

CAN ARCHAEOLOGY BY AFRICANS GENUINELY BE FOR AFRICANS?

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Since the end of my undergraduate studies, the prime issue that has deeply concerned me as well as energized me to remain within the discipline is whether as an African I can practice an archaeology that is vibrant, engaging, accessible, and directly applicable to the daily lives of African people. I redirected my research interest to address whether producing African archaeologists makes a difference or not, both to African people and the discipline of archaeology.

The need to train Africans in archaeology has been highlighted for the last five decades. Equally, some African and Africanist archaeologists have begged for the direct relevance of archaeology to Africans as early as the mid-1980s. In this decade, we see the emergence of research interests that address the relationship between local communities and archaeology in sub-Saharan African countries. Yet despite these developments, research that recognizes local communities' perceptions, reactions, and demands on archaeology or that examines the practice and teaching of archaeology in African universities is very sparse.

Within that broader inquiry, between July 2010 and January 2012, I spent sixteen months in Uganda and Tanzania to explore the experiences of Africans--as practitioners, students, and local communities-- in archaeology. My research findings show that archaeology in the Tanzanian and Ugandan higher education systems was introduced during the early 1960s in only two universities: Dar es Salaam College in Tanzania (now the University of Dar es Salaam - UDSM), and Makerere College in Uganda (now Makerere University - MKU). Archaeology was more vibrant at Makerere College than at Dar es Salaam.

By the late-1960s, its visibility at MKU started to decline and has remained undeveloped ever since then. Whereas



at the UDSM archaeology started to emerge as a full-fledged program only in 1985, today, the UDSM has a refined program that offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees. On the other hand, MKU just opened an archaeology program in the 2013-2014 academic year to offer Bachelor of Arts in Archaeology

In addition to documenting the status of academic archaeology in these countries and publishing a co-authored article in *Azania*, I also organized collaborative research involving both Tanzanian and Ugandan archaeologists, particularly fresh graduates both from undergraduate and graduate archaeology programs at the UDSM. In this collaborative research with Muwonge Herman from Uganda and Kokeli Ryano and Naserian Ndongoya from Tanzania, we examined local communities' perceptions of and attitudes towards archaeology and archaeologists. Local communities, either from archaeologically under-researched areas such as Kajuna village, Masaka District, in central Uganda or over-researched areas for almost a century such as Olduvai Gorge in northern Tanzania, have the same attitude towards archaeology and archaeologists.

We learned that despite the growth of the number of local scholars, the

relationship between archaeologists and local communities still continues its colonial legacies that disenfranchise the latter and disregard their voices, rights, and needs. The Maasai community of Olduvai Gorge, based on their long-term experience, strongly advise to archaeologists to adhere a neighborhood reciprocity approach. As one way of transforming archaeological practices in African settings, we presented the concerns and experiences of the Maasai community in two venues. The first was at the community archaeology workshop held at the UF in March 2014. The second venue was the joint international conference organized by the Pan-African Archaeological Association and the Society of Africanist Archaeologists, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in July 2014.

Asmeret G. Mehari received her PhD in anthropology in 2015. Funding for this research was provided by the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the UF Graduate School, the Center for African Studies, and the UF Office of Research.