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Will Historical Archaeology Escape Its Western Prejudices to Become Relevant to Africa?

RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

A major problem facing North American approaches to historical archaeology is the exclusionary manner in which the discipline is defined. By confining historical archaeology to the era of capitalism and colonialism, we declare that the indigenous histories of many areas of the globe are of no interest to such an intellectual agenda. If we practice an historical archaeology that only valorizes the colonial experience, then what happens to history making that engaged cultures in the pre-capitalist and pre-modern era? Such approaches separate the histories of people in Africa from those of the West, and, is in effect, academic apartheid. To remedy this disjuncture, we interrogate how historical archaeology may escape the bounds of implicit racism in its denial of historicity before literacy. We suggest that breaking the chains of exclusion is the only way to realize an inclusive archaeology sensitive to all history making projects.

Résumé: Les approches nord-américaines à l'archéologie historique font face à un problème majeur, soit la base d'exclusion sur laquelle la discipline est définie. En confinant l'archéologie historique aux ères du capitalisme et du colonialisme, nous déclarons que l'histoire autochtone de plusieurs régions du monde ne suscite aucunement l'intérêt d'un tel programme intellectuel. Si nous exerçons une archéologie historique qui ne valorise que l'expérience coloniale, qu'advient-il des événements historiques ayant mobilisé les cultures des ères précapitaliste et prémoderne? Lesdites approches excluent l'histoire des peuples d'Afrique de celle des peuples occidentaux, devenant pour cause un modèle d'apartheid académique. Pour colmater cette brèche, nous nous demandons comment l'archéologie historique peut se sortir du joug du racisme implicite et de son déni de l'historicité préalable à l'alphabétisation. Nous suggérons que le seul moyen de donner naissance à

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une archéologie sensible à tous les projets marquants de l'histoire est de briser les chaînes de l'exclusion.

Resumen: Un problema muy grave que enfrentan los enfoques norteamericanos a la arqueología histórica es la manera excluyente en que se define la disciplina. Al confinar a la arqueología histórica a la era del capitalismo y del colonialismo, declaramos que las historias indígenas de muchas áreas del mundo no le interesan a dicha agenda intelectual. Si practicamos una arqueología histórica que s lo valoriza la experiencia colonial, entonces, ¿qué ocurre con la historia hecha por las culturas que participaron en la era precapitalista y premoderna? Tales enfoques separan las historias de los pueblos de África de las del Occidente y, de hecho, es un apartheid académico. Para remediar esta coyuntura, interrogamos cómo la arqueología histórica puede escapar a los límites del racismo implícito en su negación de la autenticidad histórica antes de la alfabetización. Sugerimos que la única manera de realizar una arqueología inclusiva, sensible a todos los proyectos de hacer historia, es romper las cadenas de la exclusión.

KEY WORDS

Historical archaeology in Africa, Society of Historical Archaeology, Ethnocentrism, Post-medieval archaeology, Misrepresentation, Archaeological imperialism, Archaeology of the modern era, Precolonial history of Africa, Archaeology of colonialism

Background

The term 'historical archaeology' largely refers to the archaeology connected with European expansion overseas and impact on indigenous peoples (see e.g. Schuyler 1978). Although some refinements have been made to the understanding of the term (see e.g. Hall and Silliman 2006), debates continue whether it should also refer to the method used in studying more recent periods not associated with written texts. The Australian Africanist archaeologist Graham Connah (2007) questioned its relevance when used in an African context (see also Reid and Lane 2004). This comes in the wake of Peter Mitchell's (2005) *African Connections*, where he clearly demonstrated that the boundary between prehistoric and historic archaeology was useless (see also Robertshaw 2005). The arguments against such artificial boundaries are elaborated in the *Death of Prehistory* (Schmidt and Mrozowski 2013), wherein

the various authors hold that such divisions deny history in non-Western cultures. There is no doubt that that the concept has been an American construct for much of the latter part of the twentieth century, although some American archaeologists such as Lightfoot (1995) voiced concern on how the separation between prehistoric and historical archaeology detracted researchers from understating long-term cultural continuity and change.

In responses to some of these concerns, Orser (2002) states that historical archaeology is no longer a narrowly provincial, North American field. Historical archaeologists are now conducting research across the world in Latin America, Asia, the Pacific, Africa, and Europe, a field that is one of the most rapidly expanding archaeological practices during the early twenty-first century. Using examples of historical archaeology throughout the world, he explained it as the archaeology of the post-1415 (or modern) era rather than a methodology. This approach is largely followed by members of the Society of American Archaeology (SHA) and we find this very problematic. A profound problem is the exclusionary manner in which it defines historical archaeology. If we confine historical archaeology to the era of capitalism and colonialism, we affirm that the indigenous histories of many areas of the globe are of no interest to the current North American intellectual agendas. If we practice an historical archaeology that only valorizes the colonial experience, then what happens to history making that engaged cultures in the precolonial era? Given that such practice separates the histories of people in Africa from those of the West, then it appears we are engaged in academic apartheid.[1] To seek remedies to this current segregation, we need to ask how historical archaeology may escape the bounds of implicit racism in its denial of historicity before literacy. Only by breaking the chains of exclusion can we hope to realize an inclusive archaeology sensitive to all history making projects.

This paper proposes how a better contextualized consideration of historical archaeology can improve its appeal to minorities and other marginalized groups. There is a problem within the way historical archaeology is conceptualized and approached by some members of the SHA that makes it not inclusive, suggesting that members of this society need to engage in self-examination to correct whatever policies, perspectives, and attitudes create an exclusive posture.

In considerable contrast to the SHA, debates within the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology (SPMA) reveal a much broader perspective on the temporal reach of the SPMA (Dixon 2011; King 2011). Most noteworthy, the Dixon and King interchange of 2011 shows that there is acceptance of the notion that archaeology may reach into contemporary times, unencumbered by an insistence that it address "archaeology of the modern era".

With the broadening of the scope of post-medieval archaeology in recent years (Mytum 2016; see Horning and Palmer 2009) we have seen it come to encompass landscapes and estates (Finch and Giles 2007), vernac-

ular architecture and cities (Green and Leech 2006), religion (King and Sayer 2011), historical developments such as the Reformation (Gaimster and Gilchrist 2003), and industrial archaeology (Barker and Cranstone 2004) (often regarded as a separate discipline). Pope and Lewis-Simpson (2013) raise a question which echoes the subject of this paper. They ask whether it is possible to understand European expansion to the Americas and the rest of the world without colonial triumphalism. Beyond academic interest in European colonization, they also focus on population mobility and stability.

Institutional Racism[2]

In this paper, we examine expressions of institutional racism in the practice of "historical archaeology" as it is defined in the West, with ancillary claims that Western archaeologists know best what kind of practice should apply to the African continent. We also argue that to exclude African history–as some spokespeople are wont to do–from historical archaeology because it tries to do more than engage colonial entanglements, reveals theoretical flaws that harbour an institutional racism long undergirding the writing of African history from European documents and points of view. Some racism within Africa, and outside, draws its sustained but little discussed vitality from robust racist interpretations of African archaeology practiced in Africa towards the origins of many civilizations. Here we will discuss Great Zimbabwe, where racism re-awakened with vigour only 40 years ago; and, we will examine current practices in South Africa where an apartheid-like atmosphere continues to permeate the practice of archaeology (Ndlovu 2009, 2010). We also argue that to exclude precolonial African history from historical archaeology of the modern world (e.g. Orser 2012) arouses objections in the African world because colonial history is once again privileged–an amplification of the colonial experience and a manifestation of an institutional racism long undergirding the writing of African history from European documents and points of view, including an historical archaeology of modern times.

Historical Lenses

It is helpful to understand the various key transformations that have affected the writing of history in Africa, one part of which is historical archaeology. History writing about Africa has been dominated by colonial and Western perspectives. Starting with the first popular explorers/writers such as Speke and Grant, Burton, and Stanley our views of Africa have

been filtered through a lens of white privilege, power, and domination rendered through exotic images of the primitive. Such representations continued at an amplified level when Western colonialism was the medium through which African history was filtered (see Karega-Munene and Schmidt 2010; Mudimbe 1988; Schmidt 2009a, b, 2010). Local histories were seen as myth, as primitive expressions of exotic ritual. Colonial administrators, when called upon to deal with local history, did so to obtain advantages, such as the creation of genealogical lists that conferred paper legitimacy to a line of rulers sponsored because of colonial administrative needs. These engagements constitute complex colonial entanglements that are of great interest to historians and archaeologists, but they are only a very small part–and the very last part–of the sweep of later African history.

In some cases, colonial entanglements bred perspectives informed by deeply racist attitudes. Great Zimbabwe, one of the major civilizations of southern Africa during our era, is a case in point. White settlers very early propagated the myth that Great Zimbabwe was built by Phoenicians, the Queen of Sheba, or "Arabs", several among many illusionary references to the origins of the stone buildings. Even after Caton-Thompson (1929) put to rest the questions of origins by proving that Great Zimbabwe was the creation of Bantu speaking peoples whose descendants today live in Zimbabwe, the trenchant insistence that the ruins represented foreign influence gained even further strength with the UDI or Unilateral Declaration of Independence when Rhodesia broke away from Britain under white leadership (Hall 1984). The impact of these entrenched beliefs–the residues of which are alive today in southern Africa (see discussion below)–is that African ingenuity and complexity are seen as impossible, and that African history is not real history. We will draw parallels between the legacy of Zimbabwe in southern African historical archaeology and the historical archaeology that is advocated and practiced by prominent members of the SHA. We illustrate these connections later in the paper using examples of neo-antiquarian interpretation of Great Zimbabwe.

Marginalization

Academic marginalization is one way to characterize the historical archaeology arising out of African settings, an archaeology that gives voice to local perspectives and ways of seeing the world. One of the distinctive features of the historical archaeology of Africa vis-a-vis the larger sub-discipline of historical archaeology is the apparent widespread ignorance of North American practitioners about its practice. Rarely does one see citations of research arising out of Africa, be it by indigenous Africans or Africanists working within a historical framework. This also extends to

those in North America who work with oral traditions and indigenous people. They may cite Vansina (1965, 1985), who over the years has had increasingly little to say about archaeology except in a critical manner (Vansina 1995).

This North American provincialism (see Lightfoot 1995) results from a number of causes. First, the pedagogy of historical archaeology in North America is almost exclusively drawn from North American case studies and theoretical literature. Second, professionals who consider issues such as oral traditions rarely read beyond the Native American-based literature. Third, there is a philosophical disposition that is antithetical to anything outside of the West, and outside of what has been inscribed as "the modern era". We should identify this as ethnocentrism and it is precisely this brand of historical archaeology that archaeologists of Africa find increasingly alienating.

Dominant Literary Paradigm with Amendments

The African continent presents poignant but disturbing issues for historical archaeology as it has been framed in the West, where literacy and a central colonial thesis both ignore the historical experiences of many African people before literacy and colonialism took root. Literacy dominates debates about how historical archaeology is categorized, with literacy as the dominant axis in historical archaeological thinking. For example, in 1995 *Historical Archaeology* as a general text provided broad overviews on the practice of historical archaeology, which was cautiously named as an archaeology of "historical times", then further defined as "*that portion of human history that begins with the appearance of written records and continues until today*" (emphasis ours; Orser and Fagan 1995: 4). Importantly, this definition includes literate societies such as Mesopotamia and Egypt. Encompassing all ancient civilizations with writing, this rendering of historical archaeology takes a slight twist from the main branch and is called "text-aided" or "archaeology carried out with the aid of historical documentation" (Ibid). The authors conclude by separating these earlier societies from later societies, when "there is historical archaeology–*the archaeological study of people documented in recent history*" (emphasis ours; Ibid).

No justification is provided for this arbitrary separation. The categories are stated as self-evident when in fact there are many more parallels between them than differences. Both periods–and it is not clear when recent history begins–profit from the use of text–aided archaeological research. Both experience processes of history making that have significant affinities, and both periods elicit interest from historians and archaeologists for similar reasons. This distinction between ancient and recent is therefore

specious and cannot be sustained on intellectual grounds within the practice of historical theory.

Nowhere in this discourse do we find mention of Africa. The focus is the Ancient East, Middle East, Middle America, and Europe. Only with Egypt at the margins of Africa is there any mention of history and archaeology informed by literacy. Sub-Saharan Africa, lacking a literate tradition in most instances, is erased from consideration in these generic discussions. This is important to recognize. To use criteria that privilege only writing as the legitimate form of record-keeping, archaeologists unconsciously elect to follow an exclusionary path with deeply disquieting implications for historical archaeology.

Implications for Historical Archaeology

If we accept such definitions, are we not privileging European and North American historical experience as the only point of meaningful reference? This fits nicely with the valorization of ethnocentrism as a key part of the colonial experience, and as a force to understand and to account for historically (see Orser 2012). Of course, there are other colonial experiences that may be lacking the "four forces" identified by Orser as governing the modern transformation, including ethnocentrism, a distinctively European trait. Non-Western examples of colonialism abound, from-Asian colonialisms of various genres in antiquity, the colonialism of Alexander the Greek, the colonialism of the Omani empire in East Africa, or the Ottoman Empire in Europe and the Middle East–the list is extensive and the varieties complex. Yet, none of these fit within the working rubric, in so far as it is defined by eminent practitioners. Only Western colonialism and its orbit of influence is accepted.

Expanding the Discourse

Though written 23 years ago, the first example proffered in the 1995 volume *Historical Archaeology* is significant for showing the close affinities between recent research on sixteenth-century Labrador and historical archaeology in Africa. The authors draw on important archaeological findings of Basque Whaling in Labrador in the sixteenth century, "a chapter of European history virtually absent from the history books" (Orser and Fagan 1995: 5). Unquestionably, archaeology provides a powerful tool to recapture histories erased, excluded, and ignored over time. But why should we consider this archaeology of Basque whaling in Labrador as historical archaeology? The authors admit that literate history does not per-

tain to these findings. Does one conclude then that it is simply because the sixteenth century falls within the "modern" era that this is historical archaeology?

These are not specious questions. We ask them because the same set of conditions often apply to the history of Africa–where information has been missing in the written historical record. For example, the King of Kyamutwara Kingdom in seventeenth-century Tanzania undertook a major revamping of his administration by occupying a major shrine–a major ritual and political area-to consolidate his reign (Schmidt 1978, 2006). There are no written records about this–similar to the Basque case–and the archaeological findings are parallel to those of Labrador in that they constitute a major contribution to history (of Africa) by documenting the King's occupation of the sacred site. So, this must be historical archaeology, too, by the Labrador prescription? No, regardless of their structural parallels, the Basques are of the "modern" world while Africans belong to the non-modern or primitive world. Exclusion and arbitrary boundaries underwrite and amplify colonial experiences! Herein lies the dilemma for Western and 'modern' historical archaeology.

The history of the King of Kyamutwara was witnessed and interpreted during what are indisputably "recent times" and moreover it was a history deeply informed by oral records with detailed testimonies about his motives and the political alliances leading to seizure of the shrine. These are records meticulously kept over the centuries by elders invested with such responsibilities, both in fixed and free texts. The African example is enriched by much more diverse historical testimony, the many parts of which may be compared and assessed for their historical veracity and narrative legitimacy. Certainly, being lodged in "recent times" and entangled with extensive historical documents, this is also historical archaeology. But, no, not if it lacks colonial entanglements and exists outside the "modern world".

Our Africanist colleagues Reid and Lane (2004: 2) point out that while historic archaeology is now a well-established sub-discipline, it retains a Eurocentric stance, since it focuses on the interplay between European documents and the archaeological record. As noted above, this becomes problematic in a non-European context (see Pikirayi 2006: 230) since there are other non-European sources such as oral traditions that detail African history prior to the arrival of Europeans. These sources are important if we are to understand the nature of contact and interaction prior to the emergence of the so-called modern world. European texts only have a limited coverage on Africa, and except in a few areas such as Kongo as well as the Mutapa State (Pikirayi 1993) and Mbundu kingdoms in contemporary Zimbabwe (Pikirayi 2001, 2009), they mostly cover some coastal zones. Their coverage of the interior is limited. There is also need to consider

other, non-European texts, such as Chinese, Arabic, Egyptian, and Amharic (Ethiopia) that provide a completely different perspective of the African continent (Reid and Lane 2004: 7).

What is important to recognize at this stage of our discussion is that these separations between African and non-African worlds continue to infuse thinking about historical archaeology. Perhaps the most revealing and simultaneously informative statement made in the 1995 volume is why historical archaeology is such an appealing undertaking, "historical archaeology holds a mirror directly before the face of the contemporary world and reflects precisely the complex roots of our own increasingly diverse society. This unique reflection of our unique past is a vital tool in achieving a better understanding of ourselves" (Orser and Fagan 1995: 6). We learn here that this is an archaeology about us, but this is not an 'us' that is African or Asian or any other non-Western region. It is an 'us' readily recognized as the Western world, speaking on behalf and setting the parameters for the history of others. Does historical archaeology reveal, mirror-like, the diverse roots of African society? The question's resoundingly negative answer should help historical archaeologists understand the depth of alienation from contemporary historical archaeology amongst archaeologists of Africa. And, if historical archaeology deigns to answer questions of African complexity, its practitioners are ignored because, after all, precolonial history is outside the realm of historical archaeology. It is the stuff of "prehistory", myth, and non-modern times (Schmidt and Mrozowski 2013)!

The Coming of an Indigenous History

In the post-independence era, after political independence came to Africa, African historians struggled to find their own voices, their own histories free of the manipulations and representations of the colonial library. This movement owed much to an earlier period of indigenous publications during the colonial era by local historians who drew extensively from oral traditions of their own people (Bikunya 1927; Kaggwa 1971 [1901]; Lwamgira 1949), but lacking robust analysis. A raft of publication occurred in post-independence East Africa, for example, as historians collected, analysed, and published precolonial histories of their own peoples (Katoke 1975; Kiwanuka 1972; Ogot 1967; Were 1967). They joined a growing movement spearheaded by scholars such as Jan Vansina (1965, 1985) who privileged the historical value of oral testimonies under rigorous comparative analyses. This cadre of historians helped to focus attention on precolonial history which in Africa is overwhelmingly the historical experience of Africans. They were also influenced by and worked as colleagues with archaeologists such as John Sutton (1966, 1973), who used oral traditions

to help sort out the Sirikwa Hole enigma (dwellings or stock enclosures?) in Western Kenya and Merrick Posnansky who employed oral texts to investigate and to explain several sites in western Uganda, including the Bigo earthworks and the burned royal palace at Bweyorere (Posnansky 1968, 1969). This was a very different school of thought from archaeologists such as Kirkman (e.g. 1954, 1964), who launched an historical archaeology along the Swahili coast that valorized urban origins from the Near East. Neville Chittick (1974, 1984), who followed Kirkman's research along the coast, employed a text-aided historical archaeology by using the Swahili Chronicles, a hybrid form of literate history based on recorded Swahili oral traditions. Regardless of the degree of certainty about foreign origins and the dependency on literary sources, the later of these early archaeologies attests to attempts to discern intersection and non-intersection of oral and archaeological data.

The influence of the precolonial school of African history, including the work of historians such as Terry Ranger (1983, 1999), took shape at institutions such as the University of Dar es Salaam, where the "Dar School" of history came to be known for its rejection of colonial paradigms (see Temu and Swai 1981) and the adoption of rigorous analysis and interpretation of precolonial history that included oral testimonies. Since the flowering of precolonial history and its archaeological linkages, historical studies have been marked by a growing practice of "liberation" history and post-independence history, some with a Marxist orientation (Temu and Swai 1981). The waning of research into precolonial history in Africa is a phenomenon accompanied by a growing focus on recent African history to the exclusion of deeper histories (Reid 2011). Unfortunately for the history of Africa and its peoples, similar trends are seen in archaeological practice, with increasing focus on the era of the slave trade as well as colonialism at the expense of deep time histories (Holl 2009).

As practitioners of historical archaeology in Africa, we are concerned over what historical archaeologists in the core sub-discipline apparently see as a necessity to circumscribe historical archaeology with a colonial line. We question an agenda that makes historical archaeology into the study of cultures affected by colonialism, including the reciprocal dynamics of colonial ideology and practice when those colonized act upon and affect the colonizers. Such colonial boundaries immediately cut off history making processes inside African societies–there is only space for them as transformed phenomena under the historical archaeology rubric. We need to reflect on the earlier observation that colonialism did not directly reach many interiors of Africa until the late nineteenth century. While many societies experienced indirect influence through demands for slaves and the sending and receiving of trade goods, these interchanges do not constitute a colonial experience (see Silliman 2005).[3] They are part of larger processes

of global interchanges that date back millennia and do not hinge on Europe for their practice. By using such exclusionary membership conditions, isn't historical archaeology placing these societies outside history, as timeless and unworthy of historical analysis? Attempts to make historical archaeology an archaeology of European contact with non-Europeans (Orser and Fagan 1995; Orser 1996) as well as a global discipline (Funari et al. 1999) make no sense or are inappropriate when transposed on Africa, and need to be adjusted (Reid and Lane 2004: 3).

How Historical Archaeology Makes Boundaries Today

We believe that it's important to examine the implications of recent representations of Africanist positions in "Archaeology of Ethnocentrism" (Orser 2012), because wrapped within this renaming of what we do is a broadside against how historic archaeology is conceptualized in Africa. This polemic captures the bastion-like attitudes, referenced above, that so strongly defend the discipline against outside infiltration and diversity, a condition that should be of deep concern to all historical archaeologists. One of the devices used to ward off outside critiques of Euro-centrism in historical archaeology is to rewrite and transform the writings of the so-called critics, some of whom are Africanists. Given the significance of such misrepresentations, it is compelling to examine and to correct these distortions of African historical archaeology. Such transformations of our writings and their meanings reify the already deep divisions between historical archaeologists of Africa and the Americas and Europe, leading many to conclude that there is no place for African perspectives to enrich the discipline.

Indicative of misrepresentation is the view that "Schmidt and Walz (2007b) oppose the plan of 'studying the lives of those on "both sides" of the power divide [in the colonial experience] and deny that this perspective 'reveals how actors in a variety of positions are mutually implicated in the historical processes that shape present sensibilities and possibilities' (Stahl 2004: 96)" (Orser 2012: 740). This attributed quote with linking commentary, however, significantly rewrites and distorts the original text: "both sides must be interrogated and that each experience in the historical process understood" (Schmidt and Walz 2007b:136). This misstep is then compounded, viz: "Rather, they understand (after Cooper and Stoler 1997) that colonialism was shaped by unilateral indigenous 'struggle' and propose that 'this dynamic relationship is much more than simply seeing and understanding both sides of power interactions' (Schmidt and Walz 2007b: 136)". We did not write this as quoted. Rather, we wrote: "The authors (Cooper and Stoler) do not speak to the power of the colonized people to

shape themselves nor do they address how colonized people might shape colonizer's lives and representations'' (Schmidt and Walz 2007b:136), far from saying ''that colonialism was shaped by unilateral indigenous struggle'' (Orser 2012: 740).

Misrepresentation and Its Implications

With zeal to set a colonial-based historical archaeology apart from practice in Africa, the author continues, ''By adopting the position that indigenous agency is unbounded by sociohistorical context, Schmidt and Walz eliminate domination and oppression and consequently reinforce the European power structure. By exclusively empowering local narratives, they effectively separate public problems and daily life, a program that ultimately 'leads to the status quo of injustice and inequality' (Rosenau 1992: 84n)'' (Orser 2012: 741). It is language of this kind that drives a gratuitous wedge between different world historical archaeologies that are already interlinked in many ways. Such claims betray a lack of awareness about literature on African historical archaeology and a dire misunderstanding of how local narratives of all genres are treated in African historical archaeology today. As to indigenous agency, it unfolds within indigenous society and within all of its historical contingencies–not just vis-à-vis-a colonial presence. To confine African agency to only the ''modern'' is to erase productivity and ingenuity from the historical record, yet another bias towards Africa and its history. The false presumption that agency is unbounded by sociohistorical context is undermined by reading the pertinent literature (e.g. Schmidt 1983, 2006, 2009a, b; Stahl 2001).

African historical archaeology is surprisingly rich in local contexts due to its daily involvement with communities. Precisely because it is embedded in everyday life, it is often a more powerful index to local historical contexts than scholarship found in the Western world. Africanists seek to privilege local history in all of its dimensions–as subaltern, as elite, as gendered, and consider colonialism in its complex causes and transformations to all parties. *Postcolonial Archaeologies in Africa* (Schmidt 2009a) is a volume meant to unveil through postcolonial analyses the entanglement of local histories with colonial history in very substantive ways (e.g. Kusimba 2009; Denbow et al. 2009; Bugarin 2009; Walz 2009); the essays transparently detail how colonial and local histories are teased out from different sources, and how they intersect. Colonial representations are examined, not privileged, to see how they differ from chronicled indigenous politics and ways of representation, carefully working with archaeological data and oral texts to overturn and revise the dominant colonial narratives imposed on local people in the postcolonial period.

Day by day we grow increasingly cautious about those who trumpet the successes of historical archaeology in other parts of the globe working under the colonial paradigm. The justification for an archaeology of modernity includes a discussion of a formulaic list of criteria for apparent inclusion in the "club of practice", focusing on the four forces, mentioned earlier, that transformed life around the globe: colonialism, capitalism, racialization, and ethnocentrism. The implications of this check-list approach is that if these components are not present, then one may not join the club of those doing informed, authentic historical archaeology. On the other side of the globe, embedded in the African pasts, modern and traditional, we are instructed that these are the grand construct under which legitimate questions must be asked. It is not difficult to see a kind of intellectual apartheid developing, in which boundaries are erected to exclude forever certain histories from the "practice club".

This is a new imperialism, informed by the expectation that those in the colonies will now bend to a new form of domination, a new colonialism: "these forces thus hover over archaeological practice–the telling of history and the practice of research…" (Orser 2012: 743). It does not take long to realize that if the hovering [four] forces are not all accounted for, then that is a different kind of history. It is one matter to misrepresent what our research is engaging in Africa, it is yet another to overlook the many African historical archaeologists who work with colonial entanglements, illustrating precisely a hegemonic project to maintain the identity of the archaeologists who identify with a colonial-dominant paradigm. What about historical documentation for local domination and oppression? Do these count, or must they occur only under the aegis of colonialism and capitalism? Are they insignificant? Even though these themes run deep in local narratives, such historical studies are swept away as insignificant if we adhere to these boundary prescriptions.

The key issue arising out of this hegemonic Western project of modernity is a denial of the legitimacy of local narratives that omit discussion of colonialism or that do not arise out of colonialism. Is it any wonder that scholars of Africa may see this as prejudicial? While others view historical archaeology as an archaeology of the modern world, they do so with much greater latitude; for example, Hall and Silliman (2006) concede that confining the practice of the discipline to a specific period is problematic (see also Hall 2000), a broader view that overcomes hegemonic views and recognizes that we must seek an understanding of what practice makes the most sense for Africa (Pikirayi 2006: 230).

Other Perspectives

Consider for a moment what such inscribed boundaries mean to an African observer, especially a young African scholar who learns that only history under European domination falls under the umbrella of historical archaeology and that precolonial history and other histories of Africa are not legitimate sources in the practice of historical archaeology. The implications are chilling-this boundary building segregates Western historical archaeology from Africa. But this is not the end of it: When we attempt to escape European-imposed paradigms because they limit our gaze upon other societies and their pasts, this is identified as a: "weighty condemnation of a *sub-field that had been explicitly created to examine European colonialism*" (emphasis ours; Orser 2012: 740). Is it any wonder why Africans and scholars of Africa antiquity might feel alienated by such trenchant declarations of exclusionary identity?

The primacy of European texts aside, the writing of African history has always been problematic. It remains largely a Western understanding of the African past. South Africa is a good example where the majority population does not identify or appreciate contemporary narratives of their pasts, largely because of the dominance of white scholarship on the disciplines of history and archaeology. Hall (1999b) pointed out that this was a legacy of apartheid, and that until South African historical fabric becomes part of everyday life, archaeology will remain an esoteric pursuit on the margins of popular consciousness (Ndlovu 2009). The several historical archaeological forums that one of us has attended in South Africa reflect this sentiment, as practitioners are almost exclusively white, and the subjects of discussion are largely fragmented topics covering individual sites, missions, some shipwrecks, etc. They continue to grapple with notions of the white frontier and the outcomes of encounters with the black populations of the region.

The Five Hundred Year Initiative Project (see Swanepoel et al. 2008) attempts to understand the origins of contemporary human group identities in southern Africa, recognizing the challenges associated with approaches to doing historical archaeology in the region. The project sees the need to interrogate the periods connected with the decline of Mapungubwe (AD 1100–1300) or the emergence of Nguni and Sotho-Tswana societies, with which a vast majority of South Africans may positively identify. Some studies have long recognized the problems associated with this divide, and attempted to present second millennium AD period cultural developments in terms of continuities and developments from the period prior to European arrival (see Delius et al. 2014, Huffman 2004, 2007; Maggs and O'Connell 1976a, 1976b, 1980) but these would not be consid-

ered historical archaeology per se. This is unfortunate since these categorizations, largely determined by when Europeans set foot in the region, exclude the black public in such vital narratives of how modern identities unfolded. This mirrors what we see in the wider practice of Western historical archaeology vis-a-vis Africa, bringing to light parallel issues with lack of diversity and race.

If one examines the implications of this perspective within wider Africa, moving to another key question–the teaching of African history–then such observations are deeply disquieting: Since most teaching of history in Africa starts with the colonial experience (this marks the beginning of history), how may historical archaeologists remedy this tragically limited treatment to create a deeper handling of history? For example, in Tanzanian schools before and since independence, history teaching has been British-centric and Euro-centric. Starting in primary school and moving through high school European history is the staple, not African history, which only enters the picture with a focus on the slave trade along with occasional mentions of revolts against colonialism such as the maji maji rebellion against German colonialism. Overwhelmingly, African history is a history of anti-colonialism in the immediate pre-independence era, followed by the development of political independence. Some history texts devote several pages to Olduvai Gorge and the Latoli footprints and perhaps Bagamoyo (a slave entrepot). Otherwise there is very little precolonial history taught in primary and secondary schools. There is virtually no local history taught at any level–part of the national project to erase local identities and valorize a national political history.[4] These exclusionary postures are part of the colonial legacy of segmenting history, with a focus on the metropole, the political centre.

How may historical archaeology develop perspectives that teach young Africans that their history is more than slavery and being dominated by and reacting to a colonial presence? Ironically, history teaching in Tanzania and other African countries follows the European paradigm, suggesting that it may be a perfect fit for the rigid colonial-focused archaeology that is required by an inscribed definition of historical archaeology. Such a course of action consigns most African history to the dustbin.

This rigid prescription does not resonate with tertiary level perspectives in higher education, primarily because some university educated historians and archaeologists are still engaged in indigenous histories, a legacy of the Dar es Salaam school of history. Their archaeology first asks: What in local historical knowledge is important to comprehend, and how does it help explore questions that count? For example, when local oral traditions repeatedly reference the role of snakes during moments of stress and disaster, is it not critical to unwrap their meanings and to link them to the episodic history of disasters observed in the archaeological record (Walz

2009)? This is a question that counts at a local level–to be able to articulate local historical representations with archaeological evidence to build histories that are useful to the everyday lives of people today. These archaeologies need not have any relationship to the colonial project, though they may and indeed do in this case, where colonialism is locally treated as a natural disaster. If colonialism does arise in the discourse, then that gives greater texture to the meaning and analytical analyses of these local histories.

Southern African Issues

If exclusionary language in historical archaeology creates a de facto segregation in the discipline, then the behavioural context for the practice of historical archaeology in southern Africa provides a different angle of view of apartheid-like practices. Historical archaeology in southern Africa comprises a rather diverse range of archaeologies, mainly attempting to understand the last half a millennium of cultural and other developments in the region. It has been presented by some scholars as archaeology of the last 500 years (Swanepoel et al. 2008), characterized by European expansion into the African interior and contact with African societies along the way (Pikirayi 1993, 1999, 2014), the spread of European colonial settlements including trading stations (Pikirayi 2009, 2014) and mission stations (Mitchell 2002), or as an archaeology of the impact of that colonialism (Pikirayi 1993, Schrire 1988, 1995, 2002). There are also studies of race, class, ethnicity and slavery, as a consequence of European settlement at the Cape (Hall 1999a, 2000). The definition of historical archaeology in southern Africa has always been problematic (Pikirayi 2006), not just because it has privileged European texts post-1500, but also because of an artificial divide between a perceived 'historical period'–characterized by European presence, and a 'prehistoric period', similar to what prevails in the rest of the continent (see Schmidt and Mrozowski 2013).This artificial divide, which has dominated archaeological discourse in eastern and southern Africa for a very long time, carries considerable racist overtones. Firstly, the histories and processes connected with the development of complex state systems associated with Great Zimbabwe are not linked with the period Europeans subsequently appeared in the region (Pikirayi 2013) and dominated most recent societies. Other state systems such as Mutapa (1450–1900) (Pikirayi 1993) and Torwa-Changamire (1450–1930) (Pikirayi 2001) are mentioned in Portuguese and local oral accounts, but are distanced from Great Zimbabwe developments, a separation that occurs along the fault line of literacy. Secondly, this artificial divide is used to perpetuate notions of an alien race which is supposedly connected with the authorship

of Great Zimbabwe and related sites. These perspectives have fuelled the re-emergence of antiquarian views on the origins of the Zimbabwe Culture states, linked to the Near East, and in some cases, with early Lemba and Semitic identities attributed to them (McNaughton 2012).

Dating to 1270–1550, Great Zimbabwe has, in the conventional archaeological terminology of southern Africa, a prehistory, a proto-history as well as an historical period. These terms are not without their problems (Schmidt and Mrozowski, 2013). Its proto–history demarcates a period between the perceived boundaries of prehistory and history, during which Great Zimbabwe is known through other societies, either following external contact and interaction, and/or through textual sources, both oral and written. In some respects, this is a history that bears parallels with the Basque Whaling finds in Labrador discussed earlier–an historical lacunae enveloped in a broader historical record, written and oral.

The limitation of texts in addressing the very early history of Great Zimbabwe is illustrative of the issues that an African historical archaeology faces. What texts do exist are also external in character, and usually indirect (hearsay) with regards to the societies to which they refer. Great Zimbabwe has been documented in such manner via Muslim and Portuguese sources, concentrating more on the Solomonic legend and the location of the Biblical Ophir (e.g. Carroll 1988). The silence of these documents on the developments at Great Zimbabwe in the fifteenth century presents difficulties in understanding its decline and subsequent abandonment, although it is apparent that this is conditioned by economic and political changes that altered the character of Indian Ocean commerce following European arrival. Archaeology thus is one of the few tools available to construct the associated events and to tie them with the meagre information available from the written sources. Even when both oral and written sources become available after A.D. 1500, Great Zimbabwe remains peripheral to mainstream developments on the Zimbabwe plateau and the western Indian Ocean zone. Clearly it must have been abandoned by then, but not forgotten, given its size as a former state capital, and its regional political and economic influence (see Pikirayi 2001; Fontein 2006; Ndoro 2001).

Archaeologists have used a wide variety of historical methods to construct a developmental picture of Great Zimbabwe (e.g. Garlake 1973; Huffman 1996; Pikirayi 2001); these efforts have been met with a surprising re-emergence of neo-antiquarian notions about the past of Great Zimbabwe, perpetuating European and other racial views. This most recent manipulation of Great Zimbabwe history relegates the site into prehistory–giving it considerable antiquity–and at the same time distances it from its real authors. The latter condition partly results from a profound absence of familiarity with the archaeology/material culture of the site–a circumstance that parallels recent reactions to current research in Africa. For example,

Mallows (1985) offers the proposition that Great Zimbabwe was originally constructed as a slave pen by miners from southern India while Hromnick (1981) identifies the builders with the Dravidians. In the same vein, Ganter (2003) and Wade (2009) present Great Zimbabwe and Mapungubwe as archaeo-astronomical structures. These views are founded in Orientalism, the academic study and knowledge of the Middle East and Asia that developed since the times of European imperialism. Orientalism as a term was coined by Said (1979) in reference to the historical and ideological process whereby false images of and myths about the East or the "Oriental" have been constructed in various Western discourses. Orientalism was Europe's way of coming to terms with the Orient, based on the Orient's special place in European Western Experience. Knowledge and understanding of the 'Orient' improved gradually over time, as Europeans ventured into East Asia, otherwise the 'East' was largely the Biblical lands and adjacent territories, inclusive of Greece, Asia Minor, and Egypt.

Africa, in this instance, remained peripheral as well as a hindrance to European quests to control the Orient. To make a voyage to the Orient required sailing that extra, arduous distance via the southern tip of the continent. The term 'Cape of Good Hope' (in geographical terms, Cape Agulhas) represented a major psychological and geographical milestone for early Portuguese sailors to establish a sea route to Asia. The construction of the Suez Canal in the middle of the 19th century considerably reduced the sailing distances between Europe and Asia. By this time, Africa had also become a subject of considerable European curiosity as seen from Portuguese, British, and French expeditions of the nineteenth century, followed by the 'Scramble'. Early European explorers' encounters with the 'megalithic' structures in both the coastal and hinterland regions of eastern Africa presented another puzzle. Clearly these structures were the products of ancient advanced civilizations, but why were these erected in 'savage' Africa, they wondered!

Because these structures did not resemble those in Europe, such as Stonehenge and those reminiscent of the Greco-Roman civilizations, and because (according to the Portuguese early accounts) (see Pikirayi 1993, 2009), the local people did not know who built them–some attributing authorship of the structures to the devil–they concluded that these structures were the products of ancient Near East. We may understand such reactions as fitting theoretical constructs of the nineteenth century, but when such beliefs creep to the surface in the twenty-first century, we need to recognize them for what they are–vestiges of an era when Europeans began to assert a new dominance globally, casting unfamiliar civilizations as impossible products of African ingenuity. Born of the racism of the nineteenth-century colonial experience, the denial of African history before colonialism arises from deeply rooted nineteenth-century beliefs.

The attitudes in Europe that prevailed about Great Zimbabwe as outside history and erected inside the domain of savages continue as constant reminders that the unconscious threads of racism are woven into our everyday lives, including our practice of historical archaeology. The idea that modernity under colonial conditions should be the central focus in our practice of historical archaeology treats precolonial history in Africa as outside of history (prehistory) (Schmidt and Mrozowski 2013), thereby denying contemporary Africans a claim to their own histories. Restrictive practices in the West consign African historical archaeology to a lesser status, not quite making the grade. To valorize colonial entanglement above local histories is to make the same error as European did about great Zimbabwe: it privileges white foreign influence above local historical agency and in doing so creates an apartheid state within historical archaeology. With this backdrop in mind, it is not surprising that historical archaeology, replete with divisions and conditions that separate historical Africa from the West, is viewed with suspicion as just another means of establishing Western hegemony over contemporary Africa.

If we look to positive alternatives that contemporary practices engender in Africa, then we may point to several among many examples: (1) the use of oral traditions and heritage work to rehabilitate the role of women in history (e.g. Schmidt 2014b); (2) the role of archaeology in overturning metanarratives inscribed upon the continent by Europe (e.g. Schmidt 2009a, b; Kusimba 2009; Walz 2009; Bugarin 2009; Chami 2009); (3) the role of archaeology and oral testimonies in building a new understanding of the slave trade and its local impact in eastern Kenya (e.g. Kusimba 2004, 2009; Marshall 2012) and, (4) the use of oral traditions and archaeology in building new explanations for the rise and sustainability of Swahili civilization and its interactions with hinterland communities (Schmidt and Walz 2007a, b; Schmidt and Karega-Munene 2010; Schmidt and Patterson 1995; Walz 2009). All of these engage multiple narratives and provide alternative narratives differing considerably from colonial representations. There have been major efforts to examine discourses about societies said to be without sociocultural complexity and lacking technological achievement and innovative economy. We now have many examples of how archaeology has seriously challenged colonial metanarratives, such as primitive African technology, landscapes barren of historical experience, and the absence of contact with distant world regions in deep antiquity. While important critical examination of metanarratives about Africa will remain a priority for years to come, the new frontier for African historical archaeology is how to better integrate its practice in community settings where research agendas and participation are local priorities. This takes African historical archaeology in new directions, quite different from the modernity agenda formulated by white Western scholars. Moreover, it makes history making a local

project, freed from the designs and definitions that segregate historical archaeology today in the Western world.

Local Research as the Future

Historical archaeology in eastern and southern Africa has recently taken a path to engage closely with local communities that are motivated and dedicated to the renewal of heritage–sacred places and oral traditions–leading to a number of historical insights applied to archaeology. During local oral tradition research in Katuruka village of NW Tanzania, a new discourse opened into the history of a prominent early twentieth-century female ritual leader, a history that arose after elderly male history keepers died from HIV/AIDS and related diseases (Schmidt 2010; 2014a, b). The rise of female narratives after the widespread loss of male history keepers has meant access to subaltern narratives that provide completely new views on precolonial and colonial period politics. They also provide profound insights into power and control over history, including an important discussion about the power vacuum during the German and British colonial administrations that made it easier for a female ritual official to accrue significant social and political capital. Called Njeru, this remarkable woman of the twentieth century emerged in NW Tanzania through female voices, leading us to rewrite our understanding of strong women officials treated as "Kings" that ruled over vast estates and received tribute from their followers (Schmidt 2014a, b).

Close attention to female voices has forever changed how we construct the dynamics of political and ritual life in the precolonial and early colonial pasts. This more nuanced construction of historical archaeology promises to expand the scope of history making in Africa while at the same time it frees the African experience from a strictly colonial modality. If we fail to break down gratuitous boundaries and become more inclusive, then historical archaeology will continue to be irrelevant for most African practitioners and the African public. As historic archaeology in Africa takes these new directions under local conditions and leadership, its future innovative thinking appears ensured.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Notes

1. In the late 1950s, terms such as "academic apartheid" were used in connection with segregation and racialization of South African institutions of higher education (see e.g. Davis 1960). Such terms have been resisted by scholars based at these institutions because of the discomfort their use created in those contexts. The very indifference of South African academics to the first World Archaeological Congress (WAC1) underlines this. The same phrase is in use today in connection with adjunct faculty in the USA (see DeSantis 2011). In South Africa, academic apartheid evolved out of institutionalized racism, as university governance dealt with drafting policies to protect white students, who, until recently, were the majority at such institutions.
2. Institutional Racism is embedded within institutions and manifest in daily practice, often unconsciously, even to the degree that those engaged in its practice may vigorously deny its presence in daily life. For example, police departments are often centres of institutional racism, with discriminatory practices aimed at minorities. Similarly, universities have, through deeply embedded practices, denied equal access and equal resources to minority students. Here it applies to the denial of access by historical archaeology to African history–an unconscious but very real part of the practice of historical archaeology in the West.
3. By colonialism or colonization, we are using the term in a restricted context, to refer to gradual, and then increased, and finally accelerated European interest, settlement and, very often, violent subjugation of the continent of Africa, from the late fifteenth to the end of the 19th centuries. The coastal regions and the interiors of Africa were colonised in very different ways, by fundamentally different European imperial ideologies (see e.g. Ekechi 2002; Lovejoy 2012). The existence of a vast African diaspora from the 16th century onwards is largely the legacy of the practice of transporting millions of Africans out of the continent by European and Arab colonisers, a practice which triggered much violence among the societies affected. Referred to as the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, it was an integral part of the colonization of Africa. It involved expansion into the African hinterland, bringing many African societies *into contact* with Europeans, or at least, their trading items, which were exchanged for human resources (see e.g. Silliman 2005).
4. Teaching of local history is optional. Because it is not included in national exams, very few teachers devote time to such a focus.

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