

François G. Richard *Editor*

Materializing Colonial Encounters

Archaeologies of African Experience

 Springer

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Acknowledgments

As textual artifacts, books have a tendency to camouflage the tracks of their genesis behind the orderly and coherent façade of the finished product. Once academic projects are converted into ink and pages, and bracketed by covers, the long and tortuous histories of their making are recomposed into clean narratives flowing smoothly from inception to completion. Like most book projects, this edited volume has a more checkered prehistory. Through sinuous paths, it has traveled between many sites, both physical and virtual. It has had a number of incarnations, not all of which have seen the light of day or left traces in the present volume. And it has brought together a lot more people than featured in the table of contents, many of whom have made critical inputs at various stages along the way. Some were traveling companions for a time, before the trade winds of scholarly interests and academic obligations took them elsewhere; some joined midcourse; and others accompanied the project from start to finish. I am grateful to all for their diverse contributions.

The seeds for this volume were sown at a session held at the 2008 *Society for American Archaeology* meeting. The session brought together a collection of insightful papers, which, we thought, had the potential to contribute fresh perspectives to the interpretation of colonial situations, for colleagues working in archaeology and other disciplines, in Africa and beyond. Three of the original participants (Stahl, Weiss, Richard) contributed essays to this volume. Other chapters were subsequently solicited from Brink, Crossland, Esterhuysen, Kus and Raharijaona, Swanepoel, and Wynne-Jones, who kindly accepted the invitations. Two of the original symposium participants, Akin Ogundiran and Maria das Dores Cruz, did not write chapters for the volume, but actively contributed to the conversations surrounding its conception. I extend many thanks also to Stephen Silliman and Mark Hauser, our discussants at the 2008 symposium. Their generous and insightful remarks helped to shape the intellectual course of the volume, and have been taken into account in nearly all aspects of the book. I am also thankful to Peter Schmidt for his original involvement in the book, even as his tight schedule forced him to ultimately withdraw from participation.

As I write these words 6 years later, this volume proved quite a bit longer in the making than originally intended. In addition being grateful to the contributors for their wonderful chapters, I would also like to thank them for their grace and

patience in dealing with the book's trials and tribulations, and for staying the course until the end. Many thanks also are due to Mike Rowlands and Ibrahima Thiaw for accepting to jump aboard the project as commentators, and for their invaluable remarks on the chapters. I am especially happy that Thiaw, who initiated me to archaeological research in Senegal, was able to take part in the volume, despite the exacting schedule demanded by his many professional and academic commitments.

After a hazy and mitigated search for publication venues, I could not be happier and luckier to have found a home for the book with Springer Press. Teresa Krauss has been a model of professionalism, and a veritable pleasure to work with. I am deeply thankful to her and Hana Nagdimov for giving the volume a chance, and for their invaluable advice and assistance through the process. They have accommodated the many twists and turns in schedules and deadlines that have befallen the project with appreciable aplomb. They have also been uniquely gracious in bearing with the litany of computer problems, faulty internet connectivity, and logistical delays associated with my frequent travels to rural Senegal in the past 4 years. I should also thank the anonymous reviewers for their frank and appreciative critiques of the draft volume. Their comments have certainly sharpened arguments and edges, and raised critical points which the project left unaddressed. I have attempted to pick up their concerns in the introduction framing the volume, and hope to have done justice to their suggestions—the remaining errors being my own, of course.

Finally, my acknowledgments would not be complete without thanking Dores Cruz, one last time, for her invaluable editorial and conceptual help in the formative stages of the volume. I am deeply grateful for her insightful suggestions on draft versions of the chapters, and on the volume's ideas more generally.

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Chapter 1

Materializing Colonial Pasts: African Archaeological Perspectives

François G. Richard

As a name and a sign, Africa has always occupied a paradoxical position in modern formations of knowledge. On the one hand, it has been largely assumed that “things African” are residual entities, the study of which does not contribute anything to the knowledge of the world or the human condition in general ... On the other hand, it has always been implicitly acknowledged that ... there is no better laboratory than Africa to gauge the limits of our epistemological imagination or to pose questions about how we know what we know and what that knowledge is grounded upon; how to draw on multiple models of time so as to avoid one-way causal models; and how to account for the multiplicity of pathways and trajectories of change (Mbembe, in Shipley 2012, p. 654).

The point is not to reject social science categories but to release into the space occupied by particular European histories sedimented in them other normative and theoretical thought enshrined in other existing life practices and their archives. For it is only in this way that we can create plural normative horizons specific to our existence and relevant to the examination of our lives and their possibilities (Chakrabarty 2000, p. 20).

Matters of History: Colonial Studies and African Archaeological Materialities

In recent years, studies of colonial processes have captured a growing share of the archaeological literature, with a number of volumes focused exclusively on questions of colonial power, entanglements, and hybridity (Croucher and Weiss 2011; Cusick 1998; Dietler 2010; Dietler and López-Ruiz 2009; Gosden 2004; Liebmann and Murphy 2011; Lyons and Papadopoulos 2002; Murray 2004; Stein 2005; Voss and Casella 2012). Colonial interactions between native peoples and Europeans

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have also been the topic of recent monographs (Dawdy 2008; Lightfoot 2006; Oland et al. 2012; Silliman 2004; Voss 2008; Wesson 2008). Concomitantly, recent compendia on historical archaeology and archaeological theory feature sections entirely devoted to the topic (Hicks and Beaudry 2006; Hall and Silliman 2006; Meskell and Preucel 2004). Others have aimed to examine archaeology's rapprochement to postcolonial theory, in the hopes of sharpening studies of colonialism in the past and our sensitivity to the realities of doing archaeology in the present (Liebmann and Rizvi 2008; Lydon and Rizvi 2010; Munene and Schmidt 2010).

This recent literature has contributed critical insights to the analysis of colonial dynamics in the archaeological record and the materiality of these encounters (e.g., Lightfoot et al. 1998; Silliman 2005, 2009). At the same time, perspectives from the African continent have enjoyed limited representation in the archaeological scholarship on colonialism (but see Brink 2004; Kelly 2002; and some papers in Croucher and Weiss 2011; Ferris et al. 2015; Oland et al. 2012; Schmidt and Patterson 1995). This omission is quite intriguing, insofar as Africa offers a premiere historical terrain for the working out of colonial entwinements, and the continent has long stood at the cutting edge of the conceptual literature on colonialism in the social sciences and humanities (e.g., Apter 1999; Berman and Lonsdale 1992; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, 1997; Cooper 1994; Cooper and Stoler 1997; Mbembe 2001; McCaskie 2000; Peel 2003; Pels 1997, 1999; Piot 1999; Shaw 2002; Vaughn 1993). Also surprising is the fact that despite a growing reservoir of excellent archaeological studies of African colonial contexts (which are reviewed below), the field has largely failed to captivate the attention of sister-disciplines (cf. González-Ruibal 2014; Stahl 2009). This is so, even as social anthropologists and others have shown growing engagement with questions of materiality, corporality, cultural landscapes, and object worlds over the past 20 years (e.g., Appadurai 1986; Brown 2003; Burke 1996; Comaroff and Comaroff 2006a; de Jong and Rowlands 2007; Graeber 2001; Hendrickson 1996; Miller 2005; Moore 2005; Myers 2001; Prestholdt 2008; Stoler 2002; van Binsbergen and Geschiere 2005; Weiss 1996, for a few examples), and even as recent archaeological thought on material culture has drawn ample theoretical inspiration from ethnographic, historical, and cultural studies (Buchli 2002; Hicks and Beaudry 2010; Knappett 2005; Meskell 2004; Tilley et al. 2005).

This dual peripherality—of Africa in archaeological studies of colonialism and of archaeology in anthropological and historical accounts of colonial life—provides the starting point for this book. Our hope, in assembling the present volume, is to take a first step toward addressing some of these imbalances and open lines of conversation between African archaeology and broader audiences about the making of colonial lifeworlds. We do so by presenting original case studies from across the continent to explore the diverse pathways, practices, and projects constructed by Africans in their engagement with the forces of imperial modernity and capitalism. All chapters are driven by the twinned questions of materialities and colonial experiences: more specifically, how did material worlds intervene in the making of colonial lives and conditions, and more precisely, what can *archaeological* evidence and readings of the past tell us about the material foundations of imperial dynamics? The volume seeks to engage broader conversations and fields of inquiry by dwell-

ing in resolutely interdisciplinary spaces, and drawing at the wells of different data sources and disciplines. As we will see, we understand “archaeology” somewhat ecumenically: as a sensibility, rooted in the “archaeological record,” but keyed to materialities expressed in other media, both past and present.

Finally, because of its entanglement with an African present shot through with the legacies of colonialism, each chapter is inescapably engaged with matters of theory and epistemology, tacking between the two sets of commitment outlined in the epigraphs to this introduction. With Mbembe, the authors recognize the contributions that Africa can make to what we know (or do not know) about colonialism, and how we might know (or not) about it. With Chakrabarty, however, they also understand that vernacular African pasts are inextricably tangled up with categories, histories, and theories rooted in Euro-American thought. The paradox of “provincializing Europe” (Chakrabarty 2000) is thus also that of archaeologies of colonial Africa: namely, that while we should work to critique the ambivalences and assumptions of “theories” complicit with the rise of modernity, it is nevertheless impossible to escape these theories completely. The problem, then, is less one of rejecting “European thought” wholesale than to realize that it is “at once indispensable and inadequate” and explore how this thought “which is now everybody’s heritage and which affects us all ... may be renewed from and for the margins” (Chakrabarty 2000, p. 16; also pp. 20, 42–43). Theory is not a mist of abstraction blanketing the specificities of indigenous knowledges and feelings. In fact, it is precisely *because* the authors of this volume engage with theory *from specific places in Africa*, each with their own demands of culture, history, and politics, that they can critically enrich broader discussions, archaeological or otherwise, about colonialism.

The rest of this introduction examines two broad categories of contributions that African archaeology can make to the analysis of colonial settings: first, historical images carved out of the specific properties of archaeological materials and reasoning; and second, theoretical perspectives on colonialism derived from the repertoire of African culture-, history-, and knowledge-making practices. With regard to the first rubric, archaeologists can capitalize on the distortions of archaeological assemblages to explore (1) the different kinds of times, of the long and shorter run, that fashioned colonial worlds, providing temporal perspective that stretches beyond the reach of other archives and (2) materialities that operate beyond the realm of awareness and sayability, ranging from the very small (mundane objects that exert effects on the humans using them) to the very big (configurations of practice unfolding over long durations). These singular translations, in turn, result in genres of history-writing that have no direct equivalents in other modes of storytelling. In terms of the second rubric, African cultural histories are fertile repertoires of clues about colonialism itself and the experiences of communities enveloped in it. Collectively, these heterogeneous material arrangements have comparative potential beyond themselves, as sources of analogical models and interpretive inspiration for studies of colonial dynamics in other parts of the world (also Stahl 1993). Similarly, the methodologies and analytical frameworks designed by Africanist scholars to retrieve material traces of these processes can stimulate archaeological imaginations elsewhere.

The idea of “materializing” (Buchli and Lucas 2001; Lucas 2004), evoked in the book’s title, aims to capture the various facets of this archaeological project. We are interested in a form of “mattering” that attends to both sides of the word “matter” (González-Ruibal 2008, pp. 249–252), one that harnesses the physicality of the world to (1) *make visible* certain colonial pasts that might have otherwise lain quiet or gone untold, (2) tell stories of colonialism in an alternative way by *making manifest* unexpected or ineffable connections among spaces, places, and objects, and (3) *make* these concrete histories *relevant* to the present, by unveiling gaps and contradictions in the historical thinking and experiences of both academic and nonacademic actors, and disclosing the unspoken and ambiguous undersides of globalization, capitalism, colonialism, political modernity, and nationalism in Africa (Orser 1996; Schmidt and Patterson 1995; Trouillot 1995). In this vein, the kind of archaeological mattering advocated here can also play redemptive, political, and critical functions (González-Ruibal 2008, p. 262) by (1) opening a tangible forum for the expression, curation, and revival of African memories; (2) exposing the repressed histories of loss, trauma, forgetting, and destruction that piled up in the wake of imperial expansion (Cole 2001; Stoller 1995); and (3) stripping bare the dark, violent genealogies underwriting the contemporary world and present-day political realities in Africa (Shaw 2002). In the end, archaeological narratives have the potential to supplement the stories of imperialism and materiality assembled by anthropologists and historians. In this regard, we would contend that African archaeology is generating insights whose relevance extends beyond itself and beyond the continent, and we imagine this volume as a platform for engaging with these broader horizons of discourse.

Theorizing Archaeological Colonialisms from Africa

...most of us bear scholarly signatures that are simultaneously north and south. Our critical edges are honed not from single placements but from multiple displacements, multiple focal lengths, multiple interpellations, multiple movements both away and towards (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012b).

African Archaeologies: Three Moments of Engagement with Colonialism

In a sense, modern African archaeology has never *not* been concerned with colonialism. These preoccupations became explicit during the first three decades of independence, as African scholars mounted fiery critiques linking the continent’s contemporary woes to a long history of entanglements with European imperial enterprises (Achebe 1959; Amin 1976; Barry 2001; Rodney 1982), and traced the roots of social science research on Africa to the colonial library (Bates et al. 1993; Mudimbe 1988). Archaeology’s inextricability from the projects of modernity and

imperialism (Diaz-Andreu 2007; Thomas 2004) did not escape the attention of Africanist scholarship. A first moment of inquiry turned to the overlapping histories of archaeological research and colonialism on the continent (Robertshaw 1990), with an eye for the legacies of colonial discourses, power relations, and ideological silencing carried into the present (Holl 1995). A number of African scholars raised important problems of imbalance between Euro-American and African archaeologists in setting the terms of research and interpretation (Wynne-Jones and Fleischer n.d.). Basseyy Andah (1995a, b, c), for instance, articulated a powerful critique of the lingering forms of colonial prejudice inhabiting archaeological questions, chronologies, and theoretical perspectives. Where processualist thinking tended to erase Africa's creative capacities behind the disembodied work of systems and evolutionary processes operating at very large scales, Andah advocated archaeological studies attentive to the actions of past people and cultural contexts, and relevant to historical needs in the present. This preoccupation with the specificities of history and culture is a crucial feature of the critique of colonialism, and important reminder that the trowel is never really far from words (conversations about historical memories) and deeds (observations about contemporary practices).

A second—and related—moment emerged out of the tradition of archaeological research on African history since the fifteenth century, which took root on the continent after independence (see Posnansky and DeCorse 1986, and Stahl 2009, for reviews). Concerned with the effects of Europe's global expansion, a critical prelude to modern African history, yet an unevenly and often patchily documented period, archaeologists looked to the material record as a trove of data to expand insights derived from other sources. As the tangible residue of past human activities, archaeological archives were regarded as the domain of the “people without history” (Little 1994)—the indigenous actors often miscast through the prism of European cultural distance and sidelined in the writings of European explorers, merchants, and administrators that provided the cornerstones for many reconstructions of recent African history. Even if archaeological worlds were subject to their own set of distortions, they had for a large part been fashioned by African people themselves, which made them closer to indigenous experiences than external sources, and potential correctives to the latter. Archaeological evidence also appeared as a promising complement to oral traditions, which were rich sources of cultural information but whose chronologies were often hard to parse. In some instances, archaeological materials would also provide avenues for affirming the historicity of oral traditions (Schmidt 1983, 2006).

The past two decades have seen the consolidation of a robust body of archaeological studies of Africa's entanglements with a post-Columbian world molded by ever wider and asymmetrical economic, political, and cultural interconnections. Much of this work has examined the cascade of intended and unintended consequences spun by Europe's global expansion in coastal and interior regions of Africa, and the extensive gamut of responses, experimentations, and transformations they prompted in communities across the continent. This scholarship has concentrated on three broad geo-historical spaces, focusing on the dynamics and consequences of the Atlantic trade in West Africa (e.g., DeCorse 2001; Ogundiran and Falola 2007; Monroe and Ogundiran 2012), the imbrication of eastern African societies

in the Indian Ocean commercial ecumene (e.g., Kusimba 1999; LaViolette 2008), and the cultural worlds forged by the European settlement of southern Africa (e.g., Hall 1993).¹

While the history of global entanglements in Africa is ostensibly nested in structures of imperial thought, organization, and management, the first wave of archaeological research on Africa's recent past was generally not framed, conceptually and analytically, around questions of colonialism. This stems in part from the character of colonization on the continent and its historiography, where "colonialism" often refers to the establishment of *formal* European rule, which accompanied the political annexation of African territories during the nineteenth century. Prior to the "colonial conquest," a mosaic period somewhat blurrily referred to as "pre-colonial" (Stahl 2001), the European presence in Africa was often diminutive, confined to small islands or coastal outposts, and mercantile rather than territorial in nature, although commercial activities like the trade in captives and weapons tempered heavily with regional politics. While European administrators may at times have wanted to extend control over aspects of African political life, lack of resources, numbers, and effective power thwarted the implementation of such designs. Whatever political influence they mustered never traveled very far, and when it did, it was through meddling, double-dealing, and diplomacy rather than brute force. By way of example, in Senegal, before the 1840s, French residents were frequently at the mercy of the goodwill and caprices of local African rulers, much to their own chagrin—this was, in fact, one of the motivating factors for decisively moving toward military expansion a decade later.²

¹ For more general reviews of archaeological studies of global encounters in western, eastern, and southern Africa, see chapters by Thiaw and Richard, Croucher, and Swanepoel, in *The Oxford Handbook of African Archaeology* (Mitchell and Lane 2013). See also Mitchell (2005) for a lucid exploration of what Bayart (2000) calls African strategies of "extraversion" across the continent, which maps African societies' long-term linkages to wider (regional, trans-Saharan, oceanic) systems of exchange.

² One may debate the merits and demerits—the historical appropriateness or political dangers—of a narrow, period-specific application of the framework of colonialism in parts of Africa that did not experience the political shock of early white settler occupation. Yet, we can wonder whether in restricting the concept of colonialism to the nineteenth century, archaeological studies of African history did not also miss a chance to plug themselves into broader comparative conversations in history, anthropology, literature, and critical studies, where ideas of colonialism have served as conceptual currency (Loomba et al. 2005). There is little doubt that the dynamics of power were very different in much of Africa, say, in the 1500s and 1900s. Yet it is also undeniable that the different moments that have punctuated global engagements on the continent since the fifteenth century are part of a shared trajectory of modern colonialism begun with the maritime expansion of Europe (Loomba 2005). While this process involved various projects and histories of imperial domination, some deeply threaded through African landscapes and others more superficially woven, they collectively created planetary conditions of uneven accumulation, economic imbalance, and asymmetrical power relations. Residents in Gorée, James Island, Whydah, or Elmina in the seventeenth century may not have been able to impose their political or military imprimatur on African kingdoms, but they sought to effect domination in other ways. Such attempts often focused on acquiring control over the terms of exchange (not always successfully and not always in the short-term), with a view for profit-making, resource extraction, and the establishment of structures of economic dependency.

Of course, this political situation contrasts markedly with imperial histories in the Americas, Australia, or New Zealand (Murray 2004; Russell 2001), where Spanish, Portuguese, British, Dutch, and French colonizations involved at an early time the establishment of settler societies, extensive structures of government, ambitious systems of land and labor appropriation, indigenous dispossession, and economic exploitation, as well as projects of native subjection and racial discrimination, which instituted unequally weighed worlds of power, such that the archaeology of intercultural contacts in these places is intrinsically colonial from its inception (Silliman 2005). One notable African exception, however, is Southern Africa, where the Dutch colonization of the Cape in 1652 marks a different temporality, demography, and experience of colonial contact than elsewhere on the continent (See Brink, this volume). The founding of the colony, which was the only permanent settlement of the Dutch East India Company, and the subsequent growth of settler society set in motion a turbulent process of land appropriation, territorial conflict, and indigenous displacement, which inextricably drew Africans and Europeans into each others' histories.

Given the depth and character of these cultural entwinements, and the particular contexts of power they fashioned, it is perhaps not surprising that the first genuine archaeological studies of colonialism arose out of the South African archaeological literature (e.g., Hall 2000; Reid et al. 1997; Schrire 1996). This research, in turn, inaugurates a third moment in the archaeological scholarship on African global encounters, defined by an explicit engagement with key themes in broader theoretical debates on colonialism and a clear concern with confronting material evidence with questions of colonial narrative, ideology and practice, and domination and resistance. These pioneering studies, in turn, paved the way for later research on colonial situations, in South Africa (Lucas 2006; Swanepoel et al. 2008; Weiss 2011), as well as in other parts of the continent, including Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, Namibia, Senegal, and Tanzania (Apoth 2008; Crossland 2014; Croucher 2007; Cruz 2011; González-Ruibal 2006, 2010, 2014; Kinahan 2000; Lane 2009; Reid and Lane 2004; Richard 2011, 2013a; Rowlands 1998; Stahl 2001, 2002; Stahl and Cruz 1998; Thiauw 2011b; Wynne-Jones 2010).

Mirroring larger trends in the archaeological literature (van Dommelen 2006), explorations of African colonial worlds have found increasingly common ground with the tenets of "postcolonial thinking," even if many writers would not necessarily claim the label (DeCorse 2012)—a label whose cardinal axioms are hard to define in the first place, given the plurality and ceaseless recontouring of this field of ideas (Loomba et al. 2005). Nor have they adopted postcolonial sentiments unthinkingly. As archaeologists, they have been sensitive to the insights which material configurations shine on our understanding of colonial entanglements, tempered by the necessity of calibrating concepts to the material idiosyncrasies of the archaeological record. As Africanists, they have attended to the twists placed by African histories, cultures, and politics on theoretical formulations elaborated in other parts of the world (see Cooper 1994). That said, the fact remains that much of the current literature on African colonialism is moved by themes rooted in, or resonant with, postcolonial theory (Bhabha 1994; Chakrabarty 2000; Guha and Spivak 1988; Loomba 2005; Spivak 1988; Young 1995, 2001; see Liebmann and Rizvi 2008, for an archaeological discussion). A number of driving concerns involve (1) how co-

lonial ideologies and institutions shaped the lives of indigenous peoples in the past and present; (2) how the legacies of colonial thought continue to linger in practices of knowledge-making today; (3) the relationship between material conditions, representations, and their subjective expression in people's existence; (4) the critical deconstruction of historiography and historical discourse; (5) skepticism regarding the limitations of textual archives and their capacity to restore the lives and voices of traditionally underrepresented actors in history; (6) the character of power in the colony: its structures, ambiguities, and subversions; and (7) the writing of alternative accounts of the colonial past from the perspectives of non-European people, emphasizing indigenous agency, cultural practices, resilience, and experimentation.

Postcolonial African Archaeologies: Polemics and Productive Tensions

If archaeological evidence does not always have much to say about the subtle relationships of hegemony, identity, and hybridity that have been the bread and butter of postcolonial analyses, past materialities can however help to revisit old questions and conundrums in fresh ways. For instance, material culture offers a bridge between postcolonial theory's anxieties about the limits of text/discourse and its insistence on the recovery of subaltern histories (Spivak 1988); it is, in effect, an epistemological space, where textual documents can (partially) be bypassed by material ones, as the latter begin to yield independent light on the lives of a broad cast of actors who did not record their histories in writing (cf. Liebmann 2008). Because they take place in the present, the material assemblages secreted by archaeological fieldwork—surveys, excavations, sites, artifacts, and the various encounters they stimulate—also hail communities of memory and historical stakeholders. They often provoke historical sentiments, which, in turn, can conjure local voices about the remembered colonial past. Inevitably, they get knotted up with local politics of the past, both critically and collaboratively: just as archaeology's stagings and findings can suss out the lines of force and silence in homespun accounts of the past, they can also productively mesh with local agendas, questions, and priorities to guide archaeological inquiries. Conversely, archaeological evidence sometimes also collides with local perceptions of history. Through this labor of confrontation—with and along European texts, oral histories, and present-day concerns—archaeology strives to dismantle the colonial library by attending to how preoccupations born of the colonial moment have colored representations of Africa's past, and how they may continue to influence history-making today, both in and out of Africa.

Not only content with the complicities of knowledge and power in the past, this reflexive lens has also been turned back on practices of knowledge-making in contemporary archaeology itself. While prefaced in several earlier works (e.g., Munsoda 1990; Shepherd 2003; Sowumni 1998; Stahl 2001; Stahl et al. 2004; Thiaw 2003, 2011a; Schmidt and Patterson 1995), these issues have come to the fore in a number of polemics initiated by a number of recent publications. Drawing explicit inspiration from postcolonial texts, Peter Schmidt and fellow travelers (2006, 2009;

Schmidt and Walz (2007a, b) have raised sensible epistemological and ethical interrogations about African archaeology, reopening some of Bassey Andah's critiques evoked at the beginning of this section. Concerned chiefly with an archaeological practice that, in the spirit of redressing colonial erasures of Africa, valorizes indigenous perspectives on the past and the present, these recent critiques address two sets of problems: (1) How certain thoughtful critical perspectives might unintentionally background—or mute—African voices and representations. These worries have been directed at important works of revisionist scholarship, focusing specifically on Ann Stahl's (2001) influential *Making History in Banda* (and Reid and Lane 2004, to a lesser extent); and (2) the persistence of colonial legacies in the profession, mostly in the form of academic structures and practices that conspire to marginalize African scholars (especially those critical of academia's power/knowledge/truth nexus) and the host communities whose pasts archaeologists study. In response, this postcolonial project advances "decolonizing" strategies that promote self-critique and self-awareness, and the inclusion of greater diversity and multivocality in perspectives, especially subaltern voices.

A detailed dissection of these debates—and the web of charges and countercharges they have spun (see Stahl 2009, 2010, for pointed responses to some of Schmidt's critiques)—is beyond the scope of this introduction. That said, they do showcase, despite their occasionally acrimonious tone, the kinds of productive and thoughtful disciplinary exchanges which postcolonial reasoning can foster around pivotal issues of method, theory, and praxis in archaeology. Let us take as illustration of these possibilities, the two concerns drawn from Schmidt and Walz's (2007a, b) review of Stahl's work. One critique is leveled at Stahl's use of the trope of "the lived past," which demarcates the realm of quotidian social practice often forgotten in historical sources but accessible through archaeological materials, and from which archaeology can usefully comment about the African past. In this sense, (re)constructing the domain of everyday life is viewed as a critical way of supplementing conventional histories, providing new readings that both expose contradictions in historical representations and descriptions of indigenous pasts (Trouillot 1995). While appreciative of the term's analytic force, Schmidt and Walz riposte that if "the lived past" is ostensibly geared toward "un-silencing" aspects of Africa's history, its deployment, especially in the singular, may paradoxically create other kinds of silences. In their reading, the term essentializes the past; it dresses it in positivist garbs that consecrate the archaeologist's authority at the expense of active indigenous voices; and it leaves the question of past meanings unaddressed. These remarks do raise a fair point of critique, albeit a rather general one somewhat separate from the specificities of Stahl's arguments. Indeed, concepts—all of them—simultaneously illuminate and cloud their object of study and may have consequences that escape our intentions, however reflexive we are. In this light, the notion of "lived pasts" (accepting that there are plural quotidians enfolding different social identities in the past) usefully highlights the domain of everyday, embodied life constructed by social actors in practice. Yet, the term also does open itself to stimulating questions, though rather different ones than those posed by Schmidt and Walz. One might wonder, for instance, what "the everyday" exactly entails in

archaeological contexts encompassing decades or centuries of amalgamated, plural social practices—the temporality being here likely different from what might be understood as quotidian in ethnographic settings. On the matter of meaning, it is true that although the common opposition between representation and practice (and, by association, meaning and material culture), which Stahl’s argument partly rests on (see Stahl 2002), can be usefully translated to archaeological analysis, it does tend to downplay instances in which materiality and signification are inextricably embedded, indeed co-constituted, leaving more hope for the material exploration of signifying practices in the past (see Crossland 2014, this volume; Gokee 2015, for different perspectives). On another level, however, Stahl is well aware of these issues, and she does not present the idea of “lived past” as an interpretive silver bullet for African archaeology. Rather, her argument is situated in a particular project of interdisciplinary epistemology, which configures her argument and analysis. In underscoring the materialness of archaeological interpretation, Stahl is raising archaeology’s troubled relationship to past meanings and ideas, which are often more easily plumbed through other sources, and foregrounding the particular vantage—evidence of residues of past life—that archaeology can bring to historical interpretation (Rowland, this volume). Archaeological materials do not speak for themselves; rather, our representations of the past and their truthfulness take shape in webs of consonance and resistance that tie them to arguments, sources, and data elaborated in other fields. In this sense, while ostensibly archaeological, Stahl’s accounts of Banda’s everyday worlds carry concerns, puzzles, and evidence incubated in oral memory, history, and contemporary ethnography. Though rooted in material configurations, “lived pasts” are shot through with other voices and perspectives (e.g., Bakhtin 1983), and thus maybe less insulated from non-material sources than critics might anticipate.

Another worry of Schmidt and Walz’s is that the recent archaeological interest in global connections (including colonialism) might come at the expense of better understanding of African modes of history-making. Their rationale is that such inquiries sometimes paper over what local narratives consider significant histories (ones unconcerned with the colonial past, for instance) or carry theoretical ideas at odds with indigenous needs and views of the past, and that local histories might crumble under the weight of analytical frameworks placing excessive focus on transformations waged by global forces. At its core, the fear that certain levels of analysis might accord too much say to outside processes, and thus effectively submerge the dynamics of local histories, is well taken (Feierman 1999)—incidentally, it is a similar concern that prompted Stahl’s turn to everyday “lived past” realities, a form of theorizing “from below” that counterbalances eagle-eyed views of history.³ Indeed, accounts composed in sonorous Marxist or liberal keys (among others) frequently unleash the *deus ex machina* of imperialist destruction, economic determinism, or capitalist progress on local pasts, reducing indigenous histories to mere sidenotes adorning the margins of

³ Sections of *Making History in Banda* reference practice theory and *alltag geschichte* perspectives, which developed as alternatives to big-scale, structural explanatory models (Stahl 2001, pp. 34–35). See also the discussion on microhistory in McCaskie (2000).

preestablished narratives. Schmidt and Walz (2007b, p. 132) stand on more precarious ground, however, when they suggest that a focus on Africa's articulation with global forces does not do justice to the historical experiences of societies untouched by capitalism, or living largely outside of colonial influence. The difficulty, here, is that foregrounding the autonomy of African histories from the ripples of global diffusions lends itself to a kind of unintentional silencing, one that runs the risk of portraying Africa as a "place apart," backward and historically severed from the world, a reading that paradoxically echoes colonial representations of indigenous societies (see Stahl 2009, p. 247; Stahl, this volume; also Bayart 2000; Ferguson 2006). I do not imagine that this is what Schmidt and Walz are arguing. Nor do I think that their call for the use of African material histories to challenge historical representations (2007b, p. 142) is incompatible with Stahl's argument that, if world societies have long been shaped by global networks of power, objects, and ideas, these connections have taken myriad shapes and do not presume encapsulation (2009, p. 247). In effect, combining both views, one vantage offered by (postcolonial) archaeologies might be their unique capacity to draw upon the peculiar qualities and dissonances of African pasts (conveyed materially, textually, and orally) to revisit common narratives of colonialism as an implacable system of power and inescapable force of change. There is little doubt that African communities have been entangled, frontally or obliquely, thickly or thinly, with colonial projects for a long time. The tendrils of global flows ultimately reached even those frontier societies that were not in direct contact with Europeans, through the trail of traded objects, or the effects of commercial activities on the coast (such as slave-raiding, state expansion, or inter-polity conflicts), or the ripples of ideas and rumors. Yet, not all African societies were drawn in in the same way and at the same time made similar histories in the face of a transforming world. Indeed, the challenge is to mobilize African materialities to distinguish between different times and intensities of colonial engagement, study the character of local communities' interactions with colonial rule, and examine how Africans fashioned lives on the margins and at the center of colonialism, with the ultimate goal of nuancing our understanding of colonial dynamics (Richard, this volume).

What stands out from these conversations for the purpose of this volume (and we hope, for audiences beyond it) is what could be termed the "leakiness"—the hybridity—of concepts, histories, and identities sparked by the colonial moment (Trouillot 2003). Ideas always contain in themselves traces of other abstractions (including those one might disagree with on the face of it). Local pasts are always entwined with other histories; indeed, it is the condition of their possibility. The slave trade or colonialism may not be featured in the historical consciousness of some African localities, but they recur in veiled tones or in bodily inscriptions (Argenti 2006; Shaw 2002; Stoller 1995; Tsing 2005). Finally, identities are never "pure" but always relational. The tropes of Africa and Europe (mirroring those of colonized and colonizer) are useful distinctions to the extent that they reveal factual inequities in power, which reverberate in academic discourse; however, the distinction becomes less cutting when we discuss the postcolonial realities and want to advance, say, aspects of the politics and ethics of knowledge-making, might call for more "hybrid" categories (as I will take up below; see also Rowland, this volume).

Colonial Archaeologies: Broader Lessons from Africa?

Although African archaeology has benefited from key debates elsewhere, it has also fashioned its own syntheses from the specificities of its cultural pasts and presents, and thus impressed its stamp on theory and practice. Three elements, in particular, stand out from the discipline's engagement with the specificities of local contexts and with colonial legacies on the continent, which underscore *both* the distinctiveness of Africa-based research *and* its relevance to wider thinking about the material expressions of globalizing histories.

1. Hybrid methodologies: Modern African archaeology has always been resolutely and inherently interdisciplinary. The fact that African archaeology takes place in milieus rich with oral historical consciousness and living cultural practices, not to mention the existence of variably dense corpuses of historical documentation, means that it has had to tack between archaeological collections, oral narratives, ethnographic analogies, and historical records in its pursuits of past interpretation. Because much of the information it uses to conjure cultural context comes from nonmaterial data (which Posnansky and DeCorse [1986] view as a condition for inclusion into "historical archaeology"), African archaeology does not make much sense outside its relations to other sources of evidence. For this reason, it has had much to say about the epistemology and methodology of working in interdisciplinary spaces with multiple kinds of data. With regard to oral traditions, perhaps more than anywhere else, Africanists have blazed pioneering paths about the relationship between figurations of the past and material culture. Of special interest here is Schmidt's (2006) seminal work on the material basis of certain narrative tropes (metonymy; see also Schoenbrun 2012, on "conceptual metaphors") and how African societies have used materialities to prop up historical knowledge (Kus and Raharijaona, this volume).⁴ In this sense, this research contributes to archaeological conversations about the politics of the past the fresh idea that in addition to building models of history from material records, archaeologists should perhaps also want to understand indigenous "archaeological imaginations" (Smith 2004), the theories of material culture effective in our host communities (Lane 2011). Shifting to the matters of ethnography, Africanists have crafted important treatises about the dangers of analogical anachronism and provided thoughtful suggestions for context-sensitive uses of ethnographic observations (Lane 2005; Stahl 1993; more generally, see David and Kramer 2001). Africa-based researchers have also reflected on textuality, and the transitive properties of words in relation to landscape (Brink, this volume). Finally, and more generally, building on Trouillot's (1995) notion of silences and mentions in archive production, Stahl (2001) has proposed a compelling framework for dealing with multiple lines of evidence "supplementally"; rather than waiting for one dataset to fill in gaps in historical knowledge, she suggests a more

⁴ More generally, Kus and Raharijaona's (2006) analyses of the entwinement between poetic forms and state power in Madagascar are a model of the genre.

dynamic method of looking for disjunctures in sources, in ways that both challenge the stories they uphold and gesture toward other ways of seeing (see Stahl et al. 2004, for a broader application of this perspective).

2. Theoretical vantages: African archaeology boasts a long tradition of theoretical innovations nurtured from the turf of African cultural and material practices. In effect, as recently pointed out by Wynne-Jones and Fleischer (n.d.), contemporary forms of archaeological theory owe a number of debts to Africa, especially visible in the genesis of “postprocessual” perspectives, which derived key insights about human agency, identity formation, and symbolic expression from the study of material culture in African ethnographic contexts. Local archaeologies have continued to generate original, empirically grounded theoretical approaches and arguments that resonate with the themes and questions driving archaeological theory today, though they may enjoy limited purchase outside of the continent.

A number of studies seem particularly germane to the study of colonialism in other settings. Regarding the role of objects in (re)constituting social persons in times of global connections, we can cite, for instance, Stahl’s (2002) lucid engagement with Bourdieu and sensory ethnography to develop an analytic of taste, a way of mapping over time how embodied preferences shaped the reception of traded objects and were changed in the process. In related ways, a number of studies have drawn on ethnographic/historical analyses of African money and strategies of wealth-making in West-Central Africa to investigate practices of value-making in Atlantic and colonial Africa (Ogundiran 2002; Richard 2010; also Swanepoel, this volume).⁵ Africanists have expanded early ethnoarchaeological research on the relationship between craft production and processes of identity construction, by applying the lessons of practice theory, *chaines opératoires*, and semiotics to the ambiguous messages of artifact-making (pottery, generally) in the past and present (David et al. 1988; Dietler and Herbich 1998; Gokee 2015; Gosselain 2000). More recently, researchers have revisited the often-vexing question of “ethnicity” in African historical and archaeological contexts (Richard and McDonald 2015). African archaeologists have also devoted analytical attention to the matters of ritual life during the social and political dislocations associated with the growth of oceanic commerce, with consequences of both process and history. At the level of social process, their work has shown that ritualization is often not confined to purportedly “sacred” spaces and moments, but embedded in daily life (Stahl 2008), which imparts ritual tempos to the biographies of certain categories of mundane “things.” In terms of history, Norman’s (2009, 2010) meticulous work on the material dimensions of Vodun in Bénin, between ethnography and the Atlantic era, has demonstrated the historic

⁵ Seminal here is Jane Guyer’s work on questions of “wealth in people/knowledge” and the distinctive logics of composition (as opposed to accumulation) underwriting African conceptions of wealth (Guyer 1993; Guyer and Eno Belinga 1995), as well as her examinations of the practices associated with African money (Guyer 1995, 2004).

depth of certain principles of religious thought while noting important ruptures and innovations, with implications for the historicity of material symbols in the African diaspora. Finally, African archaeologists have delved into the political context of African world-making. At local levels, Dietler's (2010) influential work on the politics of food consumption is derived from the ethnographic fieldwork in Kenya. At a larger scale, Africanists have put forward sophisticated analyses of political landscape, which focus on the subtle intertwinings of power and cosmology in the structuring of milieu (Norman and Kelly 2004; also Monroe and Ogundiran 2012). Expanding out to wider horizons of power, much recent work has grown concerned with how the complicities of imperialism and capitalism articulated with everyday lives of indigenous people, with a view to clarifying the workings of both local histories and global process (Croucher and Weiss 2011; González-Ruibal 2008; Stahl, Weiss, this volume). Some, in fact, have turned the focus squarely on colonial power, to make a case for the role of archaeological ruins in investigating the fantasies of reason buoying colonial modernity (González-Ruibal 2006, 2010) and paradoxes of colonial rule (Richard 2013a).

3. Hybrid knowledges: As previously discussed, the past few years have seen growing ferment over matters of knowledge/power in African archaeology and contemporary disciplinary practice. This collective reflection about the present and future of archaeology on the continent has identified disquieting (but, sadly, not entirely surprising) structural imbalances of power between Africa and Euro-America, many of which are rooted in the political economic conditions and forms of knowledge our world and our field have inherited from colonialism. These conditions take on several dimensions, including restrictions on the movements (of persons and ideas) of African scholars (punishing visa policies; prohibitive cost of travel, especially for students or junior scholars; limited access to research moneys, and disadvantages in access to publication venues and grants); practices of intellectual marginalization; disparities in working conditions between academic institutions in Northern Europe and America, and in Africa (noncompetitive salaries; limited research financing; reduced availability of funding for technology acquisition, upkeep, and technical expertise; disparities in research infrastructure, facilities, laboratories, and libraries); gaps in conditions of learning, pursuit of higher education degrees, and prospects of employability and independent research; as well as the silent reproduction of the colonial "order of things" in educational structures, institutions of knowledge (museums, particularly), and selective legal protection of archaeological resources, especially in matters of cultural heritage (Schmidt 2009). While some of these conditions have improved in some countries over the years, overall, they nevertheless contribute to ongoing geographic inequalities, as well as a level of dependence on structures and infrastructures of knowledge-making firmly rooted in Europe and North America.

These inequities concern not just the craft of archaeology and its practical milieus, but how those reverberate in the construction of knowledge *about* Africa itself. After all, much published archaeological writing about Africa's past today is done by

non-Africans and/or scholars working in institutions outside the continent,⁶ which has led some to question the forms of silencing channeled in this process; how might well-intentioned scholars inadvertently impose Western standards of knowledge on African milieus of history? How might this uneven fashioning and transfer of knowledge paper over indigenous epistemologies? How might African archaeology's roots in colonial science continue to frame its checkered record of engagement with host communities and stakeholders?

On the one hand, as these questions point out, it is undeniable that “virtually all of us who make a living out of studying Africa’s past occupy, by virtue of education and employment, positions of privilege (albeit variable)” that carry responsibilities—ethical, critical, political, and material—to challenge the colonial holdovers in our practices and institutions, facilitate partnerships and mutuality between African and non-African scholars, and make honest efforts at engaging the communities of memory whose pasts they research (Stahl 2010, p. 168). There is also no question about the alienation that many African colleagues face in their engagement with the archaeological establishment. In this light, an analytic of geographic difference between Africa and Euro-America is strategically useful, in highlighting profound structural and discursive discrepancies in power/knowledge, and broad orientations for undoing them. At the same time, such stark geographic polarities begin to break down, ironically, in dealing with the complexities of postcolonial circumstances in twenty-first-century Africa. Notwithstanding real gaps in mobility, wealth and directions of flows, and obstacles of geopolitics and infrastructure, the Africa/Euro-America binary *is* breached by ever-increasing passages of people, ideas, and collaborations. Without romanticizing aspects of globalization and “internet democracy” (both of which are full of holes; Ferguson 2006; Tsing 2005), African scholars are now ever more implicated in informational networks, projects and conversations with overseas scholars and institutions, exchange of texts and writings, and outside literatures they can integrate in their reflections on the past, often a mouse click away—and vice versa, non-African scholars can remain abreast of flows of information, events, conversations, scholarship, and relationships on the continent through the medium of digital technologies, in ways that would have been impossible even 10 years ago. In this context of transforming ecology of knowledge production, as Rowlands (this volume) importantly notes, the discourses we produce are neither exclusively of Euro-America or Africa, but hybrid knowledges, whose compositions, intentions, politics, and effects have to be determined (and critiqued) empirically and case-by-case. As the borders of “Africa” dematerialize and expand, and as the continent is increasingly produced elsewhere (through flows of money

⁶ Perhaps, it is important to insist on published works, which, of course, enjoy privileged circulation. From my own experience in Senegal, the Department of History at the University Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar boasts dozens and dozens of unpublished MA and doctoral theses in history and archaeology written over the past three decades. These monographs, some of which are of very high quality, target myriad aspects of Senegal’s regional and national pasts, and speak to a fertile and diverse tradition of scholarly production in the country, which vastly exceeds in volume published research. I suspect similar situations would hold in countries with dynamic university institutions, such as Ghana, Nigeria, and Tanzania.

and labor, diasporic identities, multisited cultural productions, and so forth), it is increasingly tricky to pin down what “African epistemologies” might be—or, indeed, what “Euro-American” ones entail—given that these respective epistemologies have long been entwined in relationships of mutual implication and borrowing, and not just in the academia.⁷ That these relationships have been historically uneven does not negate them, nor does it mean that they always are or will be. Likewise, while it would be ludicrous for Euro-American scholars to claim to speak *for* Africa and African experiences, their perspectives are nevertheless mixedly “African” by virtue of being saturated by conversations with African colleagues, students, and community members, engagements with African historical consciousness and theories of history (and material culture) and long stretches of residence on the continent, and of a commitment to advocating the singular relevance of perspectives rooted in Africa (Rowlands, this volume, citing Nyamnjoh 2012). Likewise, African philosophical imaginations have not been constructed in a cultural vacuum, but co-constituted in relation to other knowledges, which they have made theirs, critiqued, and elaborated into new syntheses (e.g., Diagne 2001; Mbembe 2001; Mudimbe 1988, Nyamnjoh 2012, for a short list). As the Comaroffs elegantly point out in this section’s epigraph, we all bear signatures that are simultaneously north and south.

Theorizing African Colonialisms Through Archaeology

[F]ar from being a simple exercise in domination and resistance—though both occurred in more or less explicit, more or less intentional forms—colonial encounters everywhere consisted in a complex dialectic: a dialectic, mediated by social differences and cultural distinctions, that transformed everyone and everything caught up in it, if not in the same way; a dialectic that yielded new identities, new frontiers, new signs and styles—and reproduced some older ones as well; a dialectic animated less often by coercive acts of conquest, even if violence was always immanent in it, than by attempts to alter existing modes of production and reproduction, to recast the taken-for-granted surfaces of everyday life, to remake consciousness; a dialectic, therefore, founded on an intricate mix of visible and invisible agency, of word and gesture, of subtle persuasion and brute force on the part of all concerned (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997, p. 28).

Archaeologists have usually been more interested in borrowing theories from other fields, rather than in developing the theoretical potential of the same concepts that other thinkers find so useful. We have tried to fit our material into the frameworks devised by sociologists, anthropologists or historians, who have in turn shown little interest in what we, archaeologists, have to say using the borrowed categories (González-Ruibal 2013, pp. 1–2).

⁷ As a doctoral researcher, I remember being caught off guard when A. Sagna, the village chief heading the small community of Simal, raised the unprompted question of C¹⁴ technology in one of our conversations about the village’s settlement history. Mr. Sagna was intrigued about the promises of radiocarbon-dating as an anchor to the chronology of oral traditions.

In recent years, Africanist archaeologists have advocated an explicit rapprochement with the discipline of history (DeCorse and Chouin 2003; Stahl and LaViolette 2009; Robertshaw 2000; Swanepoel et al. 2008). While noting differences in epistemologies and methods, they have underscored complementarities of objectives and perspectives, and the prospect of mutually beneficial exchanges. A more modest intellectual kinship has also bound African archaeology and art history, whose interests have converged on past objects and the histories, technologies, and systems of meaning in which they were embedded (Arnoldi et al. 1996; McIntosh 1989; Norman 2010; Stahl 2013). Less often, however, have Africanist archaeologists identified sociocultural anthropologists as potential interlocutors (but see Stahl 2001), which is surprising given the influence that perspectives derived from (historical) ethnographic research have exerted on archaeological thought about things, materiality, and colonial situations (or the fact that both often share university departments, at least in North American universities). And yet, it seems that there are all sorts of ways in which archaeology's singular perspectives on time, material worlds, and methods can productively merge with anthropology-minded histories of colonialism, especially given the recent move toward anchoring the latter in the tangible minutiae of places, practices, and material things.

Although scholars two generations ago might have been concerned with colonialism as structural, political, or biographic history, the late 1980s saw the emergence of anthropological analyses interested in other dimensions of colonial existence: the imbrication of colonial power and culture/knowledge (e.g., Cohn 1996; Dirks 1992; Thomas 2004), how colonialism translated to the theater of everyday life, with consequent interest in how bodies, practices, and ideas were reshaped between colonized and colonizers (e.g., Burke 1996; Comaroff and Comaroff 1997; Piot 1999; Prestholdt 2008), and the ambiguities, tensions, and paradoxes lodged at the heart of the colonial enterprise and its postcolonial inheritors (e.g., Cooper and Stoler 1997; Mbembe 2001). Colonialism, intrinsically, is about exploitation and domination, conquest and imposition, order and control, about converting and civilizing "natives," racist and prejudicial ideologies, and about the manufacture of marginalization and difference, but focusing on these processes alone would give a truncated view of the complex, ambiguous worlds that flowered in the wake of colonial occupation. In effect, colonial administrations' ambitious projects and reforms were often bent out of shape once they touched the ground, in part because they crossed paths with long antecedent histories of culture, politics, and agency that exceeded colonialism's transformative capacities.

Rather than splitting colonial worlds into colonizer/colonized or domination/resistance dyads (though recognizing that such polarized thinking was itself produced by colonial discourse and a hallmark of its political ideologies), then, anthropological research has insisted on the *oscillations* that made up colonial encounters: the dialectics between brute power and persuasion, consent and conflict, intentions and accidents, and planning and improvisation, which worked itself out at different paces, at different times, and with different outcomes among a range of actors in different places. From these dialectical interplays, Comaroff and Comaroff (1997, pp. 19–27) extract a number of succinct propositions about

the organization of colonial worlds: (1) Colonialism was inseparably a process of political economy and culture, such that material forces of production and reproduction were always mediated by local imaginations, and vice versa. (2) Because colonial states' instrumental capacities were frequently uneven and limited, *other* agents of empire (missionaries, businessmen, settlers, etc.) played an important role in the "remaking" of indigenous lives. (3) Colonialism refashioned colonizers and metropolises, just as much as it did colonized peoples. (4) The categories of "colonizer" and "colonized"—and the spaces, bodies, and racial groups they delineated—were repeatedly transgressed and reinvented. The sociology of colonies was complex, hybrid, and mosaic. (5) The ideological representations that upheld colonial order, however, were predicated on the very family of oppositions pitting European against non-European, white against black, ruler against subject, etc. (6) The non-Western societies colonized by European nations were diverse, historical, and connected to the broader world. They were shaped by their own political order, economic institutions, and cultural–moral principles, which themselves shaped the terms and outcomes of colonial entanglements. (7) Colonialism, structurally and historically, was mired in ruptures, contradictions, and unpredictable effects. Taking these propositions as useful depictions of colonial realities, how can archaeologists shed their own light on the processes outlined by the Comaroff's?

In considering a related question, González-Ruibal (2013, p. 2) advises archaeologists to reclaim "what is most essentially archaeology: the craft, the tools, and the materials that make up the discipline." If we follow this useful breakdown, and put aside, for a moment, my argument about African archaeology's existential interdisciplinarity, what is perhaps most singular about the archaeological craft is its array of methodological tools and foci, what it uses to produce its data: its reliance on excavations and pedestrian surveys, and the diverse portfolio of "analyses" it deploys to coax information out of objects often long severed from their context of production and consumption, ranging from methodical exercises of classification to the use of laboratory analyses to determine the physical and chemical properties of various classes of materials, to a stance of empathy toward objects and the people with whose lives they were once entwined. These, in turn, configure in important ways what is often hailed as archaeology's aces in the hole: its commitment to material things, its particular relationship to time, and its special attunement to scale.

At their most elemental, excavating implies an engagement with the layering and vertical relations of material configurations, while surveying entails a horizontal concern with material arrangements across variably large stretches of space—a dialectics of depth, breadth, and matter that carries important consequences for the kinds of geographic, temporal, and material narratives that archaeologists craft (González-Ruibal 2013; Harrison and Schofield 2010; Lucas 2012). Thinking about *scale* first, archaeology is distinctive in its capacity to track patterns and variations at multiple levels of *materiality* (chemical signatures, stylistic attributes common to many objects, single classes of data (artifacts, fauna, botanicals, soils, etc.), connections between different groups of objects, or more complex assemblages of material relations such as human settlements, field systems, trade networks, or landscapes), *visibility* (from microscopic elements to macroscopic formations), *space* (within sites, at the

level of locality, between places, at the regional scale, intercontinental networks), and *time* (at particular moments or periods, or over different stretches of time). The conjunction of these various dimensions affords ways to creatively cut across planes of conventional historical and material analysis, to reveal scales at which certain phenomena achieve visibility, efficacy, or persistence, or at which certain social/systemic/ecological forces were active, and more generally, to identify connections or assemblages that might otherwise escape the purview of people and texts.

One obvious implication, given archaeology's access to various timescales, is that archaeological evidence can add texture and depth to anthropological and historical accounts of colonial *temporality*, especially regarding matters of historical determination and local historicities. As Mbembe (2001) reminds us, colonial contact did not submerge non-Western worlds into an absolute time of "modernity," orchestrated by the rhythms of empire, capital, and globalization. Rather, colonial worlds were sites where histories knotted up, and where multiple tenses and orders of time coexisted. Archaeologically, these temporal palimpsests often acquire material presence in surface assemblages (Harrison 2011). As different elements of the human-carved landscape endure and degrade at different rates (Lucas 2010; Olivier 2011), some places accumulate historical density through reuse, recycling, or remembrance; others remain governed by continuities of local practice (sometimes in relative autonomy from spaces of colonial rule); while others still might be dramatically reorganized—and ransacked—by the creative destruction of capitalist investments and boom-and-bust of market cycles, and thus carry the bitter-sweet signatures and paradoxes of colonial modernity (e.g., Moore 2005). Looking at these enmeshments of times from the long view of material history, archaeology can make a number of specific interventions. First and foremost, it can help to document the interplay of changes and continuities that fashioned the lives of colonized peoples, each with certain critical possibilities. In mapping the operations of *change* before, during, and after colonialism, archaeologists have dispelled ingrained assumptions about the (in)capacity of African societies to make history and demonstrated the dynamism of African historicities (Stahl 2001); for example, that "traditions" are actually quite layered and sometimes even "modern" in inspiration (Baum 1999; Guyer 1996; Piot 1999; Shaw 2002), or that ostensibly recent transformations might be buoyed by longer trajectories of cultural doings; concurrently, the operations of *continuity* can help us to recognize the distinct times of indigenous peoples unfolding alongside, across, or against the time-flows of modernity (González-Ruibal 2013, p. 11). In documenting trajectories of practice across the colonial caesura, archaeology stands to complicate the categories of "pre-colonial" and "colonial," demonstrating the deep historicity (and thus analytical emptiness) of the former, and questioning the political rupture supposedly affected by the latter (and thus the transformative agency of "modernity") (Chouin and DeCorse 2010). What is more, the ability to document long-term linkages and interruptions binding African experiences before and after colonialism means that archaeology is also in a prime position to comment on Africa's present and the opaque "prehistories" on which it rests (Benjamin 1999). Looking from colonialism forward, this might entail making visible the material legacies of colonialism and destructions of modernist "reason" in Africa's present (González-Ruibal

2008), or looking from the postcolony backward, tracking how contemporary political conditions and experiences are not just indebted to colonial modernity but also prefigured on earlier, and longer, genealogies of practices (Richard, this volume). Overall, these hold significance for propositions 1, 2, 6, and 7 in the Comaroff's list—namely, how archaeological evidence encourages us to examine the twining up of culture and economy, not accept the de facto impact of colonial agents and forces, acknowledge the deep and active historicity of indigenous worlds, and scrutinize gaps in the workings of colonial apparatuses.

A second point of original entry into colonial worlds for archaeology is the question of *materiality*, or rather the particular materialities to which it has access, and their analytical, empirical, and epistemological dimensions. Analytically, the archaeological record is a partial transcript of accumulations and ruptures in material relationships over time; in this light, it affords prime access to the spheres of mundane social practice where colonized people negotiated the demands, agents, objects, and ideas of colonial society, where colonial orders were incorporated and reworked, and where colonial histories and hybridities were made. These practical worlds can be intimate, such as the material assemblages making up the vestiges of households, but they can also encompass broader habitats, such as the landscapes housing human tasks, and co-constituted by the rhythms of cultural and natural agencies. Since past realms of experience have left uneven traces in other archives, archaeology offers a critical evidential corpus for their expression and retrieval (with relevance for points 2, 4, 5, and 6 above). Empirically, one of the advantages of archaeological archives is their relative democracy; the fact that they nominally preserve the activities of all classes of colonial actors (poor and affluent, urban or rural, African or not), in central or out-of-the-way places, means that archaeological data offer the promise of fuller geographic and sociological coverage than other archives. Archaeology, however, looks at material things somewhat differently from other disciplines. Surely, it has privileged access to buried things, found neither on the earth's surface nor on the surface (and margins) of texts, and like other fields, it examines materialities for the signatures of past relations, processes, and histories they crystallize. But its thing-centered insights about past worlds are heavily contoured by a reticent, fragmentary, and incomplete evidential corpus. If archaeologists sometimes focus on single objects and can mobilize scale to track their circuitous "biographies" in time and space (Stahl, this volume; Ogundiran 2002), they generally examine *assemblages*—associations between different sets of material elements (and the human and nonhuman entities they stand in for) that might link to other material constellations (Lucas 2012). By extension, these connections between different sets of things can shed fascinating light on how networks of objects mediate the construction of social practices (Stahl 2002, 2008); in fact, archaeologists could do more to engage key Africanist analyses of people–thing relationships (Piot 1991)—say ideas of compositional practices or the literature on fetishes (Graeber 2006; Guyer 1993)—and explore the historical and material depth of these practices, with implications for narratives of modernity, in the case of the fetish. Below and beyond objects, the archaeological analysis of colonial worlds also capitalizes on a set of "quasi-objects"—chemical signatures in

things, geological data, or materials like botanicals and bones implicated in human material networks—which, when juxtaposed with artifacts and sites, can provide pivotal information about craft production, trade, food practices, symbolic wealth in cattle, or human–environment relations (Lane 2009; Logan 2012; Reid 2004; Robertshaw et al. 2010; Stahl et al. 2008).

Lastly, archaeological materialities also carry at least two lessons for the *epistemology* of colonial history. First, with its optic keyed to the small, the partial, and the broken, archaeology can fruitfully bring our attention to the fragmentariness of colonial worlds—and maybe resist the scholarly impetus to restore the wholeness of the past from its fractures.⁸ Instead, archaeology’s patchy archives can metonymically evoke the ambiguous, indeterminate, and confusing worlds fashioned by colonialism. They may thus sensitize us to the incompleteness of colonial situations. Instead of the totalizing aura sometimes attributed to colonialism, the latter can be productively apprehended as a totality of fragments scattered between past, present, and future (Richard n.d.a). Second, while it is often true that archaeology can provide alternative perspectives on colonialism, an important point is also that there are phenomena that can *only* be retrieved through (archaeological) materialities: “gaps, shadows, silences, and absences which are not simply outside discourse, but often structurally excluded by discourse” (González-Ruibal 2013, p. 18, quoting Lucas 2004, p. 117). Archaeology, in other words, entails more than an ontology of discovery, but also one of “presencing absences,” that is, constituting objects for discourse that might not have existed before, and making manifest the dark side of unspoken histories (Buchli and Lucas 2001)—performing the work of “materializing” evoked earlier. Recently, for instance, archaeologists have turned to the historical ontologies built in the residuum of twentieth-century history (Dawdy 2010; González-Ruibal 2008) to reflect on the silent histories of imperial waste, capitalist decay, and modernist ruination weighing on present-day landscapes (e.g., Stoler 2013). In Africa, others have used archaeological evidence to challenge contemporary narratives of food and ecological “crisis” on the continent, demonstrating the long histories of human–environment interaction shaping African lives, and the processes of violence that have slowly accrued in the wake of capitalism’s global spread (Lane 2009; Logan 2012). In all such instances of “materializing,” materialities serve as reminders that while we should not overestimate the agencies of colonial modernity, we should also not downplay its long-term effects, hauntings, and consequences.

⁸ See Olivier (2011) for a compelling argument that archaeology functions more like memory than history. Its recollections are contingent and partial, called up by things and places. It fashions material spaces that summon the past into the present, suspending both in place simultaneously.

Coordinates: Geography, Time, and Subject Matter

Africa as an idea, a concept, has historically served, and continues to serve as a polemical argument for the West's desperate desire to assert its difference from the rest of the world (Mbembe 2001, p. 2).

In the spirit of self-positioning advocated so far, and given our goal to make an argument for the relevance of “Africa”-based archaeological research, it is useful to situate key terms in the volume—Africa, colonialism, archaeology, critique—in relation to the chapters' contents. Like all collections of writings, this book is not exhaustive in its treatment of any of these terms, and it is important to highlight what the volume's geographic, temporal, and thematic dimensions foreground and what they leave out (Thiaw, this volume).

“Africa,” as many writers have observed (Ferguson 2006; Mudimbe 1988), is a malleable object of discourse: shifting, hard to pin down, full of absences and elsewhere. For the purpose of this volume, we use the term both geographically, to refer to a number of regions in sub-Saharan Africa, and epistemologically, with both positive and negative implications: on the one hand, the idea of Africa is a conduit to the work of colonial invention and imagination, and the fact that the continent was one of the most intensely colonized regions of the world offers epistemic vantages into colonialism as a global historical phenomenon; yet, on the other hand, we recognize that “straightforward” geographic categories like “sub-Saharan Africa” are full of concessions to colonial thought and Western reason.

In spatial terms, the volume focuses on the western and southern part of the continent (Ghana, Senegal, South Africa), the sub-regions that boast the deepest traditions of historical archaeological research in the continent. Attention was also placed on including case studies from traditionally less well-represented areas (East African and Swahili coasts, Madagascar), whose material pasts are critical to a wider comprehension of variability and comparability of “modern” colonial conditions. The volume thus lends a unique latitudinal look at African experiences across the tangle of imperial geographies on the continent, with materials drawing on Anglophone, Francophone, and Dutch-speaking contexts. In addition to tacking between parts of the continent, sections of the book also zoom out to account for how Europe and Africa were connected by geographies of moving objects, and how African things and their circulations reshaped metropolitan consumer sensibilities (Stahl, this volume)—echoing calls by historians to include histories of colonies and metropolises into a more encompassing historical geography of empire (Cooper and Stoler 1997; Mann 2005).

As pointed out by Thiaw, however, this geographic selection is far from complete. It skips regions with vibrant records of historical archaeology research, like Nigeria (Ogundiran 2009; Wesler 1998). It does not cover some of the lesser-known (archaeologically at least) national traditions of imperialism in Lusophone Africa (Cruz 2007, 2015), in former Spanish colonies (for example, González-Ruibal's current research on coloniality at the Gabon-Equatorial Guinea border, or Garfi's research on the colonial foundation of military landscapes in the Western Sahara),

in Francophone Africa (such as Ken Kelly's work on illicit commerce and trading elites in the Rio Pongo area), or in areas associated with Italian military ventures in Ethiopia (González-Ruibal 2010, 2014). Lastly, and equally problematically, it places North Africa out of its analytical horizon, despite strong connections between the colonial histories of both areas (Mitchell 2005) and emergent archaeological work in the region (Jeynes's research on French Legion military forts in Morocco comes to mind).

Historically, the volume's contributions range in time from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, with an emphasis on the formal colonialisms that crystallized in the second half of the 1800s. While our focus is on modern African colonialisms, we are aware of the dangers of reifying European imperialism as a moment of rupture and external determination, at the expense of a longer view of history that does not neatly espouse the canons of periodization. We agree that the classifications of yore, splitting the continuum of African history into rigid precolonial/colonial/postcolonial demarcations, are not very useful and should be replaced with a keener analysis of "temporalities" and "historical times" that cut across these periodizations. All chapters are written in this longer *durée* concerned with the "prehistory" of colonialism and colonialism's incorporation into longer tempos of history and culture, and virtually all examine the interplay of antecedent African practices with new regimes of things, authority, and order.

On the question of colonialism, the volume examines the contexts of colonial power introduced in Africa by European rule, its dynamics, and its paradoxes. In this respect, contributions in the book do not examine the question of internal imperialism, by expanding African polities over others (as researched by OgunDIRAN in Nigeria). Contributions essentially deal with two species of colonialism, with related but ultimately different logics and architectures of domination. Settler colonial societies (South Africa) involved important transfers of European populations, who "came to stay" (see Veracini 2011; Wolfe 1999, for theoretical ruminations on the principles/paradoxes of settler colonialism). Settler invasion is a structure that hinges on land access and focuses on territorial appropriation from, and expropriation of, indigenous residents. Settler colonialism is predicated on the logic of elimination of native inhabitants, though the means of erasure vary (genocide, physical removal, cultural assimilation, or genetic amalgamation). Settler colonists seek to destroy indigenous social worlds and build new societies on emptied lands. These political dynamics are quite different from the modes of governance associated with colonialisms that did not involve the settlement of substantial European populations. There, the primary motivation is extractive and exploitative (of land, mineral wealth, cash crops, and labor), albeit shrouded in legitimizing ideologies of civilization and modernization. Such colonial forms of power often rest on the selective preservation of native social and economic structures, and a degree of reliance on such structures for purposes of colonial production.

In their analyses of colonial dynamics, authors are careful to avoid bifurcated versions of the colonial state as existentially brutal and totalitarian or as incompetent and dysfunctional. They prefer to view power dynamics as a spectrum of moments, modalities, and effects. All recognize that colonial regimes were violent

and coercive (physically and symbolically), but not unilaterally, not all the time, and not everywhere in the same way. Rather than just brute force, colonial states also worked through the forces of markets and cultural policies to turn Africans into law-abiding subjects. Of all the authors, Esterhuysen (this volume) addresses the question of violence and conflict most centrally (with Weiss and Richard, this volume, alluding to different aspects of the problem of violence). More than anything, however, all contributors underscore the unpredictability of colonial engagements, which set in motion a cascade of historical accidents and unintended effects that folded ever more intimately colonizers and colonized peoples into each other's histories. They attend to these historical intimacies and mixings, and how they trickled down to the level of practices, performances, and material representations by Africans and Europeans alike.

As outlined at different points in this essay, African archaeology's intrinsic interdisciplinary nature tends to expand the meaning of "archaeology" beyond a set of techniques and data, and encompass somewhat more expansive epistemological and methodological horizons. All the work presented in this book is grounded, to variable degrees, in "traditional" archaeological evidence: survey data, site assemblages, artifact collections, museum inventories ... At the same time, all authors recognize that "the archaeological record" does not stand artificially separated from the present, and that archaeological materialities are palimpsests, where the then and now interpenetrate, where different thicknesses of time pool, mix, and dissipate unevenly. They also draw equally upon other archives, which they approach "archaeologically," with an eye for material relations between people and things. In this way, all understand archaeology as a particular orientation to materiality (congealed in objects and contexts, texts, images, and memory), with an attunement to the small, the broken, the mundane, and the forgotten, and the kinds of epistemic vantage they confer to the (re)interpretation of history. Consequently, all contributors underline the distinct contributions of material culture, especially its ability to capture planes of experience that lie below the threshold of consciousness. That said, with Crossland (this volume), we caution against the commonplace equation of "materiality = nondiscursive" and "textuality = discursive." Indeed, past colonial worlds also demand attention to the material tracks and scaffolds of signification (e.g., Keane 2007). There is, then, a certain level of tacking back and forth between discursive and nondiscursive realms in the volume's analyses, as material things move between them.

A few words, lastly, on the volume's critical scope—Van Dommelen (2011) has recently written that postcolonial archaeologies have led to two forms of critique, involving new interpretations about past colonial situations and new reflections on research practices, respectively; neither is exclusive from the other, and both are legitimate ways of "doing archaeology" along postcolonial lines. Given the recent publication of African-centered collective works on the latter kind of critique (e.g., Schmidt 2009), by design, we chose to devote this volume to the former kind of exposition. This does not mean, of course, that the authors believe in a split between "theory" and "practice" or are unconcerned with the politics of research. While committed to complicating the assumptions embedded in perspectives and narratives on colonialism, the volume's writers are also committed to decolonizing

the discipline—in writing, practice, teaching, collaborative efforts, community engagement, and addressing the politics of cultural heritage; the two kinds of critical projects are mutually implicated, and the kind of analytical work proposed here is made possible by many practical engagements that have shaped the contours of our thought. What it does mean, however, as Thiaw points out, is that important aspects of how research about the material past articulates with local, present-day concerns are addressed only obliquely, when they could have been made more central aspects of the essays. In effect, though many of the contributions keep current political contexts in the orbit of their analysis, they do not elaborate on their interactions with descendant communities (but see Esterhuysen, this volume). Thankfully, both commentators offer wider reflections and reality checks on these omissions, balancing the “past-heavy” focus of the volume.

Organization of the Volume

This introductory chapter aside, the book is divided into five sections, split between four critical themes, and a set of discussion chapters. Part I (“Circulations”) examines how the movement, transaction, and exchange of objects participate in the constitution of different scales of colonial worlds. The two chapters in this section track the movements of cowrie shells through different spheres of circulations and connections. Looking inward, Swanepoel examines the “social lives” of cowries in Ghana’s Northern Territories, viewing them as points of *entanglement* with a changing regional political economy and integral to the making of locality and lived experiences during colonial times. In Stahl’s chapter, by contrast, colonial Ghana and cowries become points of *departure* opening out to wider worlds of circulation (see also Lucas’s [2012] discussion of assemblages of containment and assemblages of enchainment). By following the material flows of cowries and ivory across the “awkward scales” of the British colonial empire (Comaroff and Comaroff 2003), Stahl argues that object histories should not solely be confined to the study of material processes in the colonies, but that they must also illuminate the production of materialities, tastes, and moral economies “at home” (resonating with the Comaroffs’ third point above; see also, Mintz 1985; Myers 2001; Stein 2008; Weiss 2003). Artifacts implicated in the “African trade” traveled far beyond the continent, binding “peripheries” and “metropolises” in a network of material connections that both propped and displaced imagined geographies of empire (cf. Mitchell 2005). The chapters zoom in and out of the circuitry of global exchanges to offer complementary looks at different “moments” in the process of colonial world-building: the tentative domestication of elusive, faraway influences, and provincialization of Europe (Chakrabarty 2000). In doing so, both take seriously Appadurai’s (1986) insights about the importance of scale, objects, and movement in the creation of plural regimes of value, imaginations, and power that uneasily cohabited in colonial empires. Their combined perspectives also remind us of Munn’s (1992) discussion of the potentialities of space, time, and exchange in shaping communities, where

objects traverse different nested worlds and bring their histories into convergence, just as they shape how these worlds are lived, understood, or perceived.

While all authors labor at the crossroads of different sources, Part II (“Mediations”) places special attention on the relationship between materiality, words, and signs, as it played itself out in colonial contexts. Brink’s chapter explores practices of colonial discourse and writing surrounding the activities of the Dutch East India Company in Southern Africa. Her analysis investigates the nature of the relation “between words and things” to reflect on the role of language in crafting and upholding forms of colonial power and experience at the Cape in the 1600s and 1700s. Crossland is also interested in the complex intersections between signification and material things, though from the standpoint of Peircian semiotics. Set in the context of missionary encounters in nineteenth-century highland Madagascar, her chapter examines the confrontation of different ways of interpreting and signifying the world. She unpacks how the expanding presence of missionary schools evoked different material and affective responses from different observers, such that what appeared to Europeans as successful conversion was, from the perspective of Merina royals, a political strategy of incorporating missionaries into the structures of belief they hoped to replace. These two chapters make the important point that the material worlds of colonialism were also shaped, translated, and altered by different modes and media of experience—technologies of communication (such as written documents, printing, oral imagery, and social memory) as well as semiotic ideologies. These, in turn, recursively frame how the past is understood, appropriated, or claimed in the present and connected to possible futures.

Part III (“Memory”) explores with the relationship between the physicality of place and objects, remembrance, and imagination in colonial situations. Wynne-Jones’ chapter interrogates the material and colonial foundations of political authority and legitimacy in Swahili society, by revisiting narratives of Vumba in southern Kenya. She examines how the material world and associated performances came to occupy a central place in colonial accounts of Swahili rulership, and how, in the process, these histories recursively shaped realities and identities in colonial Kenya. To illuminate the negotiations involved in crafting history, power, and social order in colonial Vumba, Wynne-Jones turns to archaeological vestiges at Vumba Kuu, the site of enthronement of new rulers. A unique interface between writings about materiality and the materiality of objects, the site provides an important key to unraveling the relationships between “lived pasts” and their representation in history and memory. Esterhuysen’s chapter also centers on the articulations between materiality and remembering, though in the context of the disputed cave site of Makapansgat. A salient *lieu de mémoire*, the site bears the traces of a violent confrontation between Dutch Boers and Ndebele refugees. Its human and material remains contain evidence of Ndebele political logics and strategies in the face of political invasion. Using the corpse as a lens, Esterhuysen examines the shifting relationship between corporal bodies, social personhood, and the Ndebele body politic, and the traces these charged histories have left in local collective memory. Central to these two chapters is an appreciation of the generative properties of “place,” rooted in their *excessive permanence*, which outlasts speech and narratives, while eclips-

ing singular meanings (Keane 2007). Whether materialized events, commemorative markers, or fantasies of Empire in miniature (e.g., Cruz 2007), “places” provide fertile anchors for a proliferation of signs, discourses, and representations. They also become the repositories of so many “absent presents”: the silences, *décalages* (lags), and tensions overlooked or forgotten in the precipitation of dominant world-views or hegemonic narratives.

Part IV (“Power”) zeroes in on the construction of colonial subjectivities, communities, and social orders at the confluence of different spheres of politics, regimes of power, and global economic processes. Kus and Raharijaona’s chapter provides an examination of the poetics of sovereignty before and after the colonial caesura in Madagascar’s Central Highlands. Building on their important corpus of work, they explore how power was constructed through idioms of land and rule in the Imerina state, and the latter’s confrontation with France’s colonial expansion. In this highly charged context, they carefully chart new elaborations on the material symbols of land and rule to anchor local forms of resistance to French political projects. In his essay, Richard examines historical matters of power in the Siin region of Senegal—namely, the entanglements of the *longue durée* between local villagers and different state formations. Drawing on a reading of local political landscapes, the chapter questions the materiality of governance in Francophone Africa, and its ambiguous hold on rural communities (also Roitman 2005). Given the mutual embrace of colonial subjects and colonial projects, the material world can shed light on the workings, logics, and incompleteness of state sovereignty on imperial margins, while attending to how French colonial policies—including its “politics of absence”—altered the horizon of possibilities for African peasants. Weiss shows similar interest in the intersections of colonial projects and capitalism, but in relation to the volatile economy and cultural geography of the Diamond Fields of South Africa, on the speculative frontier of Empire. Weiss’ chapter investigates the intimate processes and material histories that shaped the Diamond Fields’ community in the late nineteenth century, a story often glossed in the structural language of corporate monopolies and proletarianization. Instead, she follows the flows of goods and perceptions across licit and illicit horizons, to examine how the Fields’ political landscape was reorganized around the traffic of diamonds and the discursive trails (economy of rumor, speculative imagination, collective euphoria, obsession, or panic...) they generated. More ambitiously, Weiss suggests that material dynamics in the Diamond Fields afford the outline of an “archaeological genealogy” of urban apartheid at the nexus of extractive frontiers, finance capital, partial sovereignties, and evolving configurations of political power.

The book is concluded by two commentaries from Ibrahima Thiaw, whose work on the iconic Gorée Island has contributed fresh light on African Atlantic history (Thiaw 2003, 2011a, b), and Michael Rowlands, who specializes on the negotiations of material culture and cultural heritage in West Africa, with previous background in the archaeology of colonialism in Cameroon (de Jong and Rowlands 2007; Rowlands 1998). Writing from the standpoint of archaeology and social anthropology, respectively, both are bringing shared expertise on questions of materiality, memory, cultural heritage, public engagement, and museum studies. Thiaw

assesses broad thematic commonalities across the chapters, as well as some shortcomings. Rowlands' response to the volume raises a series of reflections on (hybrid) knowledges, artifactual agencies, time, and how explicitly African theories of the political might incite a rethinking for models of sovereignty in archaeology (see Richard *n.d.b*). This, we hope, is an incentive to move beyond rhetorical appeals to interdisciplinary conversations, and make a practical step toward engaging scholars in other fields and locations.

Conclusion: Out of African Archaeology

To our knowledge, this book is one of the rare volumes engaging with questions of materiality and colonial modernities from the perspective of African historical archaeology (cf. Reid and Lane 2004; Schmidt 2009). Part of its uniqueness rests on a combination of breadth of coverage, depth of analysis, and thematic focus. It brings a diverse array of historical settings to bear on a shared set of concerns: the elucidation of colonial culture, its production, and material forms. At once rooted in the cultural specificity of place, yet attentive to its articulation with an increasingly interconnected world, the chapters hold significant comparative potential. At the same time, because the contributions are grounded in different perspectives and analytical traditions, the volume does not fall into the trap of painting an image of false harmony in the study of African colonialisms. Instead, we hope to present the divergences and ambiguities that flow from working in different historical and disciplinary locations. Thus, based on historical variables and theoretical penchants, the authors place different premiums on different aspects of colonial world-making and its material bearings. Far from destabilizing, these actually enrich the book by highlighting some of the problems, discussions, and preoccupations animating the study of colonial materialities.

While the chapters creatively engage with contemporary theoretical literatures, their true value lies in a fine balance between concepts and evidence; theoretical insights flow from material and historical situations, up from the ground as it were. This combination of theory and robust analysis, we hope, will make a strong case for the relevance of African materials to more nuanced readings of colonial experiences and their variability in time and space. In this way, we conceive of the proposed volume as an avenue for “mainstreaming” Africa into the archaeological literature on colonialism and heightening the visibility of archaeological work to broader discussions of colonial power.

Finally, the essays in this collection are strongly informed by Africa's postcolonial realities—that is, animated by a particular set of theoretical sensibilities, as well as keenly attuned to the predicaments, hopes, and possibilities attached to political conditions in African postcolonies (Piot 2010; Scott 1999, 2004; Weiss 2004; Werbner 2002). Rather than circumscribing colonialism to an island of history, the volume takes the position that postcoloniality cannot be understood without colonial antecedents. In other words, colonial settings created the conditions of possibility

for contemporary worlds, just as the critical study of colonialism is undoubtedly shaped by present conditions, convictions, and political sentiments (Mbembe 2001, 2002). In this light, many of the studies do not close with the colonial chapter, but proceed to examine the materialities, the structures of the long and short-term that have framed the relation of African communities to the state, international capital, global desires and imaginations, as well as the transnational circulation of images about the continent. An Africanist perspective on the archaeology of colonialism can contribute to a critical engagement with other fields of study. Using material culture as a point of entry rather than an end in itself, it can help to challenge meta-narratives of colonialism and the modes of power/knowledge they have continued to inform in the post-independence period (Trouillot 1995). Moreover, as certain authors suggest, material culture offers alternative readings of colonial histories that can also denaturalize the “inevitability” of postcolonial trajectories and suggest more inclusive directions for the continent’s political futures. In this spirit, the essays in this volume hint that archaeologists, in and out of Africa, can creatively participate in contemporary conversations about coloniality and its relation to other salient concerns—identity and its politics, cultural difference, globalization, the state and competing forms of government, questions of sovereignty and autonomy, political violence, economic liberalism and disparities, migrations and displacements, freedom and dignity of peoples, etc.—that took shape in the imperial crucible, and continue to influence our experiences in the postcolonial world (e.g., Amselle 2008; Apter 2008; Bayart 1993; Comaroff 2002; Comaroff and Comaroff 2006b; Cooper 2005; Ferguson 2006; Hansen and Stepputat 2005; Roitman 2005; Stoler 2006; Trouillot 2003; Tsing 2005; Werbner and Ranger 1996). We hope that the volume will show that historical archaeologies of Africa can lend original and singular glimpses into the historicity of these various processes and their material lineaments.

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Part I
Circulations: Scale, Value, Entanglement

Chapter 2

Small Change: Cowries, Coins, and the Currency Transition in the Northern Territories of Colonial Ghana

Natalie Swanepoel

In 2007, Ghana revalued its currency at 10,000 (old) cedis to 1 (new) Ghana Cedi. New notes and coins were issued and the defunct pesewa was reinstated as the coinage unit. This currency transition was marked by a 6-month period during which both forms of currency were regarded as legal tender before the old cedi became valueless. An extensive information campaign included radio and television commercials and face-to-face presentations in communities throughout the country (Ogunleye 2009, p. 45). While the new notes and coins were fairly easily accepted, old habits die hard. In 2015, Ghanaians were still calculating and quoting ad hoc prices in the old unit of account. Thus, in the market place or small shops, the buyer was more likely to be quoted 120,000 (old) cedis than 12 (new) Ghana Cedis even though only the new notes changed hands. This illustrates the degree to which the expression of value is embedded in use contexts and ingrained in habit (Kuroda 2008).

The changeover to the new Ghana Cedi was, in fact, merely the latest in a series of Ghanaian currency transitions and/or substitutions.¹ The 2001 archaeological investigation of the early twentieth-century site of Zambulugu, Sisala East District, Upper West Region yielded seven cowrie shells and two British West Africa 1/10th pennies. One of these coins was minted in c. 1925, the date of the other is illegible.

¹ At independence, Ghana was using the West African pound, which was legal tender in Anglophone West Africa: Nigeria, Ghana, the Gambia, and Sierra Leone. The Ghana Pound was introduced in 1958 by the then ruling Convention People's Party (CPP), which later introduced the cedi currency in 1965. A number of subsequent governments have, at different times, substituted all of the existing currency notes with "new" cedi notes or withdrawn certain denominations from circulation (Yiridoe 1995, p. 24). The Ghanaian Central Bank is also currently in the process of introducing the world's first biometric money system (Breckenridge 2010).

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These archaeological finds speak to the currency transition in process during the first half of the twentieth century in the Northern Territories of colonial Ghana, that from the cowrie to the colonial currency. It did not, however, proceed as smoothly as the one effected in 2007. Unlike the 2007 Cedi, the cowrie did not cease to circulate shortly after the arrival of the new coinage but rather persisted in use as an economic, ritual, and social currency for some decades. For a period of approximately 50 years, the colonial officers struggled to persuade their constituents to discard their use of the cowrie shell in the marketplaces of northern Ghana and to make sole use of the currency issued by the British colonial government, with reports of cowries being used as late as the 1960s (Evans 1985; Johnson 1970b, p. 353).

Many currency scholars have long drawn a distinction between so-called primitive moneys—the cowries, manillas, beads, and so forth of pre- and proto-colonial times—and “Western money” often introduced during the colonizing process. In this dichotomy, “Western” or “modern” money is seen as the great leveler, able to buy anything and, in the process, reduce everything to a commodity (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997, p. 171). This is in opposition to “primitive” currencies such as manillas, cowry shells, or cattle, which in many contexts served as “special purpose moneys” and, as such, were reserved for particular kinds of exchange (Bloch 1989, p. 167; Kopytoff 1986, p. 87). This “magical” ability of money to make everything exchangeable for everything else is generally used to explain why preexisting currencies were fairly easily discarded (Bohannan 1959; Comaroff and Comaroff 1997, p. 171). This explanation is, however, historically contingent as it must take into account local factors on the ground. Indeed, as numerous scholars are now demonstrating, there is endless cultural variation in the way in which societies incorporate money into larger systems of “production, consumption, circulation and exchange” (Parry and Bloch 1989, p. 1; also see Gregory 1982, p. 5; Lambek 2001, p. 736). Our understanding of money in any one society, or even in the way in which it crosses from one society to another must therefore be contextual.

Money is embedded within larger social, political, and economic systems, and anthropological studies have focused on notions of value, alienability (or inalienability), morality, earmarking, and so on (inter alia Bloch 1989; Guyer 2004; Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992, p. 13; Zelizer 1994), all dimensions that are geared toward understanding how people and societies perceive, mobilize, and use money to serve larger social and political goals in any particular context. An important dimension that is rarely discussed, however, are the implications that the physical properties of money objects may have for how equivalences are established. This is a perspective that archaeology can bring to the study of money, even in non-archaeological contexts. But why should we be concerned with the physicality of these artifacts? I argue here that the physical form of money tokens, which affect their uptake by currency users, may impact on their ability to penetrate different spheres of life and cross from one “regime of value” to another. Appadurai (1986, p. 4) argues that “exchange ... is the source of value” and that the specific circumstances (in time and space) of exchange determine what is valued and how. These circumstances thus create a “regime of value,” which Breckenridge (1995, p. 271)

has further defined as the “inter-related political, economic and intellectual fields that determine value regionally and historically.” The process of colonialism, along with the importation of new goods and new currencies, meant that different regimes of value were brought into conflict with one another (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997, Chap. 4). Understanding what factors determine which new objects are allowed to penetrate an existing regime of value, is crucial if we want to understand the intersection of cowries, coins, and colonialism in early twentieth-century northern Ghana.

The replacement of one form of currency by another is never solely dependent on the use-*value* of the currency but also on a host of features related to the workings of a “network effect,” which are determined by the use *context* of the currency.² A network effect (sometimes also referred to as a network externality) is the phenomenon whereby the user of a good or service has an effect on the value of the good or service to other people in the network. The impact of such network effects is usually positive, that is, the value of the good or service increases along with the number of people who make use of it (van Hove 1999, p. 138). From this perspective, it must be recognized that objects can only be translated into currency forms if all participants in the network are willing to recognize them not only as a valid form of payment but also as a store of value, otherwise the medium may merely serve to facilitate what is essentially barter exchange (as described by Piot 1996, p. 37).

Note that “store of value” is used here to literally denote the fact that the possessor of the currency form should have confidence that, subject to fluctuating prices, their currency will still be accepted during future transactions. Such confidence requires an appropriate financial and social infrastructure, a common understanding of value, and common exchange practice. At first glance, these may look like mechanistic principles that reduce the currency user to a rational economic being. I use them here, however, as organizing principles to examine how new forms of currency may be accepted or rejected by those who use them.

Every time humans engage in an act of exchange, be it acts of generalized reciprocity, barter, or commerce, they are participating in a “communicative act” (Agbe-Davies and Bauer 2010, p. 13). This communicative act depends to some extent on shared understandings of what is being exchanged, what the exchange signifies, and what constitutes a reasonable demand. Such shared understanding does not, however, determine the interests that each party might have in the exchange (Appadurai 1986, p. 57). These shared understandings, or lack thereof, are all the more important when the value of the unit of exchange is still being negotiated in terms of local understandings, as in the introduction of a new currency form, which, particularly in a colonial milieu, brings into play “rival standards of value” (Gregory 1997, p. 249). Contests over currency thus become symbolic and symptomatic of larger social and political themes and divisions (Mwangi 2001, p. 765).

It should be noted that historically and cross-culturally, it is the case that individuals will not necessarily adopt a new currency form simply because it has distinc-

² As authors such as Ames (1955), Einzig (1966), Melitz (1974), and Quiggin (1949) have shown, it is the context in which artefacts are used that makes them currencies rather than their innate characteristics.

tive benefits over the old form or because it is decreed by a government³ (Lotz and Rocheteau 2002, p. 563). Such acceptance is dependent, rather, on a number of historical, economic, sociopolitical, ideological, emotive, and practical considerations, Appadurai's "regimes of value." In this chapter, I discuss how these considerations manifested in the currency substitution of coins for cowries in the early twentieth-century colonial northern Ghana. Specifically, I am interested in the replacement of cowries in the marketplace as a unit of currency for small-scale or even larger purposes. It should be noted that colonial officers were not interested in replacing cowries with coins in ritual exchanges. Restricted in official view (and largely in practice) to use in economic transactions, it is coins, not cowries, which could be regarded as special purpose money at this time in northern Ghana. The reasons for this become clear when we compare coins and cowries both in terms of their physical properties and the contexts in which they were used on a day-to-day basis. I believe that this perspective of northern Ghana's currency transition illuminates not only the economic relationships between different kinds of individuals—elders, chiefs, young men, market women, and colonial officers—but also some of the internal contradictions of the colonial state. Colonialism was, after all, both a process and a practice.

As will be demonstrated in the following discussion, in introducing coinage into the existing economic and social field, the colonial government at first tried to conform to consumer tastes in currency, that is, they tried to make coins similar to cowries by providing them in lower denominations and designing them so that they could be strung (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, pp. 150–151). Over time, however, the colonial regime had to resort to ever more extreme measures to suppress the use of the cowrie in northern Ghana and cowries and other precolonial currencies in other parts of West Africa. It was only as the sociopolitical and economic milieu changed, as the colonial state became more entrenched and could impose its own value regime on its colonized subjects that cowries could be eliminated.

I have organized my discussion around those factors that have been identified by currency scholars as integral in promoting a positive network effect in the introduction of new currency instruments, namely: issues of trust and ease of use (infrastructural support); the degree to which all participants in an economic system adopt the new currency; the availability of the new currency; and the role and actions of the state that issues the currency (Caskey and St. Laurent 1994; Lotz and Rocheteau 2002). The nature of currency transitions and substitutions, no matter what their form, are determined as much by the sociopolitical and economic relations and interactions on the ground as by higher-order economic policy, and importantly, users will not adopt a new currency form simply because it has overt economic benefits.

In northern Ghana, colonial coins were introduced into a fluid economic landscape characterized by a variety of currencies, overlapping currency zones and

³ Nowhere is this more apparent than in the continuing unsuccessful attempts by the United States Treasury to introduce a dollar coin. Neither the 1979 Susan B. Anthony silver coin nor the 2000 Sacagawea gold coin has been successfully adopted as a circulating currency despite its manifest benefits and an aggressive, expensive marketing campaign (Caskey and St. Laurent 1994, p. 496).

multiple regimes of value. The incorporation of the “Northern Territories” into the British colonial empire meant, however, a new political, economic and social reality for the societies of the north. The transition from the local to the colonial currency thus can be understood, at one level, as the transition from a non-state to a state-controlled currency. Despite this transition, the old and new currencies operated side-by-side for decades. While in the end they may have operated in different spheres, that is, the colonial/national versus the domestic/local economy, in the beginning, there was far more overlap. Because of local sociopolitical factors such as existing power relations and the ubiquity of cowries in all facets of life, the colonial state could not easily insert its currency form into local value regimes.

The modern-day use of cowries for particular kinds of ritual and social transactions demonstrates their continued significance as a currency form and standard of value in this area. It should be noted though that today money is an accepted substitute in the event of cowries not being obtainable. When I requested permission to conduct archaeological research at the Wutoma shrine, the Lilixi elders instructed me to bring 100 cowries (along with two fowl and a bottle of schnapps) but allowed me to substitute a handful of coins because I could not obtain the cowries. Similarly, Bierlich (2007, p. 161) noted that despite the moral ambivalence of money amongst the Dagomba, money can substitute for kola, this substitution being facilitated by the fact that “kola is often used as a system of measurement. Because of their common features, the use of kola and money side by side is unproblematic.” Similar instances have been recorded in other parts of Africa by scholars such as Weiss (2005, p. 180) and Bloch (1989, p. 166).

Jane Guyer (1995, p. 1) has noted the grip that the concept of a “currency revolution” has had on the minds of scholars and others when referring to the shift from so-called primitive currencies to colonial ones (e.g., Hopkins 1966; McPhee 1926; Ofonagoro 1976). The more that one studies the nature of precolonial currencies, however, the more it becomes clear that these transitions were by no means revolutionary. They often occurred over quite long periods of time, and, in addition, did not signify an abrupt change from the prevailing circumstances before their advent (Guyer 1995, p. 2; Melitz 1970). It is thus more accurate, in certain cases, to talk about a currency transition rather than a currency revolution. In northern Ghana, the reluctance to adopt the new currency on the part of local people was partly determined by the nondevelopment of a positive network effect that would have allowed colonial coinage to more easily penetrate the arenas of value occupied by cowries.

A Brief History of the Cowrie Currency in West Africa

Cowrie shells have long been acknowledged as one of the preeminent currencies of precolonial West Africa (Johansson 1967; Johnson 1970a, b; Ofonagoro 1976) and elsewhere (Dubeldam 1964; Quiggin 1949, p. 25). They fulfilled all of the criteria for “money” in that they were “a medium of exchange, unit of account, store of value and standard for deferred payment” (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, p. 1).

Like many of the other currencies of the time, such as metal manillas, they were an imported rather than an indigenous currency. While they were only imported into the coastal areas of West Africa in vast quantities after the European trade was established, Johnson (1970a, p. 18) has argued that the fact that they were immediately accepted as early as 1515 in the Benin area implies that the local people were already using a shell-based currency, possibly cowries imported from across the Sahara and through the Niger Bend (also see Hiskett 1966; Law 1999, p. 16; Nwani 1975, p. 187; Ogundiran 2002, p. 438; 2007, p. 95). These early examples were all members of the species *Cypraea moneta*, “the money cowrie,” imported from the Maldives and highly sought after because they tended to be small and thus more cost-efficient when transported over long distances⁴ (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, p. 5).

Cowries played an important role in global trade (see Stahl, this volume). Hogendorn and Johnson (1986, p. 2) have argued that the hunger to acquire cowries was one of the drives behind the willingness of individuals and communities to participate in the slave trade (also see Ogundiran 2002, p. 440). Like other currencies, cowries were vulnerable to the vagaries of the global economy, the demand for cowries fell with the demise of the slave trade and resurged with the rise of the “legitimate trade,” especially that in palm oil (Law 1995a, p. 64; 1995b).

The great demand for palm oil—to grease the wheels of industry in Europe—led to high rates of inflation and the eventual demise of the cowrie currency in most of West Africa. This demise was precipitated by the oversupply of the new, cheaper, Zanzibari *Cypraea annulus*, which European traders introduced into regional trading systems in 1845 (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, p. 74; Law 1995a, p. 62).

Not all cowries were equal. As with manillas, consumer preference played a part in which of the two species of cowries was accepted in the various areas where cowries were used and their rate of exchange (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, pp. 72–73; Johansson 1967, p. 12). The further inland the cowries traveled, the greater the preference for smaller shells as this allowed a greater return on the investment from transport, particularly if the currency had to be head-loaded.⁵ By the late nineteenth century, however, most cowrie stocks in the West African interior appear to have been quite mixed. In most of West Africa, the cowrie currency experienced a complete or partial demise by the early years of the twentieth century. First, the European powers stopped importing new cowries into the system. Then, by the second decade of the twentieth century, they stopped accepting cowries for tax payments. This, along with the introduction of colonial notes and coins, ensured the transition between different currency forms within a few decades (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, pp. 79, 150). In several parts of West Africa, however, the colonial govern-

⁴ During his expedition into the Nigerian hinterland, Lord Lugard had his cowrie loads sorted by size. The loads of small cowries, containing 16 “heads” (32,000 cowries) weighed approximately 76 lbs. By contrast the larger cowries, divided into loads weighing “80 lbs. and more” contained only 7.5 heads, i.e., 15,000 cowries (Lugard 1963, p. 170).

⁵ At the height of the cowrie inflation in the late nineteenth century, it cost more to transport the shells than they were worth, and the carrier would eat the value of his cargo or more (Adebayo 1999, p. 150; Hogendorn 1999, p. 58).

ments found it difficult to enforce the switch to the new colonial currencies. People still preferred their cowries, cloth strips, or manillas, amongst others, as the basic unit of account and the primary form of money. One such area was the western portion of the Northern Territories of colonial Ghana.⁶

Cowries and Colonialism in Northern Ghana

The “Northern Territories” were occupied by the British military toward the end of 1897.⁷ They encompassed the area north of Ashanti up until the 11th parallel north of the equator (Bening 1983; Watherstone 1908, p. 344). Prior to this, the area had been characterized by intensive slave raiding (Der 1998); thus the first stage of colonization was largely concerned with “pacifying” the region by defeating the incumbent warlords and freebooters, as well as any local resistance (Weiss 2003). In 1902, the area was formally colonized and the “Northern Territories” designated as a protectorate, achieving its independence along with the rest of Ghana in 1957 (Bening 1981). In this chapter, I am largely concerned with the northwestern portion of these territories (today’s Upper West Region), although I do refer to other parts of the north where appropriate.

At the time of British colonization, what is today northern Ghana was inhabited by a range of societies with differing forms of political organization, ranging from village-level decentralized societies to larger-scale states such as that around Wa. In addition, there were groups of slave-raiders and freebooters such as the Zaberma who made a living by raiding and holding villages to ransom (Goody 1998; Swanepoel 2006). Long-distance trade was also a feature, although some parts of the northern economy (for instance, those places along direct trade routes) were better integrated than others. The British thus entered a complex political, economic, and social landscape, in which the cowrie played a central role as an economic and social currency.

Because of the general dearth of archaeological survey and excavation in northwestern Ghana, it is difficult to say with any certainty when cowries first made their appearance in the region. Four *Cyprae moneta* shells were recovered from the seventeenth- to nineteenth-century site of Kpaliworgu, in the bend of the Kulpawn River (Kankpeyeng 2003, p. 107). To the south, both *Cyprae moneta* and *Cyprae annulus* shells were excavated from the nineteenth-century site at Daboya (Shinnie and Kense 1989, p. 184). The documentary record attests to the use of cowries in eighteenth-century Asante and *annulus* cowries being present in Walewale (Northern Region) by 1889 (Johnson 1970a, pp. 28–29). Despite their status as

⁶ See Johansson (1967) and Ofonagoro (1976) for discussions of similar situations in parts of Nigeria, and Şaul (2004a, b) for a perspective on colonial-era Burkina Faso.

⁷ This military occupation was preceded by forays into the interior by government agents such as George Ekem Ferguson (1974), whose task it was to initiate “treaties of trade and friendship” or “trade and protection” with chiefs in the area.



Fig. 2.1 Northern Ghana with archaeological sites and towns mentioned in the text (map by C. Bruwer)

imports and consumer discretion as to the desirability of one species of shell over the other, both the *moneta* and *annulus* varieties appear to have been well established by the time the British arrived in northern Ghana at the end of the nineteenth century. Excavations at four late nineteenth-/early twentieth-century sites in the Sisala region (see Fig. 2.1)⁸ yielded a sample of 54 cowrie shells (see Table 2.1). This sample is fairly mixed as to species: 18 of the shells were *Cypraea moneta*, 29 were *annulus*, the rest non-diagnostic. Ten of the eleven cowrie shells from twentieth-

Table 2.1 Number of identified specimens of cowries from sites in Sisalaland

Site	Date (century)	Species			Perforated	Whole	Broken
		<i>moneta</i>	<i>annulus</i>	<i>unknown</i>			
Yalingbong	Nineteenth	5	9	4	4	7	7
Wutoma	Nineteenth	5	6	3	6	1	7
Gwollu	Nineteenth	6	5	0	9	2	0
Gwollu	Twentieth	1	3	0	2	2	0
Zambulugu	Twentieth	0	7	0	3	3	1

⁸ The four sites are: Yalingbong (nineteenth century), Zambulugu (twentieth century), Gwollu (nineteenth and twentieth century), and Wutoma (nineteenth century) (see Swanepoel 2004, 2006).

century loci were *Cypraea annulus*. The dominance of the *annulus* variety may indicate that the bulk of the influx of cowries to this area of Ghana took place toward the end of the nineteenth century when the *annulus* variety was well established in the trading networks. Such an influx would have coincided with the activities of the Zaberma slave raiders in the area (post-1860).

The presence of cowries in this area is most probably the direct result of the development of regional trade. Northwestern Ghana saw a variety of traders of Asante, Mossi, or Hausa origin moving through the area in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Arhin 1979, p. 14; Garrard 1986, p. 83). In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Zaberma established a large market at Kasana described in one account as "... the largest [emporium] the world had ever seen ... and every kind of commodity was to be found there" (Tamakloe 1931, pp. 47–48). Cowries, as a currency, were mainly used in the purchase of slaves in Asante,⁹ and initially this may have been their principal use in the north as well (Arhin 1979, p. 16). The slave market at Salaga was a key locus for the distribution of cowries to the surrounding areas as, originating from the Mossi kingdoms and Hausaland, they were carried north, east, and west (Johnson 1970a, p. 35). Despite their ubiquity in the documentary and oral literature, however, the archaeological presence of cowries is often scant. Excavations at the Kasana market, for instance, only yielded two *moneta* shells (Nkumbaan 2003, p. 104; 2008, p. 103).

In the nineteenth century, cowries played an important part in everyday exchanges at the village level. Ferguson (1974, p. 69), in his travels through northern Ghana in the 1890s, noted that cowries, ivory, gold, cattle, or slaves¹⁰ would be exchanged for silver, glass armlets, knives, powder, flints, madras handkerchiefs, rum, gin, beads, swords, and fish hooks. He mentions that cowries were the local medium of exchange, 1000 cowries being the equivalent of a shilling, and that any coins introduced were more likely to be converted into jewellery or buried for security than used as currency (also see General Staff 1912, p. 111).

Cowries were also widely used for tribute and tax payments to the Zaberma, who made their living by raiding communities for slaves or holding them to ransom (also see Johnson 1970a, p. 27). Tamakloe (1931, p. 54) notes that the "tax" payments that villages, such as Tumu and Gwollu, made to the Zaberma in order to avoid being raided included large quantities of cowries, as many as 100,000,000, in addition to any number of slaves. There are also numerous references to similar payments made by villages either before or after their defeat in Mallam Abu's account of his life with the Zaberma (Ferguson 1894; Pilaszewicz 1992; Wright 1899).

Cowries retained their validity as a means of exchange for at least the first half of the twentieth century. They were used to purchase small amounts of food in the marketplace (Northcott 1899), in payment for labor (Benneh 1958, p. 31) and in

⁹ Cowries were, however, banned in Asante during the nineteenth century, possibly in a bid to conserve and regulate the distribution of gold (Arhin 1995, p. 99).

¹⁰ It should be noted that it is likely that not all of these were in widespread use as currencies in the Sisala area, although a piece of ivory was recovered from the site of Zambulugu (early twentieth century). Ferguson's (1974) account refers to all territory north of Asante, which included state-level societies and large market towns not found in the Sisala area.

part payment to shrines or diviners (Goody 1957, p. 84; Mendonsa 2001, pp. 202, 210). From precolonial times, the shells were essential to a wide range of social transactions as well (Hogendorn 1999, p. 56). Cowrie payments formed a substantial portion of the “bridewealth” or “childwealth” payment for several groups (Goody 1969; Hawkins 2006, p. 200; Mendonsa 1973, pp. 31–32; Rattray 1932; Taylor [1906], in Williamson 2000, p. 65; Yiridoe 1995, p. 19) during the first half of the twentieth century, and today they are still included as a token payment on that occasion (see Mendonsa 1973, p. 29; 2001, p. 143). Lentz (2000, p. 204) has also recorded the practice of making cowrie payments in order to procure an independent shrine, and cowries are important when paying a variety of ritual fines (Kuupuo 2005, p. 17).

Cowries were and are important as physical objects. Cowrie throwing is a form of divination (Mendonsa 1982, pp. 110–111; Yiridoe 1995, pp. 21–22) and cowries form part of a diviner’s kit. Cowries were used as counters in gambling games (Hinds 1947, p. 1428; Yiridoe 1995, p. 21), and the use of cowries to adorn clothing and headgear was widespread throughout northern Ghana (Hinds 1947, p. 1428; Yiridoe 1995, p. 19; Fig. 2.2) and the rest of West Africa (Arnoldi and Kreamer 1995; Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, p. 101; Ogundiran 2002). While some groups, such as the Yoruba, are known to have distinguished between perforated and whole shells for use as money and ritual purposes, respectively (Usman 1998, p. 125), this does not seem to be a factor affecting use in northern Ghana where either are acceptable as part of bridewealth payment or as offerings (Mendonsa, pers. comm.). The cowries recovered from archaeological contexts are also mixed between whole and perforated shells (see Table 2.1). This brief survey illustrates the degree to which cowries can be regarded as having been ubiquitous in all facets of life, from cradle to grave, used to reproduce social, political, and ritual systems (Appadurai 1986, p. 25). Whatever economic system or spheres of exchange had existed before the arrival of the cowrie, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the shell money had become an all-purpose medium that cut across such boundaries.

Fig. 2.2 Cowrie headdress for sale in the craft market at Bolgatanga, Upper West Region, Ghana



The British colonizing forces certainly recognized the importance of this currency. When George Ekem Ferguson was being equipped for his survey mission into the “Ashanti Hinterland” in 1894, he was provided with “... merchandise to exchange for cowries and other articles forming the currency in the various countries which would have to be visited and where it would be necessary to have the circulating medium necessary for the purchase of food...” (Colonial Office 1894).¹¹ Once British hegemony had been established by the turn of the twentieth century, however, it became part of the colonial mission to convert the local populace to using metal (British) coinage (Northcott 1899). It was initially presumed that this could be accomplished fairly easily, particularly in those centers that had a government office or posting of the constabulary. In addition, the levying of fines and taxes, to be paid in coin, was expected to encourage the use of British silver (Fuller 2009, p. 57; Northcott 1899; Stahl 2007, p. 74). For the first decade, the circulating coin was sterling silver, issued in Britain and transported to the colonies (Hopkins 1970, p. 105). It was, however, common for such coins to be melted down and the metal used for jewelry (Northcott 1899). In addition, sterling silver was generally of too great a value to be useful as an everyday currency in the markets, the rate of exchange for a silver shilling being 800–1000 cowries (Northcott 1899). Subsidiary nickel bronze coins were issued for Nigeria and Ghana in 1908, with values of one penny, 1/2 penny, and 1/10 penny in order to address this problem, but cowries still retained their utility as small change in the marketplace and in other interactions (Clauson 1944, p. 3; Hopkins 1970, p. 122; Newlyn and Rowan 1954, p. 32; Olukoju 1997, p. 283).

In 1912, the use of silver sterling was abandoned in the colonies,¹² and under the auspices of the West African Currency Board, new currency instruments were issued (Adebayo 1999, p. 153; McPhee 1926, p. 243; Nnanna and Ajayi 2005, p. 2; Uche 2009).¹³ The new currency, particularly notes¹⁴, took a long time to become

¹¹ Frederick Lugard was equipped with 336 loads of goods, food, and supplies, 53 of which were cowries, when setting off on his survey mission for the Niger Company (through what is today Nigeria) in 1894. Many of them contained cloth (166 loads), another local currency. These were the currencies that were to be used to buy provisions for the caravan or as gifts to ease their passage. There was one load of specie. During the expedition, the cloth was paid out to the porters with reference to cowries as the unit of value (Lugard 1963, pp. 88, 101, 256).

¹² This was partly due to the fact that almost as much silver was circulating in the West African colonies as there was in the whole of Britain. The British Treasury was thus concerned about the possible impact a sudden repatriation of sterling would have on the British economy (Hawkins 1958, p. 345; Hopkins 1970, p. 103; McPhee 1926, pp. 240–241).

¹³ The currency boards “acted as money changers, exchanging sterling for local currencies issued at fixed exchange rates, and guaranteeing convertibility between colonial currencies and sterling” (Stockwell 1998, p. 101). Note that the seignorage or profit on the currency benefited the British government and that the currency was very much geared toward assisting the functioning of the export market, not the local community (Hawkins 1958, p. 346). Currency issued by the West African Currency Board remained legal tender until July 1959, at which point the currency issued by the independent Bank of Ghana became the only official currency (Stockwell 1998, p. 110).

¹⁴ These were issued from 1916 onward (McPhee 1926, p. 244). There was some doubt over the ability of the West African Currency Board to convert the notes into coins upon demand and, as a result, notes were often exchanged at a discounted price (Hawkins 1958, p. 346; Newlyn and Rowan 1954, p. 44).

an acceptable medium of exchange. In parts of Nigeria and northern Ghana, people still preferred their traditional currencies, such as metal manillas and cowrie shells. This resulted in what J. H. Hinds (1947) referred to as “The Currency Problem.” Simply put, he argued that by the 1940s “an independent, almost self-contained economy” had developed in northwestern Ghana in which coins were only required for transactions involving taxes and fines or in the purchase of salt and hoes. All other transactions could happily be concluded with cowries (Hinds 1947, p. 1428). This is not to say that coins did not have their uses. There are accounts that, in addition to being used as small change or being turned into jewelry, the nickel–bronze coins introduced by the West African Currency Board were also used as gambling counters or even as washers for galvanized iron roofing (Fuller 2009, p. 59).

Cowries and Coins: The Network Effect in Northern Ghana

At one level, the reluctance of local people to use coins can certainly be understood as a form of “resistance” to the new political dispensation and to all the auxiliary demands that came with it: forced labor, taxes, gun licenses, and so on. At the same time, though, it must be recognized that West African consumers were very skilled at negotiating and manipulating a host of different currency forms when desirable. The use of multiple currency forms in any given economic zone is by no means unusual. Kuroda (2008, p. 7) notes that a plurality of money forms has been the norm rather than the exception since the inception of money and that different monies served different purposes, thus enhancing, rather than competing with, each other.

Elsewhere in West Africa, the uptake of the new colonial money tended to be accomplished without too much resistance as its users found that colonial money could readily be substituted for existing currency forms in any number of situations. Ready adoption of the new currency was facilitated by the fact that many people all adopted the currency at the same time. In places such as northern Ghana (and parts of Nigeria) however, the fewer people who embraced the new colonial currency, the less likely it was that others would also adopt it. It was thus, in part, the absence of a positive network effect that prevented the widespread adoption of the new currency with any alacrity on the part of the colonized population in this part of Ghana. The reluctance can be better understood if we look at the local factors—the actions of consumers on the ground—that prevented the appearance of a positive network effect.

From the local perspective, cowries played a fundamental role in day-to-day life. They facilitated numerous economic, social, and political transactions and were thus integral to the local economy. Such transactions were effected by a diverse population who differed by age, gender, and patrilineage. The arrival of a new form of money, in tandem with a new political authority, would serve the interests of some but not others.

From the perspective of the colonial state, however, the introduction of the British currency and the promotion of economic individualism, including agrarian capitalism, was an important and necessary step for the development of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast in line with European economic interests (Grischow 2006, pp. 20, 22). One of the important cornerstones of the new colonial administration was thus the introduction of a stable, single, standardized British-issued currency (Berry 1995, p. 302; Helleiner 2002; Mwangi 2001, p. 765) as the use of multiple currencies was held to be inefficient (Webb 1982, p. 466). Colonial officers were further instructed that one of their most pressing duties was the promotion of trade in the northern districts (partly so as to provide a ready market for British goods) and that, as a result, they should spare no pains in promoting the earning and use of money so that the local people could purchase such goods (Fortescue [1899] in Williamson 2000, pp. 370–371; also see Arhin 1995, p. 102; Johnson 1974, p. 179). In addition, the cultivation and marketing of cash crops and bush products (such as beeswax and dawadawa spice) was encouraged (Irvine [1913] in Williamson 2000, p. 240). In the 1940s, the promotion of trade items that could only be bought for cash, not cowries, in conjunction with raising taxes, was seen as the way to ensure a successful currency transition (Hinds 1947, p. 1430; Stahl 2007, pp. 74–75). In order for the Northern Territories to be fully incorporated into the British possessions in West Africa, they would need to make use of a common currency. This would end any need to convert between the gold dust of Asante, the cowries on the Northern Territories, and the colonial money already in use at the coast, thus facilitating free trade and commerce (Austin 2007, p. 99).

A secondary consideration was the payment and collection of taxes (Hunwick 1999, pp. 91–92; Webb 1982, p. 464). The colonial government sought to make the Northern Territories self-supporting by having the District Officers collect taxes from individuals and communities, and by charging caravan levies (Watherstone [1905] in Williamson 2000, p. 374). Direct taxation was seen as a way to make individuals responsible citizens (Grischow 2006, pp. 46, 80). Another way of generating revenue was through the imposition of fines, although these could also be paid in kind. In 1899, district officers were instructed that they could charge a fine of up to £ 26.00 in cash or kind (Fortescue in Williamson 2000, p. 370), while by 1906, there are reports of individuals being charged up to £ 50.00 (Taylor [1906] in Williamson 2000, p. 65). It is not clear if the “in kind” would have included cowries or have been limited to livestock and/or agricultural produce. It was surely necessary that such payments be made in cash or in a form convertible to cash. A common feature of imported currencies during the time of the slave trade such as cowries or manillas is, of course, that they were not convertible back into a European form of currency or valid to buy European goods (Guyer 1995, p. 9; Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, p. 111; Law 1995a, p. 54).¹⁵ In addition, there are records of villages

¹⁵ Technically, however, the currency issued by the West African Currency Board after 1912 was not easily convertible either as such currency could only be converted at one of the four banking centres in West Africa, and the payment in British sterling would be made in London (Fuller 2009, p. 58; Hogendorn and Gemery 1982, p. 19).

making contributions to the British Red Cross or Imperial War Fund during the First World War (Nash [1915] in Williamson 2000, p. 250).

From the point of view of local consumers, however, apart from the responsibilities that they might owe to the government recently imposed upon them, and the lure of imported goods, there were a number of reasons they would not wholeheartedly endorse a transition to the new currency. This nonacceptance may have grown from factors relating to the network effect, including: the degree to which all participants in the economy adopted the new currency, the trust factor and the ease of use (including infrastructural elements) of the new currency, the availability of the new currency, and the actions of the state that issued the currency. I discuss these factors with reference to the events and attitudes of local actors on the ground recorded by the British colonial officers in northwestern Ghana during the first half of the twentieth century.

The Degree to Which All Participants in the Economy Adopted the New Currency

As previously stated, the network effect is what occurs when the benefit of a good or service increases along with the number of its users. To this end, the broader a currency form's acceptance in the market place, the more utility it has as a medium of exchange. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, cowries were widely used to make small food purchases in the markets. It was necessary that consumers could purchase fairly small amounts of some foodstuffs because of the tropical climate, which prevented large-scale storage and thus buying in bulk (Hogendorn and Gemery 1988, p. 129). Many of those devising policy for the colonies may have been unaware of the importance that cash money played in the food economy (Grischow 2006). Cowries were much better suited for these small-scale purchases than the colonial coinage in the main because there was no coin minted that was low enough in value to replace an individual or even handful of cowries (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, p. 1; Ofonagoro 1976, p. 3). The colonial government was very aware of this fact. As early as 1902, it was reported that it was necessary to introduce "some small and popular coin which will in a great measure replace a currency [cowries] which is even more cumbersome than the disliked bronze" (McCallum 1897).

While individuals who worked for the colonial government, in some capacity as policemen, troops, and messengers were paid in and would thus spend coins (Johnson 1970a, p. 48) in order for a new medium of exchange to be adopted it was not only those spending the new money who would have to accept it but also those who were receiving the payment (Chakravorti 2000, p. 1; Pallaver 2009, p. 21). In northern Ghana, the market women thus had a great deal of influence over whether or not colonial coinage was quickly adopted and allowed to circulate. This is a common theme in the diary entries of colonial officers throughout the Northern Territories. In 1914, Acting District Commissioner Poole heard complaints in the court at Tumu

that English silver was not being accepted in the marketplace (Poole in Williamson 2000, p. 281), while Dr Ryan had noted a similar complaint some months before and commented that “these people have been punished before for taking money tendered and scornfully throwing it into the bush” (Ryan (1913–1914) in Williamson 2000, p. 277). Similar instances were reported in 1914 to the east in Bawku (Rake [1914] in Williamson 2000, p. 344). This was doubly a problem with paper money as both workers and those in the markets “refused to accept paper currency as payment since many did not regard it as real money” (Fuller 2009, p. 59).

These mentions of the refusal to accept coins were often qualified with reference to other problems such as the shortage of coinage (Poole [1914] in Williamson 2000, p. 281) or the fact that buyers might get better value if they paid in cowries (Nash [1917] in Williamson 2000, p. 319). Alternatively, Duncan-Johnstone (*n.d.*) noted, with reference to the Lobi, that unscrupulous vendors could make a double profit by first demanding cowries (for a shilling worth of salt), exchanging cash for cowries at a lower than usual rate (e.g., 600 cowries to the shilling), and then insisting that the equivalent of a shilling’s worth of salt would cost 1000 cowries (also see Johansson 1967, p. 22; Şaul 2004b, p. 74). Further, the cowrie proved to be more stable than the colonial currency. During the Great Depression in the 1930s, cowries formed a bastion against inflation, retaining their value for purchases of items such as hoes or salt (Johnson 1970b, pp. 352–353). As a result, traders could and did refuse to accept the colonial currency, and fines did not solve the problem; some market women even being sent to prison because of their refusal to accept coins (Hinds 1947, pp. 1429–1430; also see Şaul 2004b, p. 75).

These practical considerations, however, were not the only determinant as to whether or not the new currency was accepted. As noted by Ogundiran and Falola (2007, p. 23), the influx of “Industrial Age material culture,” and by extension the imposition of colonial rule, worked to reconfigure “social relations and power across gender, age and class” (also see Piot 1991, p. 407; Spear 2003, p. 9). It may therefore not have been in the vested interests of certain groups in these societies to convert to coinage use too readily. In discussing the situation in the French territory of Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), Şaul (2004b, p. 74) has argued that the gerontocracy was particularly opposed to the currency substitution. This was because it would devalue their existing stocks. They thus used their political and ritual influence to reinforce the status of the cowrie. They would not accept European money for ritual payments and continued to build up cowrie hoards that would be disbursed at funerals or for the purchase of firearms and livestock (Şaul 2004a, p. 105). Geschiere (2000, p. 66) has noted that in parts of Cameroon, elders consistently raised bride prices as a way of asserting control over an economy in which the youth were able to access colonial money through their wage labor. Resistance to the commoditization of certain spheres of the “moral economy” by elders continues today in northern Ghana, for example, in the sphere of healing amongst the Dagomba (Bierlich 2007).

Ease of Use, Trust, and Infrastructural Elements

A further network factor affecting the uptake of a new form of currency is the degree to which the users are familiar with the new medium and the extent to which the infrastructure is available to cater to it.¹⁶ Transactions have the capability of being conducted quickly with the least amount of tension if both parties are either familiar with the currency or agreed as to what the common exchange value of different currencies is (Caskey and St. Laurent 1994, p. 503). Familiarity with a currency allows both the buyer and the vendor to quickly count and calculate the payment. Cowries, while used for many small-scale purchases, were also frequently used to make fairly large payments. While they were cumbersome in large numbers and the counting could be a tedious process, there were a variety of local counting systems that developed throughout West Africa (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, p. 114). It is reported that amongst the Dagaaba and other groups in northern Ghana, the common counting system was to count individual, unstrung cowrie shells in units of five (Evans 1985, p. 30; Yiridoe 1995, p. 23). Cowries could also be strung in specified amounts if they had been pierced (Evans 1985, p. 30; Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, p. 119). In contrast, there was no established counting system for coins that would allow for quick and easy transactions (Şaul 2004b, pp. 75–76). Several colonial diary entries from the Northern Territories point to the uncertainty that some local people felt over the counting of such money. In Bole, G.W.F. Wright reported that the Chief of Yabum had been unable to bring the right amount of money for their Red Cross donation, too little on one day, and too much the next as he “never counted the money” (Wright [1917] in Williamson 2000, p. 268). In addition, in noneconomic contexts where colonial money was accepted as a substitute for cowries, there was likely a period during which the convertibility of one to the other was contested and/or negotiated. As late as the 1990s, there was no set monetary amount that would substitute for the 1000 cowries that the healers of the bone clinic in the Sisala town of Gwollu demanded as payment. Because of the highly variable amounts that patients offered, however, a set rate has now been determined.

Yet another important factor in the development of a positive network effect is the amount of trust (confidence) that users invest in the currency form. During the First World War and again during the Great Depression, northern Ghanaians continued to save in and use cowries because as a currency the shell money withstood inflation and because it was not clear that the colonial regimes would be able to maintain the value of their money (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, pp. 151–153; Şaul 2004a, p. 111; also see Evans 1985, p. 33).

In the case of West Africa, where most precolonial currencies, quite apart from their use in the economic sphere, also played an important role in various social and ritual transactions, such trust was vested in more than whether or not a currency held its value. Value, after all, is realized in the act of exchange (Appadurai 1986, p. 3), be it in the market place or in some other sphere. In a social system that was

¹⁶ An infrastructural case in point would be the outfitting of vending machines to take dollar coins (Caskey and St. Laurent 1994, p. 504).

based on generational and gendered foundations, the introduction of new kinds of currency probably also opened the door for the negotiation of new kinds of tensions between differing interest groups (Şaul 2004b, p. 71; van Beusekom 1997, p. 313). Unfortunately, the colonial officers' diaries are less than informative on this point. The payment of fines on behalf of the community did, however, seem to fall to the lot of the colonial-appointed chiefs, and a system of direct taxation was favored by some of the officers as a way of avoiding the abuse of power that such a tribute system allowed (Grischow 2006, p. 83).

Some currency users simply did not trust the form of coins, rejecting them because they were too unlike cowries, for example, resisting the lowest value coin denomination in Nigeria in the opening decade of the twentieth century because it was too light. Heap (2009, p. 35) has argued that Nigerians found collections of notes and coins unimpressive in volume when compared to piles of manillas or cowries of equivalent value and that they thus did not perceive of them as appropriate forms of wealth. By this measure, coins were regarded as marginally better than bank notes as they at least had some intrinsic value (Fuller 2009, p. 59). In fact, many colonial officers regarded notes as useless because they were prone to environmental degradation (Gilbert [1919] in Williamson 2000, p. 340; also see Breckenridge 1995, p. 286; Lawal 2009, p. 63). There were also instances recorded in Nigeria of the counterfeiting or misrepresentation of the value of coins, a situation that was impossible with cowries (Ekejiuba 1995, p. 142; Falola 1997, p. 22; Olukoju 2009).

The Availability of the New Currency

The availability of a new currency to be taken up in local exchange networks is an additional factor impacting on its acceptance or nonacceptance. Like cowries, or any other imported currency such as manillas, coins too had to be imported (Hogendorn and Gemery 1988, p. 128).¹⁷ A common complaint on the part of the colonial government was that cowries, in large amounts, were extremely difficult to transport, but until the expansion of the road networks after 1918 (Wragham 2004, p. 11), colonial coinage too, was heavy and difficult to transport (Adebayo 1999, p. 153; Hinds 1947, p. 1429; Ofonagoro 1976, p. 2). This difficulty partly accounted for the recurring lack of colonial currency in the Northern Territories.

Entries in the informal diaries of the colonial officers vacillate between reports on waiting for, and receiving, currency issue (boxes of coins were brought from the south) and the shortage of nickel coinage in the area (Watherstone [1905] in

¹⁷ There have been numerous instances historically, worldwide, in which problems have been experienced in providing an adequate supply of low-denomination coins, often because the cost of their production was relatively higher than those for larger denominations (Kuroda 2008, p. 8). The shortage of coins was a common problem throughout all the colonized territories of German, French, and British West Africa, particularly during the First World War. The situation became even more complicated with the devaluation of the mark after the German territories were absorbed into those of the Allies after the World War I (Lawal 2009, p. 64).

Williamson 2000, p. 373; Nash [1915] in Williamson 2000, p. 249; Wright [1917] in Williamson 2000, p. 257). In 1919, Acting District Commissioner (DC) W. E. Gilbert put the shortage of nickel in the Zouaragou District in the northeast down to the fact that it was being used locally to make rings and bracelets. Seeking some sort of legal solution, he bemoaned the fact that while the statutes protected gold and silver coinage, they did not specify about nickel. Furthermore, even if he had found a relevant law "... that section makes the offence too serious for a DC to hear" (Gilbert [1919] in Williamson 2000, p. 339). In some cases, where there was not much European coinage in circulation, the administration had to accept payment in cowries as was the case at several toll stations at Gambaga, Walewale, Dasima, Yabum, and Bole (Arhin 1979, pp. 71–72). This was especially the case if there was no large garrison encamped at the station to generate large quantities of coin. The shortage appears to have ended by the close of the 1930s. In the Sisala District (in the northwest), E. W. Ellison (1939, p. 24) noted in his annual report that the:

...previously reported currency problems seem to be on the wane. Although the people still prefer cowries and are prepared to lower the market prices if payment is made in them, the advent of large quantities of nickel coin is slowly combating this problem.

State Policy

As previously stated, when we take the need for the creation of a positive network effect into account, it becomes clear that, for a number of reasons, there is little incentive for people to switch to a new currency spontaneously. It is because of this that what the government chooses to do is of paramount importance. Often, such a transition can only be effective if the government incentivizes the switch or withdraws the competing currency from circulation, thereby imposing its own value system (Caskey and St. Laurent 1994, p. 496).¹⁸ Throughout West Africa the colonial government incentivized the use of the colonial currency by demanding the payment of taxes and fines in the new form (Ofonagoro 1976, p. 2) and/or attempting to diminish the competing local currency by banning its importation (Şaul 2004b, p. 74; Webb 1999, p. 44), or by accepting cowries or manilas in payment but not releasing them back into circulation (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, p. 132). A last resort was to attempt to withdraw the currency from circulation altogether as was the case with Nigerian manillas in 1948, which saw the buying up of the currency reserves held in the villages at some not inconsiderable financial and logistical cost to the colonial dispensation (Guyer 2009, p. 39; Hawkins 1958, p. 345; Johansson 1967, p. 26). It is no accident that this initiative was enacted almost 50 years after these areas had been colonized, when colonialism was well established

¹⁸ A modern-day example of this can be seen in the continuing unsuccessful attempts by the United States Treasury to introduce a dollar coin while not withdrawing the dollar bill from circulation. Their Canadian counterparts were able to effect a successful currency substitution by withdrawing their dollar bill and putting the "Loonie" coin into circulation (Caskey and St. Laurent 1994, p. 503).

and the existence of a parallel currency had become untenable. It is unlikely that an operation held earlier in Nigeria's colonial history would have been successful.

Colonial money entered the system through the wages paid to the constabulary and other colonial functionaries (Şaul 2004b, p. 74). Since much of the "development" work such as road building was on the basis of forced labor, this did not result in the release of colonial money into the population (Hinds 1947, p. 1429; Thomas 1973). However, young men from the north were increasingly recruited to work in the mines of the south and on their return brought cash to their home districts (Grischow 2009; Sutton 1989, p. 640).

A great deal of persuasion on the part of colonial officers went into trying to convert the local populace to the use of coins. Duncan-Johnstone (n.d.) describes holding meetings with the paramount chiefs and the headmen under them and empowering them to fine anyone in their jurisdiction who refused to accept British coinage. In addition, they were reminded that it was a criminal offence for a vendor to short change a buyer.

Ultimately, however, the last resort of the state: the issuing of new currency and the enforced withdrawal of the old from circulation was unavailable to the British colonial government in the case of cowries. Beyond the problems of not having a small enough denomination coin to replace them or a steady supply of such coins as did exist, they were unable to "withdraw" the cowries from circulation, beyond forbidding the importation of new reserves of cowries (1927 in northern Ghana [Hinds, 1947, p. 1429]) because people needed them to fulfil various social obligations in which the state played a fairly small or no part. Beyond the occasional court hearing about bridewealth or paternity claims, it was not the role of the state to legislate these transactions. Thomas (1991) has made this point with reference to the relative commensurability of European alcohol and the ritual drink *kava* in Fiji. Alcohol could not easily replace *kava* in Fiji in ritual contexts because it lacked the requisite qualities that fit the different stages of the ritual. In much the same way, during the early years of the introduction of colonial currency, coins were not seen as an adequate substitute for cowries in such ritual and social transactions. This may partly be the result of elders reinforcing their own power and the value of their hoards. In addition, the use of cowries could also function as a form of boundary maintenance. Amongst the Dagara, where cowries play an important part in funerals, cowries were used in specific transactions such as the buying of beer. This beer was consumed in a different setting and in a different way than beer that was bought for cash. Evans (1985, pp. 33–34) has argued that this process underlines the extent to which the exchange of goods for cowries between certain sets of person could serve to maintain and define group identity in opposition to those who used cash to buy the same products. These beer-drinking functions were important as they were one of the main ways in which cowries used during funerals could be reclaimed and stored away for future use (Evans 1985, p. 34; Yiridoe 1995, p. 22).

A further difficulty faced by the colonial officers was the liminal status of cowries as a currency. They were in wide local use and thus could not be ignored, but they were not issued by the colonial government and their use was therefore not easily legislated (Ofonagoro 1976, p. 2). For example, Hinds (1947, p. 1429) reported

that it had been proposed in 1926 to forbid the use of cowries altogether by force of law but that the British King had declined to sign such an order into law on the grounds that they had never been “expressly enacted legal tender” and thus could not be regarded strictly as a currency. At the same time, since their common use as a currency “rendered such use legal under Common Law,” it should not be necessary to legislate their use! It is these kinds of inherent contradictions that made the colonial state a work in progress. The colonial regime was constantly experimenting with political (e.g., indirect rule) and economic (e.g., direct taxation, cash cropping) policies (Austin 2007; Der 1987; Grischow 2006; Hogendorn and Gemery 1982; Weiss 2003) and should thus not be perceived of as monolithic and inflexible.

Taking all of these factors into account it becomes apparent that cowries and coins were in many ways more similar than different to one another, and when their differences were weighed, coins were not adequate substitutes for cowries in the local regimes of value (Ofonagoro 1976, p. 2). Some of these similarities and differences are presented below:

Cowries	Coins
*V. bulky, difficult to transport	*V. bulky, difficult to transport
*Used as jewelry and for adornment	*Used as jewelry and for adornment
*Included in divination kit	*Included in divination kit
*Useful for small transactions	*Used for larger transactions
*Maintained value over long periods	*Subject to the inflation caused by global economic events
*Readily available	*Sometimes shortage of supply
*System in place for counting	*Not always sure of value, unfamiliar
*Could not be redeemed	*Could only be redeemed (post-1912) at very specific places

Gregory (1996, p. 204) has argued that the history of conquest arises out of the “interplay between the relation of domination and subordination and its constituent elements—coercion, persuasion, collaboration and resistance—which imply each other contingently.” Elements of all of these “constituent” elements can be seen in the attempts of the British colonial government to implement their new currency. If coercion can be understood as the enforcement of tax and other revenue payments in colonial money, then persuasion can be seen in the attempts to make coins more like cowries. Colonial officers argued for ever-lower denominations of coins (Newlyn and Rowan 1954, p. 31; Ofonagoro 1976, p. 4), and a coin design that would have a hole in it so that it could easily be strung and thus transported as perforated cowries would be. This latter idea ran into some difficulties at first as “this was not possible as each coin to be acceptable to a native must have on it her majesty’s head intact. I now favor an oval shape farthing (?) with a hole at one end for stringing purposes and the Queen’s head above, but perhaps the officers of H[er] M[ajesty]’s mint may have some objection to an oval coin” (McCallum 1897; also see Ofonagoro 1976, p. 4). The eventual West African penny and smaller denominations did indeed have holes. This may just have facilitated the use of these coins as jewelry.



Fig. 2.3 Coins purchased in the antiques' market at Bolgatanga, Upper West Region, Ghana. From left: a 1942 2-shilling coin that has been modified; a 1937 halfpenny; and a 1936 1/10th penny coin similar to those excavated at Zanbulugu

At least one of the 1/10th penny coins recovered from the early twentieth-century site of Zanbulugu has the smoothness associated with use as a pendant, and many of the old coins found today in the stalls of antiquity dealers in northern Ghana have signs of use as jewelry (Fig. 2.3).

The two remaining of Gregory's elements, collaboration and resistance, can perhaps not be as clearly delineated, but they emerge from the interplay between the individuals on the ground who were actually making use of the currency. Rowlands (1998, p. 331) has argued that many events and interactions that take place in the colonized arena escape simple binary oppositions such as "resistance" or "domination," or in this case, "collaboration," constituting the lived reality of colonialism. Individuals such as the market women or elders who had a vested interest in insisting on payment in cowries may have found themselves opposed to those employed in the colonial economy, who were paid in such coin and who sought to spend it. It was in their interactions and struggles with one another that the colonial economy played itself out and in which we can find part of their lived reality.

Ultimately, coins could be integrated into the cowrie economy as a parallel currency fairly easily because most West Africans were habituated to a system in which multiple currencies were operating. The presence of colonial agents, however, meant that new centers of power arose in combination with the availability of a new form of currency. This, in turn, led to the emergence of new opportunities for differing interest groups within society. The gerontocracy ran the biggest risks as they faced losing the accumulated value of lineage wealth embodied in their cowrie hoards. Many young men, in contrast, traveled to the south, were paid in colonial money and thus began to acquire new value systems. The colonial chiefs too, many of them the descendants of precolonial "big men," given the power to fine their

subordinates would have represented yet another locus of political and economic interest (Goody 1956, p. 10; Mendonsa 1975; Şaul 2004b, p. 74).

As more and more of West Africa became converted to the use of various colonial currencies, the precolonial currencies became ever more localized. It is important to remember that many of them used to be valid over vast distances and in a myriad of contexts (Guyer 1995, p. 2; Lovejoy 1974). Indeed, in 1800, “a pocketful of shells could easily have been spent as money in coastal Burma or Timbuktu, in Benin or Bengal, on long stretches of the Ganges or the Niger” (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, pp. 1–2). Areas of use formed distinct currency zones (Webb 1999, p. 38), northern Ghana falling within a cowrie zone that spanned the savanna, an area that incorporated a range of societies of differing sociopolitical organisation (Şaul 2004a, p. 102). While the introduction of British coinage had a market-integrating effect within the bounds of the Gold Coast territories (with some linkage to other British possessions in West Africa), it also served, to some extent, to sever the local economy from the regions to the north, west, and east, circumscribing Britain’s colonial possessions as opposed to the territories occupied by French or German forces (Austin 2007, p. 97; also see Mwangi 2001, p. 766). These new monetary boundaries were not, however, strictly observed by local people. There was much smuggling and unofficial money-changing across these new borders (Austin 2007, p. 97). At certain points, particularly during food shortages, people in northern Ghana would purchase food from the French side of the border. A common cowrie currency (sometimes, the only form of payment acceptable) was then useful (Hinds 1947, p. 1429).

The colonial powers too had to seek some common ground in 1915; for example, there was an unsuccessful attempt to fix a joint rate of exchange at 1000 cowries to the shilling and franc, respectively (Duncan-Johnstone *n.d.*), while as early as 1905, the colonial officers had instructions to accept French money from south-bound traders (Watherstone in Williamson 2000, p. 373). In such cross-border situations, the cowrie retained its value, as it may have lessened the chances of official harassment, demands for bribes, and the bureaucratic hassle of exchanging money at the border (Evans 1985, p. 37; Yiridoe 1995, pp. 27–28).

Conclusion: Coins and the Colonial State

Many authors have pointed to the dual nature of state-issued currencies¹⁹—their economic (market) use as opposed to their political (symbol of state power) nature (Gregory 1996, p. 210; Hart 1986, pp. 637–638; Mwangi 2002, p. 34; Owen 2009, p. 571). Crucially, the transition to colonial currency marked as well, a transition to state rule for many of the communities in northwestern Ghana. The length of time

¹⁹ It should be noted that in large areas of West Africa, currencies primarily fell under traditional or family control (Şaul 2004b, p. 73; Stiansen and Guyer 1999, pp. 2–3) rather than state control with some exceptions amongst state societies such as Dahomey (Gregory 1996).

that it took for the adoption of the colonial currency can thus perhaps also partly be explained by the fact that the incorporation of northern Ghana into the colonial state was itself very much a work in progress (Grischow 2006; Lentz 1999). The Northern Territories remained economically underdeveloped during the colonial era (Brukum 1998; Mahama 2009; Sutton 1989, p. 643) and the Upper East, Upper West, and Northern Regions continue to be so today (Dickson 1968). As long as the Northern Territories were politically and economically isolated, the enforcement power of the colonial government was weak, which would have helped to disallow a swift currency transition (Lotz and Rocheteau 2002, p. 588). This, balanced against the internal factors, which kept cowries circulating within the domestic economy, ensured the longevity of the cowrie currency in northern Ghana, long after it had fallen into desuetude elsewhere.

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Chapter 3

Circulations Through Worlds Apart: Georgian and Victorian England in an African Mirror

Ann B. Stahl

Europe was made by its imperial projects, as much as colonial encounters were shaped by conflicts within Europe itself (Stoler and Cooper 1997, p. 1)

Recent literatures on colonialism stress both the contingency of metropolitan–colonial relations and the mutually constitutive projects of nation- and empire-building. Scholars working in a variety of disciplines have worked to document the specificities of these processes in different world areas and to surmount the “archived grooves” (Stoler 2001, p. 863) that constrained earlier understandings. “Global history” has emerged as a focus intended to promote areal, thematic, and interdisciplinary dialogue in an effort to overcome the “West and the rest” dichotomy that framed “world history” (Clarence-Smith et al. 2006; Hazareesingh and Curry-Machado 2009; O’Brien 2006; for a discussion, see Austen 2006; Inikori 2007, p. 65). Historical anthropology has demonstrated how social practices previously bracketed as “ethnographic” were shaped by colonial processes, and scholars have explored the effects of these processes on anthropological knowledge production (Cohn 1996; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 1997; Cooper and Stoler 1997; Dirks 2001, 2006; Pels 1997; Stoler 1995, 2002; Wolf 1982). Building on Thomas’ (1991) notion of recontextualization and Sahlins’ (1994) reminder that people consume goods in relation to their own logics, archaeological studies have illuminated the materiality of these processes (Dietler and López-Ruiz 2009; Gosden 2004; Hall 2000; Lyons and Papadopoulos 2002; Orser 2001; Turgeon 2004) and contributed to our understanding of social action as a creative domain (Graeber 2001, 2005; Ingold 2000; Ingold and Hallam 2007; Munn 1986). Though interpretive and theoretical differences remain, there is broad interdisciplinary agreement that what once appeared to set European material, social, and intellectual life of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries *apart* from the world was profoundly shaped by the continent’s colonial entanglements *with* the world.

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This chapter is motivated by a concern with how Africa comes into view in these literatures (Achebe 1978; Austen 2006; Vaughan 2006). How do we understand Africa's role in the mutually constitutive projects of nation- and empire-building? Invocations of the "triangular trade" that linked Europe, Africa, and plantation-based settlements in colonized regions of the western hemisphere are today routine, as for example in treatments of economic history (though cf. Allen 2009), despite disagreements over the role of the slave trade and plantation production in fueling the economic "take-off" of the industrial revolution (e.g., Braudel 1973; Inikori 2002, 2007; Williams 1944; for an overview, see Morgan 2000). Standard descriptions of the Atlantic economy follow dominant flows, highlighting movement of manufactured goods from Europe, their exchange for enslaved Africans whose plantation labor in the western hemisphere produced the drug foods and raw materials (sugar, coffee, tobacco, cotton) that in turn contributed to Europe's eighteenth-century "consumer revolution" (Martin and Spurrell 1962, pp. xiii–xiv; Morgan 2000). In these scenarios, Africa comes into view as a market for sumptuary goods (textiles, beads) and technologies of destruction (guns and gunpowder), and as a supplier of captive labor for an exploitative global system (cf. Inikori 2007, p. 73; Northrup 2009), though others mention the continent not at all (e.g., Berg and Eger 2003b).

Scholars of Africa have worked to nuance the understanding of these processes by insisting that Africans were not passive recipients of global goods. Rather than ask "what Africans got for their slaves" (Alpern 1995; cf. Ogundiran 2002), recent historical, anthropological, and archaeological scholarship has focused on the agency of African consumers in determining demand for—and equally disinterested in—imported goods. Contextualized case studies underscore that Africans consumed imports in relation to their own ends, materially reproducing and transforming their societies in the process (DeCorse 2001; Gijanto 2011; Norman 2009; Ogundiran 2002, 2009; Richard 2010, 2012; Stahl 2002; chapters in this volume). Moreover, African consumer tastes affected design and manufacturing decisions in Europe and in the process shaped European tastes (Prestholdt 2004, 2008; Steiner 1985; see also Breckenridge 1989).

Paralleling these developments in African studies, a growing literature attends to the dramatic changes in British consumption patterns over the long eighteenth century (Allen 2009, pp. 49–51; Heyck 2008, pp. 59–62). The eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were characterized by a considerable expansion in the number of "middling order" families in England, whose increased wealth stimulated production and consumption of luxury goods (Sharpe 2000, p. 524). Scholars debate whether this constituted a "consumer revolution" (McKendrick et al. 1982; see Berg and Eger 2003a; Wilson 2008) and its effects on gender relations (Vickery 1998, pp. 1–11); however, there is general agreement that the Georgian period saw notable increases in the number and variety of home furnishings and an elaboration of material culture linked to "gentile practices" (i.e., consumption of coffee, tea) as evidenced, for example, in probate inventories (Weatherill 1996). Whereas Deetz (1977) saw these material changes as reflecting a shift in world view, later researchers have stressed instead the active role that consumption of luxury goods (varied

table ceramics, ornaments, toys, mirrors, and other household furnishings) played in the production of gender, social distinction, and an ecumene of “improvement” (Berg 2005; Styles and Vickery 2006; Tarlow 2007; Vickery 1998, pp. 161–194). English towns of the period were spatially reconfigured through new practices of shopping and display (Stobart et al. 2007). New technologies of window glass manufacture transformed shops from simple rooms in buildings to emporia with glazed store fronts that made possible new forms of display to excite consumer desire (Tarlow 2007, p. 175).¹ An upsurge in persuasive advertising included a proliferation of shop signs and text-based forms that defined fashion and shaped taste (Benedict 2007, pp. 195–197; Berg and Clifford 2007; Snodin and Styles 2004, pp. 92–94, Chap. 1, Fig. 41, Chap. 2, Fig. 20; Stobart et al. 2007). Linked to these changes in consumption was a shift in the assessment of social distinction as something based in “birth and blood” to an effect of “shared values and tastes” evidenced in, and arguably shaped by, material practice (Benedict 2007; Tarlow 2007, p. 181; Wilson 2008).

The literature on Georgian consumption amply acknowledges the role of Asian connections in the production of new European tastes and desires (Berg 2003, 2005, pp. 46–84; Eaton 2006; Snodin and Styles 2004, p. 62), as for example in the development of hybrid “chinoiserie” that materially adapted Asian forms and designs to meet European preferences (Berg 2005, p. 68). This literature seems to suggest, however, little role for African connections, other than supplying the plantation labor that underwrote the pecuniary strength of some English gentry or, following abolition of the slave trade and the shift to “legitimate trade” (Law 1995), raw materials (oil palm, cotton, groundnuts), and markets for Britain’s industrial production (Berg 2003, 2005, p. 183; Tarlow 2007, p. 163).

Salutary as attention to the triangular trade’s importance has been for bringing Africa into view in global historical studies (e.g., Inikori 1982; Rodney 1972; Williams 1944),² intellectual work remains to be done to “provincialize Europe” (Chakrabarty 2000) and bring into view just how thorough-going and mutual were the processes through which Europeans and its colonial “others” were produced, requiring that we ask how new social forms and relations were produced through material social action (e.g., Graeber 2005; Pietz 1985, 1987, 1988; see also introduction, this volume). Methodologically, this requires that we surmount accustomed disciplinary and areal silos. Austin (2007), following Pomeranz, suggests a methodology of “reciprocal comparison” in which propositions derived from the study of African history provide a basis for comparative assessment as a strategy for overcoming “conceptual Eurocentrism.” Reciprocal comparison unsettles the idea that one side of a comparison provides the norm, and instead endeavors to consider each

¹ For examples see Snodin and Styles 2004, Chap. 1, Figs. 11 and 13. Illustrations of shop interiors appear in Ackermann (1809) which is available as an e-book (<http://www.worldcat.org/title/colour-illustrations-of-shop-interiors/oclc/228145517>).

² The 200-year anniversary of Britain’s abolition of the slave trade was marked in 2006–2007 by numerous museum exhibits and publications that fostered growing awareness of how the Atlantic slave trade contributed to Britain’s prosperity (Dresser 2009; Kowaleski Wallace 2006; Oldfield 2007; Tibbles 2005).

side through the lens of the other (see Northrup 2009). Instead of one “particular” being taken to stand for the “general,” each represents a deviation when considered relative to the other (Austin 2007, p. 3). As such, Austin (quoting Fenoaltea 1999) argues that the role of African studies in global history can be enhanced by placing “Europe in the African mirror,” as for example in Goody’s (1976, 1998, 2000; Goody and Tambiah 1973) broad ranging comparative studies of family, marriage, and more; Austen’s (1993) comparative study of witchcraft in Europe and Africa; or Guyer’s (2004) study of valuation. Productive as such comparisons can be, there is potential to miss the extent to which the phenomena in question were mutually bound up in the production of one another (Graeber 2005), as Stoler (1995, p. 7; 2002) explores for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourses and technologies of sex in colony and metropole, or how analytically separate domains of the “political” and the “economic” emerged through relational discourses of race, gender, and class in colonial context (Magubane 2004). This limitation can be overcome by augmenting reciprocal comparison (“what light Africa’s experience can cast on European history,” Fenoaltea 1999, p. 145) with attention to how *circulations* shaped cultural practice. Here I build on Tsing (2000, pp. 327, 337–338; also 2005) who explores how circulation as a metaphor highlights the channels created by flows of ideas, goods, and peoples. In turn she asks how those channels transform landscapes, noting particularly that “flow” is stimulated through political and economic channels (Tsing 2000, p. 338).

My focus here is on flows of two commodities: one that flowed *out* of Africa and was intimately bound up in the production of social distinction in Europe (ivory); and another that flowed *into* Africa where it became intimately bound up in predation and the production of wealth in people (cowries). Circulations of ivory and cowries contributed materially to distinctions of race, gentility, and gender within eighteenth- and nineteenth-century imperial landscapes. Yet, because their flows depart from the conventional channels etched by the triangular trade, they either slip from view as a “minor” good that did not transform industry or produce vast wealth (what Feinberg and Johnson 1982 described as the “and ivory” complex) or, in the case of cowries, disappear under the particularized surface of African practice (peculiar to “exotic Africa”).

In this exploratory essay, I endeavor to demonstrate how a concern with object biographies (Kopytoff 1986), conceived in relation to the social actions through which they accrued value (Graeber 2001, pp. 31–34, 45), contributes to our understanding of the “circuitous imperial route” through which the “bourgeois self” was relationally conceived and clarified (Stoler 1995, pp. 7–13). Whereas Stoler’s analysis highlights the discursive dimension of these processes, our understanding of them is enriched by considering the role of objects and material practice (e.g., Comaroff and Comaroff 1997; Graeber 2001, pp. 117–149). Following the flow of ivory out of Africa and tracing its circulations within Georgian and Victorian England allows glimpses of how this African material was bound up in the social actions through which raced, classed, and gendered bodies were produced. By contrast, following flows of cowries en route to Africa reveals how they became a social medium for the production of “wealth in people” (Guyer and Eno Belinga 1995) in both England and Africa. In this case, looking at the marriage

practices of Jane Austen's England in an African mirror helps to contextualize—and thereby denaturalize—the production of kin relations within the dynamics of an emerging imperial landscape.³

My interest in ivory and cowries has been prompted in part by the patterns noted as part of our archaeological investigations in Banda, Ghana that have focused on successively earlier sites aimed at studying how shifting global connections affected daily life in this rural area (Stahl 2001, 2007). Though they never occur in large quantities, ivory and cowries evidence an interesting reversal in presence/absence that coincides with the growth of Atlantic connections. In sites dating to the period before about 1650 AD, ivory occurs in small quantities in the form of modest ornaments (bangles and “pins;” Stahl and Stahl 2004). Ivory disappeared from the repertoire of Banda material culture by the eighteenth century. While a decline of elephant and hippo populations may account for the pattern, ivory's absence from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century contexts may equally relate to its flow *out* of Africa associated with escalating European demand. Cowries, by comparison, are absent from earlier sites, but have been recovered in small quantities from later period sites. Here was a commodity that flowed *into* Africa, with direct links to escalating European demand for slaves. What insights emerge if we follow the flows of these commodities—upstream in the case of cowries as they flowed through England en route to Africa, and downstream to sites of English consumption in the case of ivory—in an effort to trace the effects of their circulations?

As a scholar with primary expertise in African archaeology, my discussion of these processes as they relate to Georgian and Victorian England is partial and preliminary. The evidence required to follow these circulations is patchy and dispersed, the province of specialists working in different disciplines (history, art history, literature, archaeology, and anthropology) and geographical areas. Silos of expertise and area frustrate a comprehensive understanding (Tarlow 2007, pp. 2–5), but by generating a question and exploring an analytical approach that views England in Africa's mirror, my goal is to further “...disassemble the neat divisions that could imagine a European history and its unified collectivities apart from the externalized others on whom it was founded and which it produced” (Stoler 1995, p. 5).

Ivory

Ivory has long been valued as a luxury raw material in Europe and was used from an early period as a medium for religious carvings and secular goods such as mirror cases, knife handles, gaming pieces, and ornaments (Cutler 1985; St. Clair and

³ My focus here is on circulations between Africa (and more narrowly West Africa) and England; our understanding would be enriched by considering the broader flows of these and other objects, including beads on which there is a burgeoning literature in Africa and elsewhere (Burgess and Dussubieux 2007; Dussubieux et al. 2008; Robertshaw et al. 2003, 2006, 2010a, b; Turgeon 2004; Wood 2009). The fact that cowries have been recovered from North American sites associated with enslaved Africans (e.g., Grulich 2008; Samford 1996, p. 101), slave traders (Kale 1989), and incorporated into valued objects collected from Native American groups as far west as the Plains (Peabody 2010) suggests that we have much to learn from these broader flows.

McLachlan 1989; Woodhouse 1976, p. 33; Wilson and Ayerst 1976; on its uses in Africa, see Ross 1995). Through the Georgian and Victorian periods, it was used to produce a widening array of luxury products consumed by gentile households. Whereas the sources of ivory were diverse (India, Africa), ivory was exported from both East and West African ports from an early period and in increasing quantities through the period in question (Feinberg and Johnson 1982; Johnson 1978). Tusks of African elephants were valued over those of Indian elephants for their large size, resistance to discoloration, and superior carving qualities (Alpers 1975, pp. 86–87; St. Clair and McLachlan 1989, p. 6). Africa was also a source of ivory derived from hippos which was valued for both for its hardness and whiteness (Barnett 1954; Burack 1984, p. 33, 130; Insoll 1995, 1997; Reid and Segobye 2000, p. 328; Stahl and Stahl 2004).

Our understanding of the channels through which African ivory made its way into the hands of European traders varies by region and period (e.g., see Coutu 2011). Archaeological ivory caches from the late first millennium AD have been interpreted as consignments destined for trade in both Western and Southern Africa. They suggest the possibility that at least some early export was in the form of finished products rather than whole tusks (Insoll 1995, 1997; Reid and Segobye 2000). Sixteenth-century Portuguese traders along Africa's east central coast tapped into existing trade and shipped ivory to South Asia where it was in demand for production of bangles used in Hindu and Muslim weddings. South Asian demand increased over the seventeenth century, though in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries some of the ivory transported by English bottoms to India was reexported to Europe to meet the growing demand there (Alpers 1975, pp. 86–87). In the period of early European–West African trade, there is evidence that ivory objects crafted in Africa were exported to Europe. Notably, the presence of Portuguese traders on the Sierra Leonean coast gave rise to hybrid Luso-African styles of ivory carving represented by salt cellars (“chalices”) and spoons that made their way as finished products into elite European households from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries (Bassani and Fagg 1988; Mark 2007; see also Blier 1993).

Ivory was purchased by European traders at coastal ports from the Senegal River to Cameroon from the late seventeenth century. Understanding of the channels through which ivory arrived at the coasts or the volume exported is imprecise; however, it is clear that slaves transported ivory to the coast in some areas (Harms 1981, pp. 152–153), while eighteenth-century journals of slavers operating at the West African coast indicate that they routinely acquired ivory (“teeth”) and camwood—valued as a source of red dye and for its use in the production of furniture and violins—at the same time as they traded for slaves (Martin and Spurrell 1962, pp. 20, 29, 51, 67, 77). Archaeological evidence from Ghana suggests declining local production and consumption of ivory ornaments as international demand for tusks expanded (Stahl and Stahl 2004, p. 99), and we know that ivory was being exchanged along the Dutch West African coast for an array of locally valued commodities including gunpowder, salt, tobacco, cloth, alcohol, and metal wares, including brass basins (Feinberg and Johnson 1982, p. 443). Whereas late nineteenth-century European traders in central and eastern Africa sometimes purchased enormous quantities of

ivory (Coutu 2011; Harms 1981, p. 40), the amount of ivory obtained in single transactions by both eighteenth-century English and Dutch traders on the West African coast was often small (Feinberg and Johnson 1982, p. 444). Nonetheless, surviving Dutch records suggest that the Dutch alone exported more than a thousand tusks per annum in the early eighteenth century (roughly 25,000 full tusks in the years 1706–1720, and a total weight of close to three million pounds in the years 1675–1731; Rijkelijkhuisen 2009, p. 419). Whereas some of the ivory exported by Dutch and English traders in this period traveled to Europe via the West Indies on slave ships (more often the case with the English than the Dutch), some was shipped directly to Europe along with gold, hides, and dye wood (Feinberg and Johnson 1982, pp. 438–439, 442, 444, 448). Traders who sailed the triangular route sold their slaves in West Indian or North American ports, but the ivory and camwood remained on board for the final leg of the journey, augmented by the sugar, cotton, or tobacco that figure more prominently in the accounts of economic historians.

Some of the ivory that arrived in the ports of Liverpool, Bristol, and London was reexported to ivory-carving centers on the continent (northeastern France and the Rhineland) or to India (Feinberg and Johnson 1982, p. 451; see also Rijkelijkhuisen 2009, p. 419). Whereas England had been home to centers of monastic production at Canterbury, Winchester, and St. Albans, these suffered decline in the strife of the Civil War years. But eighteenth-century England saw a resurgence of ivory carving linked to growing demand for luxury products and aided by an influx of Huguenot craftsmen who sought refuge in England (Avery 1996, pp. 15–17; Snodin and Styles 2004, p. 27). Documentary sources provide glimpses of ivory's passage from the ports of its arrival to the workshops where it was transformed from raw material to luxury good. A 1777 receipt in the papers of William Davenport, a prominent Liverpool merchant involved in the slave trade, indicates payment to Sarah Walker for cleaning ivory tusks that arrived from Africa on *Badger*, Davenport's ship (Merseyside Maritime Museum 2009). Ivory entering English ports through Royal African Company trade was sold at periodic auctions that included tusks of varying sizes, sometimes purchased as lots and at other times as single tusks (Feinberg and Johnson 1982, p. 444). Ivory would have been among the "mouth-watering exotica" that filled the barges that moved tropical commodities and raw materials to the quays of interior towns (McInnes 1988, pp. 79–80), some destined for Sheffield where ivory was used to produce luxury cutlery handles.

The ivory carvers who served late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century English monarchs came from the French carving center of Dieppe (Jean Cavalier and David le Marchand; Avery 1996, pp. 15–17, 27); however, evidence suggests that ivory working was an occupational specialization associated with emerging "leisure towns" (e.g., Bath; McInnes 1988; cf. Rijkelijkhuisen 2009, pp. 419–420). Based on a study of town freeman registers listing occupations in Shrewsbury, McInnes documented a dramatic increase in the number and proportion of tradesmen linked to "the world of luxury and leisure" in the second half of the eighteenth century. These included new occupations such as "ivory-turner" who appeared among the town's craftsmen between 1750 and 1775, and who perhaps also produced small luxuries like the ivory combs included in the packs of petty chapmen (itinerant merchants) of the period (McInnes 1988, pp. 58, 77–78, 85).

As part of a general expansion of craftsmanship in luxury products (Snodin and Styles 2004, pp. 137–159), the range and quality of English ivory products increased over the course of the eighteenth century with a concomitant rise in demand. English ivory production was boosted by the Great Exhibition of 1851 which made apparent that craftsmen in London, Birmingham, and Sheffield were as proficient as those of the continent (Woodhouse 1976, p. 90). At the same time, by showcasing the products of empire, the Great Exhibition and other world's fairs fueled consumer demand by exposing a broad range of the metropole's citizenry to foreign objects and styles (Breckenridge 1989).

Though work remains to be done on the history of ivory consumption, it is evident from even a cursory study that ivory products were intimately bound up in the body work of gentility, itself a project that involved cultivation of gesture, comportment, and taste (Snodin and Styles 2004, p. 101; Wilson 2008). The broader significance of a unique find like a tea-stained elephant ivory lower denture fragment recovered from a latrine deposit in Kent, England and dated by associated objects to ca. 1700–1710 (Anderson et al. 2004) is suggested by an eighteenth-century advertisement linking ivory dentures and fashion: “People of first fashion may eat, drink, or talk and show their teeth without hesitation” (quoted in Burack 1984, p. 130). Both of these luxury commodities (ivory and tea) remained outside the reach of most consumers in this period; in combination with the teapot, clay pipe bowls, and tortoiseshell combs recovered from the same archaeological context, they provide dated evidence of body work and consumption practices linked to practices of gentile identification.

Through the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, ivory became the preferred medium for the personal grooming implements with which the gentry's dressing rooms were equipped (Burack 1984, pp. 130–134, 139–140, 157–165; Snodin and Styles 2004, Chap. 2, Fig. 20). A range of implements used to produce “a habitual neatness” valued in Georgian society (Gregory 1793, cited in Wilson 2008, p. 150) were made in whole or part from ivory: combs, brushes, mirrors, razors, neck-dusters, manicure sets, perfume flasks, toothpicks, and ear scoops (for the removal of wax, sometimes with the latter two tools included in a single device! Burack 1984, Fig. 50; see also Rijkelijkhuisen 2009). Ivory objects were among the elaborated tableware of the gentry (napkin rings, spoons, knives and knife rests, specialized serving forks; Burack 1984, Fig. 42) and linked to the cultivation of genteel habits in the ivory keys of pianos that occupied a privileged spot in well-appointed Georgian and, in growing numbers, Victorian homes.⁴ Ivory billiard balls and dice were central to games of leisure played in gentlemen's clubs (Burack 1984, pp. 122–123). Women cooled themselves with ivory fans in the newly established leisure spaces (e.g., parks) of the period. A Jacobite paper and ivory fan (1714–1730) in collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum combined ivory handles with an image of Queen Anne ascending to heaven on an ostrich feather, another

⁴ Plates in Cooper (1976) illustrate the kinds and placements of pianos in elite Late Victorian and Edwardian English homes. For an exploration of the parlor as a space devoted to the “performances of middle-class leisure” (Logan 2001, p. 27), see Logan's *The Victorian Parlour*.

African import deployed in the body work of social distinction (Snodin and Styles 2004, pp. 12–13; Stein 2008). Ivory was thus intimately and tactilely involved in the production of gentrified bodies. Also it was bound up in the production of gender distinctions through artifacts associated with production (sewing needles compared to drafting instruments), leisure (piano keys compared to billiard balls), and grooming (a woman’s brush and mirror handle versus a man’s shaving kit), at the same time as the objects’ limited affordability contributed to class distinctions.

This African-derived raw material similarly played a role in the production of raced bodies. From the turn of the eighteenth century, ivory became a preferred medium for the production of both carved and painted miniature portraiture, the popularity of which contributed to the growing demand for ivory in the nineteenth century (Snodin and Styles 2004, p. 12, Fig. 5).⁵ These miniatures were a new and intimate form of representation, and ivory was valued as an appropriate medium by virtue of its similarity in appearance to marble, its sensual, tactile qualities, and for the ability of watercolorists to paint facial features directly onto the substrate rather than on flesh-colored paint (Avery 1996, pp. 26–27; Victoria & Albert Museum 2009). Ivory portraiture in turn inspired Josiah Wedgwood’s efforts to develop ceramic bicolor cameos (Avery 1996, pp. 27, 87, 96–97). In a period when new bleaching technologies made possible the “whitening” of a wide range of material culture (textiles including table linens, paper, candles) in what Tarlow (2007, pp. 165–171) describes as a cultural finish linked to “Improvement,” the production of elite and gentile portraiture on ivory contributed to the material production of “whiteness”—its “creamy color uncannily resembling pale human skin” (Avery 1996, p. 25).⁶

While this portraiture was initially associated with higher ranking members of the elite, both producers and products became increasingly associated with upwardly mobile merchant families through the course of the eighteenth century. As an example, David Le Marchand, a well-known producer of miniature carved portraits found a patron in the Raper family whose patriarch was a London grocer but whose sons entered the silk trade (Avery 1996, pp. 19–25). By the third generation, male members of the Raper family owned country houses in Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire and several were elected as directors of the Bank of England. The Raper family appears to have commissioned Le Marchand to produce likenesses of both family and notable gentlemen in ivory (Sir Christopher Wren and Sir Isaac Newton). Raper family connections through the Bank of England may have provided Le Marchand with the raw material, as suggested by a letter written to one of Court’s fellow members (Sir Humphry Morice) in April 1716. An agent of Morice, operating on the Guinea Coast at Dickey’s Cove, wrote to report the purchase of 140 slaves and that “I hearing there is so many Dutch interlopers to windward thatt I shall make ye best of my way to windward to purchase whatt slaves, teeth [ivory] or

⁵ For an exploration of how Africans used ivory as a medium to portray Portuguese “otherness” in the era of early Atlantic connections, see Blier (1993).

⁶ It should be evident that the human skin in question was marked both racially and in terms of class. It was neither the skin of “others” or of those exposed to the elements by virtue of their work or life ways.

malbygete, or what I can geet . . .” (Avery 1996, p. 25). Avery (1996, p. 25) observes that “it is likely that such tusks would have stayed on board during the voyage with the slaves to Jamaica and on the return journey, laden with sugar, to Bristol or London, where an owner such as Morice would have had first choice, before selling the remainder of his cargo.”

He opines that the availability of ivory at such favorable prices may have encouraged these businessmen to choose ivory for their portraits.

Ivory consumption increased across Europe and in North America during the nineteenth century. For those of means, the well-appointed Victorian home-boasted ivory busts or statuettes, reproductions of famous statuary produced with a carving machine invented by Benjamin Cheverton (Avery 1996, p. 26; Woodhouse 1976, p. 92). Tools associated with genteel pastimes and occupations were fashioned from ivory (needle working implements, card cases, accouterments associated with letter writing; e.g., Beaudry 2011), as were drafting tools used in the transformative visioning of the world (see Burack 1984, pp. 72, 93–95, 122–125, 130–134, 152–153; Milwaukee Public Museum 2000, p. 39; Woodhouse 1976, pp. 39, 110). Musical ability was a signal criterion of “ornamentation” and cultivation (Wilson 2008, pp. 150–151) and vast quantities of ivory were consumed by the piano factories (Burack 1984, pp. 138–139; Conniff 2012; Malcarne 2001) whose success was bolstered as pianos came to populate the parlors of middling class homes. Increasing volumes of African ivory imports led to the opening of specialized warehouses in the mid-nineteenth century that were dedicated solely to housing the ivory that was being extracted in amounts that proved devastating to Africa’s elephant populations.

Acquired by African hunters, transported by and with slaves to European centers where it was transformed by skilled craftsmen into luxury goods that participated in the “consumer revolution,” ivory’s circulation was thus intimately bound up in body work through which distinctions of race, gender, and gentility were produced. As such, its flows across imperial landscapes *out* of Africa contributed to the Georgian and Victorian ecumene (Breckenridge 1989, p. 196) through which inclusions of “us” and exclusions of “other” were mutually and materially constituted through daily social action.

Cowries

While ivory flowed out of Africa, cowries flowed in. Contemporary marketing efforts conjure cowries as an exotic, quintessentially African commodity (as for example in jewelry sales)⁷, an image that elides the complex history of their circulations and the fact that the “market for cowries was about as close to worldwide as

⁷ See for example websites that emphasize cowries’ African connections: “The mysterious, magical cowry shell necklace or belt will not only add flavor to your outfit, but it will imbue you with some of the magic and beauty that they represent. Think about adding several cowry designs to your African clothing wardrobe today!” (<http://www.yourafricanclothingshopblog.com/348/add-some-cowry-shell-jewelry-to-your-wardrobe/>).

for any other commodity of the sixteenth to eighteenth century” (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, p. 143). Though there are many species of these tropical and subtropical marine gastropods, shells of the species *Cypraea moneta* harvested from the waters around the Maldive Islands operated as a currency that circulated widely over the course of the last millennium in Asia and Africa (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, pp. 12–14; Johnson 1970a, p. 18). By the seventeenth century, *moneta* cowries had become the shell money—and a crucial driver (Guyer 2004, p. 111)—of the slave trade. In the ensuing centuries, European traders imported vast quantities into West Africa. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, historical and ethnographic accounts documented the role that cowries played in West African ritual practice, including state ritual, divination, and across portions of the wooded savanna, as a component of bride wealth transfers (of which more below). Noted only as a dimension of “tradition,” early ethnographers overlooked the irony that a medium central to the predatory practices of Atlantic slavery was also a medium for locally establishing “wealth in people” (Guyer and Eno Belinga 1995)—wives and their children—in the very areas from which slaves were taken. Archaeologists recognized cowries as chronologically significant type fossils (York 1972) because they were rare in contexts before the eighteenth century and circulated widely thereafter. But until recently, links between their expanded circulation and the slave trade received little attention in anthropological and archaeological literature. Today this link raises pressing historical anthropological questions about the processes and practices through which “blood cowries” (Hartman 2007)—a term that conjures their association with predations of the slave-trade era—came to play a central role in establishing the rights for the people within Africa’s “cowrie zone” (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, p. 101; Johnson 1970a, b). How and when did they become incorporated into the processes of filiation in which rights of women, and by extension their children, were established in areas today encompassed by northern Ghana and Nigeria, and with what implications for the reconfiguration of marriage practices in relation to an emerging Atlantic world system?

There is much primary research to be done in exploring the processes through which cowries became a valued social medium within Africa (see Ogundiran 2002; Şaul 2004; Swanepoel this volume; for comparison, see Graeber’s 2001, pp. 117–149) analysis of wampum as a social medium within the Iroquois Confederacy). Here I use their broader circulations as a platform for reflecting on the questions we might pose and the analytical strategies we might embrace to surmount an imbalance fostered by attending to their circulation in Africa alone. Concisely put, if the circulation of cowries raises questions about marital transactions in the cowrie zone of West Africa, why does their circulation—flowing as they did in large quantities through the ports of London and to a lesser degree Liverpool and Bristol (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, p. 91)—not prompt similar questions of their effects on marital transactions in Georgian and Victorian England?⁸

⁸ It is notable, for example, that despite his contextualized comparisons of marriage, bride wealth and dowry practices in Africa and Europe, Goody describes the use of cowries as bride wealth among societies in northern Ghana without referencing the history of their introduction to the continent (e.g., Goody and Tambiah 1973).

Jane Austen (b. 1775, d. 1817) fans are familiar with the extent to which questions of money and matrimony mingled in early eighteenth-century England. Yet in Austen's novels as in many historical accounts, the sources of this wealth—some of it produced directly or indirectly from the circulations of cowries—remain veiled. Living well, seemingly without working, defined gentle status (Heyck 2008, p. 49) or, in the words of novelist Daniel Defoe, gentlemen are “such who live on estates, and without the mechanism of employment” (Defoe, quoted in Heyck 2008, p. 49). Of Austen's novels in which questions of wealth and marriage occupy center stage, only in *Mansfield Park* does the reader glimpse the source of her characters' comfortable lives. The early eighteenth-century gentile household headed by Sir Thomas Bertram, who takes in Lady Bertram's penurious niece (Fanny Price), is sustained by the proceeds from Sir Thomas's West Indian plantation (Austen 2004, pp. 22, 27–28). Though these connections are seldom mentioned in Austen's novels and Jane's own nuclear family was on the shabby end of gentrified circles, she was well acquainted with the role of plantation production and mercantile connections in sustaining her world. Her mother's family belonged to the landed gentry and was of higher social standing than her father's family who had tradesmen roots (Jenkyns 2004, p. 24). Her mother's brother married into a family that owned a Barbados plantation. Her father was for a time a trustee of an Antiguan plantation, and two of Mr. Austen's nephews died in Jamaica (LeFaye 2003, pp. 11, 46–47). Jane was also experientially aware of the social and economic mobility offered by the empire: her father's sister, finding herself impoverished and without a dowry, sailed to India in 1752 to improve her chances of marrying. There she wed an East India Company surgeon and later returned to England (cowries perhaps on board ship as ballast?) where she and her husband planned to live off the interest of their Indian fortune. Living above their means forced the husband back to India, remittances from which, prior to his death, enabled his wife and daughter to live in London's fashionable district. Here “...Betsy [the daughter] could have tuition in music, dancing, French, arithmetic and writing—all very necessary accomplishments for young ladies” (LeFaye 2003, p. 16) who aspired to appear “amiable and accomplished” (Vickery 1998, p. 13) as they approached marriageable age.

As exemplified by Austen's extended family, mercantile wealth accumulated through the Asian and Atlantic trade was implicated, directly or indirectly, in social mobility and the pursuit of gentrified life. Wealth generated from the East and West Indian trade funded construction of palatial mansions in the English countryside, as for example Wanstead House in Essex (Snodin and Styles 2004, p. 1) or Harewood House in Yorkshire (Finch 2008). Successful businessmen in many parts of England invested their capital in country estates as a means of elevating their families to landed gentry, while others married into landed families (Grassby 2001, p. 48, 403–405; Vickery 1998, pp. 22–23, 33–34), as was the case with some of the Austen family's neighbors (Jenkyns 2004, p. 23). Shared interests and kin ties thus connected “comfortably off” landed and mercantile elites (Vickery 1998, p. 32, 36). Fathers of the period were concerned to “place sons in promising careers and marriages and to find husbands and dowries for [their] daughters” (Grassby 2001,

p. 341). Cowries, operating as a nonconvertible currency in the West Africa slave trade, might on the surface seem to have had little to do with marriage brokering in Austen's England, yet by following their flows from the Indian Ocean islands where they were harvested to the English port cities where they were warehoused before being shipped by the barrel full to West Africa, the relevance of their circulation comes more fully into view.

The "money cowries" (*Cypraea moneta*) that Europeans used to purchase slaves and later palm oil in West Africa derived almost exclusively from lagoons around the Maldive Islands. Though *C. moneta* can be found elsewhere, the shells harvested from the Maldives were preferred for their small size, yielding as they did more shells per unit weight, an advantage when it came to shipping (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, p. 9). Europeans did not introduce cowries to West Africa; they circulated in the Mali empire by the fourteenth century (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, p. 18), probably entering West Africa via eastern Mediterranean networks. But the Portuguese and later the Dutch and English became major suppliers of *moneta* cowries to West African ports from the sixteenth century. Cowries were harvested and processed by Maldive Islanders who transported them to Ceylon or Bengal where they were exchanged for rice. They proved attractive for Europeans in no small part because they served as both a commodity and ballast that could withstand exposure to bilge water (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986, pp. 87–89), though not quite as the "bubble wrap" or "packing peanuts" to which they have recently been compared (Conrad 2005, p. 25; Monticello 2010). From ports in Bengal and Ceylon, the British and Dutch East Indies companies shipped cowries 15,000 miles—bypassing the West Africa coast because of prevailing winds and current—to warehouses in London and Amsterdam where they were purchased by merchants from across Europe who in turn shipped them by the barrel full to West Africa to purchase slaves and, after abolition, palm oil. Thus, a shell game of sorts was performed—treated as a commodity and auctioned as a good in Europe; they were transformed into a nonconvertible currency in the West African trade (Guyer 2004, p. 15; cf. wampum in northeastern North America, Graeber 2001, pp. 117–149). West Africans, with few exceptions, could not use cowries to purchase imported goods.

Of all the imported goods that entered West Africa in the Atlantic period, cowries had what Hogendorn and Johnson (1986, p. 2) described as "the most universal effect, over the widest geographical area, on the common people of West Africa" because of their use as a currency for purchasing food and sundries in local markets (Hawkins 2002, pp. 208–224; Şaul 2004; Yiridoe 1995; see also Swanepoel, this volume). Astonishing quantities (tens of millions) of cowries were imported between 1600 and 1900, where they were recontextualized in West Africa's "cowrie zone" as currency, powerful ritual metaphor (Ogundiran 2002; Şaul 2004), and medium for marital transactions (Goody 1969; Goody and Tambiah 1973, pp. 3; Hill 1970, pp. 139–145; Lentz 2006, pp. 132–133; Smith 1954, pp. 95, 118). In some areas, they played a role in funerary ritual (Yiridoe 1995, pp. 19–20, 22) and were used to ransom enslaved relatives into the twentieth century (Smith 1954, pp. 69–70, 72–73). Their role in marital transactions and ransoming kin suggests a dyna-

mism of practice that is elided when African systems of affinity and consanguinity are bracketed as a domain of “traditional” practice (Radcliffe-Brown and Forde 1956; cf. Ekeh 1990). The process through which cowries became incorporated into ritual practices associated with life stage transitions is a process about which we should want to know more. But we should also want to know more about the processes through which marriage transactions and the materiality of metropolitan domestic life was reconfigured by these same networks and circulations.

As in West Africa, marriage transactions in Georgian England were about negotiating rights in people and, through them, property (Grassby 2001, pp. 75–76, 341–352) albeit in distinctive ways (Goody 2000, pp. 86–87; Goody and Tambiah 1973, pp. 17–32). Marriage was thus “a thing of the utmost consequence” (Vickery 1998, p. 39). Based on a study of data relating to 28,000 London businessmen in the period 1580–1740 (an estimated half of the total business population), Grassby (2001) argues the importance of extended kin networks—including those established through marriage—in accessing capital and forging business connections, and on this basis questions the emphasis placed on the nuclear family as the unit of prime importance in Georgian England. Though historians have debated the extent to which Georgian marriage and kinship practice diverged from those of Stuart and earlier England, evidence suggests that, as in West Africa, the transactions that constituted marriage were reconfigured through the period. Grassby (2001, p. 388) stressed that “family” in the period was “not a rigid structure but a process,” and that the “style and structure that contemporaries regarded as traditional had in fact been created in the not so distant past.” Dowries or “portions” were a source of considerable anxiety for families with daughters (Grassby 2001, pp. 70–75, 373–382) and there was a shift through the seventeenth century away from transferring household items as marriage goods (e.g., featherbeds, pillows, bed linens, table, and cooking ware) to payment of cash dowries (Peters 2000, pp. 89–90). These were subject to intense negotiation between the families (e.g., Vickery 1998, pp. 45–58) and were an important site through which the upward mobility of sons and daughters was negotiated (Grassby 2001, pp. 74, 374, 379–382; also Goody 2000, pp. 87–88). Breeding, pedigree, and gentility were key factors that could tip the scales of negotiation.

Viewing England in an African mirror, we might draw a parallel to the challenges of mounting and the anxiety surrounding bride wealth in some West African societies, though in this case wealth moved from the prospective husband’s to the prospective wife’s family. Drawing a parallel reduces the seeming difference between these practices—West African bride wealth paid in cowries and English dower paid in cash—de-exoticizing African marriage practices at the same time as perhaps exoticizing English ones (e.g., Goody and Tambiah 1973). But deeper insight is opened by considering these seemingly unrelated practices through the lens of *a circulation that contributed to both*. Though not all English merchants, landed gentry, or businessmen dealt directly with the cowrie trade, this trade was deeply insinuated in England’s South Asian and African trade and generated wealth—directly or indirectly—for England’s privileged social classes, a portion of

which would have found its way into women's dowries or portions. Though cowries come into view in the literature primarily through the particularized, "exotic" practices of West African peoples, they exercised a phantom presence in the profits accrued through them, which in turn circulated in aid of cementing family alliances, fostering social mobility, and underwriting acquisition of possessions that had "a genteel effect" (Vickery 1998, p. 13). Arguably we are confronted—metaphorically and materially—with a shell game writ large. Our careful and detailed attention to the recontextualization of cowries in Africa provides an important but partial view and one that, if not connected to broader circulations, allows the cowries that played so crucial a role in generating the living of Jane Austen's characters to disappear beneath the distinctive, particularized surfaces of African consumption. In other words, attending to how circulating objects were recontextualized in local contexts (e.g., Turgeon 2004)—important as that analytical move is in underscoring that localities deemed "peripheral" in world system's parlance had their own agendas—takes us only part of the way. What it fails to bring into view are (1) similar processes of recontextualization in the erstwhile "core" (see Thomas 1991); but perhaps more importantly (2) the relational processes through which these localities—colonial and metropolitan—and the distinctions of class, gender, and race shaped by them were produced through circulations of objects and people in and out of Africa. As such, systematic material histories of these circulations (Stahl 2010) promise to further our understanding of the relational production of metropolises and colonies. Following circulations, as Mintz (1985) did sugar (see also Stein 2008), illuminates the ramifying connections produced through flows of objects that are masked by the tendency to see specific objects as quintessentially bound up in the histories of particular localities.

Concluding Thoughts

Shelved in different library stacks, Jane Austen's novels centered on the matrimonial dilemmas of the English gentry seem a world away from the biography of Baba of Karo, the Hausa woman who recounted to Mary Smith (Smith 1954), stories of her multiple marriages, and the transactions in cowries that secured them. A century separates those works, but more fundamentally they are separated by the disciplinary silos (literature, anthropology) and historical conventions that treat Europe's and Africa's pasts as separate and separable. Important as work in economic history has been in drawing attention to connections established through the triangular trade, Africa comes into view primarily as a source of enslaved labor and a market for European manufactures. Historical anthropologists and archaeologists are contributing to our understanding of how local African worlds were remade through global entanglements, but the anthropological propensity to focus research on colonial localities replicates an earlier anthropological gaze—outward and downward—diverting attention from how "local" contexts outside Africa were

just as profoundly shaped by these same entanglements. Although we have much to learn from empirically rich, contextual studies of colonialism in Africa, we should pause to consider how our earnest and well-intentioned efforts to investigate the distinctive character of African materiality can inadvertently reinforce a view of Africa as a place apart (Austin 2007; Stahl 2004; Vaughan 2006). With some notable exceptions that prove the rule (e.g., Mintz 1985; Prestholdt 2008; Stein 2008), our understanding of the materiality of colonial processes is lopsided—our increasingly robust understanding of the materiality of colonial processes in the colonies is not balanced by an equally robust appreciation of metropolitan materialities, despite the fact that they were similarly conditioned by imperial circulations (cf. Johnson 1999, 2006). In other words, whereas we have become adept at thinking about connections between “local” practices and larger-scale systems, our analytical focus on colonized localities is not balanced by a similar focus on metropolitan localities. Though the analysis offered here is partial and preliminary, it suggests that deeper understanding of the relational production of colonies and metropole is facilitated by following material circulations aimed at understanding, for example, how the ivory that flowed from Baba of Karo’s grandparents’ environs contributed to the body work of gentrification and racialization in Jane Austen’s England, or how the cowries shipped in the bowels of English bottoms that transported upwardly mobile Englishmen home from India generated wealth for English merchants who—hand quicker than the eye—transformed cowries into dowries with little trace of the gastropod’s passage through England.

There is much work to be done. First and perhaps foremost, we require empirically rich studies—archaeological variants of what Geschiere (2001, pp. 34–36) terms an “extended case method.” Illuminating the material practices of daily life (of food ways, dwelling, dress, production, and consumption) in temporally seriated contexts across the “contact/precontact” or “historic/prehistoric” divides in multiple locations is a first step in investigating the material negotiations of colonization (Lightfoot 1995; Silliman 2005, 2012; Stahl 2001, 2009, 2012). These studies are enriched by attending to the complicity of objects in social life (Wilson 2008) and social action as a creative nexus (Graeber 2005; Joyce and Lopiparo 2005; Mills and Walker 2008; Munn 1986). However, stand-alone culturally specific histories are insufficient for apprehending the saliency of global connections (Chakrabarty 2000, p. 43; Tsing 2005, pp. 1–5). Rather, we need to enhance our “extended case studies” with genealogical and biographical perspectives that follow circulations—of people and objects—if we are to appreciate how colonies and metropolises were relationally produced through practices of production, consumption, and governmentality. To achieve this requires that we overcome disciplinary, geographic, and archival “grooves” (Stoler 2001, p. 862), and instead develop coordinated research efforts to better apprehend how life worlds—past and present—were mutually re-configured through global entanglements. Apprehending their mutual constitution may be enhanced by an analytical strategy of “reciprocal comparisons” that explore how findings from “non-western” histories might illuminate “western” histories (Austin 2007, pp. 3, 18). But these comparisons are enriched by material histories of circulations that belie a “denial of coevalness” (Fabian 1983, p. 31)—that obdu-

rate fiction that Africa remains, or remained until recently, aside or apart from the “modern world” (Achebe 1978; Vaughan 2006; see also Mitchell 2005). Such histories are required to challenge “completely internalist histories of Europe in which Europe was described as the site of the first occurrence of capitalism, modernity, or Enlightenment” (Chakrabarty 2000, p. 7). Material histories of global entanglements instead provide a platform for appreciating the profoundly reciprocal, enmeshed, and mutually entangled quality of our life worlds that appear separate for their distinctive qualities.

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Part II
Mediations: Things, Texts, Oral Traditions

Chapter 4

Historical Archaeology, Language, and Storytelling at the Cape of Good Hope and Elsewhere

Yvonne Brink

Background Story

In late December 1651, a fleet of five ships of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) under the command of Jan Van Riebeeck left the harbor of Texel on its way to the Cape of Good Hope. The aim was to establish a halfway station for shipping to and from the East. Van Riebeeck's tasks included the erection of a fort, the building of a hospital for the recovery of those suffering from the hazards of the high seas, the establishing of a garden to supply visiting ships with fresh fruit and vegetables, and the establishing of trading relations with local herders to ensure a plentiful supply of meat. His instructions also included the keeping of a journal in which "everything that happened there" had to be recorded everyday (Thom 1952, p. xxvi). Not only have these journals (many of which are still in existence) been a boon to historical archaeologists and others interested in Cape colonial material culture and history but they also emphasize the crucial role that language played in VOC administration of its colonies. The VOC governed by the word, relegating to itself a monopoly over this resource for fashioning and maintaining hierarchies, structuring identities, and generally keeping control. Writing that was not official was forbidden. Punishment for infringement was severe. The two most extreme examples of what happened to people who dared to write are probably Estienne Barbier and Adam Tas.

Barbier was a renegade who took the risk of writing down his grievances about VOC governance at the Cape and nailing them to the church door at Drakenstein, the very space the government used for its own communications. Penn (1988, p. 1) has described Barbier's gruesome end, "He was barbarously executed. His right hand [his writing hand!] and his head were cut off, his body was quartered and the sections displayed, impaled, next to the busiest roads of the colony."

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Adam Tas was the protagonist in a surreptitious movement by local farmers to oust a corrupt governor, Willem Adrian Van der Stel, who had been exploiting both the farmers and the company ever since his appointment. This part of Cape colonial history has been dealt with by Boeseken (1964) and Jansen van Vuuren (1973). Tas, unlike the majority of the free burghers (as the local farmers were called), was fully literate and an able writer. He acted as secretary during meetings held with fear and in secrecy, and kept a diary for recording complaints against the governor. Tas was betrayed, and when the governor heard what he had done, his desk with all his documents was confiscated and Tas spent more than 13 months incarcerated under appalling conditions in the dungeons of the castle. Tas could not be forgiven for daring to write.

On the other hand, the VOC insisted that everything concerning its own affairs be written down and the thousands of extant documents have helped scholars gain an understanding of what everyday life was like for ordinary people at the Cape under VOC rule. It was precisely because the control of language was so important to the VOC that I began to focus on issues of language and look critically at the way documents have been, and in many cases continue to be, used by historical archaeologists. During the 1980s and 1990s, the subdiscipline was seen as “text-aided” (Little 1992), while many considered it to be nothing more than a “handmaiden to history.” According to Mayne and Murray (2001), many historians still believe that historical archaeologists merely confirm what historians have already disclosed. Even though today, both in Australia and South Africa, there is frequently close cooperation between historians and archaeologists, there remain those archaeologists who think that our aim should be to lend substance to documentation, while our main goal remains the artifacts. Well, yes, but are these written documents not artifacts in themselves and therefore worthy of as much analytical attention as potsherds and other remains? As my research continued, I began more and more to shift my focus onto language issues. Literary theory became a major part of my reading program along with hermeneutics and interpretation theory, and I learned from it as much about the interpretation of material culture as I did about the interpretation of writing.

I realized that because the VOC insisted on official (and only official) writing, almost making a fetish of it and not allowing a printing press to be installed until close to the end of its reign, it was essential that historical archaeologists become closely involved with the documents. To become closely involved means, first, becoming aware that all writing, no matter how thickly a veneer of officialdom has been applied, tends to be disorderly and full of pitfalls. Hall (1991a) has shown how deceptive VOC representation of order in maps of Cape Town can be. Frequently, they were “sanitized” by simple omission of the sleazy areas where the underclass lived and operated, “marginal areas at the limits of control” (Hall 1991a, p. 52). Literary theory convinced me that any form of writing, too, is deceptive and susceptible to more than one interpretation. Too often it is assumed that historical documents are uncomplicated and unquestionably true and clear reflections of reality so that there is no real need for interpretation. However, if we have to reap the benefits of documentary information, we need to become intensely involved with the complexities

of all textual material. Furthermore, we must set aside the notion that the relation between texts and data is bipartite and hierarchical, in other words, that careful analysis of documentary evidence is subordinate to (other) material remains.

How, then, should archaeologists tell the story of this Dutch colony at the Cape with, on the one hand, its still so prominent Cape Dutch mansions visible on the landscape and, on the other hand, its carefully secluded written artifacts? Does the architecture tell the same story as the one we gather from the documents? Or are there two different stories? If so, how are they connected? Before discussing these questions, I want to show how telling this story is linked with more general issues of language and storytelling, as historical archaeology continues to develop.

A Story of Language and Archaeology

I cannot help feeling that it was structuralism that first made archaeologists aware of the affinity between language and archaeology, especially once many archaeologists had shown it to be a viable tool for material culture analysis. Although developed by linguists for understanding how linguistic systems work, the method was later tested by anthropologists for its analytical possibilities in other coded systems. Archaeologists soon began taking up the challenge, producing structural analyses of almost everything, from ceramic styles, housing patterns, and site structure to prehistoric rock art. Largely through the seminal work of James Deetz (1977), it found its way into historical archaeology.

Inevitably, there were those who were skeptical about the method from the start and this led to more critical questions being asked about the suitability of structuralism, for example, what exactly could structural analysis explain? The conclusion reached was that, although useful in some ways, structuralist approaches do not really *explain* anything. One of the main structuralist principles adopted by archaeologists is the notion that communities tend to order their world through sets of oppositions which have their origin in shared mental templates. This results in recognizable patterning in the material objects that people leave behind. Changes in patterning frequently indicate cultural change. However, as Hall (2000, p. 44) points out, “structuralism fails because it is unable to explain change—and therefore history—within its own set of theoretical propositions.” This means that “a structuralist world is a world without history,” which is clearly not very satisfactory for archaeologists, especially historical archaeologists.

With the development of post-processual archaeology and a growing interest in social archaeology came a deepening awareness of the importance of language for interpreting material culture. While not discarding structuralism altogether, it became clear that a change in mindset regarding the connections between language and material things was necessary. Structuralism was designed to study *langue*, that is, language as objective, coded system. But what is of interest to archaeologists is, rather, *parole*, language in use, which is language as it is used by people in the process of living their everyday lives. Tilley was probably a pioneer in beginning

to feel uncomfortable with the strict rules of structuralism and was involved in the shift away from *langue* toward *parole*. He found thinking of material culture as a semiotic system like *langue* constraining in that it involves transformation into linguistic concepts, and “however much we might try to escape from language, we are trapped in its prison house” (Tilley 1989, p. 192). This led him to consider adopting the text metaphor for understanding material culture: “The general position being taken in this chapter suggests that material culture can be regarded as providing a multidimensional text . . .” (Tilley 1989, p. 193).

During the 1980s and 1990s, many archaeologists with a leaning toward post-processualism experimented with this approach and it led to a number of very interesting studies (e.g., Hall 1991b). It was also the approach I used for my doctoral project (Brink 1992) and it worked rather well. But, as with structuralism, researchers became aware that the text metaphor, too, has its shortcomings. In a sense, it is reductionist, as everything is reduced to the same. I began to seriously rethink the issue when John Parkington pointed out to me in a personal comment that “if everything is text, then nothing is not-text.” Direct application of the metaphor petered out as scholars identified problems and groped toward finding solutions.

Hall (1999) began to feel that simply likening material culture to some form of written or spoken “text” amounts to an oversimplification of the really very complex relationship between word and thing. Nevertheless, for me there can be no denying that material culture does indeed possess certain textlike qualities just as, in a sense, texts *are* material culture. Equally, I have come to realize that in some ways material culture is not text, and vice versa. The result is that I, too, found myself grappling with the word/thing relationship.

As a way of dealing with the problem, Hall adopts Bhabha’s concept of “the third space” which he sees as the space of uncertainty and ambiguity between word and thing (Hall 2000, p. 16). For Hall, the task of archaeologists (in which they have thus far failed) is “to marry words and things” (Hall 2000, p. 16). He points out that other archaeologists have also concerned themselves with the issue. Thomas, for instance, speaks of ongoing “play” between language and observation in our efforts to discover “the meaning of things” which, for him, is the defining purpose of archaeology (quoted by Hall 2000, p. 2).

Like Hall, I turned to literary theory for enlightenment on the word/thing, or word/world relationship, and discovered the absorbing work of Valentine Cunningham (1994). For me, it is Cunningham who brilliantly exposes the way word and world constantly both attract and repel one another—not at all unlike Thomas’s concept of “constant play between language and observation.” In this way, temporality is introduced into the relationship. Although Cunningham’s concern is literature, it is the connection of the written, the literary, to the material or “world,” on which he focuses and this is what makes him so valuable a critic for archaeologists—as I have set out more fully elsewhere (Brink 2008). In a remarkable feat of deconstruction, Cunningham overturns notions of the world being structured through language by demonstrating how dependent the writing in works of the literary canon (by Dickens, Hardy, Conrad, Woolf, and others) is on the material world. As a literary critic, Cunningham sees it as his task to foreground this solid material, but often ignored

the base of writing. As archaeologists, we can benefit from his work by turning it around and approaching it, as it were, from the opposite end because what *we* need to come to terms with is the linguistic/literary base of the solid material world. The relationship which Cunningham (1994, p. 11) cleverly condenses to “wor(l)d” remains the same.

For Cunningham, “it is necessary and important to engage with the way the world is written, with the perpetual being-writtenness of reality, but it should never be forgotten that there is raw material there, present in and through and also behind the textual material” (Cunningham 1994, p. 47). And what archaeologists should never forget as we examine a world constantly in the process of being shaped and reshaped is that there is textual material there, present in and through and also behind the raw material we study. For Cunningham, the splitting of wor(l)d into word and world is an almost simultaneous coming together, and this is an ongoing process: there is always “simultaneous connection and difference between text and context, literature and history, words and things” (Cunningham 1994, p. 1).

In an equally seminal work, Van Heerden, too, is aware of this temporal process and explains it through the metaphor of the palimpsest. While acknowledging the existence of a kind of “third space:” “*die onsekere niemandsland tussen woord en wêreld*” [the uncertain no man’s land between word and thing] (Van Heerden 1997, p. 82, 180), it is a space where one thing is always over/under and at the same time also under/over another. Word and thing are not trapped in a static, hierarchical opposition. Instead, they flicker back and forth constantly between half-presence and half-absence (Van Heerden 1997, p. 97). There is thus constant movement, joining, and splitting apart, from over to under and back, in short sharp bursts or flashes. Perhaps the best summing up of the ongoing activity between word and thing comes from Ackroyd (1999, p. 319), who speaks of “the energetic interplay between opposites.”

For me, awareness of the intricacies and the importance of an understanding of the word/world relationship in our discipline is one of the most exciting things that has happened in a while. It has opened the door for experimentation, for creativity, for new ways of writing archaeology, and writing about archaeology. That it can stretch our creativity almost to the utmost is evident in Joyce’s superb work on the languages of archaeology (Joyce 2000). Above all, I believe, as I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere (Brink 2008), that a better grasp of the world/world relationship leads to better ways of understanding the care and attention involved in the ways people made and used things in the past, as well as the reflexive role the material things had on the identity of their makers and users (see also Crossland, Kus and Raharijaona, this volume).

A Story of Storytelling in Archaeology

A rethink of the usefulness of structuralism led to a preference for the material culture-as-text approach, the questioning of which, in turn, has led to intense examination of the relationship between word and thing. This does not mean that older

approaches are completely abandoned. Writing on a very different topic, the new discoveries in a field known as epigenetics, Frank Ryan (2009) makes a point that is relevant to research in general and which can be summarized as follows: it is not that we contradict the work and achievements of the past, but rather that we build on their discoveries to broaden our understanding of the issues with which we have to deal. This certainly holds true for archaeology. Structuralism, the text metaphor, and analysis of the word/world relationship are all of great value to archaeological research. And yet we, like others in other fields, move on, always searching for new, and hopefully better, ways of reaching our goals. In 1993, Ingold was comfortable in saying “for both the archaeologist and the native dweller the landscape tells—or rather is—a story” (Ingold 1993, p. 152). What is Ingold saying if not that the landscape is a text? A recent shift has been from focusing only on the story the (cultural) landscape tells, to including in the notion of storytelling the stories archaeologists themselves tell about the past and its people.

Was it James Deetz who, way back in the 1970s, first became aware that what archaeologists do is tell stories about the past? If, indeed, Deetz had already realized so early on that this is what we do, he had not changed his mind by the late 1990s when, in a volume of the journal *Historical Archaeology* devoted to storytelling in archaeology, he had this to say in the summarizing “Discussion:” “Simply put, archaeologists are storytellers. It is our responsibility to communicate to as wide an audience as possible the results and significance of our findings” (Deetz 1998, p. 94). So writing archaeology becomes coupled with civic responsibility toward a wider public whose taxes, after all, partially fund our research.

The notion of storytelling has had an impact on a number of post-processual archaeologists engaged in experimental work. Notable among them are Rosemary Joyce (2000) and Rebecca Yamin (2001). In what is for me a quite remarkable work, Joyce begins a chapter titled “Voices Carry Outside the Discipline” (Joyce 2000, pp. 100–132) with a section titled “Writing Sister Stories” (Joyce 2000, pp. 100–113), following it up with a section “Reading Sister Stories” (Joyce 2000, pp. 113–117). By using her “archaeological imagination” (Thomas 1996), she represents poems about women, assembled in his *Florentine Codex*, by a sixteenth-century Franciscan friar who worked among Nahuatl-speaking people in Mexico (Joyce 2000).

For Joyce, archaeologists are aware “that the material of past human experience was already endowed with meaning by others” and she feels that archaeologists ought increasingly to become involved with this intersubjectivity and engage in “the renegotiation of meaning” (Joyce 2000, p. 101). According to Joyce, it is the inherent intersubjectivity that precludes any archaeological narrative from ever being presented as closed. Denying that this is a claim for complete relativism, she sees “the openness of narrative as something to be celebrated, not something to be feared” (Joyce 2000, p. 101). It was, then, to examine “the negotiation of meaning in which archaeology must increasingly engage” that she, along with two collaborators who are both writers and theorists of hypertext fiction, created her hypertext narrative titled “Sister Stories” (Joyce 2000, p. 101).

There might be those who will consider this work to be daringly experimental and controversial, but we must remember that we have already had similar imaginative work, for example, by Spector (1991), Tringham (1991), and Yamin (2001), to mention but a few, and for Joyce, controversial or not, “it is simply what archaeologists very often have to do” (Joyce 2000, p. 101). Nevertheless, there were, and still are, many who disagree that the notion of storytelling, which they see as an impermissible postmodern intrusion into scientific archaeological investigation, is a legitimate way of doing archaeology. Some might even feel there is something scandalous about admitting that we tell stories in archaeology. We recall Bintliff (1991) arguing vigorously with Thomas and Tilley (1992) during and after the TAG conference of 1991. Referring to “this rampant monster of Post-Processualism” (Bintliff 1991, p. 278), he reminded archaeologists that “beyond ‘entertaining’ and ‘giving the public its money’s worth’ professional archaeologists have a more fundamental duty: to uncover the evidence of ‘what actually happened’” (Bintliff 1991, p. 276).

However, in spite of continuing opposition, it seems to me that more and more scientists in a variety of fields are becoming aware of the degree to which storytelling is also a part of their business, and it might come as some small comfort to those who dislike the idea to know that storytelling is neither unique to nor new in archaeology. Evolutionary scientists do it, a prime example being Richard Dawkins who, in telling the story of human evolution, unashamedly links his seminal biological work with the Medieval *Canterbury Tales* of Chaucer. Subtling his book *A Pilgrimage to the Dawn of Life*, Dawkins says: “it seemed increasingly natural to think of Chaucer throughout this book” (Dawkins 2005, p. 10). Although there are vast differences between Dawkins’s “pilgrims,” who are “all the different species of living creature” and Chaucer’s, they, like Chaucer, “will have the opportunity to tell tales along the way to their Canterbury which is the origin of life.” It is, then, “these, *tales* that form the main substance of the book” (Dawkins 2005, p. 10, emphasis added).

Theoretical physicists do it, for example Lisa Randall (2005), who, according to her publishers, is a world leader in the field. Randall does her best to explain to a more general readership the intricacies of her work, *Warped Passages: Unravelling the Universe’s Hidden Dimensions*. This is deep quantum mechanics and to make it a bit less hard to understand Randall adds her own dimension to her writing by introducing fictional characters who, while engaging in their personal interests and discussions, are nevertheless involved with the mysteries of the universe that Randall does her best to describe.

Astronomers seem to tell stories all the time, as witness an example I have used elsewhere (Brink 2008), and will briefly repeat here. Like archaeologists and other scientists, they too want their research to reach and be of interest to the wider public. The example I used was written by a journalist, Michael Ritter (2005), and published in a local newspaper. The headline reads: “American astronomers weave cosmic tale that could explain planets’ Behavior.” Based on scientific evidence, these researchers told a *story* about what their findings *could possibly* (but did not necessarily *actually*) mean. One delighted participant was happy to announce: “We got so many of the answers right.” I found myself rejoicing with this person, even

though “so many” does not mean “all.” I realized that, if we needed vindication for storytelling in archaeology, it was right here in a newspaper article about the science of astronomy. Ritter remarked that when asked to comment, a professor of planetary sciences “called the work very interesting and provocative, but said that it was probably not the last word on the subject” (quotations from Ritter 2005, p. 6, emphasis added). One thing we can be sure of is that the professor’s comment is profoundly true: like a myth, a story is never finally told. There is always more to be said. Nevertheless, the story can be seen as a contribution to a conversation which ought to continue.

Perhaps the most extreme statement that storytelling plays a major role in the accumulation of all scientific knowledge comes from Jack Cohen and Ian Stewart, who have this to say of scientific work: “Our prized laws of nature are not ultimate truths, just rather well-constructed Sherlock Holmes stories. But these stories have been scrubbed and polished over the centuries until they capture very significant features of the way the universe works. That’s what laws of nature are” (Cohen and Stewart 1995, p. 435). These authors are eminent scholars in their respective fields of biology and mathematics. Interestingly, the publishers tell us that in 1995 Stewart was awarded the Michael Faraday Medal by the Royal Society for the year’s most significant contribution to the public understanding of science. To me, all of this signifies an intense desire on the part of top scientists that their work be understood by people of normal intelligence outside of their own disciplines.

Archaeology is perhaps the discipline in which the divide between the so-called “natural” sciences and the “social” sciences is the most blurred. And the blurring is probably most obvious in historical archaeology. It is therefore important that we realize that historians have long been aware of the affinity between historical knowledge and narrative. Hunt has the following view of history: “History is a process of telling stories about the consequences of actions in the world” and actions “have a before and an after and therefore an inherent narrative structure” (Hunt 1991, p. 103). If we think carefully about this statement, we begin to realize that not only is storytelling permissible in archaeology but also it is inevitable. When are archaeologists not concerned with the before and the after of human actions evident in the traces they have left behind? As a way of dealing with this question, I want to discuss a few examples of storytelling which will at the same time show that, just as this is not a phenomenon unique to archaeology, it is also not new in archaeology. All the stories are about the consequences of actions in the world.

While Deetz was tentatively, but openly, suggesting that this is what we do in archaeology, by the 1980s other archaeologists were giving storytelling twists to their work, either without actually realizing that this is what they were doing—or, maybe, doing it somewhat surreptitiously. Johanson and Edey’s (1982) fascinating book about the discovery of Lucy is full of storytelling elements. The first example I want to discuss in more detail dates back to the same period, appearing in Leakey’s *The Making of Mankind* (1981).

Leakey describes a prehistoric landscape at Laetoli in East Africa on which a variety of animals, ranging from guinea fowl and spring hares to hyenas and a sabre-toothed tiger, left their tracks. Three hominids also made their marks: “A large

individual, probably a male, walked slowly towards the north. Following behind, then or a little later, was a smaller individual who for some reason placed his or her feet in the prints of the first individual. A youngster skipped along by their side, turning at one point to look to its left” (Leakey 1981, p. 40).

This is hardly an extract from the average modern site report of which Hodder (1992, p. 268) has complained that the writing has become “more distant, abstract, decontextualized.” Rather, it is a narrative composed by a renowned archaeologist who saw the site as an area to be excavated, measured, and described in detail, but who also chose to look differently and realized that the evidence offered possibilities as the end of a story in need of telling. Boldly told, the narrative allows readers to experience something of the atmosphere of the very early times his writing is about. We are offered tantalizingly small samples of the “feel” and the “flavor” (Johanson and Eady 1982) of what life might have been like once upon a time.

The external evidence at Laetoli suggests the activity of hominids, creatures with brains so far removed as far as structure is concerned from that of modern people that human behavior cannot be ascribed to them. Leakey’s story begins objectively enough with the recording of a mere physical event, the leaving of footprints in a suitably soft surface. For Gell, mere physical events are those which can be explained by “physical laws which ultimately govern the universe as a whole” (Gell 1998, p. 16). The Laetoli event has proved to be useful for archaeologists because the bone structure of the feet and what they tell us about bipedalism can be analyzed. There is nothing thus far that is untoward or disturbing—not, that is, until we are told that the second, smaller individual deliberately placed its feet in the prints of the larger one. This is indeed disturbing because it is an intensely *human* thing to do and hominids cannot be classified as human. But what animal would ever carefully tread in the tracks of another? Yet here this smaller adult hominid deliberately altered its normal gait by lengthening its strides to fit those of its larger companion. Engagement with this text immediately brings questions: Did this creature invent something new right there? Or had it (she?) done it before? Was it an individual preference, maybe a freakish habit of this particular hominid? We, the readers, cannot help beginning to think of these hominids in human terms. And neither, it seems, can Leakey, the author.

Interestingly, it is immediately after mentioning this remarkable behavior that Leakey changes his tack. The adults are no longer loners. They walk together, for “a youngster skipped along by *their* side.” They have become a family group: father, mother, and skipping child. Skipping? Although they might gambol and play, animals do not skip. We begin to wonder whether it is possible that hominids could have been more human than has generally been thought, because Leakey’s narrative shifts the attention of the reader away from bone structure and bipedalism toward “social” behavior, including the question of human awareness—the awareness of one being for itself, for another being, and for its world. The problem of interpreting these prehistoric traces becomes ours as well as Leakey’s. As we read and retell, we are creatively rather than merely passively involved with this text. One hominid places its feet in the tracks of another and a little one skips along. Seeing the behavior in this way introduces an element of playfulness, luring the narrator on to think

beyond objectivity. Emotions come into play, trapping the scientific observer, preying on the imagination of the narrator, who begins to think beyond the mere physical presence of tracks to the presence of ... what? The unthinkable? What business do early hominids have behaving like humans? They *cannot* be human because that is what anthropologists say. Yet there are those who would channel our thoughts differently. According to Gell, unlike the mere leaving of tracks in damp soil, this playful behavior can be seen as “an act of mind or will or intention,” caused by the being itself, not by the physical laws of the cosmos. And for Gell, “prior intention implies the attribution to the agent of a mind akin to a human one, if not identical” (Gell 1998, pp. 16–17).

Thomas (1996), too, has radical views on what it means to be human. For him, human being is a quite different kind of being from animal behavior. For Thomas, the most important feature of a human body is its ability to undergo “lived experience in which beings experience other beings and in the process interpret both themselves and others.” In the full sense, there is no “world” and no “other beings” for animals. Perhaps—just perhaps—it is time to realize along with Thomas that “we may eventually have to accept that some species other than *Homo sapiens sapiens* are human in the sense of being engaged in a meaningful world” (Thomas 1996, pp. 17–18).

We might undoubtedly study an objective description with great interest, but we become involved with this text in a different way. We bring our own ideas and feelings as well as our knowledge to it so that we make the same kind of moves in the narrative as the author. The site from the distant past becomes part of our world because the interpreter of ancient traces has refused to write only as he is told by the archaeological establishment and institutions. So it is with a rather warm feeling of connectedness that Leakey’s text leaves us. What starts out as objective description of mere physical tracks ends up with suggestions of a family group making its way in its long-ago world in a way which makes “them” seem not all that different from “us.” Who dare suggest to Leakey that, as an archaeologist, this is not the way he ought to have been writing?

Not surprisingly, Dawkins, too, is gripped by this story. He speaks of “the poignantly evocative set of footprints discovered by Mary Leakey.” And further: “They are usually attributed to a pair of *Australopithecus afarensis* walking together (hand in hand?) ...” (Dawkins 2009, p. 189). It is his bracketed question that intrigues me most as he, too, is touched by the apparent very humanlike “bond” between the two creatures of 3.6 million years ago.

There are many similar narratives to be found in archaeology—to the delight of some and, perhaps, the irritation of others. Moving on a few million years in time, we find two equally renowned archaeologists telling different stories about the Neolithic in Europe. Archaeologists are still in many ways puzzled by this global phenomenon, for example, the question of why people abandoned a nomadic way of life in favor of farming and sedentism. Why were people at some or other stage, the world over, prepared to accept the constraints and discipline involved in agriculture and a settled existence? Ian Hodder argues that people themselves had to become domesticated for this to happen and they achieved domestication of themselves

by “creating a sense of home” (Hodder 1992, p. 251). Falling back on structuralist principles—rather strangely for a self-proclaimed post-processualist—it is Hodder’s contention that Neolithic people endeavored to transform their world by distinguishing themselves and their homes (the *domus*) more and more vigorously from surrounding wild nature (the *agrios*). It is primarily through their dwellings, settlement patterns, and a whole new repertoire of smaller objects that they succeeded in domesticating themselves along with plants and animals. He thus imagines the domestication of Europe in terms of an increasing separation between the *agrios*, into which men ventured to confront its dangers and plunder its resources, and the shelter of the *domus*, hearth and home, the domain of women where nature was serenely transformed into culture.

It is interesting to contrast Hodder’s (1992) view of the Neolithic with that of Julian Thomas who, instead of separation from the natural world, sees developments in the Neolithic in terms of connection. Thomas argues that Neolithic material culture did not consist of materials simply extracted from the material world, reworked and set against it, but rather that “in engaging with materials in certain ways people were drawn into a connectedness with their world” (Thomas 1996, p. 102).

What Thomas sees as “their world” and Hodder sees as “the wild” must surely refer to the same thing: the forest, since Europe, including Britain, at the time of the developing Neolithic was largely a heavily wooded area. For me, it is thus necessary that we ask ourselves to what degree Neolithic people, women as well as men, could afford to set themselves off against the forest and see it as the antagonistic “other”—as it appears to be for Hodder. In the first place, as Thomas points out, for the construction of timber longhouses tree felling took place in the forest, and since the posts were planted in the earth itself, they remained in a sense treelike. Furthermore, having studied the positions of post holes in the floor plans of excavated dwellings, Thomas suggests that they were experienced as “vaulting spaces subdivided by upright trunks, not unlike forest spaces familiar to their inhabitants” (Thomas 1996, p. 107). Closeness to the forest was thus preserved rather than distancing from it.

The fact that dwellings were constructed from forest resources and in a manner which suggested forestlike spaces might mean that the *domus/agrios* opposition is a fantasy and that Neolithic people saw the forest as benevolent provider rather than primarily as part of the vicious “wild.” Tree worship was, after all, an important component of pagan myths. There were also river gods and kindhearted keepers of sacred rocks (Schama 1995). Schama reminds us that cults of the primitive forest, the river of life, and the sacred mountain are so old that they probably date back to the beginning of settled society. This might seem to conflict with equally ancient folk tales about evil beings inhabiting the forest and other natural spaces, but this is not necessarily the case. Belief systems are about coping with evil as well as good and reaping punishment as well as reward. The good/evil opposition raises a further and more likely possibility, namely, that the forest might have been experienced as an ambiguous space with dark, threatening depths as well as pleasant glades. It was probably regarded as liminal rather than purely benevolent, or strictly wild and dangerous.

In Hodder's model, women are relegated to the *domus*, thus separated from the *agrios*, but it is unlikely that women would have been prevented or even discouraged from engaging with the forest, either in real or metaphorical terms. Besides timber for settlement construction, the forest would have yielded valuable food resources: roots, berries, mushrooms, birds' eggs, and so on, as well as fodder for domesticates. While men might have brought into the *domus* felled trees, honey, and hunted and snared animals, women, the traditional gatherers, would surely have continued gathering in the forest. What is more, it is possible that the increasingly important role that women played in agricultural pursuits in the Bronze Age (Gibbs 1987) had its beginnings in the Neolithic. While men tended the herds, women might have tilled the soil and planted, reaped, and processed the crops. All of this means that women, far from being safely enclosed within the *domus*, would have been out there, actively engaging with their whole world. This means that they would have spent large portions of their days within or in close proximity to "the wild."

If the above suggestions are valid, Thomas's model of relationality is perhaps better suited to an understanding of the Neolithic than Hodder's structuralism. According to Thomas, people did not simply exploit the forest, but became attuned to it in a certain manner and interacted with it in both practical and symbolic ways, as evidenced by forest mythology and religion.

In contrast to the stories of Hodder and Thomas, where the focus is on the establishing of settlements, Hall has written a story about the destruction of an Iron Age settlement on the South African Highveld: "The end of the Makwareng settlement appears to have been sudden and violent. Abandoned stores of valuable iron tools, including two hoes, show that the occupants did not have the opportunity to salvage their belongings. More evidence comes from the entrance to a house, where a cluster of spearheads suggests an intense battle, while a human jawbone found in the main entrance indicates a desperate defense of the stock pens" (Hall 1987, p. 53).

From the little available material evidence, Hall constructs a story of weapons, war, destruction, and death. There is no space here for issues about culture/nature or male/female oppositions. At Makwareng, it is man against man. As so frequently in archaeology, women are simply absent and we are left to wonder about those who are "not there." Discussing Christa Wolf's novel *Cassandra*, Hutcheon (1988) explains how the central character fears that in the aftermath of the destruction of Troy "the story of women—of the concerns with human relations rather than war"—will never be told. Cassandra's descriptions remind one hauntingly of the archaeological record: "The scribes' tablets, baked in the flames of Troy, transmit the Palace accounts, the records of grain, urns, weapons, prisoners. There are no signs for pain, happiness, love" (Hutcheon 1988, p. 194, quoting Wolf).

Perhaps Hutcheon is right when she says the history of women is mostly oral, provisional, personal, so that, too frequently "only the war, the experience of patriarchy" gets narrated while "the parallel world of women remains untold until someone gives voice to it in a special narrative" (Hutcheon 1988, p. 195). We do have "special" narratives in archaeology—most notably that of Joyce (2000) telling her "Sister Stories." But why should narratives in which the female voice is heard

be called “special?” Do we not simply want complete narratives in which women are not absented and/or silenced? And are there indeed no signs in the record for pain, happiness, love; or are we just ignorant as to how to identify them and reluctant about wanting to do so? Was Leakey (1981) not driven to thinking in terms of “human” relations when he wrote about the hominid prints at Laetoli? Perhaps Thomas’s work, which takes issue with what human being entails and which incorporates relationality as a fundamental principle for understanding past lifeways, can point the way toward identifying such signs. Two of the concepts he discusses might be useful for a more complete understanding of the site of Makwareng and its people than the story of the final battle alone can offer.

The first of these concepts is *care*. People engage with their world through caring about their situation: “People care about what has happened to them, where they are and what will happen to them. Being-in-the-world is being absorbed with that world, abiding in it, being accustomed to it” (Thomas 1996, p. 65). In other words, “one’s own Being becomes an issue to oneself” (Thomas 1996, p. 78) and because one’s own Being is an issue to oneself, one also cares about the people around one, one’s place, and one’s possessions, and perhaps it is care which makes one fight to protect these things. “Care” is not, after all, that far removed from “love.”

There appears to be a considerable amount of evidence for care at Makwareng. The hoard to which Hall refers is interesting. In archaeological terms, a hoard is a store of artifacts of value. So someone, some group, perhaps the whole community is valued—that is, cared about—the two iron hoes and an iron bangle which made up the Makwareng hoard. These items had been carefully placed beside a section of secondary walling attached to one of the huts (Hall 1987). Perhaps they were placed there in order to contextualize the importance of both iron production, the domain of men and agricultural production, traditionally the domain of women in Iron Age communities. Preservation of these items together may be seen as a kind of meaning-producing activity for the people of Makwareng. The items might have had to do not only with the relations between men and women but also between people and things, people and places, and people and their world, and that is where their value lies. It is, of course, also possible that this hoard had meanings only relevant to the Makwareng settlement itself and would have been meaningless outside of where it had been deposited. If the fleeing inhabitants had been able to take some possessions with them, they might have given priority to things other than the hoard, knowing that it would not have had the same meaning elsewhere.

A second useful concept from Thomas (1996) is the activity of *building*. For Thomas, it is through building that people establish a connectedness with their world and it is largely building which lays the conditions under which the unconsidered and habitual practices of everyday life proceed. Thomas sees building, especially house building, as a conscious intervention in the landscape through which communities created their relations with their surroundings and in the process reaffirmed ties with one another. Of crucial importance is the physical engagement with the materials of which the land is made up: earth, clay, wood, reeds, and stone. In making and using things, people render both the objects and themselves meaningful (Thomas 1996). A great deal of building went on at Makwareng, with secondary

walling, the function of which is not always clear, added to walls of huts and other structures from time to time (Hall 1987). It is almost as though the act of building itself was significant in some way and might have been linked with the concept of care. Continual work on the settlement would have sustained interaction and engagement between people, their dwellings, and the materials from their surroundings. This kind of social activity would also have fostered caring.

Perhaps the very existence of a discipline such as archaeology lends validity to Thomas's notion of caring about our world and its things and life forms—an idea which he adopts and reworks from Heidegger's philosophical thought. It is surely because we care about our past that we can experience a faint kind of affinity with an early hominid who stepped into the tracks of a companion; or with the problems of people changing from a nomadic to a settled way of life; or with people prepared to defend their simple place and possessions, including a small, meaningful hoard, to the death.

But what is it about these narratives that arouses such affinities within us as we read? Hodder (1992) feels that modern site reports encoded according to the rules of institutions tend to suggest that there is only one possible interpretation of whatever is being investigated. Names of the authors and evidence of the presence of people shift to the background, resulting in stylized documents which give the impression that authority comes from above. Narrative, on the other hand, provides “a polysemic space where the paths of several possible meanings intersect—a site for the production of and struggle with meanings” (Thomas 1996, p. 53). It is this challenging polysemy which the dull excavation report tends to suppress. Perhaps, in the end, it is the pleasure of accepting the challenges that narratives like those I have discussed above provide that makes us want to read them. They act as invitations to do battle with the texts.

A Story of the VOC and the Free Burgher Builders

In this section, I briefly tell a story about the Cape of Good Hope during the period of Dutch settlement from 1652 until 1795. When I began my research, I resolved to make as full a use as possible of the special kind of artifact that historical archaeology has on offer, namely writing. I realized that in order to fully exploit this advantage I would need assistance from literary theory so that historical documents could be approached with critical awareness. Remarkably, only one contributor to Little's (1992) work on text-aided archaeology mentions the necessity of a knowledge of literary criticism for evaluating documents.

So I began with a close critical analysis of five different types of VOC documents and a more superficial perusal of many others. I was soon convinced that together VOC documentation constituted a discourse of domination and oppression through which the company sought to ensure that an ideology already well established in the Netherlands would be entrenched and consolidated at the Cape. What I see as the founding document in this discourse is an Oath of Allegiance newly

enlisted employees were made to swear before embarking on voyages for foreign territories, by which they promised to remain faithful and obedient servants to the company virtually for all time.

The large majority of the just more than 100 employees sent out to the Cape were peasants recruited from the streets of Amsterdam and other European cities. Van Deursen (1991) gives some idea of how deeply status difference was entrenched in the Netherlands of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: Children were taught from an early age that one's station in life was to be accepted as God-given. It was divine providence that determined who would be classed as "people of quality" (the high-class elite) and who as "vile and inferior" (the poverty-stricken underclass) (Van Deursen 1991, pp. 157, 160). Status differences were easily recognized through material cultural objects such as dress, possessions, living quarters, and so forth. The important way in which material culture featured in the recognition of a person's status, and therefore also in the judgment of his or her "quality," is clear from what Pennington (1970, p. 79) has to say: "It was costume, retinue and manner that made apparent a man's [sic] degree." This dichotomy between superior and inferior people was consolidated in a whole metaphorical field in European master narratives. In literature as well as the visual arts, peasants and their accoutrements, including dwellings, were consistently portrayed as ragged, dirty, dull, and ugly. Their demeanor is mostly subservient: they bend, crouch, stoop, and squat.

Although we do not know exactly what kind of dwellings the earliest farmers built at the Cape, two probate inventories dated 1695 and 1696, respectively, describe houses in the then newly established town of Stellenbosch as follows: "*een hujs van kleij seer slegt*" [a house of clay in very poor condition]; and "*een klijn kleijen huisjsjen met lies bedekt*" [a small clay house thatched with reeds] (Woodward 1982, p. 14). These descriptions suggest that peasantry at the Cape was as clearly visible as it was in Europe. Much of the above would, however, have been applicable for settlers in all the VOC colonies, yet it was only at the Cape that the unique form of rural architecture commonly known as "Cape Dutch" developed in less than a century. I made it my task to try to understand why this had happened.

As farmers grew more prosperous, their dwellings changed. Through an empirical study using probate inventories with the contents listed room by room (and with research data already gathered by Antonia Malan [1986] and kindly put at my disposal), I was able to gain a good idea of how and when important changes occurred (Brink 1990). At first, settlers at the Cape tended to build longitudinal Dutch townhouse types. These had one narrow end facing the street and the rooms were arranged one behind the other with a passage running down one side. Even before the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, we find a few transverse houses appearing, possibly because instead of being long and narrow as in Holland, the plots at the Cape were more or less square. There was thus enough space for the main axis of the building to be rotated through 90° so that one long end formed the façade. In these dwellings, the rooms lie adjacent to one another. Lewcock (1965, p. 18) describes the two types somewhat awkwardly as follows: "The central space projecting backwards at right angles to the façade creates a plan generally called the 'transverse plan' in opposition to a plan whose major development or axis takes

place parallel to the long façade of the building.” The former types are what we have come to refer to as transverse longhouses, and Hall (1991a) sees this basic little two- or three-roomed house with a kitchen at one end as the “core form” from which the traditional Cape Dutch house could develop.

Based on a vast amount of fieldwork (but no studies of documents), Walton (1965) produced a hypothesis explaining the development of the popularly, but rather inaccurately, named letters of the alphabet types of floor plans. First, the kitchen, often with a bulging oven, was removed to the rear: either to one side forming an L or to center back resulting in a (inverted) T. With the oven having shifted, symmetrification of the façade became possible and, it appears, highly desirable. Further modifications soon followed. If the kitchen had moved to side back, a matching construction was sometimes added to the opposite side, resulting in a U. If the kitchen had been placed at center back, a dining room was frequently added between it and the central front room, lengthening the leg of the T. The final step involved transverse extensions on either side of the T, giving rise to the H (on its side).

Extensive excavations at a company outpost in a forest the Dutch called *Paradijs* (Paradise) by the Department of Archaeology at the University of Cape Town proved Walton’s suggestions correct in all major respects—except the date. Whereas he thought the changes were already in place during the early eighteenth century, the evidence from excavation (Hall et al. 1993) and the empirical study (Brink 1990) both point toward the later 1730s, when T-shapes become more numerous. It is impossible to say exactly when the heavy gabbling of the traditional Cape Dutch house first began to appear, but it is likely that it came along with the later T plan, probably during the early 1740s. This plan offers space for four gables. The two earliest extant houses of this type both have the date 1756 on their central front gables; so the idea must have caught on before that time. By the 1770s, the six-gabled H-shape was in full flower.

Why all this exaggerated gabbling? Walton’s suggestion that such houses were built for the extra dwelling space they offered people with large families is not convincing. Gables in themselves offer nothing by way of extra dwelling space and no studies appear to have been done confirming that they were mostly built by people with large families. There simply had to have been other reasons for such large-scale gentrification and I resolved to do my best to find them.

The following are the most prominent features of traditional Cape Dutch houses, although few possess all of them: strict symmetry of the façade, a heavy central gable and as many endgables as the floor plan would allow, high visibility (when there is no natural rise in the landscape for the house to be built upon it is often raised on a platform, which Fitchett (1987) says is reminiscent of the Greek stylobate), an impressive gateway with a drive or avenue leading directly to a *stoep* (veranda), beyond which is the centrally placed front door. Front entrances are often embellished with a fanlight, carving, and/or decorative metalwork. A tour guide has told me that when visitors from overseas view such a place from the gateway for the first time, there are usually gasps and little cries of amazement. Clearly, there is something stately about these old places which still impresses today.

In searching for answers as to why it was only the Cape builders that were producing this style of architecture, I began wondering what else was different about the Cape and soon realized that it was also only in the Cape colony that the VOC had established a system of free burghership. Thorough research on the issue (Brink 1992, 2008), the details of which cannot be discussed here, convinced me that this intentional act by the VOC had unintended consequences which were to trouble the company until the end of its rule at the Cape, and which also in the long run played a major role in the coming into being of Cape Dutch architecture. A similar system had been instituted in the East, where it was soon abandoned as unsuccessful, but in the hope of increasing production, the VOC decided to give it another try at the Cape. From 1657 onward, then, certain employees were released from their contracts and allowed to become “free,” that is, to work as artisans or to farm independently on their own account. This story is about those who elected to farm. The first nine were granted land, greater in extent than even the largest country estates in Holland, along the Liesbeeck River.

As I see it, the acquisition of land had a tremendous impact on the free burghers’ feelings about themselves and their identity. Although the employees had accepted their being inscribed as the lesser in Cape society when they first arrived, they felt that owning land at least as extensive as many country estates of the Netherlands meant that they should also immediately be granted acknowledgment of the higher social status that was coupled with land ownership. Conflict arose around the issue of a new free burgher identity as the VOC insisted on seeing them precisely as they had before, that is, as no more than the faithful and obedient servants they had promised to remain in the Oath they had sworn. The VOC discourse could be successful as long as it was backed by a well-established, generally accepted status ideology. But when the VOC itself deviated from this ideology by not granting that land ownership could negate peasant inferiority, a crack opened up in its defenses which, through time, could be widened and exploited by the free burghers. After reading Pennington (1970), I began to fully realize how land ownership by penniless, at best semiliterate, peasants could complicate relationships at the Cape.

Pennington (1970, p. 79) says that in the Netherlands “No source of prestige could compare with the possession of land: even the mighty Dutch townsmen tended increasingly to acquire country estates when they reached the peak of success.” Other authors concur. De Jong (1990, p. 16), for example, speaks of the country estates of the seventeenth century as “always confirming a desired higher status.” He describes how, at that time, the desire for property increased among “a merchant class which was becoming more prosperous and wished to measure itself against the old country nobility so that they themselves could form an elite” (De Jong 1990, p. 29). So it seems that there was considerable justification for the burghers’ desire for a new social identity, especially two decades on into the eighteenth century when they were becoming more prosperous.

Nevertheless, the VOC did not view the matter in that light at all. For the company and its top officials, the burghers would remain “vile and inferior” people for as long as they had any say in the matter. At the Cape, the officials had all the say, and they said it over and over again. Almost every despatch to the Masters in

Holland reported on the degeneracy of the free burghers. In the early years, when the burghers were indeed poverty-stricken and for the most part illiterate, the second Commander, Zacharias Wagner, frequently referred to them as “lazy, sodden louts” (Geyl 1964, p. 358) and he complained about “the careless mode of life and behavior” of “these freemen or common farmers” whom he found despicable. His feelings about the burghers were conveyed to the Lords Seventeen as follows: “He now sees daily proofs ... that there are not above six or eight who are either in repute or in fact respectable; the rest are *vroeg bedorven* [depraved from their youth upwards], lazy, drunken fellows ...” (Spohr 1967, p. 4). When a top VOC official, Commissioner Hendrik Adriaan van Rhee de tot Drakenstein, visited the newly established town of Stellenbosch and proceeded to tidy up the disorderly fashion in which it had expanded, he also attacked free burgher identity by maligning the entire community. He accused the inhabitants of greed in trying to procure more than their fair share of the river bank, blamed them for the lack of order, and clearly expressed his disdain for them. “It would have been better,” he said, “if there had been no free burghers at all, and the company had rather left all food production to its own officials, but now that matters had progressed to this extent order had to be maintained at all cost.” He promised that no new free burghers would be allowed and warned that “lazy, careless or dissolute burghers” would be banished to Mauritius forthwith (quoted by Smuts 1979, p. 58). Such insults directed at the burghers form a thread running through all of VOC documentation pertaining to the Cape with accusations of laziness being the most frequent.

More than a 100 years later, when many burghers had succeeded in transforming their land into country estates worthy of the name, despatches continued to follow the same pattern. In a letter to Governor Hendrik Swellengrebel written during the 1780s, we read: “Commerce cannot be stimulated because most people are lazy; they all want to be lords and masters, make pleasure trips, go hunting. No one is interested in work and everyone, even the lowest classes, wants to live in luxury” (Schutte 1982, p. 318). In another letter from the same period, the author asks why the burghers do not want to work, then answers his own question: “You know as well as I do that they are too lazy.” His remedy: “It should be possible to make regulations to force them to work” (Schutte 1982, p. 326). The stigma of laziness clearly still clung to the free burgher farmer. In making such copious use of this accusation, the administrators were at the same time exonerating themselves from blame for the commercial and industrial backwardness of the Cape remarked upon by the British when they took it over in 1795.

The burghers soon discovered that countering oppression through writing in the form of petitions or pleas for a better deal had no impact on the VOC’s opinions about their status. Writing that was in any way critical or subversive was forbidden and the writers were severely reprimanded and even punished. It was imperative that the free burghers find other ways of registering their discontent and I have argued (Brink 2008) that they did it through material culture, most impressively through landscaping and architecture. The large, heavily gabled, and thick-walled *opstal* (farmstead) was a reality which was not going to disappear and served as a way for the free burgher farmer to flaunt his respectability in the face of VOC in-

sults. I do not see the farm complexes merely as emblems of wealth and prosperity attained through the owners' labor and endurance, which is the image that generally emerges from earlier historical studies. Rather, looking at the pathway to prosperity in more detail has made me see the lives of free burgher farmers under the VOC rule as filled with tension, ambiguity, and gradual becoming as they strove constantly to shake off the image of inferior ragged, dirty, dull, and ugly peasants and instead be recognized as "people of quality." Prohibited from becoming writing subjects of the VOC, the free burgher farmers became building subjects. What we also do not read about in historical accounts is the development at the Cape through the early decades of the eighteenth century of a whole new discourse, which I refer to as a discourse of dwelling, and which came into existence through the cultural creativity of these farmer-builders. In the end, it was *they* who turned out to be the creators of Cape material culture and language.

In contrast to the earlier peasant longhouses which most often nestled against hillsides or were hidden away in secluded dips in the landscape, the traditional Cape Dutch house was built where it would be visible. When necessary, measures such as raising the house on a platform were taken to ensure that it would be visible from afar. Peasant houses can be thought of as secluded, cosy cottages for people to huddle into. The Cape Dutch house, on the contrary, with very large rooms and no fireplaces except in the kitchen, was not built for huddling.

Probate inventories sometimes make it possible to trace the changes to cottages through the eighteenth century. I tell the story of just one—one of the two earliest houses still in existence and use today. Originally named *Weltevreden op Joostenberg Vlake*, it is now known simply as *Joostenberg*. In 1694, the original owner of the land, Matthys Michiels, sold the 60 morgen to Hendrik Elbertz for the meager sum of 60 guilder (Guelke and Shell 1990), indicating that there was no substantial house on the property at that time. (A morgen, slightly less than a hectare, was the measurement for land used at the Cape). In 1723, it belonged to Maria van Staden on whose death in that year an inventory was drawn up. The inventory lists a dwelling with a room on the left, a room on the right, and a kitchen. This was probably a simple three-roomed longhouse as a *voorhuis* (central front room) is not listed (Brink 1990). It was a little house to huddle into. According to Fransen and Cook (1980), the floor plan remained unchanged until it was remodeled by Gerrit van der Bijl, who bought it in 1752. Van der Bijl was a leading free burgher in the Stellenbosch district who had served several terms on the church council and the local governing board, known as the *Heemraad*. It was Van der Bijl who brought the house out of hiding and turned it into a spectacle by doubling the length, adding a "tail" to turn it into a T, and giving it a lofty gable dated 1756. Built of brick and stone, this house stands before us today as solidly as it ever did and little about its façade has changed since Van der Bijl's time. What this house proclaims is that its builder was not anybody's obedient servant.

The importance for the free burghers of the visibility of their grandified dwellings can be illustrated by a letter written by a leading free burgher, Hendrik Cloete, to a friend in Holland after he had purchased *Groot Constantia*, a rundown portion of a farm which had once belonged to Cape Governor Simon van der Stel. Cloete,

a fourth-generation free burgher, was an industrious and enterprising farmer who, in a few years, transformed a dilapidated property into one of the Cape's show places—as it remains to this day. He was one of the many to whom the attribute of “laziness” simply did not apply. Besides “modernizing” the old-fashioned homestead by turning it into a Cape Dutch house and giving it what is probably the tallest gable in the Cape, Cloete paid particular attention to the layout and the approach or driveway: “All the oaks and chestnuts which grow in profusion here have been pruned, so that the farm, which otherwise had not been visible when I rode towards it, can now be seen from very far away” (Schutte 1982, p. 111). He also contrived a sunken driveway which created the illusion to approaching visitors that they were driving along between two small mountains topped with rows of silver trees and oaks (Schutte 1982).

Clearly, the manor houses that dotted the Cape landscape toward the end of company rule were meant to be seen and admired. And admiration for the dwelling could easily be transferred to the dwellers because equating property with people was an age-old tradition in the Netherlands, as witness a well-known proverb “*Toon mij uw huis en ik zal zeggen wie u bent*” [Show me your house and I will tell you who you are] (Schuurman 1989). The VOC at the Cape, however, ignored this connection between people and property, a tenet of its own ideology. To illustrate the degree to which the company looked down on the burghers and dominated them in every walk of life, I use the example of the owners of *Meerlust*, an eighteenth-century farm, now one of the most prominent wine estates of the Cape.

When Johannes Albertus Mijburgh took over the farm, he was content to live in the old T-shaped dwelling until 1776, when he went through a great deal of trouble, and no doubt expense, to turn the dwelling which had an off-center rear extension into a grand example of the typical H-plan. The farm is still in the family today and the house still stands proudly in a beautiful rural setting. Its 300-year history has been written up by Phyllida Brooke Simon (2003) and impressively published.

Like many leading burghers of the district, Johannes Albertus served several terms as church councillor, officer in the local militia, and member of the local governing board. Serving in public capacities provided a measure of status among their fellow burghers for these men, but it is clear from Leibbrandt's *Memorials* (1905–1989) that this status was worth nothing in the eyes of the company. Phillipus, the son of Johannes Albertus and heir to the *Meerlust* property, followed in his father's footsteps as far as serving on local councils was concerned. By the late 1770s, he was a mature person who had proved himself both as a community leader and an efficient farmer. However, like all his fellow burghers in the same position, Phillipus had to cosign letters to the company in which he had no option but to represent himself as a child begging forgiveness for misdemeanors, or an inferior servant seeking favors. A request by Phillipus from 1779 (after the new gable had been built) asks that the burghers be allowed to explain to “the Lords and Masters” in Holland the present burgher conditions of the colony. It reads: “Memorialists herefore take the liberty *most respectfully* ... *with the humble prayer that it may be granted by you*” (Leibbrandt 1905–1989, p. 114, emphasis added). In spite of the humility, the request was refused on the grounds of their daring to want to appeal directly to the “Masters” instead of first appealing to the Cape government.

Another letter requesting mercy for burghers who had not reported for military duty stresses the company's "generosity" and explains that the burghers had no intention of showing disobedience to the orders of the Government. This request was granted on condition "that they will in future *conduct themselves on all occasions as faithful, rightminded and obedient burghers*" (Leibbrandt 1905–1989, p. 219, emphasis added). Here too we find the burghers bowing to the almost saintly superiority of the VOC. In order to understand how a symbolic discourse of dwelling could work against such persistent oppression, we need to understand the ways in which the world and its material cultural objects are experienced as intricately and inextricably interwoven with language. This means understanding Cunningham's (1994) concept of "wor(l)d."

Modern adult human beings in the normal waking state are never entirely without language. We are also always *in* some or other cultural milieu. We exist within these two constantly interacting fields and, for purposes of research, instead of trying to prise them apart by studying each in isolation, we should accept their togetherness. I believe that to gain a more complete understanding of the discourse of dwelling we need to see that it had verbal as well as material elements, the roots of which stretched way back into the European past. The word/world relationship is important for archaeologists because of two suppositions embodied in the work of Cunningham (1994): first, there is a sense in which the world is written; second, there is a sense in which artifacts communicate meaning, or "speak" and this kind of interactivity was at work at the Cape during the rule of the VOC. The free burgher discourse was successful for several reasons, but perhaps mainly because it embraced this principle more strongly than the VOC discourse, which relied too heavily on language alone. The VOC placed too much faith in the power of words to construct and maintain the inferior identity of its employees. It failed to take into account the degree to which the material world intrudes into the world of language and how the material world is able to undermine the textual world's certainty with a communicative power of its own.

Thomas's (1996) views on identity structuring are enlightening. Following Heidegger, he believes that individuals draw on past experiences and order them in ways that make sense by constructing narratives about themselves. The result is that "the subject is constantly produced in the present" (Thomas 1996, p. 51). For Thomas, then, the self is a narrative text, and it is indeed possible for people to re-invent themselves. If this is so, then to impose identities upon people cannot work in the long run: "Human identities, material objects and places all develop from a background of relationality. Moreover, the relations which constitute the world are constantly in motion" (Thomas 1996, p. 237). Relations between VOC officials and free burgher farmers were vigorously set in motion when the latter were given land. According to this philosophy, the world is made to work for human beings when material things (the visual arts, including architecture, for instance) are brought to language. We can understand what "being brought to language," a phrase used frequently by Ricoeur, means in practice when we note what Baxandall (1972) has to say about why contemporary people could appreciate fifteenth-century Italian art: people could value the art because of the general experience they had gained by liv-

ing a *quattrocento* life and seeing things in a *quattrocento* way. Following Baxandall when writing about the enigmatic oval shapes in Abelam art, Geertz (1983) explains that because the art is not “illustrative,” Abelam people make use of their social knowledge and their skill in the application of this knowledge in order to know what the paintings mean. Baxandall and Geertz therefore agree that people supplement their impressions with cultural knowledge when evaluating material objects and in doing so are likely to use the skills their societies esteem highly. We can also think here of Holzner and Robertson’s (1980) folk measurements, Bourdieu’s (1977) habitus, and Yentsch’s (1992) “mother-wit”—a delightful term she learned from the people she interviewed.

When we think of the kind of skills which would have been highly esteemed in eighteenth-century colonial Cape society, landscaping and architecture immediately come to mind because of the long tradition of associating property, dwellings, and country estates in particular, with the owners and their status. This would have been part of the cultural knowledge embedded in the beings of Dutch people since childhood and I believe settlers at the Cape would have been aware of it. Writing about free burgher prosperity, Guelke (1984, p. 7) points out that even though some Dutch ideas were modified by the settlers, “underlying fundamental values continued to provide a basis for problem-solving.” Cape colonists would have *known* how to evaluate a house and its owners, so challenging a dominant verbal discourse with a discourse of dwelling made sense.

In order to understand how landscaping and building could work for the free burgher farmers as a strategy for undermining and contradicting the well-established discourse of those in power, we need to shift the focus from looking upon Cape Dutch architecture as a symbolic *language* and move, rather, into the realm of subversive discourse. Language suggests a static code with the implication that, once deciphered, meaning will immediately be revealed. But for Ricoeur (1982d, e, f), discourse is “language-in-use,” that is, language, or communication, in action. It is in these terms that I prefer to see the communicative action prevalent in the eighteenth-century Cape colony and I refer to it as a discourse of dwelling. Seeing this discourse as a form of action discloses its interwovenness with the whole process of existing within the Cape colonial landscape at a particular time—of coping with being a free burgher person under oppressive rule. As repeated statements emphasizing free burgher inferiority threaded VOC documents together to form a discourse of domination, it was imperative that repeated “statements” to the contrary, in the form of impositions upon the landscape, be made so that these could be threaded together to constitute a subversive discourse of resistance.... Furthermore, for the free burgher discourse to be successful, it had to convect into and permeate every corner of Cape colonial society. By making use of some of the principles of Ricoeur’s hermeneutics, I will explain how this could occur through mundane social action. I use visiting as an example. Although Ricoeur is primarily concerned with writing, his work lends itself to adjustment for accommodating works other than written texts.

Ricoeur distinguishes between two types of discourse: oral and written or inscribed. The advantage of oral discourse is that problems of interpretation are easier

to resolve because interlocutors share the reality of the speech situation where there is opportunity for the act of pointing, or “ostensive reference” (Ricoeur 1982b, p. 92, c, p. 17). During the dialogue of the face-to-face encounter, things can be pointed to, questions can be asked, and misunderstandings can be cleared up. But the disadvantage of oral discourse is that the speech event is fleeting; it promptly disappears.

Texts come into being when the “fleeting event of speech” is “fixed” in writing, that is, made durable by some form of inscription (Ricoeur 1982e, p. 198). The disadvantage of inscribed discourse is that interlocutors are no longer present to one another within a specific situation. A distance can therefore arise between the inscription and the original speaker so that “what the text signifies [to a variety of readers] no longer [necessarily] coincides with what the author meant” (Ricoeur 1982d, p. 139; Thompson 1982, p. 14). The text or inscription is therefore open to a series of misunderstandings (Thompson 1982). Ricoeur’s concept of *distanciation* refers to the distance between reader and text that arises upon inscription. Since the author or creator is absent, the reader or beholder alone is responsible for interpretation (Ricoeur 1982c). For Ricoeur, texts open up a world, which is a “possible world” (or mode of existence) that is “alien” to the reader (Ricoeur 1982c, p. 177) and it is the beholder’s task to make something meaningful of the inscription. *Distanciation* between reader and text, or beholder and work, thus implies an initial standing back while exposing oneself to the work in order to evaluate what it brings you.

But interpretation does not end with *distanciation*. The initial evaluation must result in what Ricoeur calls “appropriation” of the possible world which the work discloses. To appropriate is “to make one’s own” what was initially “alien.” Interpretation thus “brings together,” “equalizes,” and “renders contemporary and similar” (Ricoeur 1982a, p. 185). In other words, interpretation involves initial critique, and eventual acceptance unto oneself, of the mode of existence disclosed by the work. I need to stress once more that although Ricoeur is concerned with written texts, it is not only possible but also, I believe, useful and even desirable to transpose his theoretical concepts onto the interpretation of other created works such as buildings, farm complexes, and landscapes.

To conclude my story about how meaning can be found in Cape colonial architecture, I follow a method well tried by authors who have undertaken similar interpretative tasks: I make use of what Thomas (1996) has called our “archaeological imagination.” The aim is to envisage the actions and reactions of a visitor to a Cape Dutch farmstead in the eighteenth century. At that time, the Cape was already known for its hospitality. This is usually explained in terms of the isolated lives people led on their farms, their eagerness for firsthand news of the outside world, their plain and simple kind heartedness, and so forth. Although there is undoubtedly some truth in all of these explanations, this should not blind us to the hidden dimensions of hospitality. Ricoeur (1982f) has said that for a work to fulfill its discursive destination, it must be interpreted by a reader or beholder so that it can be “brought to language.” To me, this means that material cultural objects can only be interpreted when Cunningham’s “wor(l)d” is in process, that is, when the flickering back

and forth between word and thing is activated. The free burghers *needed* visitors so that the world opened up by their farm complexes could be evaluated and eventually accepted through Ricoeur's principles of distanciation and appropriation.

But time was needed for these processes to come to fruition; so visiting a Cape Dutch farm was not for the impatient. Meeting with the owner could only be achieved after a series of pauses, the first of which was at the gateway in the perimeter wall. Here, a visitor was made to gaze upon the full vista of the symmetrical, gabled façade at the end of a treelined carriageway. The impact was more than merely physical. It worked, as it was meant to, on intellect and emotions as well, forcing the beholder into reflection and critique. Distanciated from the object, his socially acquired skills of evaluation came into play and he could begin to work his way toward appropriation of the world this farmstead was opening up. He could begin to think the "truth" of the dwelling in words—and by extension because of the close connection between people and property, the "truth" about the owner as well. Interestingly, perimeter walls were usually too low to prevent attacks by large wild animals or marauding people. Their function was largely symbolic in that they served to prevent visitors from approaching the place from vantage points other than that which presented the dwellings at their most imposing. The façade was the part that mattered most, the part that clearly pronounced the structure an object in need of interpretation, and thus turned the visitor into an interpreter.

Having moved through the gateway, followed the path, traversed the *stoep*, the visitor was made to pause again before the centrally placed front door. Here, at a point directly beneath the main gable, there was more to evaluate and admire: built-in stone benches on either side of the *stoep*, high-quality, elegantly carved wood, and metal embellishments would have given him further ideas for the narrative about this dwelling and its owners already forming in his mind.

There was a final pause for reflection inside the house, in the *voorhuis*, or centrally placed (immediately beneath the main gable) formal reception room, to which a visitor would probably have been admitted by a slave. Here, too, he could ponder the meaning of the dwelling and the free burgher way of life. He could continue with his verbalization of the nonverbal "truth" of the house and those who dwelt in it. Verbalization was important because it was this "truth" that he would report to others when the occasion arose and it was through the visitor's own fiction that appropriation, the making of what was alien one's own (Ricoeur 1982a, f), could occur. The visit did not end when farewells had been said; like a myth, it would repeatedly be "told." The meaning of the free burgher farmstead could thus become part of the matrix of colonial social life and of a new cultural knowledge that was specifically Cape.

Empirical observations by psychologists are useful for understanding how people can make worlds once "alien" to them "their own." According to Martin (1978), people experience material phenomena in four main ways and these stages can take place within a few minutes. First, they perceive the facts; second, they ponder them, piece the data together logically; third, they develop feelings about them, make value judgments, adopt viewpoints; and, finally, they look beyond the facts to certain possibilities which might be true or untrue, possible or impossible (Martin 1978, p. 21).

For Martin, “perceiving the facts” means doing just that and no more: registering what is there and what is not. So a visitor in the *voorhuis*, for instance, might note the furniture, the objects enshrined behind glass cupboard doors, the screen blocking off the formal part of the house from the less formal, the symmetry of the room, and so forth. He might also note what is missing. The basic facts, once perceived, would then be thought about carefully and the data pieced together logically. A visitor would classify, analyze, synthesize, argue, and trace the reason for this, and the cause of that: oriental porcelain displayed on top of a *kast* (cupboard) probably means that the *kast* itself, into which you cannot see, contains costly goods. The owner must be a man of means.

A visitor’s feelings about these things could then come into play: he adopts views and makes value judgments, decides what he likes and does not like, and what is good and what is bad. A visitor might begin to feel that it must be good to own a farm and live in a well-ordered house like this one. The owner must be a well-ordered and capable person—a person of quality. It must be good to be a free burgher farmer.

Finally, a visitor would look beyond the facts to likely or unlikely possibilities. He might fantasize, seeing himself in a role similar to that of the owner. He might even try to *become* a little like the owner. As Martin (1978, p. 22) says, looking beyond the facts is like pondering the imponderable, projecting the self into an imaginary situation in a possible future. This is what Ricoeur (1982d, p. 142) would call appropriation: “What I appropriate is a proposed world, the world of the text, into which I can project my ‘ownmost possibilities’.”

As a waiting room, to which it is frequently likened, the *voorhuis* was a room of carefully contrived displays, and therefore a suitable place for the consolidation of meanings already beginning to take shape. Here, artifacts arranged in more or less standardized displays could appeal to the senses, and through the senses to the emotions of a visitor, who could reflectively address them in terms of his own European background as well as his experience in Cape society. And, as we have seen from the work of Martin, it could be done within a few minutes. Addressing the standardized displays in the *voorhuis* would no doubt have had a pleasing effect on a visitor, who would be able to imagine something of the good life of the owner. The setting of displayed objects behind glass enhanced their value. Sometimes the carving of the cabinet doors matched that of the front door and “matching” added to the concept of good living. A grandfather clock was an object often found in the *voorhuis*. It showed the owner’s appreciation of the value of time and his ability to organize the time of lesser people in a simpler manner: by the ringing of a bell. The slave bell is a characteristic feature of the free burgher farm and many are still in existence. That cherished items were similar in many homes is clear from probate inventories and from excavations. Status appears to have been linked with quantity, with sets of porcelain containers known as garnitures, atop a *grootte kast* (large cupboard) being the ultimate in display grandeur (Woodward 1982). During the later part of the eighteenth century, almost every household appears to have had some porcelain of Eastern origin, but not all had vast quantities and matching sets.

It is then within this sort of setting, with the visitor ensconced, as it were within the ostensive reference (the things that could be pointed to) that appropriation could

draw to a close and finally be fulfilled during the face-to-face encounter that ensued when the owner appeared. The advantages of oral discourse could come into play and it is in such contexts that the concepts of “bringing together,” “equalizing,” and “making one’s own” what was initially “alien” can be understood. It is not difficult to imagine a visitor accepting this world, rating its merits, even in a sense feeling himself a part of it.

The importance of visiting for the discourse of dwelling needs to be summarized. The farmers needed visitors for more than relief from loneliness, an exchange of news, or opportunities for expressing goodwill. They needed visitors, first, to view and be impressed by their dwellings. Second, they needed people who could be drawn into dialogue as interlocutors in face-to-face encounters where the producers of the dwellings could ensure that the desired interpretations of their creativity had been achieved. Third, they needed visitors to act as informal reporters and thus to reinforce the discourse by participating in it and keeping it alive. In a land without newspapers, it was visitors who could report to all and sundry, including VOC officials, on the meaning of the farm complexes and the quality of the people who produced and dwelt in them. Visiting thus played a discursive as well as a social role at the Cape as it became an essential strategy for the consolidation of the discourse of dwelling in its subversive task.

There is one more subversive strategy in free burgher discourse that needs to be pointed out. Although forbidden to write, the burghers nevertheless found spaces for doing so: They registered names for their farms and they dated and initialled their gables, bestowing authority and authenticity on their dwellings as well as on themselves. Moreover, many chose farm names which, upon analysis, reveal evidence of criticism directed at the VOC in the face of, and in spite of, severe oppression. These tiny bits of writing embody a multiplicity of intertexts which, for me, are examples of what, according to Carroll (1987, p. 75), Lyotard has referred to as “little dissident narratives ... produced in spite of all attempts to repress them.” They wormed their way into the dominant discourse, became registered, that is, written down and archived in VOC writing itself, thus interrupting and contradicting it from within. Here, I mention only three examples: *Houd den Mond* means “be quiet,” or “shut up,” or “shut your trap,” and although it lends itself to several interpretations, it must surely be a critical reference to the silencing of the burghers by the VOC. *Babylonstoren*, on the other hand, through its associations with the biblical Tower of Babel, calls up the company’s monologizing tactics in precisely the opposite way. The Cape was a multilingual place: Khoi, San, Dutch, German, Portuguese, and various Scandinavian and Malaysian languages could be heard in and around the settlement. Grouped in another way, the language of the VOC, the burghers, the slaves, visiting soldiers and sailors, and the indigenous people, all contributed to the multilingual character of the early Cape. In the midst of this heteroglossia, the Cape’s own new language, Afrikaans, was struggling to be borne along with the architectural tradition (Brink 2007). Where *Houd den Mond* perhaps refers with some resignation to VOC domination, *Babylonstoren* is a furious denial of the impression of monoglossia set out in VOC texts. What is more *toorn*, a homophone of *toren*, introduces a suggestive second meaning. *Toorn* means “anger”

or “fury.” I see *Babylonstoren* as an irate reference to the VOC discourse as the only valid discourse at the Cape, to the Dutch language as the only permissible language in law, education, and official writing, and perhaps even to Dutch Calvinism as the only permissible religion. For *Babylonstoren* is, of course, primarily a biblical intertext, a reminder, perhaps, to the VOC of God’s displeasure with monoglossia and the power which goes with it, of His dispersal of that power through the creation of many languages. *Verdruk Mij Niet* (do not oppress me, or don’t fence me in) really speaks for itself and is a more direct reference to VOC oppression (Brink 2008). Listening to such “little voices speaking” can be a very rewarding part of one’s research as it gives us an idea of how the free burghers wrote their own real world, which is quite different from the way the VOC wrote it.

This then is a condensed version of my story about the workings of a discourse of dwelling which the free burgher builders brought into being through creative material and social action. Forbidden to write in ordinary language, they confronted the VOC with a new *kind* of narrative—one firmly based on material cultural representations, one which would offer a silent resistance to begging. Gentrification of the land given them offered very solid evidence of owners able to create and maintain order without VOC intervention, to act independently, to be capable of discernment, and therefore to command respect and to be treated as equals rather than as childlike obedient servants. The free burgher’s *plaats* (his farm, but more literally his place) stood in clear contrast to the inferior social “place” designated him by the company.

Conclusion

This chapter stresses the important role that language plays in archaeology. I have suggested that awareness of the connection with language was perhaps awakened when the usefulness of structuralism became evident and it has remained with us ever since, while growing in sophistication. Realizing that although structuralism could frequently provide answers to “what,” “where,” and “when” questions, it was not very useful for dealing with the more complex “why” questions. This is when enterprising archaeologists opened their minds to critical theory, whence came the idea of testing the explanatory possibilities of the material culture-as-text metaphor which, in turn, led to more fundamental examination of the relationship between word and world (see Crossland, this volume). All of this had a substantial influence on historical archaeology because of its close involvement with texts—what official documents mean and how we read and interpret these artifacts.

Possibly, the growing interest in language—writing, reading, and interpretation—played a part in leading some archaeologists to realize that a lot of what we do a lot of the time is tell stories about the past. For me, this is an indication of the degree of maturity our discipline now evinces. Only when we are able to admit that this is an important part of what we do can we begin to properly define the concept and critically examine the stories we tell in order to ask questions about their

validity. Such critical awareness protects us from the dangers of relativism as well as against accusations that we imagine that any old story will do.

I believe that the need to tell stories springs, *inter alia*, from more careful concern with our data and a desire to confront more troublesome questions: What did this awl found in a rubbish dump mean for the person who made, used, treasured, and lost it? (Spector 1991). Storytelling directs our attention to the social and that is important because, as Thomas and Tilley (1992, p. 108) say in their reply to Bintliff's (1991) critique: "Archaeological evidence is already inescapably social before we begin to excavate it."

But storytelling is also beneficial in other ways: to mention only a few, it encourages us to read more widely; to be more critical of what we read; and, most exciting of all, to discover new connections between our own work and that of others which might at first appear to be very far removed from what we do (also Kus and Raharijaona, this volume). Here, I cannot help but think again of the connectedness Dawkins experienced between his "pilgrims" and those of the Medieval Chaucer. Provided that stories are thoroughly honed and polished and scrubbed, they should be celebrated in archaeology and embraced within the discipline to the same extent that they apparently are in other disciplines. There is a final word of caution, though: we should not begin to believe that our own stories about certain aspects of the past can ever really be the final stories.

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Chapter 5

The Signs of Mission: Rethinking Archaeologies of Representation

Zoë Crossland

In early March 1824 disaster struck many of the villages of Imerina in the highlands of central Madagascar. Massive hailstones came hurtling down from the sky, destroying the region's rice crop (Ellis 1838, 2, pp. 353–355). Rice was not only the staple of local diets, but it was *masina* or sacred and life-giving. The destruction of the rice crop was a sign that something was wrong with the life and health of the kingdom, as British missionary David Jones found out when he visited a mission school at Betsizaraina, just a few days later. Here he was told that “the people of the village had become enraged against the teachers and scholars,” and reported that because the scholars “would not believe in the power and authority of their favorite idol called Rabehaza” they “had caused the hail to descend from heaven to destroy their rice etc.” He did not comment on the soundness of this belief, instead finishing pragmatically by explaining that:

I advised them to learn diligently what we taught them and to beware to speak too harsh against Rabehaza the beloved idol of the people to make them hate their instruction but to go on as mildly and gently as possible.¹

This was a complex encounter that brought together British missionaries, the people of Betsizaraina, their “beloved idol” Rabehaza, the teachers and scholars of the village's mission school, and of course, the hail and the ripening rice fields. Nonhuman actors such as Rabehaza were clearly important for the history of highland Madagascar. How then might we consider past missionary encounters not simply in terms

¹ London Missionary Society (LMS) Madagascar Incoming Correspondence (MIL) Box 2 / Folder 1/A: 12 March 1825[?] Held at the Council for World Mission Archive, SOAS, University of London.

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of the face-to-face interactions of the living, but in terms which encompass a wider range of participants, human and nonhuman alike? In thinking about what is present in and to any encounter, the concern with materiality has prompted consideration of the agency of nonhuman actors and encouraged anthropologists to incorporate material and animal worlds more fully into our narratives. This move works to take better account of the tangible characteristics of landscape and things, and the ability of the material world to intervene into human lives. Interest in materiality seems to have coalesced from a range of perspectives, and a variety of genealogies may be traced from across the disciplines (e.g., Appadurai 1986; Brown 2004; Latour 1999, 1993; Thomas 1991), including material culture studies (Miller 1998, 2005) and technology studies (Dobres and Hoffman 1999; Lemonnier 1992, 1993; Pfaffenberger 1992). Within archaeology, the limits of linguistic or textual models of interpretation for archaeology's material signs were identified early on (as discussed by Hodder 1986), leading to a search for other ways of thinking about past human engagements with the material world (e.g., Barrett 1994; Buchli 1995). Finally, the shift toward more phenomenological perspectives, and the related concern with embodiment has been important in preparing the ground for the turn toward a more material focus (e.g., Bender 1993; Kus 1989; Meskell 1996; Thomas 1996; Tilley 1994). The frustration with the limits of linguistically oriented approaches to meaning, and dissatisfaction with the perceived subjectivism of some phenomenological accounts has led to a more critical exploration of the mediations between people and materials (e.g., DeMarrais et al. 2004; Graves Brown 2000; Knappett 2005; Meskell 2004; Meskell and Joyce 2003; Miller 2005; Olsen 2003, 2010; Renfrew 2001; Renfrew 2004; Witmore 2006). Characteristic of these approaches is a critique of the subject–object divide, and an attempt to undercut it through attending to the ways in which the material world acts upon and shapes human lives (e.g., Tilley 2007, p. 17). Rather than seeing human social worlds as imposed upon an underlying and passive realm of nature, the ability of the material world to “act back” has been fundamental to the shift to fully recognize the materiality of past human life.

However, in the missionary account of the hail's damage, it was not Rabehaza alone who caused the hailstones to fall and to destroy the rice, but rather the scholars' neglect of traditional beliefs. The students' failure to give due respect to Rabehaza had upset the cosmological balance and brought invisible forces into play, precipitating as hail. This points not only toward the presence of material actors, or of those “supernatural” actors to whom Dipesh Chakrabarty has drawn attention (e.g., 1994, 1998). It also indicates a range of apparently immaterial capacities, gestures, and emotions, without which the encounter cannot be fully understood. These include the habits of thought and practice that are passed on over generations alongside material inheritance. The incident raises questions of agency and its location, as well the nature of the signs through which it is distributed. Agency from this perspective was neither located in Rabehaza alone, nor in the scholars but rather was articulated through the shifting relationships that bound them all together. Tim Ingold has noted that the literature on materiality often makes the simultaneous move of locating agency in things while also insisting on its emergence from the relationships between people and objects (Ingold 2007). He argues that a focus

on materiality alone is not enough to understand how agency unfolds. Rather, he suggests attending to the dynamic relationships between different elements of the world, without the framing assumption that these will be between minds and things. I argue here that a Peircean semeiotic approach can help with this task, as it provides ways to bring questions of the immaterial into the same frame as the material.

In the move to take fuller account of the materially embedded nature of human worlds, questions of interpretation and representation seem to have become somewhat devalued (e.g., Olsen 2003; see discussion in Meskell et al. 2008; Nakamura and Meskell 2009). Arguably, this is because the dominant Saussurean model of representation familiar to most archaeologists fits awkwardly with material evidence as Ian Hodder outlined back in the first decade of interpretive archaeology (also see Hall 1992; Hodder 1989). Saussure's analysis of signification was always designed as a linguistic model, making meaning ultimately a cognitive phenomenon, viewed as an internal mental process. The relationship between sign and real-world referents has therefore been left somewhat opaque, and the structuralist inflection has contributed to archaeological accounts of meaning that can be somewhat static and timeless (see discussion in Hall 1986). Moves have been made recently in archaeology to explore the material dimensions of signification more fully, and to situate representation in time and space (Meskell et al. 2008; Nakamura and Meskell 2009). In the preface to an issue of the *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* on the topic, Stratos Nanoglou notes that "representations are as material as anything else" (Nanoglou 2009, p. 157). That this needs affirming points to the still-resonating echoes of structuralism and its descendants in archaeology. If the cognitive and linguistic orientation of our underlying theories of meaning works to reinscribe the characteristic dualisms that have been subject to so much critique, simultaneously it offers no terms to explore the variety of ways in which meaning emerges in relation to the world of experience. As a result, archaeological accounts that raise questions of meaning often resolve into the identification of binary oppositions and struggle to engage with the dynamic and dialogic nature of meaning production.

Questions of representation and meaning become central when the subject is the archaeology of mission. How may changes in belief and practice be explored materially? Within African archaeology, Ann Stahl has called for more attention to be paid to "cartographies of taste" in our explorations of colonial encounters. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's work (1977, 1984) she has argued that a focus on taste offers a way to shift archaeological attention away from the subjective meanings of objects and social practices, and towards a better understanding of the changing dynamics of social distinction. This call may be situated as part of the broader frustration in archaeology with the interpretive privileging of past subjectivities, but I also see it as providing a way of thinking about semiosis that is not tied to a narrow representationalist definition. The embodied and affective responses to objects and practices that we gloss as taste may themselves be understood as semiotic relationships. This recognition can allow us to explore the terms on which those changing tastes were established. A semiotic theory that engages fully with the material world needs to take account of the affective responses that underwrite social distinction. It will also

need to consider the relationship between the habitual practices out of which taste is defined and changes in belief, whether introduced by missionaries or emerging from the encounter. Here, I would like to reframe the way we think about semiosis, asking not how material things relate to representation or affect, but rather how we can expand our conception of semiosis to include both material and affect, humans and nonhumans, and subject and world. In this chapter, I explore such material and affective semiotics of missionary encounters in Madagascar along lines sketched out by the pragmatist philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. This reorients questions of belief away from a focus on how meanings are materialized, toward a perspective which positions belief as a form of practice constructed relationally and semiotically in and through the material world. To distinguish such a Peircean approach from other semiotic theory, from this point onward I will use his preferred spelling: “semeiotic.”

A number of archaeologists have turned to elements of Peirce’s materially oriented semeiotic (e.g., Bauer 2002; Gardin 1992; Graves-Brown 1995; Preucel 2006; Preucel and Bauer 2001; Strinnholm 1998), although it has yet to make inroads into African archaeologies. It is perhaps most well known in archaeology via his characterization of the iconic, indexical, and symbolic relationships through which a sign represents its corresponding “object” (e.g., Graves-Brown 1995; Knappett 2002; Jones 2007). In the case study which I explore here, the map I provide below of the placement of missionary schools in highland Madagascar is a sign that represents through a predominantly iconic relationship to its object (the distribution of schools in the landscape). On its own it cannot attest to the real presence of the schools at the locations shown, but can only describe them. It is the indexical qualities of such a map that provides some security that it describes a real place. Leave Antananarivo and travel to the southeast crossing over the river Sisaony, as shown on the map, and you will arrive at Alasora precisely because the sign of the map and the landscape it portrays have a real existing relationship. Finally, the map also has conventional or symbolic relationships with the landscape it represents. It can be understood through a set of well-known and shared conventions that specify (for example) a sinuous line with the label *Sisaony* next to it represents a river. In this example the sign of the map is a material thing, and its object—the landscape—is represented as also really existing. However, this need not be the case: a map could equally represent a semeiotic object that was imagined, destroyed, or abstracted; or a landscape could be represented by sign that was intangible—perhaps a song or a dream rather than a thing of paper and ink.²

While important, the relationship between sign and object does not encapsulate the whole of Peirce’s sign relation. Efforts are sometimes made to understand the relationship between the sign and its object by assimilating it to a two-term model of signifier and signified, but Peirce insisted that his sign relation was irreducibly triadic. Semeiosis only takes place when another, more-developed sign called an interpretant emerges from the relationship between sign and object. Although the

² Here it should be borne in mind that the Peircean term “object” bears little relation to the understanding of objects as opposed to subjects, as within a Cartesian frame.

interpretant may be noetic in its origins, Peirce was quite clear that it does not have to take place in the mind.³ The response to a map starts with an “affective” interpretant that recognizes or fails to recognize what one is looking at. It can prompt an embodied “energetic” reaction, such as walking in a particular direction or turning the document so that north is at the top. Equally, a map may be interpreted cognitively, in a way that is predominantly an internal mental effort. These interpretants may also be habitual practices with a generality to them that is not tied to the specifics of the map that is held here and now. All such “habitual” interpretants as conceptualized by Peirce involve affective and energetic dimensions⁴. This recognition that interpretation need not be a cognitive phenomenon, together with Peirce’s acknowledgment of material signs and immaterial objects provides another way to carve up the world that does not start with a distinction between subject and object. Peirce’s interpretant offers a great deal for exploring past practice and belief, but archaeologists are only just starting to as opposed to subjects, as its potential (e.g., Bauer 2002; Preucel 2006; Preucel and Bauer 2001; Watts 2008). In this chapter I focus on the interpretant, and its affective, energetic, and habitual dimensions to consider the signs of mission in nineteenth-century Madagascar. I am particularly interested in the question of how the perceived sign–object relationship constrained and prompted particular interpretants.

Missionary Landscapes

Nineteenth-century missionary efforts in Africa were commonly articulated through the material reworking of place (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Grove 1989; Harries 1997; Jacobs 1996; Ranger 1999). As missionaries attempted to inculcate Christian beliefs, they also worked to create new ways of dwelling that imported ideas of order, cleanliness, cultivation, and gendered space from their home countries (e.g., Donham 1999, p. 105; Greene 2002, pp. 70–74).⁵ In highland Madagascar, efforts focused primarily on the creation of schools and the translation of the Bible. Such

³ “For the proper significate outcome of a sign, I propose the name, the interpretant of the sign. The example of the imperative command shows that it need not be of a mental mode of being” (Peirce 1935, paragraph 473 [1907]).

⁴ Peirce developed a number of different terms for his triad of interpretants (see Fitzgerald 1966; Liszka 1990; Short 1981; and for archaeological explorations of his terms, Crossland 2013, and Preucel and Bauer 2001). Here I deal only with the more well-known “emotional,” “energetic,” and “logical” interpretants, without going into any great detail on these or Peirce’s other classifications. I use “affective interpretant” in preference to “emotional interpretant” to acknowledge that emotion is culturally specific, conventionalized, and generalizable. I use “habitual interpretant” in preference to “logical interpretant” as a way of situating the term within a broader anthropological perspective, notably Bourdieu’s writings on *habitus*, as well as to avoid the problematically narrow and rationalist inflection that the term “logical” carries.

⁵ Even in utopian religious communities where the creation of place is oriented around an idealized model, past experience pervades all aspects of place-making (e.g., De Cunzio et al. 1996; Kryder-Reid 1996; Preucel and Pendry 2006).

missionary efforts to change belief were embedded in a *habitus* which had developed under very different conditions and which itself had the potential to be disrupted and adjusted in the encounter with foreign places. Missionary proselytization therefore worked on the material world, but was also resisted—not only through language and practice, but through the material qualities of the world. Roman Catholic theologians of mission have recognized the culturally specific and materially embedded forms of Christianity that are created from the mission encounter in the concept of inculturation. This concept is defined against the parallel notion of syncretism, which, in contrast is usually viewed negatively as a fusion of Christian belief with inappropriate and false local beliefs (Bowie 1999, pp. 68–70; cf. Kaplan 1986). The notion of inculturation recognizes that some degree of mixing of Christian concepts with local cultural understandings is necessary for Christian belief to maintain its relevance. Fiona Bowie gives the example, in northern Cameroon and Chad, of the use of millet bread and millet beer to replace wheat bread and wine in the Roman Catholic mass. As she outlines, the concept of inculturation, however, retains a sense of a “pure” Christian belief that is separate from the cultural beliefs through which it is expressed, a separation which needs to be maintained and monitored. This masks the historically specific forms of Christianity’s development within Europe. As a result, the experiment with millet bread and beer was viewed by the Vatican as veering too far from the original and correct ritual use of wheat bread and wine (Bowie 1999, pp. 70–74). Given the culturally specific imagery of cultivation drawn from the Bible (imagery of gardens, wheat, and vineyards) that has often been used by missionaries to conceptualize the task of conversion (e.g., see Crossland 2006), it is perhaps unsurprising that the use of millet bread should have been viewed as inappropriate by the more conservative elements of the Roman Catholic church. Of course, within Catholic belief there is more than “meaning” inscribed in the communion wafer, but the resistance to eating a wafer made of millet rather than wheat also points to the way in which embodied gestures interpret the sign of the host, as much as any cognitive assessment of its semiotic constitution.

In negotiations over how to translate Christian belief into a language that was meaningful locally, nineteenth-century missionary encounters therefore involved negotiation over material translations of belief as much as over linguistic terms (cf. Pels 1999). Such negotiations might begin with local leaders as missionaries looked for suitable sites for their mission stations, located water sources, and co-opted local labor and resources for the construction of the mission. The balance of these negotiations could swing in favor of one or other group, or groups within the participants, at different times and places, but the subsequent changes in landscape and settlement that grew out of the encounter were always varied, with elements that were unexpected and unpredicted by the participants. As Giddens describes (1984, p. 27), the actions of all people involved in the encounter, although strategic and intentional, do not necessarily result in the intended and predicted outcome; control over the forms and manner of the propagation of belief is elusive. Although missionaries want to inculcate their own beliefs in others, even in the most violent situations of religious and political domination there are choices made on the part

of both converts and those they hope to convert that inevitably affect the form of Christianity that develops.

When the London Missionary Society (LMS) arrived in the highlands of Madagascar in October 1820, their representative, David Jones was welcomed into the court of the reigning king, Radama. Jones established a school at the royal court and Radama allowed him to teach the heir to the throne and other children of noble birth. Jones' acceptance into the court was tied to the renewal of a treaty between Radama and the British government, orchestrated by James Hastie, agent for the British Governor at Mauritius. Radama made a commitment to abolish the external trade in slaves in return for monetary support from the British.⁶ Military training and equipment was also given to the king along with a promise to find apprenticeships for selected members of the royal court.⁷ Radama made a request to the LMS directors for missionary artisans who would teach his subjects industrial production for crafts such as weaving and tanning (Ellis 1838, 2, pp. 274–275; Campbell 1981, 1987; Larson 1997, 2000).⁸ Historians of highland Madagascar have shown how the treaty with the British allowed Radama to prevent his father's advisors from building wealth through the slave trade. The British supported the development of a standing army and Radama made use of this to advance his own supporters (e.g., Berg 1996, 1998; Larson 2000, pp. 222–224).

The LMS expedition to Madagascar seemed at first to be wildly successful in its attempts to implant Christianity in the highland kingdom of Imerina. By the 1827 review of the mission, just 7 years after the missionary deputation had arrived there were 38 mission schools in operation around the capital city of Antananarivo.⁹ These were taught by scholars trained at the palace school by David Jones. In their letters to the directors of the LMS, the missionaries described the king as progressive and enlightened; a monarch who took a pragmatic attitude toward the superstitious beliefs of his people (Berg 1998).¹⁰ They described Radama as promoting the industry and civilization of his people through their labor. The work carried out for the king by his people included erecting houses, maintaining irrigation ditches and canals, learning trades from the missionary artisans, and building the mission schools.¹¹ The changes that took place in highland Madagascar were framed by the missionaries within a narrative of improvement that resonates with Webb Keane's

⁶ LMS MIL 1/2/A: 11 Oct 1820.

⁷ Eventually, a party of young nobles would be sent to the UK, some to be educated under the auspices of the LMS, and others to learn a range of crafts, such as the manufacture and dyeing of calico, and the making of guns and gunpowder (LMS MIL 1/2/C: Jones to Directors 3 May 1821).

⁸ A history of Madagascar, based heavily on missionary correspondence was published by Ellis in 1838. This provides a great deal of information on the early mission, some of which cannot be found in the documentary sources that have survived. Griffiths also published a short history in 1843. More recently, a number of historians have written accounts of the mission, including Gow (1979); Campbell (1985); Raison-Jourde (1991) and Huyghues-Belrose (2001).

⁹ Report published in 1828. Held in the National Library of Wales, J. Luther Thomas Collection: MS 1943078.

¹⁰ For example, LMS MIL 1/2/C: Jones to Directors 3 May 1821.

¹¹ For example, LMS Madagascar Journals (MJ) 1/8: Entry for 2 January 1824.

discussion of the characteristic Calvinist framing of mission by LMS missionaries to Sumba, Indonesia (2007). In viewing the development of their work the missionaries saw the growth of the schools as directly related to the growth of Christianity—the layout of the mission as it was mapped onto the local landscape could be pointed to as an indexical sign of the mission’s success, and of Radama’s efforts to improve and civilize his people. And yet, arguably it was this very framing that allowed Radama to draw upon missionary agency to remake structures of authority in a way that consolidated traditional belief, rather than replacing it.

David Jones arrived a little more than a decade after Radama’s father Andrianampoinimerina had died, into a royal court where the young king was working to wrest power away from the influential advisors of his father’s reign. Andrianampoinimerina had forged a unified state (*fanjakana*) from the disparate polities that had occupied the highlands in the late eighteenth century (Berg 1988; Wright and Kus 1979; Wright 2007). In the turbulent decades before he pacified the region, political conflict had convulsed central Imerina. Andrianampoinimerina’s restructuring of highland ways of life was effected through a combination of conquest, alliance, and marriage, together with powerful symbolic work to both justify and make sense of the changes that he put in place (Kus 1982, 1990; Larson 2000). The missionaries found Radama keen to establish control over the kingdom on his own terms, and to obey his father’s deathbed exhortation to conquer the entire island. The young king seized the opportunity to appropriate the knowledge and beliefs brought by the missionaries in order to strengthen his own sacred authority.

The concept of a powerful center was fundamental to Andrianampoinimerina’s reworking of the politics and history of the highlands in the late eighteenth century, as Susan Kus and Victor Raharijaona have explored (e.g., Kus 1987; Kus 2007; Kus and Raharijaona 2000, p. 108). As Radama modified the power relations he inherited from his father, he acted on the local landscape in order to shape and constrain the agency of the participants in the encounter. The ways in which the mission was built and expanded in highland Madagascar relied upon preexisting organizational structures and channels of political authority to constrain the actions and choices of different participants. It also involved a manipulation of semeiotic relationships through which agentic acts were expressed. The ancestral land of the king and of different powerful descent groups was at the heart of this endeavor. Both Radama and the missionaries undertook to reconfigure the sign relations within which the idols, the living, the dead, and the landscape were caught up.

Ancestral Landscapes

Radama’s ancestral land was in the northeastern district of Avaradrano. It was in this region that his father had united the kingdom of Avaradrano with its nearby competitor at Ilafy to forge a unified and loyal heartland from where he pursued his claims upon the central highlands as a whole (Wright 2007). Oral histories collected in the late nineteenth century (Callet 1974) record that Andrianampoinime-

rina and his allies rapidly conquered the polity to the south and brought in that to the west through marriage alliance. The hilltop village of Ambohimanga, capital of Avaradrano, was made the capital of the new kingdom by Andrianampoinimerina. A few years later, he created another capital at Antananarivo, 15 km to the south. This echoed a move made by an important earlier ruler, and reinforced the central importance of both Ambohimanga and Antananarivo for the histories of Imerina (Kus 1982, 1987, 1990; Kus and Raharijaona 2000, p. 107). Andrianampoinimerina effectively co-opted these older histories by laying claim to Antananarivo for himself, physically reworking the history of descent and of privilege through the landscape. Yet, as Susan Kus and Victor Raharijaona have explored, this left him with a significant problem: how could he position himself as the single and unitary leader of a unified kingdom when he was divided between two capitals, at Ambohimanga and Antananarivo (e.g., Kus and Raharijaona 2000, p. 108). Susan Kus (1983, 1990) has shown how in undertaking this task Andrianampoinimerina took advantage of two systems of cosmological ordering. One system placed emphasis on the center and its ability to hold together the cardinal directions, valuing the east and north more positively than the south and west. The other system marked out the 12 spatiotemporal “destinies” or *vintana* that took up the interstitial places in between the cardinal directions (see Fig. 5.1). This allowed a simultaneous privileging of the kingdom’s center at Antananarivo and of its northeastern ancestral origin place at Ambohimanga. On Andrianampoinimerina’s death he was buried at Ambohimanga and although Ambohimanga’s influential history remained important, Radama shifted the locus of political power to Antananarivo. This seems to have been part of his efforts to reconfigure the kingdom after his father’s death, a shift that can also be seen in the choice of villages where mission schools were established.

Central in the complex system of highland beliefs that the missionaries encountered was the sacred force of *hasina*, an “intrinsic or supernatural virtue, which renders a good and efficacious”¹² (Richardson 1885, p. 236). *Hasina*¹³ was a natural and sacred force that promoted vigor and fertility, flowed from the ancestors, and could be found throughout the landscape and in every human act or gesture. Historian Françoise Raison-Jourde argues that *hasina* designated the sum total of all physical, biological, political, and economic relationships between things and individuals and between the living and the dead (Raison-Jourde 1991, p. 85). The reciprocal exchange and circulation of *hasina*, therefore, informed all human existence from the machinations of the palace elite through to the quotidian practices carried out in people’s homes and fields (Raison-Jourde 1991, p. 26). The importance of *hasina* for human life has led historians of Madagascar to observe that agency was not understood to flow from or be located in the living, but rather in the ways in which the living were able to take advantage of *hasina* (Berg 1995, p. 73; Delivré 1974, pp. 140–168). This ancestral blessing had to be carefully managed, because al-

¹² Richardson seems to have based his 1885 definition on an earlier definition recorded by Joseph Webber in 1855.

¹³ This discussion of *hasina* draws upon Delivré (1974, pp. 140–168), Bloch (1977, pp. 318–329), and Berg (1986, 1996, 1998).

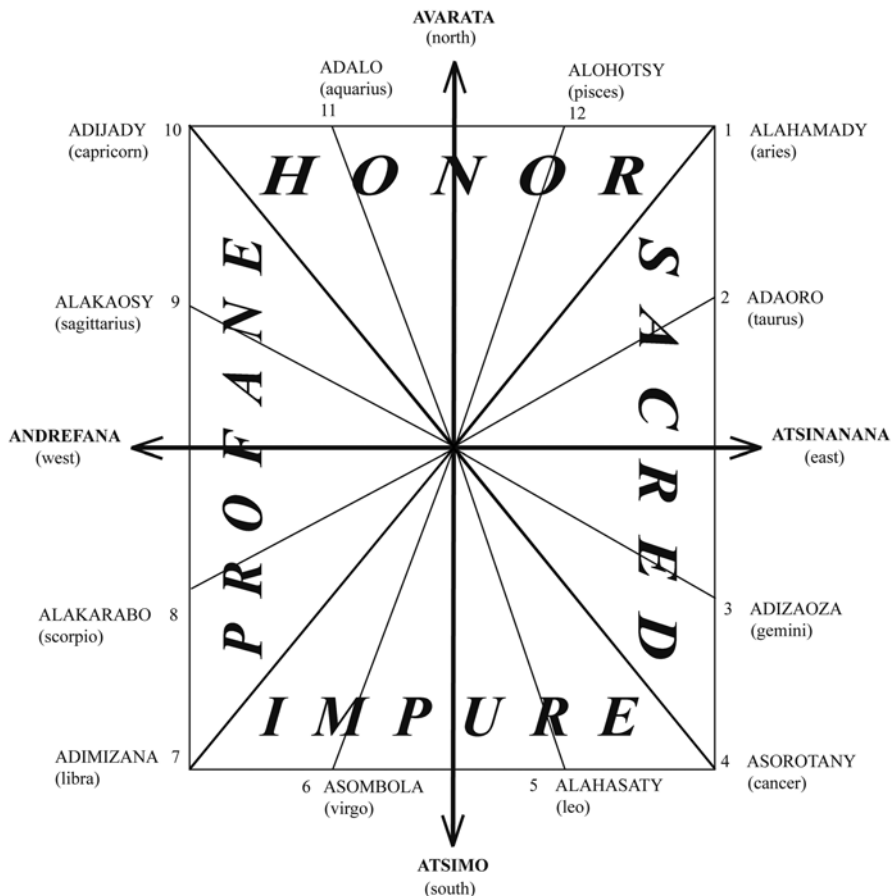


Fig. 5.1 System of spatiotemporal ordering

though it sustained existence, it could also wreak destruction if it was not channeled with great care. The effects of *hasina* could be seen in the wealth and well-being of the powerful and in the failure to thrive of others who had not been so blessed. *Hasina* can be conceptualized semeiotically as a material sign relation that was always of and in the world, as I explore below. *Hasina*'s workings demonstrated that the ability to act was always made manifest under particular material circumstances as well as in relation to invisible powers or forces that might not be fully understood.

Maurice Bloch (1977) has discussed how *hasina* was drawn into governance, outlining how the higher social status of some descent groups was understood to be underwritten by the “superior *hasina*” with which they were blessed. Those from the lowest status descent groups could only receive this superior *hasina* through returning their own blessing to the king. This was done in the form of unpaid service known as *fanompoana* and also through tribute payments. The latter were most perfectly expressed in the form of a silver dollar. Such coins were usually cut into many

pieces for trade and market purchases, but the ideal tribute coin was whole and uncut, representing the unsullied unity of the kingdom (Bloch 1977, pp. 315–318; Kus and Raharijaona 2008, 2011; Pacaud 2002).¹⁴ The coins were themselves called *hasina*, as the missionaries noted. *Hasina* was therefore fully enmeshed in the legitimization and maintenance of unequal power relations, and caught up with political and royal authority (Bloch 1977, pp. 315–318). The mission was incorporated into the politics of Radama's reign and into *hasina* ideology from early on. This was made visible at the moment when Jones' school was consecrated by Radama. Radama blessed the kingposts of the house with water, and in doing so incorporated Jones into the court and into the stream of ancestral blessing (Berg 1986, p. 184; Hayes 1923, p. 57).¹⁵ It was noted in the missionary literature that the nobles of the court were astonished by this act that was usually restricted to the houses of the family of the king (Ellis 1838, 2, p. 263).

The central pillar or *andry* of all houses was symbolically charged, standing at the heart of the house and the family; in the context of royal ritual it took on a wider significance, representing the unity and vitality of the nation (Kus and Raharijaona 2000; Bird 2003, pp. 49–50). Through his act of blessing, and by placing Jones' school in amongst the palaces of the royal court Radama located both mission and missionary in the heart of the kingdom. This marked a reworking of the channels through which *hasina* flowed, and although the missionaries never articulated this explicitly, the mission relied for its success on this stream of blessing. In building the mission the king recomposed relationships with different subject groups, promoting the mission schools as a channel for the potent blessing passed to him from his ancestors.

Mapping the Kingdom

The spatial organization of the mission schools not only mapped out the politics of Radama's reign, but it also incorporated the missionaries into the structures of belief they hoped to replace. The kingdom was organized into six *toko* or districts, four of which made up ancient Imerina, the core of the kingdom founded by Andrianampoinimerina. These four *toko* were conceptualized as quarters of a larger whole that was centered on the city of Antananarivo. The northeastern district, Avaradrano, was understood as the origin place of the kingdom, the home of Radama's father, and the district from which Andrianampoinimerina had drawn his support. The unifying work of the kingdom necessarily drew upon every district and represented

¹⁴ Currency in Madagascar at the time was composed primarily of silver dollars, cut into fragments, some as small as half a grain of rice (LMS MIL 1/2/B: Hastie to Griffiths 18 February 1821).

¹⁵ The specific act of sprinkling the main posts of Jones' house is recorded in Hayes' book about David Jones, written for children in 1923. Ellis' account also mentions the ceremony, although without reference to the house posts. I have not yet found documentation of the ceremony in the LMS archive.

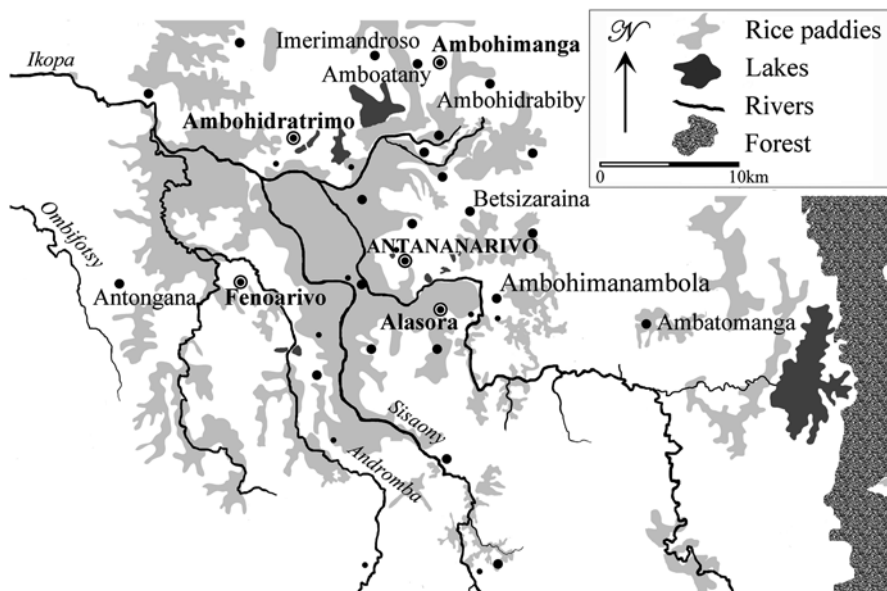


Fig. 5.2 Map of mission schools around Antananarivo by 1828

all descent groups within them. In this way the entire kingdom participated in the sacred work of *fanompoana*, returning blessing and maintaining the well-being and vigor of the king's domain. The placement of the first mission schools was no exception.

Figure 5.2 shows a sketch map of the distribution of mission schools in the villages around Antananarivo, based on reports sent back to the directors of the LMS. The first schools were located at the capital, Jones' within Radama's court and later mission schools nearby. Before rolling out the schools to the surrounding countryside however, Radama unified the first schools into one central school, which was to be the "fountainhead" from which the others would flow.¹⁶ The next two schools were established at the provincial capitals of the most powerful districts to the east, consistent with the higher value placed on this direction (Hébert 1965). The first was placed at Radama's ancestral village of Ambohimanga in the northeastern district of Avaradrano, followed by one at Alasora in Vakinsisaony to the southeast. The privileged histories of the most powerful descent groups were embedded in these landscapes. The two districts to the northwest and southwest then had schools placed at their principal towns, Ambohidratrimo and Fenoarivo.¹⁷ Figure 5.3 shows a conceptual map of the organization of the schools, showing that most schools were placed in the eastern districts, particularly in the northeastern Avaradrano region, consistent both with the more positive valuation placed on the east in highland cosmology, and with the districts from which Andrianampoinimerina had drawn

¹⁶ LMS MJ 1/8: Entry for 10 March 1824. Jones and Griffiths, Antananarivo.

¹⁷ LMS MJ 1/8: Entry for 5 May 1824. Jones and Griffiths, Antananarivo.

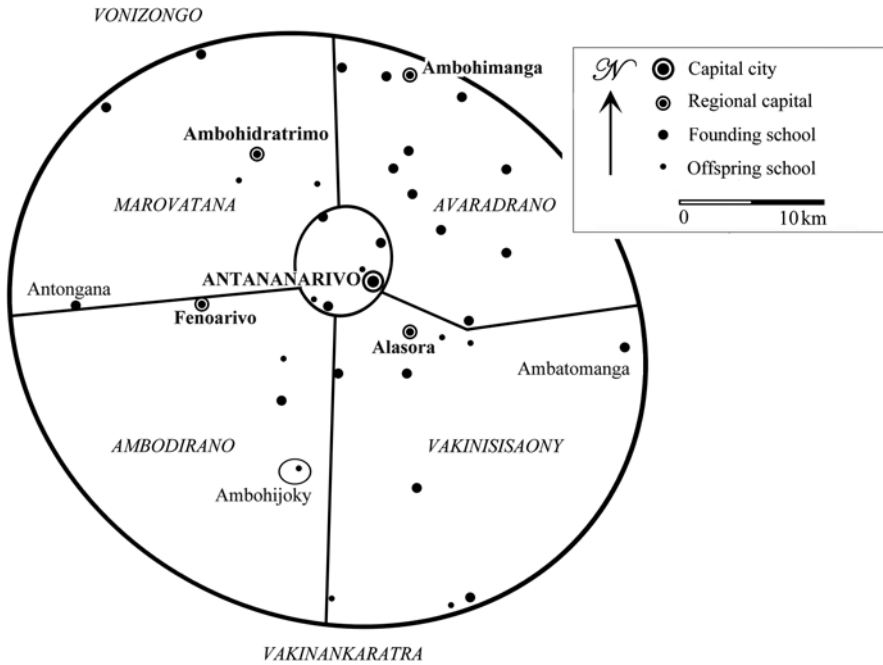


Fig. 5.3 Schematic conceptual map of mission schools

his support. The distribution also located schools at the frontiers of old Imerina, and demonstrates which descent groups were kept close to the king’s court. Note that the village of Ambohijoky, toward the south of the map was grouped by the missionaries with the schools of the center at Antananarivo. Ambohijoky was associated with the Manisotra, who had rebelled against Andrianampoinimerina. The descent group was composed of high status enslaved people attached to the royal court. However, this was not a simple inscription of politics or cosmology onto landscape. By placing schools throughout the districts of Imerina, Radama simultaneously remade and claimed Antananarivo as the central locus of power through which all blessing flowed, while changing the channels through which people had access to him and to the ancestors. In this way, the missionary work was grafted on to the political apparatus of the polity (cf. Wright 2007), relying upon the organizational infrastructure of the state for its successful expansion, while also embedding the schools within well-established local beliefs and practices.

Interpretants of Blessing

As the mission schools flourished and numbers grew, so the schools reworked habitual highland practices but not in the ways that the missionaries had anticipated. *Hasina* was made visible through the success or failure of the projects of the living.

A burgeoning rice crop, for example, might be a sign that stood for *hasina*, but it was not a static signifier, it was a growing, living interpretant of the proper flow of that blessing. To plant rice was a sign that one hoped for the blessing of the ancestors; for the crop to grow and flourish was both a sign and interpretant that the planting was undertaken correctly, and that the living's relationship with the dead was properly tended to. Here the growth and development of a rice plant can be viewed as a form of interpretation. A plant's growth is both a sign and interpretant of the availability of nutrients in the soil. The better the soil, the more luxurious the growth of the plant, which "interprets" minerals and other soil content as nutrients by converting them into growth. Viewing the interpretive work of a plant in this way depends on a secular framing of agriculture, but equally, a plant's luxuriant growth might be viewed as a sign and interpretant of blessing, of the gods or the ancestors. This had implications for all the projects of the living. Just as rice plants grew and flourished so the growth of the mission was understood to be another way in which relationships between the living and the dead were expressed and molded. The building and growth of the mission could be examined for its conformance with established practices for the exchange of blessing, and in its results, it could be assessed as an interpretant of the ancestors' approval.

After announcing a school at the sacred and storied village of Ambohimanga, David Jones sent for wood to be brought from the eastern forests, to construct desks and seats for the new schoolhouse.¹⁸ Timber had to be brought overland at great expense. It was a burdensome task that was normally accomplished as *fanompoana* labor service for the king. In this way the mission allowed "inferior" *hasina* to be given to Radama and his ancestry by his subjects. In return, Radama channeled back "superior" blessing from the dead: The exchange ensured the health and well-being of the populace. The collection of wood was thus part of the sacred exchange of blessing, and it made the school a source of *hasina* for those who contributed to its success. To be blessed with the burden of *fanompoana* labor service was to become an interpretant of the king's ancestral privilege and a visible sign of the descent group's continuing access to it. Any act of carrying out labor service was a bodily acknowledgment (an "energetic interpretant" in Peirce's terms) of the King's sacred efficacy. As a recognized cultural practice, it was also a habitual interpretant that remade the chain of connection between king and subjects. In successfully completing *fanompoana* labor for the king the flow of ancestral beneficence was made visible; a sign that the work was indeed blessed by the dead and a verified interpretant of their expectations and desires. The very work of building a school recognized the relationship between the missionaries' demands and the positive flow of *hasina* to the descent group, and acted energetically to sustain it. Once the school had been raised, then attendance at lessons also became a form of *fanompoana*, alongside serving in the military or cultivating the royal rice paddies (Ellis 1838, 2, p. 353). This was to recognize the role of the schools as a conduit for the circulation of ancestral *hasina* through practical action on the ground.

¹⁸ LMS MJ 1/ 8: Entry for 19 May 1824. Jones and Griffiths, Antananarivo.

At Anjanahary missionary David Griffiths exhorted the villagers to build a large house for their school, both to be equal with other villages and to please the king.¹⁹ Here he acknowledged the politics of the mission, recognizing the jockeying for position between different villages. In undertaking *fanompoana* every district had to be represented to share in the distribution of sacred blessing. The missionary reports show that, as well as the locations of the first five schools, all subsequent missionary work was organized around the center and the four ancient districts that it staked in place. The careful selection of sites for the schools reflected the spatial organization of *fanompoana* and demonstrated how the schools had been drawn into the carefully judged exchange of blessing. The work of the schools forged another means of privileged access to the king, and Radama made this clear in a state address that announced the expansion of the schools into the villages around the capital. The central school at Antananarivo would be "...the parent institution and the fountainhead of all the schools that might be formed..." he explained.²⁰ Ancestral blessing would pour down to the king from his ancestors and cascade onwards through the "missionary seminary" and on to the schools in the provinces. In this way the missionaries recorded, "the good, the industrious and the wise" would be "honored" by Radama.²¹ The central school, blessed by Radama, and located in the royal court was the source of the stream of blessing that passed through schools and flowed throughout the kingdom. It trained the teachers who would be sent into the provinces, including Radama's heir who would found the school at his ancestral village of Ambohimanga.²² The schools then, were located centrally within the mutual exchange of *hasina*; on the one hand as a form of royal labor service or *fanompoana*, and on the other as a reciprocal channel for ancestral blessing directed from the King.²³

It was only after Radama had died that the LMS missionaries came to a more critical view of the "feudal" nature of *fanompoana* labor service.²⁴ Françoise Raison-Jourde observes that although the LMS eventually recognized that the schools were understood to be a form of royal work, its missionaries never explicitly acknowledged the connection between *fanompoana* and *hasina* (1991, pp. 124–125). As schools were established outside the capital city, the missionaries started to encounter more opposition to their work. Some of this resistance centered on the challenge that the mission posed to the group protectors or *sampy* of different descent groups. These were the "idols" like Rabehaza, with which I opened this chapter

¹⁹ LMS MJ 1/8: Entry for 20 May 1824. Jones and Griffiths, Antananarivo.

²⁰ LMS MJ 1/8: Entry for 10 March 1824. Jones and Griffiths, Antananarivo.

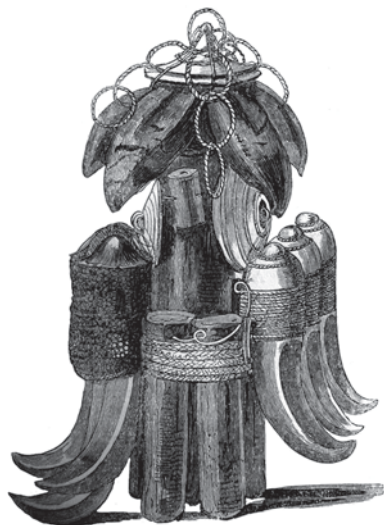
²¹ LMS MJ 18: Entry for 3 May 1824. Jones and Griffiths, Antananarivo.

²² LMS MJ 18: Entry for 29 April 1824. Jones and Griffiths, Antananarivo.

²³ Indeed, as Berg points out, the financial support of the schools by Radama, including the payment of salaries to missionaries could be interpreted as a *hasina* offering (1986, p. 189).

²⁴ For example, LMS MIL Box2/ Folder 1: 22 Oct 1836. Baker, Port Louis. Cited in Raison-Jourde 1991, p. 125. Griffiths wrote during the time of the next monarch, Queen Ranavalona I that "the six provinces in the interior of the island are oppressed to the extreme; both soldiers and civilians being compelled to work at a moment's notice, without food or any remuneration whatever..." (Griffiths 1841, p. 38).

Fig. 5.4 Example of a *sampy*, from William Ellis’s History of Madagascar



(Fig. 5.4). The power and influence of a descent group was closely tied to the power and influence of its protector, because the *sampy* ensured the proper flow of *hasina* and the security, wealth, and well-being of those they protected. Less powerful protectors, and those held by families and individuals were known as *ody*, often translated by the missionaries as “charms.” When Andrianampoinimerina unified Imerina he promoted the *sampy* of those descent groups that supported him into a royal pantheon (Delivré 1974, pp. 161, 192–198; Berg 1996, 1998). A powerful *ody* could be promoted to *sampy* status; equally the royal *sampy* could fall out of favor or be promoted according to the politics of the court (Delivré 1974, p. 193; Berg 1986, p. 177). This meant that threats to the *sampy* could be a worrisome sign that it and its associated descent group had fallen from favor.

At first, the missionaries were restrained and deferential in their dealings with the *sampy* and their guardians, and this was met with a similar caution by the *sampy* guardians toward the missionaries. Slowly, the missionaries began to recognize the importance and sacred nature of the *sampy*.²⁵ After touring the kingdom in September 1823 Jones, Griffiths and the artisan Canham were taken to the powerful village of Ambohimambola (see Fig. 5.2) where they met the guardian of Kelimalaza, one of the most powerful *sampy*.²⁶ The Ambohimambola descent group was influential in the kingdom, having being given many rights before Radama came to power. Historian Gerald Berg explains that they were “almost autonomous . . . with few legal responsibilities to the sovereign other than bestowing Kelimalaza’s blessings upon the king” (Berg 1986, p. 188). On arriving at the village the missionaries were asked to remove their shoes because horse leather was forbidden in the vil-

²⁵ LMS MIL 2/1/C: Griffiths 23 Sept 1824.

²⁶ LMS MJ 1/7: Entry for 25 Sept 1823. Tour of the kingdom.

lage. Complying with the request they reassured the guardian that their shoes were not made of horse hide, and he relented, allowing them to wear their shoes in the presence of Kelimalaza. The missionaries wrote dismissively of the house of the *sampy*. However, although they questioned the guardian critically, they seem to have refrained from condemning the *sampy* during their meeting; perhaps a little intimidated by the less than warm welcome they had experienced at this village.²⁷ The entitlement of the missionaries, and their demands for labor and school attendance contrasted with the declining political and economic power of the guardians of the *sampy* (Berg 1998, p. 85). The missionaries noted that the *sampy* guardians seemed impoverished; they had been somewhat sidelined from court life, and were usually found in their villages outside the capital (Ellis 1838, 1, p. 400). Those who embraced the schools saw the opportunities they provided for maintaining and gaining influence with the king (Raison-Jourde 1991, p. 123). In constructing schools on the missionaries' orders Radama's subjects reestablished the king and his capital city as the *axis mundi* around which the sacred landscape and highland history turned. However, Ambohimambola was only one of several villages associated with the royal *sampy* that were selected as sites for the mission schools. This suggests that the mission schools were not simply in competition with the *sampy* but that they also drew on the reputation that the *sampy* and their descent groups had established to channel *hasina* to and from the king through a different route. By mapping the schools onto the villages who hosted the *sampy*, the mission was able to lay claim to the influence and history of their powerful descent groups while also redirecting the flow of *hasina*. In this way, Radama reworked the networks of power and influence that underwrote his political strength, while seeming to leave them relatively unchallenged (Campbell 1988; Berg 1996). Despite the conflict between mission schools and the guardians of the group protectors it is clear that the missionaries' work drew its force and power from precisely the flow of *hasina* as articulated through landscape by powerful descent groups and their *sampy*.

The LMS missionaries may have been uncomfortable with the degree to which they had been incorporated into highland structures of belief, but they were unable to fully acknowledge this as the success of the mission depended upon it. The hailstorm caused by the scholars' lack of care for Rabehaza demonstrated how all were caught up with this complex circulation and exchange of blessing. Rabhaza's agency, like that of the living, depended upon his location within the flow of *hasina*. Disrespect to the *sampy* disrupted established practices which ensured the proper flow of blessing; as a result ill-effects were felt by the local descent group. The flow of *hasina* was therefore encouraged and anticipated through habitual practices which were pegged both to the material world and to representations within language. In a world where agency was dependent on the blessing that flowed from the dead the living could only make changes to the political and cosmological order through small adjustments which worked to shift the flow of *hasina* rather than overturn it. The placement of the mission schools at the villages of powerful descent groups with powerful group protectors recognized the resistances and obstructions

²⁷ LMS MJ 1/ 7: Entry for 25 Sept 1823. Tour of the kingdom.

to mission that were present in the highland world. These obstructions encompassed statements in language which denied or condemned the introduced beliefs of the Europeans, as well as the material configurations of the landscape, which could impede and hamper the missionaries' projects. But they also included the resilience of habitual practices, beliefs, and dispositions that were tied to these discursive choices and material configurations alike. Things—whether “beloved idols,” rice plants, ancestors, or kings—only had agency in so far as they were brought into relation with others, and it was through these relationships that ancestral blessing could flow and circulate. What was important in the reconfiguring of the highland landscape was that the relationships through which agency was extended or curtailed were maintained and cultivated.

As Ann Stahl has outlined, the “symbolic” meanings of past objects and landscapes are notoriously elusive for archaeologists (2002). However, as Peirce describes, these symbolic dimensions to signs are only one element of semeiosis, in which the relationship between a sign and its corresponding object is assigned by convention. Archaeologically, we often have better access to objects whose relationship to signs has a strong iconic or indexical component. These operate through similarity and relation, or along the axes of metaphor and metonymy. Peter Schmidt has explored these tropes in a number of publications that examine how metonymy and metaphor operate within myth and legend, and accordingly in practice (e.g., Schmidt 1997, 2006).²⁸ These tropes provide valuable insights into past symbolic discourses, but when grounded in a Peircean semeiotic they have the potential to do more powerful work. For both highlanders and missionaries the growth of the mission was understood in indexical terms, as demonstrating the flow and growth of blessing: God's blessing and the growth of Christianity for the Europeans, and ancestral blessing for highlanders. But for highlanders, the affective and practical recognition of the iconic aspects of the schools' placement was also important. The mission schools made a pullulating and palpable map of the flow of blessing to powerful descent groups.

The sign of mission was thus placed in a very different relation to its semeiotic object by different participants. The extension of the schools across the landscape was a mapping that was recognizable to highlanders in its incorporation of preexisting practices and beliefs; a “cartography of taste” that played out through schools and desks, teachers, and pupils. Equally, the distribution of schools was itself a material interpretant of blessing, which worked to structure and affect the ways in which people were brought into relation with the ancestral dead. Where highlanders sought out the flow of blessing, the missionaries saw the growth of education, improvement, and progress. As Peter Pels has observed, the disparity between how missionaries and the people they encountered interpreted apparent changes in belief and practice indicates that the notion of conversion may only encapsulate “...the projected change missionaries were taught to engineer, not the actual change that

²⁸ Significantly, Schmidt draws upon Roman Jakobson's (1987) discussion of metaphor and metonymy in his discussion (e.g., 2006, pp. 109–110), and Jakobson himself was influenced by C. S. Peirce's writings (Crossland 2009, pp. 73–74).

their activities helped to engender” (1999, p. 30). An emphasis on the semiotics of place encourages a dialogue between accounts that deal with the material remains of mission, and documentary accounts that revolve around the changes in belief and practices wrought by missionaries. In tracing the practical and routinized ways in which older beliefs and practices were creatively drawn upon in the construction of new configurations of belief, this dialogue has the potential to create alternate narratives that can identify the emergence of new ways of dwelling that could not be foreseen or controlled either by missionaries or by local people.

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Part III
Memory: Imagining and Remembering
Colonial Worlds

Chapter 6

Biographies of Practice and the Negotiation of Swahili at Nineteenth-Century Vumba

Stephanie Wynne-Jones

Vumba Kuu in the Colonial Moment

Enthroning the Diwan¹ of Vumba Kuu was, by the end of the nineteenth century, a practice involving elaborate ritual. This ritual embodied and enacted relationships between the Vumba people, their regional landscape, a particular set of objects and spaces, and their neighbors in the southern coastal region of Kenya. The Vumba people are a group associated with the Swahili coastal world, who claimed sovereignty over much of the area from Kwale to Tanga (Fig. 6.1) from the seventeenth century; yet, it is due to the colonial interest in recording local traditions that Vumba Kuu has become particularly well-known. Vumba's practices of enthronement were transcribed as part of the *Chronicle of Vumba Kuu* at the start of the twentieth century, recording the traditions of the diwanate in the work of A. C. Hollis (1900), a British colonial official. For the Vumba people, who were by this time living mainly on Wasini Island rather than at their former capital of Vumba Kuu, this process of recording the past had an important contemporary effect, as it simultaneously confirmed the Vumba people as Arab/Swahili in the eyes of the colonial administration, reiterated their regional authority and—through the wealth of detail provided for future historians—established the Vumba state's performances of power and authority as paradigmatic for Swahili power structures more generally (Horton and Middleton 2000, pp. 166–168; Prins 1967, p. 95).

¹ The title of Diwan is originally of Persian origin and is used in many historical Middle Eastern contexts to signify officials of high rank. It was used to denote the ruler of Vumba from the seventeenth century, when a break in succession meant the abandonment of the office of Sultan. The Diwans ruled in a hereditary fashion from this time onwards.

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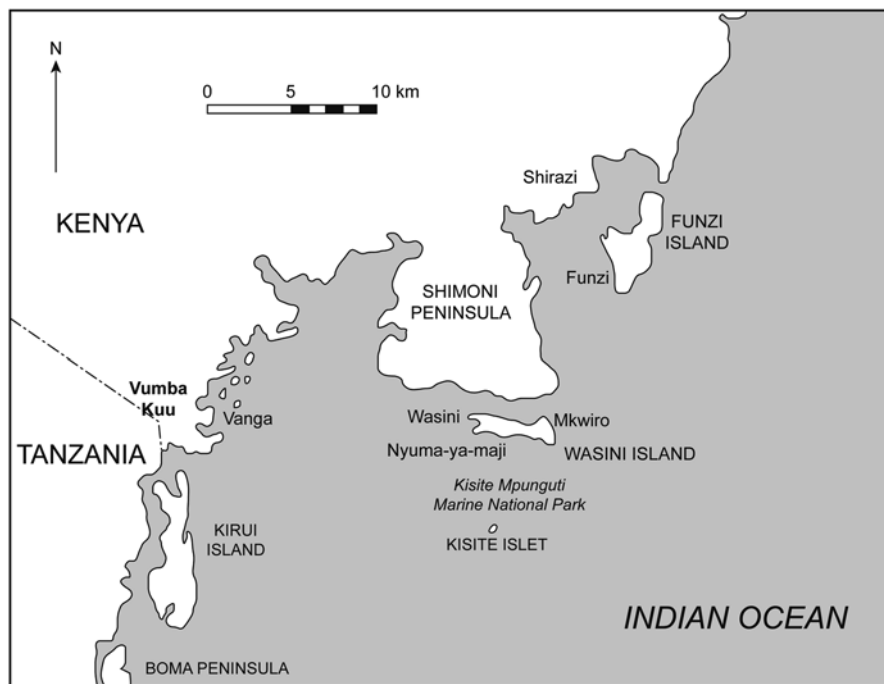


Fig. 6.1 Map of southern Kenya coast, showing the location of Vumba Kuu

The Vumba traditions relate to the deeds of a sultanate and later diwanate, but the majority of information refers to the rituals of enthronement that accompanied the installation to office of a new Diwan. These were material practices, relating to a specific location and setting; through them the identity and status of the Vumba Diwanate and people were tied to the former capital of Vumba Kuu. The installation of the Diwan was achieved through a series of rituals and feasts, involving materialized practice at all stages, and the objects associated with the diwanate became interwoven with the ongoing enactment of that office. The materiality of the process of enthronement related by the histories is therefore commonly recognized, although explored in some very different ways. Anthropologists and archaeologists, who often interpret the precolonial Swahili through their twentieth-century counterparts, have tended to see the traditions as indicative of a peculiarly objectified form of power, with the trappings of office seen as constitutive of that office (Horton and Middleton 2000, p. 166; Prins 1967; Wilson and Omar 1994). Historians such as Glassman (1995) have instead viewed Vumba's traditions as representing a contemporary maneuver within the context of nineteenth-century social mobility, when Swahili identity was contested and negotiated through increasingly competitive feasting. The performances of power are thereby seen as a recent phenomenon, perhaps drawing on more prosaic cultural practices of domestic consumption in earlier centuries.

More recently, archaeological work at the site of Vumba Kuu has recast understandings of these colonial traditions against a background of much longer-term negotiations of status and identity, as well as the ongoing record of daily life in this region (Wynne-Jones 2010). In this essay, it is suggested that the results of this archaeological work force a reconsideration of the ways that Vumba's traditions have been viewed, and hence of the colonial process of history-writing in this region. Rather than the "materialization" approach suggested by discussions of power and symbolism at Vumba Kuu, a discursive approach to materiality is presented. A consideration of the materiality of the enthronement rituals, tied up as they were with aspects of performance, can provide an important voice in the way we understand the colonial histories. The nineteenth–twentieth-century histories transcribed in the colonial moment call up a past material entanglement that had probably never existed in the form carried out during the colonial period. Nevertheless, archaeology demonstrates that what might appear as invention is actually a creative reordering of long-standing material practices. Vumba Kuu's materiality, approached through archaeology, recasts colonial traditions against a long history of performance, both public and private, which allows an exploration of how those practices were particular to their political context, and situates the written traditions. Simultaneously, archaeology here allows us to appreciate the common features of practice and performance that have been carried through the centuries. Although the specific material trappings have differed, it is here argued that performance has been a key feature of the ways that Swahili identity was negotiated at Vumba Kuu over the centuries, and it is into these recurring practices that people and objects were bound up.

The importance of dynamic material engagements in the longer-term history of Vumba Kuu suggests the notion of a biography of practice. Rather than the more common vision of biographies of objects (Gosden and Marshall 1999; Kopytoff 1986), which chart the changing ways that objects were understood in different contexts and time periods, a biography of practice focuses on the activities themselves, into which objects were entwined in various ways at different times. It is argued that at Vumba Kuu, certain practices or performances recurred, forming important ways of negotiating contemporary relationships. Feasting, or communal consumption, is the most obvious example of this, although the form of this practice varied greatly according to the particular time period, which people were involved, and the specific material repertoire. By placing a focus on networks, relationships, or activities into which people and objects were entwined, and which were constantly shifting, this approach takes inspiration from actor network theory and its "sensitivity to the messy practices of relationality and the materiality of the world" (Law 2007, p. 1) whereby, the meanings of objects and persons are a "continuously generated effect of the webs of relations within which they are located" (Law 2007, p. 1) and are constantly being reunderstood and renegotiated. Rather than necessitating a radical ontology of object–person equivalence, this approach serves here only as an inspiration to think through networks of action rather than fixed identities or material repertoires.

There is also a clear similarity to Stahl's advocacy of a "genealogy of practice" in exploring West Africa's intersections with colonialism. For Stahl (1999, 2001,

2002, 2007) this has meant an awareness of long-term cartographies of taste and object preferences with a focus on changing practices through time, and in particular changing material repertoires reflecting consumer choices. Importantly, Stahl also critiques arguments for the “invention of tradition” as creating a false dichotomy between lived past and historical memory. Historical and community memory is viewed as an ongoing and continually reinterpreted process, and the relationship between written and lived pasts is one of power rather than veracity (Stahl 2001, pp. 217–228): both represent a creative reworking of accepted truth and practical decisions.

Rather than exploring changing practice through time at Vumba Kuu, I advocate a focus on the longevity of the practices themselves, and on identifiable patterns of activity that can be mapped for different periods, echoing Latour’s (2005) contention that certain activities fall in and out of networks and that their recurring nature helps characterize the networks in which they happen, reflecting ongoing cultural idioms, continuously recreated. This seems particularly pertinent in a region in which histories and anthropologies stress the centrality of performance and social context in contestations of ethnicity, politics, and contemporary power relations.

Colonial Negotiations

The opportunities for negotiation of status that were afforded by colonial projects of historical recording and ethnic categorization have often been discussed (Feierman 1990; Ranger 1983; Spear 2003; Willis 1992). On the Swahili coast, residents often took the opportunity to reassert their links with the Arabian Peninsula in order to benefit from the slightly superior status afforded to Arabs/Asians under colonial rule (Bang 2007; Fair 1996, 1998; Glassman 2000; Loimeier and Seesemann 2006; Mazrui and Shariff 1994; Pouwels 1987; Willis 1993). In addition to the gross ethnic categories that were being delineated during this process, the opportunity for multiple smaller-scale reorientations was created, including more local debates about Omani and Arab identities in opposition to the older Shirazi families (Glassman 2000, p. 402; Sheriff 1987, pp. 24–30), about gender divisions and roles in the emerging political sphere (Askew 1999; Caplan 1982; Eastman 1994), and the recognition of territorial and regional authority (Glassman 1995, pp. 146–153; Nicholls 1971). In all of these areas, the British colonial movement was the latest manifestation of a long-running process of identity politics that pre-dated and continued throughout the Omani colonialism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Nicholls 1971; Pouwels 1987). History was—of course—one contested terrain, as claims to regional and political authority often rested on the establishment of precedent and autochthony.

As such, writing Vumba’s histories was an important process. The legitimacy afforded to the Vumba people’s claims to identity and authority by the transcription of their traditions was not just self-presentation in a colonial context but the latest manifestation of an ongoing self-construction along particular lines. The impor-

tance of official recognition and categorization has long been understood as part of this process. Askew (1999) has also made a powerful argument for attention to other cultural media in the negotiation, emphasizing performance as a key medium for social change and the negotiation of identities (see also Fair 1996; Kratz 1993). In this, Askew (1999, p. 93) draws on Turner's emphasis on the malleability of moments of public performance, creating a liminal space between the mundane and the extraordinary; nonetheless, she calls for an understanding of the ways that those standout moments are made powerful due to being embedded in an ongoing world of daily social negotiation.

There are predictable similarities between Askew's call for an appreciation of performance and the ways that archaeologies have attempted to approach spectacle and ritual activity (Inomata and Coben 2006a): each draws on a similar anthropological literature. Archaeological considerations of performance have tended to focus likewise on standout events, or spectacles, seeing these as crucial moments in which society is portrayed and refashioned. Feasting, for example, is often invoked as a mechanism for creating social solidarity, negotiating power, demonstrating largesse, and producing obligation and indebtedness; the practice is therefore not just a point at which wealth and power are displayed but an event at which these aspects are contested and constituted (Bray 2003; Dietler and Hayden 2001). As in Askew's argument, there has been a concurrent call for the recognition of private performance, mundane practice, and the constitution of selves through less spectacular events: the self-constituting, often private performances of daily life (Gardner 2004; Hodder 2006).

Practices of Enthronement

The Vumba traditions recounted to Hollis relate to the deeds of a Vumba Sultanate and later Diwanate, and much of their content follows the template of other Swahili histories, many of which overlap in their detail (Hollis 1900; McKay 1975; Wynne-Jones 2010). By the time these traditions were recorded, at the turn of the twentieth century, the Vumba people were living on Wasini Island and at Vanga, having fled their capital of Vumba Kuu during the seventeenth century, under threat of Zimba attack. The practices of enthronement recorded for the Diwans of the seventeenth–nineteenth centuries thus begin with a return to Vumba Kuu.

A processional party of elders from the more important Vumba clans would move through the site to the grave of an illustrious former Sultan, *Mwana Chambi Chandi Ivo*, where a private ceremony would invest the Diwan-elect with the regalia of office. His feet were washed, and he was crowned with a worked *kofia* (skullcap) around which a turban was tied. The “thick and tangled forest” that had grown around the grave by the nineteenth century seems to have become part of the setting for the performance of this drama; cutting a path to the grave was a task fulfilled as part of the larger ritual. The setting of the forest, over what had been the regional capital of this famous Sultan, also added to the sense of ancient tradition

that invested these actions with import. Likewise, the secrecy provided by the trees allowed the ritual to remain opaque for the wider community, with only certain families of recognized ancestry participating in the process of investiture. The ritual thus enacted and created categories of inclusivity and exclusivity that had relevance to a wider social context. The graveside setting would also have contributed to a sense of ritual, likely drawing upon established practice in Swahili communities, where graves were often prominent and centrally-positioned (Wilson 1979).

For the wider community over whom the Diwan claimed authority, the transformation would only become apparent when the elders exited the forest to attend a feast which had been prepared at a location nearby. The Diwan was carried to this event atop a bedstead, another of the objects in the material repertoire associated—through this ritual—with office. At the feast, his generosity would be displayed, as all of the groups owing allegiance to Vumba would gather to eat, and would consume the cattle provided by the Diwan-elect. A series of gifts would be provided for the elders of the non-Swahili groups with whom the Vumba state had relationships; in particular, the histories recount 2000 ells² of cloth given to the Segeju elders. The generosity of the Diwan was thus embodied in the performance of the feast, and signaled through ritualized gift-giving which established relationships of reciprocity and debt with various other groups. The context of the feast was fundamentally embodied; through consuming the generosity of the Diwan, the participants were performing their relationship with the new leader. The material culture of this encounter was enmeshed in this network of action and performance, with the various objects gaining power through the performance, just as the Diwan does. The feast was probably associated with certain etiquette or social spaces of consumption, which can only be partially reconstructed by us now. This might have been determined by specialized foodstuffs, linked to communal or individual portions, or to particular serving and eating dishes that created a similar division.

The enthronement of the Diwan was also a powerfully sensory event. It is notable that all of the objects linked to the diwanate are linked to performed aesthetics. The Diwan himself wore his skullcap and turban above fine robes, and he was the only member of Vumba society permitted to wear leather, rather than wooden sandals. His regalia also included an armband, which was not only visually impressive, embodying the performance of the role of Diwan on this and future occasions, but was indexical of previous performances, having been achieved following the provision of an earlier feast. The practice of enthronement, therefore, separated the Diwan from the larger society in a performance that wove together his physical and material attributes into the role. Likewise, the inherited regalia of the office included the *ngoma kuu* or large drums, the *siwa* or a side-blown horn, and *matwazi* or cymbals (Dickson 1921; Wilson and Omar 1994). These were played during the enthronement feast, and everyone danced to their music, experiencing the diwanate as it was performed on that occasion, encountering performance as “both product and producer of social relations” (Askew 1999, p. 77; see also Fair 1996, 1998;

² An ell was a measurement of cloth based on the length of a man’s arm. An English ell was approximately 45 in..

Glassman 1995 on the political effectiveness of drumming and dance in colonial East Africa). The objects were therefore bound to the office through the practices of enthronement, and future use would index that practice, bringing the sensory experience of the feast into quotidian contexts.

Life at Vumba Kuu

At first glance, the archaeology of Vumba Kuu's occupation offers a very different type of story. The majority of the site is relatively humble, associated with wattle-and-daub architecture and a simple material repertoire, seemingly distant from the grand deeds of Sultans and Diwans recounted in the traditions. Yet, by approaching the archaeology with an emphasis on practice and performance, a number of themes begin to emerge that can allow a better understanding of Vumba, both during its fourteenth–fifteenth-century occupation, and in the colonial period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Indeed, excavations at the site have recovered what appear to be the remains of specialized or communal consumption near the fourteenth–fifteenth-century mosque on the southwestern side of the site (Fig. 6.2). A 3 × 3 m trench (VMB008)

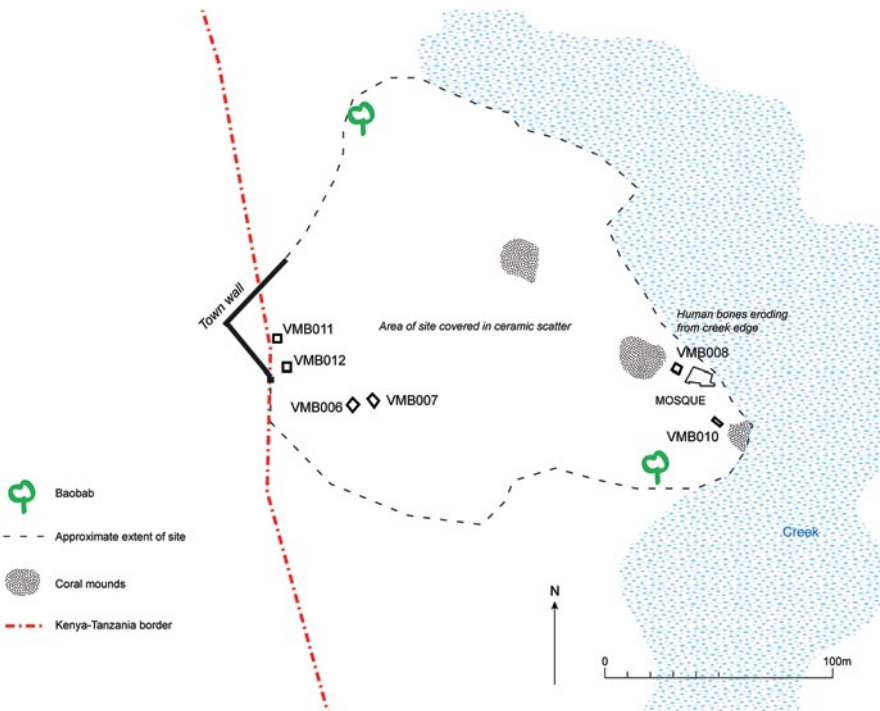


Fig. 6.2 Plan of site, showing the location of VMB008 near to mosque

revealed a dense midden deposit in this area. This part of the site is the only area associated with coral-built structures, including the mosque and probably some tombs, as evidenced by fragments of human skeletons being washed out into the creek to the east. The coral mounds on this side of the site are now fairly indistinct, but parallels from other sites suggest that coral-built tombs were likely, as well as possible domestic structures. This area is therefore qualitatively different from the rest of the site, and the presence of the mosque makes it likely that it represented a focal point for the community. In this context, dense consumption-related remains are of interest, particularly as they seem not to have been related to a structure: no fragments of an associated building made of coral or baked daub were found as part of this deposit.

The specialized nature of the consumption evidenced here was suggested by the contents of the midden, as well as by its location (see Wynne-Jones 2010, for a fuller description of the assemblage). The ceramics recovered were largely bowls (74% of the total) with a significant proportion of carinated bowls (10% of the total), which were rare for the site as a whole (3% of the overall assemblage). Four bowls with rim diameters between 37 and 40 cm were found in this midden, with their large size implying a function as a serving dish, and were unique for the site. The assemblage was also more highly decorated than the standard. Red-painted and graphited burnished vessels were the most common type of decoration at Vumba Kuu: the majority (46% of all the painted vessels at Vumba Kuu) were found in VMB008. Finally, an incense burner and a ceramic oil lamp were found as part of this midden (Fig. 6.3), suggestive of a ritual context and possibly linked with Islamic practice. Both were also decorated with red paint. The deposits here therefore represent a more decorative aesthetic in consumption paraphernalia than is seen in the domestic assemblages, which carried over onto the associated objects like the lamp and burner.

This more highly decorated aesthetic and the different vessel form speak to a different setting for the consumption evidenced in VMB008, setting it apart from the domestic debris of daily life. Archaeology would not recover the paraphernalia recounted in the Vumba traditions, such as the wooden drums, or sandals, or the objects of personal adornment. All are much less durable in the archaeological record, and would also have been curated and passed down over the generations (indeed those encountered in the twentieth century were said to date back to the occupation of Vumba Kuu (Wilson and Omar 1994). Yet the ceramics—all locally produced—and the foodstuffs consumed are clearly part of the same material repertoire as those produced for daily use, and the remains seen in VMB008 are evocative of the routines of daily life.

At Vumba Kuu, these routines were fairly simple. The site bears the remains of a modest town, enclosed by a coral-built wall and made up largely of wattle-and-daub architecture. The mosque, aforementioned, and the few coral mounds scattered in that area, are the only investment in more permanent building materials at the site. A single occupation layer recovered through excavations here relates to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and to a comparatively small fishing and farming community. Excavations across the site recovered wattle-and-daub house floors and their

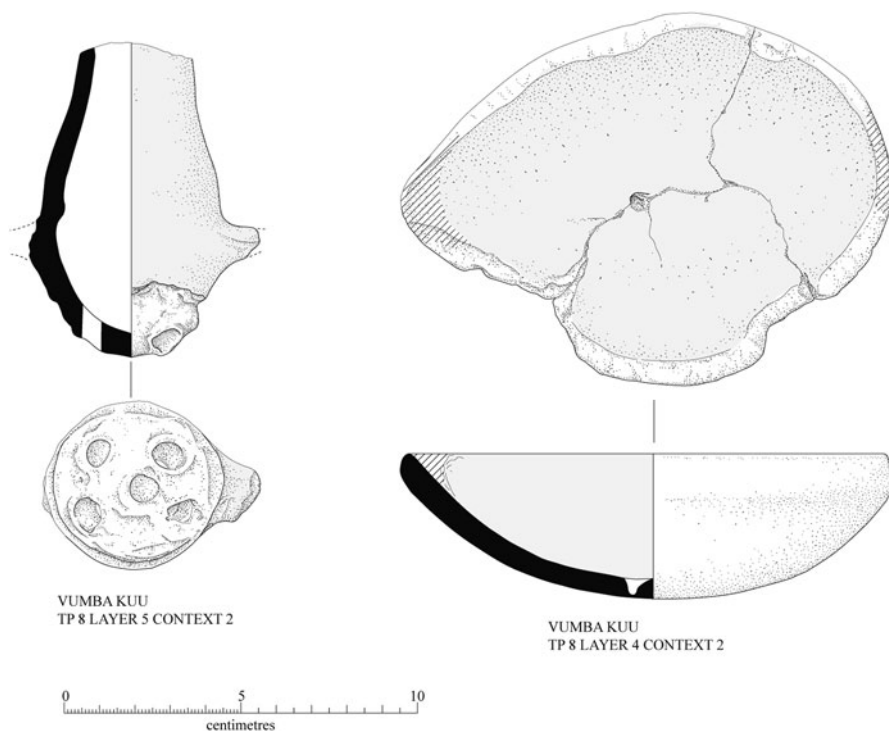


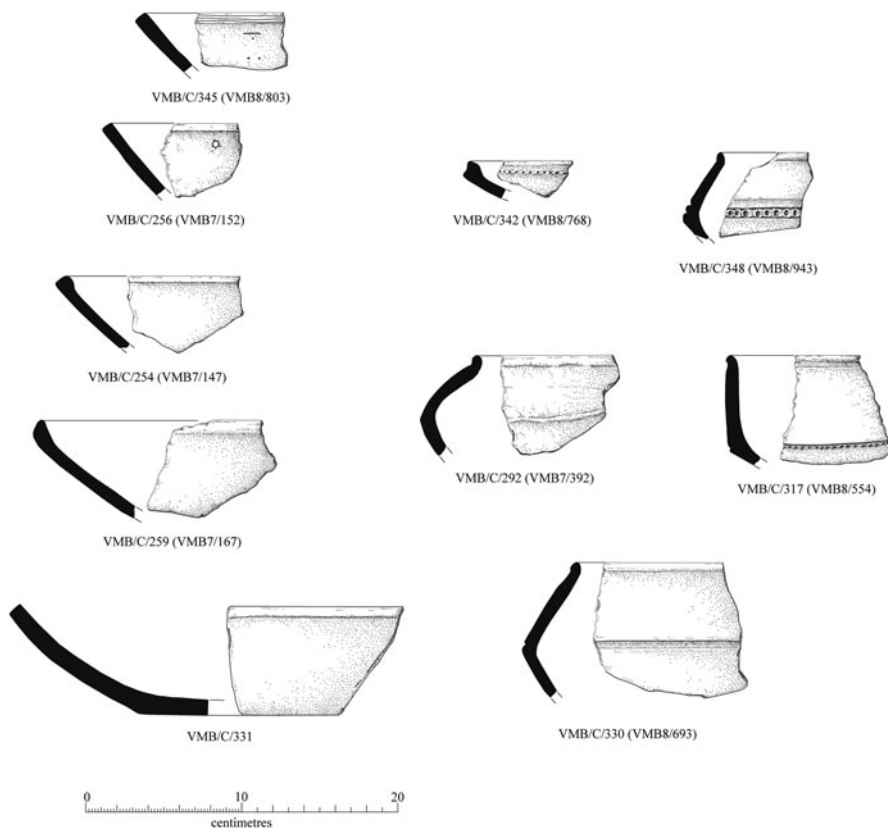
Fig. 6.3 Incense burner and oil lamp from VMB008

associated midden pits, which provide a familiar Swahili picture of small-scale production and consumption of local crops and proteins, from fish to cattle and small stock. Botanical remains testify to the use of hinterland crops, such as millet and mung bean,³ with no evidence for the rice consumption seen elsewhere in these centuries (Walshaw 2005, 2010). These foodstuffs were cooked in wide, round cooking pots made of local low-fired earthenware. In addition, 64% of the diagnostic ceramics are of open bowl forms, mostly of a simple, straight-sided design (see Table 6.1 and Fig. 6.4). This suggests that, in common with other Swahili sites of this period, the inhabitants of Vumba Kuu were using bowls as serving dishes, whether for individual or group consumption; this contrasts with earlier periods, in which it seems that food might have been shared directly from the cooking vessels. Otherwise, though Vumba Kuu does not possess many of the features of Swahili town assemblages. In particular, there is almost no evidence for oceanic trade, which was a key facet of Swahili identity and economic practice (Horton 1987; LaViolette 2008). Twelve excavation units, adding up to a total of 58 m², were excavated and yielded hundreds of kilograms of locally produced pottery and yet 63 tiny fragments of Islamic monochrome and 39 glass beads represent the only evidence for external

³ Botanical remains were analyzed by Dr. Sarah Walshaw of Simon Fraser University.

Table 6.1 Vumba Kuu ceramics sorted by form

	Open bowls (%)	Rounded closed bowls (%)	Carinated bowls (%)	Globular jars (%)	Necked jars (%)
Overall assemblage (including VMB008)	54	13	3	16	14
Overall assemblage (excluding VMB008)	50	13	1	25	12
VMB008	56	14	4	7	19

**Fig. 6.4** Selection of bowl forms from excavations at Vumba Kuu

contacts (Fig. 6.5). This reinforces the notion of Vumba as peripheral to the Swahili world, participating in the social practices of Swahili communities, but not sharing their underlying economic basis in trade.

Against this background, the finds in Unit VMB008 are anomalous but intelligible. The ceramics are similar, clearly made locally, although more highly decorated. Likewise, the foodstuffs eaten are of the same basic repertoire, but with a much greater preponderance of fish bone and no evidence of any other kind of fauna. This

Fig. 6.5 Photograph of Islamic monochrome sherds from Vumba Kuu



is also interesting, as at other Swahili sites of this time period, feasting and high-status consumption are most consistently associated with cattle (Fleisher 2010), a link reinforced by histories and modern ethnographies (Caplan 1998, 2002, p. 25; Vernet 2004), and yet VMB008 contained no mammal bones of any kind.

It is suggested that the finds in VMB008 represent some kind of standout event or ritual, associated with the consumption of food, and the lack of an associated structure suggests that this was a public event, and very probably involved a wider community. The spatial association with the mosque suggests a link with Islam, or at least with the communal nature of the associated spaces. As with the rituals of enthronement recorded in later centuries, this event (or possibly many events) was associated with the tomb area of Vumba Kuu, and may have been in some way linked to the memorialization of ancestors as experienced at those sites. The sensory nature of the event is also evident here. As well as the act of consuming food, and therefore experiencing participation through the provisions laid on, the incense burner and lamp speak to an environment that was set apart from the ordinary. Both are elsewhere associated with mosque contexts at Swahili sites (Horton 1996, p. 354). Whether or not this consumption was related to the authorization of power at the site remains unclear, but I speculate that it would have been a bringing together of the community as they participated in their common Vumba identity and had it reinforced through the grandeur of the occasion.

Yet that grandeur is relative. The material repertoire of VMB008 is simply an elaboration of the more common assemblage for the site, and is clearly part of the same tradition. The more highly decorated and specialized ceramics seen in VMB008 would therefore have drawn upon a common shared materiality experienced daily, and heightened by the occasion in which it was entwined. Likewise, the bowls of the domestic middens, from which Vumba's residents would have eaten each day, would have allowed them to continue their experience of being part of the community, as the act of eating food would continually reference the grander ceramics and meals associated with community occasions.

Biographies of Practice/Performance at Vumba Kuu

The archaeology of the site of Vumba Kuu therefore gives us a perspective on the nineteenth–twentieth-century histories of the Vumba people. These histories refer to a glorious early past for the site, ambitiously ascribed an origin date of 600AH (AD1204) to match that of the stonetown of Pate in the Lamu archipelago. Neither this date nor the references to a powerful sultanate are easily reconciled with the site of Vumba Kuu, with its small-scale production, wattle-and-daub architecture, and lack of evidence for external contacts. The histories are therefore cast as a process of inventive remembering that gives a particular piquancy to discussions of the manipulations of history during the early colonial period, and the ways that groups used the past to establish claims on contemporary ethnicities and identities. The site of Vumba Kuu is central to this process of historical memory, providing a crucial sense of ancestry, a link to the coastal world and a history of belonging; it also allows a claim to the longevity of Vumba structures of authority as they were constituted and enacted in the later period.

Yet a consideration of the materiality of Vumba's historical traditions allows a clearer perspective on this colonial-period process of memory-making. Specifically, evidence for a discontinuous practice of feasting speaks to a long-established means through which Vumba people participated in the Swahili world and through which they *were* Swahili. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, community consumption at Vumba would seem to have been related to Islamic practice. Communal consumption was also linked to a particular foodstuff: in this case, fish seems to have formed the major component. The associated ceramics also suggest a role for display, seen in the more highly decorated forms seen in VMB008. It is difficult to reconstruct the scale of the spectacle involved here, or the scale of participation within the community. Certainly, though, the consumption represented by VMB008 can be thought of as a public performance, of which people would have been aware even if they did not participate. Thus, it can be seen as a moment of cultural production, whether that was at a spectacular scale involving drumming and dancing and a wider community, or at a much more modest local level. Both participants and witnesses would have experienced participation in the coastal world through the forms of consumption both here and replicated in their daily lives.

This suggests that the narrators of the Vumba traditions in the nineteenth–twentieth century were not simply inventing tradition in a form that made sense for the time, but were drawing on an established mode of historical production in that retelling. The history of communal consumption at Vumba Kuu (as with the growing evidence for feasting at other sites of this time period) adds historical precedence to the arguments discussed above, suggesting the importance of performance in the colonial context, not just as a response to relative political weakness or a subversive device, but as a key medium of social negotiation and interaction. They have previously been referenced in this way, of course, but largely via the assumption that the Vumba traditions referred to some historical truth regarding the practices of the ear-

lier sultanate, rather than as a recurring set of practices linked in with substantially changing materialities.

Practice/Performance

The public events represented by the Vumba enthronement and the consumption seen in VMB008 speak directly to archaeologies that focus on the spectacular and ritual as the setting for understandings of performance. Drawing on an anthropological literature that stresses theatricality and public spectacle in the creation of moments of transformation (Schechner 2002; Turner 1986), performance has been conceived as extraordinary, outside the normal run of events. Inomata and Coben (2006b), for example, specifically adopt the term “spectacle” to define this field of enquiry, and to circumscribe the world of performance within the realms of the nonroutine and the theatrical (Inomata and Coben 2006b, p. 23), requiring the existence of an audience to experience and participate in the consolidation or renegotiation of social relationships made possible in these “moments of disjuncture” (Inomata and Coben 2006b, p. 21). Performance refers thereby to a type of activity that punctuates the equilibrium of the mundane, providing moments of dynamism and change against the background of practice, or daily activity (Bradley 1991; Schmidt 1996). As discussed above, the archaeology of feasting draws on this logic, exploring the potential for these standout events to create and reforge social relationships. The enthronement feasts at Vumba Kuu can be explored through this literature, both as what Dietler (2001, pp. 82–88) has called “patron-role” feasts and—particularly during the preceding ceremonies, as “diacritical” feasts, in which political territory is negotiated.

Yet, these approaches also emphasize the ways that ritual and the extraordinary draw on a repertoire of shared experience beyond the confines of the particular instance. Smith (2006, p. 481) has pointed out that the conspicuous consumption participated in on these occasions owes its importance to accepted—daily—practices of consumption and taste. Likewise, other ritual performance draws on the “hidden transcripts” or offstage understandings of performers and audience alike (Inomata and Coben 2006b, p. 25). Although the inventiveness and social power of performance tends to be stressed, there is also the potential that the picture presented during the ceremonies might be contested through daily actions beyond the realms of the ritual (Bailey 1996, p. 5).

This realm of daily practice might also be considered a form of performance (involving what Shanks 2004 has called “performativities”), and it is often at this level that archaeology can inform on historical understandings. Hodder (2006) in particular has stressed the performative aspect of daily practice and repetitive activity within particular spaces. Like other archaeologists who have attempted to bring performance into their understandings of the formation of identities (Joyce 2000; Shanks 2004; Wynne-Jones 2007b), Hodder stresses the self-constructive aspects of these performances in creating what he calls “docile bodies” socialized individuals well-habituated into particular ways of doing and being. These ideas

are similar to those labeled elsewhere “practice” approaches (Donley-Reid 1990; Hodder and Cessford 2004). Budden and Sofaer (2009, p. 211) attribute this focus on the individual to a reliance on the work of Butler (1993) in exploring the ways that performance and identity interact, and advocate instead attention to the work of Goffman (1959), whose ideas about the “performance of self” provide a bottom-up perspective without losing sight of the importance of social, as opposed to personal, identities; they bring back the audience when considering mundane activities and nondiscursive forms of skill and knowledge.

These three scales, of spectacular, public, and private performance, are all interlinked. In exploring the process of authorization exemplified by the Vumba traditions, it is particularly interesting to think through the relationships between the standout events and the sphere of daily activity or practice. As discussed, spectacular communal performance, as represented by the rituals and feasting recounted in the traditions, provide an important medium for social negotiation and the consolidation or reorientation of relationships. On the Swahili coast of the twentieth century, we know that both feasting and *ngoma* were important vehicles for that process. Yet the effectiveness of that ritual draws on a rich wider world of daily activities and understandings, as well as a series of performed identities that are continuously affirmed in daily activity. This provides a means of understanding the world of Vumba’s Diwanate, as presented at the close of the nineteenth century, as part of a world of understanding and action that gives context to the narratives presented to the colonial officer.

Just as the process of enthroning the Diwan was caught up in a particular set of objects and spaces, daily performance would likewise have produced networks binding people and things in more mundane activities. The material nature of the Vumba rituals has already been discussed, together with the ways that sensory experience would have contributed to people’s experience of power. Approaches to objects as bound up in the practices of power are common to archaeology, although often follow a rather instrumental approach to materialization of power. More recently, recognition of the dialectical nature of materiality has allowed archaeologists to think through the ways that objects are part of social action. We act through objects, and their particular affordances both allow and shape the ways that action is structured (Fisher 2004). Through actor network theory, archaeologists have begun to engage with the notion that objects have agency (Ingold 2000; Jones 2007; Knappe 2005), although many prefer the form of secondary agency found in anthropologies of materiality (Gell 1998; Miller 2005) to the posthumanist viewpoint of some ANT writers (see, for example, the discussion of “object efficacies” in Hardin and Arnoldi [1996, p. 1], which adopts an approach very similar to Gell). What is useful, though, in Latour’s (1991, 2000) work, is the movement of focus for study, away from specific people, actions, or objects as having identity in themselves, toward the networks in which they are bound up, which for Latour (2005) constitute “the social” and creates a more dynamic viewpoint for exploring the constantly renegotiated society created through their interaction. Rather than Gell’s directional approach to object agency, in which agents always have a “patient” on whom they act, Latour (see also Callon 1991; Law 1991, 2007) advocates a multidirectional

and fluid world of activity in which both act through and with each other, creating a dynamic model for exploring performance as action, through which both people and things are identified. Rather than focusing on objects, we “must infer, through an operation of retro-engineering, the chains of associations of which these objects are only one link” (Latour 2000, p. 10).

The concept of a biography of practice, advocated in this paper for Vumba, is perhaps a means to begin this process; it is an attempt to situate the meaning of the material world we encounter as archaeologists in the realm of human action, both mundane and specialized, as in the Vumba rituals. If it is possible to trace the actions in which objects were entangled, and through which they might have moved, rather than the relatively static objects as they are constantly reinterpreted, we can retain the notion of active objects without focusing in on any one category at the risk of essentializing its meaning. As Latour states in reference to the Berlin Key, “the very notion of discipline is impracticable without steel, without the wood of the door, without the bolt of the locks” (2000, p. 19); actions can only be imagined through the materiality that is part of them. Thus, feasting at Vumba was experienced through the existence of associated material culture, but if the action and performance of identities that is feasting becomes our focus, then it is possible that the material culture was changeable over time. We need not posit a static repertoire of objects, or of their associated meanings, as the recurring practice of specialized consumption was recast by successive generations in ways that draw upon the past but also reference present concerns.

The particular objects and identities associated with practice might change over time, while the ways that these were enacted and understood could be remarkably constant. At Vumba in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the ritual performance of identity recounted for the colonial histories was a contemporary means of entwining the objects and actions associated with status; they seem to draw on a longer tradition of practice which can be viewed through the use of varying material repertoires and settings in the repeated practice of communal consumption.

Colonialism and the Invention of Tradition

What is particularly interesting at Vumba Kuu is the contradiction between the histories and the archaeologies. Vumba Kuu has become established as a model for the ways that power might have been linked to particular material practices and yet was an extremely humble site with little evidence for the objects usually associated with that power in the Swahili world. Histories and archaeologies associate Swahili elite power of all periods with overseas trade; the recognition of the importance of objects in the legitimization of that power has been linked to the demonstration of those connections (Meier 2009; Wright 1993; Wynne-Jones 2007a). Objects derived from trade are associated with display, and have also been regarded as intrinsic to high-status consumption practices. This latter argument, articulated by Fleisher (2010), also links feasting practices to wider changes in the archaeology of his study

region on Pemba from the eleventh century onward, and a growing proportion of decorative bowl forms in the ceramic record, both imported and local. This analysis allows a reappraisal of both the use and display of imported goods as part of a realm of power negotiation. Fleisher argues that imported ceramics gained their power not only through their links with oceanic trade, but also through reference to Swahili consumption activities. This consideration of the internal logics of value moves his analysis of feasting beyond many of the archaeological studies in this region, creating object biographies for the ceramics, and locating their value in the ways they were understood locally and the practices with which they were bound up. It also provides a means of “historicizing the role of feasts in the deeper Swahili past, based on an understanding of feasts as a central social practice” which he traces directly to the importance given to these moments in the nineteenth-century histories (Fleisher 2010, p. 203).

The data from Vumba Kuu do not challenge this argument, so much as shift the focus of analysis. The Vumba context is clearly very different, and the assemblage associated with the communal consumption or ritual of the earlier period is significantly less dramatic. Unlike Fleisher’s example from Chwaka, the assemblage is not associated with imported goods, or with the bones of cattle. Both of these have been taken as indicators of status in Swahili contexts and their presence is key to the way that feasting has been recognized. Rather the Vumba data highlight a sense of performativity for these practices, suggesting that it was the practice itself that had social efficacy in this context, with the materials through which it was experienced changing according to context. The objects associated with VMB008 were intertwined with the process of performance, which is what gave them efficacy, as well as shaping the performances themselves. They also all speak to an embodied experience of consumption, with the different social space provided by the various vessels, as well as the objects that would have created a particular atmosphere during the event through the light of the oil lamps and the burning of incense. Thus, at Vumba we see the performance articulated through a very local material culture.

This sense of performativity, highlighting practice and interaction, also lets us look at the more mundane aspects of Swahili social life in a new way. The ceramics associated with daily consumption are part of the same tradition as those found in the more specialized context, with the two no doubt reinforcing each other. They also echo the more decorative forms used in specialized consumption, and may have been a continual reaffirmation of participation in the wider world of practice united by these traditions. Practices therefore echo across scales, as well as across time periods, and incorporate different objects into established networks of interaction.

By placing the focus on the performance, rather than on the objects or the people *per se*, a biography of practice can allow for the recognition of similar structuring logics being played out in different ways and with a different material repertoire. Thus, the outcome of exploring repetitive performance/practice in the longer-term history of Vumba is not simply about historicizing the role of feasting but about recognizing the practices that constitute networks into which objects and people are bound. Specialized consumption as a practice at Vumba Kuu might be citing

a wider world in which imported goods were entangled in networks of action, but might in the particular instance be enacted using locally produced goods. This could nonetheless have signaled to all participants an involvement in a larger world of social interaction in which these practices were meaningful. As already recognized, the material correlates of consumption gain their value through association with particular practice. The value or status of those objects, however, is not external to the practices (as with imported goods) but is actively created through them. As with Latour (2000), objects and social activity were both created through the practices that linked them together, constraining accepted action but also allowing it.

At Vumba Kuu, the notion of a biography of practice enables us to perceive a thread through the different historical manifestations of the site, and to build the histories narrated during the colonial period into more than an “invention of tradition.” Through their citation of an ongoing world of specialized consumption, the Vumba people of the colonial period were actively creating themselves in much the same way that the inhabitants of the fourteenth–fifteenth-century site did. The rituals they cited, through which the Vumba leaders and people were simultaneously created, made sense in a nineteenth-century world, but they also continued a long tradition of practice. This practice displayed more continuity than the other aspects of the region’s occupation, enmeshing material goods and people within a network in which both made sense.

The complex picture of people and their overlapping relationships encountered by the British colonial powers on the south coast of Kenya resisted easy ethnic delineation (Middleton 1992). Historians of the twentieth century now recognize that an overarching definition of the fluid and shifting group known as Swahili is likely impossible to obtain (Loimeier and Seesemann 2006; Willis 1993, p. 12). This was clearly also the case in earlier centuries, as increasing archaeological data from different regions of the coast show very different types of site, object assemblages and lifeways. I argue that performance might be the key to the way Swahili identity has always been manifest, and that the practices glimpsed through the materiality of the Vumba histories and their archaeological predecessors were key defining characteristics in this process on the southern Kenya coast. In the nineteenth century, then, the very tangible, performative ways that the Vumba people chose to assert their claims to identity and authority drew on a long history not of a specific group of people but a specific means of establishing the claims of quite disparate groups to places, objects, and ways of being in the world.

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Chapter 7

Margins of Difference: A Study of the Collapse and Restoration of the Kekana Chiefdom Under the Rule of Chief Mugombane

Amanda Esterhuysen

Introduction

The South African colonial frontier, like many others, produced zones of interaction that were characterized by the dual processes of domination (colonizers) and resistance (colonized) (Silliman 2005, p. 59), while at the same time engendering new and interesting “hybrid” or “creole” ideas within and on the margins of the interacting societies (cf. Gosden 2001, p. 243; Lightfoot 1995). However, as a number of excellent historical and anthropological studies have described and analyzed these moments of colonial contact (see for example Bonner 1983; Delius 1983; Legassick 1980; Penn 2005), very few archaeological studies have devoted much attention to the broader impact of colonialism, or to the often more subtle internal changes, contradictions, conflicts, and anxieties that these zones of interaction produced within the African societies that they study (see Swanepoel et al. 2008 for a broader discussion). As much energy has been expended on describing sites and objects, and in constructing culture histories, we now need to unpack the relationships between persons and things (cf. Leach 1965, pp. 168–169), both within and between sites, and to begin to understand the relations of power that each may have supported or excluded at any one point in time (cf. Thomas 1991, p. 126). This chapter examines the aftermath of a series of violent clashes between the Trekkers (Dutch colonists, also referred to as Boers) and the Kekana Ndebele that occurred on the northern frontier of South Africa in 1854 AD, and through a study of the human and material remains attempts to expose the complex web of spiritual and physical relationships

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that played a role in the collapse and restoration of the Kekana Ndebele chiefdom. In particular it attempts to detect the margins, boundaries, and internal lines (Douglas 1966, p. 51) that become fortified and reinforced as the foreign, outside forces, begin to threaten the local body politic, because these margins and boundaries are key reflectors of internal tensions and social anxiety.

The events, which form the focus of this chapter, took place within the northern region of South Africa. Today this area is known as the Limpopo Province (Fig. 7.1), but in the past it formed part of the Transvaal and was referred to as the Northern Transvaal. In September 1854, in a coordinated act of resistance, the Ndebele, under chiefs Mugombane (Kekana) and Mapela (Langa), attacked a number of Trekkers after which the Kekana took refuge in a cave (now known as Historic Cave, see Fig. 7.1). The Trekkers retaliated and, after trying unsuccessfully to extricate the Kekana from the cave, placed them under siege. Over a period of a month the Kekana suffered great loss, many were shot trying to break out of the cave or died of dehydration within it (Esterhuysen et al. 2009). The Kekana oral history is silent about the siege, and the oral tradition deftly papers over a break in the lineage that occurs after the siege (see Esterhuysen 2012; Hofmeyr 1993). This study turns to the human and material remains, described in contemporary documents and excavated from Historic Cave, to tease out the less durable sociopolitical forces at play.

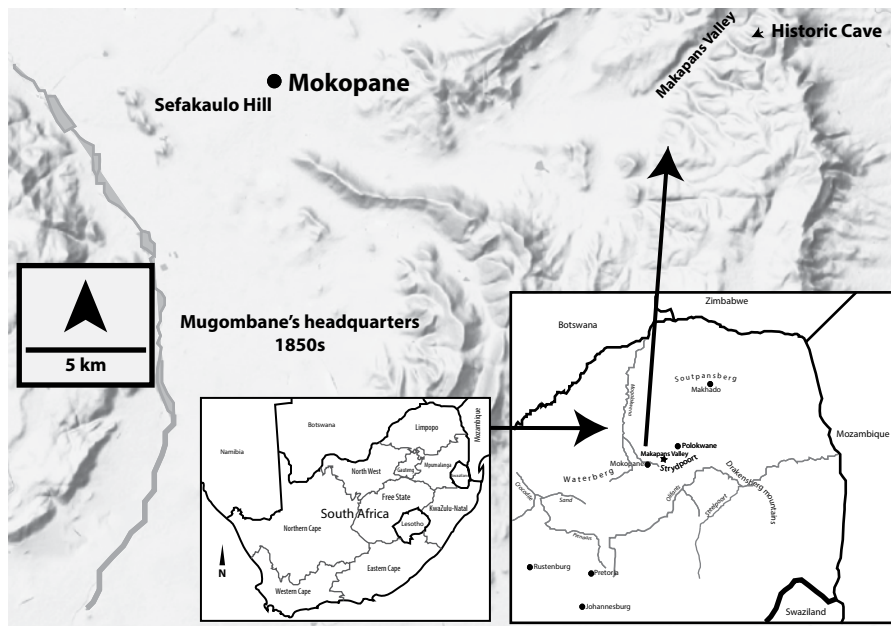


Fig. 7.1 A map of the study area

Death and the Corpse

Corpses, death, and dying are culturally constructed entities that form part of a network of knowledge and memory, and the content and meaning of mortuary rituals serve to reinforce the social, political, and ritual scaffolding that underpins it. These rituals serve not only to make sense of the transition between life and death but also to reestablish, justify, and normalize the new hierarchy of social relationships that come into being after the death of an individual (Boeyens et al. 2009; Ngubane 1976; Posel and Gupta 2009). Thus as human bodies instinctively prompt questions about cause of death, and age and sex profiles, there is much to be gained from shifting the focus of the study from the human remains, to the corpse as a signifier of the sociopsychological fabric of the society (Baglow 2007; Crossland 2009, p. 71).

Amongst Southern African Bantu-speaking people a corpse is both a symptom and cause of internal social or political tension because the actual cause of death is always secondary to an underlying socio-ideological factor that *allowed* the person to die. Studies of death and mortuary practices, conducted in South Africa from the 1900s to present, consistently identify mystical forces as the root cause of death (Ashforth 1998; Carton 2003; Eiselen and Schapera 1966; Gluckman 1937; Hammond-Tooke 1981, 1993; Janzen 1992; Junod 1905; Mönning 1967; Ngubane 1976). These forces may be powerful, malevolent, outside forces brought to bear by a witch or sorcerer; contagious polluting forces, permeating from corpses or people in hot or dangerous states that weaken and cause death (Hammond-Tooke 1993, p. 179); or brought about by ancestral wrath. Ancestors were generally known for their benevolence but would visit their displeasure upon humans if they felt offended or neglected (Eiselen and Schapera 1966, p. 254; Gluckman 1937; Hammond-Tooke 1993, p. 178). In most documented cases, remedial action involved divining the source of the malevolence and restoring the *status quo* through the application of protection magic, cleansing rituals, or imposing strict observance of rituals and avoidance practices, and sacrificing animals to appease and please the ancestors (see for example Eiselen and Schapera 1966, p. 251; Gluckman 1937, p. 125). The chief was ultimately responsible for the physical and spiritual well-being of the group; the chief's ancestors ensured the safety of the royal lineage and thus the chieftom (Hammond-Tooke 1993, p. 151). He played a politico-religious role and was expected to provide rain and maintain a condition of coolness, metaphors for social harmony and prosperity (Hammond-Tooke 1993, p. 19).

Mourning and death rituals have a restorative function, both at the level of the family and society at large. The corpse is dealt with in a “culturally structured way” and the ceremony provides the opportunity for mourners to reconstitute relationships and heal the “rupture in the social fabric” (Stutz 2010). However, if someone of importance has died it also provides the opportunity to disassemble and reassemble the body politic in a manner that is consistent with an established, possibly slightly manipulated, body of custom and practice.

In Southern African societies the first set of social relationships that need to be reconstituted are relationships between the living; amongst wives, brothers, and

uncles of the deceased (Gluckman 1937). The nature of these new relationships of responsibility depend on the *social personality* of the deceased; his/her status, influence and prestige, which includes the standing of his/her lineage or clan (see Berglund 1976, pp. 85–88, for a discussion on *isithunzi*). The second set of relationships that need readjustment occur in the world of the ancestors, which is analogous and contiguous to the world of the living (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, p. 153; Gluckman 1937; Ngubane 1976). The shade or *social personality* of the deceased must take up his/her appropriate position to ensure the restoration and continued welfare of his/her family.

It is thus in the best interest of the next of kin to ensure that the transfiguration occurs successfully so that the shade can continue to play a part in their affairs (Gluckman 1937). If the corpse is not properly buried and the grave not attended to for an appropriate period of time, the transition to the spirit world can be impeded and the *social personality* may be captured and appropriated for use in this world by witchdoctors. Berglund's (1976, p. 81) informants, for example, stressed the importance of watching the graves of important people, like chiefs or doctors, because these graves, if left unguarded, could be opened by *abathakathi* (witches) who could slit the tongue, drive a stake through the body, and apply medicines to "kill and annihilate" the person. This was considered a terrible thing because it involved the termination of the *social personality* together with the moral weight and the store of power that derives from the clan or lineage.

It is these "leaky spaces" (Baglow 2007, p. 236) that allow the rules of succession amongst the living and the dead sufficient flexibility to legitimize a number of defensible alternatives (Esterhuysen 2012; Hamilton 1985; Oomen 2008). Historically, this is most evident after the death of a chief when rival half-brothers and uncles, fiercely supported by their maternal kin, jostled for position (Schapera 1963). It is at these points in time that chiefdoms more than often split, and the success of each new chief depended on his ability to put together an effective and trustworthy set of advisors and accomplished doctors and diviners to convey perceptible approval from the spirit world (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, p. 151).

Lastly, the corpse occupies the boundary between reason and terror, anxiety and calm, and between disgust, revulsion, and fascination (Posel and Gupta 2009). Ngubane (1976), influenced by the work of Douglas (1966), argued that because birth and death were mysteries that overlapped with the "other world" they were marginal states that were dangerous to both worlds (Ngubane 1976, p. 274). Death, thus creates pollution and anyone who comes into contact with the corpse was (and is) at risk of being contaminated (Gluckman 1937; Ngubane 1976). The contagion must be contained or it will cause further illness, misfortune, and death (Gluckman 1937, p. 125). Posel and Gupta (2009) also remind us, with deference to Baudrillard (2000) and Foucault (1991), it is on "death's borders" that power is established (Baudrillard 2000, p. 130). The intentional "breaching" of normal and acceptable treatment of the corpse has "heightened" symbolic and political meaning (Posel and Gupta 2009, p. 301). Bodies are, in the words of Richardson (2008, p. 190), a "grizzly tool for political rhetoric."

The metaphor of “eating up” was readily applied by conquering chiefs during the nineteenth century in Southern Africa, a concept that aptly described the practice of vanquishing fractious groups or individuals, and involved the incorporation of subjects, and the appropriation of stock and other wealth (Duncan 2010; McClendon 2006). But, as the “language of eating” no doubt fed the colonial and particularly the missionary’s preconceptions about savagery and cannibalism (Lindenbaum 2004), there is a growing body of argument that suggests that this metaphor for power and invincibility was founded in anthropophagy (see Delius 2010). A number of South African ethnographers and anthropologists have recorded that the most potent medicines contain human flesh (Hammond-Tooke 1993, p. 81; Kirkaldy 2005, pp. 222–249, 270–274; Krige 1936, p. 270; Niehaus 2000, p. 38; Reyneke 1971; Stuart 1913, p. 378). These were most often medicines employed to make rain, an important symbol and sign of coolness and social harmony (Hammond-Tooke 1993, p. 81; Niehaus 2000, p. 38), and used to doctor soldiers in preparation for war (Stuart 1913, p. 378; Krige 1936, p. 270). Stuart (Webb and Wright 2001, p. 156) through one of his informants (Nsuzi) described how the chief’s doctors medicated a Zulu regiment to prevent bullets entering their bodies and, in her study of the social system of the Zulu, Krige (1936, p. 270) likewise referred to the use of human flesh in preparing soldiers for battle. In addition, she explained how a chief could attain enormous power by eating the chief of an enemy (Krige 1936, p. 246). To do this the chief was first strengthened by his doctor, to fortify him against any danger or contamination from polluting forces. He then killed his enemy and cut off various portions of the body, including the hand and penis, which were mixed with other medicine and burnt into charcoal. Similar attitudes toward human flesh are said to have existed amongst the Tswana and Venda (Kirkaldy 2005, pp. 222–249, 270–274; Reyneke 1971).

Arguably, the dismemberment and doctoring of the human body was the ultimate act of power and violence because it obliterated the enemy; it was a recognized way of annihilating the *social personality*. I believe it was this logic that informed the practice of making captives watch their kin “being eaten” (Delius 2010). Literally or figuratively this would have forced captives to acknowledge the termination of their own lineage and to accept their incorporation into a new sphere of authority. This political act can of course have the opposite effect. The dismembered body can also play a role in unifying a group or nation. The body of the martyr becomes a metaphor for the suffering of a nation and a powerful symbol around which to rally forces.

The Sociopolitical Landscape of Northern “Transvaal”—1830s–1870s

By the 1830s, Trekkers had begun to leave the Cape and move into the northern and northeastern regions of South Africa. These regions were particularly attractive to the colonists, because they formed part of a well-established local African

and international (Portuguese, British, American) trade network, and fell outside of British rule (Ferreira 2002, p. 50). The groups of Trekkers who spread through this area depended on the assistance of the African communities to enable them to hunt, farm, and trade, but when assistance and goods were not forthcoming, they often resorted to acts of violence (Boeyens 1994 p. 195; Bonner 1983, p. 69). Through economic and political leveraging the Boers benefitted from and participated in the local and international trade market. However, in time the Trekkers began to assert their dominance over communities in the interior by assigning themselves to positions of power, and imposing their own mode of colonial rule (see Comaroff 1989). This control was expressed through, amongst other things, the imposition of tax, incorporation of captives as “bonded” or indentured servants (*inboekelinge*) and the appropriation of land (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, p. 199). These actions were underscored and sanctified by a Calvinist racist doctrine that deemed white people superior to black people (Comaroff 1989). In the mind of the Trekker, this line was regarded as an “absolutely unchallengeable matter of fact” (Agar-Hamilton 1928, p. 88), “race,” and not “culture” determined who had access to social, economic, and political privileges:

the people are not prepared to allow any equality of the non-white with the white inhabitants, either in Church or State. (1852 Constitution of the Transvaal as translated in Storey 2008, p. 106)

Thus as indentured servants received Dutch names, European clothing, and were schooled in the ways of the Trekkers and were expected to “understand and adhere to the preferences of the prevailing culture, mirror its appearance and language, submit to its authority, and aspire to its approval” to achieve the status of *oorlam* (civilized) (Morton 2005, p. 204), this emerging society occupied the margins of Trekker society. From this position of liminality they posed a threat to Europeans, because as Turner (1969) and others (see for example Kapchan 1996; Mälksoo 2009) have argued, people on the margin force members of the establishment to question and confront their own boundaries. *Oorlamse* fell between categories and threatened to overstep clear boundaries of difference. Thus, as the Boers trained the *oorlamse* in a range of different skills, placed them in supervisory positions, and trusted them with firearms (Delius 1983, p. 36; Manson and Mbenga 2009, p. 87), they were ever watchful that they did not exceed their “god-ordained” station in life and begin to blur the boundary between an inferior- and superior-being. However, by being kept on the margins, and not fully integrated into colonial society, there was always the threat that the “apprentices” would desert their masters and join the ranks of the resistance. These escapees represented more than just a loss of labor to the Boers; they carried information about the Boer’s strengths and weaknesses across to the opposition.

In 1852 and 1854, treaties were entered into between the Boers and the British that gave the Trekkers the right to govern a large portion of the interior of South Africa, specifically the regions of the Transvaal and the Free State, independently. In the years immediately following independence, the Boers prohibited arms trade, intensified their raiding of communities in the Transvaal (Manson and Mbenga

2009, p. 88), and began to show an interest in the territory of Chief Mugombane and the Kekana Ndebele. In 1852, Boer leader Andries Hendrik Potgieter set out to establish a town near Mugombane's capital. This was a strategic decision on his part to lay claim to a major trade route to the ivory-rich north. Not surprisingly, friction between the groups began to grow. In minutes taken during a meeting of the *Volksraad* (Boer Council) in 1852, the Boers reported that members of Mugombane's chiefdom were openly hostile toward the Trekkers and that they were clearly in the process of setting up alliances with other Ndebele groups and arming themselves. At the same meeting the Boers decided to take punitive measures against members of the group to force them to submit to their authority¹.

The Boers information was accurate. The Ndebele had begun to mobilize a resistance. Between 1850 and 1854 an alliance was forged between several Ndebele chiefs, including Mugombane, who commanded large tracts of land in the central Limpopo region. The political boundaries and margins of the Kekana Ndebele had expanded and contracted a number of times in response to the shifting political landscape in the interior of South Africa. Oral histories provide a list of chieftaincy disputes that trace back to AD 1650 (see DeBeer 1986; DeWaal 1978; Esterhuyzen 2012; Van Warmelo 1930; Ziervogel 1959). But the leadership of Mugombane marked a fairly expansive phase in the history of the chiefdom. He established a number of key alliances and set himself up as the head of a large group of people that would have included wives, relatives, adherents, dependents (see Kopytoff 1987, p. 22; Miers and Kopytoff 1977), and in all probability slaves (Delius 2010). Delius (2010, pp. 9–11) pointed out that the clear social strata evident in these northern chiefdoms were bolstered by a hunting and raiding economy that destroyed weaker chiefdoms, and permitted the capture and redistribution of its women, children, and cattle by the victorious chief. The chief was able to build and maintain his power base through the accumulation of people and wealth, and used these trappings of war to cement internal and external allegiances.

Four separate events occurred between September and December of 1854 that resulted in the death of a number of Trekkers and Kekana Ndebele. In September of 1854, the Kekana murdered about 12 Trekker men, women, and children on the outskirts of their territory and 2 men at Mugombane's capital. At the same time the Langa Ndebele at Fothane Hill (20 km to the northwest of Mokopane) killed the Boer leader Hermanus Potgieter and his party. The simultaneity of their actions fueled speculation that the attacks were premeditated and sent a clear signal that the Ndebele intended to resist the Boers' demands for tribute, labor, and land (DeWaal 1978, p. 92).

Correspondence from Boer Commandant-general P. J. Potgieter² and a report written by Commandant-general M. W. Pretorius³ provide the basic details (albeit

¹ Notule van die Volksraad van die S.A.R. II (1852), pp. 348–349 and 473–475.

² Secretary of State of the South African Republic (SS) 6, R684/54: P. J. Potgieter—M. W. Pretorius, Waterberg, 29 September 1854. SS6, R695/54: P.J. Potgieter—M. W. Pretorius, Waterberg, 8 October 1854.

³ SS7, R733/54: Verslag van (report by) M. W. Pretorius, Magaliesberg, 6 December 1854.

from a Boer perspective) of the murders of the Trekkers. According to these sources, a party of Boers who crossed onto Kekana territory in September of 1854 were attacked by members of Mugombane's chiefdom. The Trekker party of men, women, and children were killed and their bodies dismembered (DeWaal 1978, pp. 62–69). These written accounts describe a horrific scene in which body parts were strewn around the area, a man's hands were cleft in two, and in at least one instance a head was separated from its body, and was found floating in the nearby river⁴. A Boer patrol that visited the scene 14 days after the attack collected and buried the remains.

The second incident occurred around the same time. Markus Albertus Venter and his son, Willem, allegedly arrived at Mugombane's headquarters to exchange meat for grain and were also murdered and dismembered. Pretorius' December report⁵ again portrayed a macabre scene. He suggested that the men may have been burnt alive, that fat was extracted from the bodies and described how their genitals were removed and hung in a tree. It is not clear who witnessed the scene or whether the bodies were recovered. Thirdly, coincident with these attacks, the Langa chief, Mapela, murdered Hermanus Potgieter and a hunting party of approximately eight other people at the Langa capital, Fothane. Unlike the other murders there was a sense that Hermanus received his just deserts. Pretorius did not provide much detail about this attack and there is no record of the bodies being recovered; however, he is alleged to have said that he would never have "put foot in stirrup" if the Ndebele had only killed Hermanus, because his (Hermanus') "treatment of the kafirs ha[d] been atrocious (gruwelijk)" (Orpen [1846–1908] 1964, pp. 233–234). Ironically, it is this unaccounted for body that becomes reconstituted as a martyr and hero by Afrikaner partisans trying to establish Afrikaner nationhood in the years leading up to the Second South African war (1898–1904). These grand narratives provided the ideological and legal rationale for the appropriation of land, for racism, and for inequality in work and in education. Trekkers were depicted as "chosen people," carrying out heroic deeds for the upliftment of the nation, while Africans in general were depicted as treacherous and uncivilized, thereby producing a rationale and imperative for the separation of "races" (see for example Preller 1925).

The fourth event that occurred in 1854 was the Boer reprisal. Following the murder of the Trekkers by Mugombane and Mapela, the Boers sent for reinforcements from Rustenburg and the Soutpansberg, and went in pursuit of the Ndebele. In the time it took for the commandos to arrive, Mugombane and his people had retreated into a cave in the Makapan Valley and Mapela had taken refuge in the hills. The only documentation of the siege comprises a number of dispatches and a report written by Commandant-general Pretorius after the siege⁶. In the dispatches the Boers initially called for reinforcements and gunpowder, and later disclosed the death of one of their leaders who was shot dead near the mouth of the cave. Briefly, the report related how two Boer commandos tracked the Kekana to the cave on the 25th of October. Over the first few weeks they tried in vain to extricate the Kekana,

⁴ SS7, R733/54: Verslag van (report by) M. W. Pretorius, Magaliesberg, 6 December 1854.

⁵ SS7 R733/54 verslag van M. W. Pretorius, Magaliesberg, 6 December. 1854.

⁶ SS7 R719/54 & SS7 R733/54 verslag van M. W. Pretorius, Magaliesberg, 6 December. 1854.

but when they had no success they decided to place the Ndebele under siege. The Boers cut down the trees around the cave and blocked all cave exits with wood and stone to prevent people stealing in and out of the cave at night. During the ensuing weeks, as the need for water increased, members of the chiefdom left their refuge in a state of delirium or desperation (DeWaal 1978). Men were shot and surviving women and children were taken captive and shared out amongst the Boers, and their aides. Finally, on the 21st of November the Boer Commandant-general called an end to the engagement.

In the aftermath of the siege, Chief Mugombane drank poison and died (De Beer 1986, p. 38) and his younger brother, Mogemi, took up the regency. Mogemi relocated the capital to Sefakoala Hill, where he joined the ward of one of his headman, Lekalekale (Jackson 1983, pp. 20–21). Between 1857 and 1870, Mogemi, Lekalekale, and the Langa chief, Mapela, formed a formidable coalition, and from their hilltop fortresses relentlessly persecuted missionaries and attacked Trekkers. By 1870, the Trekkers had been forced to abandon their two main settlements in the north, Schoemansdal and Pietpotgietersrus, and as part of a peace agreement all the women and children taken from the Kekana chiefdom were returned (DeWaal 1978, p. 181). At this time, an internal dispute split the chiefdom; Mogemi was unseated and Mugombane II was installed as chief.

Through Bodies and Objects

On one level, the murders of the Boers by the Kekana may be regarded as the first overt signs of retaliation against increased colonial oppression and can be seen to mark the beginning a period of intolerance of Trekker-presence and rule in the area. However, I feel the nature of the killings require further comment. Not losing sight of the fact that the description of the bodies was made by the Trekkers who would have benefited from playing up the savagery—it would, on the one hand, cause sufficient panic and outrage to convince their fellow settlers to leave their farms, take up arms, and exact retribution, although on the other, it offered moral justification for attacking a chiefdom that they had been struggling to control and who occupied a strategic tract of land. The dismemberment of the bodies bares striking resemblance to descriptions of other killings of captives and enemies, both white and black, recorded from the 1800s onward (see for example Delius 2010; McClendon 2006, p. 267), where heads, hands and pieces of flesh were cut off the bodies and organs, like the penis, intestines and stomach, were removed (see for example Stuart 1913, pp. 377–378). The brazen mutilation of the colonials' bodies symbolized the intention of the Kekana to fracture and weaken the colonial society; and secondly, it represented a confident statement of Mugombane's social, political, and spiritual authority over that of the colonists.

This confidence was no doubt fed by the commandeering of guns and ammunition, which were symbols of colonial potency and instruments of Boer order. From the 1850s onward, the Boer's authority was steadily undermined by alliance

networks that constantly thwarted their attempt to control the movement of guns and powder. By 1850, the BaSotho were manufacturing gunpowder in Lesotho and had access to the east coast gun trade. Despite the Trekkers best efforts to prevent cross-border trade, the contraband was easily accessible (Storey 2008, p. 112). The rusted remnants of guns, lead-shot, and flint recovered from Historic Cave conjure up this subversive network of relationships to which Mugombane belonged or had access to. The mutilation of bodies would thus have dealt a humiliating blow to the Boers, and would have been a painful indicator of their loss of control over the Africans in the interior. Mugombane no doubt incorporated the colonial's flesh into his rain and protection medicine to enhance and bolster the physical and spiritual well-being of his people. It would have been a strategic reminder of his ability to annihilate the colonial *persona*. The archaeological excavation of the refuge site revealed several different kinds of protection *muti*⁷ that went into preparing the cave for the Boer reprisal, some of which had been mixed together with animal fat⁸. The preparation of rain medicine would have been equally important because for Mugombane, and many of the northern chiefdoms, rain not only symbolized social harmony and well-being, it also offered protection against the Boers. The Boers had limited defense against malaria and horse sickness that accompanied the onset of summer rains and so would be forced to withdraw to fever-free areas until the rainy season had passed. It is thus not a coincidence that Mugombane chose to attack the Boers at the start of the rainy season.

The excavation of the Kekana's refuge site (Historic Cave) provided further confirmation that the Ndebele's killing of the Boers was a strategically planned political move. The archaeology produced material evidence of extensive and possibly lengthy preparations that went into furnishing and securing the cave before the siege. Elaborate stone walls were constructed around the cave's entrances. Clay was brought in from outside and mixed with dung to construct an elaborate floor in the base of the cave. Poles, reeds, and mud were procured to create walls, paths, and livestock pens, and rocks and boulders were rearranged to create living areas. Mortars and pestles were carried in and grain bins and baskets were installed in which large amounts of grain, legumes, and fruit were stored (Esterhuysen 2010). Livestock was selected out from the main herd to be brought into the cave, whereas the rest of the herd was sent to another Ndebele chief for safekeeping. The main herd was later claimed by the Boers as part of their war profits (De Waal 1978). The excavations also uncovered the well-preserved material manifestations of efforts to protect the cave, and those hiding within it, against maleficent magic.

Berglund (1976, pp. 256–257) recorded in his study of Zulu thought patterns and symbolism that all materials have latent powers which, when manipulated “correctly and with good intention,” can be used to “encourage and support the powers embodied in men.” Conversely, the power that resides within materials can also channel evil if it is the intention of the manipulator to cause harm (Berglund

⁷ Medicine.

⁸ Fume tests were used to distinguish between plant and animal fat. But no attempt was made to distinguish between animal and human fat (Esterhuysen 2006).

1976, pp. 256–257). The substance is said to either “strengthen the knee or bend the knee”; the bending of the knee is a reference to the practice whereby the legs of a corpse are flexed prior to burial (Berglund 1976, p. 257; see also Ngubane 1976). It is in the nature of the herbalists, good or bad, to experiment with new materia to discover new avenues for manipulating powers (Berglund 1976, p. 257). Similarly, Hoernlé (1966, p. 233) noted that diviners employed a range of amulets to protect themselves and others against various perils like sorcery, or contagion from polluting forces. Mönnig (1967, p. 142) reported that Pedi widows were given little bags to wear around their necks for protection, and Schapera (1969, p. 165) remarked that amulets were worn on the body and charms placed in the house as protection against disease and misfortune.

A wide range of bags, medicinal horns, amulets, herbs, plants, and potions had been deployed on the margins of and within the cave (see Fig. 7.2 and Esterhuyesen 2006, 2008a and 2010). Remarkably, European fabric and buttons had been integrated into this wide array of materials typically dispensed by herbalists as protection medicine (Fig. 7.3). The European cloth, for example, had been fashioned into medicine bags (Fig. 7.4) or torn into strips (Fig. 7.5) that, according to

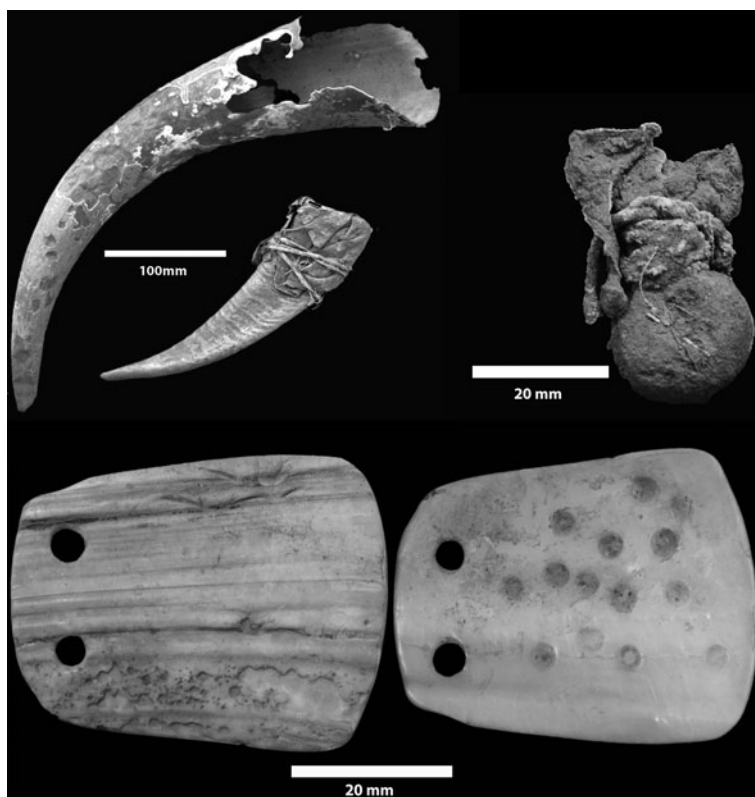


Fig. 7.2 Examples of medicinal horns, leather bags, and amulets excavated from Historic Cave

Fig. 7.3 A European button attached to a leather strip

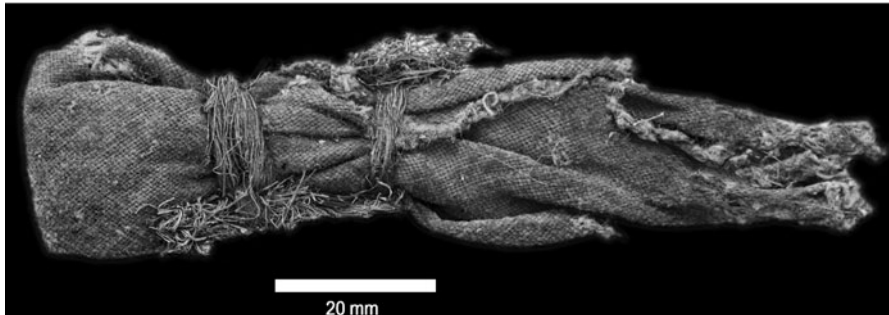


Fig. 7.4 A cloth bag

a contemporary missionary account, were knotted around the neck, arm, or waist (Moffat [1829–1860], in Wallis 1976, p. 225). Entire European garments, however, were conspicuous by their absence. Clothing, the European’s measure of civility (Kirkaldy 2005, pp. 150–155; Loren 2001; Morton 2005), had been refashioned into agents of power or protection. In addition, fragments of a Dutch psalmbook (Fig. 7.6) and a piece of paper with Dutch writing had been incorporated into the divination kit of one of the diviners who occupied the cave. Delius (2001, p. 437) has argued from oral and missionary records that many of the initial converts were diviners or “witchdoctors,” and Comaroff and Comaroff (1997, pp. 345–347) have shown that from the perspective of the Africans the distinction between the mission-



Fig. 7.5 European cloth torn into strips and worn around the neck, arm, or waist



Fig. 7.6 Fragments of a psalmbook found with other elements of a divining kit

ary and healer/diviner was not clear. These ritual specialists regarded the bible or psalmbook with its revelatory function as a set of “prognosticating dice” (see also West 2003, p. 48). Like the European fabric, the Christian canon was fragmented, manipulated, and deployed to protect or communicate with the ancestors.

For the first week of the month-long siege, the physical and spiritual fortifications were held, and the Boers were unable to enter the cave. Once the Boers decided to turn the battle into a waiting game, the outcome of the battle no longer hinged on fire-power, but on rain. The onset of the rainy season would have forced the Boers to withdraw from the valley, and rain dripping into the cave would have provided some respite for those trapped in the cave. But the rains came late that year, a phenomenon that the chief and his council had not foreseen, a mistake that cost him hundreds, if not thousands, of men, women, and children.

The fragmented skeletal remains of approximately 30 men, women, and children were recovered during the excavations of the cave, and a further 32 individuals have been located in museum collections both inside and outside of South Africa. This included two near-complete naturally mummified bodies of a young woman and a child (Esterhuysen et al. 2009). A rough estimate of the total number of dead, based on the size of the cave and number of individuals excavated per square meter, fell somewhere between 1380 and 1780 (Esterhuysen et al. 2009, p. 12). In their record of the event, the Boers claimed, and possibly exaggerated, that over 3000 members of the Kekana chiefdom had died during the siege⁹. Regardless of the exact number, each corpse would have been a source of contagion that would have permeated and infected the other occupants of the cave, and each new death proof of the doctors, diviners, and chief's inability to detect and prevent further onslaught from malicious and contaminating forces. The dessicated bodies are a further enduring reminder of Mugombane and his advisors' inability to bring rain and literally and figuratively cool the hot and destructive forces that had taken hold of the cave. It is interesting to note that when interviewed in the 1980s, Kekana elders, despite having read accounts of the siege event, surmised that the cause of death was boiling air or a contagion that spread through the cave and weakened the chiefdom (Hofmeyr 1993, pp. 118–119), the notion of impersonal causation of death still held sway.

The objects of protection and divination take on a different role and meaning in relation to the human remains. They no longer embody the physical and spiritual strength of the body politic, but rather symbolize weakness in the face of a stronger opposing force, which to the Kekana was/is channeled by the living or the dead through objects and corpses. Thus, whether for its impotency or malicious potency, each object and corpse in the cave must be regarded as an accessory to the downfall of the chiefdom. Further, each corpse symbolizes a rupture in the social fabric of the chiefdom and portends a reassembly of the body politic, while the objects, possibly one of the last expressions of chief Mugombane's geopolitical connections, expose the points of tension and weakness within the society and possibly how the chiefdom would have split.

Earlier in this chapter I alluded to the importance of agnatic politics in Southern African society, and how these male-centric relationships buttressed the administrative hierarchy of the chiefdom (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, pp. 140–150). It was also noted that the structure of the hierarchy was not fixed, and the chiefship could be challenged at any time. This necessitated the continual maintenance and

⁹ SS7, R733/54: Verslag van (report by) M. W. Pretorius, Magaliesberg, 6 December 1854.

management of political networks, both inside and outside, of the chiefdom (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, p. 143). The exchange of women, and particularly royal women, provided one of the ways of constructing an effective web of socioeconomic relationships. Thus chiefs married for diplomatic reasons (Mönnig 1967, p. 264) and offered gifts of wives to broker deals. In the case of a highly beneficial alliance, it was important for the royal council to confer a suitable rank on the woman to signal their appreciation of the woman's clan or lineage. The social background and class of the Kekana chief's principal wife was of particular importance, because she was selected to give birth to the next chief. Long and protracted negotiations were carried out with families of high status and she was chosen by the Chief's senior council (*bakgoma*), in consultation with the broader royal council (*bakgomana*), and royal sisters. All members of the chiefdom contributed toward the bride price, thus establishing her as the mother of the next chief (Esterhuysen 2012).

However, while on the one hand the wives and mothers embellished and reinforced the administrative hierarchy of the chiefdom, on the other they were regarded as dangerous because they came from a foreign group, and had the potential to divide the group (Ngubane 1976, p. 281). The "stranger" bride was the person most likely to be accused of witchcraft in times of misfortune (Hammond-Tooke 1993, pp. 128, 175), and wives and mothers were regularly identified as the most common source of friction between royal half-brothers. They were often the cause of succession disputes because they stood to benefit from the success and wealth of their progeny (Schapera 1963, p. 171). In the case of the death of a chief, the credentials of his wives and in particular that of his principal wife could be impugned by the new royal elite to enable them to establish a different chiefly bloodline and more useful socioeconomic ties. Historically, when these political relationships were broken and reconstituted to suit the new leadership, the principal wife and her children were sent back to her place of birth (Esterhuysen 2012).

I have argued elsewhere (Esterhuysen 2008b) that decoration on ceramics recovered from the cave, when plotted in space against a spacetime record of design fields, reveals the edges of Mugombane's sphere of influence—because these material expressions of women are the tangible remains of alliances, ancillary relationships, and political strategy. Consequently, these objects represent the different segments of the chiefdom, and when the ceramics are found in association with the royals, provides an, albeit only partial, glimpse of the different lineages of the royal wives and mothers. In highlighting the different parts of the corporate unit (cf. Kopytoff 1987), these decorated objects expose the potential fault lines within the chiefdom.

In the case of the Kekana comb-stamp pottery (Fig. 7.7) recovered off the back shelf of the floor occupied by the elites in the cave, indicated that a key matrilineal alliance existed to the west and south of Mugombane's stronghold. Documentary and oral histories pinpointed a close association with the Kgatla, and in particular the Kgatla ba Mmakau of Chief Sjambok, who had on a number of occasions taken a stand with the Mugombane against the Boers.



Fig. 7.7 Comb-stamp pottery

In the Aftermath

Evidence from Historic Cave suggests that the siege left Mugombane socially bankrupt and politically exposed. Without an army, women, children, and livestock he no longer had the socioeconomic currency needed to balance and maintain internal and external political relationships. The juxtaposition of protection medicine with human remains further highlights his inability to fulfill his role as protector of the chiefdom, and ensuing events indicate that his paternal uncles and younger brothers, who had the most to gain from exploiting this condition of uncertainty, removed him and rapidly restructured the administrative center and chiefly household around his younger brother, Mogeme.

A further indication of the chief's reduced status may be read into the way that he died. Socially bankrupt chiefs often drank poison and committed suicide in response to social pressure, and likewise poisoning was employed readily as a means to “do away” with unsatisfactory chiefs (Schapera 1966, p. 184; see also Esterhuysen 2012 for more recent instances of poisoning amongst the Kekana royals). Predictably, Kekana historians recollect that the poison given to Mugombane was provided by his maternal grandfather (DeBeer 1986, p. 38) so that the burden of blame for the death of the chief was judiciously passed over to the matriline, and the responsibility for the break in the patrilineage lay outside of the chiefdom.

Based on patterns repeated in Kekana history (Esterhuysen 2012), it is likely that the maternal or principal wife—the mother of the heir—would have been ostracized and sent back to her birthplace. The ceramic design suggests that his maternal relations or senior wife may have been a member of the baKgatla (Esterhuysen 2008b). The oral tradition interestingly suggests that the baKgatla ba Mmakau played a role in revival of Mugombane's household 15 years later (Hofmeyr 1993).

Mogeme's center of support clearly lay within the ward of headman Lekalekale. Because his success depended on being able to reestablish order, Mogeme's reign unsurprisingly marked the beginning of a period of tighter control, order, and intolerance (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, p. 158). Mogeme redefined the boundaries of difference and drew a firm line between the colonists and his chiefdom. Together with Lekalekale and Mapela he persecuted the missionaries, attacked white households and refused to yield to the requests from the Boer government (DeWaal 1978, p. 152). It is notable however, that after years of warring and socioeconomic austerity, when in 1868 the colonists and Africans finally set down terms for peace, and the Kekana women and children were released from bondage, Mogeme was forced to step down and a chief from the household of Mugombane, who spoke Dutch and wore European clothing was installed (see Sarah Heckford's description of Clas Makapan; Heckford 1882, p. 286). The Ndebele chiefdoms, despite being war-weary, held all the bargaining chips and again from a position of control were prepared to dissolve and reset the internal and external boundaries of Ndebeleness.

Conclusion

The human and material remains of the siege provides the tangible remains of a complex set of spiritual and physical relationships that was operated to hold Mugombane's chiefdom together. However, his defeat at the hands of the Boers opened up lesions within the society and widened the divisions between the different components of the chiefdom. Growing suspicion and resentment brought about by a hierarchical system that relied on socioeconomic successes and allied spiritual forces to hold it together caused the system to become unstable, and resulted in the suicide of the chief. A number of key relationships were altered by the siege and relationships of responsibility redefined and changed. The new administrative structures headed by Mogeme reformed the boundaries of difference through the rapid and firm restatement of convention.

Mugombane, the chief who symbolically appropriated colonial power, suffered the social and spiritual consequences of overstepping the boundaries of tradition. But as the powerbase shifted back to the Ndebele, and the limits of tolerance for the colonial world began to shift and change, it was his lineage that was revived to begin to renegotiate the margins of difference.

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Part IV
Power: Politics, Capitalism, and the
Making of Colonial Worlds

Chapter 8

The “Dirty” Material and Symbolic Work of “State” Building in Madagascar: From Indigenous State-Crafting to Indigenous Empire Building to External Colonial Imposition and Indigenous Insurrection

Susan Kus and Victor Raharijaona

Overture: Allusive Material Metaphors, Epiphanic Acts, and Potent Words

One afternoon as the sun was declining,¹ an aging lord of a small realm in the highlands of central Madagascar called all his sons and grandsons together in his presence. Before him was a finely woven mat of sedge (*tsihy rindra*)² laid out to the north of the central hearth (Rahajarizafy 1961, p. 9). Spread out on this mat, before the eyes of all the potential heirs to his polity, were an assortment of beguiling and desirable items including silver jewelry to decorate wrist, breast, and brow; silver and gold coins of foreign origin; imported glass beads of many colors whose names such as “wealth without end” (*haren-tsy maty*) and “deep water” (*ranolalina*) were

¹ Vocabulary traditionally used to describe the reigning sovereign includes the image of the “Sun that is not Two,” (*Masoandrotsiroa*), a litote to mark the singularity and uniqueness of the sovereign. When a sovereign ascended to power, the term *miseho* was used. This term can be translated as “to appear,” “to be apparent,” “to become visible,” “to show oneself,” or “to be in view.” The term is also applied to the sunrise (Abinal and Malzac 1987[1888], p. 595). When a sovereign’s remains were placed in the tomb, the act of closing the tomb entrance “was called ‘stopping up the sun’ (*tàmpi-màsoàndro*); the sovereign being ‘the sun,’ the light and warmth of his people, and was formerly often so termed in public speeches” (Sibree 1892, p. 219).

² The term *rindra* refers both to the bark of a particular sedge plant and to a metaphorical image of being well-organized, effectively arranged, and/or brought into agreement/harmony (Abinal and Malzac 1987[1888], p. 534).

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as intriguing and attractive as the beads themselves; indigenous red silk cloth of fine weave and pattern; delicately roasted silkworms painstakingly gathered from mulberry trees; boiled crayfish that had been caught under rocks in fast flowing streams; meat from the hump of large cattle succulently grilled and flavored with savory salt from the west (*sira vatra*), honey from the forest of the east coast taken from a hive where the queen bee is still alive (*tantely velon-dreny*), and oranges and lemons gathered from cloud covered slopes (*aman-javona*) all in the fine mist (*aman-erika*).³ Each son and grandson gathered before the lord was told to choose the object he desired. One of the youngest grandsons, Ramboasalamsimarofy or the “Healthy Dog Free of Ailments,”⁴ slipping through the ranks of his kin, caught his grandfather’s eye as he chose the small basketful of dirt (*tany*) that was placed discreetly within the bedazzling and tempting display (Rahajarizafy 1961, p. 9). His grandfather exclaimed (and proclaimed): “*Lasa’ny ny tany sy ny fanjakana!*”: “[There! To Raomboasalama] has/have⁵ gone the land and the polity!”⁶

Proclamations of Power and Exclamations of Resistance Lost in Translation

The “Healthy Dog” (Ramboasalama) would go on to appropriate the name of the “Bull with the Encompassing Gaze” (Ombalahibemaso) as he undertook the reunification of Imerina, a polity (less than 30 km in diameter, see Fig. 8.1) in the interior highlands of this fourth largest island in the world, a polity originally forged by his great-great-grandfather. His latter sobriquet of an “Encompassing Gaze” alludes to political aspiration, if not singular control of the polity (Kus and Raharijaona 2006, p. 314). Later, after audaciously arrogating or having accorded to him, depending on the particular version of this oral tradition, the name⁷ of the “Noble Desired in the Heart/Navel of Imerina” (Andrianampoinimerina), he would go on to solidify and extend his “rule” (or “administration,” or “order,” or “government,” or “state,” all possible interpretations of the indigenous term *fanjakana*), beyond the original boundaries of the polity. History books assign the dates of 1787–1810 to the rule

³ A tale of assumption of political power and subsumption of carnal desire by the grandmother and the grandfather of Ramboasalamsimarofy, the central character featured in the tale at hand, involved desires, offerings, and consumption of the delicacies of silkworms and oranges (Raharijaona and Kus 2011, pp. 54–55).

⁴ Litotes, or figures of speech that purport to make understatements by expressing an affirmative by negating its opposite, are common elements of Malagasy poetic oral verse. In prosaic English translation, they lose much in terms of both elegance and force.

⁵ The ambiguous translation of the verb into singular and plural form will become evident in the ensuing discussion of the crafting of an indigenous Malagasy concept of the “State.”

⁶ The term *fanjakana* has been variously translated as “order,” “rule,” “government,” “polity,” “administration,” “governed territory,” and “state” (see also Crossland 2001, p. 1). This fecund field of translation will be discussed below.

⁷ Being accorded a name and/or appropriating a name is a practice not limited to ruling nobility, and the practice continues into present times (Kus 2006; Kus and Raharijaona 2006, pp. 314–316).

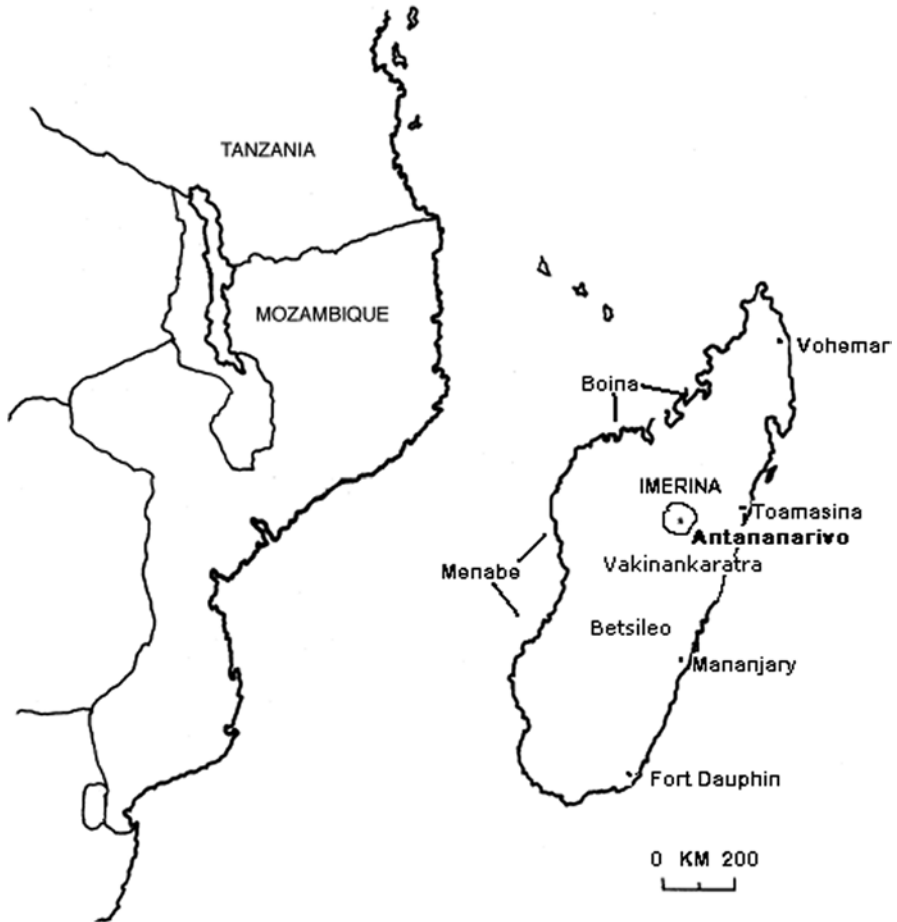


Fig. 8.1 The polity of Imerina in central Madagascar

of the “Noble Desired in the Heart/Navel of Imerina” (see Table 8.1 below for this ruler’s names/sobriquets and their possible translation).

The revelatory tale above, traditionally interpreted as one evidential piece among many legitimating Andrianampoinimerina’s (the name we will use below to refer to this individual) claim to inherit the four corners of the divided Merina polity,

Table 8.1 The sobriquets of the final unifier of Imerina

Name/sobriquet	Translation
<i>Ramboasalamatsimarofy</i>	Healthy dog free of disease; healthy dog free of ailments
<i>Ombalahibemaso</i>	Bull with the encompassing/perspicacious gaze; bull with large/many eyes
<i>Andrianampoinimerina</i>	Noble desired in the heart/navel of Imerina

appears in a number of traditional sources. Most important of these sources is the *Tantara ny Andriana eto Madagascar (The History(ies)⁸ of the Noble(s) and Sovereign(s) of Madagascar* (Callet 1981[1908]). This is a work of more than 1000 pages, in the Malagasy language, of complementary and conflicting oral traditions. It was compiled by the French Jesuit François Callet, who collected the tales from a number of indigenous oral historians during his time in the highlands of Madagascar (1864–1885) (Delivré 1974, pp. 36–62). The tale of the “Healthy Dog” that began our discussion is, in Callet’s account (1981[1908], p. 405), minimalist: a four line distillation of the important action of choosing dirt from among the trappings and exigent tastes of the rich and the powerful, and the subsequent declaration of a blessing publically offered to the inheritor of power by the reigning lord. One possibility (though rather unlikely) for the brevity of the tale is that the particular oral historian recounting the tale to Callet was, in fact, unable to elaborate. Another more likely possibility is that Callet was somewhat tone-deaf concerning the fine points of the dense multi-vocality of oral poesies. Still another possibility, one that might be conjoined with the previous one, is that the tale was deliberately recounted in “oral short hand” due to other constraints. This tale is one of many epiphanic tales⁹ in the oral traditions presaging Andrianampoinimerina’s rise to power. What is of note, however, is that the particular “punch line” of choosing (or being offered) dirt as a sign of legitimate inheritance of power (passage of power was always a contested issue in the history of the central highlands of Madagascar) both occurs in earlier *and* reoccurs in later well-known tales (to be discussed below) of the designation of a political successor.

We have embellished the tale with details, as is the prerogative of the storyteller. Certainly, “exotic” details are an enticement to listen and an incitement to imagine for the cultural outsider. However, most of the cultural embellishments we have added are metaphorically thick concrete cultural details. Such cultural “materials” can and have been made to bear additional symbolic weight, most certainly, for this was and is a society of primary orality where natural matter, material culture, and cultural oratory and gesture carry not only connotative significance but also “effective”¹⁰ force. Some “materials” denote *and* connote sumptuary items befitting and defining ruling elite. Silver (rather than gold) has been the precious metal of choice in the central highlands of the island. “Complete” (round) coins of pure silver of foreign origin, coins that did not suffer the profanation of cutting and chipping to meet the needs of small-scale market transactions, were traditionally offered as prestation to the unique sovereign of the land. Their singular wholeness, their

⁸ The Malagasy language does not mark nouns as singular or plural.

⁹ The oral traditions of Imerina offer a suite of tests to assess the ability of individuals to rule. Those fit to rule reveal themselves by sleeping with their head higher than other rivals (Callet 1981[1908], p. 302); or by leaning against the central pillar that serves as the support of the traditional one room house (Callet 1981[1908], p. 406); or by leaving undisturbed/unconsumed the tempting possessions (i.e., sugarcane and honey) of a wise envoy sent by the ruling sovereign to test the character of potential inheritors of power (Callet 1981[1908], pp. 301–303).

¹⁰ To effect is “to bring into existence.... To produce as a result” (American Heritage Dictionary, 4th Edition 2006).

round perfection (with no beginning and no end), and their evocation of the singular sun rendered them sacred, and rendered them a fitting offering to ruling elite (Kus and Raharijaona 2008, p. 56). (See Stahl, Chap. 2 for additional discussion of indigenous creative and “thought-provoking” use of “imported/foreign” materials). The humps of beautiful well-fed cattle, as well as their haunches, evoking continuity and permanency of “at the end and in the beginning” (*faran’ny sy lohany*), were offered to sovereigns not only on ritual occasions but also were the sovereign’s due upon the slaughtering of any cattle. Some of the material symbols connote the qualities of individuals and their fitness to rule. The *sandrify*, a type of palm, is characterized by a singular sturdy trunk that has a florescence of innumerable secondary offshoots (Callet 1981[1908], p. 92). The bead, *tsiambanindrafy*, “the one who is not beneath his/her rival,” carries a name that needs no explanation. Some of the symbols speak of the nature of effective governance. Finely woven materials have often carried the significance of a well-ordered and a peacefully integrated polity (Callet 1981[1908], p. 715). The material used for the particular mat in the tale above is *rindra* (Rahajarizafy 1961, p. 9). The term *rindra* not only designates the vegetal material composition of the mat, but also, when this term is attached to the word *fanjakana* (order/rule/polity/government/state), the resulting phrase, *fanjakana arindra*, can be translated as a “well-organized polity.” The mat is additionally placed to the north of the central hearth, a powerful direction and place of nobility. Other symbols blend imagery of personality, privilege, and potency. Crayfish¹¹ from fast running streams, honey from the eastern forests gathered carefully from hives to allow the queen bee to live on,¹² and oranges gathered in the mist are desirable delicacies befitting ruling elite, but they are also metaphors, respectively, for tenacity and firmly established power, abundant sweetness/dearness in perpetuity, and rarity/singularity. We have elaborated upon these culturally specific, rich *material* symbols, certainly to capture the attention of the reader, but additionally to make several critical points important to the argument to follow. (We have also filled this work with an inordinate amount of endnotes to the same ends.) Members of prosaic literate societies are not automatically appreciative of the rich “allusionary” and elocutionary force of such concrete images in the discourse of societies of primary orality. Where political power is only nascent in such societies, the “power of persuasion” through oratory is a critically important political tool, yet not an easy one to wield (Kus and Raharijaona 2006, 2011). While not every individual in a society of primary orality is a gifted orator, it is the case that such individuals are, nevertheless, sophisticated consumers of well-crafted oratory. Critical for our

¹¹ This particular image of the crayfish allows us to point out an example of the complex intertwining of icon, index, and symbol available to indigenous oral poets/philosophers. (1) Crayfish are “tenacious” in their holds on the rocks to which they cling. (2) Crayfish “move forward” while crabs with similar appendages move sideways. (3) The name *orana* for crayfish is also a homonym for the rain necessary for the life of crops, animals, and humans.

¹² One Malagasy proverb asserts that “Life is ‘sweet’”, “*Mamy ny aina*.” The first sense of *mamy* is “sweet,” “delicious,” and “soft/delicate” as is fine-quality honey. However, the force of this proverb comes from the other sense of this term: “cherished” or “dear” (Abinal and Malzac 1987[1888], p. 211).

argument is the fact that the symbols and allusions of such oratory, appropriated from materially grounded systems of local knowledge, provide/d audiences with the means of both evaluation *and* resistance (see also Brink, Crossland, this volume). We will begin to explore this assertion with the “simple” basket of dirt.

The basket of dirt, of *tany*, found among the fascinating array of powerfully evocative material symbols, seems less beguiling and perhaps a bit more straight forward in its significance. Yet, effectively understanding the significance of *tany* is critical for a number of reasons, not least important of which is to understand the indigenous Merina (and Malagasy) concept of the “State.” Smith (2003, p. 15) has brought to the attention of anthropologists and archaeologists a much needed problematizing of the concepts of the “State:” “... the State, as an analytical concept, is at best an illusory focus for research that lends coherence and continuity to a disparate set of authority relationships that are highly discontinuous; at worst, it is an instrument of domination in itself.” While acknowledging and heartedly endorsing Smith’s admonition, nevertheless in our discussion below we will deliberately use the term “State.” This is because in the case of the early Merina polity, we have the chance to witness the deliberate creation of an indigenous *and* reified concept of the “State.” That concept was and still is formulated as the phrase uttered by Andrianampoinimerina’s grandfather in the tale that opened this work: *ny tany sy ny fanjakana*. We will begin by examining more closely the two concepts/words of *tany* and *fanjakana*.

We will also examine the material and linguistic crafting, in projects and propaganda, of the indigenous concept of the (Merina) State to meet the needs of Andrianampoinimerina’s efforts to reunite and reshape the polity of Imerina, to legitimate his claim to sovereignty, and to subsequently envision an expansionist State (see also Esterhuysen, this volume). (This project was brought to partial realization under the reign of Radama I, the son of and the immediate successor to Andrianampoinimerina, and further expanded upon by later successors to the throne.) This original crafting involved powerful concrete metaphors. We will focus on the symbolic manipulation of the two symbols/concepts that are critical to the understanding of the indigenous conceptualization of the Merina “State:” “*ny tany*” (the land) and “*ny fanjakana*” (the state). In particular, we will bring attention to both the co-optation of “grounded” local imagery and the imposition of conceptual and physical presence on *land* and *landscape* of the indigenous Merina State under Andrianampoinimerina. We will then examine the power of indigenous concrete symbols, with their attendant metaphors, to incite and “ground” Malagasy resistance to a corrupt and exploitative indigenous polity under Andrianampoinimerina’s successors. We will further examine the imposition of the French colonial authority in Madagascar, focusing our attention on elements of the physical presence of the French government (*fanjakana*). We will also bring attention to the early French colonial authority’s limited appreciation of the indigenous symbol of *tany*, and make brief reference to the power of this symbol to continue to “ground” Malagasy resistance, for more than 60 years, to French colonial presence on their land (*tany*).

Ny Tany Sy Fanjakana: An Indigenous Concept of the “State”

Over and over again in the *Tantara ny Andriana eto Madagascar (The History(ies) of the Noble(s) and Sovereign(s) of Madagascar)*, the official oral traditions of Imerina, one hears, especially from the mouth of Andrianampoinimerina, the polity referred to as *ny tany sy ny fanjakana* (Callet 1981[1908]). The historian, Delivré, who had done one of the earliest and most extensive studies of this text, offers the fact that there are more than 150 mentions of this expression (or the alternative phrasing, *ny tany amampanjakana*) in the text (1974, pp. 159, 382 fn. 74).

The phrase, *ny tany sy ny fanjakana*, typically has been translated into French (Madagascar being a former French colony) as *la terre et le royaume* (“the land and the kingdom”) (Delivré 1974, p. 159) or *le pays et le royaume* (“the country and the kingdom”). Still today, this phrase can be heard in general discourse. It is also currently used to designate the entirety of the territory of the Malagasy Republic, both in political discourse and in many official documents. For instance, national declarations of law and official public announcements,¹³ often include the phrase “Across the entirety of the land and the polity of the Malagasy Republic,” (*Manerana Ny Tany sy ny Fanjakana ny Repoblikan’i Madagasikara*). The translation of the phrase *ny tany sy ny fanjakana* is a bit awkward, and it might appear as a pleonasm. However, we would argue that this phrase offers further proof both of the persistence of the indigenous term for the polity that is common in the countryside, and the perceived need on the part of politicians and court officials to continue to graft the indigenous conceptualization of territorial identity onto the legal and political designation for the “State,” the independent Republic of Madagascar, used beyond the shores of this fourth largest island in the World. (One Malagasy proverb says: [You need to] soak [the cloth] twice [in the dye], to have a rich/deep color.)¹⁴

The indigenous term for the “State,” *ny tany sy ny fanjakana*, is most often written as five words containing two different nouns. Yet one might argue that this orthography is an artifact of nineteenth-century French and English missionaries’ transcription of the Malagasy language into Roman script. In practice, Malagasy is an agglutinative (though some have called it an incorporative) language, a language that allows for the creation of polysynthetic words equivalent to entire phrases (Profita 2000, p. 100). Examples of such words/composite phrases already present in this work include the series of sobriquets and honorific names of the young grandchild who chose the basketful of dirt: Ramboasalamatsimarofy, Ombalahibemaso,

¹³ An example of current use of this term: previous to the 2011 celebration of the Malagasy Independence Day (June 26), the Radio Television Malagasy (RTM) announced that it was against the law to use firecrackers anywhere on the island in celebration of the national holiday. *Eo ankatokiny ny fankalazana ny fahaleovantena, dia raràna ny manapoaka tsipoapoaka manerana ny Tany sy ny Fanjakan’ny Repoblikan’i Madagasikara*.

¹⁴ *Mamerina in-droa, manana ny antitra*.

and Andrianampoinimerina (see Table 8.1 for translations).¹⁵ It is also the case that the “duality” in juxtaposition of the nouns that appear in *ny tany sy ny fanjakana* is neither awkward nor exceptional in the Malagasy language. It is actually a philosophic device that brings attention to a complementarity between two items or ideas whose conjoining results in a larger whole (see also Crossland 2001, pp. 27–28), carrying the additional sense of completeness or completion. *Tany aman-danitra*, or the “earth and the firmament,” can be understood as the universe. Another example of duality signifying a greater whole is *faran’ny lohany* or “[In] the end and [in] the beginning,” understood to mean in perpetuity. (Note the similarity to the English phrase “as it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be, world without end.”) *Vady aman-janaka* literally means “spouse(s) and children,” but it is used to designate the immediate family. Such conjoining of complements, such merism, can also serve as provocation to poetic reflection. Consider the Malagasy proverb: “like rice and water (*ny vary sy rano*), in the field [irrigated rice paddy] always together, in the village [in the cooking pot] never separated.”¹⁶ This “wisdom of the ancestors” offers a lyrical as well as compelling image of the basic substance(s) of life used to describe the eternal love that unites two individuals (Paulhan 2007, p. 98; Raharijaona and Kus 2013, p. 49).

To be clear, we are arguing that in order to understand the Malagasy indigenous concept of the “State,” *ny tany sy ny fanjakana*, it is essential to appreciate how a single word and a conceptual whole can be created through the interplay of linguistic characteristics of the Malagasy language and characteristic elements of (highland) Malagasy world view. However, the argument we wish to develop immediately below is that *ny tany sy ny fanjakana*, which Delivré argues is an “inseparable” whole (1974, p. 159), is rather, a concept of changing content embedded in ideological constructions of the “State” that have (and continue to be) experientially, socially, and historically crafted and contested (see also introduction, this volume). Further, the apparently “seamless” binding of *tany* and *fanjakana* is not only a historical illusion, but it is also the case that at times the fracturing of the term, *ny tany sy ny fanjakana*, into its constituent pieces underpinned resistance to the indigenous expansionist “State” of Imerina as well as resistance to French colonial “State” rule. (Though it is not within the scope of this chapter, it should be noted that resistance

¹⁵ It is also the case that many place names in Madagascar employ this device. Consider the amusing and edifying commentary of Kling who studied Malagasy toponymy: *Écoliers, nous avions imaginé, en classe de géographie, un jeu qui consistait à rechercher le plus long parmi les noms figurant sur nos cartes de Madagascar. Je me souviens encore à présent que Tsimanandrazana avait remporté la première place de ce concours original.... Aux profanes que nous étions, les noms de Madagascar apparaissaient complexes, illisibles, imprononçables. ...au contraire, lorsqu’une fois initié, même fort sommairement, à la langue du pays, on découvre la poétique beauté que renferme chacun d’eux* (1957, p. 787). [“As schoolchildren, we had devised, in geography classes, a game that consisted in finding the longest name among those featured on our maps of Madagascar. To this day, I remember that Tsimanandrazana won the first place in this original contest... To our profane ears, the names of Madagascar appeared complex, illegible, unpronounceable... By contrast, once initiated, even summarily, in the country’s tongue, one discovers the poetic beauty that each of them encloses” (editor’s translation)].

¹⁶ *Toy ny vary sy rano, an-tsaha miaraka foana, an-tanana tsy mifanary.*

to various contemporary Malagasy “State” regimes also has drawn and continues to draw inspiration from such fracturing; see also Richard, this volume).¹⁷

In order to continue our investigation of the indigenous term *ny tany sy ny fanjaka*, we suggest that *tany*, as a material symbol, is best appreciated using Peirce’s notions of icon and index, and that *fanjakana* is a symbol, an abstraction open to, and in need of, content (Peirce 1958–1960; Raharijaona and Kus 2013). A forte of archaeologists is their appreciation of materials and materiality, naturally occurring and culturally crafted. One additional point we want to draw attention to for our discussion below is that in a world of primary orality, the power of local symbols most often draws force from rich references to copious and redundant experiences of the sensual and material world. We recognize that Madagascar has provided us an advantage of access to both the material and the oral given the relatively late historical period for “state” development that we are focusing on. Critical for the argument to follow is to additionally recognize that (1) the co-optation of local icons, indexes and symbols is essential to “state” propaganda when the “constellation of authority” (Smith 2003) is still nascent, (2) however such co-optation is neither facile nor straightforward, and (3) co-opted symbols can always be reappropriated at the local level (see also Kus and Raharijaona 2000, 2008, 2011).

The “Down to Earth” Poetry and Evocativeness of *Ny Tany*

The term *tany* can be translated into English as “earth” (in the sense of both dirt and terrestrial universe), “land,” “ground,” or “soil” (Abinal and Malzac 1987[1888], p. 673). Its concrete multi-vocality, which its English translation allows us to begin

¹⁷ Consider this Betsileo *rija* (contemporary folksong) we tape-recorded at Andrainjato, Betsileo in May 1987.

Any Andondona Ny sape novolen’ny Foré	[The sacred heights of] Andondona Have been reforested in pine trees [by the Ministry of Water and Forests]
Any Antalatan’Ampano Ny rano lasan’ny Jirama	[The cascade of] Antalatan’Ampano [Its] waters are possessed by Jirama [state owned Utility of Water and Light]
Any Andrainjato Ny tany lasa “very tsy hita” [université]	[At Andrainjato The land is “lost to sight” [a subtle play on words: “lost to the University (of Fianarantsoa”)]

These verses rely upon the knowledge of an implied/understood play on words, *lasany ny fanjakana ny tany* (“the land has been seized by the state”) that make reference to Andrianampoinimerina’s grandfather’s pronouncement, *lasa’ny ny tany sy ny fanjakana!*: “[There!To Raomboasalama] has/have gone the land and the polity.” Of further interest is the definition of the term “*rija*” in a very recent dictionary published under the auspices of the Academia Malagasy: “*Hira fanaon’ny Betsileo miaraka amin’ny dihy mitototo tany*,” “Betsileo song to accompany the dance to trample the land [in preparation for planting]” (authors’ translation, Rakibolana Rakipahalalana 2005, p. 882).

to appreciate, renders it a powerful experiential mnemonic in a society of herders and agriculturalists living within a dramatic landscape of heights and valleys, and renders it a forceful iconic-indexical “root” for oral poets employing an agglutinative language.

The inhabitants of Imerina began and begin their lives with their navel cords buried in their natal villages. They ended and end their lives buried in communal tombs dug into the earth, creating a landscape that serves as index of group affiliation and social status, creating a *tanindrazana*, or a “land of the ancestors.” Between those inceptive and consummate moments, beyond their villages, they work and walk the land, moving from the river valleys that nurture their rice crops, to the slopes where their cattle graze, to the heights that visually dominate their land, named Imerina, “Visible from Afar.”

The root term *tany* comes to be qualified through observation and manipulation: *tany-lonaka* (fertile soil), *tanim-bary* (irrigated rice field), *tanin-ketsa* (nursery for rice seedlings), *tanimanga* (“blue earth” or soil baked into pottery, bricks, or roof tiles), *tany maintimolaly* (black soil of a fertility coming from long duration of cultivation), and *ombalahin-tany* (“bull-of-earth,” or the clots of dirt that do not crumble when dirt wall falls down). Such observations and experiences are indeed “fertile ground” for proverbs and poetic imagery, for oral verse of formal discourse, tale, poetry, and song. The fierce bull that digs into the earth with its horns, *ombalahy mitrongitany* (Callet 1981[1908], p. 175) is a fitting description of a sovereign ready to take on all challengers, and hedgehogs that take the color of the soil in which they live, *trandraka an-tany mena ka volon-tany no arahina*, are individuals (like anthropologists) who take on the customs and the ways of the country in which they find themselves.

Origins are powerful and in several tales the earth (*tany*) and the sky (*lanitra*) are the primordial beings, sometimes brothers, sometimes lovers. A dispute between lovers taken to the extremes of lightening flung by the sky to attain the earth and of large boulders hurled by the earth to attain the sky explain the physical geography of the landscape, particularly the massive boulders that crown its heights (for fuller details, see Kus and Raharijaona 1998, p. 53). Later, gestures of regret by the lovers explain the reflection of clouds, sky and boulder strewn heights in the calm surface of low-lying ponds pierced by clots of dirt and sprigs of vegetation (see Fig. 8.2), and explains early morning mists that caress dramatic heights (see Fig. 8.3); both melancholic, eternally recurring attempts at an embrace of reconciliation. The land and landscape are thus rendered sacred and sacredly patterned.

According to tales, the original inhabitants of Imerina, the Vazimba, lived as gatherers and hunters in the thick forests that originally covered the land. Through various combinations of intermarriage, battle, and chase, the Vazimba were displaced, according to those tales,¹⁸ and the ancestors of the Merina began the arduous tasks of “domesticating” the land: physically transforming marshland into rice paddies, hillsides into fields of dry crops and pasture, taking possession of slopes

¹⁸ According to archaeological survey and excavation, there is no evidence that the central highlands were occupied by hunters and gatherers (Wright 2007).

Fig. 8.2 The earth attains the sky



Fig. 8.3 The sky attains the earth



and heights with villages and tombs, *and* symbolically giving the land orientation and direction through centers and cardinal directions. The visible products of the ancestors’ work (e.g., cultivated fields, villages, etc.) and their tombs become critical features of the *landscape*. However we want to bring the reader’s attention to the critical distinction between *landscape* and the land/soil that will be important later in our argument. It is the case that the ancestral tombs anchor Merina (and Malagasy) identity. Understandably then, it is a common practice for Merina (and for members of other ethnic groups) to take a pinch of dirt from the grave of ancestors or from the natal village *tany nahaterahana*, wrap it in cloth, and carry this *tany masina*, or “consecrated”¹⁹ soil with them when voyaging a long distance away

¹⁹ The term *masina* can be translated into French by Abinal and Malzac as “efficace, saint, sacré” [“efficacious, holy, sacred”] (1987[1888], p. 436).

from the *tanindrazana*, the ancestral land. Dirt from the tombs of former sovereigns is even more sacred, and we will come to appreciate its significance later.

A “pinch of dirt” or a “handful of dirt” is also often part of a formula used in creating individual protective amulets (*ody*), collective talismans (*sampy*), remedies for physical and psychological ills, and even nefarious charms (*ody ratsy*). Such a “pinch of dirt” can get lost in the details of a larger composite talisman. Such a composition might involve enigmatically named plants, beads, and other objects: the water lily, *betsimihilana*, the “large one that lies without tipping,” referring to its leaf that reposes on the surface of a pond, undisturbed by the wind that ripples the water (Callet 1981[1908], p. 95); the bead, *tsimatiantaninolona*, “who does not die in the land/territory of another;” a stone, *vatonalohanitrino*, “vomited up by a crocodile.”²⁰ The “pinch of dirt” from the ancestral tomb is perhaps best understood as part of a larger constellation of other “pinches of dirt” that have been “marked” and are put to use in the concrete and gestural efforts of “predication upon the inchoate” (to use Fernandez’s phrase (1986, p. 23) to help us begin to understand the poetic and metaphoric logic involved in such efforts). Examples of other marked “pinches of dirt” are dirt taken from the soft mud at the mouth of a river (*tany malemy vav’ony*) used to guarantee that one dies in one’s home territory (*odi-manaramody*) (Callet 1981[1908], pp. 107–108), dirt taken from a place of formal public assembly (*tany kianja masina*) used for a love potion (*odi-fitia*) (Callet 1981[1908], p. 106), and dirt from the footstep/imprint of an individual (*tany no diavina*) used to entrap that individual (*odi-tsongodia*) (Callet 1981[1908], p. 110). To be clear, our point is that not only is a “pinch of dirt” easily overlooked by a cultural outsider, but also not immediately evident to a cultural outsider is the fact that there are many different types of “pinches of dirt” that are embedded in a Malagasy poesis of the quotidian and the cosmological.

Tany in its first sense is land, soil, and the earth. Yet the dictionary of Abinal and Malzac also reveals that this term can be used to designate “pays, contrée, royaume” (1987[1888], p. 673), that is “homeland, country, and kingdom,” which adds additional complexity to the concept of *ny tany sy ny fanjakana*.

Fanjakana: The Imposition of Rule (And of Occasional Order) on the Land, Writ Large on the Landscape

In the above section, we turned our attention to the icon and index of *tany*, now we turn our attention to the abstract symbol of *fanjakana*. The Malagasy language “in translation” is indeed incitement to contemplate linguistic and poetic affordances as we wrestle with indigenous conceptualizations of the “State.” Going directly to the term *fanjakana* in the dictionary of Abinal and Malzac (1987[1888], p. 866), one learns that the term is equivalent to *le royaume, le gouvernement, le règne, l’administration*, that is to say “the kingdom, the government, the reign, the admin-

²⁰ The name probably refers to a quality of a stone rather than a real action involving the stone, in the sense that should it be swallowed by a crocodile, it would be vomited out untouched.

istration.” However, the principle root of the term *fanjakana* is *zaka*. *Zaka* translates as “that which one can carry, govern, rule, that which one can bring to accomplishment, of which one is capable, that which one can use/command according to his/her will” (Abinal and Malzac 1987[1888], p. 866). So the conceptualization of *fanjakana*, one might say, comes with the ambiguity of “order” and of “exploitation.” We can see this more clearly in several qualifications of the term. *Fanjakan’i Baroa*, or the “reign of the sovereign, Baroa,” is synonymous with political exploitation and oppression. The term *fanjakan’i Bezanozano*, or the “administration of the Bezanozano [ethnic group],” is synonymous with anarchy (Abinal and Malzac 1987[1888], p. 866; Delivré, 1974, p. 159). On the other hand, *fanjakana arindra* refers to a rule of placing in order, creating harmony, crafting unity (Abinal and Malzac 1987[1888], p. 534; Delivré 1974, pp. 159–160). It will be remembered that in the tale that opened this work, the test of offerings to potential heirs to the throne were laid out on a finely woven mat, *tsihy rindra*; *rindra* is the root of the verb *arin-dra*. It will also be remembered (if one has the habit of reading footnotes) that the (first) definition of *rindra* is the bark of a type of sedge (*Cyperus aequalis*) used in creating the mat. This is yet another example of Malagasy philosophical profundity embedded in material mundanity.

The term *fanjakana* is a field wide open for ideological filling and political reflection that runs between indigenous polity, indigenous exploitation, and foreign imposition. We will explore these “fillings” in the sections below, paying particular attention to however: (1) the enduring, powerful icon and index of the *land* in both local systems of knowledge and “state” ideology, and (2) the visibility of the “State” on the *landscape*.

No Clump of Dirt Was Left Untouched by His Thoughts or His Deeds

One elder from whom Callet collected the royal oral traditions of Imerina was quoted saying: “No clump of dirt such as this ([demonstrating] while he took a pinch of dirt no larger than a corn seed) was left untouched by the deeds of Andrianampoinimerina, untouched by his thoughts” (Callet 1981[1908], p. 746).²¹ This remark seems to be a good “bookend” to the oral tale that began this work, where the young “Healthy Dog Free of Ailments” revealed his legitimate claim to heading the polity of his grandfather (one of the four corners of Imerina) by choosing a basket full of dirt. Andrianampoinimerina created a landscape of marked dirt and of monumentality as he reunited the four corners of Imerina that had constituted the united polity of his great-great-grandfather. In numerous speech acts Andrianampoinimerina appropriated the powerful concrete “symbol” of the *tany* to index his accomplishments. In numerous deeds, Andrianampoinimerina also rendered his polity, his *fanjakana*, legible and physically present on the *landscape*.

²¹ *Tsy misy tany eran’iny (no raisi’ny Rangahy milaza izany, tany erany ny voankatsaka) tsy voa didy n’Andrianampoinimerina ka tsy nasia’ny heviny.*

Andrianampoinimerina grafted the ideology of the “State” onto local indigenous symbolic logic and understanding; sometimes in eloquent oratory, sometimes with inelegant oratorical force. Andrianampoinimerina is quoted a number of times in the oral traditions both reminding his subjects that he possesses the land (*Ahy ny Tany*) (Delord 1957, p. 137) and that he is “Master of the land” (*Tompo ny tany*) (e.g., Callet 1981[1908], p. 364); graciously people are allowed the right to live on the land and to grow crops (Callet 1981[1908], p. 364).²² Numerous times he further *equates* himself to the land: “I am the land that sustains you, I am the land on which you reside” (Callet 1981[1908], p. 229).²³ In a practice that dates to earlier times and was carried into future reigns, fidelity was sworn to the polity of Andrianampoinimerina using three oaths: *lefon ’omby* or “spearing the bull,” *velirano* or “striking the water,” and *misotro vokaka* or “drinking water mixed with ‘earth’”. A fuller discussion of all three of the oaths would lead us into greater appreciation of the “power of poetry” in (dis)service of the “State,” but limitations of space only allow us to focus on the third listed oath critical to the central argument of this work. The oath of *misotro vokaka* or *sotrovokaka* involved placing water from a sacred source in a canoe and mixing it with earth taken from the tombs of former sovereigns. Individuals then drank this mixture with a series of prescribed gestures and uttered an oath to the effect that should they betray the laws of the sovereign, they and their offspring should perish, that the dust from the royal tombs dry them up [in the sense of leaving no offspring], and they not find any land to sustain them (Callet 1981[1908], pp. 388–389; Cousins 1950, pp. 83–84). This particular use of earth from tombs of sovereigns is important to note as it is critical to our continuing discussion of the power of “mundane” indigenous symbols whose significance often remains not only hidden to the gaze from foreign world views, but also underestimated by detainers of indigenous power.

Imerina is and was a country of sophisticated hydraulic rice cultivators. One role of early petty leaders, even before the time of Andrianampoinimerina’s great-great-grandfather, was to coordinate marshland draining projects and create and maintain a system of dikes. Several of those extensive dike systems came to demarcate the four corners of Imerina that were united under Andrianampoinimerina’s great-great-grandfather. Destroying those dikes came to be a strategy of internecine warfare that plagued an Imerina resulting in devastating famines. Under Andrianampoinimerina’s directives, the population of the newly unified Imerina not only restored the dike system (Callet 1981[1908], p. 297), but also undertook the massive project of draining the great marshland area of the Betsimitatatra. This not only brought new land into cultivation, but also allowed two crops of rice to be cultivated in this area, adding to the visible and consumptuary demonstration of the *fanjakana*’s ability to render the land fertile and the people prosperous.

Andrianampoinimerina continually grafted the symbol of land and of earth, of *tany*, onto his rule, *fanjakana*. He also made the *fanjakana*’s presence additionally visible on the landscape in more “monumental” ways. When Andrianampoinime-

²² ...*fa an’andriana ny tany, fa ny andriana no Tompo tokana ny tany rehetra, fa fipetrahana foana sy famelomana no any ny olona.*

²³ *Izaho no tany onenanareo, izaho no tany hipetrahanareo.*

rina first acceded to power, it was power over the “corner” polity of Avaradrano and his capital was the town of Ambohimanga (“Beautiful/Blue Height”). He engaged his subjects in a collective physical and symbolic effort to rebuild the protective ditches and stone gates of his capital (Kus 2007). It is to be noted additionally in passing that his house(s) at this capital was constructed of *tany mena* (red earth) that was taken from the village of one of his most noble warriors and supporters, a source of dirt/earth that was to be guarded against defilement and that was only used by the sovereign (Callet 1981[1908], p. 506).

When Imerina was eventually reunified, Andrianampoinimerina moved his capital to Antananarivo (“Village of a Thousand”). The move was symbolically and physically brilliant in terms of the propaganda of the *fanjakana*, but provided a significant symbolic challenge concerning *tany* (Kus 2007). The location of Antananarivo as capital of the polity recommends itself for several reasons. It sits at the center of the four corners of Imerina. It is a dramatic height that is visually isolated from other heights and is indeed “visible from afar.” To be expected the sovereign’s residence was placed on the highest point of Antananarivo (and when Antananarivo became capital, all other higher placed villages were ordered abandoned). Antananarivo is cradled by the great expanse of the marshland/ricefields of the Betsimihata, and from the north, east, and south of this town, one is offered a dramatic view of the iridescent young rice shoots of its “first rice” *vary aloha*, a counter seasonal crop of rice, planted in the middle of the austral winter to be harvested in the spring.²⁴ There is not much of surprise for the archaeologist in this polity’s working of the landscape when one compares it to other nascent polities in prehistory and history. There is monumental construction (of ditches, gates, and high-placed royal enclosures) as well as the town planning using the “clean slate” Antananarivo offered to “write and read” the polity’s order and organization, including Andrianampoinimerina’s residence at the central and highest point of the four corners of Imerina. However, if we look closely at this dramatic landscaping by the *fanjakana*, there are a number of challenging symbolic implications concerning the *tany* that demanded resolving, if not, forcing. These challenges include explaining away two capitals for a singular sovereign and a singular *fanjakana*, and a displacement of populations from their *tanin-drazana*, from the land of their ancestors.

Buried at Ambohimanga were the ancestors who legitimated the rightful claim of Andrianampoinimerina to rule (and their tombs were one source of dirt for the oath of *misotro vokaka*). Ambohimanga thus could not be put aside for Antananarivo. We have discussed in more detail elsewhere (Kus 2007) how Andrianampoinimerina attempted to meet the challenge of two capitals for a singular sovereign, in particular, how his various efforts to resolve the duality of capitals provide examples of an inelegant hegemonic, albeit symbolic, drone, rather than an eloquent poetic “coalescence.” However, for our current discussion it is interesting to note a recurrent refrain in Andrianampoinimerina’s public addresses: Ambohimanga and Antananarivo were referred to as a singular space, coalesced into “one” in the phrase,

²⁴ Technically this is *vary aloha* or “first rice” (Callet 1981[1908], p. 277) according to the traditional Malagasy calendar. It is not surprising consequently that this rice, a literal creation of the *fanjakana*, was an offering in prestations to the sovereign.

Ambohimanga sy Antananarivo, similar to the strategy of *ny tany sy ny fanjakana*. For Andrianampoinimerina's successors, the underlying duality was dissolved with the burial of Andrianampoinimerina at Ambohimanga rendering the former capital a necropolis, and Antananarivo a vibrant administrative center.

The fact that Ambohimanga became a necropolis and the (penultimate) resting place of Andrianampoinimerina's body is significant to our discussion below of the *menalamba* rebellion against the *fanjakana*. But returning to the present discussion, the fact that Andrianampoinimerina was buried at his original capital is critical as it stands in marked contrast to the orders he gave to some subjects, representatives from the three groups from the surrounding areas of Ambohimanga who were his original and continuing supporters. He ordered them to take up residence in his new capital in areas he assigned to them, and further ordered them to bring their dead and place them in the fields near Antananarivo (*alao ny faty nareo aidino any an-tsaha*) (Callet 1981[1908], p. 510). As we have mentioned several times, for the Merina (and for other Malagasy), the land where one's ancestors are buried is critical to one's sense of identity and the dirt from ancestral tombs is a potent talisman for those who venture far from their homeland. To be "removed" from one's *tanin-drazana* is to lose identity as did former slaves and descendants of former slaves who are said not to have ancestral tombs. How audacious then is the move by the *fanjakana* of Andrianampoinimerina to displace people from the land of their ancestors to the space of the polity mapped/landscaped onto the new capital, and to literally and symbolically create a new *tanin-drazana* with the displaced bodies of their dead ancestors!

Besides the town planning of a new capital and the reinforcement of the polity's territorial divisions through the building and rebuilding of dikes, other "monumental" impositions on the landscape of Imerina were undertaken by Andrianampoinimerina. These included additional refortification of existing sites with ditches, stone palisades, and stone entryways, as well as the creation of new villages (e.g., Callet 1981[1908], p. 485), and the placement of standing stones/monoliths to mark not only territorial boundaries and centers, but also to serve as mnemonics for the oral declarations of this sovereign concerning various matters of "State" (e.g. Callet 1981[1908], pp. 540, 734–735; see also Kus and Raharijaona 2006; Crossland, this volume). Indeed, to look out over the *physical landscape* of Imerina under Andrianampoinimerina's rule was to see "visible from afar" the monumental works of the "State." Yet, this was and is also an *oral landscape* of names (Kus and Raharijaona 2002). Whereas originally village names spoke of phenomena of land and nature, like the name of Antsahadinta or "In Fields [full] of Leeches" or the name of Ambohimanga itself, "The Beautiful/Blue Height," referring to the dark and luxuriant forests that cover its slopes, new names imposed on the landscape by Andrianampoinimerina testify to the *fanjakana*'s presence. Such are names like Imerimandroso, "Imerina That Advances" (Callet 1981[1908], p. 494) and the name of Antananarivo itself, "The Town of 1000 [indomitable warriors]" (Kus and Raharijaona 2002, 2006).²⁵

²⁵ It is interesting to note that the original name of Antananarivo was Analamanga which translates as "At the Beautiful/Blue Forest." The first translation of the term *manga* is "blue," but "blue" is a poetic allusion to "beauty" or "excellence."

The Ocean Is the Limit of My Rice Field: Conquest Beyond Imerina

After reuniting the original four corners of Imerina, Andrianampoinimerina launched expeditions to extend the territorial boundaries of his polity within the highlands area. He went on to conquer the territories of Imamo-West and Imamo-East, Bezanozano to the east, Voninzongo to the northwest, Vakinankaratra to the south, and Sihanaka to the east. He additionally sent his son (and future heir) to launch an expedition outside the highlands to the area of the Sakalava/Boina in the northwest coastal region of the island (see Fig. 8.1) (Delivré 1974, pp. 216–217). As the historian Campbell (1991, p. 265) points out, Madagascar as an island (a large one, nevertheless, between the size of Texas and California) possesses “unambiguous external frontiers.” This fact was not lost upon Andrianampoinimerina who eventually announced his pretention to extend his *fanjakana* across the entirety of the island: “*Ny ranomasina no valam-parihiko/Ny riaka no valam-parihiko*” (Veyrières and Méritens 1967, p. 41). The “poetic” translation is: “It is the sacred waters/the waves that are the limits of my rice fields.” We find it interesting that the French translation offered by Veyrières and Méritens is “*La mer est ma frontière*,” or “The ocean is my frontier.” We point this out as an illustration of an argument that we will reinforce later: the translations of Malagasy terms and phrases into French and English often employ prosaic word-choices, abstractions, and reifications that betray indigenous cultural aesthetic-logic and philosophical reasoning. This pretension to island-wide “colonial” domination was passed on to Andrianampoinimerina’s immediate successor, Lahidama or Radama I. Might the reader guess how this successor was designated?

One version of the story of succession is that Andrianampoinimerina introduced his son to the populace as his successor. He then took him to several aptly named locations in the royal enceinte of Antananarivo. First to the “palace” of Mahitsy or “Upright[ness]” admonishing Radama to “Uphold the *tany*! Uphold the *fanjakana*! (*Mahitsia tany ialahy! mahitsia fanjakana ialahy!*)” Then Radama was taken to Tsarahafatra or “[Place of] Good Advice” so that he pays heed to valuable counsel that is given to him. Then Andrianampoinimerina threw dirt at Radama, which Radama caught (Callet 1981[1908], p. 1037). In another version Andrianampoinimerina called in all of his wives²⁶ and gave each one a covered basket. To one wife, Ramanantenasoana, he gave a large sum of silver of off-island origins. To Rambolamasoandro he gave a basket of dirt that was meant for her son, Radama. Yet a third version has Andrianampoinimerina summoning the same two sons of those different mothers. Andrianampoinimerina asked his son by Ramanantenasoana if he was capable of ruling. This son, Ramarolahy, answered something to the effect that: “If I do not rule, or inherit, then blood will spill.” Radama, on the other hand, gave the more appropriate answer, and he was given a bit of soil (*vovotany*) wrapped in cloth and placed in a small basket. However, when his mother saw this she was angry and not knowing the significance she told him to take it back. Radama, however, did know the significance (Callet 1981[1908], p. 104; see Wynne-Jones, this volume,

²⁶ We are currently undertaking a larger project on these “powerful” wives.

for additional discussion of the critical role of performance in understanding “structuring logics” among the entanglements of imported goods and locally produced goods and materials).

Andrianampoinimerina died in 1810 and was buried at his original capital of Ambohimanga. This sacred necropolis was to remain off limits to snails, horses, pigs, hedgehogs, and foreigners (*Firaketana* letter A 1937–1963, p. 360).

Lasany Ny Fanjakana Ny Tany (To the State Has Gone the Land): Indigenous Empire Building

[Hegemony] has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified... It is also continually resisted... (Williams 1977, p. 112)

During Radama I’s short reign (1810–1828), he took up the pretentious name of *Mpanjaka anivon’ny riaka* or the Sovereign in the Midst of the Moving Waters/Waves (the “moving waters” that defined the limits of his father’s rice field). Radama I, following his father’s initiative, continued to launch expansionist campaigns into regions beyond the highlands of Imerina: the Menabe in the west, Toamasina and Mahavelona in the east, Mananjary and Fort-Dauphin in the southeast, and Boina in the northwest (see Fig. 8.1). While there are claims that Imerina eventually, under the reign of Radama I and his successors, extended its control to two thirds of the island, the historian Campbell brings our attention to the fact that Merina (*Imerina* is the name of the polity, *Merina* is the corresponding adjective) control never exceeded one third of the island (Campbell 2005, p. 230).

Under Radama and his successors (see Table 8.2), there were consistent policies concerning *ny tany*, as well as a number of concessions/pretensions to the symbolic significance of *ny tany*. One consistent policy, that actually was critical to limiting foreign incursions into the polity, was expressed in the discourse of numerous sovereigns, including Andrianampoinimerina: “My land cannot be ceded to foreigners, not even a morsel of the dimension of a grain of rice or the length of a footprint; [land] can only be sold among my subjects” (Veyrières and Méritens 1967, p. 40).²⁷ Continuing concessions to the symbolic significance of *ny tany* under the

Table 8.2 Reigning Merina sovereigns after Andrianampoinimerina

Sovereign	Dates of reign	Gender
Radama I	1810–1828	Male
Ranavalona I	1828–1861	Female
Radama II	1861–1863	Male
Rasoaherina	1863–1868	Female
Ranavalona II	1868–1883	Female
Ranavalona III	1883–1896	Female

²⁷ *Na dia eran’ny akotry iray aza, tsy azo amidy amin’ny firenena hafa ny taniko, fa amin’ny oloko ihany no azo amidy.—Na dia tsivalandia aza, tsy azo amidy amin’ny firenena hafa ny taniko, fa amin’ny oloko ihany no azo amidy.*

rule of Ranavalona I included the customary law that the sovereign did not eat from imported dishes and plates, but rather from dishware made from local soil (*tany manga*) or locally crafted silver (Julien 1909, p. 56). This same sovereign designated her heir to the throne employing yet another gesture concerning *tany*. She called into her presence the two contenders for the throne under the pretention of offering them gifts. On a table were placed two high-quality covered vases. The eldest was allowed to choose first. His vase contained “valuable gems and beautiful ornaments.” The vase of the younger contained a handful of dirt. The sovereign stated that while the eldest could accede to honor it is the case that the land cannot be divided. (This tale was recorded in English by the British missionary Sibree (1889, pp. 37–38), and so while we have some concrete imagery, we do not have the original Malagasy dialogue. Frustratingly this situation of glossing indigenous concepts into Indo-European languages will continue to echo in discussion below.)

When Andrianampoinimerina united the four corners of Imerina, he referred to the residents of Imerina as Ambaniandro or “Those Under the Sun,” attempting to craft a collective identity (to displace potentially divisive group affiliations) for subjects of his polity. As the polity expanded beyond Imerina, as it became an indigenous empire, the name Ambanilanitra or “Those Under the Sky” was the reference for subjects beyond the original heartland of the polity. Those images need to be appreciated for their poetic and ideological astuteness. The singularity of the sovereign was a persistent theme in the propaganda of Andrianampoinimerina (for fuller discussion see Kus 2012) and not surprisingly the sun is a convenient symbol to employ (see footnote 1 for additional discussion). As mentioned earlier, the sacred cosmological complementarity of earth and sky are attested to in origin myths, and it is further believed that sovereigns are descendants of “God(s) fallen to earth” (*Andriamanitra latsaka an-tany*) and “God(s) seen with the eyes [here on earth]” (*Andriamanitra hita maso*).

While Andrianampoinimerina can be credited with bringing peace and prosperity to the land *for some*, transforming the vast marshland of the Betsimitatatra into ricefields, assuring a standardization of the weights and measures used in market transactions, creating a “finely woven” order for the *fanjakana*, etc. (Raharijaona and Kus 2013), the work of the historian Campbell (1991), however, reveals an increasingly corrupt and exploitative *fanjakana* under Radama I and his successors. This was a *fanjakana* exploitative of both “Those Under the Sun” and “Those Under the Sky,” and a *fanjakana* constantly seeking territorial acquisitions, the *tanindrazana* of others. Even until today the term “Ambaniandro” (“Those Under the Sun”) is used as a pejorative designation for the Merina by descendants of those both formerly colonized by the Merina and those who successfully resisted such colonization. Campbell points out that members of the powerful polity of the Sakalava (on the northwest coast), among others, who resisted the Merina, as recorded by various missionaries in the area during the second half of the nineteenth century, considered the Merina as *not true Malagasy*, but rather as foreigners and considered their polity as foreign (1991, p. 287).

Campbell (1988, 1991, 2005) has extensively documented the devastating toll on agricultural productivity and human life of the abusive use of obligatory corvée labor (*fanompoana*) under the successors of Andrianampoinimerina. Lives were

lost dragging immense logs from the forests of the east (forests that also contained the sweet honey set before the heirs to the throne in the tale that opened this article) to the build the palace of Ranavalona I (Kus and Raharijaona 2000, pp. 109–110). Lives were lost among conscripted soldiers in battles, such as those fought on the west of the island (from where the savory salt came used to complement the succulent grilled beef offered to the potential heirs of the sovereign in the tale that opened this “tale”). Lives were lost *in* the actual performance of corvée labor, but they were also lost *because of* the unreasonable demands of such labor. Campbell (1991, p. 268) brings to our attention:

...the mortality rate for expedition troops averaged 50% per annum, and this had a dire impact upon the agricultural base in Imerina, which comprised a highly labor-intensive hydraulic riziculture. Although subject peoples were generally excluded from the army in the first half of the nineteenth century, they were subjected to arbitrary, harsh, and frequently long periods of fanompoana that often resulted in famine.

Brigandry during the nineteenth century became a way of both protest and survival for many individuals, certainly those trained for military service who now found themselves without the basic means of subsistence because of issues of insufficient time to upkeep their rice fields *and* the brigandry of others (Campbell 1991, pp. 267–269). One can understand how the fateful statement of Andrianampoinimerina’s grandfather designating him as heir to authority, “*Lasa ’ny ny tany sy ny fanjakana!*” ([There! To Raomboasalama] has/have gone the land and the polity!) could now be reinterpreted through a play on words by the subjects of the abuse of such authority as “*Lasany ny fanjakana ny tany!*” (The land has [now] gone/been lost to the polity [and those who control it]!).

One indignant blow to the “land of the ancestors,” *tanindrazana*, came in 1869 “when [under Ranavalona II] the imperial Merina court abandoned ancestral ways and adopted the white man’s religion, establishing a state church in all subjected provinces, and imposed the Merina version of Christianity as the imperial ideology” (Campbell 1991, p. 287). Among all the protests that both preceded this event and followed it, there is one great memorable indigenous uprising that continues to engage the Malagasy imagination and fascinate both on- and off-island historians. It is the revolt of the Menalamba dated by historians between 1895 and 1899 (Ellis 1985) or 1895 and 1897 (Campbell 1988). The student of Malagasy history will realize that this revolt straddles the last days of the indigenous Merina Empire and the colonial imposition of French rule. Indeed, historians have tried to answer the question of exactly *against whom* were the rebels rebelling (e.g., Campbell 1991; Ellis 2003).

In the next section we will discuss relatively briefly this revolt of the Menalamba or Red Shawls (Ellis 1985). Our intent is *not* to presumptuously tread on the terrain of historians who are much better versed in this historical episode than we who have concentrated our attention on the period leading up to and the eventual the assumption of power by Andrianampoinimerina. Rather, we want to continue our discussion of the power of the concrete “mundane” material symbol of *tany* to (1) add “finer grain” to the history being told, and (2) reinforce our argument that archaeologists’ sustained focus and nuanced appreciation of materiality/materiali-

ties should include an appreciation of the concrete poetry used in reflective thought and active (“performative”) engagement in life by members of societies of primary orality. This is to say, we need to recognize these subjects of “States” and empires, indigenous and foreign, as ingeniously poetic, poetically philosophical, materially grounded, and on-the-ground “agentic” (to use current theoretical vocabulary).

The Menalamba and the Contestation of Indigenous and Foreign Regimes

Let us offer a brief summary for our purposes here of the Menalamba uprising (Historians such as Rajohanasa (1953), Ellis (1980, 1985, 2003) and Campbell (1988, 1991) offer rich accounts of the Menalamba uprising for those interested in a fuller recounting). The British were the main European players in Madagascar during the nineteenth century. However, the “Franco-Merina War of 1883–1885 established a nominal French protectorate over Madagascar, but the Merina government ignored French pretensions to govern external policy” (Campbell 2005, p. 4). Britain’s interest in wiping out the slave trade in the Indian Ocean led them to strike a deal with the French in 1890, allowing the French a free hand in Madagascar in exchange for Britain’s free hand in Zanzibar (Campbell 2005, p. 4). The concatenation of the Merina Queen and Prime Minister’s conversion to Protestantism in 1869, British missionary complicity in the Merina political agenda, including continued conscription for *corvée* labor (Campbell 1988, p. 54), French aggression, continued exploitation of indigenous populations by and corruption and feuding among the ruling Merina elite of the *fanjakana* (Ellis 1980, p. 219), and a number of other factors contributed to increasing political unrest across the island and the eventual uprising of the Menalamba beginning in 1895.

The center of the Menalamba rebels was in the highland Merina region west of Antananarivo. On November 22, 1895, a band of 2000 Malagasy attacked the village of Arivonimamo (30 km west of Antananarivo) and killed the Merina governor stationed there along with a British missionary family (Campbell 1988, p. 55). The revolt spread to other regions of the island. It was suppressed at the end of 1897 in the highlands, but uprisings in other parts of the island, among non-Merina, continued until 1904 (Campbell 1991, pp. 259–260). The attacks of the Menalamba were directed against local officials of the royal government, prominent indigenous converts to Christianity and church personnel, foreigners, and primarily missionaries (Campbell 1988, p. 55; Ellis 2003, p. 69). According to Campbell (1988, p. 55): “[The Menalamba] razed to the ground an estimated 750 churches, over 70% of which were affiliated to the London Missionary Society (LMS), and killed five foreign missionaries and an unknown number of indigenous church personnel. Between 3000 and 5000 Malagasy lost their lives in the uprising....”

What is interesting about this rebellion is that it was originally treated by historians of colonialism (e.g., Ellis 1980; cf. Abbink et al. 2003) as a precocious anticolonial rebellion, a rebellion of indigenous nationalists against foreign invaders and against the incursion of capitalist values into their culture (Ellis 1985). Indeed, to

the French on the ground at the time it must have appeared as a nationalist resistance to their claims to first exercise a protectorate over the island (1890) and then annex it as a colony (1896). Given the murderous and destructive focus on indigenous Christians and the assaults on European lives and property, it was easy to give credence to this interpretation. Campbell presents a compelling and convincing argument to challenge this original interpretation. He argues that this was a rebellion by “revolutionary traditionalists” (Campbell 1991, p. 289) against an exploitative *fanjakana*, a *fanjakana* that once upheld ancestral traditions, but no longer did so. Ellis (2003) has recently revisited this question in an article titled: “Colonial conquest in central Madagascar: Who resisted what?” He concurs with Campbell that this was a revolt initially expressing indignation against the immorality of the indigenous state/empire and then continued against the offshore invaders who were seen to be assaulting tradition and taking over the land of the ancestors. We are not historians of this period, however, we are potentially in a position to enter into this discussion given our focus on the traditional symbol of *ny tany* and the indigenous concept of the “State,” *ny tany sy ny fanjakana*.

It is interesting to look at both Ellis’ and Campbell’s interpretation of the term “Menalamba.” Ellis (1990, p. 220) says: “*Menalamba* mean literally ‘red shawls.’ The most plausible explanation for the name is that the leaders wore red shawls as a traditional symbol of authority.” Campbell (1991, p. 25) argues rather: “...the color of royalty was more purple than red, and no traditionalist would have worn it habitually for it was considered a sacrilege to do so....” He goes on to add that: “[a] more obvious explanation is that the rebels smeared their clothes with the common red laterite soil of the plateau in order to provide some camouflage” and says that washing clothes may have been associated with Christian practices (1991, p. 25). The lateritic soils of Madagascar run the gamut of yellowish pinks to deep red; in fact, Madagascar has often been referred to as The Big Red Island, and its soils running from its great rivers into the “midst of the moving waters” have sometimes been compared to the draining of the lifeblood of the island. There is no reason that the “practical” need stand in opposition to the “poetic,” indeed, in societies of primary orality, the practical is the source that gives rise to much poetic reflection and to the force that underpins the credibility of concrete symbols based upon such reflection. It is noted in passing in various sources that the Menalamba swore an oath to their cause, an oath of *misotro vokaka*, the drinking of the island’s lateritic soil taken specifically from the tombs of sovereigns, in this case, the tomb of Andrianampoinimerina at Ambohimanga. We would argue that for a people steeped in the power of and gifted with the talents of oral poetry, that there is much significance to be found by being both enveloped by (red shawls) and imbued with (dirt of the tombs of the sovereign) the force of the *tany* as they dared challenge the *fanjakana*. (To be clear, we are not arguing that the motivation of all the Menalamba were so “unsoiled”).

It is additionally interesting to note that it has been easy for non-Malagasy past and present to gloss the phrase *ny tany sy ny fanjakana* as the “State” or government. Ellis and Campbell, while aware of the indigenous term, are quick to use vocabulary, such as “kingdom,” “government,” or “state.” Delivré (1974, p. 382, fn 74), who as we note above makes mention of over 150 uses of the phrase in the *Tantara ny*

Andriana eto Madagascar, offers this count, not in his text, but rather in a footnote! In the work of Delivré (1974) one can find the term *fanjakana* in the index, the term *tany* does not appear. Neither term, nor the phrase, appear in the indices of either Ellis (1985) or Campbell (2005).²⁸ Raison-Jourde who has discussed at length the appropriation of the term *fanjakana* by nineteenth-century missionaries to the island to refer to the “kingdom of god” goes on to translate *fanjakana* as “*le pouvoir sur des hommes et un territoire*” (the power over people and territory) (1991, p. 7). Let us further comment upon, as a side note, the manner in which Ellis (1990, p. 230) interprets the indigenous names of the “mythical” leaders of the rebellion. Among those leaders were Ratsitiavola and Ratiatanindrazana. Ellis translates the first as “Mr. Does Not Love Money,” an apt interpretation and one that points to a perception on the part of the Menalamba of the level of corruption of members of the *fanjakana*. The second name he interprets as “Mr. Patriot.” The literal translation of that second name is rather, “Mr. Who Loves the Land of His Ancestors.”

A central point of this section of the chapter is to bring to our attention how members of literate societies, wherein the “State” has been reified conceptually (and experientially), are given to facile translations of “material” indigenous metaphors and symbols into “immaterial” abstractions (found to be more attractive, more “sophisticated,” to the literate ear than lapidary prose). We argue that the Menalamba rebellion is an example where, if Campbell’s arguments are correct about a rebellion against an indigenous colonial empire, a rebellion against the abusive use of traditional authority, we can see the powerful potential for contestation in the disarticulation of *ny tany* from *ny fanjakana*.

French Invasion and Foreign Colonial Imposition

As the Menalamba rebellion continued when the French “officially” proclaimed Madagascar to be a colony, the French sought to quell what they understood to be an indigenous insurgency against *their* legitimate *fanjakana*. A number of foreigners, including missionaries, wrote of Malagasy beliefs in terms of gris-gris, talismans, charms, fetishes, etc. Consider the comment of Dr. G. W. Parker, a medical missionary and one of the physicians to Queen Ranavalona II, the queen who had converted to Protestantism: “. . . the Hova [Merina] idols (burned when the present queen professed Christianity) were merely *dirty bundles* of colored rags and feathers” (authors’ emphasis, 1883, p. 481). As we asserted earlier in this work “dirt” and “dirty” fetishes are easily and disdainfully overlooked and misunderstood by zealous missionaries and ardent European civilizers (cf. Graeber 2005, pp. 410–418, 431).

To quell the Menalamba rebellion and begin “*la mission civilisatrice*,” General Joseph Gallieni was sent to Madagascar, arriving on September 16, 1896. With little firsthand knowledge of the island, Gallieni was not only dependent on his subordinates, but also on indigenous “informants” to understand the local “peasant arche-

²⁸ The entry *Fanjakana* does appear in Campbell, but it is a place name, not the concept.

type” (see also Richard, this volume). The insecurity and rebellion continued for months, and palace intrigues and rivalries added to the complexity of understanding the situation. It was rumored that the Queen herself was behind the Menalamba rebels. While exceedingly unlikely, the French believed that such rumored sanctioning by legitimate traditional detainers of power/*fanjakana* strengthened the rebellion. Gallieni, as one strategy to quell a rebellion he perceived rallying around traditional authority, ordered Queen Ranavalona III exiled to Reunion on February 28, 1897 and then eventually to Algeria where she died childless in 1917. Consider this horrific fate for a Malagasy: to leave no offspring and to die outside one’s homeland (*maty an-tanin’olona*, literally, “to die in the land of [another] people”). (The Queen’s/Mpanjaka’s remains were eventually returned to Madagascar on October 31, 1938.) This sentence of the Queen’s banishment was delivered to the public by Rasanjy, Gouverneur Général de l’Imerina. Gallieni (1908, p. 38) said of Rasanjy: “...of all the high officials of the former Malagasy government, I only retained Mr. Rasanjy, an intelligent and astute individual, who promised me, upon my arrival, to counsel me frankly and without self-interest, and has faithfully and scrupulously upheld that promise.”²⁹ Jean Carol, who was secretary to the Governor General Laroche who preceded Gallieni, said of Rasanjy: “Rasandze has no conscience; greedy for honors and wealth, he sold out his country. Always ready to align himself with those in power, he would do all the dirty work asked of him....” (loose translation of quote in Ellis 1990, p. 123).³⁰

Still the insurgency continued. Gallieni understood that the Menalamba were rallying around the premier figure of Merina history, Andrianampoinimerina, and was further informed (most likely by Rasanjy) of the indigenous belief in the power of soil procured from the grave of Andrianampoinimerina at Ambohimanga. He wrote (1908, p. 128):

I have had to take strong measures against the instigators of disorder...; finally, in order to quell the rumor circulating across the country, that the soil taken from the royal tombs confers invulnerability, I have ... had transferred to the great palace of Antananarivo, with attention to appropriate ceremony to favorably impress the indigenous population, the mortal remains of the sovereigns buried at Ambohimanga.³¹

As he states above (though it should be noted that this entry was written minimally a year after the fact), Gallieni understood the power of “fetishes,” in this case, the soil from the grave of Andrianampoinimerina said to render an individual invin-

²⁹ ...de tout le haut personnel de l'ancien Gouvernement malgache, je ne conservai que M. Rasanjy, homme intelligent et avisé, qui m'avait, dès mon arrivée, promis un concours sans arrière-pensée, et a tenu depuis cet engagement avec une scrupuleuse fidélité.

³⁰ J'avais dû prendre des mesures énergiques contre les fauteurs de désordre...; enfin, pour couper court à la légende répandue dans le pays, que la terre provenant des sépultures royales procurait l'invulnérabilité, j'avais ... fait transférer au grand palais de Tananarive, avec un cérémonial propre à impressionner favorablement la population indigène, les restes des souverains ensevelis à Ambohimanga.

³¹ Rasandze n'a pas de conscience; avide d'honneurs et de richesses, il vendrait sa patrie. Toujours prêt à se ranger du côté du plus fort, il fera toutes les bassesses que vous voudrez....

cible (see also Nativel and Raison-Jourde 1999, p. 177). It would seem that Gallieni was working between the logic of his indigenous elite informant and his own understandings. He ordered the body of Andrianampoinimerina (and other royal ancestors) to be disinterred from their graves at the necropolis of Ambohimanga and transported to and reburied at Antananarivo, with all due pomp and circumstance, overseen by Rasanjy (cf. Esterhuysen, this volume). This sacrilegious act took place on 14–15 of March 1897. At first glance this is a brilliant tactical move (Nativel and Raison-Jourde 1999, p. 190). It is as if one disinterred Louis XIV from St. Denis or Elizabeth I from Westminster Abbey and reburied him or her at the headquarters of occupying troops. Gallieni and his forces occupied the royal palaces at Antananarivo, including the original residence of Andrianampoinimerina. Usurpers/colonialists can exert authority by respectfully protecting, in a “museum” setting (and in this case under the “tricolore”) the remains of their conquered (honorable) predecessors. What is interesting is that this attempt to desanctify the soil of Ambohimanga by disinterring the remains of Andrianampoinimerina did *not* work. Menalamba continued to take soil from the site of the grave until their ranks were devastated by French troops at the end of 1897. It is an interesting question to ask if Rasanjy, the *elite* indigenous informant of Gallieni, actually understood *local* indigenous belief concerning what renders the “land/soil” sanctified. Still today, signs put up by the Ministry of Culture warn visitors to Ambohimanga that the removal of soil from the royal enceinte is strictly forbidden, a “crime against the State.”

Gallieni went on to cover the Malagasy landscape with evidence of the French *fanjakana* from roads, to railroads, to schools, to agricultural and mining operation. Malagasy who fought for the French in WWI and WWII continued to take pinches of dirt from their *tanindrazana*. But there also continued to be a number of resistance movements in Madagascar to end external colonial rule. One movement beginning in 1915, the VVS or *Vy, Vato, Sakelika*, “Iron, Stone, [with] Offshoots” incorporated the *misotro vovoka* (“drinking of dirt”) among elements of the oath its initiates took. Even in 1987, the image of “Malagasy dirt” continued to inspire popular imagination. In one panel of his work (1987, p. 16), *Vato ambany Riana [Rock(s) beneath the Cascade]*, a cartoonist of Malagasy history, Ramiandrisoa-Ratsivalaka, pictured three objects on an “altar” used by the VVS in their oath taking: a handful of dirt in the shape of the island of Madagascar, a cup filled with blood and a sharp knife.³² Even today one term for the period before French colonization is *tamin’ny tany Malagasy*, roughly translated as “when the land was [in the hands of the] Malagasy.”

Dirt/earth continued to be a powerful icon for Malagasy resistance movements. The poet Rabemananjara listed what he considered to be the four “fundamentals” (1970, p. 56) of Malagasy culture, the first of them being *ny tany*, the land (followed by language (*ny teny*), personal dignity/honor (*ny zo*), and friendship and social relations (*ny fihavanana*) (1970, p. 56). He speaks of how “the virtue of the land ceaselessly penetrates individuals as daily they walk the land with naked

³² *Teo amin’ilay alitara dia nisy vilia misy tany, kaopy misy ra ary zava-maranitra.*

feet” (authors’ loose translation, Rabemananjara 1970, p. 56). He goes on to speak of the strong attachment Malagasy have: “. . .to the earth as earth itself. Something concrete and palpable. One takes pleasure in working the land. One breathes in its odor without ever being satiated and seeing [the landscape] daily is a constant source of emotions” (1970, p. 56).³³ It is important to note one source of inspiration for Rabemananjara’s words and sentiments. Rabemananjara was not only a poet of the Négritude Movement, he was also a politician and a patriot. His involvement in the M.D.R.M. (*Mouvement Démocratique de la Renovation Malgache*), a political movement whose agenda was to seek independence for Madagascar within the Union Française, led the French government in 1946 to condemn Rabemananjara to 20 years of forced labor, much of that time spent in exile. 1947–1948 saw yet another Malagasy rebellion against colonial rule that met with horrific repression on the part of the French authorities (e.g., Tronchon 1974). Still today those rebels are known by the acronym, the “*Tia tanindrazana*,” or “Those who love the land of their ancestors” (reminiscent of the name of the Menalamba rebel, Ratiatanindrazana, or “Mr. Who Loves the Land of his Ancestors”).

Madagascar regained its independence in 1960. Its national anthem, *Ry Tanindrazanay malala*, “Oh, Beloved Land of our Ancestors” does *not* include the word *fanjakana*.

Conclusion

There will continue to be interesting discussions among prehistorians and historians about “states,” nascent national identities, and how these intersect with rebellion and resistance to colonial impositions, both indigenous and foreign. We understand our contribution to this discussion as follows. For those of us who do not have access to linguistic evidence, we urge poetic diligence in our appreciation of the materialities, both bedazzling (e.g., bright shiny beads) and dull (dirty little bags), we study in the archaeological record. We urge those of our ranks who do have access to linguistic evidence to take seriously the investigation of indigenous concepts of the “State.” We have perhaps tested the patience of our readers with the inordinate amount of time we have spent on the dense, allusive, elusive oral poetry of the Malagasy. But we have done so to avoid the “slippery slope” of hegemonic vocabulary that would have us too easily accede to the power of abstraction and reification, assent to vocabulary that too conveniently fits the tales of “the winners” (both indigenous and foreign) who get to tell the *histories* of our collective pasts. We would encourage us to allow the concrete, robust, yet often subtle, poetry of indigenous tales to entice us into lingering longer on examples of confrontation and contestation of “constellations of authority” (Smith 2003) (both indigenous and foreign). Certainly, this is

³³ *Les Malgaches s'attachent d'abord à la terre, à la terre en tant que terre. Quelque chose de concret et de palpable. On se plaît dans son commerce, on en hume insatiablement l'odeur et sa vue quotidienne offre une source constante d'émotions.*

to allow us to nuance the *histories* we tell (see also Brink, this volume). However, it might also allow us to learn lessons for our own struggles with the “constellations of authority” we confront each day, rather than have us prosaically capitulate to abstractions and their more threatening forms of unassailable reifications.

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Chapter 9

The Politics of Absence: The Longue Durée of State–Peasant Interactions in the Siin (Senegal), 1850s–1930s

François G. Richard

Postcolonial Preamble: Peasants, State, and Society in Senegal

In a recent study of community-based development in West Africa, Dennis Galvan (2007) examined the conditions that favored effective grassroots mobilization in the Siin, a small rural region in west-central Senegal (Fig. 9.1). In charting the rise and fall of the *Association des Paysans de Toukar*, a farmer’s association in the village of Toukar, deep into the Siin heartland, Galvan explains that the success of its initiatives depended in some measure on its founders’ capacities: an enterprising group of young men, with university educations, who were able to use their village background, technocratic skills, and urban contacts to attract funding for local development projects, which included the establishment of a cholera prevention program, a water-retention basin for garden irrigation, a revolving credit fund for cattle husbandry, and a general goods store. Yet, if visionary leadership and funding connections gave continued lift to the association, Galvan also underscores the central importance of two other factors: The Senegalese state’s “benevolent neglect” of the region (which shielded the association from the potential squandering of resources and knowledge via political patronage networks) and a willingness to recycle elements of “traditional social relations” (such as kinship and age-group cohorts) in the name of community development.

As Galvan aptly notes, the recombinant use of “tradition” and ambivalent relations between society and state structures are not new phenomena in Siin’s peasant world. Their specific expressions today may be original, but they rest on a deeper historical stratum, stretching back to the colonial era (and probably earlier), where

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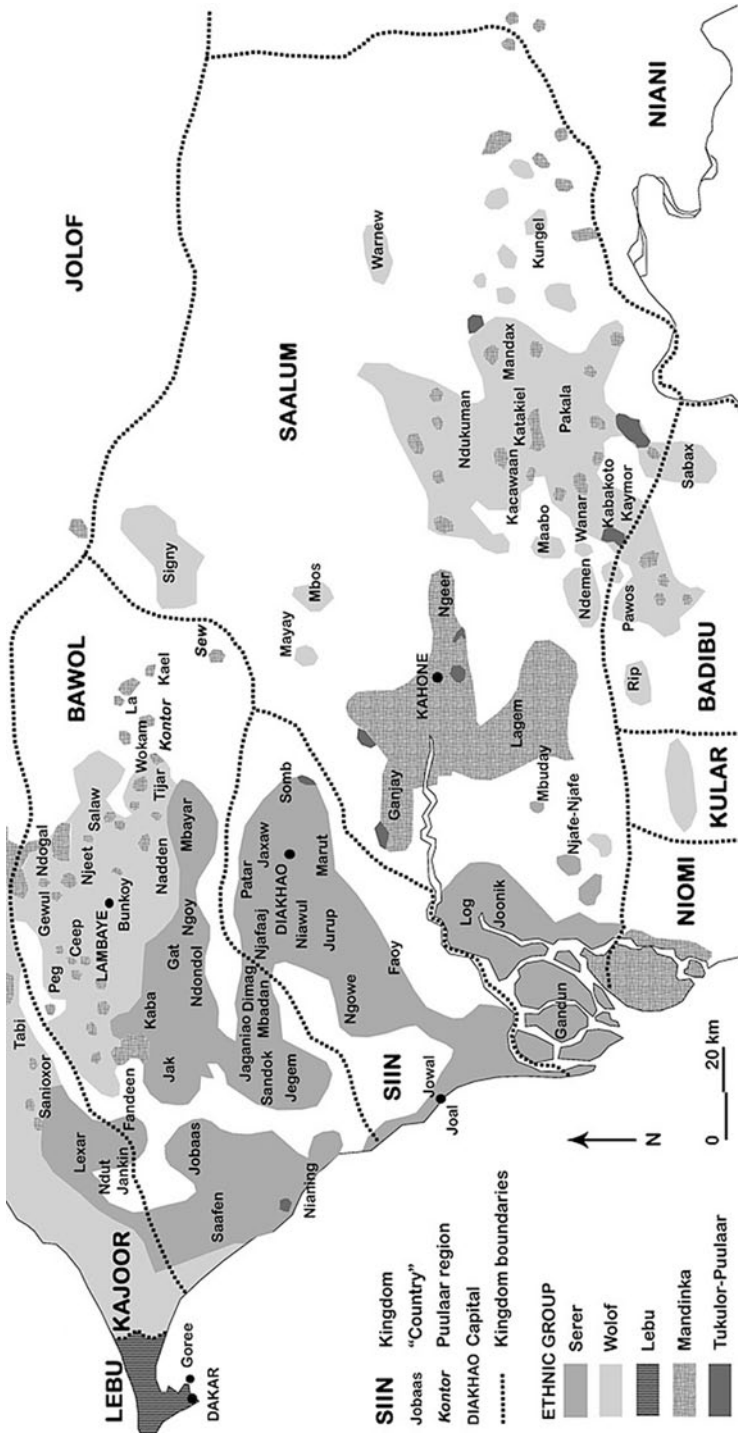


Fig. 9.1 Kingdoms and ethnic groups, west-central Senegal, nineteenth century

the roots of Siin's marginalization from state-assisted development can be found, and during which hybrid repertoires of practices, combining past and present, became a legitimate form of mediation between state and community. Two elements are interesting here. First, contemporary modes of being and acting in Siin are infused with social orientations that were shaped in relation to colonial authority. Second, Siin's relationships to state power (both past and present) have been paradoxical: On the one hand, they have turned the region into a political backwater insulated from the sphere of clout, influence, and favor, in a rapidly modernizing Senegal where national politics seem increasingly coterminous with large urban agglomerations—and where the countryside seems to amount to a little more than an afterthought. On the other hand, this peripheralization has also proved productive, affording certain political possibilities for community empowerment in the present. To be sure, state and society have been imbricated differently at different moments of the past, but the point is that the history of their interplay binds political trajectories between colony and postcolony, and that the social worlds that African peasants have built over time are outcomes of that history.

My concern in this chapter is with the colonial phase of this long story of interactions in Siin, specifically, what we might call “colonial *government*”—the character of colonial rule, the efficacy and derailments of its technologies of power, how its projects affected African villagers and were reframed by them—between 1850 and 1960, the 100 years or so of French occupation in Senegal. The account I propose, draws on historical evidence gleaned in various archives and the evolving results of several campaigns of archaeological research conducted in the Siin since 2003. It lends special attention to the political history of Seereer communities, Siin's largest ethnicity, as they grew entangled with the sticky webs of imperialism and learned to navigate, with various degrees of success, the new worlds of power unloosed by colonialism.¹ As one of the top producers of commercial peanuts in West Africa, the Siin-Saalum region was a critical piece of Senegal's colonial economy, and the Seereer, who have long been imagined as the textbook African peasants, were important objects of colonial attention.

What particularly moves my analysis is the seeming paradox between common perceptions of colonial power as invasive and statements like those of Biram Thi-am, a farmer interviewed by historian Martin Klein in 1975 in the Saalum region, who recollected that, during the colonial era, “the peasant could never see the white man” (Klein 1979, p. 73)—an impression that has been echoed in my conversations with Seereer elders who were children during the fading decades of colonialism. In

¹ The term “Seereer” is an umbrella term, which encompasses seven different ethnolinguistic groups thought to share cultural roots stretching into the distant past. This designation, however, becomes far more ambiguous as an identity construct when we take into account the fact that some of the “Seereer” groups do not speak mutually intelligible languages, have different kinship structures, and boast different sociopolitical organizations. I have tried to address some of these ambiguities elsewhere, by charting key moments in the historical, political, and representational construction of Seereer ethnicity since the fifteenth century (Richard 2015). For the immediate purpose of this article, and since my analysis will concern only the Siin region, I will employ the term “Seereer” in the rest of the essay as a shorthand for “Seereer Sinig,” or those Seereer populations historically inhabiting the Siin.

many ways, this disjunction reposes a critical problem identified long ago by Karen Fields (1985, pp. 30–31), when she asked “[h]ow did a notoriously small handful of white men rule gigantic territories”—a relevant predicament of *history*, which summons pointed *theoretical* questions about the nature of colonial power and thresholds of its limits. My interest, then, is to interrogate Siin’s rural landscapes to develop a historical anthropology of political life that elucidates the workings of colonial rule, and how we might go about conceptualizing its materiality. Forging a dialogue between Galvan’s idea of “benevolent state neglect” and local commentaries about the invisibility of colonial rulers on the ground, I propose that a key modality of colonial governance in the Siin was a “politics of absence.” Absence here does not mean vacuum or nothingness; rather it evokes a material register of power that did not require direct physical intervention, but rather worked obliquely through a variety of non-state or para-statal actors, media, and institutions. This politics of absence braided with more frontal state strategies to organize the quotidian of peasant populations, though its results did not always play out as predicted. Much of this essay will take up these ambiguities of government—where efficacy met incertitude, and where the two could not always be differentiated—and explore how they reverberated across the Seereer milieu.

Anatomies of Colonial States: History, Anthropology, Archaeology

Scholarship on the nature of “colonial government” in Africa has been somewhat bifurcated. In the broadest of brushstrokes, one strand of literature has portrayed colonial rule as despotic and oppressive, emphasizing its vocation for domination and sovereign violence (e.g., Mamdani 1996; Suret-Canale 1971; Young 1994). Other studies have adopted a more skeptical tone, pointing out the limitations and internal contradictions of colonial regimes (most notably their reliance on precolonial institutions) and their inability to monitor African labor and agricultural economy, and downplaying their transformational effect on African societies (Berman and Lonsdale 1992; Roberts 1996). While both view capture salient aspects of colonial rule, there is danger for slippage into an “all-or-nothing” understanding of power and its capacity to alter the social relations of colonized peoples. This split has not escaped more recent research (Comaroff 1998; Cooper 2005; Mbembe 2001), which has adopted a more temperate perspective: One recognizing that colonial governments varied considerably in time, space, and over the course of their existence and that some administrations were strong and intrusive (and meted out power instrumentally), while others were weak and indifferent (allowing power to dissipate along many channels), and that others still were sometimes both at once! In the face of these textured political worlds, the venerable category of “The Colonial State” as an integrated entity and definitive political type appears somewhat chimerical. Collapsing under its own unwieldy weight, “the state” has given way to more pliant definitions: A variably coordinated ensemble of institutions, loci, programs, and discourses, held together by legal frameworks, and broadly working (through

cadres, agents, bureaucrats) to define a political community, administer rights and resources, legitimize a regime of order, institute cultural conventions fostering acquiescence to rule, and regulate the behavior of different political actors (Comaroff 1998, pp. 341–342; also Bayart 1993).

Part of the instability of colonial rule stemmed from the fact that these different projects did not always converge toward a coherent vision. The cracks between them nurtured sizable dysfunctions, contradictions, and shortcomings. Nor were colonial designs always synchronized with the cultural terrains they attempted to police and reform. While colonial authorities at times managed to align reality with the representations churned up by colonial knowledge mills, their political initiatives were often out of joint with Africa that European bureaucrats failed to grasp in full. Another source of imbalance flowed from the cohabitation of colonial administrations with other assemblages of power (which frequently enjoyed more legitimacy in the eyes of Africans) (Lan 1985; Moore 2005; Obarrio 2010); at various points in time, these other spheres of power may have been combated (say, precolonial aristocracies, Islamic brotherhoods, or labor unions), actively cultivated (such as traditional ruling elites repurposed as “chiefs”), or actually manufactured (one example being African clerks and interpreters, who were pivotal cogs in the machinery of colonial affairs) (Lawrance et al. 2006). More ambivalence accrued from the fact that colonial policies did not always elicit anticipated responses from subject populations or meet their consent. Africans openly resisted, subverted, and appropriated colonial idioms, rituals, and other trappings of power for their own devices (Berry 2000; Saul and Royer 2001; Stoller 1995). Additionally, the goal of subjecting Africans to colonial law sometimes backfired and opened new avenues of native agency (Roberts 2005). In rural Senegal, for instance, after the 1900s, “indigenous tribunals” rapidly worked their way into peasants’ daily life, and villagers increasingly used legal recourse to adjudicate matters of land rights, inheritance, marriage, family dispute, and theft, turning a “modern” institution into the arbiter of social “tradition,” and transforming both in the same breath (Galvan 2004). Likewise, in urban areas, educated mixed-race and black Africans frequently used the law to magnify contradictions in colonial ideology, contest state power, and carve out a space for the expression of the rights of the colonized (Johnson 1971).

The take-home message is that colonies were not absolute systems of order, but “twilight zone[s] of multiple indeterminate configurations of power and authority” (Hansen and Stepputat 2006, p. 302; Stoler 2006). To properly grasp the nature of colonial sovereignty, then, requires an understanding of the different registers of power at play in given territories, how they articulated with each other, the uncertainties permeating the attempt to govern subject populations, and the ambiguous responses to which they gave rise. In other words, the key to unpacking the metaphysics of colonial rule lies in the microphysics of its functioning (Cooper and Stoler 1997; Stoler 2002).

A relatively recent interlocutor in cross-disciplinary conversations about colonialism, archaeology stands to make pointed contributions to our comprehension of colonial statecraft. In the past two decades, historical archaeology has been particularly active in writing counter-histories of colonialism that eschew totalizing portrayals to focus on the microdynamics of colonial world-making (see volume

introduction for an overview of this literature). Drawing on the material refuse of colonial encounters, the debris generated in the routine interfaces of colonizers and colonized, archaeology has advanced a ground-level view of colonialism distilling the lived substance of history rather than its organizational structure; it has foregrounded the ordeals and resilience of native peoples where earlier annals had placed the onus on European achievements; it has underscored daily practice rather than discourse through theoretical gamut of postcolonial thinking: hybridity, alterity, difference, agency, resistance....

Power permeated colonial situations in profound ways, and historical archaeologists have been keenly attentive to its asymmetries and fluidity. This effort has resulted in thoughtful examinations of power relations across colonial settings, focusing on the capacity of indigenous actors to negotiate, subvert, or bypass the diktat of colonial prescriptions, and engage in meaningful social action. By contrast, archaeological energies have been less readily directed toward an analysis of colonial states and their material forms. And yet, as a number of recent studies would suggest (Dawdy 2008; Hall 2000; Leone 2005; Matthews et al. 2002; see also Buchli 1998), archaeological evidence seems poised to shed empirical light on imperial governance, its working contradictions, and manifestations in the material world. To make a finer point, actually, it can be argued, given the fact that many archaeologists labor at the “contact zones” (Linke 2006) between people and the state—where people lived, worked, resided—that the discipline has much to say not only about the tangle of relations binding “regimes” and “subjects” but also about the shadowy horizon of power that stands past coercion and confrontation, and strives to configure comportment through the mundane ether of social practice. In other words, I would suggest that archaeologists are ideally positioned to examine the mechanics of colonial “government” (see Richard 2013a, for a version of this argument). I take “government” here in its Foucaultian inflection to refer to a mode of power in which people are the bearers of their subjection to a political order (Burchell et al. 1991).²

One of the epistemological appeals of government as an archaeological field of study lies in its fundamental embeddedness in materiality. Much like Jacques Rancière (2001) stresses that politics is about struggles over the configuration of the sensible world and the signs through which it is made legible, speakable, and navigable—to whom, for whom, and more importantly, by whom—, Foucault (2007, p. 98) reminds us that government is about the “right disposition of things,” about their proper arrangement in pursuit of the effective management of people. In light

² In his analysis of the modern state in the *Collège de France* lectures, Foucault (2007, pp. 87–114, 115–134) distinguishes three intersecting modalities of state power. *Sovereignty* refers to the theory and practice associated with the exercise of political rule over a territory and its subject populations, for which law, obedience, and policy are the primary instruments. *Discipline* denotes the application of power over/through bodies with the aim of surveilling, correcting, and ordering individuals within particular institutions. Last, *government* (or *governmentality*) entails a regime of power concerned with “the population” and its optimization; it seeks to shape the conduct of people by mobilizing their desires, aspirations, habits, and interests (through a wide array of techniques and discourses) to enlist them in the project of their own rule (Mitchell 1999). Rather than operating independently, these modes of power act as each other’s conditions.

of this observation, we can argue that the material patterns that form the backbone of archaeological studies of colonial settings provide a ready-made window into the logics and techniques of colonial government. While distorted by formation processes, material assemblages compose a piecemeal portrait of human activities shaped in colonial power fields, in contexts that were often deliberately targeted by colonial programs. Colonial state operations, in other words, can be read aslant, through the “effects” (e.g., Foucault 1994; Trouillot 2003) that they left on the indigenous worlds we so frequently study.

In addition to capitalizing on materiality, and the types of information encoded in archaeological data, the study of governance underscores the dense linkages connecting states and subjects, and invites us to examine their co-constitution. Foucault (1994, pp. 326–348) remarked that in becoming subjected to regimes of authority, individuals interiorize certain predicates of order and dispositions that orient their deeds and decisions. These sensibilities are thus folded into the subjectivities of social actors, and partake in the construction of who they are (van Dijk 1994).³ Thus, rather than cleaving power and people, or treating sovereigns and subjects as separate existential realms, we need to view state power as a diverse spectrum of designs, whose effects scatter widely between the poles of negation and possibility. In addition to condemning the repressive dimensions of power and revealing ways in which colonized people sought to avert them, we also need to heed power’s *productive* side and how it (purposely or not) helped to configure native actions (for literature on the productivity of power, see Scott 1999; Scott and Hirschkind 2006). My intent here is not to paint a roseate picture of colonialism and deny its infrastructure of domination, exploitation, alienation, and violence. Surely, force and discipline centrally featured into the colonial equation of power, but so did government. My point, rather, is that power and agency are intertwined: Institutions of power create conditions in which people can act in certain ways, but not in others in which they recognize certain choices as feasible, tricky, or impossible, in which they perceive certain regulations as desirable or illegitimate.... Matrices of power *both* constrain *and* authorize certain kinds of projects. But note the flipside of that

³ I use “subjectivity” here, following Foucault (1994, p. 331), to denote two facets of identity construction in a given power formation: (1) the process of subjugation (to be made amenable to control and governance), and (2) the forms of consciousness and self-knowledge that orient people’s courses of action. In becoming subjects to particular regimes of authority or social institutions, individuals internalize certain identities, sensibilities, and affects that influence their deeds, dealings, and decisions—to paraphrase Foucault (1980, p. 98), they are constituted by power situations of which they are the bearers. While the full spectrum of subjective expressions stretches beyond archaeological evidence (since, after all, subjectivity involves matters of psyche, self-perception, and feelings), it can be argued that subject positions also have *material* dimensions: certain sets of practical dispositions, with archaeological traces, that may have promoted self-understanding. The material subjectivities I evoke in this essay, broadly capture what Siin villagers in the colonial period would have collectively perceived as meaningful and legitimate modes of being. As such, inevitably perhaps, the “subjects” of this essay refer to a somewhat normative “peasant community,” made up of “peasant actors” (adult male stakeholders, generally), at the expense of more a patchwork of positions structured along the lines of gender, age, occupation, wealth, kinship, lineage, pedigree, ethnicity, religion, etc.... Unfortunately, available sources afford limited information about these social axes, though I try to consider them when possible to insert nuance into my portrayal of peasants.

dialectics: As colonized people blazed new territories of practice around, through, or against colonial policies, they also (again, not always consciously) reframed the terms of power and conditions of its applicability. Taking account of government, along with other aspects of colonial state-making, enables us to interrogate the various reasons, processes, and institutions of rule at play in colonies, and determine precisely how they intersected with native lifeworlds and political experiences. In Senegal, I suspect other colonial settings, colonial administrations variably ignored, restrained, or coerced colonized subjects, but in doing so they also offered a certain freedom to act, which became part of Africans' evolving social traditions.

Materialities of Government in Rural Senegal: Toward a “Politics of Absence”?

Conversations about colonialism have taken a sinuous path into Senegalese historical scholarship (e.g., Becker et al. 1997). Surely, much pivotal work has attended to the political storyline of colonialism: its battles, events, and great men. Likewise, important studies have analyzed official policies and programs, and unpacked the logics of decision-making, administration, bureaucracy, and justice in French West Africa (Hesseling 1985). These facets of colonialism all involve power in some capacity, but its mechanisms, material conduits, and human effects have not always been analyzed—let alone theorized. Work on specific applications of colonial power *has* been carried out, but often in urban environments, where archives supply more abundant and detailed information. By contrast, in more poorly documented rural regions like the Siin, while research has elegantly dissected the *structural* properties of colonial rule (Klein 1971, 1979), it has lent less attention to its microphysics and intersections with African actors (but see Donneuil 1999; Galvan 2004, for important exceptions). Given the highly uneven topography of governance in colonies like Senegal, where the colonial state wore very different faces between town and country, these imbalances have produced an incomplete map of colonial statecraft.

Reviewing the question of modernity and power in French and British West Africa, Frederick Cooper (2005, pp. 142–148) has critiqued the urge to indiscriminately associate colonial regimes with the all-out implementation of “modern governmentality,” as is sometimes seen in postcolonial scholarship. As Cooper points out, a major difference separating European governments from colonial states was that the latter did not focus their efforts much on the production of individual subjects as on governing through collectivities, and developing institutions designed to keep them in check. And even there, colonial regimes in Africa provided notoriously “unable to routinize and normalize their exercise of power, and they were equally incoherent in their efforts to harness “tradition” and “traditional rulers” to a stable pattern of governance” (Cooper 2005, 143). Instead, he discerns periods of mutual adjustment between colonial policy and the initiatives of colonized peoples: An early and euphoric imperial agenda of reform, improvement, and rationalization (1850–1914); a more sobering period of rule through indigenous institutions until the late 1930s,

followed by a decade of social and economic tensions which colonial ideologies could no longer rein in; and, by the late 1940s, the implementation of programs of modernization and development targeting African workers, which African political organizations recuperated as a claims-making device (Cooper 1996; also Conklin 1997).

This periodization is heuristically useful, and it matches quite well the terrain of colonial Senegal, which Cooper has studied for many years. That said, its broad lines do not completely account for the idiosyncrasies of colonial governance as it was translated to different regions. In the Siin, for instance, direct intervention and indirect rule cohabited on the ground very early on. More generally, Cooper's periods are also crosscut by certain rationalities of rule, such as the idea that subject populations can be managed both through and in conformity with the progressive laws of commerce and the economy. In Siin, then, state institutions, market forces, and social forms combined and recombined to shape each other and how rural people understood their circumstances, constructed their choices, and imagined the broader world (Coronil 2001). This, in turn, imparted particular shape to the institutions of rule in the province, the materiality of colonial state projects, and the tensions generated by their implementation.

In his thought-provoking study of Catholic evangelization in Waluguru (Tanzania), Peter Pels (1999, p. 43 ff) has argued that colonial missionizing—and the colonial enterprise, more generally—did not just consist in forging a new representational order (e.g., Mitchell 1991) but also involved a “politics of presence.” By this, he means that colonial transactions were mediated through matter and physicality that colonial contact was a profoundly tactile, embodied, and sensuous tale of encounters. While colonial world-building often evokes metaphors of language and vision, the “long conversation” between colonizers and colonized, the yearning to sway native consciousness, and the rearrangement of signifiers triggered by imperial ventures (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991) also implicated arguments of gestures, practices, customs, and things.

Pels's point about the materiality of empire-making is very well taken. However, in advancing the idea of physical *presence*, he seems to consider only one aspect of the materialness of colonial power plays, at the expense of a more diverse palette of media for exercising rule. Not only does materiality, surely, work through propinquity and sustained contact but it also operates through absence, invisibility, deferral, infrequency, ephemera, and sidelong mediations (e.g., Bille et al. 2010; Engelke 2007; Munn 1996). What happens, then, when political projects leave few material residues of their passage or when they may not have rested on the production of new social geographies per se? By extension, how do we study processes that have limited archaeological visibility? When it comes to the state, for instance, archaeologists have often underscored the bold, in-your-face character of power, materialized in its capacity to reconstruct landscapes in its own image (Monroe 2010; Smith 2003). By contrast, when peered through an archaeological lens, one of the most curious aspects of Siin's countryside is the relative mutedness of colonialism, the faintness of its material traces, and the seeming absence of overt state signatures.... Surely, a few grand old buildings survive, though those are overwhelm-

ingly confined to urban settings. In the countryside, other than the occasional fort, dispensary, or school, few built structures appear to have been erected, and the ones that exist stand few and far between. Likewise, other than the contemporary road grid, railway system, and a handful of towns, which follow the footprints of colonial penetration, Siin's rural milieu contains limited evidence of colonial infrastructure building. Concurrently, there is a little hint of systematic attempts to synthesize a new order into the landscape or reform local practices by realigning their material referents. Instead, the panorama of rural life over the past 200 years, outwardly at least, remains crisscrossed by material continuities: Village arrangements owe more to local cultural histories than modernist planning, building technologies are firmly rooted in local *savoir faire*, the *bocage* is underwritten by local kinship solidarities, ancestral shrines stand as testimonies to a vibrant sacred geography, local ceramic traditions dominate local assemblages.... And yet, colonial influences stain, with variable intensity, the fabric of local livelihoods. Historically, they surface in the ubiquity of peanut crops, in the growing incursion of mass-produced commodities, or in the establishment of settlements of seasonal workers.

How must we account for these hybrid political landscapes that weld old and new elements without overhanded attempts by colonial authorities to dominate social space? Playing on Pels, I would suggest that, in Siin, weaknesses inherent in the structure of colonial rule imposed the deployment of a "politics of absence:" Because French authorities never had the resources to infiltrate and remake the livelihoods of African peasants, they often settled for more offhand modes of governance—that is, delegating the business of government to institutions that were *not* under direct control of the state. "Absence," defined in this broad sense, was an important register of colonial statecraft, which joined more vigorous forms of power and interventionist technologies as primary avenues through which colonial rule was meted out. The inability to consistently engage in a politics of presence, one mobilizing permanent personnel and markers of sovereignty on the ground, laced the management of peasant populations with contradictions. By extension, the gap between colonial intentions and the actual effects of policies on rural communities introduced systemic unpredictability into the exercise of rule.

Having spent a fair amount of time on theoretical considerations, let me devote the remainder of this chapter to an examination of Siin's hesitant terrain of governance and how it conditioned the contours of Seereer existence. While these intersections took place in more ways than can be reviewed here, I would like to explore two interlinked horizons of colonial power, which, with Trouillot (2003, pp. 7–28), we might call the "geography of imagination" and the "geography of management." The first domain relied on "colonial science" and entailed the production of knowledge about colonized others. These representations, in turn, informed the second domain, which encompassed mechanisms of control on the ground. In the Siin, colonial strategies, the physical milieu of Seereer villages, and the ethnographic images that developed about them converged in tense ways, and became locked into a process of mutual adjustment and constitution.

These histories of power find partial expressions in Siin's rural landscape, which I seek to unlock through the combined lens of archaeology, ethnohistory, and

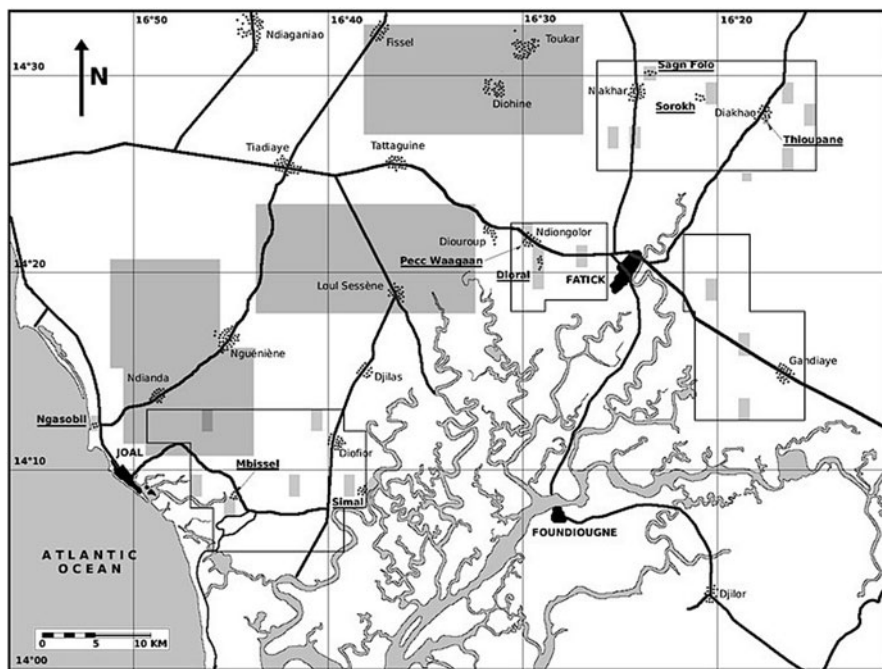


Fig. 9.2 Archaeological Survey in Siin, 2003–2011: The empty polygons and small light *gray* rectangles represent the 2003 survey regions and quadrats, respectively. The boldface fonts mark the sites excavated in 2003. The large *gray* polygons indicate the 2011 survey regions

ethnography. The archaeological evidence mobilized here derives from a campaign of large-scale survey conducted in 2003 centered on the villages of Mbissel, Fatick, and Diakhao (Fig. 9.2). This work identified 180 occupations, over 90 of which fell into the eighteenth- to twentieth-century range. Many of these sites span Phase Vb (eighteenth to nineteenth century) and Phase Vc (late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century) of our regional chronology. Because these ceramic phases overlap to a considerable degree, and because of chronic problems of surface admixture (in the absence of surface excavations), it is often difficult to tie occupations to a definitive period. To remedy these problems, I have included preliminary materials from additional survey work carried out in 2011, which targeted previously unexamined areas near the villages of Ngéniène, Loul Sessène, and Dioghine. While these data are in the initial stages of analysis, they provide greater resolution in the chronology of recent settlements. In effect, of the 215 occupational contexts retrieved during the survey, 78 were conclusively ascribed to Phase Vb and 77 fell squarely into Phase Vc. These archaeological pictures are important historical transcripts, in that they get at changing trends and departures in human mobility, residential logics, community-making, and use of object tying together before, during, and after of colonialism—the kinds of stories faintly impressed, if at all, in the forgotten margins of official annals. However, because they derive from large-scale surface observations,

these archaeological frames tend to confine our observations to a regional scope, which sacrifices a certain amount of interpretive resolution. I try to introduce some attention to such micro-historical details—the realm of rationales, intentions, and ideologies that underlay the actions of colonizer and colonized alike—by picking up narrative threads present in archival and oral evidence gathered between 2002 and 2011. I also attend to contemporary features of the Seereer milieu, which, in some sense, is a cumulative product of long-term cultural histories, and contain important clues about the transformations spurred by the colonial conquest.

My view of “archaeological landscapes” is thus an expansive one, which does not just boil things down to classic archaeological evidence (like settlement vestiges, earthenware pottery, ceramic plates and bowls, bottleglass, etc.), but recognizes that rural milieux are palimpsests in three dimensions, made up of complexly intertwined temporalities. While they coexist in the present, not all elements of a landscape have the same history, longevity, or pull on social action. Some were fashioned earlier or later, others were altered, and still others destroyed or replaced. In this light, contemporary social topographies can be just as archaeological as buried ones, and revelatory of deeper histories (even as they sometimes entail a measure of historical flattening). As mentioned above, certain material networks like roads are colonial inheritances that have become integral parts of present-day geographies. Likewise with Siin’s system of agricultural fields, which preserves a concrete, multigenerational record of landed patrimony, lineage ownership, and occupational history. In some sense, the juxtaposition of different sources, each calibrated to certain scales of social change and speaking to different histories, offers critical vistas into the slow-moving and faster-clipped processes that shaped political landscapes over time. If similarities among different sources bring a level of assurance to our recounting of the past, disjunctures between them are equally valuable, as they invite new questions and positions about our rendering of historical process (Stahl 2001).

Ethnographic Encounters: Finding the Archetypal Peasant

While ostensibly a process of territorial and political domination, colonization in Senegal has its origins in the agricultural programs put in place by the French in the 1820s. Having lost its New World possessions and exhausted by Napoleonic wars, France looked to experiments with cash crops as sources of alternative revenue. The colony first latched onto the gum trade, which dominated the economy of northern Senegal for four decades, but after gum production began to wane in the 1840s, it found an export substitute in peanuts (Brooks 1975). This unassuming crop paved the way to colonization by engineering a recentering of political and economic gravity from northern to west-central Senegal (the region known as the “peanut basin”), dragging local societies into global markets, and locking African communities into a relationship of dependence on outside economic forces. It also proved meddlesome politically, by promoting peasants as the new beneficiaries of external commerce, a privilege once reserved to regional rulers and aristocracies. The 1850s

was a period of instability and violence, as embittered elites sought to tap the new-found peanut wealth by sending their armies to raid farming villages and by imposing tributes on French merchants, and as Senegal began to be swept by massive Muslim revolutionary movements (Klein 1968). To curb these perceived threats, French governors launched a series of military expeditions aiming to suppress defiant coastal polities and craft a sphere of commercial exchange under France's legal jurisdiction. While the "conquest" dragged well into the 1860s in Northern Senegal, local kingdoms eventually capitulated, though not without some foot dragging. If local rulers officially assented to peace treaties that put an end to the "customs" payments they formerly enjoyed and imposed a 3% tax on all exported goods, they often ignored or temporarily revoked these agreements during the first two decades of rule (Klein 1968).

By the late 1870s, stability had been restored over most of Northern Senegal, and local polities were by and large operating in the orbit of France's dominion. Military surrender, however, did not necessarily mean political overtake. In effect, many of the provinces pacified by France were administered as "protectorates" that kept traditional elites in place and granted them continued power, authority, and influence. For example, after first being invaded in 1859, the Siin did not become a protectorate until in 1887. It took 11 additional years for its monarchy to be dissolved, and 20 more, in 1920, for the region to be finally incorporated into the colony. The turn to a system of partial or graduated sovereignties was in part a financial decision. Relatively cash-poor, the French government was a miserly sovereign, unwilling (and unable) to disburse the colossal sums required for development and modernization in the colonies, and thus reliant on political and economic infrastructures already existing in subjected territories. In this light, France's reluctant accommodation of other spheres of authority also reflected limitations intrinsic to the colonial state and the complex political geographies in which it was interpolated. The logistics of imperialism were simply too taxing for the French colony's modest human, military, and economic resources, thus confining its effective reach to a handful of coastal enclaves. Elsewhere, the political institutions that organized peasant life were too historically entrenched in rural milieux to be bypassed, which made conciliation a cornerstone of the business of rule (e.g., Moore 2005); in fact, the accommodation of local structures of power by state projects is a symptomatic feature of Siin's long-term political history (Richard 2012).

If the Siin province had long been known to European merchants and served as a key supplier of foodstuffs to Gorée in the eighteenth century, French administrators rediscovered its agricultural proclivities in the 1850s (Boilat 1853; Pinet-Laprade 1865). Unsurprisingly, given the colonial penchant for metonymy, Siin's Seereer people came to embody the region's farming potential. Colonization set in train a cottage industry of ethnographic reporting, which gradually solidified the Seereer into one of the most traditional peasantries in Africa (Galvan 2004) (Fig. 9.3)—a population of conservative folk living outside of history: prone to autarky, shrouded in the fog of tradition, and suspicious of the new (Aujas 1931; Bourgeau 1933; Carlus 1880; also Pélissier 1966). The myth of the typical Seereer peasant enjoyed a thriving cultural career during the colonial period, which, depending on the author

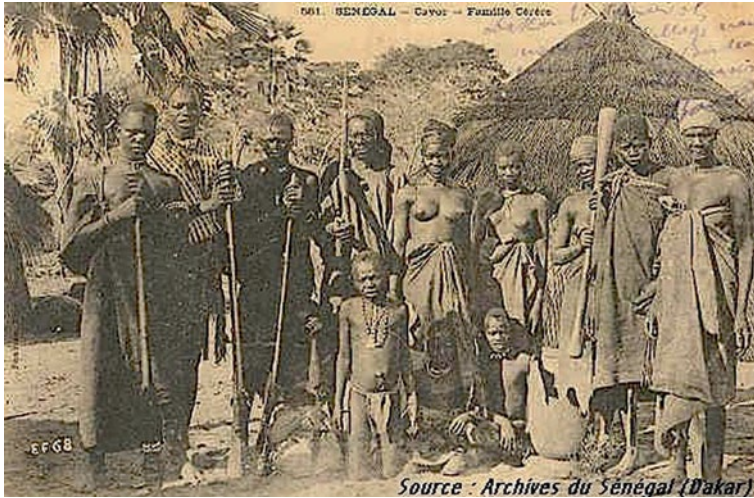


Fig. 9.3 Postcard, “Cérére family,” early 1900s (ANS, Iconographie, #0802) <<http://www.archives-dusenegal.gouv.sn/cartes/0802.JPG>>

and situation, served a multiplicity of purposes—sometimes to decry the apparent Seereer resistance to technological progress, modernization, and civilization, at other times, to underscore their unique suitability to France’s economic projects in Africa (ANS 1G26/104, 2G33/70; Bérenger-Féraud 1879; see Richard 2011). Indeed, the Siin became a strategic piece in the economic apparatus of France’s colonial empire, which by the end of the nineteenth century, churned out some of the highest yields of commercial peanuts in French West Africa (Klein 1979; Mbodj 1978, 1980).

The definition of a peasant archetype was part and parcel of colonial France’s *politique indigène* (“indigenous policy”) (Labouret 1930)—the philosophy and set of policies developed to manage the subject populations that occupied the vast colonial hinterland unfurling beyond Senegal’s four major coastal cities: Saint-Louis, Gorée, Dakar, and Rufisque. These urban communities belonged to a separate legal sphere, where white and mixed-race inhabitants were accorded the same rights as French citizens (Diouf 1998; Schnapper 1961). By contrast, the populations of protectorate lands qualified as “French subjects” and fell under the legal framework of the Native Code. The immensity and cultural diversity of subject territories demanded the construction of forms of knowledge and classification—through ethnography, census data, statistics, and so forth—to record, police, and order African cultural forms, that is, to render them intelligible to colonial authorities (Robinson 1992). Once codified, these “customs” would guide the development of appropriate regulations that would enforce social stability, native compliance with colonial authority and economic requirements, and the proper administration of justice, while assisting Africans on their paths to “Civilization.” Historically, peasants have often been constituted as objects of state management, to be improved by state policy

(e.g., Scott 1998; Mitchell 2002). Similarly, under French rule, as for other “ethnographic” or “taxonomic” states (Dirks 2001, Chap. 3), the definition of “custom” and “tradition” became an instrument of administration designed to both frame and reshape the existence of African cultivators. It also became an object of contentious debates.

Despite the growing availability of information, the ethnographic production of a type of Seereer subject—the docile peasant—was complicated by a number of factors. First, the “ethnographic Seereer” could be not created *ex nihilo*. Colonial rule did not encounter an empty human terrain to be molded at will, but a milieu fashioned by culture, history, and power (Spear 2003). Given its inadequacies, the French administration remained perplexed by the reluctance of cultural practice; it also was forced to half-heartedly concede the influence of other configurations of authority competing over resources, territory, labor, as well as people. Thus, for much of the colonial era, social power was the object of a tug of war between the remnants of African monarchies, a small cadre of French officials, commercial houses and their interests, Catholic missionaries were often uneasily caught between colonial and precolonial authorities, a network of traditional grassroots elites, and Islam’s rapidly growing presence after the 1920s. These political projects formed the slippery foundations onto which ethnographic research sought to erect a corpus of “customs”—one of their bridges to the management of Seereer villagers.

The second difficulty is that colonial images of African traditions were often carved out of a complex social world to suit the demands of governance. Attempts to codify the subtleties of African kinship, marriage, land tenure, ownership, inheritance, and fell well short of seizing the essence of Seereer culture. Rather, they painted an orderly façade of normative rules, structures, and categories recorded in ponderous tomes (e.g., ANS 1G30; Geismar 1933; Maupoil 1939), which allowed cultural effervescence to proceed unabated, and actually fostered new practices that creatively usurped “customs” in the service of personal or collective ends. For example, while the Seereer were often officially depicted as a matrilineal society, they in fact reckoned kinship both through paternal and maternal lines. Thus, strategically claiming rights of inheritance through one or the other line often enabled those whose deceased relatives had defaulted on their debt to ignore the demands of merchants seeking reimbursement for unpaid loans or goods bought on credit. Likewise, Seereer individuals who had converted to Islam often decided to claim the latter’s mode of patrilineal succession to avoid taking on the arrears of maternal relatives (Bourgeau 1933, pp. 47–51; Dulphy 1939, pp. 293–298). Of course, instances of conversion to Islam or Catholicism also generated considerable intra-familial tension, as inheritance came to be disputed among relatives of different confession, each claiming allegiance to a different system of rights. Given these social acrobatics, it is little wonder that colonial sovereignty remained a tentative project, and that, correlatively, colonial policies inadvertently fashioned different kinds of *sujets* from the reliable small-holding farmers they had hoped to cultivate out the Seereer.

Representing Space: Logics and Practices of French Colonial Rule

While considerations of length preclude a detailed engagement with the intricacies of colonial discourse, I will suggest that the construction of a peasant archetype in Siin partly rested on inscribing the Seereer into a space of premodernity iconic of the region's rural backwardness (Moore et al. 2003)—a landscape of constellated settlements, dispersed and anarchic, redolent of savage logic, yet a landscape also frozen by the weight of tradition, a strong aversion for movement, and deep attachment to the matrilineal soil and land of ancestors (Fig. 9.4). Although this “identity package” has a complicated history (Richard 2015), after the 1890s, it increasingly hinged on stressing the Seereer rootedness in the land, as a concrete symbol of the *ethnie*'s agricultural vocation, cultural fixity, and religious animism, and marking their contrast to the Wolof, Senegal's majority ethnic group, held to represent the best example of native capacity for “progress.” For instance, reporting on Siin's rural habitat, administrator Reynier (ANS 2G33/70, p. 2) averred that “[t]he aspect of a Sérère village and its arrangement are curiously revealing of the taste and mood of the race: the habitations are as dispersed are they are grouped in Ouoloff villages,” an aesthetics reminiscent of the peasant communities scattered across the French countryside. In other words, the Seereer farmer joined the Wolof trader, Puular herder, and Laobe woodworker (Guy 1908, p. 304) in an orderly tableau of ethno-racial vocations, where each native group occupied a fixed, predictable position, and where form was in some respect reflective of content.

Of course, this ethnographic optic was not entirely baseless. In all evidence, the Seereer *were* primarily cultivators (and adept ones at that), with an acutely cultural



Fig. 9.4 Postcard, “Inside a Cérère village,” early 1900s (ANS, Iconographie, #0357) <<http://www.archivesdusenegal.gouv.sn/cartes/0357.JPG>>. This image is representative of the aesthetics of colonial photography in the Siin, whose depictions folded culture into nature by merging Seereer lifestyles into their geographic surroundings. Photographs, here, were mobilized to create “visual proofs” of Seereer primitiveness

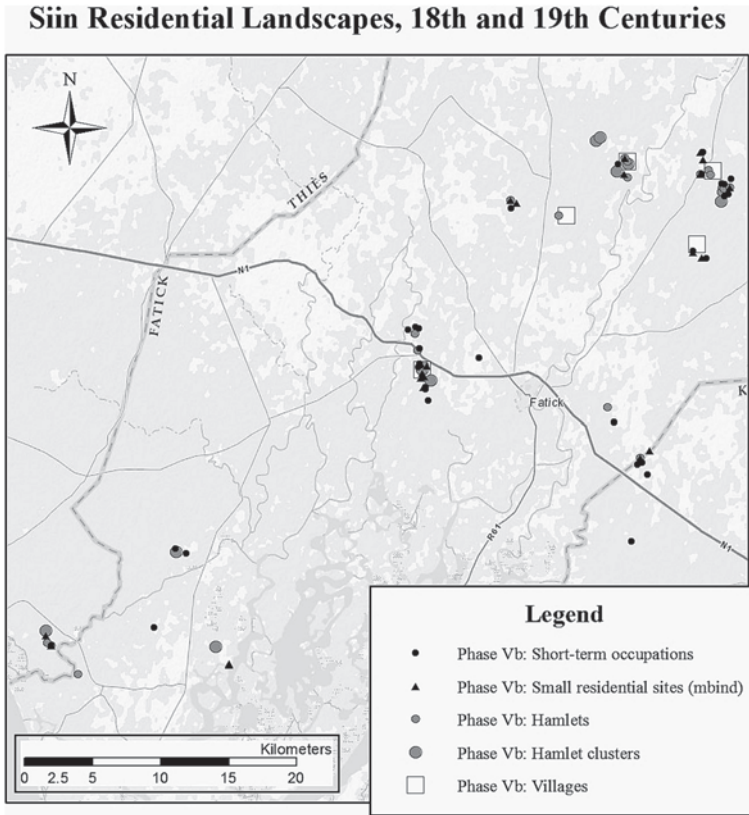


Fig. 9.5 Map of archaeological settlements, Siin province, eighteenth to nineteenth century

sense of their milieu and strong connections to their land and lineage. Rather, the main difficulty with these portrayals lies in the fact that they viewed Seereer social landscapes at the time of colonial expansion as the precipitate of a timeless cultural essence. Archaeological materials provide helpful clarification of ethnographic visions and the physical milieu that propped them (Figs. 9.5, 9.6). As the 2003 survey data reveal, Siin’s residential landscape *was* mostly dispersed during the past 300 years, and consisted of a mosaic of small, scattered settlements. More than 80% of the Phase Vb-Vc sites were smaller than 2 ha in size. A majority (62%) consisted of sparse remains probably corresponding to individual concessions, while others (30%) contained a few trash/habitation mounds likely representing the vestiges of small residential clusters and hamlets. These sites were inhabited for fewer than 150–200 years. They also tend to spread widely across the landscape, rather than converge into concentrated settlements. A few exceptions stand out from the site inventory in the form of small and large villages made up of extensive networks of mounds organized around “plaza-like” open spaces. They tend to concentrate in Siin’s interior regions, and seem to have been fairly short-lived as well. Survey

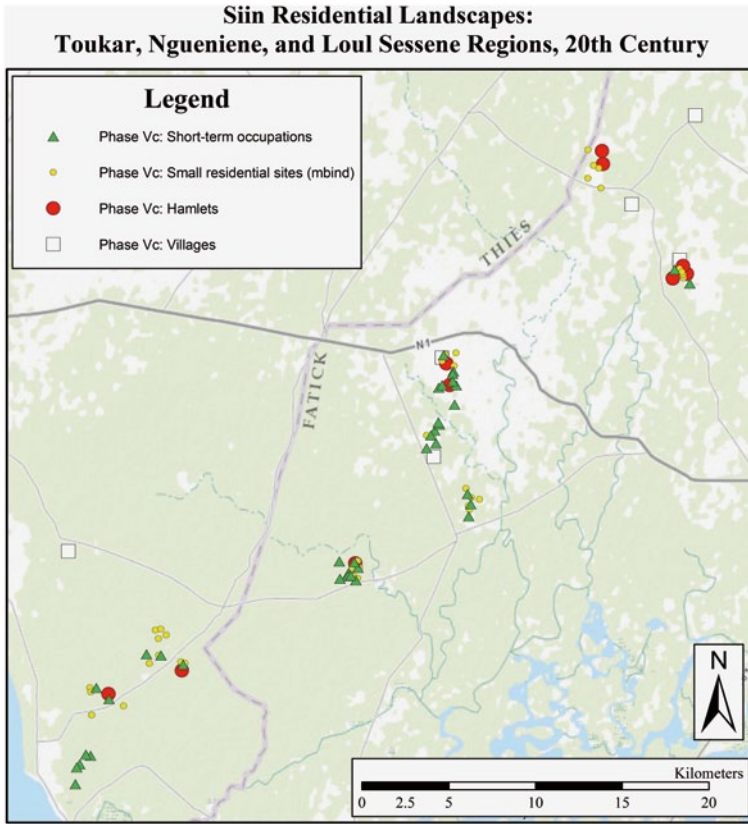


Fig. 9.6 Map of archaeological settlements, Siin province, late nineteenth to early twentieth century

evidence suggests considerable dynamism and movement in Siin's archaeological settlements, with interesting patterns emerging: After their foundation and being inhabited for several generations, sites follow a number of trajectories: (1) They move elsewhere, though never more than several 100 m from the original settlement, (2) they hive off, and parts of the settlement relocate a short distance away, or (3) some occupations merge with nearby sites to form larger residential units. Contemporary settlements are often found in the vicinity of archaeological sites, or partially overlap with them, and seem to represent the most recent episode in this history of village mobility. It is also worth noting that, by and large, the geography of eighteenth- to nineteenth-century deposits maps quite well with the present-day distribution of spirit shrines (*pangool*); in fact, many of them contain such shrines or have become sacred places themselves.

Archaeological portraits are thus in partial agreement with ethnographic sketches of Seereer lifeworlds; they depict Siin's village communities as dispersed clouds of habitations, which were variably integrated into larger ensembles. Likewise, the

Fig. 9.7 Postcard, “Lacustrine village [Fadiouth],” early 1900s (ANS, Iconographie, #0207) <<http://www.archivesdusenegal.gouv.sn/cartes/0207.JPG>>



pattern of village (re)settlement around founding sites, contemporary villages, and *pangool* bespeak a certain attachment to “place” and lineage-managed land. Having said that, other aspects of colonial imagery are invalidated by our survey evidence, which reveals that the Seereer cultural landscape during the colonial era was a relatively recent phenomenon indebted to reconfigurations associated with Atlantic exchanges (Richard 2012). The constellated milieu that so fascinated French observers actually took shape during the eighteenth and nineteenth century in response to the political turbulences generated by the oceanic commerce and transition to the post-abolition era. By extension, archaeological formations also signal considerable diversity in rural materialities: Coastal settlements are much more nucleated than their counterparts in the hinterland (Fig. 9.7), supposedly “Seereer” material assemblages are broadly shared with other ethnic groups in border areas, while the presence of myriad imported objects suggest the region’s long-term involvement with external market forces (Richard 2010). Confining Seereer communities to the immutability the ethnographic present caused colonial observers to miss the stories of change, continuity, movement, and variability woven into Siin’s rural landscapes. As a consequence, the ethnic portrayals supposed to guide colonial policy actually failed to explain why the Seereer refused to mirror their Wolof neighbors and “modernize” their rural habitat—beyond the circular rhetoric that the Seereer were innately backward and the Wolof instinctually entrepreneurial (e.g., ANS 1G26/104, p. 39; ANS 2G33/70, pp. 13–14; Gastellu 1981, pp. 25–26; Geismar 1933, p. 23).

At a more general level, these vexations flowed from the uneasy fit between the logics and logistics of colonial rule in Senegal (Richard 2011).⁴ Because France’s

⁴ Part of this precariousness stemmed from the not-always-stable relations of collusion and tension between capitalism and colonialism at the heart of French imperialism. During the twentieth century, some of these contradictions became visible at the level of the metropole—between the political costs and economic returns of the colonies (Marseille 1984), or between small French firms advocating economic protectionism and strong companies favoring more open markets (Boone 1992)—and in Senegal, between the interests of business/commerce and desiderata of political administration (Klein 1968).

African empire was to be built on the continent's labor, savoir faire, and resources, rather than costly investments, the quest for hegemony "on a shoestring" (Berry 1992) was quixotic best: While the success of colonial governance was in part predicated on the development of new forms of African civility, the colonial economy largely rested on the maintenance of traditional social relations, thus implying minimal political reform of local lifeworlds. This situation laid out the groundwork for the politics of absence that steered colonial governance in the Siin countryside.

Another reason of power underlying the idea of rule through absence was the broad belief that the laws of economic liberalism were critical motors of governmentality (see Foucault 2010 on this relationship; Lemke 2001). To many French bureaucrats and technocrats, "Commerce" was a civilizing force, which would convert "natives" to the cult of colonial modernity (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1997). It was believed that participation in colonial markets would free peasants from their perceived isolation, inward-gazing economy, and communal *zeitgeist*, by encouraging them to operate in a cash system, consume manufactured goods, and develop a taste for private property. To trigger these changes, taxation, money, and cash-cropping would work in tandem (Galvan 1997). Originally introduced in 1891, the head tax was payable in kind for a few years because of lack of money in the countryside, but it rapidly commanded payments in currency. As the colonial rationale went, the obligation to pay the head tax would force households to grow peanuts, and use the proceeds of agricultural sales to obtain the cash needed to cover the tax. The combined increase of cash cropping and use of money would compel peasants to cultivate subsistence crops and thus turn to the markets to acquire basic goods and services. In time, peasants would be irreversibly plugged into a world of market exchange, debt and credit, commodities, and cash, a world that would regulate the collective conduct of rural masses and instill the virtues of industry, property, and individual responsibility among them (Richard 2011).

As might be expected, the Seereer did not take to the seductions of commercial crops, cash, and commodities as readily as expected. As Roitman (2005, pp. 6–9 ff) reminds us, colonial truth regimes could not just be forced on colonial subjects; rather, colonial visions of social order and "appropriate comportment" generated both acquiescence and disputes over the legitimacy, intelligibility, and signs of regulatory authority. Thus, in the early days of the protectorate, sections of the peasant body in Siin and neighboring Saalum responded to French taxation through defiance rather than compliance. Colonial archives document episodes of tax evasion, the exploitation of loopholes in the tax system (mostly by migrating from high-tax to low-tax areas), and refusal to pay, as residents from the village of Dihine reportedly did in 1891 and 1892 (ANS 13G322a, 13G322b; Klein 1968, pp. 162–163). In subsequent decades, villagers gradually surrendered to the inescapability of the *impôt* (head tax), though not without questioning the legitimacy of colonial fiscality. Thus, Siin farmers chronically underreported household members and heads of cattle in their herds, which were the bases on which personal wealth was determined. Likewise, if, after 1900, the Seereer gradually accepted the realities of cash cropping, they often produced just enough peanuts to meet tax requirements and acquire consumption of goods. Indeed, until the early 1930s, most Seereer villages were not only economically self-sufficient but also the families continued to

produce enough millet to feed themselves, while avoiding the strangulation of debt (Reinwald 1997b).

When political technologies designed to regulate the actions of colonized farmers was proved ineffective, colonial power showed a more repressive side, sanctioned under the auspices of the *Indigénat* regime (Asiwaju 1979). The latter was an ensemble of provisions derived from the French criminal code that authorized the summary use of force and penalty (imprisonment, deportation, fines, and forced labor) without recourse to judicial courts, to ensure abidance to the law. In these instances, colonial authority was less grounded in the African adoption of self-policing or participation in their own rule, than in the public enactment of violence, punishment, and exploitation on the bodies of rural dwellers (Hansen and Stepputat 2005). These performances of sovereignty complemented France's politics of absence. They were predicated on a muscular kind of presence, a politics of concrete and visceral visibility, which camouflaged under displays of brutal force the failures of subjectivation, government, and rule by consent.

Governing Space and the Challenges of Milieu

Until the late 1920s, lack of personnel and resources confined the colony's dealings with indigenous spheres of power to a dual strategy of conciliation and outsourcing. It is also effectively located colonial authority in a restricted number of places and bodies (those of administrators, soldiers, merchants, and indigenous clerks), thus limiting its intrusion in the daily life of Seereer villagers. While colonial forms of control could be more successfully deployed in urban settings, "the state" often had a patchy physical presence in rural areas. Until the late nineteenth century, for example, complaints from missionaries and merchants about bands of thieves roving the countryside often elicited the contrite admission that colonial protection did not radiate far beyond the perimeter of military posts (e.g., ANS 13G318).

While its power of police increased over time, prior to the 1930s, the colonial state achieved concrete expression in largely episodic and punctual ways, its trappings glimpsed in military forts and expeditions, administrative delegations, medical campaigns, school creation, or the building and inauguration of infrastructure. However, their limited visibility notwithstanding, state institutions were palpable through the effects they left in the landscapes. For instance, public construction projects (roads, wells, bridges) showcased the arbitrary face of colonial power, built as they were on brutal *corvée* labor requirements. While much has been made, drawing on the early Foucault, of the capillary extension of power, Frederick Cooper (1994, p. 1533) argues that the colonial state asserted its presence in more "arterial" fashion, that it was *channeled* through a system of disciplinary techniques—tax collection, fining, policing, labor recruitment, imprisonment, native courts—themselves mediated by a network of native administrators and collaborators often handpicked from precolonial elites. The reliance on African employees created intermediaries nodes of personal and charismatic power, which unlocked new opportunities for illicit personal accumulation. Colonial correspondence is littered with the testimonies

of simple villagers condemning the brutality of village and district chiefs, and the rapacity of aristocratic elites, over whom colonial authorities had the most nominal of influence (e.g., Searing 2002). During the 1860s and 1870s, for instance, entire villages sought to escape their rulers by relocating to territories under colonial jurisdiction, only to be sent back by French military authorities (ANS 4B51, 13G314a). France tolerated these necessary evils, as evidenced in classified assessments of African intermediaries from the late 1800s, which reported instances of petty crimes and power abuses committed by district chiefs, but proposed a few corrective measures (ANS 13G52).

By and large, however, most Seereer villagers remain estranged from sites of colonial spatiality—administrative towns, commercial centers, ports.... Prior to the 1930s, the scattering of these sites and porousness of colonial sovereignty opened vast spaces of autonomy, where the Seereer continued to practice old and new spatial forms away from the watchful eyes of colonial law, even as the latter increasingly redefined the conditions of local subjectivities. Galvan (2004, Chap. 4) has provided a powerful illustration of these dynamics in his discussion of the institution of pawnship (*taile*). *Taile* emerged in response to colonial attempts to reform rural landholding and institute new regimes of individual land ownership. Instead of selling land considered inalienable under Seereer principles of collective custodianship, a farmer could pawn his use-rights to a land plot to another peasant as collateral for a cash loan. The money would enable the first peasant to pay off his taxes or debts (as often was the case), while the land parcel would enable the second peasant to extend his cultivated acreage or pasture for cattle herds. This system, in other words, allowed the temporary conversion of unsellable resources into cash without compromising their inalienability; it performed an illusion of commodification that actually upheld traditional conceptions of landholding. Another example of Seereer tactical deployment of the social can be found in the skillful use of bilineal descent (as mentioned above) to evade “customary law” in matters of taxation, debt, resource management, and inheritance (Galvan 2004; Reinwald 1997a).

The aftermath of the world economic crisis of 1929 saw a consolidation of colonial governance and a shift in state materiality from a mode of sporadic presence, and arterial intervention to a regime of present absence working primarily through the channels of political economy to refashion the field of local possibilities. Archaeological landscapes offer useful clues of these transitions and how they were internalized into Seereer livelihoods. I will briefly examine their manifestations in material culture inventories and settlement logics.

One unquestionable archaeological trend in Siin involves the explosive increase of imported artifacts over the past 200 years. While trade goods are negligible in pre-1700 surface and excavated contexts, and while foreign manufactures (glass objects, especially) become essential components of site assemblages (even as local ceramics continue to dominate), one sees a marked expansion in the quantity and diversity of imported objects in post-1850s occupations. Although village communities in the region had long been engaged with Atlantic commerce and have a long history of making foreign objects and ideas their own (Richard 2010, 2013b), the colonial moment ushered new worlds of peasant consumption, and, over time, cemented farmers’ dependence on commodity circuits and cash exchanges. However,

Seereer relations with the global “empire of things” (Myers 2001) were by no means unilateral, and different classes of artifacts reveal different histories of appropriation.

Glass assemblages, for instance, contain an overwhelming proportion of gin and schnapps bottles, a preference that appears to have been driven by consumer choice. It was also fueled by the commercial availability of *alcool de traite* (trade liquor), which was an essential component of economic transactions and often served as currency in the early decades of colonial exchange. While many colonial administrators lamented the socially destructive effects of alcohol and its hand in propagating violence in Senegalese provinces, liquor also became an intrinsic part of certain Seereer practices of social reproduction—as commensal gift to reward workers in labor parties, as libation to honor spirits and ancestors, as ritual substance to assist rites of passage and agricultural ceremonies.... The increasing availability of trade alcohol also appears to have motivated the construction of new forms of aristocratic distinction at the end of the nineteenth century. One episode of feasting documented in a royal capital’s public plaza suggests that elites may have sought to countervail the democratization of gin consumption by controlling the circulation of wine, and reserving this product as a marker of aristocratic status (Richard 2010). If archaeological assemblages inform us about broad categories of “elite” and “commoner” practices, they also chronicle the development of finer-grained social stories. For instance, a number of French documents from the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century note, with amused condescension, the emergence of a Muslim taste for *alcool de menthe* (“peppermint water”). While technically an all-purpose medicinal drug, peppermint water contained moderate amounts of ethanol, and would have enabled Muslim enthusiasts to partially reconcile religious restrictions on alcohol with the satisfaction of recreational drinking. The recovery of *alcool de menthe* bottle fragments on Vc residential sites might index the presence of such consumptive syntheses tied to the expansion of Muslim modernities in the Seereer countryside. In another example, the discovery of Vichy water bottles in the village of Ndianda, on an early twentieth-century site identified as the residence of a colonial district chief, seems to signal the development of yet other registers of distinction, no longer predicated on inherited status but on social occupation. Vichy water, by no means a cheap good (ANS 13G325), perhaps serves as an unassuming testament to the new forms of wealth, disposable income, and purchasing power accrued by certain colonial employees, and to the rise of Seereer subjectivities merging the desire for material icons of taste with the aspiration for certain ideas of colonial civility.

Glass containers in Siin embody something of the successful side of colonial commerce, and its program of “subjection through consumption.” Other artifacts, however, document the failure of colonial commodities to capture the practical imaginations of Seereer peasants. The contrast between the omnipresence of locally produced pottery on colonial sites and the sparse numbers of imported ceramics indicates both the absence of popular demand for mass-produced vessels as well as the inability to foster new needs for these goods in local foodways. Glazed individual plates and bowls were simply poorly adapted to local communal modes of food preparation and consumption, which involved large containers capable of

accommodating several people. The bulk of imported ceramics consists of utilitarian stonewares, which were probably acquired for what they contained, rather than the function fulfilled by the containers themselves. Note that culinary traditions did not remain stagnant during the colonial era; in fact, they changed fairly dramatically, most notably through the incorporation of vegetables (peanuts, tomatoes) and condiments. Likewise, we also note the increase of metal cauldron parts in the archaeological record, which points to the adoption of new cooking technologies over time. Finally, while whitewares and porcellaneous ceramics never quite fully made it into colonial assemblages, they did increase after the 1930s in archaeological inventories, just as locally made ceramics have, since, mostly been replaced by China-made plasticware or enamel-tinware (although, there remains a market for large water jars). What these objects trajectories indicate is that as the Seereer struggled to accommodate change while remaining the same, the new things they used joined old ones to reconfigure the sensible world in which rural folks acquired a sense of personal and collective identities. In short timespans, goods that had little currency a few decades earlier became the stuff of familiar sights, sounds, tastes, and smells. Along with the cash they commanded for sale or purchase, imported goods became dyed into the fabric of everyday interactions and social reproduction (marriage payments, inheritance, loans, barter, debt repayment...). That said, while the spell of commodities was quite successful in binding the Seereer to market conditions they could not control, they came short of conjuring the types of submissive farmers adapted to the demands of colonial accumulation.

The remodeling of Seereer modes of consumption also parallels broader reorganizations in Siin's social space. These are manifested archaeologically in the form of changes in settlement structure and larger-scale transformations in village location regionally. One of the most palpable trends coming out of the 2011 survey is the fragmentation of the village landscape after the late 1800s. While the eighteenth century inaugurated an increase in settlement numbers but decrease in average size and occupation, Phase Vc sites are generally smaller, more ephemeral, materially poor, and dispersed than their predecessors. Many of these sites, moreover, are located in previously empty areas lying between well-established villages. This atomization of the social environment points right back to colonial political economy, and some of the processes unleashed by the normalization of cash crops, commodities, and currency in the countryside.

First, the fragmentation of Siin's habitat is connected to the massive conversion to peanut farming after the 1920s, which triggered a growing individualization of property relations and dissolution of matrilineal holdings. Part of the loose network of Phase Vc habitations orbiting in the periphery of large villages reflects the multiplication of interstitial agricultural concessions, as peanut farmers broke off from familial units, claimed their own fields to cultivate, and moved to the fringes of existing settlements. This trend also intensified the fuzziness of settlement boundaries which colonial observers took to be an ancestral expression of Seereerness, and which rural geographers documented in the 1950s (Pélissier 1966).

Second, the mobile geographies outlined by archaeology were a product of the new organization of labor accompanying the shift from subsistence farming

to commercial cultivation. Peanut cultivation in high-yield areas like the Siin necessitated voluminous manual labor and attracted migrant workers who came to assist with agricultural tasks. While labor movements were often seasonal, some non-Seereer migrants established hamlets in the vicinity of existing villages (David 1980); indeed, some of archaeological occupations surveyed in 2003 were identified by nearby residents as having been founded by migrants coming from Wolof regions to the north, and The Gambia and Guinea to the south. Confronted with the pressures of land, labor, and drought, Seereer residents themselves were also prone to population movements, as they left crowded *terroirs* and increasingly small parcels of land to look for cultivable soil, accessible water, or pasture for their herds. A number of sites documented in 2011 in the region of Nguéniène traced original settlers to inland areas near the villages of Fissel, Toukar, and Diouroup, according to descendants we interviewed. Their stories recoup the testimonies of peasants interviewed by Guigou (1992, pp. 77–78):

Some men, who resided in villages of the Ndiafadj country and lacked land, left to settle in villages of Hiréna, in the Diakhao zone or that of the Gandiaye *arrondissement* [county], so they could benefit from more abundant and fertile lands. Some went to rejoin a maternal relative, others who left were attracted by land tenure opportunities. These movements took diverse shapes, ranging from the seasonal agricultural migrations of young men to the temporary or definitive migrations of adult men accompanied by their families...

In some instances, these displacements afforded new economic opportunities, avenues of accumulation, and forms of social advancement that had been proscribed under customary arrangements. They also engineered less felicitous effects. Most frequently, the arrival of newcomers sparked off disputes over land, resources, and identity, which are prominently recounted in village traditions (Becker et al. 1991). Relocation also sometimes failed to deliver the promises of economic betterment. In effect, the lands on which the new settlers established their homes were often marginal, and their fragile, ferruginous, and often poorly watered soils were not always able to support a comfortable living. Many migrants, in other words, faced a future of poverty, one that was accelerated over time by overcultivation and drought cycles, a situation visible today in many parts of the Siin. Last, on a more experiential plane, regional movements may have unsettled the horizon of Seereer migrants, whose identities were solidly anchored to soil, place, and spiritual forces rooted in lineage estates (Dubois 1975). To palliate the effects of dislocation, peasant migrants may have improvised strategies like those of Seereer seasonal workers in the eastern Saalum during the 1960s and 1970s, who incorporated soil from their homeland into their spiritual altars (Trincaz 1979, p. 34; see also Kus and Raharijana, this volume).⁵

⁵ In Seereer traditional cosmology, for instance, the deceased *always* must find a way back to their place of birth, no matter where or how far they died, so they can aspire to eternal rest (Gravrand 1990). More generally, the symbolism of the earth for the Seereer, as a metonym for land, and thus a substance materializing one's attachment to the ancestors, cultural identity, and the protection of the lineage, has been reported in other contexts. Writing in the Siin of the 1950s, Gravrand (1965, p. 292; 1973), for example, mentions that a pregnant woman, when visiting nonrelatives, would discreetly scatter a bit of soil from her home over her host's bed before sitting on it, so as to shield herself and her baby from potential dangers, spells, and mystical malevolence.



Fig. 9.8 Postcard, “Purchase and weighing of peanuts in a trading house,” early 1900s (ANS, Iconographie, #0585) <<http://www.archivesdusenegal.gouv.sn/cartes/0585.JPG>>

Archaeology suggests other—structural—reorientations in Siin’s residential landscape, apparently set off by the French bureaucratic and commercial presence (Aujas 1929; Klein 1968). While we have noted a certain fragmentation of the Seereer habitat during the colonial era, settlement maps also document the parallel emergence of unprecedentedly large villages. Some of the largest residential sites recorded in Siin emerged in the nineteenth century, with 6 of the 9 villages larger than 7 ha dating to that period. These sites frequently contain well over 50 mounds, with distinct *quartiers* (neighborhoods) clearly identifiable in surface remains. Why this size increase took place is not entirely clear, though it can probably be related to the “relative” political stability created by colonialism and the demographic increases spurred by export agriculture.

Residential sites of the colonial period also appear to converge toward administrative and economic centers, as well as commercial axes and major roads. Closer proximity to colonial infrastructure would have been desirable for logistical and economic reasons. In towns, peasants would find weighing stations and points of collection for peanut harvests, where selling prices were better than those practiced by merchants servicing the countryside (ANS 13G314b, 13G314c; Mbodj 1978) (Fig. 9.8). Towns also hosted regional markets where surplus food and crafts could be exchanged for valued commodities (Aujas 1931, p. 331; Corre 1883, p. 4; Mbodj 1978, p. 336; Reinwald 1997b, pp. 150–151). Being near roads and bridges would have considerably eased the transportation of peanut harvests and reduced traveling times, which could be extensive. Over time, the development of commercial axes appears to have influenced settlement layouts. Today, many villages are wound about major roads, as residential quarters agglutinate in ribbons along each side of the axis. This clearly is a departure from the more dispersed modes of occupation

discussed above and reported in the hinterland in the early decades of colonial rule (Martin et al. 1980) (Fig. 9.6). In this process of community reconfiguration, settlements have gradually dislocated from matrilineal landholdings, and today, original lineage estates and the boundaries of contemporary villages no longer really overlap (Lericollais 1999). As noticed earlier, these alterations of the Seereer milieu should be read as spatial symptoms of a broader process of transformation toward individual ownership, free-holding, and the loosening of matrilineal allegiances. These features, in turn, have intensified to an even greater degree since 1960, after Senegal gained its independence, and national political directions in the past 50 years have followed a path of land reforms, economic austerity, liberal governance, and the promotion of Islamic modernity (Diop and Diouf 1990; Gellar 1995, 2005). Particularly injurious to Seereer peasants was the nationalization of agricultural lands in the 1960s, which completely upset the subtle architecture of traditional land management and gravely affected many communities (Abelin 1979). Later, in the 1980s, programs of structural adjustment initiated a gradual withdrawal of the state from rural life, which continues to fuel local animus toward sovereign authority and suspicious toward state centralization.

Conclusion: Colonial Postscripts and Futures' Pasts

This essay began with a story of absence, a contemporary vignette evoking the relative disengagement of the Senegalese state from the dealings of Siin's peasant communities. I have suggested that this state of affairs and the political experiences flowing from it are indebted to a much longer history of interactions between peasants and centralized authority. The elusiveness of the postcolonial state and the productive gaps it has created for Seereer farmers are connected to many earlier narratives of absence. Working back from the present and forward from past settings, I have attempted to expose some of the historical threads bridging the today and yesterday of power in the Siin countryside. Because these political genealogies are messy, deep, and tangled up, much of my attention has been focused on the *colonial prehistory* of present-day formations of power and the modes of action, political possibilities, and subjective understandings they have configured. Landscape here has worked as a hyphen between history and ethnography: A dialectical image (Benjamin 2002) juxtaposing different political times and temporalities of power, an archive of the ruptures and continuities that have made and redefined Seereer modernities over the past 200 years—just as the cluster of Seereer practices and sensibilities came to be depicted as a cultural standstill by the discourse of tradition.

Throughout this chapter, my goals have been multiple. First, I have sought to show that archaeological settings, materials, and perspectives can be used to study motifs of colonial statecraft, practices of colonial government, in particular. In this context, archaeology permits reflections about the materiality of the state and its mediations of power. It is thus in a position to contribute to anthropological and historical conversations about the problematization of the colonialism and theori-

zation of its operations, in Africa and beyond. Second, archaeological landscapes offer prime evidence of how colonial programs were translated to rural Africa and traces they left on peasant lifeworlds. In this way, engaging with colonial governance helps us to elucidate the milieux of power in which African forms of agency, identity, and social practice were molded. It also lends insights about the material conditions and dispositions that oriented native modes of subjective understanding.

In addition to these general considerations, this chapter has also sought to think through the possibilities created by the problem of absence in archaeological and historical settings. Epistemologically, I have tried to show that archaeological reasoning can be sparked as much by what is there as by what is not there—absence of evidence here does not necessarily imply evidence of absence. Failing to find certain expected signatures of colonial power can reveal limitations in one's data, but it can also trigger new ways of approaching historical questions. In this instance, material "resistances" provoked fresh questions about the nature of state power and its mediations (rather than endorsing certain *a priori* notions about how states become substantiated in the world). Conceptually, I have tried to examine how absence might feature as a technology and logic of rule, and thus this essay joins a growing body of archaeological writings on emptiness, invisibility, and immateriality as they relate to matters of power (Crossland 2003; Smith 2008; also Miller 2005).

Finally, and to return to contemporary times, I find value in the fact that archaeologies of colonialism can help to write better histories of the present. The entwined temporalities permeating the archaeological record indicate that historical processes set in motion during colonialism (and quite clearly before) have deep resonances in the Siin today. Past, present, and future are not self-confined horizons. Instead, they bleed profusely into each other, and are traversed by processes of different durations, effectiveness, and predictability, which combine to alter the field of historical possibility (Obarrio 2010, 2011). This does not mean, as colonial writers imagined about the Seereer, that the past is the mirror of the present or that traditions have gone unchanged for centuries. Quite differently, it means that adjusting to new situations is intrinsic to the making of tradition and that slow and fast changes are continually absorbed into configurations of identity deemed stable (Weiss 2004). It implies that the ways in which today's peasants go about crafting sustainable futures in uncertain times have antecedents, and that the ways they face problems forged by centralized authority have been anticipated historically. It indicates, finally, that the orientations to the past, present, and future contained in archaeological landscapes have relevance to how time and memory are mobilized in the present to negotiate the future, and thus that archaeology may have something to say about social and political experiences sometimes held to be the exclusive province of postcolonial modernity.

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Chapter 10

Modernity's Rush: Time, Space, and Race in the Shadows of the Diamond Fields

Lindsay Weiss

*The time is out of joint—O cursèd spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!*

Introduction: The Diamond Rush

In the valley of the Vaal and Orange Rivers of South Africa, along the trails of their alluvial deposit, weaving among the outcroppings of andesite boulders, diamonds were discovered; and one of the largest mining rushes of the late nineteenth century commenced. The early diamond diggings initiated a project of mining that was to extend into the twenty-first century, involving thousands in the task of sifting through tons of gravel from the ancient kimberlite pipes bearing diamondiferous soil.

The South African diamond rush began in 1867, when a rough diamond (which happened to have been part of a local farm child's "five-stones" game), was spotted by Schalk Van Niekerk. Van Niekerk requested the diamond from the family in order to send it to a London merchant for identification. This initial find was publicly dismissed as a sort of freak occurrence (surmised by some to have been deposited by "migrating ostriches"). However, Van Niekerk's second diamond find, the "Star of South Africa," was far more persuasive to the global audience. He infamously traded 500 sheep, 10 oxen and a horse for the stone, which was ultimately valued at £ 25,000. It was this enormous sum which tipped the scales of excitement, instigating the large global rush to the fields (Meredith 2007, p. 17).

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Over the following decade, tens of thousands of hopefuls arrived to sift tons of deposit in sunblasted pans with blistered hands and sweat-soaked backs, all eyes fixed in the anticipation of one single vision: the appearance of sparkling pebbles of precious rough diamond. The enormous communal excavation that this vision inspired gave rise to thousands of arduous and protracted journeys across the arid inland region known as the Karoo, requiring days of exhausting roadside travel and all the dangers of unexpected weather, illness, and injury. Around the diamond rush coalesced an extremely heterogeneous and unconventional community, living just beyond the boundaries of the Cape Colony. Even as such a context was ostensibly beyond the borders of the Cape Colony, however, the intense and volatile conditions of labor and trade that were to emerge produced what was perhaps an epitome of a colonial landscape. In light of this, it is important to consider how the unusual pursuits of rush camp culture may have promoted sorts of subjectivity. Specifically, it is instructive to explore how the pace and movement of time at the diggings related to the larger African and colonial setting—what did days, weeks, months, and years spent on the Diamond Fields actually *mean* within the broader context of Southern African colonial expansion?

The Diamond Fields existed on the extreme northern periphery of the Cape Colony, but anxiety over the territorial designs of the neighboring Afrikaner republics prompted British annexation of the region in October 1871 as the British Colony of Griqualand West (Turrell 1987, p. 1). Ostensibly, this annexation furnished “imperial protection” to Nicholas Waterboer, captain of the local Griqua pastoralist communities. This colonial incursion by the British had been made possible by the highly contentious acquisition of local title by the land-hungry Trekboer farmers, infamously purchasing the entire region (in 1839) from “David Dantsie” (De Goep) for 1 riding horse and 70 fat tailed sheep (Stow 1905, p. 394; Morris 2002, 2008, p. 87). In practice, however, this British usurpation was fundamentally about the mineralogical potential of the region. As a result of diamonds, local contestations of grazing-land rights quickly gave way to an entirely new pace and rhythm of rural production through a mass influx of prospectors, merchants, and entrepreneurs, bringing with them trade in guns, brandy, and luxury goods (Shillington 1985, p. 43).

Between 1871 and 1875, 50,000–80,000 African pioneers migrated to and from the fields each year from across Southern Africa (Turrell 1987, p. 21). Pedi, Tsonga, Southern Sotho, and Zulu migrants came to the fields to join local Rolong, Tlhaping, Griqua, and Koranna agropastoralists and traders, all attempt to profitably exploit the new market for petty trade and labor (Turrell 1987).¹ These laborers moved

¹ Naturally, laborers from different regions of Southern Africa had different priorities. During the early years of the rush, for instance, the Pedi laborers were stereotypically characterized as being primarily concerned with obtaining guns on the fields, due to the military threats of encroaching Zulu, Swazi, and Boer forces moving across the Transvaal region. South Sotho and Tsonga laborers, by contrast, were more invested in acquiring cattle wealth and the materials to boost commodity production in grains in the wake of widespread drought, overgrazing and cattle epidemics which greatly affected most agropastoralist economies during the first half of the nineteenth century (Harries 1993, pp. 20–23). For young men, while obtaining bridewealth and boosting their status in their communities were obvious individual priorities, the ultimate influence of chiefly

across a colonial landscape in which migrant labor was already well underway both in the Cape Colony as well as the Orange Free State as a result of various colonial modes of legislative coercion as well as through more overtly violent means of procuring labor. The fields were unique, however, in that Africans had the right to profitably own and work their own claims (Turrell 1987, p. 56), wages were remarkably high, both facts which, coupled with the possibility that finding a particularly large diamond might catapult the laborer “upwards in the social hierarchy,” doubtlessly gave this prospect of life on the fields the added “element of a lottery” (Harries 1993, p. 53). The illicit diamond trade could not be limited to individuals, however, as it necessarily created a shadowy and ever shifting network among these diverse laborers as “stealing a diamond often required a great deal of teamwork to distract the overseer, hide the stone, and successfully sell it to a fence” (Harries 1993.). These new social networks produced a new subjectivity among laborers, which fundamentally evaded chiefly directives, as well as the ostensible status of unfree laborer itself. As such the illegal diamond buying (IDB) trade, pinned along the circuits of stolen diamonds, indicates an obscured but important entrepreneurial element among migrant labor that is directly linked into a similarly rebellious network of colonial diamond buyers (themselves often operating as small business owners, running canteens and eating houses).

Despite its protectorate status, and the almost immediate appointment of commissioners to carry out Cape Colony law at the diggings, the sense of any allegiance to British sovereignty at the diggings was extremely unclear. For instance, on the day that the Union Jack was raised at the main rush location (celebrating the arrival of the newly appointed Cape commissioners) in November of 1871, it was reported that one digger who had been shaving outside his tent “merely glanced up, grunted, and went on lathering his face” (Roberts 1976, p. 63). The rebellious tendencies of many of the diggers were never very far from the surface and “[I]ater that day, an American digger showed his disapproval by hauling down the British flag” (Roberts 1976.). Even as such incidents may have been limited and dispersed, the accounts of the day reported that, “as everyone knew, they were symptomatic of a very definite and deep-rooted hostility toward British rule” (Roberts 1976).

The colonial diggers, a motley group of men and women from Europe, America, Australia, and the Cape Colony, seemed to want to imagine autonomy from both larger struggles over sovereignty. At the same time, they derided the effectiveness of their Cape-issued governors, rebelled when their interests were being infringed upon and were only dimly aware of their effect on the seasonal and pastoral time frame of the Thlaping and Griqua Harts–Vaal confluence, and even less so of the turbulent regional history of San rebellions and commando counterraid, marking the region’s painful history of “clearance, eviction, and exclusion” (Morris 2008, p. 90). One travelogue from the 1870s about the Diamond Fields recounted the

control over these laborers should not be underestimated. The long-distance importance of chiefs in the migrant labor system of the early fields can be evidenced in 1876 when Chief Sekhukhune summoned baPedi men from the fields for battle with the Boer ZAR republic, resulting in the immediate departure of 6000 men, allegedly halving the labor force (Harries 1993).

strange sense of discontinuity experienced when entering the fields, “here is a city in the desert—dropped at random, as it were, from the clouds, so detached does it seem from all the ordinary surroundings...” (Morton 1877, p. 74). The first local newspaper released an editorial statement advocating a similarly insular mindset, exhorting diggers to prioritize their “material welfare” over political topics and in doing so safeguarding the conditions of “peace and security” in which exchange could most effectively be undertaken (Turrell 1980, p. 214).

Importantly, it was not only the discovery of diamonds, but this distinctly idiosyncratic and hybrid camp culture which arose in the wake of this discovery, advocating the prioritization of exchange at all costs, that eventuated such a dramatic transformation and segregation of the Diamond Fields a decade later. Ephemerality, speed, easy blending of local provisioning and metropolitan *haute couture* and sleight-of hand characterized the materiality of early fields. The speed and single-mindedness with which tent cities disappeared and reappeared overnight across the rush camp landscape mirrored the remarkable blending of public business establishments and private domestic rituals, and this blending, in turn, rendered the incursions of the illicit trade of diamonds a constant preoccupation and anxiety among diggers.

To understand how profoundly these sorts of concerns came to grip and transform the community of the diggings, it is first important to examine how the lifestyle of diamond-hunting entailed a powerful transformation of time-consciousness. This essay will explore how the Diamond Fields epitomized a spatiotemporal disposition which was fundamental to the very dynamic of colonial territorial expansion, a disposition rooted in a late nineteenth-century culture of speculative expectation and the untrammelled pursuit of material gain. The archaeology of the public spaces of the fields demonstrates how these spatiotemporal dispositions came to imbue the African landscape with an abstracted, almost allegorical quality, which allowed those involved in this speculative pursuit to imagine their present circumstances as more than just temporary, but *necessarily* temporary—for to imagine otherwise would have meant accepting the possibility of permanence and failure.

In order to recognize how powerful such dynamics were, it is important to understand that the Diamond Fields were not only navigated according to the rules of procuring maximum productivity, but that this form of navigation in itself—the success of the extractive project—rested upon extremely unpredictable factors, such as ancient sedimentation patterns or the dispersal of kimberlitic pipes bearing diamondiferous soil, geological predictors which were poorly understood by most diggers. The intoxicating communal anticipation of these diggers, combined with the fragility of their abilities to predictively locate these great riches, tells a different story of the Diamond Fields than its later industrialization, one deeply imbricated within a volatile reaction between the landscape and the expectant subjectivities that it had assembled. As the availability of diamonds dwindled, and as the market value for these finds fluctuated, community suspicion and blame came to rest upon the illicit diamond trade, and its associated venues, illustrating the vulnerability of such anticipatory spaces to political violence and apartheid landscapes.

Temporality and Archaeological Thought in Southern Africa

The question of temporality in Southern Africa is an important one, which has always been intimately linked with the politics of archaeological thought. For instance, one of the first large-scale archaeological excavations in Southern Africa was of Great Zimbabwe, a trading complex situated between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers dating to the twelfth–seventeenth century (Trigger 1989, pp. 130–135). Geologist Carl Mauch documented the first sighting of the ruins of Great Zimbabwe in 1871, at the same historical moment when the Diamond Rush was first getting underway. Mauch's conclusion was that the complex stone buildings and forts, seemingly far too complex to have been the product of an African civilization, must have been the ancient site of the temple of the biblical figure of the Queen of Sheba (Trigger 1989). The entire edifice of this assumption, as he recounted in his journal, had been based on a small piece of what Mauch had determined to be cedarwood (Hall 1996, p. 25). Based upon the exotic context for this wood sample, it was concluded that this entire site, its plans and the technology for its construction, and most importantly, its cultural significance, could be situated within the folklore of the Old Testament (Pikirayi 2001, p. 9).

A subsequent archaeological site report issued by the “Rhodesia Ancient Ruins Ltd” company (formed by the Diamond Fields magnate Cecil Rhodes) concluded that the abandonment of the original gold mining and trade at this site might have been the result of an ancient revolution (Hall 1902, p. 121). But when it came to the question how these ancient ruins were understood by those who were living near to the site at that time, the archaeologists summarily concluded, “the native mind is absolutely blank with regard to any history of any tradition concerning the ruins. This ignorance may be explained by the migratory spirit of all South African races” (Hall 1902).

It was not until the mid-twentieth century that the early history of Great Zimbabwe was finally established as an African state through the archaeological work of D. R. MacIver and the ceramic sequencing of Gertrude Caton-Thompson (Hall 1990). Nonetheless, the early interpretations of Great Zimbabwe remain an important example of the epistemological and temporal chauvinism of the late nineteenth-century archaeological project, a project which presumed Africans “to be late-comers to the revolutionary developments that marked human progress—agriculture, metallurgy, and civilization” (Stahl 2001, p. 13). One of the key modes of correcting the lingering progressivist bias within African archaeology is to reflexively consider the beliefs that underpinned particular narrative framings and temporal orderings from within the fragmentary archaeological record. As François Richard proposes, “our objective...should be to understand how and why particular pasts emerge while others do not” (Richard 2009, p. 81).

Since the eighteenth century, from within the works of Montesquieu to Kant and through to the speculative philosophies of Hegel and Marx, it is well understood that Africa had been discursively fashioned as a space and time decidedly prior to

or outside of the determinative events of progress and modernity (Mudimbe 1988, p. 72). This was a general side effect of the fundamental and totalizing propositions of speculative philosophy and teleological paradigms; those landscapes and people not historically linked with progress became categorically vestigial or even aberrant—existing in a sort of *tempus nullius*. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida (1994) attempts to tease out what he believes to be an ethical alternative to this state of affairs, pursuing “spectral logics” lingering within such ostensible culprits as the progressivist text of Marx’s *Capital*. Derrida’s “hauntology” attempted to restore a sense of the multiple and inconstant forces of history even within the context of the most powerful “empirical and systematic efforts to apprehend both power and history” (Brown 2001, p. 149), illuminating a “spectral” context for those historical features whose finitude or partiality render them inadequate to some imagined “whole” of time (Derrida 1994).

Turning to the question of temporality in nineteenth-century colonial-era Southern Africa with this in mind, then, is not so much about turning to the temporality of modernity as something constitutive of the “West-in-Africa,” but about examining these historical moments as critically illustrating the impossibility of the “overcoming” that had, particularly at this point in history, been so central to the timescape of modernity. Illustrating this is far more challenging in terms of ready thematization, and yet potentially reveals far more dispersed and concealed fields for the dynamics of contested colonial hegemony. The fantastic spaces of the rush camp revealed the twinned work of modernity’s temporality, firstly, the heady speculative anticipation of unprecedented future wealth, and secondly, the denial of the present’s force in the face of these future-time fantasies. The successful institutionalizing of the industrial mining complex on the Diamond Fields was a conscious project of reversing the latter of these affects, reinstating a strong sense of permanence and discipline to life on the fields, as the collective speculative anticipation swiftly transformed to suspicion and violence. The story of the fields was less a western rational implementation of technological advance and labor control, than a volatile reaction to the specter of speculative and ephemeral African-European illicit exchanges that became synonymous with the hybrid spaces of the early camps. Understanding this point leads to a broader story about the temporalities and spatialities of capitalism in the African colonial context.

The examination of this nineteenth-century colonial South African landscape offers the possibility of exploring temporal disjointedness not only as an epistemic or discursive construct, but also as an actually occurring subjectivity which produced very concrete consequences during the unfolding of events over the late nineteenth century. To begin, the particular sorts of subjectivities that coalesced in the wake of the fantasy of finding diamonds had far less to do with the dynamics of “contact” than how a set of unprecedented personal aspirations and desires gathered individuals and things. Specifically, what propelled individuals to the Diamond Fields and throughout their occupancy there, was an anticipatory sort of temporality, one oriented profoundly toward the future, and one rooted in the experience of the gamble, or the general receptivity to the possibility of gaining immense riches. Archaeologically, such an affect might have less to do with any one sort of spatial arrangement

or artifact type than the ways in which particular sorts of flows traversed and connected unexpected parts of the landscape, leaving unexpected sorts of assemblages in its wake. The cartographic residue of the diamond rushers marks both their departure from the sensible grids of tangible capital, but also a departure from a time “that is wearing badly: a time whose languages have grown thin or hypocritical, whose practices have grown hollow, whose ideals are neither realized nor perhaps any longer suited to the age” (Brown 2001, p. 154). Those in pursuit of diamond wealth were also pursuing an escape from the material inadequacies of their present, inhabiting a disjointed temporality, one ill at ease with its present. This disjointed temporality was mirrored in their modes of consuming, and the material decors of public eating houses and taverns littering the outskirts of the fields (reputed to be central sites of illicit diamond buying), these material assemblages signaling a derivative symbolic value, one attendant to the spectral flows of illicit diamonds which enticed the public clientele's exchanges.

One of the notable qualities of the colonial setting is that it constructed an inherently *speculative* space, one that enshrouded commercial and personal encounters alike within a larger set of calculations about profitability, risk, and wealth. Inhabitants of the Diamond Fields carried this pervasive colonial disposition to an extreme, imagining their pursuits to be largely tangential to the broader matrix of sovereign claims or territorial disputes which had rocked the early years of the rush. This community of prospectors, therefore, created a heightening of an already speculative environment, built upon the pursuit of an unpredictable mineral. The sea of tents on the fields was imagined to be operating freely under the “sign of capital,” and one which was, importantly, uniquely oriented to the future and remarkably devoid of widespread skepticism about the possible failure of their communal speculation. This point is central to understanding the unique spatiotemporal orderings of imperialism as it operated so often from the peripheries of liberal colonial governments, such as the Cape Colony, unfurling “technologies of rule [which] thrive on the production of exceptions and their uneven and changing proliferation” (Stoler 2006, p. 128). Here, in the context of a rush, the violence of the frontier had come to be displaced into the arena of commerce, and came to shift traditional questions of territorial sovereignty to questions of commodity security, but was no less politically powerful for that fact. It was the material qualities of the diamond itself, its small size and soaring value, its potential for widespread availability, easy transport, trade, and concealment which became the provocation for the renegade violence, and ultimately the reinstatement of social order and widespread policing, which overcame the early culture of the Diamond Fields in the 1880s.

Returning to the early years of the rush, in order to begin to unpack how such a community might leave a different sort of material signature than other kinds of settler or homesteading communities, it is important to ask how the primacy of the speculative endeavor might have had a transformative effect upon one's experience of time. In *Futures Past*, Reinhart Koselleck describes the shift to what he terms this modern form of temporality, one which became increasingly distanced from bounded historical tradition, even of Christian eschatology. This modern temporality moved toward an experience of time which, under the conceptual charge of

progress, industrial and scientific development, and the “annexation of lands overseas” eventuated a distancing between what he terms “the space of experience” and the “horizon of expectation” held by these individuals (Koselleck, 2004, p. 267). While Koselleck’s concern was to chart the emergence of a particular political tradition that had become abstracted from existing traditional forms of rule, in a sense, there is also immense political relevance in the fact that there were other sorts of spaces which charted a similar anticipatory course even as they imagined themselves as being extra-political spaces, these individuals participated as the vanguard of the imperial-colonial project, propelling the anarchical advance of speculative capital.

If there were ever a space that could be characterized thusly—the ever-receding horizon of expectation on the one hand, and the space of actual experience, on the other (so characteristic, as Koselleck argues, of modern temporality) it would be the space of rush camps. Stemming less from the charge of progress and technological innovation, the Diamond Fields elicited fantasies and desires for wealth and profit that frequently exceeded actually existing sources of labor, actual mineralogical potential or existing global market conditions. The exaggerated disparity between these diggers’ horizons of expectation and the limitations of their actual experience marked a dislocation of temporality which was not only modern, but also reflected a temporality that was rooted in a material displacement of traditional modes of production. The scattered and unpredictable placement of diamond further displaced the traditional rhythms of the agricultural relationship of soil to labor. So not only was the sensation of time being “out of joint” coterminous with the proliferation of contingency-laden subjectivities, but this displacement was materially enacted in the pursuit of this very haphazard source of wealth. The trails of diamond left in their wake a similarly disjointed trace upon the landscape and material culture. If capitalism meant the collapsing of space and time (Marx 1971, p. 524), then spaces of rush could be described as the delirious invocation of this collapse, far in advance of its earliest possible arrival.

Donald Hardesty emphasizes the short-lived aspect of mining rushes in nineteenth-century North American gold sites, describing the individuals as those who “do not expect to live permanently in the new environment” being more akin to “sojourners” even as they often ultimately became settlers (Hardesty 2005, p. 82). The transient quality of the rush settlement presents unique problems for the archaeological assessments of class or community, as such categories came to take on uniquely fluid aspects. It was instead networks of trade and information, which became the predominant structuring feature of these encampments (Hardesty 1988: *passim*). One of the relatively permanent markers on the landscape of rush camps, however, was the tavern or hotel, which dotted the seas of individual tents within the encampment. While often operating within the same sort of flimsy canvas tenting and tin siding, such establishments outlasted the provisional reed huts, shacks, and small tents (comprising the bulk of the living arrangements for diggers). Some diggers even lived permanently at these hotels, whereas hotel establishments further away from the central site of digging were mainly patronized for meal service and drinking. The centrality of the canteens and hotels is an unsurprising fact given that

the typical digger's tent or shack interior was described at the time as being very spartan, having only the most essential amenities, for instance, "a joint of meat [which] was often hidden inside a pot...while a tin of mealie-meal [corn-meal] suspended from the tent poles..." (Macnish 1968, p. 233). Meal and bar services at hotels and canteens provided a vital break from the monotonous bachelor camp life, and moreover, functioned as a central arena for the exchange of news and, of course, diamonds.

The Halfway House Hotel

One such rural establishment on the Diamond Fields was known as the halfway house hotel, so named as it was located approximately midway between the early river diggings and the later rush to the "dry" diggings. Hotels on the rush camp were described as providing relatively minimal and utilitarian sort of table services, meal services often garnished with nothing more than a few salt cellars and enameled tinware (Macnish 1969, p. 237). By contrast to this, the archaeological assemblage of the halfway house produced a rich mixture of high and low material culture, from the remains of porcelain figurines and doll's legs to the presence of lowly spongeware vessels and the complete absence of stemware or formal serving vessels. Most notably, the hotel produced an impressive array of ceramic tableware patterns, including over 20 different transfer-print decorations and at least five different sorts of spongeware patterns. In light of the fact that the early halfway house assemblage spanned only approximately 10 years, this assemblage can be characterized as one with an extremely high variability, which in turn denotes the likelihood of mismatched tableware comprising the table setting at any one given meal service.

The general phenomenon of mismatched tableware or tea sets characterizing ceramic assemblages has given rise to a variety of archaeological interpretations. For instance, in the context of the Massachusetts Bootts mills boardinghouse (a mid- to late nineteenth-century cotton mill), such an eclectic assortment of dishes and serving vessels was thought to impart a certain "quiet humility" to mealtimes (Mrozowski et al. 1996, p. 62). Whether at a worker boarding house, or a roadside hotel and canteen, the relative awareness of diners as to the adequate standards of their table service is a subtle yet important one, as it gives rise to a broader set of questions surrounding how public and private were negotiated in diverse contexts of capital production.

This question raises the possibility of thinking about how profoundly different the attunement to the nuances of one's surroundings would have been for those who were living as working-class boarders compared to those who were living in the colonial landscape as if they had foregone any traditional form of productive labor, instead staking their hopes and futures on the gamble of a rush. Though more difficult to document historically and archaeologically, the latter sort of individual abounded during this time in the mid- to late nineteenth century and were even labeled "superfluous men" as their numbers seemed to exceed the demand placed

upon industrializing populations. The term “superfluous men” was especially appropriate because, despite their daily labors, these motley communities had decidedly turned against the very idea of work, and by association, their own identity as workers (Arendt 1966, p. 249), and thus, did not feel the limitations or shortcomings of their material environment with the same sense of permanence or urgency as professional working-class communities might have done.²

To some extent, the incongruous performance of informal and domestic table services in very public road-side and often run-down circumstances was authorized by the subjectivity of the clientele, whose gambling disposition meant a fixation upon the idea of future riches and, thus, indifference to the adequacy of the present—an affect further evidenced by the distinct differentiation between the reaction of “outsiders” and “insiders” to the décor of public houses on rush camps (Lawrence 2000, p. 143). The anticipatory temporality so definitive of these modern subjectivities—lodged as they were in these sort of displaced and “half-way” landscapes—represented a culture of the fields that was more than a mere product of expediency, but constitutive of a novel sort of informal culture of indiscriminate mixing, where the interiors of ragged tent and plank-lined public spaces housed the emergence of an ad hoc amalgam of domestic décor and makeshift items. This material signature referred to by Susan Lawrence as “bushcraft” (Lawrence 2000, p. 129), in which approximate goods substituted for their absent forms, and which were gathered in order to summon an imagined lifestyle to come. Hence, stores and bars such as the halfway house were stocked with champagne and luxury goods along with sardines, tent nails, and kerosene, or adorned their walls with images from “all the art galleries in Europe” as well as with animal skins (Warren 1902, p. 317). As Mbembe describes, “it is not simply that things are objects of consumption. It is also that they organize desires and provoke fantasies” (2004, p. 401).

The complex range of material culture in evidence at this single hotel and canteen highlights the transformations in temporality brought about by the modern turn, in the context of such a provisional camp space, and illustrates a collective disposition only partially lodged in the present. This future-oriented sensibility of the diggers suggests that the idiosyncratic and mismatched tableware was part of a broader signature of laxity in décor and stylistic choice that enabled and, in turn, was enabled by the extreme social fluidity on the Diamond Fields, and the communal rejection of the present circumstances as holding any finality. The inconsistencies of the

² This is an extremely important point made by Arendt, for, while there were disparate “digger’s democracies” and such labor organizations, at the same time, it is disputable whether such organizations could be equated with the subsequent labor organizations of the Rand. Importantly, these diamond field individuals in no way conceived of themselves as an incipient proletariat or as fighting for worker’s rights. Rather, they were organizing *against* the very specter of becoming workers (a disavowal which inevitably took on racial terms). As one digger’s democracy proclamation went, “born to labor, the multitude works and suffers, but *we who have flung ourselves out from the ranks of the hopeless life-long toilers, who live only to multiply the luxuries of the rich, who have become the mining and mercantile guerillas of a new state, will not permit ourselves to be brought back to the chain of the monopolist, from which we have so recently escaped*” (Turrell 1980, p. 57—emphasis added).

assemblage, the mismatched and jumbled deployment speak to the artificiality of any monolithic emulative performance of bourgeois material culture (Wurst 2006). More than what was represented, it was how these sorts of items were accumulated and deployed, for instance, on a very ad hoc basis, perhaps evidencing a certain neglect which conveyed a certain stretching of propriety's grip, as well as ambivalence about the long-term continuation of these meal services or use of tableware.

Mismatched sets of tableware, of course, have the potential to convey a broad array of meanings predicated on their context. For instance, in the "Rocks" slums of Sydney Harbor, Grace Karskens suggests that the mixing and matching of different color and types of décor could even participate in a certain fashionable statement and evoked the intimacy of home and "a very personal creation of household assemblages" (Karskens 2001, p. 77). Similarly, in the context of mixing tea ware decorations among early- to mid-nineteenth-century middle class families of New York, such a fashion was thought to contrast with more uniform tableware as a statement of the intimate and private space invoked by the tea ritual (Wall 1994, p. 147). Certainly also, in the context of the halfway house hotel, this choice in décor type seemed to be about eliciting in the guests this "at home" demeanor with the unfamiliar, and more generally a sort of readiness for the cosmopolitan or public life, or, as the hotel itself publicly advertised, being able to enjoy "all the comforts of an English home" even when among strangers, and even when in transit (Advertisement 1872).

The theme of home-style comfort could be said to have most broadly characterized the stylistic choices at this hotel. From the assorted transfer-print patterns emerged classical images of cherub-garlanded cameos, dainty flower arrangements, and traditional marriage decals such as Scotia Pottery's orange blossom (Godden 1964, p. 232) (Fig. 10.1). The relative absence of tureens, furthermore, indicated a less formal style of meal service, one necessarily (given a prevalence of stew type meat) served directly from kitchen to table. Meal services at road-side establishments were typically served at all hours of day and night, and this was no exception

Fig. 10.1 Scotia pottery, orange blossom decal



for the halfway house hotel (Boyle 1876, p. 62), a state of affairs which doubtlessly further contributed to the relaxed familiarity invoked by the abundance of domestic motifs. More broadly, the nostalgic theme of “home” was something widely sentimentalized within Victorian culture, particularly with relation to the “idealized childhood homes” (Wagner 2004, p. 163). The theme of home and family within the context of rush camps, more importantly, marked a certain status marker, as the ability to bring one’s family into such challenging conditions, along with all the attendant paraphernalia and decoration for creating a “home-style” environment was an intrinsic marker of social capital and respectability (Hardesty 1988, p. 103). The Victorian-era hagiography of motherhood, particularly into the early twentieth century, was something intimately connected with imperial ideology and gestured toward a particular form of gentility that “transcended class...” (Davin 1997, p. 92). From the gilt-rimmed tea ware (popularly known as “wedding band”) to the descriptions of one of the proprietor’s assistants as being on a “matrimonial bent” and subscribing to a mail-order bride catalog (Warren 1902, p. 319), it was clear that the prospect of marriage emblemized a very important culmination of fortune-making on the fields.

Through IDB court transcripts, there is a rare glimpse of how such an atmosphere of domesticity and matronly care actively facilitated the public illicit diamond buying transaction. Court transcripts of African sellers documenting their time sorting out potential buyers at canteens or hotels abound with descriptions of the “mistress” of the establishment plying them connections with illicit sellers through offering small glasses of brandy, bread, pipes, blankets, tobacco, meat, and bread. Often, these small exchanges would be interspersed with the procurement of a small diamond, to which the “mistress” of the establishment might characteristically ask why the diamond was so small or impure, and, in anticipation of future sales, promising the seller, “[i]f you bring a bigger one you will get more money” (Resident Magistrate 1877a, b). For diamond diggers, access to diamond buyers was a complex process, that was frequently negotiated through these small acts of exchange, for instance, one diamond seller named Umpofo, testified that his access to an IDB canteen was facilitated through a local named January, who was regularly there and had been estimated by Umpofo as a “man of money” because, “the bread was given without payments” (Resident Magistrate 1877a, b). The complex dispensation of commercial goods was not only something that enshrouded illicit diamond transactions, therefore, but also something that advertised to other observant Zulu, Pedi, Sotho, and Tswana laborers where they might go about obtaining cash for contraband. These small meals and drinks, therefore, were not only about establishing a milieu in which stranger sociality could enmesh new social blocks, language, nationalities, and genders, but it also enshrouded a complex theater for sellers, buyers, and detectives alike, that collectively constituted the illicit social life of the Diamond Fields.

These new circulations of materialities and new forms of trade, of course, for the migrant laborer, meant the prospect of “speeding up” the traditional forms and time frames for establishing one’s credential for matrimony among Southern Africans. As South African historian Peter Delius put it, young men who had yet to marry

or establish a household were more readily “abstracted from the society” and thus were also more likely to comprise the numbers coming to the Diamond Fields with its lure of high wages and unrestricted market (Delius 1984, p. 68).³ The reputation of the fields was often imparted through song during the long (sometimes 200-mile) walks to the fields. The repute of the fields was that of relaxed social prohibitions, as one Sotho *sefala* migrant song documents, “What do I say to you, gamblers (veteran poets)?...[y]ou know, I speak of Kimberley [Diamond Fields]...I speak of Sodom” (Coplan 2006, pp. 225, 226). It is important to underscore the extent to which the rapidly changing conditions and volatile influx of individuals to the diggings, created a complex and hybrid social landscape where there was a constant sense of provisional sociality that was both ephemeral as well as transformative. This is important to understand because it illustrates the extent to which the Diamond Fields marked a complete departure from traditional spaces and tempos of work, in fact the community seemed to be more rooted in hope and expectancy than the belief in traditional forms of labor, so much, so that it was recorded in the Eastern Cape in 1870 that Africans who were migrating to the Diamond Fields had nicknamed the encampment the “White man’s Nonquase” (Bundy 1979, p. 73).

Nongqawuse and “The Disappointment”

Nongqawuse was a young girl orphaned in Xhosaland during a Boer raid in the mid-nineteenth century, and she was subsequently sent to be raised by her uncle Mhlakaza. She is remembered for her infamous prophecies which had elicited a disastrous widespread cattle killing among Xhosa pastoralists in 1856, in the wake of an epidemic of cattle lung sickness (Peires 1989). As with the early discoveries of alluvial diamonds along the Vaal, Nongqawuse had experienced her visions along the banks of the Gxarha river, and after an initial period of waiting for the prophesied deliverance of the Xhosa people, her vision turned into what has been termed “The Disappointment.” During this time, much as with the faltering hopes of small-scale diggers over the course of the diamond rush, “the more the evidence mounted that they should give up hope, the more the believers clutched at every straw, and the more that logic demanded that they slacken their pace the more they redoubled their efforts...” (Peires 1989, p. 151). Nongqawuse’s prophesy invoked a similarly intense form of temporal dislocation and an anticipatory sort of disposition remarked upon by anxious colonial administrators who wrote at the time, “in the midst of their ruin they are happy and contented and in the confidence of the fulfillment of their expectations” (Peires 1989, p. 145). Nongqawuse’s vision not only entailed the resurrection of ancestors and the defeat of British settlers, but, importantly, it invoked the very idea of a communal rejuvenation and recreation, understood as the concept of *Uhlanga* which operated both outside of time and

³ Indeed, wages were cited as being higher than those available in rural England at this time (Turrell 1980; Harries 1993).

place as the very moment of creation but was also understood as a very real as-of-yet undiscovered part of the landscape, specifically, “a marsh (which appears to be solid but yet is overgrown with reeds which hid the entrance to a huge cavern in the centre of the earth from which the *Uhlanga* sent forth all living thing” (Peires 1989, p. 131).

Even after thousands of cattle had been slaughtered and the prophesied new cattle wealth failed to materialize, there persisted widespread reports and rumors of fabulous sightings in which cattle were emerging from the earth bearing an uncanny resemblance to those subterranean fantasies of prospectors: “the horns of oxen were said to have been seen peeping from the reeds and some had heard the bellowing of cattle impatient to rise from underground” (Peires 1989, p. 132). Some believers insisted that they had yet to find the source of this great wealth and that, “far to the north of their country, there is a vast subterranean cavern, from which their horned cattle originally came, and that cows and oxen might still be produced in great abundance, if the entrance of the cavern could ever be found...” (Peires 1989). If such a place could be discovered, “[n]ot only were there to be new people, new cattle and eternal youth for all, there were to be no unfulfilled wants and desires of any kind” (Peires 1989, p. 133). Labeling the Diamond Fields after the tragedy of the cattle killing, translated these collective pursuits of elusive wealth as equivalently millenarian fantasies with potentially disastrous consequences. Such tragic potential extended well beyond this vernacular metaphor for the Diamond Fields, inhering in the very term “speculation,” deriving from the ancient Roman term for cattle theft (*peculatum*) (Gnecchi and Hands 1903, p. 46).

Present Tense: The Landscape of Suspicion on the Diamond Fields

The late nineteenth century was a era transformed by the effects of finance capital, long-term investment and the unprecedented numbers of global sojourners in pursuit of wealth—it was an era where money, as Lukács put it, had come to behave as a “magical enlargement of the radius of human action” (Berman 1982, p. 49). Yet finance capital did not emerge solely from global banking centers and investment houses. Its methods of investment in the colonial infrastructures were predicated on the idiosyncratic flows of goods and ideas from the so-called peripheries, and the modes of travel, trade, and labor that emerged in these typically unpredictable environments—so much so that these environments were formative for many of the sorts of projects and institutional forms ultimately adopted by finance capitalists. The regulatory calculations and projections of metropolitan finance capital, importantly, emerged from the proliferation of ever-shifting cultures of eliciting and managing the social life of fictive capital. In the colonies, for instance, it was very often these flows of fictive capital, such as the flows of illicit diamonds, or the promise of limitless cattle, which took hold of the local subjectivities and preoccupations, in turn, precipitating the conditions which the investments of finance capital would

have to negotiate. Because of the instabilities of value and the elusive location of the commercial nexus itself, whole landscapes and even temporalities emerged, which were characterized by this speculative excess and volatility, leading to what John Stuart Mill described as a temporary “derangements of markets” (Mill 1986, p. 97). It is important to recognize this powerful animating force, which emerged from the very concept of limitless wealth. The anticipation of wealth and deliverance from the confines of low-wage labor would have affected every individual who sifted through the soil of the fields.

While illicit diamond trading was no doubt common on the fields, the true culprit for the diggers misfortunes stemmed from global depressions in diamond prices due to flooding of the world market, the depletion of manually friable diamondiferous “blue” soil, and the encroachment of the monopolizing powers of foreign capital all of which conspired to displace hundreds of hopeful individual diggers toward the end of the 1870s. As one travelogue recounts upon their return to the fields in 1881, “the old time digger...had almost disappeared, and in their place had sprung up a mushroom breed of financiers [there]...for wholesale plunder and chicanery...” (Cohen 1911, p. 117). What emerged among the remaining “old time diggers” was a spiraling discourse of blame and community-wide anxiety, panic even, emerging around the widely discussed practice of illegal diamond buying, or “IDB.” This discourse was based upon the idea that the Southern Africans, who had freshly arrived upon the fields were naturally honest, but were lured into the illegal sale of diamonds from the claims they were digging, by less scrupulous European canteen and eating house owners. As one account relates “the natives were first taught to thieve by white receivers of stolen goods.” The account continues to explain that this inducement to steal typically emerged through the sale of liquor or supplying free food,

the raw native was enticed to the canteen to spend his money, and although at this time a strict law existed which prohibited any native being served with liquor without an order from his master, the keepers of low grog-shops evaded the law by keeping on hand a stock of false orders to suit any emergency, whilst the villainous compounds they retailed let up a fire which could be kept blazing by dishonesty only...The business being done in eating houses ... was reduced to a system. A native of one or the other tribes, whether a Shangaan, a Basuto, a Zulu or a Ballapin [sic], was kept in the pay of the proprietors, according to the habitués of the house. These various touts would remain most of the day...eating or pretending to eat with them...If the native had any diamonds for sale he was at once introduced to the private room of the master, which was at the back. (Matthews 1887, p. 188)

The logic behind these stories, which proliferated in the local newspapers and travelogues of the time, and discussed across countless bars and tables on the fields, was that material diamonds themselves continued to exist in great abundance, only having entered into a covert and subterranean stream of illicit circulation, evading even the most vigilant claim-owners and diggers. The social outcome of this was popular outrage directed against spaces associated with such illicit trading, and the explosions of mob violence mapped out a specific cartography linking the routes between informal (typically peripheral) and “low” public eating houses, hotels, and rural canteens. Transcripts of special diamond courts only heightened this form of

suspicion, as they revealed ongoing systems of diamond solicitation engaged by hotel and canteen staff under the guise of bar service and the provisioning of such innocuous gifts as pipes, brandy, blankets, and bread (Resident Magistrate 1877a, b).

As resentment and violence coalesced in the wake of imagined trails of stolen diamonds, these tensions came to have a particularly transformative effect on public and socially hybrid spaces of the fields—which came under great pressure to demonstrate the licit nature of their establishments. As mob violence and the actions of the special detective department forced increasing pressure upon public spaces where African laborers and diamond buyers could mingle and potentially ply their trade, increasingly large geographical swaths of the region eventually fell under suspicion for harboring IDB. Even mundane material objects flowing out of the Diamond Fields came to be subject to suspicion and seizing by the local detective force: food, pipes, goats, dogs, boots, pigeons, indeed books became imbued with the spectral quality of concealing the coveted diamond. During this period, the physical bodies and movements of migrant laborers who had come to the fields to work for wage labor were discursively reconstituted as a physically coded zone of criminality—particularly as they indulged in leisure activities at bars and canteens, they were imagined as constantly engaging in stealthy “signs and signals” (Advertisement 1877). In the settler newspapers and travelogues this typically translated as a virulent discourse directed against the African laborer, against whom no disciplinary or legislative restriction could seem adequate, as, “he uses his nose, mouth, stomach, ears, toes, and hair to conceal the diamonds that he steals, and at nightfall he walks home from the mine ... the diamond being all the while ... on his person” (Matthews 1887, p. 190).

The imposition of segregated worker housing (occurring in 1884) rendered the cartographic question of where the real illicit networks operated, and where they were simply imagined as a result of local conditions, instantly irrelevant. With the incarceration of African laborers, the site of criminality swiftly became the skin’s edge, and the relationship between materiality, violence, speculative temporality, and trade manifested a landscape that seemed, for local and long-distance diamond speculator alike, inevitably carceral and segregated. The outcome of a community of prospectors whose “belief in the immortality of the mine is supreme” (Morton 1877, p. 83) was the intense demand for an equally absolute legibility in interactions between Africans workers and Europeans buyers. Those Africans who had moved freely among Europeans in bars or canteens, who had constituted an avid consumer base on the fields, who had exercised franchise and the right to own claims, who were local land-owners, high court interpreters and ministers (Turrell 1987, p. 92), increasingly became objects of widespread incarceration.

The Halfway House in the Wake of IDB Suspicion

The net effect of this shift in the atmosphere of the fields meant that sites that had formerly been socially hybrid spaces and zones of indiscriminate mixing came to be vilified, subject to mob attacks (usually resulting in burning down of a suspected site). In light of this, it becomes interesting to consider how these social pressures may have specifically influenced day-to-day activities as rural canteens and hotels such as the halfway house hotel. The hotel's ceramic assemblage did shift, in the 1880s, toward a uniform and professionalized sort of service and decoration choice. The late hotel assemblage represented an increase in plain whitewares, or

Table 10.1 Ceramics comparison chart of halfway house assemblage by ware type and decoration. Percents in each category for this table have been calculated out of Total MNVs, rather than by category. Numbers in parentheses are the number of vessels

Ware type category	Halfway house c. 1870–1880 (MNV) MNV %	Halfway house c. 1880–1920 (MNV) MNV%	Percent change in ceramic by décor (%)
<i>Undecorated white-bodied refined ware</i>			
(Plain) ironstone ^a	0	(16) 16%	16
<i>Color-bodied refined wares</i>			
Yellow ware	0	(1) 1%	1
Teapot ware	0	(2) 2%	2
<i>Decorated refined wares</i>			
Lined ^b	(8) 12.3%	(18) 18%	5.7
Scenic/floral	(26) 40%	(15) 15%	–25
Geometric	(1) 1.5%	(1) 1%	–0.5
Sponged	(7) 10.8%	(5) 5%	–5.8
White and gold			
Asiatic Pheasant	(1) 1.5%		
Paint and print	(1) 1.5%		
Scalloped edge		(2) 2%	2
Flow blue	(1) 1.5%	(1) 1%	1
Willow-ware		(1) 1%	1
<i>Coarse earthenware</i>			
Terracotta flower-pots	(1) 1.5%		–1.5
<i>Stoneware</i>			
British salt-glazed container	(4) 6.15%	(3) 3%	–3.15%
<i>Porcelain^c</i>			
Asian market ware	(1) 1.5%	(1) 1%	–0.5
Gilded tea ware	(4) 6.15%	(11) 11%	–4.85
Painted/scalloped		(5) 5%	5
Undecorated	(4) 6.15%	(4) 4%	–2.15
Plain tea ware	0	(1) 1%	1
Bone china	0	(1) 1%	1
Snoorkoppie	0	(1) 1%	1

Table 10.1 (continued)

Ware type category	Halfway house c. 1870–1880 (MNV) MNV %	Halfway house c. 1880–1920 (MNV) MNV%	Percent change in ceramic by décor (%)
Undiagnostic ^d	0	(2) 2 %	2
<i>Miscellaneous</i>			
Doll and doll tea sets	(1) 1.5 %	(5) 5 %	3
Wash basin		(1) 1 %	1
Decorative item	(1) 1.5 %	(2) 2 %	–0.5
Pipes	(4) 6.15 %		–6.15
Egg cup		(1) 1 %	1
<i>Total MNVs</i>	65	100	

n.b. Because of the danger of under-representing undecorated wares the undiagnostic sherd counts are listed below. Importantly, undecorated and undiagnostic sherds at the later hotel (WBK3) outnumber those at the earlier hotel (WBK4) despite the trend of depositional wear to increase small sherd counts over greater periods of time. While I have chosen to exclude undiagnostic sherds from my analysis, the fact that there is a far greater representation of undecorated ware at the later hotel supports the hypothesis that there was a move toward undecorated ware at the later hotel: *WBK3* Undiagnostic refined white earthenware 60 sherd fragments. Undiagnostic whiteware rim sherds 3 sherds. Undiagnostic refined white earthenware base rim sherds 59 sherds. Undiagnostic oval base rim sherds 10 sherds. Undiagnostic handle rims 8 sherds. Small unlabeled undiagnostic undecorated 416 sherds. Undiagnostic porcelain sherds with footrims 16 sherds. Undiagnostic porcelain body sherds 6 sherds

WBK4 Undiagnostic refined white earthenware base rim sherds 146 sherds. Handles 7 sherds. Small unlabeled undiagnostic undecorated 283 sherds

^a Ironstone here is being used in its most general sense, to group those late nineteenth-century whitewares with dense high-fired fabric. See Brooks (2003)

^b The category lined wares includes industrial slipware

^c In my analysis, I did not choose to distinguish between porcelain and highly vitrified whitewares—lumping them together under the heading porcelain. All of these ware types were widely available in the Cape at the end of the nineteenth century, and this fact complicates any simple correlation between ceramics, wares, and types. In my estimation, the enduring British taste for refined earthenwares, and the fashionable influence of British taste on the Cape meant that, by the end of the nineteenth century, the status difference between porcelain or a highly vitrified whiteware item would have been marginal. I have, however, distinguished the category of bone china. For further discussion, see Klose and Malan (2000)

^d Undiagnostic here is used to indicate undiagnostic vessels; there were large numbers of undiagnostic sherds which have not been included within these tables as they could not be estimated in terms of vessel counts. Raw sherd counts are provided in the table description

plain whitewares with simple blue banding along the rims, came to predominate in the ceramic assemblage, almost tripling in representation among tablewares. Plain ironstone wares and banded wares were, by comparison, almost completely absent in the earlier hotel assemblage despite their widespread availability at that time (see Table 10.1.). These “ironstone china” wares came to be generally known as “hotel-ware” or “commercial wares” as a result of their popularity with “large steamship companies, hotels, clubs, colleges, and other places where hard usage has to be un-

Fig. 10.2 Blue-banded ware

dergone” (Jewitt 1878, p. 317).⁴ Ironstone china took off in popularity in America in the late nineteenth century—sparking off a domestic industry for the ware (Barker and Majewski 2006, p. 217). These wares have been traditionally grouped with other white refined wares as households and hotels frequently used these types interchangeably to create the effect of a matched dinner service (Bell 2004; Brooks 2003, p. 124; Lawrence 2000, p. 132). The plainness of the decoration of these ironstones, despite the fact that ironstone dishes were most often available in very colorful patterns (Miller 2005, p. 7), marks a significant departure from the previous aesthetic choices surrounding the hotel’s table and meal services. As blue banded ware (Fig. 10.2), previously almost absent from the assemblage, comes to almost triple in representation, it is important that the plainness of decoration type lent a dramatically more homogenized, professionalized, and “sanitized-looking” system of serving guests. Tables set with matching patterns of banded plates and tureens, alternating with whitewares would have given the diners a very different visual directive from the previous hotel’s assemblage, punctuated as it was with images of cherubic and classical vistas, matrimonial floral sprays and feminine cameos.

Importantly, these ironstone and banded wares are almost exclusively found in the form of individual plates and saucers that the guests would have eaten off of directly. Further separating the client from the proprietor’s “hearth” is the abundant array of serving tureens and platters that emerge in the assemblage, which indicated a reduced likelihood of any part of the meal service being served directly out of the kitchen. While these serving vessels continue to have some of the idiosyncratic and home-style flair of the previous decade, many of them were minimally decorated by comparison to the predominating tureen styles of the time period (Fig. 10.3) and while there continue to be the presence of *kommetjes* and other such less formal service vessels, their numbers are noticeably reduced.

The emergence of serving tureens not only indicates the possibility of a shift in food preparation at the hotel, but also suggests that a change in the form of meal ser-

⁴ “Ironstone china” was actually a type of earthenware, but so named as it was renowned for its extreme hardness and durability, “for it is not easy to break even a plate” (Jewitt 1878, p. 317).

Fig. 10.3 Blue-banded tureen

vice had occurred, from what I have previously suggested as a “from the kitchen” sort of home-style service to possibly something more like *service à la française*, which necessitated the simultaneous deployment of tureens as it emphasized the presentation of an abundant variety of courses at the table (Flanders 2004, p. 273). It came to be in demand in the North American colonies in the late nineteenth century (Wall 1994, p. 121), and this practice may have experienced a similarly delayed reception in the African colonies as was the case with many other ceramic fashions (Lucas 2004, p. 105; Malan and Klose 2003).

While it is uncertain whether such a level of formality would have been observed at the halfway house hotel, continental-style meal services were certainly not unknown at the Diamond Fields hotels. Since the inception of the fields, hotels had been cited to have served *table d’hôte* (Trollope 1878, p. 78). *Table d’hôte* was a communal and fixed priced meal service offered during a set period which would have afforded a roadside establishment much-needed flexibility in terms of service times. While this might seem to have allowed for a more relaxed or communal sort of dining arrangement, it is also true that the lack of regularity of meal start times for clients came to mean that residents and diners could, to some degree, experience a good deal more privacy in their dining.

In fact, over the 1880s and 1890s, a subtle but notable shift in local hotel advertisements occurs, in which hotels increasingly stress the potentially individuated nature of the amenities. While including reference to the somewhat common *table d’hôte* service, ads emphasized “table d’hôte with *separate tables*” (Murray 1894, p. 256—emphasis added), listing special rates for “private suppers” (Advertisement 1876). Taking the fact that drinking and eating had constituted, in many important respects, the core of the incipient sociality that defined the early the Diamond Fields these seemingly minor or subtle shifts in the collective ambience of the hotel and canteen space indicate profound changes in the desired emphasis; rather than social fluidity, it seemed that the real luxury these hotels came to offer was privacy.

De Beers and the Segregation of the Diamond Fields

These subtle shifts reflected in the assemblage of the half reflect an important change in the broader public matrix of the fields. In the mid 1880s, companies such as De Beers, with the backing of the Rothschild investment house, consolidated the mining claims, and swiftly imposed worker housing in an attempt to quash community instability over the perceived epidemic of illegal diamond trade. The worker housing was overtly segregated, with suburban bungalows for the European workers while African miners were sequestered in prisonlike compounds which had been modeled after Brazilian slave lodges (Turrell 1987, p. 97). Cape Town, and other South African colonial cities never reached the numbers of incarcerated of either Kimberley's prisons or their compounds, and the space of the compound became virtually indistinguishable from the space of the prison as workers came to be "borrowed" from the Breakwater prison (Worger 2004, p. 65), and the Diamond Fields swiftly transformed into the earliest officially segregated landscapes in South Africa.

Importantly, what occurred on the Diamond Fields had less to do with either the pacing or legislative edicts of the Cape Parliament; it was a series of events fundamentally about the particular social and political culture to emerge in the pursuit of fictive capital, with its inevitable discourses of risk and security. The blueprints for this sort of political change were the diamond mines and the routes of traded diamond, rather than any sort of civil ordinance or Cape transects. For those who had come to the Diamond Fields to realize their fortunes, the diggings (later aptly termed the "big hole") represented the center of speculative fantasy, an enormous man-made testament to the unreal and insatiable desires that were elicited by the allure of abstract wealth. In many ways, the diamond diggings, and sites of mineral wealth more generally, represented heterotopic spaces, spaces always-already displaced by the impossibility of their own utopian underpinnings (Foucault 1986), a sort of negative space whose contours literally reflected the lack at the center of these desires. Indeed, the utopian drives of those that flocked to the diamond diggings were seldom realized, with the diamond-as-limitless-wealth proving elusive for most, and in addition to the compounded desire produced in the wake of its passionate frustration (Simmel 1990), an enormous *ressentiment* emerged. The subtle transitions undergone by hotels and canteens on the fields are important because they indicate the closure of the hybrid public or the very possibility of imagining such places. The places, which were about the disavowing of the present circumstances, which were for dreaming of the future, for indistinct transactions and circumventing the immanence of labor, became invisible with the professionalization of public eating and drinking spaces.

Conclusion

The diamond rush was, historically, an extremely colonial story. It was a story of the stretching and warping of the landscapes preexisting spatiotemporal routes and rhythms. It was an eruption of hybrid spaces, in which the pursuit of diamonds

swirled together the lives of Zulu, Pedi, Sotho, and Tswana diggers with canteen owners from Europe and the Cape. As these new spheres of illicit trade proliferated, so did the discourse of suspicion, and the sensibility that such spaces were antithetical to a truly transparent marketplace, one in which the profits ran in one direction (the metropole) and one in which racial hierarchies were demonstrated both spatially as well as in terms of the restoration of metropolitan notions of domesticity and privacy from the realm of the criminal.

The tensions of this story run along the routes of the illicit diamonds, and inhere within the material culture of these public spaces, a material culture that, through its veneer of propriety and domestic caretaking, rendered the illicit diamond trade ever more inscrutable. A careful examination of the material culture of the diamond rush reveals a strong temporal shift in the inhabitants of the Diamond Fields (later known as Kimberley), one that moved from an initial transitory and anticipatory sort of public culture, to one which indicated a more permanent and less hybrid sort of culture. Speculative dispositions, such as those of the initial diamond rush, continued to proliferate throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, and they continue to mark a defining aspect of contemporary casino culture. Their material signature continues to indicate a certain mobility, or at least an anticipatory sort of sensibility, in the form of greater wealth and freedoms from current conditions. The troubling events of the Diamond Fields are a very familiar sort of colonial narrative, one that was already well familiar to those who had survived or heard the grim story of Nonqawuse's prophecy. While very few were immune to the thrall of the gamble on the fields, it was clear that those migrants who referred to the fields as "the White man's Nongqawuse" were well aware of the untenable quality of a community coalesced under the sign of speculative anticipation.

Within the public spaces of the fields another story unfolded that was largely unwritten, where the anarchical quality of a speculating community led to a significant degree of suspicion and even paranoia over the presence of secret wealth—ultimately leading to what Mbembe terms a calculus of superfluity, in which new ascriptions of identity and criminality came to channel the "dissipation of value" into the realm of the biopolitical. Racism itself became something of a calculation, a "transactional practice" in which the labor of the African was not only something to be rationally organized and used, but also to be sequestered and criminalized as "a necessary sacrifice" for the retention of wealth (Mbembe 2004, p. 381).

These prospectors were involved in yet another millenarian sort of wager, one in which their own ungovernability and their own unmapped routes and forms of exchange came to be staked in the hope of preserving the "eternal stability" of the "supreme" mine. As Hannah Arendt writes with reference to the subsequent gold rushers in Southern Africa, "it was significant that a society about to part with all traditional absolute values began to look for an absolute value in the world of economics where...such a thing does not and cannot exist..." (Arendt 1966, p. 188). Notably, Arendt goes on to add, "[t]his delusion of an absolute value has made the production of gold...the business of adventurers, gamblers, criminals, of elements outside the pale of normal, sane society" (Arendt 1966, p. 188).

If the diamond itself emerged on the fields as something of a fetish (cf. Pels 1998; Pietz 1985)—it had achieved this status invisibly. The tangible quality of actually-occurring diamond was sustained through widespread rumors of its omnipresence; in the process, the diamond itself had become deterritorialized. Yet the signifier of the absent diamond was not really new, in coalescing the Diamond Fields, it had already brought about a global deterritorialization—in the wakes of its deposits it coalesced countless nomads. These nomadological networks forged novel circulations that blurred the boundaries between public and private, class aspiration and criminal aspiration and colonizing fortune-seeker and colonized fortune-seeker. The indeterminacy of these spaces, “home” to any set of aspirations and transactions, coupled with the rising anxiety about the number of illicitly traded diamonds, induced the imperial reassertion of commercial authority. The ability to sequester laborers and thus name the limits and color of criminality effectively rescripted the entire structure of the rush encampment, evidenced by a professionalization of canteen and hotel culture.

The illicit diamond trade and the imperial segregation of the Diamond Fields were twinned process equally intrinsic to the construction of the racialized urban spaces of South Africa, casting the terms of identity from within the cauldron of economic paranoia and fantasy (Mbembe 2004). This corporate-colonial ascription of criminality and race was accomplished through the spatial and temporal segregation of diamond diggers, mechanically separating out the immanence of labor for the European and African miners. The impossibility of deliverance from these bifurcated terms of work—the permanence of racial difference instilled through this segregated sequestering, was achieved through the enforced long-term duration of worker contracts. This protracted exposure to the disciplining space of the compound achieved the finality of the closure of the public spaces of the fields. The dramatic shift in hotel and canteen material culture, in which a hygienic and individuated table service supplanted the easy home-style informality of the early rush assemblage, reflects a sobriety and formalization of transit itself, which was no longer imagined as between present and future, but merely between coded and gridded spaces firmly in the present. The closure of the public spaces of the camp was a temporal closure, in which the communal culture of passionate speculation and aspiration, along with its attendant material culture, seemingly melted into thin air, leaving behind the landscape of apartheid.

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Part V

Discussion

Chapter 11

On *Materializing Colonial Encounters*: A Commentary

Ibrahima Thiaw

In general, Africanist scholarship on colonialism has been a vibrant and fertile terrain of inquiry. Such is not the case, however, in African archaeology, where studies of colonialism are in their infancy. In this light, the present volume is long overdue and will likely pave the way for further research at a broader continental level. It clears out new paths of inquiry and will likely spark new and passionate debates in African archaeology and in the social sciences and humanities in general, both at a continental level and beyond.

Materializing Colonial Encounters contributes to greater understandings of colonial dynamics and processes looking critically at the complexities of material circulations, mediations, memory, and power. The colonial context is the one where force was often exerted unilaterally to extract resources and subjugate human bodies, and legitimated by ideologies of power and domination intended to maximize economic, political, and social gains. Power and its memories have been contested and resisted in equally multiple and complex ways. These challenges took shape within contexts of emerging new tastes and identities, where new forms of political and economic governance, and social organization were being negotiated and experimented.

Archaeological concerns on colonialism in Africa are born out of historical archaeology, whose initial interests lay on Atlantic encounters. While the Atlantic impact often intersects with colonialism, the second resulting from processes unleashed by the first, the two do not necessarily match each other in their temporalities. While some regions, such as South Africa, might have experienced colonialism early on in the Atlantic contact era, many others remained independent and in control of their destinies until late in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. This does not, however, mean that they were exempted from the vast array of changes

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wrought by Atlantic processes worldwide. While not all chapters make it explicit, all authors seem to share the understanding that colonialism in Africa has long and plural temporalities, even as their analyses center chiefly on nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' processes.

The book includes nine chapters organized thematically in four parts focusing, respectively, on circulations, mediations, memory, and power. Part I is concerned with circulations of cowrie shells and ivory. These objects have been both enigmatic and iconic trade items at various cultural, regional, continental, and transcontinental scales. Examining the circulations of cowrie shell in the political, moral, and symbolic economy in the Northern Territories of colonial Ghana in the early twentieth century, Swanepoel makes a strong case about the power of use, context, and habit. The ubiquity of cowrie shells in various regimes of value, their continued use across emerging colonial boundaries, combined with the economic and political isolation of the Northern Territories, largely explains their success over colonial currency. The persistent use of cowrie shells in various spheres of social transactions decades after the introduction of colonial currency and all the way to the postcolonial era made them the important points of entanglements that challenge the old concept of "currency revolution" (Guyer 1995). This shows that even within the same national context colonial experiences can vary in time and space, and that analysis must be contextualized according to cultural, social, political, and economic spheres and sensibilities.

Stahl's approach in Chap. 2 explores the broader implications of colonial materialities in the developments of new tastes, material wealth, and moral economies, both in the colonies and in the "metropolises." In doing so, she demonstrates that the harvest and circulations of cowrie shell and ivory might have contributed in funding racial, genteel, and gender practices that shaped the imperial landscapes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in England, and perhaps elsewhere in imperial Europe. These complementary looks that juxtapose and contrast peripheries and metropolises via material connections offer unique insights on the imagined geographies of empire and their changing forms at various historical moments and in various cultural contexts (Mitchell 2005). Stahl's perspective reaches out to both the Africanist and Europeanist scholarships and crosses disciplinary boundaries to investigate how colonialism and its material manifestations might have transformed in significant and distinctive ways both the colonizers and the colonized.

In Chap. 3, Brink excavates colonial archives of the Dutch East India Company in the Cape in Southern Africa to explore and expose the role of language in developing a distinctive colonial experience. In Chap. 4, Crossland, working through a Peircean semiotic approach, peels out and exposes the different worlds woven concurrently by missionaries and Merina royals in nineteenth century in highland Madagascar. The ways in which Merina royals manipulated missionaries to incorporate them into local belief system is symptomatic of the complex hide-and-seek game that characterized colonial encounters. Both in the case of the Cape in South Africa and highland Madagascar, language and things are put into contribution in intricate ways, and are both powerful mediums to develop, sustain, and expand memories and experiences to legitimate one's power.

In her chapter, Wynnes-Jones examines the biographies of practice in Vumba Kuu on the southern coast of Kenya, where Swahili political authority was reenacted and given legitimacy via writing and ritual performance, with the support of British colonial authorities. She critically looks at the role of colonial writing in the production of memory to legitimate power, authority, place, identity, and status in coastal Kenya. However, the archaeological material manifestations of such practices at the site of enthronement of new rulers show disjuncture between written history and the lived past lives as understood from the archaeological record.

Esterhuysen reflects on the violent tensions that opposed Boers and Kekana Ndebele in the northern frontier of South Africa in the mid-nineteenth century that she explores via its material manifestations including dead bodies and material things. The killing of Boers by Ndebele in 1854, their refuge in a cave, and ultimately the siege of the cave by Boers resulted in the death of several Ndebele. As a *lieu de mémoire*, the cave site and the historical context of this violent encounter have great cultural and political significance in Ndebele logics, and strategies of power and the silent memories that surround the siege.

The chapter by Kus and Raharijaona deciphers the poetics and politics of power and sovereignty through language metaphor as it applies to rule and land in the Ime-rina state in Madagascar Central Highland. Language, land, and the material symbols associated to power and political authority are carefully peeled to capture and expose the complex forms of resistance to French's colonization. From his study of historical landscape and material culture analysis in Siin, Richard elaborates on the nature of local state formations, and the extent to which these generally small-scale peasant communities were penetrated and integrated within the colonial French Senegalese state. From this work, it appears that the colonial state's control over the operations of local governance and everyday life affairs were somehow loose. It remains, however, that colonialism operated in complex and disguised forms that altered quite significantly rural communities on the margins of the French colonial state in Senegal that was centered around the old Wolof country (Sarr and Thiaw 2012).

In her chapter, Weiss strongly shows the interconnections between the diamond rush and Southern African colonial history made of "warping landscapes," "hybrid spaces" where illicit trade developed along suspicious discourses that demarcated racial spaces and hierarchies that were mapped out with concerns over criminality. The traffic of diamonds brought rapidly changing landscapes and an economy of social anxiety, fear, and hope on which will grow urban apartheid culture.

Colonial historical constructions based on "conventional archives" make a sharp distinction between history and memory (Nora 1989). This line of analysis is today increasingly challenged. Most chapters in this volume triangulate between materiality, documentary records, and oral accounts to dismantle colonial historical constructions embedded in colonial discourse and its technologies of power, control, and social monitoring and engineering, which included the making of archives, material production, circulations, consumption, and landscapes. As shown by Kus and Raharijaona, oral accounts, language, and memory can no longer be cast as vernacular. Like history, they are part of the sum of narratives that constitutes our

past experiences. As Richard and Esterhuysen understand it perfectly, the fact of the matter is that history, historicity, and memory are all selectively created and constantly subject to change and rearrangements.

The study of colonialism is, however, a contested terrain, one that is bundled with moral issues, political wounds, economic exploitation, the ensuing and continued impoverishment, long-term economic and political dependence, and cultural marginalization. As such, colonialism is also inextricably tied to the development of colonial modernity and its racially, geographically, economically, and ideologically polarized worlds, which continue to haunt postcolonial modernities. Therefore, the greatest weakness of this work, despite all it merits, is that it does not give serious consideration to the significance of these polarized worlds and their persistent manifestations in modern identities and ideologies. This could, however, be thwarted by lending more voices to the sensibilities of African descendants and opening channels of conversation with more of them, a void that could not possibly be filled by one chapter out of ten or even by myself, in this short commentary. I have to confess that this is a hard critique to make because those sensibilities have to exist in the first place and one has to find them. On the other hand, the quality of the work presented in the different chapters, to my view, transcends the constraints that tend to impose political correctness upon us.

Another shortcoming of this, otherwise finely written and insightful book, is the evenness of its geographical coverage. There are four chapters on West Africa, of which two are on Ghana and two on Senegal. There are three chapters on Southern Africa that deals with the critical aspects of colonial materialities. There are two articles on Madagascar and only one (on Kenya) for the whole East African region. The absence of Central Africa and Northern Africa are a bit disappointing but understandable. Overall, however, this book will be an excellent addition to African archaeology and African scholarship on colonialism and beyond.

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Chapter 12

African Archaeologies in Transition: Hybrid Knowledge of Colonial Pasts

Michael Rowland

It would appear that African archaeology is in a state of transition. Not long ago, it was accused of sustaining a colonial project of reducing the prehistory of the continent to deficient versions of what was happening elsewhere in “global” or “world” archaeology (Stahl 2010; Schmidt 2009). Whether it was the origins of food production, urbanism, literacy or other such civilizational accomplishments, Africa was deemed either deficient or in need to reassert its virtues. For a long period, African renaissance literature had been concerned to demonstrate the global cultural impact of Africans as symbols of black achievement. When Thabo Mbeki became president of South Africa, he aimed his inaugural speech at the relaunch of an African renaissance to show that the continent had universal values, whether they might be monumental architecture (the urban ruins of Great Zimbabwe, the pyramids of Egypt), literacy (the archives of Timbuktu), or urbanism (Benin, Ife, etc.). Revival of African heritage could mean many things, for example, the pan-Africanism of Kwame Nkrumah (e.g., his establishment of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board) or the call by the first president of Botswana, Sir Seretse Khama, for Africans to write their own history books in order to have a past worth writing and learning about. The recent building of the monumental bronze sculpture to the African renaissance outside Dakar by President Wade is a more disputed representation of Léopold Senghor’s francophone version of African renewal.

As far as African archaeology is concerned and demonstrated by this volume, a significant new development has taken place. What some would call the need for further decolonizing of the subject (Lane 2011; Stahl 2010, for a critical dialogue with Schmidt and authors) reflects an uneasiness among practitioners about the non-African origins of much “writing” on African archaeology. While a general dissatisfaction of the dominance of writing about Africa within established Western

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genres of textuality had already been voiced by several African public intellectuals (Mbembe 2002; Nyamnjoh 2012), both African archaeologists and archaeologists of Africa had converged on the need for more critical reviews of the unconscious tendency to remain within colonial disciplinary paradigms, a stress emerged on the need to adopt what Lane terms “indigenous epistemologies” and the promotion of indigenous perspectives in archaeological writings on the past (Lane 2011; Mire 2011). What this volume in part answers is the kind of writing about African pasts that would mediate these uncertainties and move toward a more entwined and reconciled sense of authentic writing.

Materializing Colonial Encounters stands at this point of transition, therefore, in developing new perspectives on the writing of the African pasts. I am sure there are queries about who is involved in doing this, and the preponderance of North American faculty in this volume may suggest to some that it is really business-as-usual. But collaborations are more complex and diverse these days. And it is the substance of papers and approaches that we need to address as the best way to establish whether something is beginning to emerge that says distinctively why African pasts are different and singular in the perspective that helps us to understand the presentness of the human condition. If the “knowledge factory” is deemed to be resolutely lodged in Europe and North America, does this mean necessarily that the practitioners located there can only think in an expatriated manner? All knowledge is hybrid, and if studying Africa is meant “to reflect creative diversity and reflexivity in the conceptualization and implementation of research projects, as well as in how they provide for co-production, collaboration, and co-implication within anthropology across and beyond disciplines” (Nyamnjoh 2012, p. 63), we will not be able to presume some “in and out of Africa” as the basis of power, but more the real intentions of colleagues to transfer skills and provide mutual means of collaboration and response. So let us assume this is the unequivocal personal ethics of all the contributors to this volume and their work is guided by motives identifying distinct heritage perspectives and the preservation of indigenous knowledge.

So what is it that enlightens us in this volume if we see it from an indigenous African perspective? As Augustin Holl has argued in a paper on trajectories in West African archaeology, professional research under the ethos of an academic discipline is only one of a set of temporalities that can be synthesized “to create a broader and richer understanding of past Africans lives” (Holl 2009, p. 129). Archaeological research was created in the context of a colonial infrastructure and while museums had a role in “leaving something behind” after independence, most of the practitioners saw what they did as a kind of salvage work quite separate from independence movements and the creation of postindependence states. Holl and others would say that the colonial model has simply shifted, relatively intact, into the space created by postcolonial critique with an appropriate shift from the study of remoter periods of Stone Age Archaeology, food production and diffusion to the archaeology of European expansion, and encounters and entanglements with native communities (Holl 2009, p. 148). His anxiety is empirical. The archaeology of early periods, already sometimes discredited as significant bodies of data, disappears as data-rich and multiplicitous sources for reconstructing historical pasts provides a more

sophisticated understanding of archaeological finds. “Does this shift in focus make sense?” he asks (Holl 2009, p. 148).

As it stands probably not, but it certainly has several implications, all of which are emphasized as organizing characters for this volume, which this commentary will follow. First, the perspective is on materializing as well as materiality, and therefore on emergence as much as on existence. The role of the material itself has been recognized many times and in many ways, but refuses to be tamed, since so many aspects of the artefact’s material defy straightforward analysis, because of the deceptively apparent self-evidence of that role. Materials, materializing and materiality, for example, have all been sources of dispute depending on how literally the issue of the material is taken (cf. Ingold 2007). A materialist perspective also creates more radical insights about a materializing world of flows and connectivities that begins to question whether “Africa” exists as a separate and undivided continent of research. Second, as a focus, such a perspective disaggregates single, totalizing temporalities and associated narratives based on linear sequences subsuming vast amounts of spatial variation. While, archaeology can privilege the nondiscursive and the materiality of duration, other material evidence may stress “events” and the forms of agency that, as discontinuities, are constantly being transformed and appropriated in situations of the so-called contact. Finally, as a change of perspective, a materialist standpoint moves towards inverting the paradigm that always begins with the European experience of “contact and encounter” and African “resistance” to it.

Artefacts Have the Power to Create Presence, Exercise Agency and Generate Meaning

The one theme that all the contributors take for granted is the idea of material agency. It appeals most to the study of change and encounter as well as temporality, because we can focus on the materiality of objects as having differing potentials for agency and efficacy.

But this disguises a more fundamental question that needs addressing, particularly given that the conceptual origins of the “agentive object” lay in the tangled relationship of the Portuguese and their discovery of the fetish on the West African coast in the seventeenth century. Latour has recently extended his earlier argument in *We Have Never Been Modern* to examine the establishment of “facts” on which a European scientific revolution had to be premised (Latour 2010). This depended on a prior separation of the assumed reality of the existence of an external reality of object worlds from the interiorized subjectivity of human agency. Such a split, in turn, depended on the horror of object agency that became embedded in counter-reformation restrictions on ideas of the ritual efficacy of relics and either their destruction or sequestration in Europe. As relics were being destroyed in Spain and Portugal, Portuguese colonists would discover them again as fetishes on the West African coast during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and destroy “idols”

in the hundreds of thousand there. It is, of course, no coincidence that as the relics were destroyed or removed into obscurity, and as the fetish was discovered and destroyed on the West African coast, the museum of decontextualized objects was born—as “cabinets of curiosity”—in Italy and Spain at first, and then in France and Southern Germany. The power of objects in the Western tradition—whether “mimetic” or “contiguous magic” according to Mauss, or as the “mimetic faculty” for Taussig—continues the Christian tradition of isolating and hiding objects to allow them to emanate their powers that literally catch the eye of the beholder, whether as relics, museum objects, or objects of science. The subject of splitting/separating (as a consequence of anti-fetishism), and then rejoining fact and fetish, which in turn creates external reality and interiorized subjectivity (or reason and ideology, and other subject–object binarisms), is well illustrated in Bruno Latour’s term for them as “factishes” (Latour 2010, p. 64).

It is, of course, ironic that as we rescue objects from being mere reductions to the intentions and actions of people, we blithely take for granted that the subject endowed with interiority will project its codes onto external object realities. Such codes appear not from within the objects themselves but transmitted from the past, or embedded in language, the subconscious, society and so forth. Objects figured such as external realities are carved out as representations. Much debate has consequently ensued on the agency of objects and, in particular, the various phenomenological positions on persons and things—but which I would say largely rely on reconceptualizing objects in forms of relationality. In fact, relationality has become the keyword for understanding objects (as have perspectivism and ontology), and once rephrased as such, the debate becomes how objects think, that is, create concepts for themselves.

Cowries, that figure in both contributions by Swanepoel and Stahl, are a good case study in this respect. What do cowries do? While we know in terms of circulations that millions were brought to West Africa by Europeans as the part of the Indian Ocean trade, their earlier association, particularly through the Sahara trade networks in places like Adamawa, the Benue Valley to the Grassfields of Cameroon, is with beads and cloth. Significantly, it is the smallest cowries that are deemed most valuable and are linguistically associated with millet, both described as seeds and having the white, creamy color of ground millet paste and of fermented millet beer. As we know from Douny’s (2010) study of Dogon cosmology, millet/water/earth is part of a more everyday/seasonal experience of transforming materials as food, medicines and libations. If cowries are metaphorically seeds, having associations with fertility and reproduction, they are most consistently associated with the human body and artefacts that are worn on the body as well as being pinned in the hair, used on strings with pearls and as bracelets. There may be a long-standing metaphoric association of millet with cowries through their mutual circulation in the Indian Ocean. As we know, pearl millet, sorghum and finger millet all are of West African or Sudanic origin, and had diffused through the Horn of Africa to India and the Deccan by the early second millennium BCE, apparently completely separate from any centralized trade through the Nile Valley, the Gulf, and the Mesopotamia or the Indus Valley (Fuller and Boivin 2011). Now there is no question that the

millions of cowries brought back to West Africa from the Indian Ocean Maldives trade were not used in transactions, but is the commodity principle the best way to understand this? Would embedding cowries in a wider West Central African cosmology of materials/color/texture/sheen create an indigenous world of similarities and associations that date back millennia and extend over large areas? If so, are we at the moment blind to cowries as objects evoking concepts because of our tendency to see them as money? Stahl, for example, is clearly right in associating the flow of cowries into West Africa with the arguments of Jane Guyer on wealth-in-people and accumulation, although the observation that ivory disappears as a wealth-in-people item in Banda (Ghana) once it becomes a commodity for Europeans, suggests that the opposite is equally true: that cowries as money may be the superficial appearance of a more complex “spheres of exchange.”

There may be several points of entry into material cosmologies that, in a “deep past” sense, may be the shapers or dominant signifiers of events or moments of contact and appropriation. We are, after all, still in thrall to the idea of long-term continuities and transformation in style distributions that allow us to speak of the implications of focusing on the ability of humans to imitate and copy, and pass it on by nongenetic means of communication. Several contributors (Stahl, Brink and Crossland) provide food for thought in this respect. As Brink shows, storytelling may be an inevitable part of any discourse, but as the history of archives shows, only a few may get the means to tell them. So, there are good reasons why material culture studies have tended to emphasize the nondiscursive role of objects as a means of giving voice to the voiceless. But what kind of story can be told? The rise of gentry in Georgian England as a matter of taste and self-cultivation makes the role of ivory in the travel from Ghana to England barely comprehensible without the context given by understanding differences in consumption patterns. This is Miller’s critique of those who emphasize materials alone as the study of material culture and ignore the inclusion of sociality (Miller 2007). But the points are movement, imitation and transmission. In other words, mimesis has to be a more fluid way of seeing how the same object or material can be used like a “dye in the ether” to study the transformations of value through cycles of exchange (Graeber 2001).

Conflicts in Time

Underpinning several of the chapters is a need to apprehend more clearly “heritage memory” as a “performative moment,” a space of uncanny encounter with ancestors and as a destabilizer of temporalities. The imperative to remember is everywhere and it is quite peculiar. It usually involves recalling something not experienced by the person doing the recalling, and it is undertaken according to quite different compulsions and motivations. Governments are often involved in impelling such historical recalling through schools, memorials and other means. It is an imperative to be obeyed, but it can be ignored. Cultural heritage sites, museums or books of old photographs all enjoin us not to forget what has gone. They, and everything else we

are asked to remember as well as what we remember from our own lives, are poignantly compelling in the face of the fact that nearly everything and everybody have been and will be forgotten. What we are enjoined to remember are “markers in the struggle against the furies of disappearance and forgetting” (Assmann 2006, p. 81).

What kinds of heritages or representations of the past are produced in situations of conflict or post-conflict, or as commemoration of remote conflict memories? Some may use these resources to preserve alternative pasts, as resistance to military and cultural occupation or as a means to attract money from foreign donors. Preservation and restoration of material environments are often cited as important contributors to “culture as cure” or of heritage as “well-being,” as a means to argue new moral-ethical framings of “heritage time” within a new therapeutic cosmopolitanism. How these are manifested in actual and intimate experiences of home, kinship, family and so forth, suggests alternative ideas of respect and dignity based more on mastery and self-control of futures than retention of passive senses of a past. Issues of temporality in post-conflict situations form a complex focus in which these kinds of questions can be directed, and several chapters or elements of chapters (Brink, Esterhuysen and Wynne-Jones) form a suitable comparative framework for conceptualizing alternative times, temporalities and contested past-futures.

One of the most important themes in these chapters is their emphasis on the technologies that are used for the production of pasts and futures (as a counterpoint to emphasize on narration of pasts and futures in social memory literature). These technologies are not only constructive but also destructive in that they make some people, institutions and memories into irrelevant remnants of the past. By technologies, I mean archives, artefacts, ritual practices and material spaces. All of these have, of course, been widely explored in anthropology. What is of interest is the effect of these technologies and the dispositions towards concepts of time they produce and their influence on individual and collective projects of self-realization. How does the general human fear of forgetting and of being forgotten grounded in the experience of ageing and death become exacerbated for particular groups by particular technologies?

A cross-cutting theme in these cases is the technologies of place-making. The excavations at Vumba described by Wynne-Jones are the technologies for the reconstruction of the performances into which people were bound to re-enact the conditions for the enthronement of a king. Stahl’s earlier endorsement of “a genealogy of practice” is used to pursue a biography of objects approach to create a political memory for the site and the ritual practices that were once held there. What this shows is that “place-making” is already a well-established phenomenon in which ritual is used to orchestrate attachment to place, particularly in life and death ritual contexts, feasting and commemoration. Casey’s study of place-making emphasizes “dwelling” as a point of gathering and centeredness with the body as the premise on which basic dimensions of the cosmos will be articulated (Casey 1993). This is why violence, dislocation and dismemberment feature so strongly in accounts of dissolution of boundaries and territories, as in Esterhuysen’s account of fall of the Kekana Ndebele chiefdom. The treatment of the dead of the opposition groups (in her case the Boer trekkers) equally follows the pattern of cosmological dissolution and the

breaking of boundaries on which place-making and centeredness were believed to depend. But the Boer trekkers, by not sharing this cosmology, were so shocked by the “barbarity” of mutilation that it set in train the long-term aggressive violence and mistrust between Boers and other Africans that remains until today in South Africa.

Archives, of course, are technologies that select some memories, memorial artefacts and the events they refer to as worthy of preservation. Museums/libraries/bureaucratic archives are thus just a subset of the wider human phenomenon of archiving in one form or the other motivated by the fear of being forgotten. The things curated and memories/events memorialized in them are then marked as belonging to the past and yet they are also significant for the future. Archives often insist on the deep temporal origins of the present and future. They also often prescribe forms of evidence and artefacts that can be presented as proof of continuity. Collecting and curating an archive can, of course, take many forms and certainly is not restricted to the formal institutions of the museum or the state instituted idea of formal remembering. There are several moments in many of the chapters in this volume that entice greater awareness of how object memories and curating complement other forms of remembering in a more everyday sense of practice, including Kus and Raharijaona’s description of how cultural materials complemented the shortening of oral poesies in the formation of the Merina Kingdom in Central Madagascar, and Weiss’s discussion of the change in the ceramic assemblage to ordered sets of plates and cutlery in the Half Way Hotel in Johannesburg consistent with imposing growing respectability on a lawless time of the diamond rush.

The Limits of Sovereignty

François Richard’s chapter starts with an interesting paradox: “What particularly moves my analysis is the seeming paradox between common perceptions of colonial power as invasive and statements like those of Biram Thiam, a farmer interviewed by historian Martin Klein in 1975 in the Saalum region, who recollected that during the colonial era, ‘the peasant could never see the white man’ (Klein 1979, p. 73).” He goes on to contextualize this statement in a well-established discussion about the weight of colonial power, its ambivalence in different forms and the capacities of “African peasants” to subvert and intervene in the gaps and fissures set up by colonial authority. As summarized in the quote from Cooper and Stoler, “the key to unpacking the metaphysics of colonial rule lies in the microphysics of its functioning” means that the historians’ approach leaves us with a task of detailed investigation of local variants of colonial rule and its subversion. Or should it be?

Richard instead argues that archaeology and material culture will provide alternative evidence based on “the grounded material” and everyday perspective of “native people.” In the case of Siin in rural Senegal, this does not produce a picture of authority imposed on a transformed landscape of colonial rule, rather a “politics of absence,” where at best indirect rule or no rule at all simply allows things to go on as

normal. Whatever might be the hesitant consequences of colonial government, the results are described as a mixture of implicit presence in rather vague but sometimes suddenly brutal aspects of a colonial settlement, combined with the incentives of a peanut-based cash economy that like the typical peasant household economy, followed the Chayanov rule and produced only enough to meet immediate cash needs to pay taxes. The archaeology of Siin landscape suggests that this pattern is by no means stable, and cash farming in peanuts after the 1920s does lead to a growth in commercial exploitation and changes in landholding, settlement and labor forms. But this does not appear to correlate with a growing and more interventionist French colonial presence, but rather a greater willingness by local populations to break with the under-productionist rule of peasant life and adhere to the incentives provided to alienate land and mobilize labor for intensive production without the coercion of French inspired *mise-en-valeur*.

Within the political economy of *mise-en-valeur*, much of the detail of how power circulates and incentives or pressures, including the desire for modernity and the importing of European goods, is complemented and expanded by the mapping of landscapes and settlement patterns as well as the increasing incentive of consumption goods. To the extent that a sort of “takeoff” point begins to appear, this should provide a mapping of when even more remote rural parts of Senegal were incorporated into the governance of the late French colonial or post independence state. But this is not really the pattern shown in this case. Richard turns our attention to the importing of alcohol and ceramics in the post 1930s periods as a feature strongly associated with continuing ritual and feasting obligations on which political identity is depended. Kus and Raharijaona are more emphatic still that dirt/earth remained throughout colonial rule of Madagascar as the dominant signifier for Merina resistance and the key metaphor for understanding the nature of the Merina state. If we take their advice seriously to investigate the linguistic and material indigenous concepts of the “state,” then a hierarchy of scales of inclusive metaphors around land, dirt, color and texture are the core of oral poetry and narratives to which identity belongs and still continues to be so whatever aspects of “modernity” may have taken hold.

All of which suggest that the language we have used so far to describe colonial encounters and incorporations is excessively shaped by the modern European experience of the transformation from royal to constitutional sovereignty. Warnier, in a different context of kingship in Cameroon, has described this as the “Magritte effect.” An illusion that if we use certain verbal expressions, the external reality will respond and adapt to our words (2007, p 6). In some of his writings, Foucault was also concerned with the effects that the displacement of royal by constitutional forms of government would release new forms of power and relations that classical theories of sovereignty would not be able to cope with. Sovereign power as the right of seizure: of things, bodies, time and ultimately of life itself would be supplanted by the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life (Foucault 2007, p. 139–140). In Warnier’s description of the “king’s body” in the Cameroon Grassfields, there is no calculated management of life, rather it is a matter of transmission of body substances to as many others as possible as the means of creating

social bonds (Warnier 2007). Here we enter into that uncanny domain where what is human or animal is not really an issue until a more regulatory biopolitics appears on the scene. But are we so certain that this is what has happened? If the colonial state is the arbiter of this transformation of sovereignty through the “civilizing mission” of health, education and the other supposed functions of the modern state, then we may be right in attempting to track the symbolic spaces opened up by the shift from royal to popular sovereignty. But it may just be another delusionary step in attempting to find some kind of language to grasp the complexities of Africa.

Conclusion

I began by saying that this is a volume that describes African archaeology in a state of transition. But transition to what? On the basis of the chapters in this volume, I can see two movements taking place. First, the rise of indigenous perspectives that is more than challenging who has the right to produce and interpret archaeological pasts in Africa. The problem has been adherent in the past to universal archaeological epistemologies, and an unwillingness to carry out long-term fieldwork that will encourage recognition of endogenous African trajectories that challenge universalisms. The distinction between archaeology, ethnography, and oral histories in Africa, as if they should be the product of different disciplinary backgrounds, is clearly unhelpful and mirrors European clashes between the demise of folklore, ethnology, and the rise of social sciences in the early twentieth century. Long-term fieldwork implies collaboration and transfer of resources to Africa as a way of partnering the way field research is done. Second, if the rise in colonial studies in archaeology is maintained then the premise that this starts with the European presence needs to be challenged. None of the chapters in this volume can make sense of their cases without a longer pre-European perspective. Also the strategy of starting with the indigenous puts aside the language of colonial encounter and resistance, and replaces it with endogenous themes suggesting more nuanced and less easily “read off” responses. Starting from the “inside out” of Africa has more than metaphorical appeal, but is also the ethical stance that the contributors to this volume that the contributors to this volume clearly advocate.

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