations. In some countries the three-faced mask could also be necessary to depict the person who is forced to take on three jobs in order to earn a living wage, but whose efforts are then so dispersed that they fail to make any real contribution in life. This leads ultimately to a deeply unfulfilling career and we need to address the fundamental political and social undervaluing of archaeological employment that allows for this.

Conclusion

The masks that I have discussed here relate to archaeological issues that strike me as important today. Whilst I have only expended a few lines describing some, most represent important issues that need to be taken seriously and addressed. Other people will know of other issues and may have different priorities in what needs to be addressed most urgently. The value of *nyau* masks in their original Chewa societal context is that they allow people to raise things that never otherwise get voiced within Chewa society. *Nyau* breaks the silence on issues of huge social importance but about which discussion is generally taboo (Boucher 2012: 11). I have fought with this in writing this paper: how to raise serious issues of ethical practice without descending into libellous allegations and personalised slander. Equally, I have grappled with how to present current problems without creating a picture that is overly dark and that presents African archaeology in an unfairly bad light. Africa has problems in archaeological practice, but no more or less serious than those of other continents. It was salutary to hear on the world news last night that the European Commission currently estimates that €128 billion is wasted every year within Europe because of corruption. Whatever we may say about problems in African archaeology, we should take satisfaction that they are minor by comparison; most of our problems are clearly understood and most are soluble given collective will power and action. In reading for this paper it was interesting to note which aspects of ethical behaviour in African archaeology have been raised in print and which have not: issues of unfair gender discrimination, failures in community consultation, shoddy citation and non-publication/reporting have been discussed (rightly) at some length (e.g. Wadley 1997; Chami 2009; Esterhuysen 2009, 2012; Ndlovu 2009a, 2009b; Schmidt 2009b). But, equally serious issues remain in the shadows: examples include sexual abuse of students, illicit thefts of objects from museums, homophobia, religious and tribal discrimination etc. I chose to address some issues in this paper in response to the imbalance. I think it important to add that I wrote this paper working (for the first time in 16 years) from outside Africa and I wonder if I would have written it had I still been employed by an African institution. I hope that I would have.

The caricatures presented here are cruel and unfair. But, this is why caricatures work: they stick in our minds. Anyone who has read the *Mail and Guardian* newspaper in South Africa cannot think of President Jacob Zuma without thinking of the Zapiro cartoons showing a shower-head attachment on his pronounced forehead. The shower-head harks back to the trial in which Zuma was accused of raping a young AIDS activist. When asked in the trial whether as a multiply married man he was concerned that he had had unprotected sex with a woman who was openly HIV+, he responded that he was not because he had showered immediately afterwards. Zapiro penned the famous cartoon that same week and the showerhead attachment is now a permanent fixture in all Zapiro Zuma cartoons. In a large way thanks to Zapiro's caricature, this single foolish, deplorable statement has unwittingly given a greater boost to AIDS awareness in South Africa than any other statement ever made. The *nyau* caricatures work the same way. They are

humorous, but haunting. Even as one conducts daily life they come constantly to mind and this gives them great power. Their ever-presence ensures that they affect peoples' actions and makes them highly effective as enforcers of prescribed ethical behaviour and practice.

The masks created in this paper have not danced in the flesh and so, unfortunately, their faces will not be as memorable as true *nyau* masks, but I hope that they will have some of the power of their ancient forbearers. I expect that you will have mentally concocted some of your own masks as you read this paper. This is in keeping with *nyau* tradition; new masks are encouraged, as these are needed to address new social issues. The greater the social relevance, the more popular the mask becomes and the more regularly it performs. As it performs, its ethical effectiveness grows. I hope that your masks will prove effective. If you feel strongly about them, I encourage you to write about them, or even perform them; we could encourage mask wearing at all major African archaeological congress banquets.

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