

# COMMUNITY HERITAGE WORK IN AFRICA: VILLAGE-BASED PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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## Prelude – The Top-Down Paradigm

Heritage work, including preservation and development of heritage sites, increasingly depends on state actors and incorporates what Laurajane Smith (2006) identifies as authorized heritage discourse (AHD). This discourse uses language of UNESCO and other global agencies that are invested with authority to identify and preserve important heritage sites. As state actors are the key participants in the UNESCO process of identification, nomination, and approval for the World Heritage List, it is only natural that they speak the language of heritage valorized by that institution as well as other policy bodies that participate in this process.

A significant trend that we now see on a global scale is competition among States Parties to obtain World Heritage Site status in order to capitalize on the economic and political benefits that come with such designation. World Heritage status not only confers certain protections for heritage but also announces to a global audience the availability of heritage experiences within tourism. With such distinct economic advantages attached to the UNESCO recognition of World Heritage Sites has come an increasing politicization of the how UNESCO confers such status. Lynn Meskell's (2012) poignant ethnographic observations of the UNESCO convention at work confirms the suspicion that political wrangling dominates how World Heritage sites are approved, viz: "States Parties have most to gain in the geopolitical machinations and voting blocs that have emerged in the last few years. Not only do nations garner international and national prestige, financial assistance and benefit from heightened public awareness, tourism and economic development – they leverage heritage for strategic economic and political trade-offs for military, religious, and geographical advantage" (Meskell 2012).

The new political direction of global heritage under the UNESCO umbrella touches both professional heritage experts and community interests, marginalizing both. As Meskell (2012) puts it, "today statist agendas have come to eclipse substantive considerations of both global heritage and local communities," a condition that has come to prevail because "members of the World Heritage Committee are state representatives and are thus free to pursue their own national interests, maximize their power, push their economic self-interest..." This growing emphasis has led to the diminishment of expert opinion "of the content and value of heritage sites, leading to the increased frequency of challenges to ICOMOS and the IUCN when they present expert opinions" (Meskell 2012). If expert opinions are being overlooked through an increasingly politicized process, then it also goes to reason that mounting concern over community needs and interests – now valorized by many experts through practices guided by the Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous People – will also be pushed to the margins.

Beyond the increasing marginalization of local communities vis-a-vis the sites recognized by UNESCO is a necessary awareness that only a very small proportion of sites ever get as far as the nomination process. The overwhelming majority of heritage sites do not qualify for UNESCO nomination and approval as World Heritage Sites. Non-state interests in both World Heritage Sites and other sites of national and regional interest need better avenues for recognition and incorporation of community interests. Community identities attached to heritage sites are at risk when they are ignored in the processes of evaluation and planning. These local interests may be seen at odds with state interests, especially when communities live on or nearby heritage sites where states actors have plans for economic development designed to appeal to tourism and other national economic goals.

Related perspectives also pertain to communities that reside within the boundaries of heritage sites, either prior to or after national, regional, or UNESCO designation. Their cultural pasts and presents are often viewed as unlinked to the physical remains that make up most heritage sites and cultural landscapes. They and their intangible heritage may be viewed as separate, awkwardly “primitive”, underdeveloped, and intrusive. Recent developments in India illustrate vividly the potential for conflict between state interests and communities: The mission of the Archaeological Survey of India has been the protection of individual monuments, not entire sites. Though archaeologists were working with the ASI to develop an integrated management plan sensitive to community needs, the ASI in July 2011 commissioned bulldozers to enter a portion of Vijayagara (a World Heritage Site) and to raze the main bazaar of the temple town, Hampi. This was done in the name of heritage protection, yet it destroyed the social fabric and identity of a community within the precincts of the larger site (Sinopoli 2012; Fritz and Mitchell 2012). Such state actions result in the alienation of resident communities from their collective and individual heritages as well as erase the practice of intangible heritage such as rituals to ancestral spirits and other rites associated with sacred places, not to mention a host of social, economic, and cultural human rights issues.

As UNESCO appears to be moving toward an increasing marginalization of expert opinion, we need to pause and ask what can be done to ensure that community interests are not at odds with state planning and that communities are brought into the planning process and allowed to follow their own initiatives in heritage development and planning. Giving voice to community interests may be perceived by some state as an impediment, as an extra and difficult step in an already complicated process of nomination and recognition. And, community interests and independence may also be viewed as antithetical to state interests in circumstances where heritage is designated a high priority economic activity or where heritage sites are seen as having overwhelming national and global significance. Even in these circumstances community perspectives have much to contribute to use pattern analyses, management, and local economic development planning. When community interests are marginalized and community voices silenced, social memories linked to the landscape and built environment are erased with the destruction of community infrastructure and the dislocation of social institutions. Importantly, there are alternatives to such trajectories, alternatives that valorize local uses and meanings of heritage if they are given an equal place at the negotiating table where other priorities such as economic planning and tourism are normally privileged.

### **Decolonization**

Decolonization of heritage practices looms very large in community archaeology and heritage work because it addresses issues of power and control of heritage—who

initiates archaeological research or heritage work, who sets the research and interpretative agendas, and who controls the dissemination of results (see Atalay 2006a, 2006b; Schmidt and Patterson 1995; Schmidt 2009; Smith and Wobst 2005). A colonial setting is any in which the interests of the people are made subordinate, where local decision making is abrogated, and where the economic welfare of the local community is appropriated on behalf of outside entities. Alienation from the land and its ancestral values is perhaps the most profound negative consequence of appropriation, creating chaos and conflicting heritage claims across regions such as southern Africa where population displacement was common under colonial regimes (cf. Churukire and Pwiti 2008). Similar conditions prevail now in India and any other state where local communities are moved from their traditional land base and deprived of roles in planning and managing heritage sites within their orbit of identity.

Participatory approaches have grown in popularity over the last two decades around the globe and in Africa (e.g., Abu-Khafajah 2010; Atalay 2012; Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008; Cooke 2010; Dowdall and Parrish 2001; Marshall 2009; McDavid 2002; Manyanga 2005; Murimbika and Moyo 2008; Silliman 2008). Yet, heritage practices that unite rather than separate heritage professionals and local people have been much slower to follow the academic rhetoric underwriting such views. In spite of multiple resolutions and codes of ethics, such as those implemented by the World Archaeological Congress insisting that communities must be brought into the process of archaeological and heritage planning, execution, and writing, we have far to travel to deliver the goods.

Sonya Atalay (2006b, 2012), one of the most effective advocates amongst the community of Native American archaeologists, writes compellingly about the need for archaeology and heritage work to develop new methodologies and new theoretical approaches based on community initiatives in archaeology and heritage work (see Kuwansisiwma 2008). This perspective resonates with initiatives taken by communities in Kagera, Tanzania—engagements that are a relatively infrequent genre of community participation. Though in their incipient stages, these efforts hold great promise in the valorization and revitalization of histories shredded through colonialism, globalization, and trauma. When professionals try to implement these ideas, Atalay is quick to note that it is a slippery slope when they try to implement *their* ideas of community engagement based on reciprocity and mutual benefits. She strongly believes, as do I, that community engagement is the way of the future in heritage studies. Moreover, I would argue that heritage-driven projects not accounting for the needs of the community are practices that retain colonial legacies of non-consultation and separation of 'subject peoples' to the directives and desires of a science often practiced in the interest of imperial interests, whether the early 20th century colonial state or the postcolonial state. Lest we forget, Bruce Trigger (1980) made similar points in his seminal article on science and history in Native American settings.

A slippery slope enters the picture when heritage professionals and archaeologists, well-intended and earnest to apply such a philosophy, try to put it into practice and find that some communities have no interest in their past nor in heritage work in their midst. Or, they may find that the communities where they would like to establish collaborative programs mistrust heritage workers and archaeologists, manipulate them to their economic advantage, or provide only token forms of collaboration. On the reverse side, heritage workers and policy makers may not consider poorly educated peasants and poor urban dwellers as equals in heritage planning, forgetting that local people hold deep knowledge about the landscape and its meanings over centuries

if not millennia. Each of these scenarios--only a small sampling of what one might expect--present soul-searching challenges and sometime impossible difficulties. Basically they speak to the issue of what happens when outside agendas for participatory approaches are presented to a community, rather than what happens when a community comes to life with its own agenda. The direction from which the initiative flows will often influence success and engagement.

Atalay's (2012) recent review of her attempts to engage very different genres of communities provides some useful insights into some of the difficulties and successes that emerge in community oriented research and inclusion. Her review provides a device through which insights into top-down and bottom-up collaborations can be applied to other world regions. She starts with how she tried to interest communities around Çatalhöyük, Turkey, in archaeological research. She admits that her initiative--and her refreshing honesty in describing it as her initiative rather than the communities' initiative--did not elicit positive reactions. No one in these five communities initially saw any benefit in archaeological research and heritage representations. Nor did any of the leadership in the heritage/archaeological project think to thoroughly include the communities in planning and development activities. It was only after an extensive and complex educational campaign that local people slowly began to see ways that they could participate.

Despite its best intentions, the Çatalhöyük experiment started with top-down practice while it espoused participatory engagement. This is not an anomaly. In fact, it is the common template for projects that want community engagement. It was not the community that came to Atalay or others engaged in research. People in the villages from which laborers were drawn did not seek ways to engage archaeology. It was archaeologists affiliated with the project after it had been up and running for years who took initiatives to the villagers, engaging in extensive efforts at education about archaeology. Some of these top-down initiatives led to positive results. This is a powerful case study because it illustrates how much hard work is in store for archaeologists and heritage professional who recognize the importance of participatory approaches benefiting descendants and local people but where such communities display little or no interest in archaeological inquiry or heritage development. Most archaeologists and heritage professionals working in rural areas of Africa, Asia, or the Americas can expect similar disinterest on the part of local people unfamiliar with archaeology and heritage development, unless we modify our approach to work with communities in developing training and other educational perspectives before projects are launched. To engage with communities in this manner before launching projects presents some stiff challenges of the sort that Atalay shares.

Her study sets out a stark prescription for extensive preparatory work. It also causes us to ask-- how might the Çatalhöyük project have avoided the disengagement of nearby communities over the long term? One answer, I believe, lies in capacity building before a project begins or at least from the very beginning of projects, that is, training local people how and *why* archaeology is conducted and heritage development occurs, and what kinds of questions are appropriate. It also means working together with those associated with the project in whatever role they play -- laborer, technician, manager -- about how *they* interpret the research results -- be they archaeological finds or heritage management plans. This should be a prelude to more complex interactions and on-site training that privilege the intelligence and potential contributions of the labor force.

An important part of any collaborative project is the exercise of a reflexivity that

questions privileging scientific goals over local participation. This requires that we examine the degree to which we are willing to accept that intelligent people will respond enthusiastically to skilled training if they are invested with trust. I find that local farmers are much more skilled in many archaeological tasks than advanced archaeology students. They quickly recognize changes in soil color and texture, recognizing odd features such as micro-inclusions of clay, and practice an archaeology that has much finer motor-control of tools than most university students and even some professional archaeologists. I sometimes pair university students with locally trained archaeologists, with the latter acting as trainers. We must also ask if mental restraints in our thinking – no matter how reasonably justified – are a form of denial, a way of exclusion that seeks comfort in expeditious research results over the more demanding but ultimately more satisfying task of inclusion and full training, not just common labor and other tasks that require lower levels of training. Given that most rural folk are better equipped to deal with local knowledge about the landscape and the presence of ancient remains of archaeological interest, then why are they not included from the beginning and invested with trust to increase their confidence and sense of ownership?

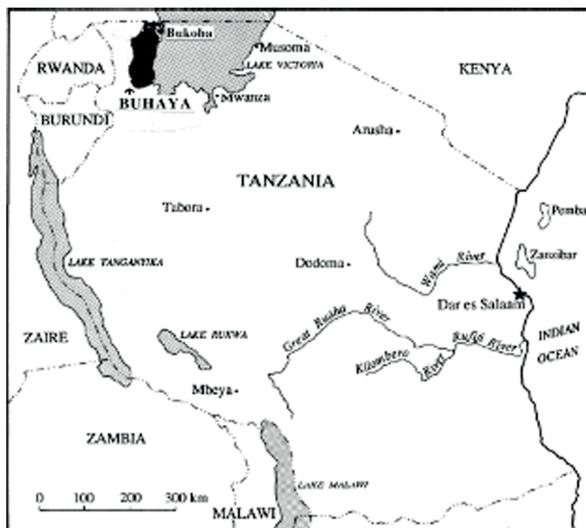


Fig. 1 Map of Tanzania with Kagera Region highlighted in black.

### Investing Trust in Local Collaborators – An African Legacy

A recent initiative taken in Kagera Region during 2008 by the leadership of Katuruka village (Schmidt 2010) to restore, preserve, and reclaim their heritage cannot be explained by formal training in archaeology at university level or the presence and active involvement of a developed infrastructure, such as an active Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) dedicated to cultural heritage and preservation (Fig. 1). Rather, such spirited awareness may be traced back to the extensive participation of Katuruka residents in the archaeology of heritage sites within their community between 1969

and 1984 and their clear awareness that archaeological goals were linked to the oral traditions told about sites. The original research program launched several decades earlier was guided and jointly designed by elders, building on and complementing local values and needs—now part of the legacy of local engagement. Through this period, several of those who were talented in archeological inquiry went on to lead excavations and supervise major regional surveys. With such experience they clearly understood – despite only primary school education – the overarching research goals and helped to design the day-to-day methods that were appropriate to the local circumstances as well as finding sites of major importance (Schmidt and Childs 1985). Memories of these engagements and the significance of the archaeology previously conducted in the community by community members lived on through time to create informed knowledge ready for additional development.

The methods that were developed with Haya collaborators and communities during the 1969-84 period were later taken into the university classroom, laboratory, and field schools when the formal teaching of archaeology was launched in Tanzania in 1985 (Schmidt 2005). Amongst the innovations introduced into the instructional program at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) was the idea, soon formalized as a requirement, that students design their field school research project. The faculty felt that it was critical that students, as the most important stakeholders, take ownership of the research program in which training occurred. Initially the intake of students was so small that all could participate as a group, but soon students were required to present individual proposals, the best designed of which would be chosen for collective treatment leading to field school research.

There were detractors who said, ‘How can you expect naive students without any significant prior experience to design research projects?’ Our response was simple: that we were not looking for precise and theoretically informed projects—those would come through instruction and growing confidence through time. Rather we were looking for innovative ideas that drew on local histories and ideas about the past where archaeology could contribute. We encouraged our students to think out of the box, asking them to move beyond established, colonial, and normative research ideas that could be challenged by research in new regions and sites. Once a basic research idea was accepted and discussed at length, then students were asked to design a research strategy that would be used to obtain information that they needed to test their ideas. The next step was implementation, close guidance and modifications as the research strategies were applied in the field. Constant discussion about the adequacy or inadequacy of strategies and tactics built a sense of empowerment and ownership in students, who by their second year were eager to test their ideas in a new setting. This approach stands in stark contrast to most Western field schools, where students are programmed to work into faculty-determined agendas, performing rote tasks that often help advanced academics achieve their goals.

Within the Tanzanian setting, then, capacity building unfolded in two dimensions: 1) with local people in the field, stakeholders and collaborators who assimilated and engaged archaeological research as trusted associates; and 2) with students a decade later, given freedom to exercise their informed but creative imaginations and to take ownership of research ideas and results. The two are irrevocably linked, the first setting the scene for the development of the second. I recently learned from a Senior Lecturer of Archaeology at the UDSM that this training practice was still drawn upon occasionally despite much larger enrollments. The staff considered it a centerpiece of

their former training program. I suspect that the investment of trust in students is one reason that the UDSM now has one of the most productive archaeological research team in the African continent today and produces more MA and PhDs than any other institution. This history also helps to explain why the scene was set for an enthusiastic initiative for heritage preservation and development in Katuruka in 2008, with an emphasis on the emotional qualities of interanimation (Basso 1996) that occur in the presence of ancient places and sacred shrines. The elders understood that archaeology and heritage were significant to the health of their community. They envisioned that if heritage work focused on a well known archaeological site with a high level of significance, then they would follow an expeditious route to realize heritage development goals that had lain dormant for years. It was serendipity that I happened upon the scene in 2008. My reappearance after more than two decades away crystalized these long held views into rapidly formulated plans (see Schmidt 2010).

### **Moving Away from a Top-Down Approach to Katuruka Village in NW Tanzania**

There is a clear need to overcome a significant dependency on top-down approaches, for inevitably they are taken with good intentions but without the extensive preparatory work that is required to develop a true sense of ownership in projects at the community level. There are few examples of grassroots initiatives. In light of this history, the Katuruka initiative and other grassroots initiatives in Kagera Region of Tanzania help to unveil the circumstances in which it may be possible aid, assist, and work alongside communities with positive visions but lacking some of the skills and means to realize their goals.

If, as heritage workers and archaeologists, we come to find that no one in a 'community' identifies with a heritage property, or that local people display a disinterest in archaeology or heritage work, or when conflicting economic, political, and social conflicts dissipate a unified perspective, then 'community' may indeed become ephemeral, lacking concreteness, as Chirikure and colleagues (Chirikure and Pwiti 2008; Chirikure et al. 2010) point out at the Khami World Heritage Site in Zimbabwe. To unlock understanding of where community is situated and how it is defined requires close observation of the source of community initiatives through a careful ethnographic approach. Are initiatives coming from the top, from archeologists or heritage managers to the community, or are they emanating *from* the grassroots? I want to speak to these questions using Katuruka village, where a grassroots initiative by community members has led to new perspectives on what heritage means locally and how such local understandings figure into reconfigurations of local identity in a globalized world.

Elders in Katuruka village of NW Tanzania took me aside during a social visit in 2008 to insist that I should return to their community to help them reclaim their history (Schmidt 2010). This insistence came with conditions and explicit caveats. They had witnessed the degradation of their community's respect for the past, respect for traditional religion and other social institutions, and respect for elders by youth. The crisis of respect in Haya life has been long developing because of incremental devaluation linked to colonialism, the teachings of Christianity, and globalization (Schmidt 2012). Christianity in particular has deeply denigrated principles of respect at multiple social levels because traditional authorities responsible for enforcement of ethical codes, well-being, and peace were demonized by Christian churches.

Since 2008 I have worked to assist Katuruka villagers in their research into oral

traditions and to help them develop a major royal capital site and ancient shrine as a heritage destination for limited domestic, educational, and foreign tourism. I employ a discourse-based approach that captures what people say in their daily discourse about reclaiming their intangible heritage as they restore their ancient sacred and historical places. Out of such an ethnographic approach comes a better understanding of *when* local heritage concepts emerge, how they are socially acted out, and when and under what conditions ethical values are articulated in making heritage and human rights claims (Schmidt 2014). In NW Tanzania, local heritage work puts ethical principles to work within heritage activities that incorporate embodied actions. I use the discourse of heritage workers in multiple settings in two Tanzanian villages. The goal of this research is to understand how people make heritage claims in their daily lives through conversations and in more public, rhetorical pronouncements about heritage. I find that social practices of ethical theories unfold in *specific* settings (Meskell and Van Damme 2008), for example, during the revitalization of heritage places of deep meaning and the recovery and preservation of oral traditions.

One of the most potent changes introduced by Christianity among the Haya is in *senses of place*, where powerful emotions and social memories well up when places of meaning are encountered along the paths and in the homesteads—places where kingdom, clan, lineage, and family histories are encapsulated on the landscape. Christian teachings explicitly identified ancient shrines and other religious places as the devil's residences. This is a view that continues to threaten places with centuries of meaning, once embodied through oral recitations and ritual performances. Under such conditions, sacred shrines such as Kaiija—a sacred shrine tree that we informally call the Tree of Iron—began to fade from consciousness.

Symbolically and ritually associated with iron working and dating to 2,500 years ago, Kaiija means “the place of the forge”. It was celebrated as the central place of reproductive power, a key trope derived from iron production and linked to political legitimacy in the region. Many genres of texts led us to the ancient Kaiija shrine, now celebrated in the archaeological literature as an extraordinary *axis mundi* for the Eastern Bantu reproductive and productive worlds (Schmidt 1978, 2006, 2010). This and other sacred places associated with past kings and key religious leaders and ancestors were given the official blessing of neglect in 1963 when the new independence government abolished chiefs and kings. No longer were subsidies to kings and chiefs from government available to maintain shrines so critical to the integrity of the kingdoms. This would prove to be fatal for Kaiija's upkeep and the social memory attached to it. Without a ritual official to conduct the new moon rituals, no animating social action occurred at the shrine.

Without regular rituals, local tribute, and royal support to maintain the primary shine and all its ancillary shrines, little vitality resided in these once evocative and potent places after the 1960s. People began to look upon shrine trees as undermining their economic interests, with the shade from the huge canopies inhibiting the growth and ripening of banana plantings. Residing since childhood near the shade cast by Kaiija, one Timothy Njuma (a fictitious name) decided to remove Kaiija in the late 1990s, failing to heed warnings about probable punishment and dying from a terrible ordeal meted out by the ancestors to those disrespecting this heritage. He did the unthinkable. By pounding iron spikes into Kaiija, covered with salt, he killed the huge shrine tree and paid the price for such evil-doing: he went mad and could be heard raving in his locked room for months before he finally died.

No one would discuss this cultural travesty in 2008 when I revisited the village, save one quick mention within the first minute of my arrival. It took nearly two years before

people felt comfortable discussing a history that took away their identities, erased their spiritual senses of place, and besmirched the memory of a neighbor and kinsman. This and many other erasures of ancestors from the landscape ushered in a disquieting sense of dread and loss further exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic that was sweeping through their villages at the same time (e.g., Ndeki et al. 1992; Rugalema 1999).

The significant reduction in the numbers of elderly males because of HIV/AIDS opened fresh opportunities for elderly women to rise into positions of leadership by organizing aid societies – replacing traditional clan responsibilities – for funeral expenses and other assistance. When village elders decided in 2008 that they would form a committee to address heritage issues, they articulated their desires during that first meeting around a sense of loss accelerated during the HIV/AIDS crisis (Schmidt 2010). Its social effects were then obvious everywhere: overgrown fields where once prosperous farms were abandoned, collapsed houses, multiple grandchildren living with a single grandmother, the death of complete households, and a huge number of youth and few remaining elders. A repeated reference in heritage discourse was the need to educate people about the antiquity of their villages and to use the archaeological evidence from 1970 excavations to teach the youth and others about the history of technological innovation that marked their ancient history.

Other key issues also took center stage: 1) talk about creating a heritage tourism site was clearly lodged in a larger discourse about tourism and heritage within the region; 2) a desire to reclaim their heritage, which they articulate as oral traditions, respect for the ancestors, and learning about sacred places; 3) detailed discussions about researching and documenting living oral traditions today, with the aim to create a permanent archive for future educational goals. Quite vehemently, they insisted that heritage thinking focus on economic well-being, such as how idle youth could gain employment as tour guides and simultaneously become teachers of the past: *'Perhaps if we restore these shrines and the palace, with a museum inside, we could attract tourists to visit this important place. Our young people could be employed to take them around the site and we could train them in the oral traditions that were once told here'* (Schmidt 2008--11 field notes).

When I returned in 2009 at the behest of the villagers, my mission was to understand local ways of constructing heritage—how people thought about and talked about heritage. I was more concerned with how heritage ethics were put into action and made vital through daily embodied practice. I wanted to understand the reasons that people give for wanting to reclaim a heritage, the emotions they express when engaged in reclaiming their relationships with the ancestors, how they struggle to talk about how their ethical codes of yesteryear were erased by the Christian church, what they fear from the diminishment of respect and prosperity, and why they want to reclaim economic security through their recuperation of past heritage institutions and practices. I also wanted to understand how Katuruka residents think and feel when they build traditional houses to serve as shrines, and thus embrace ritually potent, spiritually elevated, and historically meaningful places belonging to lost ancestors.

Following Keith Basso (1996), I call this practice the revitalization of interanimation or *re-interanimation*—knowledge that comes alive, with emotion, in the presence of places of spiritual and emotional meaning. As participants in the village embarked upon their daily tasks, they made new pasts by cutting and weaving elephant grass, by fetching building poles, and by cutting thatch for shrines. As they worked they reviewed and explored why they were acting out their ideas about social practices tabooed by

churches that saw traditional houses as the abodes of the ancient Bacwezi spirits. They also openly discussed why they were embracing heritage values distinctive to their historical past as well as inserting archaeology into their heritage discourse, now accepted as an important part of heritage in their contemporary world. My role in this mutual research is to wrap together and present to other audiences these diverse threads of discourse and the daily practice of heritage values that mark the contingent historical contributions that the Haya make to heritage discourse more broadly.

## Heritage Tropes

Haya elders reframed their claims to a past through heritage tropes of their own making. The elders saw that with the valorization of heritage, economic security would come hand in hand with education into indigenous knowledge. They discussed and strongly argued on behalf of: 1) restoring sacred places—seeing this as heritage work; 2) creating a local museum that memorialized the antiquity and significance of the history of iron production in the area, including the archaeology about it; 3) developing a heritage tourism site with multiple implications, including the building of a sense of self worth and well-being in the community, and 4) instilling a sense of pride and identity in the community about the significance of local history.

They rapidly designed and set out a program that could be acted on daily to recuperate respect for the past. Such daily practice took multiple forms and led to a high degree of heritage consciousness within certain sectors of the community. Among the first actions were: 1) restoration and revitalization of a sacred shrine belonging to Mugasha (Fig. 2), the god of the waters and storms; 2) a village organized census to determine the effects of HIV-AIDS on the community; and 3) identification of all keepers of oral traditions and oral history.

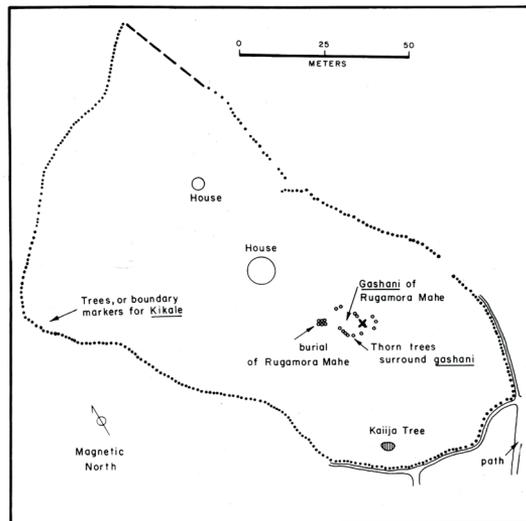


Fig. 2: Map of King Rugomora's palace compound, with the location of Kaiija shrine tree on the southern boundary.

## HIV/AIDS and Social Disruption

The results of village censuses confirmed initial impressions about the absence of elderly males. The severity of HIV/AIDS over the previous twenty-five years was stunning. Nearly half of the older generation of males—those over 65 years—were lost since 1978, when there were 97 males for 100 females over 65 years of age. By the 1988 census, this proportion dropped to 54 to 100, recovering a little fifteen years later because of intervention programs to 58 to 100 in 2003, but returning to 54 to 100 at the time of the village census. This is enormous demographic change. Since elderly males were once the keepers of oral traditions and knowledgeable about landscape histories, a severe rupture in the chain of transmission at this scale is devastating to the integrity and vitality of oral testimonies and helps explain another reason for the steady erosion of sacred places on the cultural landscape. After the completion of the village censuses, several members of the committee gathered together to compile a list of expert keepers of history. I was surprised by the appearance of women's names, filling more than half the lists—not experts in oral traditions but in oral histories about social relations in the community. In the past, women were not recognized as experts in a field of knowledge dominated by males. But with the loss of so many male keepers of history, women are now recognized for their abilities to remember social histories.

With the initiation of interviews for oral traditions and histories, I removed myself as outside expert, diminishing some of the anthropologist's place of power (see Rizvi 2008). Interviews were conducted by village elders, who were free to explore whatever subjects appeared to be germane to the knowledge of those with whom they spoke. The results of these interviews provided some very significant findings. Some women, because of naturally good memories and confidence gained as single heads of households, brought forth important subaltern histories. Their testimonies are vivid, as when an 86 year old women complained: *'I can be sick here and die. Even my brother did not come once when I summoned him. No one will bring you food these days. I am on my own, I plant my own plot without help'* (Katuruka Interviews 2009-11).

## Subaltern Women's History

Elderly women command an intimate knowledge of social interactions in the community and clear historical reminiscences about their neighbors and kin. Now elevated to history keepers, their newly recognized expertise reflects their deep knowledge of people and events they have witnessed in their life-times. After long interviews with two women (supplemented by the testimony of one woman's brother), we came to understand that a woman named Njeru lived in the former royal palace of King Rugomora (c. 1650-1675), where Kaiija tree is located. She lived in the palace between 1900 and 1963 (the latter date marks the abolition of kings and chiefs in Tanzania and is approximately the time of Njeru's departure). Njeru cared for the regalia of the dead king and also maintained the burial estate of King Rugomora. She conducted the monthly new moon ceremonies (rituals of renewals) in the shadow of Kaiija shrine on behalf of the ancient kingdom over which once ruled. She married the dead king in 1900 as a virgin, was given the same respect and tribute as a king, and could deeply influence the welfare and well-being of her neighbors who widely admired her beauty and respected her. As historical narratives about this important historical figure were unveiled, so too

did an awareness develop among women who added much to local history and to the heritage project. These narratives, never before recorded, deeply enrich the texture of the history of the royal compound and mark this local initiative into collaborative research as distinctive in subaltern studies.

These new female participants in Katuruka's heritage work now advise the project on an interpretative trail that includes Njeru's place of royal residence as well as her menstrual house. Thus heritage work in Katuruka has come to insert women of importance into heritage claims, along with their appearance in historical narratives. A heritage that valorizes important historical women is now emerging. It is claimed by contemporary elderly women, who enacted it through their daily practice by embracing and caring about heritage in the community.

As subaltern histories rose to the surface of local inquiry, so too did the insistence that the committee keep to its original agenda to create a museum that would commemorate the technological history and antiquity of Katuruka, drawing deeply on archaeological histories. The elders' goal to build a small museum was realized in 2010 with the construction of a traditional *omushonge* house in the exact location where oral traditions held that King Rugomora held consultations with his advisors and his spirit mediums. Known as Buchwankanzi, this house was later used by Njeru to curate the royal regalia. It was precisely in this place that the 1970 excavations recovered many artifacts and features suggestive of intense ritual activities and well as deep time connections to Early Iron Age activities. The construction of Buwankwanzi was a daily activity that ran for nearly a month, with visits from scores of villagers, most of who never witnessed the construction of a traditional house (Fig. 3).



*Fig. 3: Reconstructed Buchwankwanzi house in King Rugomora's palace compound. Today it functions as a small archaeological museum dedicated to the history of ancient iron technology.*

### **Re-interanimation Reprised**

The heritage interventions pertaining to these shrines mark their *re-interanimation*, a phenomenon that includes the recursive quality of places and their relationships to human actors, as Basso (1996, 55) observes, 'As places animate the feelings and ideas of persons who attend to them, these same ideas animate the places on which attention has been bestowed.' Such participatory heritage work in Katuruka is considered by some as liberation from the strictures of Christianity enforced for more than century. The willing participation of villagers in the shrine and Buchwankwanzi revitalizations is a clear declaration that even devout Christians no longer accept the idea that they must not participate in senses of place.

Motivations for these *re-interanimations* are linked to the rise of disenchantment over what people see as the failure of the Christian church to mediate the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The church is closely identified with Western medicine, having introduced it to rural and urban communities. Western medicine and the church have been unable to provide relief from the ravages of the disease. This has led many people to question, as they witness the moral decline of their villages, if they and their direct ancestors erred in accepting the precepts of the church. Discourses about Jesus as alien to Haya cosmology are increasingly common, with sometimes biting commentary mixed with frustration and bitterness. There is a profound depth of disenchantment as Haya Christians measure their present against their pasts, working and talking in places where spirit mediums and other ritual officials such as Njeru once gathered in the service of their king.

### **Revitalized Knowledge and Heritage**

In early 2011, the committee began to take new directions. Discussions with visitors showed that both local and foreign guests '*wanted to see more things, such as furnaces—not just look at a place in a field where there were once furnaces*' The committee requested excavations to expose ancient iron smelting furnaces so visitors could visually experience the 2000 year old technology, '*to make the ancient remains clearer and more obvious*' (Schmidt 2008--11 field notes). This desire to bring archaeology into heritage talk and planning writes archaeology into a plan to concretize history. Archaeology organized by the committee became a focus of the project in the summer of 2011 when test excavations uncovered remains of 2000 year old furnaces. As these were unveiled, villagers gathered by the scores at the excavations to participate in the discoveries.

Working together with trained archaeologists from the village, we observed several positive participatory developments: 1) village citizens mobilized to assist with the construction of exhibit shelters and the relocation of a major, traditional road. Local residents readily signed over rights of way so the road could be relocated; and 2) local secondary school students visiting Katuruka responded with great enthusiasm and excitement to the tour exhibits. This last development points to the project's capacity to satisfy the right to an education that incorporates local histories that value senses of place. The absence of local history in the secondary or primary curricula is a target that the project and regional and district authorities are taking on in 2013, with Katuruka heritage as the educational medium. Students visit these potent places and begin to develop their own senses of place through repeated visits. This experiential learning is accompanied by a dedicated website with academic

resources, curricula, videos, and other images as well as teacher resources ([www.tanzaniaheritage.org](http://www.tanzaniaheritage.org)). The people of Katuruka, through their own distinctive wisdom, devised a community solution to a long-standing human rights issue in Tanzania—a hegemonic nationalist history that has helped to erase local heritage.

As Haya villagers engage in therapeutic heritage work (Meskell and Scheermeyer 2008) through the recuperation of oral traditions and histories and as they begin to daily engage in their *re-interanimation* of places, their senses of sacred places are being restored incrementally. Their ethical practice incorporates the recovery of interpersonal respect as well as respect for places of meaning that were once dominant in their moral lives. And, their initiative and determination to reclaim and remake a heritage severely eroded by change over the last 120 years marks this community as distinctive in the annals of African archaeology and heritage preservation and development. That they incorporated collaborative research—oral traditions, oral histories, and archaeology—into their heritage development agenda speaks to a vision arising from familiarity with these genres of heritage from both indigenous culture and lived experience.

### Lessons for the Dominant Discourse

The Katuruka experience illustrates the creative capacity of a village community to design and execute a heritage development scheme. It provides a poignant lesson for heritage planners to examine their current heritage practices, so often based on the privileged assumption that knowledge is restricted to policy makers and politicians rather than heritage “experts” and local experts. Local ideas about how to integrate needs such as access to spiritual places and their continued presence provide compelling and diverse perspectives on heritage preservation. Moreover, inclusion of local expertise illustrates vividly how histories of multiple use and knowledge of landscape history may enrich heritage interpretation at heritage sites. To escape truncated and idealized synchronic pasts of (re)constructed sites, incorporation of a sense of change over time requires a more nuanced treatment of landscape use. Such inclusiveness may then lead to a multi-dimensional heritage plan with layers of meaning, something for both international and domestic tourists who respond positively to local ritual practices and other intangible heritage such as oral traditions, songs, and dances, not just (re)constructed temples and palaces.

When villages and other settlements are removed from heritage landscapes, the core meanings of that landscape are removed with them, never to be recovered. The lessons of Katuruka village demonstrate that farming villages and other communities hold significant capacity to manage their own heritages, whether or not these are directly tied to the heritage that state, provincial, or municipal governments designate as important. The argument that local communities lack the expertise and education to participate in planning and management is diminished when we accept that wisdom rests in experience and that education in technical aspects of management can be accomplished during preliminary phases of development (Atalay 2012).

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### Summary

This paper examines alternatives to top-down approaches to heritage management and development. One of the key issues facing communities around the globe today is the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD)--the determination of heritage values by "experts" and government officials on behalf of the people. It is all too common to find local people alienated by such practices and searching for ways in which they can take ownership of their own heritage. Community-based research that shares power and is participatory is one avenue that is quickly developing in many regions around the globe. In Africa, a number of villages and other small communities have taken the initiative to preserve and develop their heritage, free of outside control. Important lessons may be drawn from these experiences, particularly the use of discourse-based research that captures how the people define and live out their heritages through everyday practice.