

*Historical Archaeology***Whither Historical Archaeology in Africa?**

By Paul J. Lane

Africa and Africans in Antiquity (2001) E.A. YAMAUCHI, Editor. Michigan State University, East Lansing. Paper \$28.95. ISBN 0-87013-507-4.

The Archaeology of Southern Africa (2002) P. MITCHELL. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 515 pages. Paper \$60.00. ISBN 0-521-63389-3

Ancient Egypt in Africa (2003) D. O'CONNOR and A. REID, Editors. UCL Press, London. Paper \$50.00. ISBN 1-84472-000-4.

East African Archaeology: Foragers, Potters, Smiths and Traders (2003) C.M. KUSIMBA and S.B. KUSIMBA, Editors. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia. 226 pages. Cloth \$49.95. ISBN 1-931707-61-8.

Historical Archaeology in Africa: Representation, Social Memory and Oral Traditions (2006) P.R. SCHMIDT. Altamira Press, Lanham. Cloth \$88.00. ISBN-13 978-0-7591-0964-3. Paper \$34.95. ISBN 978-0-7591-0965-0.

INTRODUCTION

Historical archaeology first emerged as a distinct sub-field of the broader discipline in North America during the mid-20th century. Initial focus was principally on the study of archaeological remains of buildings, artefacts, and settlements associated with European colonization for which documentary sources also survived. Attempts to marry written sources with the material traces of human activity and critically assess these against one another continue to be primary concerns. However, the sub-field has matured significantly in recent decades, especially as different geographical areas have been subject to academic study from the perspective of 'historical archaeology'. Nevertheless, there remains considerable variation in definitions, methodologies, and theoretical underpinnings. These range from the highly cynical suggestion that historical archaeology can be 'one of the most expensive ways of finding out what is already known' (see Deetz 1991:1), through definitions which equate it with the archaeological study of time periods and events for which written sources are available, and of societies

that have developed a literate tradition (e.g., Deetz 1977; Beaudry 1988), to the suggestion that its focus is the archaeology of European expansion and exploration from the 15th century onwards (Deagan 1991; Deetz 1991; Hall 1993) and/or the emergence of the modern world (Schuyler 1970; Orser 1996). These last two perspectives have come to dominate the field, and both Schuyler's definition of historic sites archaeology as study of "the material manifestations of the expansion of European culture into the non-European world starting in the 15th century and ending with industrialization or the present depending on local conditions" (1970:84), and Deetz's definition of historical archaeology as "the archaeology of the spread of European culture throughout the world since the fifteenth century and its impact on indigenous peoples" (1977:5), are widely cited.

That none of these definitions is entirely comprehensive, especially when viewed from a non-European or non-Western perspective, is evident from recent overviews and syntheses of what constitutes historical archaeology in different parts of the world (e.g., Funari et al. 1999; Reid and Lane 2004; Hall and Sillman 2006). Negotiating one's way through such diverse definitions and deciding on which if any is most appropriate is thus not only fraught with pitfalls and contradictions, but also often a matter of personal inclination and/or the dominant research traditions of different regions.

This is especially well illustrated on the African continent. A recent *Encyclopedia of Historical Archaeology* (Orser 2002), for instance, includes a range of entries on aspects of African historical archaeology. These encompass regional overviews for West, East, North, and South Africa, a continent-wide discussion of 'maritime archaeology', and various individual entries about specific settlements such as Aksum, Oudepost, Elmina, Qsar es-Seghir, Great Zimbabwe, and Cape Town. Leaving aside all the practical difficulties, such as constraints on space, availability of contributors, failures by authors to deliver and so on, which inevitably have a significant effect on the final content of any volume, this selection is in no small part due to the editor's objectives, which match his own wide-ranging and inclusive definition of historical archaeology in global perspective expressed elsewhere:

...we may define historical archaeology as a multi- and interdisciplinary field that shares a special relationship with the formal disciplines of anthropology and history and seeks to understand *the global nature of modern life* (Orser 1996:27, emphasis added).

Orser goes on to stress that in his view, historical archaeology “should not be interested in all literate cultures, but only those that inhabited a time...broadly termed ‘modern times’” (ibid.).

Yet, both the individual entries to his edited encyclopaedia and the absence of other, equally viable entries, also speak volumes not just about the diversity of approaches to historical archaeology on the African continent, but also about significant gaps in current research. To judge from the different regional reviews, for instance, it would appear that in South Africa (Malan 2002) the dominant notion as to what constitutes historical archaeology is that it deals with the archaeology of European colonial encounters (see also Hall 1993), and generally with greatest reference to the European spaces and contexts of that encounter rather than from that of indigenous places and settings (cf. Parkington and Cronin 1979; Hall 1998). Based on the entry for West Africa (de Corse 2002), much the same could be said for this region as well, especially with reference to the Atlantic slave trade (e.g., de Corse 2001a), although there are signs that rather more attention is now given to indigenous settings (e.g., de Corse 2001b; Kelly 1997, 2004) than was the case a decade or so ago.

These research traditions contrast quite markedly with the situation in East Africa (see Schmidt 1990; Lane 2002), where the archaeological investigation of European colonialism, with a few notable site-specific exceptions (e.g., Kirkman 1974; Posnansky 1959, Garlake 1967; Matson and Sutton 1965; Sutton in press), has been rare (see also Horton 1997). Instead, much of what could be considered historical archaeology deals with the archaeology of the Swahili coast (Kirkman 1957; Kusimba 1999), where historical sources range from early Classical sources such as the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (Casson 1989) through 10th-12th century Arabic material (e.g., Gibb 1962) and various Chinese maps and texts (Wheatley 1964), to later European and Swahili documents (Strandes 1899; Freeman-Grenville 1962; Chittick 1976), and the as yet largely untapped potential of

Omani and Indian sources as well. Alongside this well-established research tradition, which currently goes under the name of *coastal* or *Swahili* rather than ‘historical’ archaeology, there also exists a more radical perspective, first proposed by Schmidt (1978, 1990), which uses local oral traditions as the main external, non-material evidential source.

The final regional entry in the *Encyclopedia of Historical Archaeology* covers North Africa (Straughn 2002). Here, owing to the very different historical trajectory of the region when compared with much of sub-Saharan Africa (although there are obvious parallels with early work in East Africa), much of the initial focus was on urban settlements such as Carthage, Leptis Magna, and comparable North African cities of the Classical world (for an overview of Roman North Africa, see Mattingly and Hitchner 1995), and more latterly on Islamic and/or Arab sources and towns such as Qsar es-Seghir (Redman 1983, 1986) and Al-Basra (Benco 2004). There has been far less research on, for instance, the archaeology of the Ottoman Empire (although see, e.g., Adams 1992; Alexander 1995, 2000) or post-15th century European incursions, and even fewer studies aimed at integrating any of the local ‘indigenous’ oral traditions (although see Edwards 2004).

The critical point to note here is not that archaeologists working in one part of Africa have either a ‘better’ or ‘more flawed’ understanding of what constitutes historical archaeology. Rather, what needs to be recognised and acknowledged is just how much influence research traditions can have, and how important it is to reflect on these and address them by changing research questions and agendas (Robertshaw 2000). Assuming, that is, that one accepts that the concept of historical archaeology has some validity on the African continent, which it would appear not all scholars believe to be the case.

In a recent review of *African Historical Archaeologies* (Reid and Lane 2004), for instance, Professor Graham Connah questioned whether the notion of historical archaeology was a particularly helpful or appropriate concept when applied to African contexts (Connah 2004a:477; see also Connah 2006, 2007; Robertshaw 2004). At first glance, such musings might seem rather surprising, coming as they do from one of the doyens of African archaeology,

whose own work on the continent has often focused on archaeological sites and landscapes for which supplementary written and oral sources are available, such as at Benin in Nigeria (Connah 1975) and Kibiro in Uganda (Connah 1996). Connah is also the author of a book devoted to the archaeology of colonial settlement in Australia (1988), in which he makes good use of documentary and photographic sources to aid and expand on interpretations of the surviving material record of this phase in Australian history. Most recently, he has co-authored a paper on the historical archaeology of a 9-pounder British naval gun preserved in Kampala, Uganda (Connah and Pearson 2002). Yet, it is precisely Connah's experience of seeking to integrate material, written, pictorial, and oral sources so as to provide a richer and more textured understanding of the past in two quite contrasting continents, that should give us pause to reflect on the usefulness of the concept of historical archaeology and how it has been, and is being, applied by archaeologists working in different parts of Africa.

THE CASE AGAINST HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN AFRICA

Connah's dissatisfaction with the use of the term historical archaeology with reference to African contexts and materials stems from two core concerns. Firstly, that several generations of archaeologists have worked hard to rid the study of Africa's past of the kind of bias that a division between 'history' and 'prehistory' has often invoked. Namely, that 'prehistory', instead of being regarded simply as a time period prior to the invention of a system of writing and the production of written texts (which in global perspective is of variable duration and date of both beginning and ending), is taken to imply a lack or absence of historical processes and events. This latter interpretation of the term can convey an impression of cultural stasis and backwardness, and typically also ideas of racial inferiority or unimportance, as most famously encapsulated in Trevor-Roper's assertion in the early 1960s that, aside from the history of Europeans, the rest of Africa's history amounted to no more than "the unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe" (1963:871). Archaeologists of Connah's generation were among some

of the first to explicitly confront such views, and their accomplishments and the work of a later cohort of scholars demonstrate unequivocally just how mistaken Trevor-Roper was, as is well illustrated in David Phillipson's overview of African archaeology now in its third edition (2005), and also Connah's recent collection of brief yet highly accessible essays on different aspects of three million years of human and hominid activity on the African continent (2004b), written specifically with the non-specialist in mind. No wonder then that he now believes that archaeologists investigating the African past should seek "to create a seamless account of human endeavour" (2006:2) and "cease to think of 'prehistoric archaeology' and 'historical archaeology' as separate entities" (2004a:477), as opposed, for example, to his earlier belief that the African past (or at least, that of Benin) could be reasonably split into prehistoric and protohistoric periods (1975:2).

Connah's second argument against the use of the concept 'historical archaeology' is that there are a number of competing definitions and as a result the term is ambiguous. Far better then, and in keeping with his desire for a seamless narrative of human endeavour, to talk simply of just plain 'archaeology' when dealing with the African continent. This too seems to represent a change in his thinking, as it is certainly at odds with the views expressed in his book on the settler archaeology of Australia (tellingly sub-titled, *The Archaeology of Australia's History*, which given its subject matter would seem to imply that the continent also has a prehistoric past!), in which his principal aim was, explicitly, to provide a brief introduction to the historical archaeology of Australia (1988:2). This, he felt, was a valid endeavour on three counts (*ibid.*, 2-5): 1) European settlement of Australia has left a mass of material evidence which archaeologists, as the primary specialists skilled at recovering information from material remains and interpreting it in socially meaningful ways, are best placed to study; 2) that written documents and other archival (i.e., in the narrower sense of the term, historical) sources are often partial and uninformative about certain processes and practices; and 3) that studies of the archaeology of the recent past for which textual and related sources are available, provide a good testing ground for models of the relationships between

material culture and human behaviour that can be used to interpret the material remains of periods for which neither written nor oral sources survive— i.e., eras that are often glossed over in different parts of the world as being part of ‘prehistory’.

All scholars are entitled to change their ideas about particular aspects of their discipline, and many often do. Thus, the issue here is *not* that elements of Connah’s *oeuvre* as an archaeologist seem to have been either explicitly (as in the case of his 1988 book), or more implicitly (as in the case of some of the stated motivations for his research at Benin (Connah 1975:2-3) and Kibiro (Connah 1996:1-2) concerned with historical archaeology, and thus seemingly contradict his recent remarks about the usefulness of the concept. Instead, the issues are: 1) whether the concept does have some validity in reference to African contexts and materials; and 2) whether other archaeologists working on the African continent share his views or not.

On this latter point, judging from the titles under review, it would seem that perhaps the majority of practitioners are happy to dispense with, or see no real need for, the prefix ‘historical’ when writing about aspects of the archaeology of the continent even when making use of oral and written sources in their interpretations of the material record. This said, since these are very different books concerned with very different subject matters, geographical areas and temporal ranges, no proper comparison can be drawn between them in terms of content. Instead, for a better indication as to whether the concept ‘historical archaeology’ has some validity for those who research Africa’s past we need to examine how different authors approach the integration of written and oral sources with the material remains of past activity.

METHODS, SOURCES, AND SOURCE CRITICISM

A key feature of historical archaeology, regardless of which definition is preferred, is that it seeks to integrate and interrogate strictly archaeological types of sources (such as artefactual, ecofactual, structural, and architectural remains and their contextual, spatial, and temporal associations and characteristics) with other non-archaeological sources that can be broadly defined as ‘historical’. These include various

types of written texts and documents (such as formal histories, unpublished archival records, personal letters, newspaper accounts); pictorial and cartographic materials (such as drawings, maps, and photographs); different forms of orally-transmitted information (such as myths, oral traditions, praise songs, king lists, interview responses, and personal memories); and, in a few cases, also information gleaned from historical linguistic analyses (e.g., Schoenbrun 1998). In recent years, there have also been attempts to link these kinds of sources with various proxy indicators of environmental conditions (such as pollen and phytolith records, carbon- and oxygen- isotopic signatures, and geoarchaeological information) in an effort to reconstruct the long-term historical ecology of particular regions and habitats (e.g., Mrozowski 2006; for an African example, see Schmidt 1997a).

The degree of attention given to these different non-archaeological sources by individual researchers depends as much on their specific research questions and personal definitions of what constitutes ‘historical archaeology’ as it does on the actual availability of different types of historical information. Orser, in discussing these issues has suggested that three broad approaches can be identified (Orser 1996: 23-28). Thus, where historical archaeology is treated as the study of a time period during which at least some individuals are literate (and thus distinct from earlier periods of ‘prehistory’, i.e., pre-writing), emphasis is obviously placed on the presence of written sources. Since writing was invented and adopted at different times in different parts of the world, the date when such time periods began and their duration are highly variable when viewed in global perspective. Alternatively, where historical archaeology is regarded principally as a method that entails the consideration of material archaeological remains alongside other types of historical evidence, then more emphasis is placed on the nature and availability of ‘other historical’ sources, such as texts, oral testimony, pictorial evidence, and/or linguistic and even ethnographic data, rather than simply on written texts. Again, the temporal range of historical archaeology from this perspective is also highly variable between different continents. Likewise if, as Orser prefers, historical archaeology is regarded as the archaeological study of ‘modern times’, then the issues of liter-

acy and the existence of written texts are not so important. Instead, emphasis is placed on documenting how men and women, whether literate or not, responded and contributed to a set of broader historical processes that according to Orser, include global colonisation, Eurocentrism, capitalism, and modernity.

In his book on *The Archaeology of Southern Africa*, Peter Mitchell opts for precisely this definition (p. 380), devoting an entire chapter (chapter 13, pp. 380-412) to this topic. In this he is also continuing a trend that has come to characterise the practice of 'historical archaeology' in South African (as opposed to southern African) archaeology that has already been alluded to. Acknowledging that a number of studies in the region have done little more than document archaeologically what is already known from documentary sources, Mitchell considers that the main contributions of the sub-field have been attained through "the close engagement of material culture and textual evidence" with reference to four, closely related themes as played out against the context of European colonialism. These are, the nature of colonial frontiers; the archaeological evidence of underclasses (who are rarely represented in documentary sources); the material expressions of cognitive structures; and the "archaeology of text" (pp. 381-382). The rest of the chapter is devoted to providing a narrative of European colonial expansion across southern Africa, salted with different examples of archaeological evidence associated with this, and more focussed archaeological studies of the processes involved. Most of the latter have been carried out in South Africa, and include well-known studies such as that by Carmel Schrire and colleagues at Oudepost 1 (e.g., Schrire 1988, 1990; Schrire and Deacon 1989; Cruz-Urbe and Schrire 1991; Schrire et al. 1993), and the work of Martin Hall and other members of University of Cape Town Historical Archaeology Research Group, on the historical archaeology of the greater Cape Town area and the construction of the colonial landscape (e.g., Brink 1990; Hall 1992, 1993, 2000; Hall et al. 1990; Hall and Markell 1993; Malan 1990).

As the work by the historical anthropologists John and Jean Comaroff (1991, 1997) on the impact of Protestant missions and missionaries on southern Africa's Tswana populations has

highlighted, an important component of the process of colonisation is the reconstruction of ordinary everyday lives, the use of space, modes of behaviour, styles of dress, and ways of thinking. Many of these leave some form of material trace making them particularly amenable to archaeological investigation. Analysis of the dissonance between textual, oral, and material sources can reveal something of the ambiguous nature of contact situations and the fluidity of identity constructs that can accrue, and as Mitchell's review makes clear, archaeologists working in southern Africa are becoming increasingly interested in this aspect from the perspective of historical archaeology. In particular, although such concerns have often been addressed with reference to places primarily associated with the European side of the colonial encounter, such as Cape Town and Oudepost, it is evident that more attention is now being given to localities more directly linked to the indigenous populations and, even more critically, to indigenous accounts and representations of the colonial encounter. Recent examples include studies of 19th century Tswana towns such as Ntsweng and Phalatswe in Botswana, especially with reference to Tswana responses to Protestant evangelism (Reid et al. 1997; Lane 1999); the transformation of the Mutapa state in northern Zimbabwe following the expansion of Portuguese trading networks along the Zambezi basin (Pikirayi 1993); the consequences for Nama and Herero pastoralist communities following the creation of new trading opportunities provided by European whaling and sealing expeditions on the Namibian coast (Kinahan 2000), and of German colonialism, land division, and genocide (Lindholm 2006); and the evidence for resistance by local San hunter-gatherer populations to the expansion of European-style farms and the decimation of local wildlife in the Seacow Valley South Africa (Saitowitz and Sampson 1992; Sampson 1995), and the decimation of other San communities in the Northern Cape (Deacon 1996).

Not all archaeologists working on the continent would agree with this narrower definition of historical archaeology, however. As Peter Schmidt's book, *Historical Archaeology in Africa: Representation, Social Memory and Oral Traditions*, highlights, archaeological understanding of the later pre-colonial past of all parts of the

continent is deeply informed by the wealth of oral traditions concerning patterns of human settlement, political structures, and belief systems that have been assembled by scholars. Chapter 12 of Mitchell's book (pp. 344-379) is a case in point. Entitled "Later farming communities in southern Africa", this traces the expansion and consolidation of farming communities across southern Africa from ca. 1000 CE onwards, their interactions with neighbouring pastoralist and hunter-gatherer societies, and the emergence of the major Bantu-language-speaking ethnic groups, such as the Sotho/Tswana, Shona, Zulu, and Xhosa who occupied the eastern and northern parts of the region at the time of the European colonial encounter. Mitchell expertly integrates oral, documentary, and archaeological sources, alongside environmental evidence to provide a highly readable narrative and valuable summation of the evidence and different debates. Yet nowhere in this chapter does he refer to this as an example of 'historical archaeology', and so Mitchell's text *could* be read as implying that history only starts when the Europeans arrive. This is, of course, not his intention – as a reading of the rest of the book amply shows. But, it is a dilemma that needs addressing, not least because widespread use is made of ethnographic and ethnohistoric information concerning southern Africa's ethnic populations by archaeologists working in the region so as to interpret the archaeological record of much earlier periods. In many cases, this ethnographic information is used with care and due attention to the pitfalls of simply analogies. However, the general failure on the part of scholars to historicize these ethnographies has often had the unfortunate effect of portraying the indigenous populations of the region as unchanging and static (for broader discussion of these issues, see e.g., Stahl 1993; Lane 1994/5, 1998, 2004a).

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SOURCES

One response to the kind of critique outlined above would be to abandon, as Connah suggests, the use of the term 'historical archaeology' altogether and simply accept that for different time periods archaeologists have the opportunity to use a variety of different sources, but the nature of these sources is not a constant and written sources, in particular, are only available

for much of the continent as a direct consequence of European expansion and colonialism. Integrating such sources thus becomes more of a methodological rather than a theoretical issue, although deciding what constitutes, for instance, a 'European' as opposed to an 'indigenous' source is not always straightforward (see e.g., Schrire 2004:293). Moreover, as recently emphasised by Schoenbrun, archaeologists and historians also need to be aware that the "contents of a written source draw on other types of sources, and any source of one type or another can be put to use in other contexts" of historical production and representation (2006:1413).

Similar points have been made recently by Pikirayi, with particular reference to the distinction that needs to be made between 'external' and 'internal' sources (2006). By the former term Pikirayi means sources produced by outsiders, either as direct observers, or as often in African contexts, transcribers and copiers of verbal accounts provided by various visitors to foreign lands. Thus, examples might include the large number of published first-hand accounts of voyages of discovery and exploration in Africa by different individuals of European origin that begin to appear from ca. 1500 CE onwards, and especially after 1800; the numerous official documents produced by the different European colonial powers that are now lodged in archives in Africa, Europe, and elsewhere; the records kept by different trading companies, ship captains, and others engaged in commercial activity; personal diaries and letters written by European missionaries, explorers, and administrators; and the various pre-1500 descriptions and guides to parts of Africa written in a variety of languages, such as those referred to above. By 'internal sources', Pikirayi means the range of historical sources produced by different African societies. Most obviously these include the oral traditions and histories, myths, and personal memories that have been transcribed by professional historians and anthropologists. However, as he notes (2006), there also exist various texts written in the local vernacular for certain parts of the continent, as well as some indigenous writing systems, notably the Vai script developed in what is now Liberia and the Barnum hieroglyphs that occur in Cameroon.

Just as archaeological sources are subject to a

wide range of processes that can affect their formal, spatial, bio-chemical, and contextual characteristics which may affect the integrity of the scientific information they carry, so too can oral, textual, and documentary sources be subject to a wide range of factors that may introduce different kinds of bias and selectivity. For the African continent, both the specific and general value of oral traditions, in particular, as reliable sources of historical information have been discussed at some length and various methods of source criticism devised (e.g., Vansina 1965, 1985; Henige 1974, 1982; Miller 1980; Tonkin 1992; Willis 1996; White et al. 2001). There is also widespread recognition of the need for detailed source criticism when handling documentary and archival sources. In terms of the latter, racial bias is obviously one factor, but many others also came into play. Equally, European perceptions of and attitudes toward Africans were by no means uniform, varying between individuals, different nationalities, as well as between different kinds of sources and over time.

For instance, European pictorial representations of Africans were highly diverse initially and were influenced as much by the conventional rules that governed all forms of pictorial representation as by particular prejudices or views regarding the African continent and its peoples. Consequently, there was no single stereotypical image of Africa or Africans in early Modern Europe, although there was often a tendency to either Hellenise Africans in terms of their appearance and poses, or draw heavily on the styles of earlier, medieval Christian painting (Friedman 1981), which often cast Africans as one of the Magi (Mark 1988). More importantly, in the representations of actual African peoples and settings, a primary concern initially seems to have been with the *cultural* as opposed to physical differences between black Africans and Europeans, as in the Flemish merchant Pieter de Marees' early 17th century account of the Gold Coast (Iselin 1994). Inevitably, not all European representations were as favourable. The broadly contemporary written accounts of Khoikhoi herders living around the Cape, by members of the De Houtman expedition of 1595, by John Jourdain (1608), and also Herbert's fanciful image of a Khoi family (1634), all emphasise an apparent 'savagery' and predilec-

tion towards cannibalism (Smith 1993). The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that each external source needs to be considered on its own terms and scrutinised for traces of bias and veracity.

ANCIENT EGYPT IN AFRICA, AFRICA IN ANCIENT EGYPT

One widely influential source of ideas about Black Africa and the inspiration of comparisons between Europe and the African 'other' has been Ancient Egypt. The history and scope of the influence of these notions on European thought over the centuries is amply illustrated in the collection of papers assembled by David O'Connor and Andrew Reid in their edited book *Encounters with Ancient Egypt* (2003). This is one in a series of eight books published together as a set under the overall editorship of Peter Ucko, and arising from a conference held at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London in late 2000. While the other books in the series cover many of the other ways in which Ancient Egypt has influenced Western thought and also consider Egyptian's ideas of their past at different points in history, it is this volume which most explicitly examines Egypt's relationships with the rest of the continent. As the editors state early in their introduction, the main purpose of this volume is to address the related questions, "was Ancient Egypt to some, or even much, of Africa the source of sophisticated culture as Greece was to much of Europe, or, did Egyptian civilization incorporate fundamental African concepts markedly different from those dominant in the ancient Near East and the Mediterranean lands?" (p. 1). Inevitably, in attempting to answer such questions a more fundamental one, to wit, 'Is Egypt part of Africa?', also comes to the fore, and the contributors and editors attempt to address both the narrower ones which provided the stimulus for the volume *and* the wider one from a variety of perspectives, that include a consideration of both the substantive evidence and different ideological constructions of Africa and Egypt.

Aside from the editor's introductory chapter, the book comprises eleven single-authored contributions. Of these, seven chapters (chapters 2-8) explore the ideological, political, and economic aspects to scholarly debates on Ancient Egypt and its role within Africa, while the

remaining four (chapters 9-12) focus more on the actual evidence for Ancient Egypt's engagement with its southerly neighbours. This said, all of the chapters are linked by a number of shared themes. Among these is the degree to which Classical scholars have ignored the evidence for the presence of Black Africans in the Classical world other than as slaves, and more importantly, the contributions African cultures (including Egyptian) made to the shaping of 'Western Civilization'. The main argument in favour of greater recognition of African contributions and presence are outlined by Bernal in chapter 2, while in chapter 3 North offers a critique of some of the arguments forwarded by Bernal in his chapter and at greater length in *Black Athena* volumes I and II (Bernal 1987, 1991). While acknowledging the racism and prejudice of earlier generations certainly shaped the tenor of scholarly research on the history of Greek, and thus Western, civilization and underplayed Ancient Egypt's part in this, North is critical of Bernal's insistence that the *origins* of Greek civilization are Black African and argues instead for a more cautious recognition of African contributions without losing sight of the contributions of other non-African societies and historical processes. There are other dangers involved since, when one looks south, the glorification of Ancient Egypt as the font of civilization actually becomes once again a source of racism and prejudice. This is well illustrated in the following four chapters, which in their separate ways highlight how a belief in Ancient Egyptian superiority has often resulted in the downplaying and neglect of the contributions made by sub-Saharan African societies to their own technological, social, economic, and political development. This is perhaps most evident with reference to European colonial and missionary concepts of Hamitic superiority as discussed by Reid (chapter 5) and Bennett (chapter 8), but is also evident in the work of the writings of ardent Afrocentric authors such as Cheikh Anta Diop and Léopold Senghor, as elaborated by Folorunso (chapter 6) and MacDonald (chapter 7) (see also Holl 1990).

Nevertheless, as these authors all acknowledge, scholars are faced with something of a dilemma. Specifically, whereas it is important that local achievements and inventions are recognised for what they are and not simply

explained away as the outcome of cultural diffusion or even population migration from technologically or racially superior regions, as was common in the 19th and early 20th centuries, it is equally important that the evidence for actual contacts between Ancient Egypt and its sub-Saharan neighbours is acknowledged and the consequences that such contacts *may have* had are explored. In his chapter Reid, for instance, traces the influence of theories about the southward migration of a superior race of cattle-keepers of Semitic origin referred to in the literature as Hamites (after Noah's son Ham), on interpretations of the history and archaeology of the Great Lakes region. As he makes clear, attitudes toward possible connections between Ancient Egypt and the Great Lakes have undergone many changes, and have been shaped by the historical and cultural context in which these theories were produced. A recurrent element of these claims has been the use of superficial similarities between the two regions in terms of different material traits, ranging from the common use of the bow-harp and the wearing by men of cloth-wrappers, to similarities in the shape of canoe prows and the construction of clay walls with arched doorways, as evidence for contact and/or migration. All can be shown to be based on a combination of conjecture, racial prejudice, and poorly constructed formal analogies, and there is virtually no securely dated material evidence (other than the bones of domesticated cats!) to suggest contact between the two regions until the modern era. In fact, the Great Lakes region seems to have been one of the few parts of Africa where long-distance trade and external contact played minimal roles in the emergence of social complexity.

Just as for East Africa, Hamitic hypotheses have had considerable influence on interpretations of West Africa's past, and here too there is only limited evidence to support the claims of Christian missionaries and Afrocentric authors alike that the rise of complex societies and urbanism in the region were as a consequence of links with Ancient Egypt. As MacDonald notes, current archaeological and related evidence suggest that ceramic technology, cereal domestication and iron-working, all commonly regarded as key traits of early civilization, were all separately invented by communities in sub-Saharan Africa independently from Ancient Egypt, and

what little material evidence there is to suggest contact points to links with Nubia rather than the lower Nile region. Nubia, as is well known, of course *did have* close links with the Egyptian kingdoms to the north, and the nature of these links and how they have been investigated form the focus of the last four papers in *Encounters with Ancient Egypt*. All of these papers focus on the Nile Valley, since this was the only corridor through which Ancient Egypt effectively had access to Sudanic Africa, and especially on the rise of the Nubian kingdoms. All also concentrate on the influence that ideas about Egypt, notably those that envisaged Ancient Egypt as the font of knowledge and civilisation, have had on the direction of scholarly research in the region. In so doing, all offer alternative readings of the material evidence that challenge the hegemony of Egyptology and the tyranny of the text. Wengrow in his paper (chapter 9), for instance, notes the considerable similarities between the early Neolithic traditions of the Egyptian Nile Valley and Central Sudan (known respectively as the Badarian and Khartoum Neolithic). On the basis of this comparison, he suggests that they shared a set of common cultural traditions, and that the archaeological record of the Badarian and Khartoum Neolithic represent the remains not of settled, agricultural villagers, but of cattle-keeping nomadic pastoralists. Drawing on the ethnography of 20th century pastoralists of the southern Sudan, such as the Dinka, Shilluk, and Nuer, who all hold notions of divine leadership, Wengrow makes a convincing case to the effect that Ancient Egyptian ideas of divine kingship had their origins in similar kinds of societies rather than in the kind of urban contexts found in Western Asia that are conventionally regarded as having provided the prototype for Egyptian civilization.

The remaining three papers by Edwards (chapter 10), Morkot (chapter 11), and Fuller (chapter 12), concentrate on a different period—namely the interaction between Ancient Egypt and Meroe and the Kushitic/Napatan Kingdom. Until recently, interpretations of the origins and the evolution of social structures and political forms of Meroitic Nubia have been driven by a northern perspective, as is made abundantly clear in Morkot's critical essay on the writings of scholars such as Breasted, Reisner and Gardiner. A similar point is also made

by Burstein in his contribution (chapter 4) to *Africa & Africans in Antiquity*, where he notes that because "of the priority assigned to literary sources in this model, topics were selected for analysis not because of their intrinsic historical significance but because of the chance survival of written evidence" (p. 141), underlining one of the key reasons why a critical interrogation of textual sources in the light of available archaeological evidence is so crucial.

In their chapters, Fuller and Edwards similarly touch on aspects of this historiography, but also offer alternative readings of the material evidence. Edwards, for instance, points to the existence of a long-term culinary frontier between Egypt and Nubia as expressed through different preferences for wine and wheat-based breads in the former, and beer and sorghum-based porridge in the latter. This was also given material expression through differences in ceramic vessel forms and also the use of metals. Edwards also speculates on the possibility that copper rather than gold may have been more highly valued in Nubian society in common with other traditions further south, and in contrast to the conventions of Ancient Egypt. Fuller develops some of Edwards's arguments about the contrast between Pharonic and Sudanic models of state formation, noting that even though Nubian society and elites drew on various Egyptian architectural and iconographic forms and based their script on Egyptian hieroglyphics, the patterning of the archaeological evidence suggests that Kush was organised as a segmentary state rather than on the centralised lines exhibited in Pharonic Egypt, and so may have shared similar traditions of political authority and leadership found in societies further to the south.

ATTEMPTS TO VERIFY CLASSICAL AND MEDIÉVAL TEXTS

In common with other parts of the world, much of what might be considered historical archaeology on the African continent has been concerned with the verification of various written historical sources, especially those concerning the pre-modern era. Outside of Egypt and Nubia, where texts written using the hieroglyphic script first emerged in an archaic form perhaps as early as 3400-3200 BCE (Dreyer 1998) and, as discussed above, have shaped the

direction and content of the majority of archaeological research in the region, the main areas where text-based archaeology has been attempted are Libya and adjacent parts of North Africa, the East African Swahili coast, and Sudanic West Africa. In the former two areas, the primary relevant texts are those written by Greek and Roman authors (although for more recent centuries, Arabic sources are also of value), while for West Africa, the earliest documentary sources derive from the writings of Arabic scholars such as Ibn Batuta, Ibn Khaldun and Al Bekri. In all three areas scholars have tended to give primacy, until recently, to the available written sources, with the result that certain misrepresentations and distortions within these texts have often acquired the status of historical fact (Smith 2003). A good example is the claim made by an earlier generation of historians, based on their reading of the original sources, that Islam was introduced to the Empire of Ghana as a direct result of its forcible imposition by Almoravid warriors from Morocco and southern Mauritania. Recent reappraisal of both the Arabic and local oral historical sources, however, has shown that the Ghana Empire was never conquered by the Almoravids (Conrad and Fisher 1982, 1983). Tellingly, the available archaeological evidence from Koumbi Saleh in southern Mauritania, which is believed to be the site of a merchant town attached to the royal capital of Ghana, is also inconclusive, and is certainly open to an alternative reading (Insoll 2004:168-169).

The collection edited by Edwin Yamauchi, *Africa and Africans in Antiquity* (2001), provides further examples of some of the challenges archaeologists face when using textual sources as well as offering a valuable introduction to current approaches to text-aided historical archaeology for a region that is more often than not hived off from African archaeology and considered more from the perspective of Classical archaeology and/or Egyptology. Of the ten essays, one is concerned with the evidence of historical linguistics, and in particular, commonalities in different Afroasiatic languages (Hodge, chapter 1); four deal with different aspects of Egypt's relations with Nubia and the kingdoms of Kush, Meroe, and Ballāna (Yurco, Russmann, Burstein, and Adams, chapters 2-5); three with other parts of north and north-east-

ern Africa, specifically Carthage and the Maghreb (Bullard, chapter 6), Cyrenaica and Marmarica (White, chapter 7), and Ethiopia (Bard and Fattovitch, chapter 9). The remaining two essays (Snowden, chapter 8, and Swanson, chapter 10) deal with how different aspects of the perception and representation of Africa and Africans in antiquity and in the modern era have shaped understandings of the history and archaeology of the continent. The majority of the contributors are either Egyptologists, Classical archaeologists, or specialists in Oriental (or Middle Eastern) studies, the main exceptions being Hodge, a specialist in African linguistics, Adams, who is a leading specialist on the archaeology of northern Sudan and the Middle Nile, and Bard and Fattovitch, whose area of specialisation is on the emergence of the Aksumite kingdom in what is now Ethiopia and Eritrea and its Pre-Aksumite origins. It is interesting, therefore, that a common theme to these papers is the extent to which, firstly, the Classical and Egyptian textual sources demonstrate not just the presence of black Africans in areas north of the Sahara during antiquity, but also the extent to which sub-Saharan communities and polities contributed to the growth and operation of complex, state-level societies along the Mediterranean littoral.

In common with the contributors to *Encounters with Ancient Egypt*, a recurrent theme of the papers in *Africa and Africans in Antiquity* is the extent to which the dominance of text-aided archaeology has encouraged scholars to focus on particular topics and issues to the neglect of others. This is most apparent in the papers by White on Cyrenaica and Marmarica, and by Bullard on Carthage and the Maghreb. For the former area, the available textual sources include various New Kingdom accounts concerning clashes with the nomadic chiefdoms that occupied the areas inland from the coastal littoral, who are also mentioned by Herodotus who referred to them generically as 'Libyans'. Textual sources also provided valuable information about the circumstances behind Greek colonization of this area toward the end of the 7th century BCE, and archaeological research at several of these sites has advanced our knowledge of these colonial settlements considerably. Much less research has been conducted aimed at investigating the impact of Greek colonialism

beyond the confines of the urban centres, or on the archaeology of the nomadic communities further into the interior. Much the same could also be said about the Maghreb, where the Phoenician colony of Carthage was established in the 9th century BCE. Textual sources point to the existence of tribute relations with the neighbouring Berber leaders until they were revoked by the Phoenicians in 450 BCE, and successive archaeological campaigns at Carthage have provided vivid insights into life in the city over the centuries. Far less is known from either written or material sources about Berber society and none of it features in Bullard's account (cf. Blench 2001). This is precisely the kind of context, and *contra* Connah, where the application of the concepts of historical archaeology, whether these are simply methodological ones concerning the interrogation and integration of textual and material evidence alongside one another, or the sub-field's more conceptual and theoretical concerns with the effects of colonialism and indigenous responses, and the impacts of world systems, would seem to have the potential to make a profound difference on the direction and content of archaeological research in a particular geographical region.

Recent ongoing research on the Garamantes, who lived in the area of the Fezzan in the Central Sahara of Libya, provides a case in point. The Garamantes were first mentioned briefly by Herodotus in Books II and IV of his *Histories* probably written around 430 BCE, in which they appear as a somewhat warlike group of people who used four-horse chariots to attack neighbouring cave-dwellers, although he also mentions that they had farms and long-horned cattle. They also figure on the first world map in history made by Ptolemy (90-168 CE), and are referred to by other Roman historians including Pliny and Tacitus (McCall 1999). However, questions as to the identity of the Garamantes, whether and how they managed to survive in the desert, and the nature of their relationship to the Roman empire and the earlier Cathiginian polity have only recently been addressed by archaeologists. From the various results of combined archaeological and palaeoenvironmental research, it is now evident that the Garamantes emerged around ca. 750 BCE from earlier pastoralist communities (e.g., Liverani 2000a, 2000b). Interestingly, the consolidation of set-

tlement, horticultural intensification, and the growth of social complexity and political hierarchies coincided with a progressive decline in rainfall following the onset of increased aridity across the Sahara around ca. 1050 BCE (Brooks 2006:34-35). Archaeological research has further demonstrated that occupation of the desert margins was made possible by the construction a sophisticated underground system of water conduits and galleries, or *foggaras*, so as to draw ground water from the southern edge of Wadi al-Ajal towards the centre where their capital, Garama, was situated (Mattingly 2003). The development of trade links with Carthage and the later Roman colonies also helped sustain these communities, with salt possibly being one of the most important commodities. Gold obtained via trans-Saharan trade with the emergent West African kingdoms may have been equally important, although the material evidence for this remains limited.

ORAL HISTORY AS METAPHOR

The growth of scholarly study of the oral history and traditions of African societies coincided with a rise in interest in the later Holocene archaeology of the continent, and especially that concerning the origins and spread of food production, metal-working, urbanism, and complex political systems (see Robertshaw 1990). As part of this intellectual trend, the use of such traditions became a common component of most archaeological surveys, principally as a means of providing an overview of the more recent history of the area under investigation. Moreover, a particular characteristic of a great many oral traditions concerning different African societies is the emphasis placed on migration as the primary driving force of social change, and the first generation of Africa's historians to be trained in the Western academic tradition were often keen to see their archaeological counterparts provide material verification that the various routes and stopping places described in the oral accounts were indeed associated with the settlement histories of specific ethnic groups. It is rare however, to find unequivocal confirmation of this kind in the archaeological record, as many archaeologists were quick to point out (e.g., Siiriäinen 1973; Andah and Okpoko 1979), and over the subsequent decades there has been a steady distancing

between the two disciplines. This has even prompted a debate as to whether they now share common concerns (Vansina 1995; Robertshaw 2000).

One area which has featured prominently in some of these debates, and which has also fostered alternative approaches to the uses of both oral and archaeological sources is the Great Lakes region of East Africa, and particularly with reference to places associated in the oral traditions with an elite known as the Bacwezi. According to at least one set of traditions, the Bacwezi had been the historical rulers of a large region centred in the lush grasslands of western Uganda, which, by calculating from genealogical data, would appear to have existed sometime during the 14th and 15th centuries CE (Oliver 1953; Nyakatura 1973). A number of extensive complexes of ditched earthworks, including the sites of Bigo, Munsa, Kibengo, and Kasonko, are known from this area (Wayland 1934; Lanning 1953, 1955). During the 1950s-1960s, various archaeological campaigns were undertaken at some of these in an attempt to provide a clearer understanding of their date and function, and their link with the Bacwezi dynasty (Shinnie 1960; Lanning 1966; Posnansky 1966). The discovery at Bigo of an enclosure similar in form to that found at some of the later royal capitals in Uganda, and a suite of radiocarbon dates from the site suggesting occupation between the 13th-16th centuries CE, led to the conclusion that Bigo was indeed the capital of the pastoral Bacwezi kingdom, and that the other sites were part of the same political system (Posnansky 1969). Reappraisals of these investigations, however, have called into question many of the historical interpretations that were used to guide the archaeological excavations (Berger 1980), and highlighted some of the more general problems associated with trying to substantiate oral traditions archaeologically (Schmidt 1990). Moreover, the results of more recent field investigations by Robertshaw at Munsa and Kibengo indicate that despite some superficial similarities these not only differ from one another but also from Bigo, in terms of their site inventories and material culture traditions. Thus, rather than belonging to a single state, Robertshaw suggests that each of these sites represents the centre of an independent polity that was in competition with its neigh-

bours over resources and control of the local populace (1999).

Over the years, Peter Schmidt has written extensively about these and associated sets of oral traditions and the insights they provide into changing structures of social and political power (e.g., 1978, 1983a), as well as on the related topics of the symbolism of iron and iron production (e.g., 1997b), the origins, technology, ideology, and environmental consequences of iron production (e.g., 1978, 1997a; Schmidt and Childs 1985; Schmidt and Mapunda 1997), the linkages between oral traditions and archaeology (e.g., 1983b, 1990), the use of historic and archaeological sites as mnemonics in the process of history production, the socio-politics of the past and archaeological praxis in Africa (1995) and the historiography of Great Lakes scholarship (e.g., 1990, 1995). His new book, *Historical Archaeology in Africa: Representation, social memory and oral traditions* (2006), brings together a selection of these and other related material with the stated goals of highlighting the significance of linking oral traditions and archaeology to provide a better understanding of “social memory and the role of deep-time mnemonics”; to illustrate “how historical archaeology as defined and practiced in North America has the capacity to escape the bounds of its ethnocentrism”; to map out the kind of “questions that count” (Deagan 1988) with reference to African historical archaeology; and to “show why history and ‘prehistory’ fit together in history making when applied to issues of historical interpretation” (pp. 3-7). Rather than simply reproduce a selection of previously published papers and book chapters verbatim, however, Schmidt offers a series of interlinked chapters, in some cases newly written and in others using extensive extracts from previously published work, but also with accompanying new introductions, and in some cases, new conclusions and even elements of an auto-critique.

The book consists of eleven chapters and is divided into two sections, the first of which addresses issues of representation, social memory, and oral traditions, while the second is concerned with historical archaeology and representation, and the book as a whole is written in Schmidt’s characteristic polemical style. Entitled, ‘Questions that Count: Africa and Beyond’, chapter 1 sets out Schmidt’s objectives

and his vision for historical archaeology, emphasising in particular how new theoretical questions in historical archaeology might be posed through the study of the use of tropes in historical representations, and the need to consider the political implications of the production of historical and archaeological knowledge. In chapter 2, Schmidt offers an historiographical perspective on the use of oral traditions in African archaeology, with particular reference to the varied attempts to understand the Bacwezi corpus (as summarised above) so as to set the scene for his revisionist approach. Chapter 3, co-authored with Jonathan Walz, is in essence a review of definitions and constructs of historical archaeology as applied on the Africa continent which address many of the same themes as this review—notably the problems of text-driven approaches, the weaknesses of verification approaches to the use of oral histories, and the privileging of ‘external’ (to use Pikirayi’s terminology) over ‘internal’ sources and representations (see Schmidt and Walz 2007, for a similar version of this chapter). It is here that Schmidt, with his co-author, sets out his vision of historical archaeology on the African continent and in particular how it might be possible “to make historical archaeologies of groups that fall outside the margins of European ethnocentrism, colonialism, capitalism and what Orser (1996) calls ‘modernity’” (p. 45). For Schmidt, oral sources represent the most authentic voice of indigenous communities, and it is only through understanding how oral traditions are created and express knowledge about historical events and processes that a truly indigenous African historical archaeology will result.

Consequently, in chapters 4-6, Schmidt returns to his early structural analyses of Bacwezi mythology and the associated archaeological and ethnoarchaeological evidence concerning iron technology and the symbolism of iron and iron production in the Great Lakes region and elsewhere in Africa, so as to illustrate how societies employ the material traces of past generations as material mnemonics in their constructions of history (chapter 4), the interpretive potential and dimensions of a tropic analysis of oral traditions (chapter 5), and how places and landscape acquire the symbolic meaning through productive practices such as iron smelting (chapter 6). Since he first began research on

the corpus, Schmidt has argued consistently that the Bacwezi ‘myth’ must be seen as a symbolically loaded, metaphorical account of trends in the region’s history and changing power relations, rather than as a literal description of actual historical events and relationships. This point is reiterated several times in *Historical Archaeology in Africa*. Early on, for instance, Schmidt observes that, “strict congruence between the oral tradition claim and archaeological evidence may be missing the point of the oral tradition’s historical importance” (p. 27). Instead, he suggests that the real historical value of oral traditions emerges only once it is recognised that they contain tropic expressions, “linked to ritual and performative life” (ibid.). However, because “tropes are symbolic representations, their use easily masks disjunction and contradictions between differing or contested histories”, and consequently it is through the task of tropic analysis that the processes of this appropriation and the power relations that enabled it are revealed (p. 100).

Thus, for instance, Schmidt found during his research in the Kagera region of northwest Tanzania that oral traditions, as in Uganda, linked the more recent, immigrant Bahinda ruling dynasty with the Bacwezi, and that the power and authority of the Bahinda clans were generally associated with control over iron-working, rain-making, and fertility rites. However, genealogical reckoning placed the period of Bacwezi rule up to 20-25 generations ago and thus significantly earlier than had been estimated from the Ugandan traditions. Moreover, excavations at Katuruka, the former capital of Rugomora Mahe, one of the Bahinda rulers of the Kiamutwara kingdom during the 17th century CE, led to the discovery of iron smelting remains associated with the very beginnings of settled farming in the region and dating to around 500 BCE. Although similar remains of early farming and iron smelting communities were found at many of the other ritually important places within the historical topology of the Bahinda landscape, in other respects there was a lack of direct settlement continuity as evidenced by typological differences between the Early Iron Age ceramics and those associated with the 2nd millennium CE kingdoms. On the basis of this, Schmidt concluded that whereas the Bacwezi may have been indigenous rulers of small-scale

polities during the 1st millennium CE or possibly earlier, later leaders, unconnected with Bacwezi, subsequently manipulated traditions and appropriated the archaeological remains of the Bacwezi's evident iron smelting abilities to legitimise their own assumption to power.

Whereas the first section of *Historical Archaeology in Africa* is concerned primarily with accessing and reconstructing indigenous understandings of the social and political world and of 'the past', the second section is more concerned with external representations (or, in Schmidt's view, misrepresentations) of African societies and their pasts, and the socio-politics of archaeology on the continent. Once again, Schmidt draws heavily on his archaeological, ethnoarchaeological, and historical research in and on Buhaya, northwestern Tanzania, particularly with reference to Euro-American misconceptions regarding the origins of iron smelting in Africa and the technological skills of rural African communities (chapter 7), and on his broader experience of teaching archaeology and conducting research in eastern Africa (chapter 8). Chapters 9 and 10 (co-authored with Kharyssa Rhodes) reproduce elements of previously published historiographies of the investigation of Bigo and Cwezi oral traditions. Chapter 10 also critiques more recent archaeological assessments of Bigo and the associated site of Mubende Hill, as forwarded by Robertshaw (1999). Specifically, Schmidt and Rhodes argue that as the site is an important shrine associated with the Cwezi, its history and the symbolic capital this confers may well have been appropriated by a new elite in much the same manner as occurred with the Rugomora Mahe under the incoming Hinda royal clan. In support of this argument, they note the presence of Early Iron Age ceramics at Mubende Hill and suggest that these have the same significance as the extensive traces of Early Iron Age (EIA) smelting activity that were incorporated into the ritual practices by the Bahinda elite clans at Rugomora Mahe and other similar sites. Although Robertshaw notes the presence of EIA ceramics at Mubende Hill, in his view these were limited in number and such evidence as there was, did not have a direct bearing on the subsequent emergence of political complexity (Robertshaw and Taylor 2000). Schmidt and Rhodes take the opposite stance, arguing that there is far more evidence

for EIA activity at the site, and it is precisely because of the presence of this evidence and memory of this history that Mubende Hill had sacred significance for the later emergent elites and was selected by them as a political centre. Given the radical nature of these claims, it is unfortunate that no illustrations of the relevant ceramics or anything more than cursory descriptions of the characteristics of the diagnostic material are provided, and reference is made simply to an as yet unpublished report on the results of two separate analyses conducted by Schmidt and later Rhodes on the museum collection.

The broader purpose of this critique, irrespective of the actual strength of the evidence put forward, is to suggest that archaeologists working on African materials and sites need to reappraise the legacy of what is often termed "the colonial archive" and create space within their interpretive narratives for indigenous voices and perspectives through the interrogation of oral traditions and the archaeological record. A rather similar point is made in the final chapter, in which Schmidt critiques the continuing dominance of notions of the Arabian (and hence foreign) origin of, and inspiration for, the emergence of social complexity in Eritrea and Ethiopia and especially the growth of the Pre-Aksumite kingdom of Damaat (also rendered DM'T). In the absence of oral traditions, in this case study Schmidt relies more heavily on the results of recent archaeological surveys and excavations conducted around Asmara in collaboration with Matthew Curtis, to make the point colonial paradigms continue to dominate many archaeological reconstructions of Africa's because of the power of the text (in this case previous archaeological interpretations) in diverting attention away from the alternative readings of history offered by the material evidence in the ground. What matters, he suggests, "is not the antiquity of the material remains", but rather, "how the reach and embeddedness of historical misrepresentations are displaced and diminished by contradictory material evidence" (p. 260).

INDIGENOUS ARCHAEOLOGIES

Schmidt's insistence on the need to indigenise African archaeology is a sentiment with which most other archaeologists who work on the continent would agree. One clear sign indigenisa-

tion is proceeding is the number of African scholars engaged in the production of archaeological knowledge. The collection of essays edited by Chapurukha Kusimba and Sibel Kusimba—*East African Archaeology: Foragers, Potters, Smiths and Traders* (2003), provides preeminent testimony of this trend as it is one of only a handful of international publications where the majority of contributors are African (specifically, two-thirds of all contributors). Here, perhaps more than anywhere else, we might expect to find truly indigenous voices and takes on the continent's archaeological past. None of the contributions are explicitly concerned with "historical archaeology", and the term is not even used. Similarly, none of the "usual suspects" of historical archaeology such as colonial encounters and modernity, form the core focus of analysis in any of the papers, a point which Mitchell, in his overview of the contributions from a southern Africa perspective (chapter 11), draws attention to (p. 179). Nevertheless, several papers address the use of archaeological data in conjunction with written and/or oral sources, and also the historiography of these approaches and the effects they have had on the direction of research in different parts of the region. Specifically, three consider aspects of the history and archaeology of the Swahili coast (Chami, chapter 6; Kusimba and Killick, chapter 7; and Kessy, chapter 8) and three others (Kusimba and Kusimba, chapter 1; Mapunda, chapter 5; and Robertshaw, chapter 10) draw on oral traditions and/or historical ethnographies in their discussions of the historical significance of particular archaeological sites and assemblages, and it is these I focus on here.

A theme shared by all of the contributions that concern the archaeology of the Swahili coast is the extent to which the available Classical and Arab documentary have tended to mask the significance of certain historical processes and have directed research energies toward certain research questions and away from other topics and themes (a point which is also made by Robertshaw in his review [chapter 10] of changing archaeological approaches to the study of state formation in the region). Thus, in his paper on early iron-working communities on the East African coast, with particular reference to the site of Kivinja in the Rufiji Delta, Tanzania, Felix Chami is highly critical of an earlier

generation of scholars, who, because they gave primacy to the historical sources, tended to regard the origins of Swahili urbanism and state-level political systems as foreign-inspired. Recent research along the East African coast and on the offshore islands by Chami and others, as well as research at the Swahili stone-town sites (see Kusimba 1999; LaViolette and Fleisher 2005:339-343 for a review), has clearly demonstrated the presence of active and thriving agricultural communities along the Western Indian Ocean littoral well before the establishment of maritime trading links with the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean world from the 8th/9th century CE. Moreover, in Chami's view, finds of various imported goods, such as glass, ceramics, and even gold items, from the Classical Mediterranean world associated in stratified contexts with early farming (EIA) ceramics at a variety of sites, not only "corroborate the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* and other Greco-Roman documents by Ptolemy" but also indicates that these communities were active trading partners well before the arrival of Arab merchants on the coast (p. 96).

Emanuel Kessy is also critical of the role that historical texts have had in shaping the direction of research on the East African coast. However, his concerns are rather different from those expressed by Chami. In particular, he illustrates the extent to which the presence of textual sources has encouraged a possible over-emphasis on the Swahili era (ca. 9th–15th century CE) sites by archaeologists to the neglect of the earlier and later periods. Drawing on survey and excavation data from the islands of Pemba and Zanzibar on site distributions and contents, he offers a convincing narrative to suggest that there were several changes in site location strategies on these islands over the course of the last two thousand years or so, which correlate in part with changes in the degree of reliance of marine resources over time, but were also influenced by shifting trading patterns, the arrival of the Portuguese, and Omani colonialism. Whereas Chami's use of the historical sources is essentially one of verification, Kessy intertwines the historical and archaeological sources to provide a seamless narrative of the kind called for by Connah.

In their paper, Chapurukha Kusimba and David Killick, like Kessy, are also critical of the

role that text-driven archaeology has had on the pattern of research on the Swahili coast, although like Chami, they are also concerned to establish whether there is archaeological support for some of the statements in these texts. Their specific concerns are with understanding the technology of iron production along the Swahili coast, and its development over time. They note, for instance, that the *Periplus* states that iron tools were among some of the items imported to East Africa in the 2nd century CE, but by the 10th century, various Arabic sources indicate that iron was one of the major exports to India. Drawing on the results of archaeometallurgical of a range of iron objects from five Swahili sites on the Kenya coast, the authors are able to demonstrate for the first time the technological capabilities of the Swahili smiths, and even more critically, that iron-working and the trade in iron products played an important role in the emergence of Swahili city states, contrary to earlier preconceptions. Their analyses also detected the presence of nails made of crucible steel. At present, all of the evidence indicates that Swahili blacksmiths produced iron and steel products using the bloomery process and there is nothing to indicate that they were familiar with the techniques for making crucible steel. The latter techniques, however, were practiced on the Indian sub-continent from at least the 6th century CE and the products so produced were of high quality and known to be expensive. As Kusimba and Killick note, the presence on Swahili-era sites of mundane items such as nails produced using from foreign crucible steel thus seems rather anomalous as one might expect that any imported high-quality and expensive items would, instead, have been luxury artefacts. In fact, the presence of these nails is even more curious given that the historical sources claim that the Indian merchants who visited the Swahili coast considered the iron and steel products made in East Africa were of a better quality than those produced in India. Kusimba and Killick partly explain this by suggesting that while the East African bloom was of better quality it may have also been cheaper than the crucible steel produced in India, and so consumers there would have preferred it at least for their utilitarian products (pp. 113-115). This still does not explain the presence of the nails made of crucible steel, however, and it is clear that this

and related issues need to be the subject of further research on both sides of the Indian Ocean.

The technologies, symbolism, and development over time of iron smelting in eastern Africa is also the subject of Bertram Mapunda's paper (chapter 5) with reference to the Ufipa area of Tanzania toward the southeastern end of Lake Tanganyika. This is a region well known for its iron, and the Fipa are known from 19th and early 20th century records to have been highly regarded as iron producers and actively continued their craft until as recently as the 1950s. Historical memory of the various practices have also allowed various scholars to organise reconstructions of the smelting process and have made it possible for them to document in some detail the symbolic associations and social significance of the technology. However, as Mapunda notes, these previous ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological studies have all tended to focus on only one specific type of iron-working technology as practised in Ufipa, which he terms *Malungu* technology that relies on the use of tall, natural draught furnaces. This is perhaps understandable, since the remains of these furnaces survive as prominent features in the landscape and the most obvious tangible evidence of iron smelting practices. Research on the archaeology and oral traditions of the area, however, has demonstrated that at least two other technologies were employed in Ufipa in the past, that these technological styles had different geographical distributions and may also have had different origins. Mapunda terms these the *Katukutu* and *Barongo*-type technologies. The former appears to have flourished during the 16th–18th centuries CE along the shores of Lake Tanganyika and the Fipa escarpment and involved the use of comparatively short, globular natural draught furnaces. In contrast, the *Barongo*-type (named after its similarity to the technology employed by Barongo smelters in the Mwanza region in northern Tanzania at the southern end of Lake Victoria) involved the use of taller, forced-draught furnaces. It was also restricted to the shores of Lake Tanganyika and employed mainly during the 19th century. The *Malungu* tradition also developed during the 19th century, continuing into the 20th century, but involved the use of much taller furnaces without the use of bellows and was restricted to the Fipa escarpment away from Lake Tanganyi-

ka. There were other differences between these three technologies (pp. 71-78).

There is a long history of iron production around Lake Tanganyika, initiated during the Early Iron Age/Early Farming era around 400 CE, as documented several decades ago by Desmond Clark at Kalambo Falls and at a range of other sites located more recently by Mapunda. The Kalambo Tradition continued to around 1000 CE, when a new pottery type emerged, similar to or possibly part of the Triangular Incised Ware (TIW) ceramics found along the East African coast associated with the precursors of Swahili stone towns (see Chami, chapter 6). Thereafter, the evidence points to a phase of more rapid stylistic change possibly associated with an intensification of population movement, some of which may have been behind the introduction of different iron production technologies. For instance the “abrupt appearance of full-fledged iron technology and a new pottery type” in the 16th century in Nkansi District probably indicates “that a large population influx took place” and that these migrants were responsible for the *Katukutu* technological style (p. 81). Local oral traditions would link these to the present inhabitants of the region, namely the Lungu (to the south of Kala) and the Fipa (to the north of Kala). Archaeological evidence collected by Mapunda in the current Fipa region is consistent with the information provided in the oral histories and royal genealogies that Fipa arrived in the northern area (from the southern area now occupied by the Lungu) around the mid-17th century. It was in this area that the *Malungu* technology developed, and judging from the archaeometallurgical evidence, evolved out of the earlier *Katukutu*. However, the origins of the *Katukutu* technological style is rather more ambiguous, since some Fipa oral traditions state that the area they now occupy was empty prior to their arrival, while others state that the land was occupied by Mbonelakuti (Batwaa) pygmies who were hunter-gatherers but also proficient in iron smelting. At present, it is not possible to determine which of these accounts more accurately reflects the evidence on the ground. However, as Mapunda notes, if the latter is the case it could call into question many of the conventional models regarding the southward expansion of early farming and iron working commu-

nities and their relationships with neighbouring, autochthonous hunter-gatherer groups as part of a moving frontier (cf. Lane 2004b). On this point, it is worth noting that there is perhaps some support for the argument that Batwaa groups had knowledge of iron smelting from recent work in the Ituri Forest, DRC (see Mercader et al. 2000).

Conventional ideas about hunter-gatherers and the dangers of projecting ethnographic data and models of hunter-gatherer behaviour into the distant past are also raised in the papers by Sibel Kusimba and Chapurukha Kusimba (chapter 1) and Audax Mabulla (chapter 3). In their paper, Kusimba and Kusimba compare and contrast the archaeological evidence relating to hunter-gatherer mobility practices and subsistence strategies from two quite separate time periods in two different lowland ecotones in southern Kenya. Specifically, the lithic and faunal evidence from Later Stone Age sites around Lukenya Hill indicate that during the Pleistocene, hunter-gatherer were highly mobile, concentrated on the exploitation of large migratory grazers, and had ready access to exotic as well as local sources of lithic raw material either through exchange or as part of a seasonal round. In contrast, the evidence from ‘historic’ (ca. 100-300 BP) hunter-gatherer sites in Tsavo point to a concentration on small, non-migratory mammals, as well as birds and reptiles, and a highly expedient lithic technology that was dominated by the use of locally available vein quartz. While there is plentiful evidence that these groups were linked by trade with neighbouring pastoralist and farming communities (and also indirectly with the Indian Ocean trade networks), they appear to have been far less mobile than was the case at Lukenya during the Pleistocene.

For Mabulla (chapter 3), the “study of contemporary forager land use provides a fruitful approach to understanding prehistoric landscape use and archaeological spatial patterning”, as well as “a better understanding of prehistoric forager adaptive strategies” (p. 33). While there has been considerable ethnoarchaeological research on the Hadzabe, as Mabulla notes, the vast majority of this work has been directed toward understanding the spatial structure of base camps, the formation process that operate in these, and the diagnostic characteristics of

different butchery practices and patterns of food sharing. Much less ethnoarchaeological work has been conducted on documenting Hadzabe patterns of mobility and landscape use. In this regard, Mabulla's paper provides a useful synopsis of these landscape practices and their possible archaeological signatures, and on the basis of this material he argues that despite increasing contact between Hadzabe and neighbouring groups from the later 19th century onwards, and evidence for tangible changes in their material culture repertoire and economic practices, modern Hadzabe strategies provide reliable analogues for much earlier 'prehistoric' Later Stone Age and even Middle Stone Age behaviour (pp. 50-53). This stands in marked contrast to the observation made by Kusimba and Kusimba in their chapter that individual cases of modern hunter-gatherers are often poor analogues for 'prehistoric' behaviour (p. 15), and failure to consider the historical trajectories of modern communities undermines the value of much ethnoarchaeological research. On this basis, there is very evidently a need for more not less 'historical archaeology' in the region—a view with which this reviewer would concur.

CONCLUSION

This review began with a discussion of a series of issues concerning the use of the term 'historical archaeology' with particular reference to Africa. Alongside matters of definition, one important question asked was whether the term had any validity at all for African archaeology, or whether it would be better to abandon its use altogether, as recently recommended by Conah (2006, 2007). Having examined various studies of African contexts and materials which can loosely be described as examples of 'historical archaeology', although not always so defined, it is worth reflecting again on these issues. Several points can be made.

First, outside Southern Africa (and even here, mostly only in South Africa) and parts of Anglophone, Atlantic West Africa, the term 'historical archaeology' is only rarely used. Moreover, much of what is termed 'historical archaeology' in South/Southern Africa is concerned with the various dimensions of the encounter between indigenous communities and European settlers and colonists. One consequence of this is that 'historical archaeology'

here is often subsumed under, or equated with, the archaeology of [European] colonialism. In contrast, the focus of 'historical archaeology' in West Africa has been primarily concerned with the growth, expansion, and consequences of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Hence, in contrast to South Africa, 'historical archaeology' here has often come to stand for the archaeology of the [Atlantic] slave trade. Exceptions to these propositions can of course be found, nevertheless, I suggest that the archaeology of European colonialism and the archaeology of the Atlantic slave trade, in each case broadly defined, are respectively the dominant paradigms of historical archaeology in these two areas.

A second set of observations arise from the forgoing remarks. First, the emphasis on European colonial encounters in South Africa and on the Atlantic slave trade in West Africa (and on neither of these in other parts of the continent), is, in large part, due to the different historical trajectories of the different cultural and geographical regions of Africa. Specifically, European colonial settlement *did* begin and *did* become entrenched significantly sooner in South Africa than elsewhere on the continent; West Africa *was* the focus of trans-Atlantic slaving activities. As the use of square brackets around the terms 'European' and 'Atlantic' above further implies, also embedded within these constructs is the assumption that 'historical archaeology' is somehow associated with, if only implicitly, European activities, sources, or, at the very least, a European presence. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that while such an assumption prevails, then the term will have only limited resonance for the regional archaeological traditions of those parts of the continent where a European presence is of relatively recent origin (say the last 150 years), and/or did not result in a restructuring of settlement, society, demography and productive activities on the scale experienced in southern Africa and those West African countries impacted by the Atlantic slave trade. A clear case in point is East Africa where, despite a very early use of the term 'historical archaeology' to describe the archaeology of the coastal zone from the later 1st millennium AD onwards (Kirkman 1957), the appellation never stuck and instead the terms 'Swahili archaeology' or 'coastal archaeology' came to be favoured. It follows, then, that even where used

on the continent, 'historical archaeology' is partial and implies rather different things even when modelled most closely on the dominant North American conceptions of the subfield.

Third, a diverse range of other written, oral, cartographic, pictorial, and linguistic sources also exist, only some of which concern Europeans, or periods after 1500 CE, or both. As illustrated above, archaeologists working on African materials have long made use of these categories of historical evidence in combination with material remains. An equally diverse range of approaches, methodologies, and theoretical underpinnings characterise such studies as those which are more explicitly defined as 'historical archaeology'. The use of such supplementary information is often simply a matter of course as part of 'normal' archaeological research, so it is questionable whether the majority of instances can really be said to constitute 'historical archaeology'. The well established tradition of using (or at least referring to) historical linguistic data associated with Bantu languages in studies of the establishment and spread of early farming and metal-working communities (conventionally referred to as Early Iron Age societies) across vast expanses of eastern, central, and southern Africa, is a case in point and terming this 'historical archaeology' simply because some non-material, historical evidence is used to support an archaeological argument would seem pointless. This said, as Schmidt's research using oral traditions has demonstrated, and also Schoenbrun's detailed analyses using historical linguistics, a 'historical archaeology' of early Bantu-speaking farmers is possible. By the same token, I have consistently argued that the ethnographic data used to construct analogies for the reconstruction of ideologies and worldviews among early Bantu-speaking farmers and farmers in southern Africa, needs to be grounded in a more historically-informed manner than has often been the case. In these, and other examples, what makes such approaches examples of 'historical archaeology' is not the use of non-material sources but rather the critical interrogation of these in conjunction with the archaeological evidence so as to assess the strength of a particular dominant historical narrative or discourse, whether of 'European' making and origin or not (cf. Schmidt and Walz 2007:56-59).

A fourth and final set of observations follow

from this and which, once again, are illustrated by several of the case studies discussed above. Specifically, as part of the process of critically assessing particular historical discourses, archaeologists need to examine the history of those discourses and the disciplines that have generated them so as to produce, in a manner as discussed more generally for academic disciplines by Foucault (1972), the archaeology of archaeological knowledge. As part of this process, archaeologists must also examine how, in Stahl's terms, the legacy of different unexamined epistemologies "actively create and maintain a series of silences about Africa's past ... that are perpetuated by contemporary academic practice" (2002:1). Trouillot's argument about how such 'silences' are created and reproduced by selective 'mentions' at each of the main portals of historical production, i.e., "fact creation", "fact assembly", "fact retrieval", and the "moment of retrospective significance" (1995:26), is critical here, especially in light of the debate over definitions of 'historical archaeology'. Put another way, the questions of importance are not what 'historical archaeology' is or might be, or even how it differs from 'prehistory' since this latter distinction is an ontological one rather than simply a matter of chronology or sources (see Lucas 2005: 121-132), but instead concern how history *works* in different contexts and under different historical conditions. This requires more than consideration of how historical knowledge is produced or represents, although these are important starting points. Neither is it simply a matter of also examining and the power relations that structure the production of historical knowledge and historical representations, although these too are equally important. Instead, as Schmidt and Walz have recently urged, a start must be made on "asking questions derived from African knowledge" while simultaneously accepting and valuing "the integrity of African historicities" (2007:66-67). Many of the texts reviewed here offer ways for moving toward these goals. I would hazard, however, that Africa's archaeologists still have much further to travel, and that making this intellectual journey also requires more overt recognition that 'sources', 'archives', and 'narratives' cannot be treated merely as sites of knowledge retrieval but are also, simultaneously, sites of knowledge production, and that, equally, the

processes of retrieval and production stand in dialectical and recursive relationship with one another. It follows from this, I suggest, that since 'history' as both event and narrative is common to all times and places, then we must also acknowledge that 'our' archaeological sites emerged from an accumulation of acts of 'history making' each of which sought to define a particular vision not just of the present, but of also the past and the future. □

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