J Archaeol Method Theory (2017) 24:28–49
DOI 10.1007/s10816-017-9318-2

Finding Russia in Botswana: AIDS, Archaeology, and the Power of the Ancestors

Carla E. Klehm[1]

Published online: 20 February 2017

Abstract The materialization of memory is one way in which the past becomes a powerful agent for negotiating the present. Today in Botswana, archaeological sites have become sites of memory where ancestors have been invoked for healing in response to the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS. This paper concentrates on one site, Khubu la Dintša, where a local community practiced an ancestral healing ceremony, *phekolo*, as a way to restore spiritual balance. Told through a set of narratives that integrate ethnographic interviews with one of the former church elders, Russia, the article chronicles the trajectory of the church, the perceived power and active role of the ancestors in this ceremony, and the complex web of morality and practicality in which alternative narratives emerge during a time of social disruption and later fall apart. This paper complements the others in this issue by focusing on how memory, place, time, and material culture are recursively engaged: a process that includes formal and accepted to marginal and even ephemeral viewpoints and holds lessons for how we as archaeologists approach and curate the past.

Keywords Memory studies · Narrative · Heritage · Africa

Introduction

In the foundational work in studies of social and collective memory (*e.g.*, Connerton 1989, 2009; Halbwachs 1992 [1952]; Nora 1989; Nora and Kritzman 1996; Trouillot 1995; Wertsch 2002, 2009), a common, but often understated theme pervades: the way we perceive of and portray the past is dependent on the present sense of what matters

✉ Carla E. Klehm
cklehm@wustl.edu

[1] Department of Anthropology, Washington University in St. Louis, One Brookings Drive, Campus Box 1114, St. Louis, MO 63130, USA

(Confino 1997:1388). With social memory—as it is defined for this paper—the past is performed, experienced, and interpreted in shifting social, political, and economic contexts. Although enduring, social memory is selective and malleable, responsive in its memorialization and obliteration to present cultural conditions (van Dyke 2011:237). As Africanist scholars have noted through studies of memory (Cole 2001, 2006; Feld and Basso 1996; Kus 1997; Werbner 1998) and, more directly relevant to this story, on issues of heritage, healing, and even HIV/AIDS (Campbell 2003; Meskell 2003; Meskell and Scheermeyer 2008; Setel 1999; Schmidt 2006, 2010, 2014; Schmidt and Walz 2007; Walz 2013), curating indigenous epistemologies can expand our understanding of the dynamic relationship between the past, present, and future.

The article focuses on how the past has been invoked as part of a component of social memory at an archaeological site in central Botswana named Khubu la Dintša, where a local community practiced ancestor worship, known as *phekolo*, from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. Chronicled through a set of interviews by James Denbow in the early 2000s (Denbow *et al*. 2008a, 2009), Khubu la Dintša was used as an "ancestral church" called *Tumelo mo Badimong*, "Faith in Ancestral Spirits." By 2002, it was a site for the church's yearly purification rituals with over 150 congregants, some of which traveled to the site from more than 100 km away. *Phekolo* churches sprang up informally around Botswana partially in response to the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS. The notion that AIDS may be a punishment by the ancestors existed as an alternative explanation for the endemic. Churches such as *Tumelo mo Badimong* attempted to reconnect their members with ancestors to seek spiritual harmony with *botho*, "humanhood." Ancestors were known to have lived at archaeological sites, and Khubu la Dintša was used as a venue for these ceremonies. The church ceased its formal ceremonies by the mid-2000s, as traditional medicine did not heal those inflicted with HIV/AIDS. Although abandoned, some ceremonies continue to be carried out at the site by one of the former church elders, Russia. After introducing a Western archaeologist's perspective of the site and recounting Denbow's 2002 observations of the *phekolo* ceremony, the article examines Russia, interviewed by myself in 2014, who continues to use the site today. Russia describes what he believes that the ancestors can heal, how they can heal, and even what *Tumelo mo Badimong* could and could not do, a narrative that reinvents itself as events over the past 15 years has unfolded.

The topic of *phekolo* can spring into many productive nodes of anthropological inquiry, such as the anthropology of experience, AIDS in Africa, indigenous religious practices and medical care, and even heritage management. For the sake of brevity, and to remain aligned with the topic of this special issue, I wish to focus primarily on the use of the power of the ancestors and of placemaking at archaeology sites to demonstrate how people negotiate their present. How the ancestors are seen to play an active role, why these alternative narratives emerge at a time of major social disruption, and how these narratives continue to evolve, providing insight into the ways we as archaeologists see social memory operating. Following Schmidt (2010, 2014) and others, an ethnographic focus on the intersection of heritage and archaeological sites, their perceived value, and present social issues challenges archaeologists to both think more openly about how alternative narratives operate and the best way to curate them, particularly when dealing with ethically complicated perspectives.

Ancestral Roles in Social Memory

Long recognized in anthropological literature, social memory is linked to the social spaces in which we live, access, and recall, which facilitate as well as shape how remembrances occur (Basso 1996; Connerton 1989; Feld and Basso 1996; Nora 1989; Schmidt 2006, 2010; Trouillot 1995; Walz 2015; Wertsch 2009). The spatial organization of these places, their visibility and accessibility vis-à-vis settlements, when and how often these places of social memory were visited, and the material remains left behind from ceremonies are ways in which archaeologists interpret how social memory may have operated in the past (Alcock 2002; Bradley 2002; Chesson 2001; Fowler *et al*. 2010; Schortman and Urban 2011; van Dyke and Alcock 2003). Social memory and the traces left behind on the landscape are anything but static; rather, it is a process of creation, a "collective remembering," that engages both human and nonhuman agents and in itself is constitutive (Cole 2005; Turner and Bruner 1986; Wertsch 2002, 2009). Places bind geographical space with the past, present, and future times: a bundle of human experiences conflated in space and for some are believed to be the loci of both destructive and healing power (Walz 2013, 2015). Drawing from deep social memory, a selected (and often reinterpreted) past becomes a referent, an acting influence, and even perceived as an actor in response to these conditions.

Understanding how the past becomes an agent in the present requires a framework to understand how subjects interpret, cope with, and control situations in which helplessness might otherwise overwhelm. Privileging narratives gets at the emotional center of how people experience their present—the intense frustrations associated with cultural change, postcolonial realities, and/or the social trauma of dealing with a pandemic that obliterates not just present and future generations—as they intersect with connections long held with land, places, and the past (Schmidt 2014:173).

Studies of collective memory in Africa provide direction for such alternative approaches. Africanist scholars have long documented how integrating indigenous epistemologies through the use of oral histories (Kus 1997; Schmidt 2006, 2009, 2010, 2014; Vansina 1985), material culture (Walz 2015), and landscapes (Cole 2003; Crossland 2014; Hamilton 1998; Schmidt 2006) can access the tension between the memory of the past and of present situations. Schmidt (2010) suggests an "autoethnographical" approach, one that records the interpersonal relationships that leads the author to investigate these questions in the first place. As narratives are deeply personal, in recording them, we as archaeologists can never fully distance ourselves in an unbiased way and should take that into consideration as well (Schmidt 2014). With a focus on the actors involved, how people talk about their pasts, the richness of emotional experience becomes data without acquiescing to the cold analytics of the academic voice (Schmidt 2010:257–258). Cole (2005), while recognizing that there is no single theory to encapsulate the "social heterogeneity" of memory, suggests beginning with the standard questions—the past being invoked by whom, where, in what specific ways, and why (in a reaction to what?)—followed by more nuanced inquiries into that processes that legitimate these narratives and the power dynamics and goals involved (Cole 2005:113–114).

These theoretical underpinnings, drawn from foundation works in memory studies to ancestral landscapes help develop a set of important questions about Khubu la Dintša: Why was this archaeological site chosen as a place for *phekolo*? Why are the

ancestors here seen as influential? Why do these responses appear at this time, and why was the practice later abandoned? How does this build on our understanding of how social memory operates? Narratives of the past become codified not only through their enactment but also through their retelling: formalized as once again, they are remembered by individuals, by groups, and in waves of religious phenomena. Working between scales—from moments in time to broader trends, from the individual to a collection of narratives—we as archaeologists gain a better understanding of how social memory takes on purpose and form (Cole 2006). The following three ethnographic narratives—the story of Khubu la Dintša from the viewpoint of myself, an archaeologist; the use of the site for *phekolo* by *Tumelo mo Badimong*, as documented by James Denbow; and ruminations about its continued importance and use for traditional medicine by one of the former church elders, Russia, who I interviewed in 2014—present Khubu la Dintša as a multivalent, contested place where dissonance among these interpretations leads to better understanding of why the past remains important in the present.

First Narrative: Khubu la Dintša in the Past, Khubu la Dintša in the Present

Understanding how those ancestors came to be a powerful force in the modern world begins with an explanation of their origins. Thus, the first narrative comes from myself, the author, as I conducted archaeological survey and excavations at Khubu la Dintša from 2010 to 2011 as part of my dissertation work. From an archaeologist's perspective, my interpretation and understanding of the ancestors at Khubu la Dintša are as follows:

Since approximately 600 AD, southern Africa agropastoral communities became increasingly engaged in regional and long-distance trade during a period known as the African Iron Age (600–1650 AD) (Huffman 2007). Over the next 1000 years, luxury goods such as gold, ivory, rhinoceros horn, and exotic animal skins and more local products such as cattle, salt, and specular hematite were traded for glass beads, porcelain, silks and fine cotton cloth, chickens, and other goods that came via the Indian Ocean exchange (Denbow *et al*. 2015; Horton and Middleton 2000; Sinclair 1987; Wood 2012). These southern African trade networks extended from the Congolese Basin across the Kalahari Desert to the Mozambiquean coast to East Africa and Southeast Asia, and from there to the Middle East, India, and China (Denbow *et al*. 2015; Wood 2012). In east-central Botswana, a major trade hub called Bosutswe (700–1700 AD) emerged, linking products from the Makgadikgadi Salt Pans and the Okavango Delta to the Indian Ocean trade (Denbow 1990, 1999; Denbow and Miller 2007; Denbow *et al*. 2008b).

Less than 1 ha in size, the site of Khubu la Dintša was an opportunistic settlement in the shadow of Bosutswe, inhabited during the peak of Bosutswe's trade boom from about 1220–1420 AD (Klehm 2013). Scattered on the surface and located throughout the cultural layers of the site are evidence of an agropastoral community with a defensive location in mind: three stone walls which delineate the occupation area and protect areas of the hilltop with a more gradual slope; a circular kraal where cattle, goat, and sheep were kept, located in the middle of the occupation area and visible in part

because the white ash from the animal dung changed the color and texture of the soil; a large midden lying adjacent to the kraal, filled with ceramics, iron, lithics, and animal bones; and the remains of a house floor surrounded by household goods and the possessions of individuals such as grinding stones, awls, a bone whistle, and metal and glass beads, the latter which arrived there via the Indian Ocean exchange (Fig. 1). The mid-thirteenth–fifteenth centuries AD was a time rife with regional instability, and maintaining long-distance trade routes would have been a precarious venture for Bosutswe. Local ties to neighbors such as Khubu la Dintša, as places where these cattle could be safely herded and have access to good grazing, meant that Bosutswe flourished for several hundred years.

Visible along with Iron Age walls, goat jaws, and bead caches—the materials around which this archaeological narrative was developed—are the remains of a more recent history. These traces, littered on the surface of the site, appear sufficiently decrepit that one might mistake them as prehistoric, yet they are not (Fig. 2). At the base of the hill lies a broken-down entranceway of mud and stone slumped in on itself, looking like a melted muddy snowman that has surrendered to the lashings of seasonal rains: an entrance by which my excavation crew would park everyday on the way to excavate the site (Klehm 2014). Stones taken from Iron Age walls and from prehistoric grain bins that would have stored millet and sorghum have been transplanted and used to line rough paths that traverse the hilltop and delineate large circles. The largest of these stone circles is framed at the far end by a palisade-like wooden structure, the fence posts now serving as dominoes in multi-year battle among the elements, gravity, and structural integrity. Less than 10 years ago, this archaeological site was a place where the memories of past ancestors were ritually invoked to provide power and protection for a community coping with a very present reality in modern Botswana society: the onset and rapid spread of HIV/AIDS (Denbow *et al*. 2008a, 2009).

Second Narrative: the Ancestors at Khubu la Dintša

These material traces of recent use set up the second narrative of this story, as beginning in the 1990s, Khubu la Dintša was used as an ancestral church called *Tumelo mo*

Fig. 1 Remains of the kraal and midden (*left*) and stone walls (*right*) at Khubu la Dintša

Fig. 2 Remains of the *phekolo* ceremony at Khubu la Dintša. *Clockwise from upper left*: entryway at the base of the hill; *Banna ba Badimo* (people of God/the Ancestors) carved into a tree on the site; stone pathways leading to the ceremonial areas; wooden structure with grassy remains of where clay basins used to exist

Badimong or Faith in Ancestral Spirits. Documented through photos and interviews by James Denbow in 2002, Khubu la Dintša was used as a site for yearly purification rituals, known as *phekolo*, headed by a spiritual leader named Mothofela Molato every July (Denbow *et al*. 2008a, 2009). *Phekolo* churches sprung up informally around Botswana, partially in response to the outbreak and rapid spread of HIV/AIDS. Churches like Molato's attempted to reconnect their members with their ancestors and sought a spiritual harmony with *botho*, or humanhood, as part of the healing process. Ancestors were known to have lived in the past where archaeological sites are located, both through oral history (even without direct historical ties to these sites) and through observations. At Khubu la Dintša, and other nearby Iron Age sites, artifacts and archaeological features such as pot sherds, circles of stone that comprised grain bin foundations, the aforementioned stone walls, and the white ash of the kraal indicate that the ancestors lived there. The idea of these places as being charged with ancestors plays into taboo and even place-names; Bosutswe is also known as *Galesupiwe* or "The place at which you must not point [or else you will get lost, your finger will fall off, you will die…]" (Denbow *et al*. 2008a:160, 2009:216). Portions of Denbow's observations and the controversy around the use of the archaeological site are described below in order to provide a context, a "narrative," of how Khubu la Dintša had been used prior to my arrival and prior to my interviews with Russia.

Khubu la Dintša, as a place-name, translates to "Hill of the Dogs," a shortening of its longer referent name, "The Hill where Lions were Chasing the Dogs" (Denbow *et al*. 2008a:174, 2009:222). With Molato, the name gathered a new association as he saw lion paw prints in rocks at the site and built small altar around them (Denbow in

conversation 2010) (Fig. 3).[1] Because of these paw prints and because both Bosutswe and Khubu la Dintša were seen as places where [ambiguous, generalized] ancestors lived, people have left candles, beaded necklaces, sugar, and coins in tribute, which are found clustered among empty whiskey bottles and scattered on the surface of these sites (Denbow *et al*. 2008a:161, 2009:217). These offerings, including the coins, held no temptation for my own archaeological field crews, who would not touch or take them no matter how little money he or she had.[2]

At Khubu la Dintša, spiritual imbalance brought 150 congregants together every July, traveling from the towns of Serowe, 80 km away, and Letlhakane, over 115 km away, to this place (Denbow *et al*. 2008a:174, 2009:222–223). People would gather in the evening at the base of the hill, singing hymns that members of the congregation had composed. Then, when night had fallen, they would climb the hill, single file, to the main ceremony area, following the stones lining the hilltop path which were painted white to illuminate the way in the darkness (Denbow *et al*. 2008a:174, 2009:222–225). After climbing the hill, menstruating women would break off into isolation—seen as too unclean to participate in the ceremony—and the rest of the congregants proceeded to the other constructed areas of the site: a dancing floor and five cleansing basins located in a wooden structure that allowed purification for the church's followers according to ethnic group (Pedi, Kalanga, Kgalagadi, Hurutshe, and Ngwato). The dancing floor, lined with white ash dug up from the archaeological kraal and midden deposits, was used to connect the participants to ancestors through dance (Denbow *et al*. 2008a:177).[3]

Molato's interpretation of the past is only one among concurrent views of the site, diverging from most of the members of the local community at Mmashoro, located 15 km away, and especially from the people living at cattle posts within several kilometers of the site. Although many of the community in Mmashoro, population 1543, and the nearby cattle posts believe that *marotobolo* (hills with evidence for past human occupation) are protected by ancestors, they do not actively engage in *phekolo* (as part of Molato's church or otherwise) nor were they the ones placing the candles and other objects at the site (Botswana Central Statistics Office 2002:70; Denbow *et al*. 2008a:158, 162, 2009:226–227). Instead, to them, Khubu la Dintša is common land, like most of the surrounding landscape: a place where their cattle and goats can graze and roam as did their fathers' livestock before them. The people at the nearby cattle posts, in fact, were upset by these primarily outside groups that then began to claim ownership over the hill (Denbow *et al*. 2008a:180).

[1] Lions have strong religious and symbolic importance as they play part of a creation myth in some Batswana groups. Molato likened these small rock depressions to the Matsieng Footprints, a set of 113 human footprints and feline paw prints carved into sandstone plates (Walker 1997). These paw prints, originally made by the Basarwa (San) people, were later reinterpreted by Sotho-Tswana people as a creation site. At Matsieng Footprints, Tswana tradition describes, the first Tswana (Matsieng) emerged from the earth and his footprints and those of the animals that accompanied him imprinted there, as the stones were still new and soft in the world's beginning (Taçon and Ouzman 2004:63).

[2] As ancestral places, there is a certain understanding about how one respects these places, to a degree that even pointing directly at the site is taboo pointing directly at the site (or to face the associated consequences such as illness, crop failure, getting lost, even the pointing finger falling off, as encapsulated by the place-names) (Denbow in conversation 2010).

[3] This ash was a specific choice by the community to harness the power of the ancestors for healing, as white is a color associated with health, power, and life in local cosmology (Mensele 2011:58).

Fig. 3 Rock impressions interpreted by Molato as lions' paw prints (*left*) and the altar he and his church build around the rock impressions (*right*)

Antipathy among Molato's church, the local community, and other parties eventually manifested in an outbreak of local anger and confusion in the early 2000s. First, Molato accused the local nursing clinics of infecting peoples with the AIDS virus (Denbow *et al*. 2008a:180, 2009:227), a tension between traditional medicine practitioners and Western medical doctors revisited again later this article. By 2002, the poking and prodding of archaeologists into ancestral resting places (*i.e*., archaeological sites) became Molato's next target (Denbow *et al*. 2008a:179, 2009:226). The church began making allegations that the archaeologists were unearthing ancestral spirits and thereby fueling and hastening the spread of disease. Although *Tumelo mo Badimong*'s own modifications of the stone walls and grain bins and digging for white (kraal) deposits were ignored, rumors of disturbed ancestors forwarded by Molato created concern about archaeology throughout the local area. A large meeting was called between the archaeologists and a representative of the Botswana National Museum, and the Mmashoro *kgosi*, or administrative chief, and over 600 people of Mmashoro and nearby areas to mitigate these tensions (Denbow *et al*. 2008a:182–184, 2009:227).[4] The meeting explained to the villagers what exactly each party was doing at the sites of Bosutswe and Khubu la Dintša and how their actions affected the effectual healing of HIV/AIDS by Molato's church. The National Museum contested Molato's assertion of rights over the site of Khubu la Dintša, and, with the smoothing of community tensions, the archaeologists continued excavations at Bosutswe.

When I first visited Khubu la Dintša with Denbow in 2009, the year before my own excavations there began, Molato and his church had abandoned the site for at least 5 years: the stone-lined path had been kicked out of alignment by grazing cattle and scampering khudu; the wooden structure was collapsing; the cleansing basins had washed away. Although Denbow had chronicled his interactions with Molato from several years before, the conclusion to the *phekolo* story remained unanswered. Why was it abandoned? What happened to these people? Misplaced stones and slumped entryways implied neglect, and the local people from Mmashoro, the closest town, did not have much to contribute other than "those" people stopped coming to the site. When prompted, the local administrative chief at Mmashoro mentioned that a couple former members might still live nearby. Unfortunately, I was unable to locate them at

[4] Although church elders were invited to the meeting as well, they did not attend, citing a series of excuses for their absence (Mosothwane in conversation 2016).

the time, and the mystery of the abandonment of the *phekolo* ceremony at Khubu la Dintša remained until 2014.

Third Narrative: Finding Russia in Botswana

In June 2014, I returned again to the Bosutswe region to begin a new set of archaeological surveys. In my first meeting with the *kgosi* of Mmashoro (customary for the area, as national permits does not equate to either local blessing or the culturally correct way to enter an area as an outsider), I again expressed my interest about the *phekolo* ceremony at Khubu la Dintša and the location of the former church members. The chief stated that Russia, one of the former members, had recently returned to the area and was at his homestead just outside of the village. He arranged to have his nephew, Lefatshe (whom I had hired for my 2011 excavation season), take me to see Russia the following week. Thus, a week later, I traveled with Lefatshe and two fellow archaeologists to find Russia. While Russia's wife and his wife's sister ground grain into flour in the open space adjacent to the main house, Russia and my group sat in a semi circle of chairs and began to discuss the *phekolo* ceremony in what would become a set of two interviews (Fig. 4).

I began our conversation by acknowledging that learning the history of the ancestors was an important thing: common ground between Russia and myself. I added that I only see the hill with one set of eyes—as an archaeologist—and that I would like to know what the hill meant to him. I explained that I knew why people used to go Khubu la Dintša, but that I did not know why it was no longer used for *phekolo*.

Many of the more direct questions I asked Russia about timing and numbers of people involved were answered vaguely or not at all; asking when the ceremony stopped and how many people came every year (as a way to gauge when the ceremony was abandoned) was met with uncertain responses and at times evasion and complete redirection. Even in the more ambiguous moments, important clues lay in the conversations' subtleties. Russia's version of the story, when compared to Denbow's earlier interviews with Molato, suggested that not only had the practice of *phekolo* at Khubu la

Fig. 4 2014 interviews with Russia (*left*), with Russia, Boineelo, the author, and Lefatshe pictured, *left to right*; and a close-up of Russia (*right*)

Dintša evolved but also that Russia and other traditional healers believed what the ancestors could or could not do had also changed.

Russia, briefly, was one of the elders in *Tumelo mo Badimong*. As Russia describes, he originally met Molato when sick with an ancestral disease when the church was still active (date unknown). Willing to help him, Molato and Mma Borotho, Molato's instructor from whom he learned how to approach the ancestors, took him to Khubu la Dintša and killed a black cow for him as an offering. He got better, for which he credits Molato and Mma Borotho. After the illness left him, he "became one that could communicate [with the ancestors]." Shortly thereafter, Russia became one of the elders in Molato's church.

From the beginning of our interviews and throughout, Russia swore that I was incorrect about the ceasing of *phekolo* at Khubu la Dintša. The ceremonies, he argued, were still active. As an example, Russia offered that the previous year he healed a child at the site. When I countered that the structures the church built at the site were all falling down, he responded: "It is because the ancestors have not asked us to maintain those things. We still use the hill for both *phekolo* and for rain-making rituals [in October]; using those structures is not how the ceremonies take place anymore. When [a person is] sick, the ancestors tell [us] what to do, to threat those sicknesses: we need you to do this and that [which may vary from earlier practices]." Russia claimed that not only he but also others were still actively healing around the country: Molato was currently conducting ceremonies in Matswake (near Letlhakane) as well as doing ministry in Ghanzi (on the other side of the Kalahari), and occasionally returning to Mmashoro. Other sacred places (a number of them also Iron Age sites) were currently being used for *phekolo*, including another hill near Mmashoro and another at a sacred waterfall in Moremi Gorge, in the Tswapong Hills near the large town of Palapye (120 km away). The latter was considered a particularly special spot, where an active traditional church called Saint Ezekiel practiced. Russia held this church in high regard, stating that he was a member there, although he also conducted *phekolo* locally. Batswana (the pluralized form for people from Botswana; the singular is Motswana) still consulted traditional doctors, he explained. Russia claimed that people still came, at times in groups of 20–50, to seek his help. These people traveled from diverse places across Botswana for his help: from Letlhakane, Serowe, Palapye, and even Molepolole (400 km away). The sick spanned many ethnic groups, including "Kalanga, Bangwato, Bakwena, Babirwa, Balete, Batlokwa come to see *Badimo* [the ancestors]." As Russia explained, a Motswana from one of these groups would approach a local healer he/she had learned about through family and friends, who would then either help address the problem or refer the ailing patient to another traditional doctor based on the complexities of his/her problem. This network of traditional doctors spanned the country, stretching from Molato in Ghanzi to healers in the nearby large town of Serowe. Each healer addressed different "levels" of illness, from familial issues of misbehaving children to physical sicknesses such as cancer. However, he admitted, [in 2002] there were many, but as time went by, fewer people came. In his words, "A lot of people now just go to hospitals, but things can be cured [in] traditional [ways]. They have lost their tradition and go the English way…less and less everywhere."

Reflecting on the discussion of our first conversation, I revisited my misconceptions of the healers' use of the site. Whether or not large groups were still congregating, and whether or not the same activities were still occurring, to Russia and to the people he was healing, Khubu la Dintša and other sites around the country remained not just

Fig. 5 Russia wearing his black robe in which he conducts *phekolo*, with his healing tools in the foreground (*left*); close-up of Russia's healing tools (*right*)

significant but also still in use. The traces from *phekolo* such as the stone paths, the wooden enclosure, and ash-lined circles dug from the archaeological kraal—the things that to my Western eyes signified "use" by practitioners of *phekolo* at the site—varied from Russia's more nuanced relationship between the practice of *phekolo* and its material traces. Wanting to know more about how the physical use of the site had changed and whether the meaning of the site had changed as well, I met again with Russia the following week. During our second interview, I asked Russia to describe how he conducted *phekolo* for those who still seek treatment. For this meeting, he wore his healing robe—a black gown that looked similar to those used by judges or for graduation ceremonies—and brought along a number of his healing implements to show me (Fig. 5). Along with the robe, he told me he also wears strands of beads, which he apologized about forgetting to bring. Regarding the *phekolo* ceremony, Russia explained:

When getting ready to perform the ceremony, he begins by praying. "When the wind blows, in the morning, in the afternoon, the ancestors speak in the wind and so I know which hill to use." After the correct place for *phekolo* is decided, the sick person and/or their family arrange to get cars and water for the journey at dusk or before dawn. "Everything is dark in the early morning and at night, but with the moon this is OK, as it is [the] correct [time] to see the ancestors." All the participants wear black; the blackness of his own robe allows him to communicate with the ancestors.[5] For contrast, Russia explained that when one goes to church, or when one talks about Jesus (considered one of the ancestors), one wears white instead.[6] "[A] black robe is to talk with the spirits. When one talks about Jesus, [one] wears white. Jesus is, [however] involved [either way], because he is one of the ancestors."

After climbing the hill (no shoes are allowed), "all wear black [the afflicted, the family, and the healer] and sit on the dried skin of a goat[7] while waiting for the leader to be instructed [by the spirits]." Ladies cannot go when menstruating. They sacrifice a black

[5] The color black in *phekolo* ceremonies is associated with the chasing away of and protection from evil forces (Mensele 2011:78–9).

[6] White, as mentioned earlier, is used during *phekolo* when one asks for blessings from the ancestors, which was why the ditch was dug into the kraal years earlier. In *phekolo*, white clay or soil, with the color's symbolic importance, is especially important as a material for healing (Mensele 2011:79). During the 2002 ceremony, Molato had about five female assistants who also wore white dresses (Denbow in conversation 2016).

[7] The skin serves as a carpet made of leather or *phate* in Setswana.

cow, a white goat without any spotting, or a black goat, but "no sheep." As dictated by the ancestors through Russia, various parts of the animal are then placed in specific areas on the hilltop along with traditional beer. Together, Russia and the ill (and/or the family of the ill person) sing songs to praise the ancestors.[8] The sick person leads the group, and often there is dancing involved. After some time, Russia is told by the ancestors what the true cause of the sickness that has manifested in that individual. The next phase of healing begins as Russia starts to "sweep" out the sickness by using a set of healers' tools. For Russia, these tools are three: a Gemsbok's tail with a wooden handle, given to him by another healer, Phenyo, "when learning how to heal"; a common broom that "came from Moremi; it was blessed there"; and the skin of a polecat (Fig. 5). The tail, or *seditse*, is used to spray the sick person with the sacrificed animal's blood and insides. The broom and the animal skin are brushed against the sick person, just as if one was sweeping a floor. Russia also uses the [white] soil [taken from the kraal] for healing, bathing himself and the afflicted with the soil.

Significantly, Russia identified that the sicknesses that he and other healers treat differ from those under Molato's church and according to the interviews with Molato. Some of the illnesses that Russia addresses remain the same, such as child-bearing problems, misbehaving children ("for a child that will not go to school because the ancestors will not allow them"), and mental illness ("for crying all the time, for seeing things that are not there"). However, Russia explicitly and emphatically stressed that he and other healers do *not* treat AIDS. His statements reflect a shift in rationale, where he (and others associated with the church) previously saw the ancestors as capable of this kind of healing and later realized that the disease was not responding to their ministrations (Denbow *et al*. 2008a, 2009). Russia stated his position for me:

AIDS is not part of nature. The ancestors say it was introduced. People were injected with it and [it] spread through blood. When [he] examined it, it looked like it was injected. It is man-made.[9] [The healers] used to try to heal it with the spiritual presence, but they [the ancestors] said it would not work. People need to pray more for the cure to be found, pray to angels [ancestors] as messengers of Jesus.

Russia and other traditional healers now send those inflicted with AIDS to the hospital [since they know they cannot treat it]. He added, once again, that people now go to the hospital regardless of whether traditional healing might be a useful alternative or even the correct solution. "Some diseases are increasing, like smoking weed, and they take you to the mental hospital, inject you and then it [the disease] becomes permanent."

[8] Russia would not share with me the specific songs and lyrics used.

[9] This train of thought, as explained to me by Mothusi and Mokgosi, my accompanying archaeologists, is part of a long ongoing conspiracy theory that HIV/AIDS was a laboratory-made by white people, outsiders or otherwise, to suppress black Africans, one of a number of narratives that are used as explanation for the pandemic (for further analysis of these tropes, see Fassin and Schneider 2003; Liddell *et al*. 2005:692–693; Petros *et al*. 2006: 70–74; van Dyk 2001)

Why did Russia talk to me, an outsider not seeking *phekolo*, especially as he blames outsiders for HIV/AIDS? Has his position also changed on having archaeologists working in the region, that they are no longer agitating the ancestors? The questions to these were not answered directly, but what became apparent was that Russia believed it was too important to share his story than to be quiet, especially after he identified me as one who was interested in education. Despite my own background and the occupation of my crew, Russia's desire to have his story written trumped his reservations: a desire to create awareness of traditional healers and "to write that they [healers] want to cooperate with hospitals to cure diseases as they [healers] have traditional medicine. Doctors can use it as well. They should come and see how it works." Russia hoped that by spreading his story, Khubu la Dintša, as a place for *phekolo*, might be fenced off from the public "in order to protect it" and from wandering cows as was St. Ezekiel's.[10] As "at Moremi, a chief [or spiritual leader] would open it to you, you would pay a small amount, or one or two cows, or beads, or attire for going." Through his words and wishes, Russia stressed the importance of the hills: "they are important places, and important places still [now]."

Social Memory at Khubu la Dintša: Or, Why the Ancestors Mattered

Since HIV/AIDS spread rapidly throughout Botswana in the 1990s, it has led to drastic changes on the landscape: the expansion of western medicine into rural areas, building of new hospitals, and educational heath programs that broadcast AIDS-related materials through televisions, radios, newspapers, and in community meeting places (Denbow and Thebe 2006:45). By the early 2000s, an aggressive ARV program was launched by the Botswana government in conjunction with a number of overseas partners, to increase access to doctors and medical care throughout the country (Heald 2006:35–39).

This occurred concurrently with a resurgence of ancestral cleansing ceremonies, where ancestors were invoked to treat diseases that lay outside of the limits of Western medicine (Denbow and Thebe 2006:50–1). This return to traditional healing coincided with the limited success of implementing government policies at the village level, where some chiefs maintained that HIV/AIDS did not impact rural villages. Both reactions come as part of an often oversimplified juxtaposition of "tradition" and "modernity": between village and city (*e.g.*, Gaborone, the capital) problems and the tension between village administration, from *dikgosi* [the plural of *kgosi] and dikgotla* administration, the traditional village-level courts presided over by *dikgosi*, where local issues are discussed and resolved (Heald 2006:37–38). At first, absence for a cure for HIV/AIDS caused people to view it as a moral rather than a viral disease. Witchcraft also served as a potential cause, be it proximal or direct, from a biomedical or colonial white conspiracy (as mentioned earlier) and, perhaps most relevant in this case,

[10] Like with the previous attempts to fence off the site and to stop archaeologists from working there, the site might still be "protected" in another way.

ancestral vengeance or punishment.[11] In Botswana[12] and throughout southern Africa, potential conspirators have included a diverse range of actors that selectively incorporate religion, gender, homophobia, and xenophobia into these narratives (Liddell *et al*. 2005, Petros *et al*. 2006, Schatz *et al*. 2013).

More enduring, however, has been the association of HIV/AIDS with *botho*, and the need to restore spiritual harmony with the ancestors and ask for their protection. *Botho*, "humanhood," is the essence of a person similar to the concept of *ubuntu in* other southern African ethnic groups (Gaie 2007:29; Gaie and Mmolai 2007:36). *Botho* is seen as "holiness through communal wholeness," as indicated by the Setswana proverb *motho ke motho ba batho*, or "a person is a person with and through others" (Pöntinen 2013:177). As all aspects of personhood—economic prosperity to poverty, charisma and rejection, health and disease—are believed to have this spiritual dimension to them, keeping balance with *botho* is of the upmost importance (Denbow and Thebe 2006 37–8). Ancestors, as *go swa motho go sale motho* (when a person dies, there is always someone remaining), must be attended to at ancestral places and have resulted in significant debates in interpretation and policy (Gaie and Mmolai 2007:3; Mmolai 2007). As Christian missionaries have had a strong presence (and influence) in Botswana since the early nineteenth century, biblical figures are often incorporated into traditional beliefs: historical Jesus, for example, is considered one of the ancestors, as ancestors need not necessarily have direct blood ties to a particular person (Gaie and Mmolai 2007:10). These concepts of *botho* and the role of ancestors in combatting HIV/AIDS resulted in significant debates in interpretation and policy (Mmolai 2007).

This, however, is not the only perspective that exists. As mentioned earlier, both *Tumelo mo Badimong*'s use of Khubu la Dintša and Russia's continued ceremonies and their respective views on healing HIV/AIDS sits in contradistinction to most members of the local community at Mmashoro and in the scattered cattle posts nearby (who did not participate in the *phekolo* ceremony and were confused and upset about the claims to the land and the rumors circulating), archaeologists that have worked in the area (such as both Denbow and myself, who do not believe we are disturbing the ancestors), and the outreach medical aid clinics in Mmashoro and in Serowe. Many Batswana

[11] At the more extreme end, it was seen as being similar to *boswagadi*, one of the gravest of traditional afflictions that occurs when someone has sexual intercourse with the spouse of a dead person before a purification ritual takes place. This was well documented particularly among elderly people, who related the symptoms of *boswagadi* (weight loss, coughing, darkening of the skin, failure to control the bowels) with HIV/AIDS (Amanze 2002; Kgathi *et al*. 2000; Thapelo *et al*. 1999).

[12] Witchcraft by the biomedical community or from foreigners has also served as an explanation of other natural disasters in Botswana. With the repatriation in 2001 of "El Negro," a stuffed specimen of a Motswana man who had been displayed in a Spanish museum for over 150 years, rumors circulated regarding witchcraft and its impact on weather (Gewald 2001). A sudden absence of rain in January, the wet season, after a particularly wet set of months, became linked to the arrival and reburial of the skull (only the skull was buried as the soft tissue was inexplicably removed in the transition of the specimen to Botswana; the accompanying grave goods also stolen) in Tsholofelo Park in Gaborone, the capital of Botswana (Gewald 2001:557–558). These rumors developed into an assertion that the ancestors were angry, either because the remains did not come from Botswana, that they were of a "Bushman" (as opposed to a Motswana of Bantu ancestry) that therefore angered one of the Tswana ancestors, Chief Tshekedi Khama, and/or the bones served as a drug to prevent the rains from coming, in a broader conspiracy where the elite schemed to keep the populace poor and dependent (Gewald 2001:558). As in Mmashoro before the meeting took place, these rumors circulated in part because of confusion: a lack of common knowledge where the bones came from and why they were to be interred in Gaborone and a belief that ancestral spirits can influence the land of the living.

either more closely follow other blends of Christianity or other ways of thinking that did not involve participating in *phekolo*, and more readily go to hospitals and clinics for antiretroviral (ARV) medicines. This trend continues still, as noted in part by the continuing abandonment of churches such as *Tumelo mo Badimong* and the decreasing frequency of Russia's clientele.

Doctors, scholars, and foreign health aid groups have pushed back against recommendations that individuals such as Gaie and Mmolai (2007) and others promoting *phekolo* advance. These groups champion the utility of Western medicine in these circumstances, citing empirical evidence about the use condoms and the efficacy of PMTCT and ARV treatments (De Kadt *et al*. 2011; Setswe 2007; WHO, UNAIDS, and UNICEF 2008; Blum 2004). These agencies emphasize how suspicion of Western medicine by individuals such as Russia and Molato is a real, life-threatening issue for sub-Saharan societies that must be addressed (De Kadt *et al*. 2011; Steigberg 2008). This is not, however, without recognition that indigenous views of illness have tangible consequences for the causation, prevention, and treatment of HIV/AIDS. Doctors and scholars have also worked with local communities to create more grounded and responsive programs that integrate efforts on international, governmental, and local levels (see Campbell and Mzaidume 2002, Fassin and Schneider 2003, Liddell *et al*. 2005:697–698 for just three examples from southern Africa alone). Like Russia, they urge for more communication through and the integration of both Western medical and traditional medical perspectives, as they believe prevention and treatment programs can only succeed if local concepts of what health, disease, and sickness are taken into account (van Dyk 2001).

The Ancestors at Khubu la Dintša: Why They Matter for Archaeologists as Well

Opening up the narratives of the past to alternative interpretations provides utility beyond addressing the disjuncture of where archaeologists conduct their work and what those places mean for the people that live there. By curating indigenous epistemologies, archaeologists can chronicle the reaction of people and a culture with respect to the present and to help in the healing process as well (see Meskell and Scheermeyer 2008, Schmidt 2010, Werbner 1998). This also requires paying attention to the intersection of the past, present, and future through the use of material culture; recognizing flux in these narratives as they continue to evolve over time and analyzing why that happens; and to open ourselves as archaeologists to how we may also see and curate these places. These are not processes explicitly linked to the present, and can and should be looked at in archaeological examples (see Mixter and Henry, this volume).

When social memory is presented as a unified construct, as an overly simplified (often dominant, state-sponsored) narrative, analysis misses important variability. For example, Kus (1997), working on early state formation in Madagascar, found herself dissatisfied with how high-level theory obliterates individual rationale by reducing agents to victims of ideological manipulations (under the hegemonic umbrella imposed by the state). She found herself focusing on alternative narratives she discovered in oral histories, as a way to access "the complex mixes of belief and skepticism, of desire, voluntarism, habit, and coercion" that people swim in as they negotiate their present

(Kus 1997:201). The past is not monolithic nor is it static and complete envisioning of what places have occurred throughout prehistory. Relatedly, in her archaeological research at Deir al Medina, a New Kingdom Egypt site along the Nile, Meskell (2003) noted an "afterlife" to the village that reimagined its association with ancestors. During the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, the site, long since abandoned as its use as town for the builders of New Kingdom's monuments, continued to be visited by other groups, for whom it was believed to be a sacred landscape (Meskell 2003:50–51). Food and water were brought to New Kingdom tombs, and new burials were interred at the site, some of which did not relate to "sacred places" as would have been understood in New Kingdom times. One burial of an elite Roman family, for instance, was found located in the cellar of an ordinary village house (rather than being placed in the nearby cemetery and pyramidal tombs located adjacent to the house that would have still been visible during the Roman period) (Meskell 1999, 2003:50–52). Like with later interpretations of Deir al Medina, Russia's story demonstrates how plastic such places can be over time with relations to the broader social processes at play, but on a much shorter time scale.

Traumatic moments can be seen as catalysts that modify social memory. In his series of ethnographic interviews in northern Tanzania, Schmidt (2006, 2010, 2014) documents whether or not social memory can survive under massive trauma such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic. For the Haya people living in the village of Katurka, where HIV/AIDS led to nearly half of those older than 65 passing away, this resulted in much of the oral tradition, and of senses of place anchored in ancestral shrines, being abandoned and even lost entirely. For example, one of the sacred trees, *Kaiija* (related to an Iron Age archaeological site dating to the first millennium BC), was cut down and nails driven into it, its history temporarily forgotten (or at least de-prioritized) as a community member believed it was a shady burden to a plot of banana trees (Schmidt 2010:265–266, 2014:176–177). Rather than all places and pasts being forgotten, however, a resurgence in local interests in heritage, through stories curated through elder women in the village and through the formation of a committee to a rebuild these places meant that the Haya engaged once again with these places (Schmidt 2010:255, 2014:177–178). Here, there is a community (re)employing social memory within broader sets of cultural processes and social circumstances.

Returning back to the Khubu la Dintša case, *phekolo* was one of a number of engagements with the disease, and one that has continued to change over the past 15 years. People knew of Western medicine, of hospitals and preventative campaigns through lectures, through nurses, through advertisement campaigns sprinkled along the roadsides and on billboards in the larger towns, and yet this resurgence occurred. Sometimes this happened alongside treatments of Western medicine and at others with the incorporation of new interpretations, such as the role of ancestors and even Jesus into practice. These viewpoints—of *phekolo* practitioners, of biomedical doctors, of archaeologists, of a local community skeptical of the other three—existed alongside one another, as dissonant (although to some degree complementary) and historically contingent explanations and treatments of social trauma temporarily flourished in Botswana. Russia's resolution, that Western medicine is the answer for healing AIDS and cooperation with hospitals is essential, shows continuing evolution of his perspective. This adaptation occurred rapidly, in the course of a few years, while still using the same construct of the power of the ancestors. To draw from anthropological literature on

subjectivity and illness: "Recognizing the multiplicity of the human condition, we affirm that our subjectivities and the moral processes in which we engage are forever in flux...As our worlds change, so do we." (Kleinman and Fitz-Henry 2007: 55). Memory of the past and its uses in the present are strongly rooted in contexts that are always in motion.

As active ancestors were seen to play crucial roles in both the HIV/AIDS epidemic and in recovery from the disease, as an archaeologist I also struggle to expand my own perceptions of what exists on the landscape. Zoë Crossland (2014) wrote on a similar theme, but in a different period and place: nineteenth century Madagascar, a period of political and social upheaval when imperial expansion, missionary expansion, and the slave trade led to warfare and migration throughout the country. Here, Crossland positions the dead as active actors on the landscape whose presence was felt and experienced through interpreted signs that structured both the present experience and informed society about an anticipated future (Crossland 2014:4). Although just a passing reference in her broader employment of Peircean semiotics, Crossland refers to Koselleck's (2004) dual concepts of the "space of experience," where the past is layered and situated within the present, and the "horizon of expectation," the anticipation of what is yet to come, in describing these symbol-laden places (Crossland 2014:5). The intersection of these two concepts created a landscape filled with ancestral presences that served as charged negotiants, forces to be dealt with for the unknown future. This interaction of the past with the future is not just one where the former influences the latter. Rather, as proposed by Sassaman (2012:254), the past serves as "a resource to effect change. With a twist of perspective we can portray any past as a series of alternative futures." Koselleck, and by extension Crossland, Sassaman, and others, provide a heuristic starting point for my own engagement for these alternative interpretations of why and how Khubu la Dintša that differ so greatly from my own.

When studying the social context in which an alternative narrative such as Russia's emerges, it requires the pushing of boundaries in a number of ways: from challenging our interpretations as Western archaeologists (following Schmidt and Walz 2007) to even considering those agents, be it human or even absent (at least from a Western perspective) ancestors and supernatural presence, that may be involved. Place has an integral role; social memory exists in places that are layered with meaning, layered with time, and filled with presences (Basso 1996). At Khubu la Dintša, this has led some to walk up to the top of the hill, guided by moonlit pathways to cleanse oneself in front of the ancestors, at other times sitting with Russia on a goat's skin and have the sickness brushed away. For the participants of *phekolo*, the presence of the ancestors is not only real but also the most crucial component (and motivation) for their choice to be in those places.

Conclusion: Khubu la Dintša in the Future?

Approaching Khubu la Dintša in the present happens from the south by car: a turn off the dirt track that runs past a set of dispersed, unmarked cattle posts to the dusty town of Mmashoro; a short drive through mopane-acacia scrub, where most plants and trees that eek out an existence are barbed with thorns, that is accompanied by a near-constant metallic scraping from the sides of the car as the vehicle and the scrub come in contact with one another. The sound is akin to nails running across a chalkboard, as overgrown

branches reluctantly give way to the vehicle on its path. After parking at the base in the shade of a large tree at the base of the hill, a tall white sign, placed there in 2012 by the National Museum of Botswana, greets the visitor. Declared one of Botswana's National Heritage sites, and thus protected accordingly, the sign reads:

Welcome to KhubulaDintša Ruins. KhubulaDintša is a prehistoric farming village occupied sometimes around AD 900.[13] The name KhubulaDintša is associated with lions that used to be living in these hills. This site is basically an extension of the better known Toutswe period sites such as Bosutswe and Toutswemogala. The farming people who lived in KhubulaDintša kept domestic animals such as cattle and grew crops such as sorghum. They produced farming tools such as hoes and axes through iron smelting. Archaeological excavations conducted at the site have recovered large deposits of animal bones, pottery, some beads and remains of clay huts which were built by these farmers. Glass beads found in this site suggest the farming people living in KhubulaDintša were involved in long-distance trade with people living as far as the Shashe-Limpopo region. KhubulaDintša is used by some religious groups as a shrine where ancestral worship and various ritual practices are conducted to heal the sick. There are some taboos associated with this heritage site.

The sign, like this article, also curates the various histories that have occurred at Khubu la Dintša, acknowledging, briefly, the alternative narratives also layered onto this place. What this narrative will become in the future depends on how we craft its memory, and whether we choose to include alternative narratives such as Russia's that may not align with archaeological interpretations.

Additionally, although informative, it remains important to emphasize that Russia does not hold a majority viewpoint, for Batswana or even those who, to some extent or another, practice African traditional religion. Reminding me of this was my good friend Morongwa Mosothwane, an archaeology professor at the University of Botswana who was present with Denbow at the 2002 ceremony. In reference to the initial claims by Russia that he/they could heal HIV/AIDS, she stated: "People like [Russia] should rot in jail. I don't have a problem with the local community using archaeology sites. But I do have a problem with people claiming that they can do things they cannot do, and killing people in the process. Those are people's lives at stake. He is taking advantage [of them]." Her curt condemnation of Russia's actions reminds us that alternative narratives should be approached cautiously and critically, particularly those charged with human suffering and death, and that a single indigenous epistemology does not encompass them all. The incorporation of alternative narratives into our stories provides a more multi-directional view to how cultures respond to major change. Russia provides just one Motswana's perspective, and it can be added to that of a Western archaeologist and with Denbow's earlier accounts. Future interviews might be conducted with other former church members, now disenfranchised; with community members still skeptical and possibly defensive of who Russia is and how he continues to practice *phekolo*; and with the Batswana university students that accompanied these interviews: all narratives pulsing with contradiction, transformation, and insight.

A final practical reason to consider including alternative narratives also exists. An endemic problem in Africa and many developing countries around the world is the lack

[13] This date, as described earlier in the article and published in Klehm (2013), is incorrect and should be the thirteenth–fifteenth century AD.

of local investment in protecting archaeological sites (Howard 2003; Skeates 2000). African museums constantly suffer from shortage of funds, and governments and communities face basic but difficult economic decisions about the worth of these sites: if more is to be gained through preservation and tourism or development (Kusimba and Klehm 2013). Gaining a better understanding of why the past is seen as powerful will provide new ways to engage with communities and lead to stronger community investment in these sites for the future (Ndoro and Pwiti 2001; Schmidt and Walz 2007; Schmidt 2014; Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996). Quoting Meskell and Scheermeyer (2008:156): "trauma raises questions about what constitutes a public culture…what counts has history and whose history." The voice and weight we allow indigenous epistemologies and alternative narratives to carry are part of our engaged practice as archaeologists (Schmidt and Walz 2007), because, regardless of my viewpoint or yours as the reader, the past at Khubu la Dintša remains very much a part of the present.

Acknowledgements The author wishes to thank Russia for the interviews; Mothusi Maeletsa, Mokgosi Modimoosi, Boineelo Ratie, Lefatshe, and Morongwa Mosothwane for their translation, assistance, and advice during and after the interview, and to the four anonymous reviewers that made this a much stronger manuscript. Thanks as well to Edward Henry and David Mixter for organizing and inviting me to their AAA session on social memory and the subsequent volume, as well as their comments on an earlier draft. Lastly, the ability to interview the people around Mmashoro, conduct archaeological survey in the region, and engage in reflexive practice is due to the model that James Denbow has created. Many, many thanks.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Funding The original research at Khubu la Dintša in 2011 was conducted under a Doctoral Dissertation Improvement grant from the National Science Foundation (2011, BCS-1115148), with a Republic of Botswana Ministry of Environment, Wildlife, and Tourism Permit (EWT8/36/4XV(54)). The 2014 interview with Russia was conducted in conjunction with survey and excavations in the Bosutswe region, supported by an East Tennessee State University RDC Major Research Grant (2014; PI Eileen Ernenwein), with Botswana research permit EWT8/36/4XXV(62).

Conflict of Interest The author declares that she has no conflict of interest.

References

Alcock, S. (2002). *Archaeologies of the Greek past: landscapes, monuments, and memories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Amanze, J. N. (2002). *African traditional religion and culture in Botswana*. Gaborone: Pula Press.

Basso, K. (1996). *Wisdom sites in places*. Santa Fe: University of New Mexico Press.

Blum, R. (2004). Uganda AIDS prevention: A, B, C and politics. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 34*(5), 428–432.

Botswana Central Statistics Office (2002). Populations of towns, villages, and associated localities: 2001 population and housing census. http://www.cso.gov.bw/templates/cso/file/File/population_town.pdf. Accessed 1 Dec 2015.

Bradley, R. (2002). *The past in prehistoric societies*. London: Routledge.

Campbell, C. (2003). *Letting them die: how HIV/AIDS prevention programmes often fail*. Oxford: James Currey.

Campbell, C., & Mzaidume, Y. (2002). How can HIV be prevented in South Africa? A social perspective. *BMJ, 324*(7331), 229–232.

Chesson, M. S. (2001). Social memory, identity and death: an introduction. In M. S. Chesson (Ed.), *Social memory, identity and death: ethnographic and archaeological perspectives on mortuary rituals*, *Archaeological Publications of the American Anthropological Association Publication Series* (Vol. 10, pp. 1–11). Arlington: American Anthropological Association.

Cole, J. (2001). *Forgetting colonialism?: sacrifice and the art of memory in Madagascar*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cole, J. (2003). Narratives and moral projects: generations and memories of the Malagasy anti-colonial rebellion of 1947. *Ethos, 31*, 113–143.

Cole, J. (2005). Collective memory and the politics of reproduction in Africa. *Journal of the International African Institute, 75*, 1–9.

Cole, J. (2006). Memory and modernity. In C. Casey & R. Edgerton (Eds.), *A companion to psychological anthropology: modernity and psychocultural change* (pp. 103–120). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Confino, A. (1997). Collective memory and cultural history: problems of method. *The American Historical Review, 102*(5), 1386–1403.

Connerton, P. (1989). *How societies remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Connerton, P. (2009). *How modernity forgets*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crossland, Z. (2014). *Ancestral encounters in highland Madagascar: material signs and traces of the dead*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

De Kadt, J., Makusha, T., & Richter, L. (2011). The moral tensions of HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. In S. Schwartz & M. Taylor (Eds.), *Moral education in sub-Saharan Africa: culture, economics, conflict, and AIDS*. *Journal of Moral Education*, *39*(3), 393–401.

Denbow, J. R. (1990). Congo to Kalahari: data and hypotheses about the political economy of the western stream of the Early Iron Age. *African Archaeological Review, 8*, 139–175.

Denbow, J. R. (1999). Material culture and the dialectics of identity in the Kalahari: CE 700–1700. In S. K. McIntosh (Ed.), *Beyond chiefdoms: pathways to complexity in Africa* (pp. 110–123). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Denbow, J. R., & Miller, D. (2007). Metal working at Bosutswe, Botswana. *Journal of African Archaeology, 5*, 271–313.

Denbow, J. R., & Thebe, P. C. (2006). *Culture and customs of Botswana*. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Denbow, J. R., Mosothwane, M. & Ndobochani, N. M. (2008a). Finding Bosutswe: archaeological encounters with the past. *History in Africa, 35*, 145–190.

Denbow, J. R., Smith, J., Ndobochani, N. M., Atwood, K., & Miller, D. (2008b). Archaeological excavations at Bosutswe, Botswana: cultural chronology, paleo-ecology and economy. *Journal of Archaeological Science, 35*, 459–480.

Denbow, J. R., Mosothwane, M., & Ndobochani, N. M. (2009). Everybody here is all mixed up: postcolonial encounters with the past at Bosutswe, Botswana. In P. R. Schmidt (Ed.), *Postcolonial archaeologies in Africa*. Santa Fe: School for Advances Research Press.

Denbow, J. R., Klehm, C. E., & Dussubieux, L. (2015). Glass, ivory, and salt in the African interior: glass beads of Kaitsaa and the beginnings of Indian Ocean trade in Botswana. *Antiquity, 89*, 361–377.

Fassin, D., & Schneider, H. (2003). The politics of AIDS in South Africa: beyond the controversies. *BJM, 326*(7387), 495–497.

Feld, S., & Basso, K. (Eds.). (1996). *Senses of place*. Santa Fe: SAR Press.

Fowler, W. R., Borsteded, G., & Golden, C. W. (2010). Introduction: Maya archaeology and social memory. *Ancient Mesoamerica, 21*, 309–313.

Gaie, J. B. R. (2007). The Setswana concept of botho: unpacking the metaphysical and moral aspects. In J. B. R. Gaie & S. K. Mmolai (Eds.), *The concept of botho and HIV/AIDS in Botswana* (pp. 29–43). Eldoret: Zapf Chancery Research Consultants and Publishers.

Gaie, J. B. R., & Mmolai, S. K. (Eds.). (2007). *The concept of botho and HIV/AIDS in Botswana*. Eldoret: Zapf Chancery Research Consultants and Publishers.

Gewald, J.-B. (2001). El Negro, El Niño, witchcraft, and the absence of rain in Botswana. *African Affairs, 100*, 555–580.

Halbwachs, M. (1992[1952]). *On collective memory* (trans. & ed: Coser, L.A.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hamilton, C. (1998). *Terrific majesty: the powers of Shaka Zulu and the limits of historical invention*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Heald, S. (2006). Abstain or die: the development of HIV/AIDS policy in Botswana. *Journal of Biosocial Science, 38*, 29–41.

Horton, M., & Middleton, J. (2000). *The Swahili: the social landscape of a mercantile society. The peoples of Africa series*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Howard, P. (2003). *Heritage: management, interpretation, identity*. New York: Continuum.

Huffman, T. (2007). *Handbook to the Iron Age: the archaeology of pre-colonial farming societies in southern Africa*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Kgathi, G. L., Seganabeng, R. R., & Seretse, T. E. (2000). *Exploring moral issues in Botswana*. Gaborone: Heinemann.

Klehm, C.E. (2013). *Regional dynamics and local dialectics in Iron Age Botswana*. PhD Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin.

Klehm, C.E. (2014). Trade tales and tiny trails. Digital publication. *The Appendix Journal of History*. http://theappendix.net/issues/2014/1/trade-tales-and-tiny-trails-glass-beads-in-the-kalahari-desert. Accessed 24 Nov 2015.

Kleinman, A., & Fitz-Henry, E. (2007). The experiential basis of subjectivity: how individuals change in the context of societal transformation. In J. Biehl, B. Good, & A. Kleinman (Eds.), *Subjectivity: ethnographic investigations* (pp. 52–65). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Koselleck, R. (2004). *Futures past: on the semantics of historical time* (trans: Tribe, K.). New York: Columbia University Press.

Kus, S. (1997). Archaeologists as anthropologists: much ado about something after all? *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory, 4*, 199–214.

Kusimba, C. R., & Klehm, C. E. (2013). Museums and public archaeology: presenting Africa's past at home and abroad. In P. Land & P. Mitchell (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of African archaeology* (pp. 227–237). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Liddell, C., Barrett, L., & Bydawell, M. (2005). Indigenous representations of illness and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. *Social Science & Medicine, 60*, 691–700.

Mensele, M. S. (2011). *A study of rituals performed at two sacred sites in the eastern Free State*. MA Thesis, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein.

Meskell, L. (1999). Archaeologies of life and death. *American Journal of Archaeology, 103*, 181–199.

Meskell, L. (2003). Memory's materiality: ancestral presence, commemorative practice, and disjunctive locales. In R. Van Dyke & S. Alcock (Eds.), *Archaeologies of memory* (pp. 34–55). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Meskell, M., & Scheermeyer, C. (2008). Heritage as therapy: set pieces from the new South Africa. *Journal of Material Culture, 13*, 153–173.

Mmolai, S. (2007). Methods used to combat HIV & AIDS in Botswana: implications for botho. In J. Gaie & S. Mmolai (Eds.), *The concept of botho and HIV/AIDS in Botswana* (pp. 71–83). Eldoret: Zapf Chancery.

Ndoro, W., & Pwiti, G. (2001). Heritage management in southern Africa: local, national, and international discourse. *Public Archaeology, 1*, 21–34.

Nora, P. (1989). Between memory and history: Les Lieux de Mémoire. *Representations, 26*, 7–24.

Nora, P., & Kritzman, L. D. (Eds.). (1996). *Realms of memory: rethinking the French past. Vol. 1: conflicts and divisions*. New York: Columbia University.

Petros, G., Airhihenbuwa, C., Simbayi, L., Ramlagan, S., & Brown, B. (2006). HIV/AIDS and 'othering' in South Africa: the blame goes on. *Culture, Health, & Sexuality, 8*(1), 67–77.

Pöntinen, M. A. (2013). *African theology as liberating wisdom: celebrating life and harmony in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Botswana*. Leiden: Brill.

Sassaman, K. (2012). Futurologists look back. *Archaeologies: Journal of the World Archaeological Congress, 8*, 250–268.

Schatz, E., Gilbert, L., & McDonald, C. (2013). 'If the doctors see that they don't know how to cure the disease, or they say it's AIDS': how older women in rural South Africa make sense of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. *African Journal of AIDS Research, 12*(2), 95–104.

Schmidt, P. (2006). *Historical archaeology in Africa: representation, social memory, and oral traditions*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira.

Schmidt, P. (Ed.). (2009). *Postcolonial archaeologies in Africa*. Santa Fe: SAR Press.

Schmidt, P. (2010). Trauma and social memory in northwestern Tanzania: organic, spontaneous community collaboration. *Journal of Social Archaeology, 10*, 255–279.

Schmidt, P. (2014). Hardcore ethnography: interrogating the intersection of disease, human rights, and heritage. *Heritage and Society, 7*, 170–188.

Schmidt, P., & Walz, J. (2007). Re-representing African pasts through historical archaeology. *American Antiquity, 72*, 53–70.

Schortman, E., & Urban, P. (2011). *Networks of power: political relations in the Late Postclassic Naco Valley, Honduras*. Boulder: University of Colorado Press.

Setel, P. W. (1999). *A plague of paradoxes: AIDS, culture, and demography in northern Tanzania*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Setswe, G. (2007). Abstinence and faithfulness programmes for prevention of HIV/AIDS among young people: what are the current debates? *South African Family Practice, 49*(8), 5–10.
Sinclair, P. (1987). *Space, time, and social formation: a territorial approach to the archaeology and anthropology of Zimbabwe and Mozambique c. 0–1700 AD*. Uppsala: Societas Archaeologica Upsaliensis.
Skeates, R. (2000). *Debating the archaeological heritage*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
Steigberg, J. (2008). *AIDS and AIDS treatment in a rural South African setting. Monograph no. 149. Institute for Security Studies*. Pretoria: ISS.
Taçon, P. S. C., & Ouzman, S. (2004). Worlds within stone: the inner and outer rock-art landscapes of northern Australia and southern Africa. In C. C. Chippindale & G. H. Nash (Eds.), *The figured landscapes of rock-art* (pp. 39–68). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Thapelo, B., Morima, N., & Wills, G. (1999). *Moral education for junior secondary schools*. Mogoditshane: Tasalls Publishing and Books.
Trouillot, M. (1995). *Silencing the past: power and the production of history*. Boston: Beacon Press.
Tunbridge, J. E., & Ashworth, G. J. (1996). *Dissonant heritage: the management of the past as a resource in conflict*. Chichester: J Wiley.
Turner, V., & Bruner, E. (Eds.). (1986). *The anthropology of experience*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
Van Dyk, A. (2001). Traditional African beliefs and customs: implications for AIDS education and prevention in Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology, 31*(2), 60–66.
Van Dyke, R. (2011). Imagined pasts imagined: memory and ideology in archaeology. In R. Bernbeck & R. McGuire (Eds.), *Ideologies in archaeology* (pp. 233–253). Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.
Van Dyke, R., & Alcock, S. (2003). Archaeologies of memory: an introduction. In R. Van Dyke & S. Alcock (Eds.), *Archaeologies of memory* (pp. 1–13). Oxford: Blackwell.
Vansina, J. (1985). *Oral tradition as history*. Madison: University of Wisconsin.
Walker, N. (1997). In the footsteps of the ancestors: the Matsieng creation site in Botswana. *South African Archaeological Bulletin, 52*, 95–104.
Walz, J. (2013). Routes to history: archaeology and being articulate in Eastern Africa. In P. Schmidt & S. Mrozowski (Eds.), *The death of prehistory* (pp. 69–91). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Walz, J. (2015). Healing space-time: medical performance and object itineraries on a Tanzanian landscape. In R. Joyce & S. Gillespie (Eds.), *Things in motion: object itineraries in anthropological practice* (pp. 161–178). Santa Fe: SAR Press.
Werbner, R. (Ed.). (1998). *Memory and the postcolony*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Wertsch, J. V. (2002). *Voices of collective remembering*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Wertsch, J. V. (2009). Collective remembering. *Semiotica, 173*, 233–247.
Wood, M. (2012). *Interconnections: glass beads and trade in southern and eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean: 7th to 16th centuries AD*. Uppsala: University of Uppsala.
World Health Organization (WHO), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), & United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2008). *Towards universal access: scaling up priority HIV/AIDS interventions in the health sector. Progress report June 2008*. Geneva: WHO.