



“All the world’s a stage...”: A Valedictory Note

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Published online: 23 December 2023

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“All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts...” (*As You Like It*, Act 2, Scene 7). Delinked from its melancholic origins, I find this Shakespearean soliloquy appropriate for this exciting moment of transition in *African Archaeological Review*, especially when recontextualized with reference to the actors that keep this journal moving—authors, editors, reviewers, managers, staff, subscribers, and readers.

Speaking of exits and entrances, this issue brings my term as editor of the *African Archaeological Review* to an end. It has been an honor and a great privilege to serve our field—African archaeology—in this role. In taking up this position in 2019, my goal was to continue the excellent work of my four predecessors and build on their legacies—that is, to continue to solicit, nurture, and publish the best scholarship in African archaeology. I began my term with consultations with the editorial board members through a survey and one-on-one conversations. Those consultations enabled me to define the following additional priorities: (1) make the journal attentive to the relevance of archaeological knowledge for addressing contemporary challenges in Africa; (2) create a platform in the journal for fostering dialogues

on thorny issues affecting African archaeology; (3) facilitate expanded access of Africa-based scholars to AAR; and (4) support emerging scholars everywhere.

To activate the potentiality of archaeology as a part of the solution to contemporary challenges, we inaugurated the Usable Past forum, where archaeology’s deep-time knowledge is deployed to address issues of immediate relevance. The goal is to stimulate reflections among scholars, researchers, teachers, and students about the importance and relevance of their primary research to policy and contemporary issues. The forum was also envisioned as a resource for awakening the interests of the African publics to the relevance of archaeology for social, political, economic, and “developmental” aspirations. To achieve this goal, it is imperative to make the science of archaeology accessible to policymakers, educators, and the general public.

We kicked off this public-facing dimension of archaeology with a Usable Past forum on food security, assembled and edited by Amanda Logan (Logan et al., 2019). Since then, two other Usable Past forums have been published. The one at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, published in volume 37(3), explores how contagions have been managed at different periods in African history (Ogundiran, 2020). The other, spearheaded by Shadreck Chirikure, examines the relationships between UNESCO’s World Heritage designation, heritage management, and heritage tourism in Africa (Chirikure et al., 2021).

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We also made efforts to position the journal as an outlet for fostering dialogues about the practice of archaeology and the implications for archaeological research, education, and professional development in Africa. The most successful outcome of this endeavor is the discussion forum on the challenges faced by archaeometallurgists and other archaeological science practitioners in African institutions (Thondhlana et al., 2022). The forum originated from the decolonizing archaeology panel discussion on “Archaeological Science in Africa and the Diaspora: Present and Future Prospects,” organized by Oxford University and other collaborators. The conversation among the all-African contributors sought intra-African solutions to this post-colonial problem while highlighting potential areas for Global North and Global South collaboration.

The access of the journal to Africa-based scholars has constantly been at the top of my concerns. Access comes in different forms. There are always questions about the accessibility of the journal’s contents to Africa-based readers, whether Africa-based authors are being published in the journal, and whether the work of African authors published in the journal is accessible to the global audience and not hidden behind a paywall. All of these questions have to do with resources. Thanks to Springer Nature’s Transformative Agreements with mostly Global North academic and research institutions, about half of the research articles published in AAR in the past 5 years are in the open-access domain. What about the other half, since the cost of these Transformative Agreements is prohibitive for most African institutions?

To address this question, I initiated dialogues with the Springer Nature managers in 2020 to explore possibilities for arranging a complimentary subscription to AAR for several African universities with archaeology degree programs. I was soon disappointed to learn that what I was proposing did not fit the business model of Springer Nature. However, with the guidance of Mary Sue Daoud, Associate Publisher (Business Manager) for Springer’s archaeology and anthropology journals, I discovered that Springer Nature participates in the Research4Life program that provides institutions in low-income countries with free online access to thousands of journals, including AAR. I shared this information with the

journal’s readers in my volume 38(3) editorial (Ogundiran, 2021). The program has the potential to level the playing field of scholarship. However, we do not know yet how many African institutions, particularly archaeology departments, are taking advantage of this opportunity.

Unlike AAR authors from institutions participating in the Transformative Agreement, most Africa-based authors do not have the opportunity to publish their articles as open access. As a result, the articles of such authors are likely to be hidden behind the paywall and unlikely to enjoy as much visibility as those of their colleagues in better-resourced institutions. Again, thanks to the resourcefulness of Mary Sue Daoud and the support of Springer Nature senior managers, we created a solution through what we call the Free Temporary Access program. This initiative grants a select number of articles by Africa-based authors and others open access on a 3-month rotational basis (usually five articles at a time). No doubt, Springer Nature, like other publishing corporations, is in the business of making money. However, it is heartening that the rank-and-file managers take the intellectual responsibility of Springer Nature seriously. With dialogues and persistence, it has been gratifying to know that they are willing to explore solutions to many problems relating to global inequality in knowledge circulation and accessibility. Finally, our mentoring program has enabled several young scholars working under challenging conditions to bring their manuscripts up to publishable quality and to publish in the journal. The editors and a few editorial board members have mostly shouldered this responsibility of mentoring and guidance.

This issue brings the formal celebration of the year-long fortieth anniversary of the African Archaeological Review to a close. Beginning with a sort of “journey so far” review article in the March issue (Gokee & Ogundiran, 2023), followed by the Archaeology for Education special issue in September (Stahl et al., 2023), this issue caps the celebration with a forum dedicated to reflections on the future of African archaeology. I am grateful to the editorial board members who helped shape the forum’s focus and content. More gratitude to the forum authors. I hope these think-pieces will stimulate discussions and

debates at conferences and seminars in the coming years.

We have processed over 400 manuscripts since we took the reins of the journal in 2019. Of these, 267 articles have been published, including research articles, reports, interviews, and book reviews. With this volume of work, the past five years would not have been as fun, satisfying, and productive without the enthusiastic collaboration of Dr. Cameron Gokee, who has served as Associate Editor since January 2019. I could not wish for a better collaborator. In addition to managing the movement of manuscripts through the Editorial Manager, from submission to review process, he oversaw several special projects and served as the book review editor. His proactive efforts have ensured an expanded and diverse list of book reviews. For example, books published in French have been well-represented in our reviews. It has been a great privilege working with Dr. Gokee, and I thank him for his selfless and outstanding service to the journal and African archaeology in general. As Dr. Gokee and I retire as editors, we are glad that Dr. Cameron Monroe and Dr. Anneke Jansen will step into the roles of Editor-in-Chief and Associate Editor, respectively, on January 1, 2024, although the transition has been ongoing for nearly 2 months.

Dr. Monroe is a Professor of Archaeology and Director of the Archaeological Research Center at the University of California at Santa Cruz. An archaeologist of West Africa and the African Diaspora, his scholarship has significantly advanced our understanding of the early modern world, state formation, political economy of landscape, and urbanism. He has conducted extensive long-term fieldwork in the Abomey Plateau (Republic of Bénin) and initiated a comparative project on the materiality of power and political sovereignty in post-revolutionary Haiti (The Milot Archaeological Project). His publications include *The Precolonial State in West Africa: Building Power in Dahomey* (2014) and several articles in journals that include *African Archaeological Review*, *Journal of Archaeological Research*, and *Current Anthropology*. I had the fortune of co-editing *Power and Landscape in Atlantic West Africa: Archaeological Perspectives* with him more than a decade ago (2012). His experience as a scholar, mentor, and administrator, as well as his accessible and gentle personality, will serve the journal very well.



Outgoing (left) and Incoming (right) Editors-in-Chief, Society of Africanist Archaeologists Conference, Houston (June 5, 2023)

The incoming Associate Editor, Dr. Anneke Jansen, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (USA). She is an Africanist archaeologist, using zooarchaeology, stable isotope analysis, and other archaeometry methods to investigate the development and spread of pastoralism through Africa and other parts of the world, with emphasis on early herd management strategies in Kenya and Tanzania. Her publications have appeared in the *African Archaeological Review*, *Journal of Archaeological Science*, *PLoS One*, and *Nature Communications*, among others.

I close this valedictory note with words of gratitude to the editorial board members for their contributions to the work and success of the journal and to our numerous reviewers for their careful and judicious treatment of the manuscripts that came their way. My deep appreciation also goes to the Springer Nature team, especially Mary Sue Daoud (Associate Publisher) and Razel Gerona–Avanzado (Production Editor), for always listening and working with me to find solutions. Now, over to Cameron and Anneke. I am confident that they will take the journal to higher levels.

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