

Editorial

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Welcome to our first issue of the *Journal of African Cultural Heritage Studies*. This journal recognises often heritage is fragmented across several disciplines, with specialists hardly engaging with each other. It aims to publish scholarly articles on original research in African archaeology, culture, heritage and related studies. Africa is always an interesting subject of research especially in archaeology and heritage studies, but there is little engagement between African and external researchers. Though Africa has impressive archaeological sites ranging from hominid evolution to early and later civilizations, its people value the intrinsic connections they have with place and landscape more. Understanding memory and narratives in heritage theory is thus crucial in understanding African perceptions of heritage outside the western authorized heritage discourse (Smith 2008).

This journal is the first that is wholly dedicated to African cultural heritage studies. It will be published bi-annually and aims to become the forum for heritage debates within Africa and a bridge for African researchers to engage in debates with practitioners in other parts of the world. The issues that it will focus on will include cultural heritage management, conservation, heritage theory, indigenous archaeologies, as well as recent conceptions of heritage in postcolonial settings. Its purpose is to bring African insights on cultural heritage to mainstream philosophies. The journal editors recognize the absence of African philosophies in the heritage disciplines in Africa as well as in heritage debates around the world. Africa has a rich heritage philosophy which could enhance an understanding of cultural heritage holistically. Mainstreaming African knowledge systems to critical heritage studies will, therefore, be one of the main objectives of the journal. We also hope that it will become a platform for communication between archaeologist/anthropologist, cultural geographers, communities, and policy makers in the heritage and development sectors. Our aim is to provide a journal that is broad in scope, by encouraging research that adopts multidisciplinary approaches to the study of cultural heritage in Africa.

The journal's intended readership will be researchers as well as policy makers within the development and culture heritage sectors in Africa and other parts of the world. It will also be useful for researchers and students of African archaeology, cultural heritage studies, museum studies, African studies, and cultural anthropology. Archaeology, cultural anthropology and museum studies have often dominated heritage studies in Africa. African 'pasts' have been shaped by these disciplines, which have not always understood Africa. It is thus necessary to create a counter-narrative that can create pasts that people can connect with (Manyanga, Chirikure 2017). The journal thus intends to bring the African voice into

debates about Africa and also explore the tensions that often exists between African and western concepts of heritage.

One of the major areas of research in world historical archaeology today is the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Africa has produced very little in this aspect of its history and it is poignant that one of our first papers discusses memory of slavery in East Africa. Slavery in this region where Arab traders operated in, is hardly discussed in many academic circles. Herman Kiriama's paper on slavery in Shimoni Caves, Kenya, therefore brings to the fore the heritage of slave trade in East Africa. Academics in Africa have ignored the manifestations of the slave trade on the continent itself. Many publications have focused on slavery after transportation. Kiriama's focus on a community that had both descendants of slaves and slavers show how selective memory plays a part in shaping heritage.

There are also contemporary heritage issues that African communities grapple with today including colonialism, liberation, post-colonial conflict all of which has left material heritage and memories that people want to remember and forget. Africa struggles with how to deal with colonial heritage both material and immaterial and debates on these aspects of colonial history will enrich not only policy but also discourses on the heritage of colonialism. Nancy Ralushai's paper discusses anti-colonial struggles through a multi-pronged approach that uses archaeology, folklore, song, and other narratives to question the commemoration of the Majimaji rebellions against the German between 1905 and 1907. She brings the study of the battlefield into landscape studies by recognising that the landscape is valued for the memories, emotions and feelings that it evokes. It is a recognition that archaeology alone cannot demarcate the extent of a battlefield or bring out the fear that warriors faced. These are aspects of the battlefield that appear in legends, songs and oral narratives. These issues, which emphasize the centrality of the intangible in understanding African cultural heritage and landscape, will be promoted in this journal.

The liberation of Africa from colonialism has also become a part of the heritage discourse with UNESCO developing a project that will result in a 'liberation museum', a library and an archive in Arusha, Tanzania. The project (Road to Independence: African Liberation Heritage Programme) will not only create sites of memory but will link them through narratives of unity in the liberation of southern Africa. Some of these sites like Robben Island have already been the subject of study and have been inscribed on the World Heritage List. It will be interesting to see how this project develops, as heritage places are identified and listed as liberation heritage and what counter-narratives emerge from the process of selecting this heritage in postcolonial contexts. Other emerging heritage issues are in colonial and postcolonial genocide studies, and these have fed into scholarship in memorialisation and reparations, as well as museum studies.

Africa's efforts to preserve its heritage are determined by many parameters from its economies to the performance of the international art markets and to the strengths of the legislations meant to protect that heritage. Heritage management therefore often requires

one to understand the economic, social and political contexts of the different countries. Trafficking of heritage resources is not driven 'irresponsibility of African institutions' but by the prevailing economic and political conditions and a readily available market. As a resource rich continent, it has attracted investors in the extractive industry and the number of sites (including properties listed on the World Heritage List) threatened by mining have significantly increased. In this environment where economies are not performing well enough for governments to provide funding for conservation, where manpower with technical skills may not be available and where communities are powerless, management of cultural heritage is a complicated process. The report from activities to empower the heritage practitioners in Lesotho in this volume highlights the problems that are faced by the heritage sector in many African countries.

References

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