

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRAXIS IN WEST AFRICAN HISTORIC PRESERVATION: SENEGAMBIA 1981

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Introduction

Gradually, the theoretical 'loss of innocence' and the dawning of 'critical self-consciousness' which archaeologists were said to have experienced in the 1970s appears to be extending into a fuller awareness of the wider socio-political context in which theorising about cultural phenomena takes place. One index of this shift is the emergence of a literature that challenges positivist orthodoxies concerning fundamental epistemologies (e.g. Miller 1982) and rejects much of the positivist critique of historicism (e.g. Hodder 1983). Another index is the paral- lel phrasing of demands that archaeologists should explicitly recognise the political implications of their interventions into the sources of reconstruction of the past of peoples far outside their own immediate cultural experience (cf. Odak 1980; Sinclair 1984). Such interventions place archaeology on the anvil of contemporary relations of exploitation between North and South. It is therefore incumbent upon archaeologists to review aspects of their attitudes and assumptions to the practice of research and conservation in determinate situations (ideology and agency as praxis). One way of doing so is to examine one's own experience in relation to the people who are the custodians of archaeological remains or cultural resources which are the subject of enquiry (Miller 1980). Another is to examine the preoccupations of past researchers which led to their treatment of sources in a particular way, as I have done with respect to Nigerian 'Cross River Monoliths' (Ray, n.d.). Yet another is to look at the implications for historic preservation of a variety of attitudes and actions by practising archaeologists in a single nation state or region. The latter is the approach adopted here.

The example of Senegambia together with Guinea-Bissau is used here for several reasons. One is that the three nations involved (Senegal and The Gambia have yet to reach formal union) occupy a chronically poor but nevertheless strategically important location in Africa. These two factors largely determine the attitude of the North toward them. Another is that the people living within their boundaries have experienced markedly different forms of colonial rule (French in Senegal, British in The Gambia, and Portuguese in Guinea) and relatedly of archaeological organisation, interest and practice. Thirdly, I had an opportunity to make close comparisons and to meet and talk to practising archaeologists and historians in each of these countries on a visit to West Africa in 1981.

The first two sections of the paper describe the geopolitical context of the three nation-states and then of the archaeological

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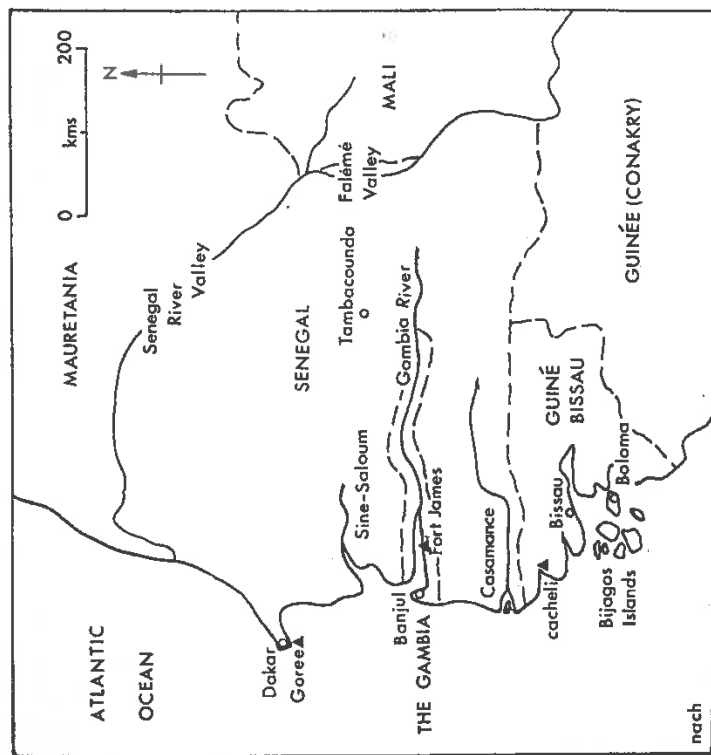


Figure 1: West Africa with regions and places mentioned in the text

organisations and research history of each. The third section attempts to characterise some general attitudes to conservation among archaeologists in Dakar and a comparison is made with those of historians expressed in Bissau. The fourth section concerns reconnaissance purposes, specifically, the making of maps for research and conservation purposes, while the fifth is a consideration of four different expatriate attitudes towards the famous Senegambian megaliths. The aim of this characterisation is to show how they represent in microcosm, the alignment of different interests in the investigation, preservation or display of monuments, and how, in at least one case, the outcome of this process brought results contrary to their expressed intention.

The anecdotal nature of this exercise serves deliberately to counter the kinds of programmatic statement often made concerning national policy on the preservation of sites, monuments and other

cultural resources. Written by an expatriate, it focusses largely on expatriate attitudes because in 1981 a slightly stronger tendency to rationalise their local behaviour in international terms was evident: no doubt, this is an endemic feature of expatriate activity in most fields. The exogenous critique which this paper provides needs, therefore, to be set alongside an endogenous one such as that which Yoro Fall seemed to have embarked upon for Senegal in 1981 and which Nzewunwa (1984) has prepared for Nigeria.

The Geopolitical Context

The Republics of Senegal, The Gambia and Guiné-Bissau occupy together much of the extreme western edge of Africa (see Figure 1). The physical setting varies by latitude and proximity to rivers and coast-line, but can broadly be divided into three zones, a semi-arid Sahelian zone north of the latitude of Dakar, and south of this two zones which divide east/west. To the west is a palm-bush and mangrove area bordering the lower reaches of the westward-draining rivers. The eastern zone is the 'thorn-bush savannah' of the interior.

Culturally and historically, the Senegal river valley in the Sahelian area has been heavily settled and has experienced an early phase of indigenous state-level political organisation (Chavane 1980). Influenced by Islamic Berber groups from Morocco, this area was the source for much of the Islamisation of the region. By the second millennium AD, another territorially based polity was emerging in the extreme south: the Empire of Kaabu (Brooks 1980), the northern marches of which bordered on the Gambia river. In between, settlement was concentrated in the Faliémé valley of eastern Senegal, in the basin formed by the Siné-Saloum and lower Gambia rivers and in the coastal regions from the Siné-Saloum estuary south to the Bijagos Islands. The principal contemporary peoples of Senegal are, in population size order, The Ouolof, Foulbe (Fulani), Serer, Tukulor and Diola. All these groups are represented among the population of The Gambia, but the majority of its population are Mandinka who are also a sizeable minority within Guiné. Only the Diola and some Serer are non-Muslims, but in Guiné the majority of the peoples, including the numerically predominant Balante, Papel and Bijagos, are likewise non-Muslims. Christianisation, mostly from Catholic missions has been widespread in all three countries, although its success has been limited to coastal areas.

The importance of the region lay not in agricultural or mineral wealth, but in the port of Dakar considered crucially important to the 'security' of the east-central Atlantic and the circum-Cape sea-lanes. Access to this port (and to Conakry in Guiné further south), is therefore of great importance to both NATO and Soviet fleets, as formerly was Dakar to the French and Banjul and Freetown (Sierra Leone) to the British. Up an estuary very prone to silting, Bissau has not, been regarded anywhere nearly as vital.

Thus Senegal, as that part of Africa to which Dakar is attached, has assumed an importance to the French quite unrelated to its perceived

economic potential, becoming at the height of the colonial era, the 'gateway' to the huge swathe of Sahelian territory administered as the 'outback' of French West Africa, where Dakar's mild climate made it a suitable administrative centre. Towards the end of the colonial period (initiated by French enclaves from the late 17th century and effected by the occupation of the Cayor region between Dakar and St. Louis in the mid 19th century) the importance of the port of Dakar was underlined for the French with the transference of allegiance of the garrison to the Allies in 1942 and the effect this had on the Vichycoise.

The Gambia remained as a separate entity (although of anomalous form as a territory comprising areas on either bank of the lower reaches of a large river), as an artefact of Anglo-French rivalry in this strategically important area. In the era of Independence (only really effective from 1970), the concerns of the Gambians are more with a community of regional interest with Senegal and so moves towards unification have been gathering momentum in the last decade.

The expansion and imposition of colonial authority by the Portuguese outwards from Bissau port (founded in 1687) was relatively late (1913-15) and extremely violent. The pattern of control then exercised involved an influx of Portuguese personnel and their concentrated settlement in regional centres, accompanied by widescale alienation of indigenous lands around these centres. This pattern was then in marked contrast to that in Senegambia and was the major factor in the refusal of Portugal to relinquish colonial control. A protracted war of liberation began in 1962, with little direct external support for the revolutionary forces of PAIGC. Due to a coherent nationalist philosophy and effective internal organisation and discipline (see Cabral 1980) the PAIGC controlled of most of the country by 1970 (Davidson 1984, 787) and by the end of 1973, Independence was formally recognised by the United Nations.

The current Senegalese and Guinean political milieux are somewhat more complex. Briefly, in the years of the presidency of Leopold Senghor (1960-80), successive French Governments attempted to use Senegal as a pawn in their game of retaining a strategic influence in world affairs, in matters both military (hence their concern to continue to control access to Dakar port, inside or outside NATO), and cultural (as a base for francophone cultural missions). By 1981, with the transfer of power to President Diouf, this covert control exercised by France could be registered in Dakar by the pervasive presence of 'advisers' in economic and political spheres to the new Government. However, two new factors have emerged. First, the presence in Dakar of the regional offices of the UN organisations, of which the UNESCO contingent, influenced to some degree by pan-Africanist Senegalese opposition parties, has been most vocal. A second is the less obvious but more locally effective presence of an Islamic interest, particularly from Saudi Arabia.

Guiné is surrounded by its larger and regionally more viable, francophone neighbours: Senegal and Guinée (Conakry). Since the mid-

1970s it has therefore been under considerable pressure economically (and indirectly, culturally and politically) to integrate despite a quite contrasting ideological orientation, especially in relation to Senegal. What in 1981 appeared to be emerging, was an internal conflict in which individuals with contrasting personal histories from the years of the Independence struggle were advocating differing strategies for or against assimilation, with the former group receiving active support and the promise of tangible resources from Dakar.

The Archaeological Framework

In Senegal, archaeology has long been practised as a branch of the activities of the IFAN (Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire based at Dakar, formerly the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire). In recent years although funding and direction have continued to come from France, the work of the Institute has gradually been integrated more with the work of the Université de Dakar. Indeed the most recent development (up to 1981) had been the appointment of members of the first generation of post-doctoral Senegalese archaeologists within the History Department of the University itself. Although most researchers who come from overseas to work in Senegal do so in association with IFAN, there is now some independently-organised work from within the University. Additionally, there is something of a tradition of amateur research conducted by locally resident missionaries and (in that era) colonial officers.

Several contrasting modes of research are featured from Dakar. One is characteristic of those archaeologists whose appointments are in teaching or joint teaching/research positions. Here, although laboratory studies may be continuous, fieldwork takes place only during vacations or at weekends. Both Senegalese and expatriate archaeologists featured in this group in 1981, although in effect, the group encompassed all practising Senegalese archaeologists, and since 1984, there have been no expatriots formally within it. Another mode is the (often externally-funded) research fellow within the IFAN, whose duties are entirely lab- or field-based, but who may occasionally give a lecture series, or supervise laboratory based instruction. In 1981 this group was entirely composed of expatriates. Another group comprises scholars in other disciplines (e.g. Geology) who work alongside (and sometimes as) archaeologists on research projects at IFAN or within the University. A fourth mode of research is that conducted by foreign expeditions, which are usually invited to use the IFAN as a base for operations. Finally, amateur research is usually carried out independently of the IFAN, again by expatriates, often in an unlicensed (but not always inept) manner. Bases for such work have included Government offices in Dakar but most have been local missions or schools in the interior.

Archaeology in The Gambia and in Guiné is closely linked with oral historical enquiry, and is based in Governmental institutions. Although the formal apparatus exists in The Gambia, neither country has anything which could be described as a definitive organisational entity devoted to archaeology. Thus, in The Gambia, most research undertaken has been launched in co-operation with overseas expeditions, as with the Canadian

expedition which explored the Ker Batch group of stone circles in the early 1970s. In 1981 the only locally based archaeologist was a Gambian, trained primarily in historical research. He had been working in collaboration with oral historians based in the Gambian National Archives, but was responsible to the Antiquities division in the Government.

In Guiné, some reconnaissance work has occurred collaboratively between a Guinean trained overseas in oral history and museum studies and a prehistorian from the IFAN in Dakar. No organised missions from overseas had operated in Guiné since Independence, up until 1981. However, there had been in Guiné (and to some extent in The Gambia), something of a tradition of amateur enquiry in the colonial era. In parallel with the Bulletin issued annually by the IFAN for former French West Africa, there was a journal entitled *Boletín Cultural de Guiné Portuguesa* which contained occasional reports of field observations made in the earlier years of colonial control. However, the most recent summary of archaeological research contained therein was published in 1954. Oral historians at the Scientific Research Institute in Bissau had collected, in an incidental way during the years of military struggle, a mass of information concerning not only the traditions, but also the material remains pertaining to hundreds of historic sites, particularly in those areas of the country where guerrilla operations were most intense and the liberated zones had been of the longest standing.

Since Independence, these Guinean oral historians have initiated field research and have formulated site-specific conservation policies based upon this localised, sporadic data. By 1981, they had identified a need for a sustained archaeological input, but had been unable to secure funds to begin to implement this. This will be discussed below.

Some Attitudes to the Conservation of the Historic Environment

Given the degree of French tutelage which presently active Senegalese archaeologists have received it is perhaps too early to talk of an 'indigenous' archaeological orientation on historic preservation having emerged. This is not to imply lack of interest in the subject expressed by newly-appointed or post-doctoral Senegalese archaeologists in Dakar in 1981, rather to acknowledge that (with the exception of the radical historian Yoro Fall) there was no local critique of predominating European aims or attitudes on research or conservation within Senegal.

This last sentence introduces a vital linkage: certainly in the African situation (but probably elsewhere as well), attitudes to conservation cannot be divorced from attitudes to research, since in the case of any one scholar, their view of the latter will almost inevitably colour, if not actually predetermine, their attitude to the former. Three contrasting views on archaeological/historical research and conservation in the West African context could be schematised as follows: firstly, a paternalistic view of research requirements which might be said to have characterised archaeological activity in French West Africa, and in Ghana and Nigeria in the years immediately after Independence. In this view (one perhaps more supportable in the absence

of trained indigenous personnel) research priorities were determined almost at a pan-continental level, oriented towards the solution of historical problems perceived as common to, or affecting, whole regions and cultural areas. Consequently, in the conservation sphere, opportunities for large-scale salvage work, on dam-projects in particular, were seized in the hope of their revealing evidence of a fundamentally important nature concerning major phases of African cultural development. Suffice it to say, that the lack of a framework of locally oriented research objectives (c.f. Nzewunwa's critique of the Kainji project) led, in most cases, to the patchy accumulation of disparate data which brought little enlightenment either locally or continentally.

A nationalistic view of research and conservation has developed in reaction to this externally induced pan-Africanism, but has still tended to address questions derived from that era. In particular this characterised a first period of confident assumption of the re-ins of archaeological research in the late 1970s. It was noticeable in Nigeria, where the notion of an archaeological/oral historical emphasis on parts of the Benue valley, which would manage to secure the identification of the role of Nigeria as the 'Bantu homeland' gained prominence. The irony that one of the sources of the model in question was from former colonial historians was not apparently appreciated by the patriotic proponents of this combined research and (oral historical) salvage operation. This nationalistic view was also popular at this time in the Republic of Guinea, where the primary field of research which would situate that nation centrally in the development of pan-African civilisation was identified as the formative era of the Kingdom of Mali. Thus much research effort was channelled into the north-east of the country. By the late 1970s it was possible, with a Malian proposal for a major dam near the common border, to align this work yet more closely with national development objectives. As a consequence, other, perhaps equally vital, research and conservation work in other provinces was relatively neglected during the late 1960s and 1970s although by 1981 there were definite signs of the development of more even coverage.

With recent increases in the number of trained personnel, a more 'parochial' view of the orientation of archaeological research and conservation has emerged. Although regarded from some external vantage points as the introduction of 'tribalism' into African historical studies, the importance of this development is that such an orientation can, in fact, accommodate positively two contrasting dimensions. The first is the local dimension, where after the traumas of colonialism, pride over *in situ* achievements can be nurtured. The second is the pan-national and global dimension in which each locality can be seen to have made its contribution to a wider history of humankind. The point of this discussion has been to provide a wider framework against which the specific localised attitudes to conservation perceived in 1981 can be measured. For simplicity I shall blend together the inflections which individuals gave in interviews and characterise these attitudes, so that the contrast is twofold: between French-speaking expatriot archaeologists at IFAN in Dakar, and indigenous oral historians (with a concern for material sources of evidence as well) at Bissau.

The Dakar group, it should firstly be emphasised, were people who have devoted a large part of their working lives to researching African prehistory in the field. Although paternalistic in daily attitudes, they were dedicated to the study of Senegalese as well as more widely west African history and culture. Moreover, albeit in comparative comfort in Dakar, these people had lived continuously in Africa and had associated closely with Africans as friends and equals over a number of years. They nevertheless still belonged to a francophone expatriate tradition of "knowing what is best" for Africa.

Several factors characterised and determined their attitude to field research. Among these were ease of access from Dakar, prominence of physical traces of archaeological interest, the prior discovery of intrinsically interesting objects, whether they were fine and plentiful microliths or buried bronzes and in some instances, the possibilities which existed for collaboration with field scientists in other disciplines. Although views on this matter varied, the attitude to development which required a conservation response was opportunistic. This applied in the case of erosion along the sides of the Fatémé valley which revealed stone axes, to the quarrying of shell-middens in the Sine-Saloum estuary which brought cemeteries to light and to the construction of roads such as in the Senegal river valley which has led to the discovery of at least one important ironworking site. The carrying out of operations in such circumstances has, in fact, led to the formulation and publication of thoughts on the logistics and policy for salvage work by some of these archaeologists, but the general assumption appeared to be that since the Government apparatus was so inactive in the field, and since there was little apparent local concern or response to development activity, why bother to promote such policy?

To look at one case in detail, the shell-midden sites of the Sine-Saloum delta range in size from accumulations along the banks of tributary waterways, to the case of middens which have initiated island formation on sandbanks and which have become huge artificial islands in their own right over the centuries. Large canoes have been used in recent years for transport to deposit shells quarried for use as an accompaniment to tarmac for road building and other construction projects. As a result, huge mounds, such as one 400 meters in diameter and 12 meters high at Fabouna, have been entirely removed. The response so far had been a fairly unsystematic excavation of burial mounds sited on top of the middens prior to their removal. In the process, numerous examples of fine red burnished lidded cremation bowls were recovered whole and transferred to the archaeological laboratory at the IFAN. A suggested future response was that from among the hundreds of islands in the estuarine region which have shell-middens on them, those with burial mounds on them should be classified and banned from exploitation. Customs boats which already patrol the delta would then enforce this ban. This 'solution' to the problem has the virtue of being both simple and direct. However, it is neither scientifically founded (resting as it does on a priori notions: all burials are in prominent mounds; burials are more worthwhile studying than shell-middens; and so on), nor does it take into account other cultural criteria than the presence/absence of

obvious archaeological monuments, such as the local traditional value attaching to individual localities within the delta.

The Dakar based expatriate archaeologists have been involved in making decisions on conservation on an informal basis, responsible neither for formulating nor implementing a national policy on historic preservation. To some extent they adopted an amoral stance and were parasitical upon development as a guide (and in some cases also as a pretext) for research. In Guinée the case was quite different, for some very basic reasons. Paramount among these was access to resources. When the Dakar based archaeologists decided to intervene in conducting a salvage operation, they at the very least had transport to reach the location. The only transport available to workers in Bissau Scientific Institute came in the form of two 2-CV type vehicles which might travel only on roads around the capital and between major towns. During the war most information had been gathered while based deep in the bush.

Despite these difficulties, the posture adopted regarding development and conservation was highly interventionist. For instance, in two cases the discovery of stone tools in areas scheduled for reservoir construction led to a successful opposition of the schemes. Despite problems of access, a network of local contact was being used as a means of monitoring erosion of resources, whether due to quarrying or agricultural operations, or as in the case of walls surrounding recent historical sites, the long term effect of climate. In a situation where the absence of trained personnel was keenly understood, the policy has been one of damage limitation rather than exploration.

Making Maps: Translating the Purpose of Reconnaissance

Expatriate archaeologists, particularly in Senegal, seemed in 1981 to have been especially keen on the production of maps showing the extent and distribution of their discoveries. For instance, I was shown at different times two different maps of the Senegal river valley showing the distribution of different sizes of settlement mound. The density of sites was impressive, but what did they mean? Why were such maps prepared? Had more of these sites been dated, the maps could have been used to illustrate shifts in site location or density at different times in the past, but as it was, they could only be used to indicate regularities in the siting of larger versus smaller settlements.

Nor was this the only area for which detailed maps had been prepared. Two priests had produced a map of all sites featuring stone monoliths and circles, and all of those which were represented by cemeteries of earthen or piled stone tumuli. This map was but a distillation of more detailed maps which had shown more precise locations of each site. One obvious reason why such maps had been made is that Senegal, unlike many West African countries, appears to have many visible field monuments. The sites in question are also similar on the one hand to the settled mounds of the Near East (as in the case of the Senegal river-valley series), and on the other to the prehistoric burial mounds and stone circles of Europe (as with Sine-Saloum/Gambia river sites).

Another reason why such maps have been so readily produced (in comparison with places nearer the Equator in West Africa), is the climatic factor: less rainfall has resulted in sparser vegetation cover and therefore a greater ease of discovery from ground survey. Upon reflection, I think there were other reasons for map production in the 1981 Senegalese context. Most important among these I believe, was the notion of self-validation. This was aimed in different directions according to the individuals concerned. Thus the priests, discouraged by the professionals from carrying out excavations they were not qualified to conduct, made detailed surveys and distribution maps to underscore their devotion to the exploration of the stone circle/tumuli phenomenon. They also appear to have put together the maps to provide a substantive source upon which to base their historical speculations.

Meanwhile the IFAN researchers produced maps of their discoveries overtly in order to make the findings of their research available and to facilitate the process of evolving strategies for future studies. Yet again here, it is possible to suggest that validation of their endeavours was at least as important to them. Such validation was targeted partly at each other: these workers had been trained at different centres in France and interpersonal rivalries expressed metropolitan rivalries of many years' standing. Thus for instance the style of archaeology practised by Bourdeaux-trained archaeologists was felt by them to be different from (and superior to) that which had developed in Marseilles or Paris. Also, the evidence for organised industrial activity which such maps represented was important in order to justify the continued presence of expatriot archaeologists in Senegal: so this direction of validation was targeted at the Senegalese authorities both within and beyond the University of Dakar whose support it was necessary to enlist for continuing programmes.

In a sense, a further target of this latter exercise was in fact overseas, since much of the funding for expatriate activity at IFAN came from French Government sources. Finally, the wider international academic community had for some time (in the context of the Pan-African Congresses on Prehistory and Quaternary studies long established in the continent) been an extremely important target grouping. The production of maps here signified not only industry, but progress, in the archaeological exploration of Africa. Yet as stated earlier, here is the real problem with this map production: the purpose of reconnaissance was reconnaissance itself, while its 'secondary' purpose was to produce maps. The real consequence was that since there were strong ulterior motives for making maps, they tended towards being the 'end product' of research but contained little historically meaningful information.

Here again, the contrast with activity in Bissau is marked. The oral historians there had not simply identified and located sites discovered in the bush-war years: they had also marked their position on a series of very large maps. These maps were not published (unlike almost all the Dakar examples I saw), and were therefore not accessible to all the researchers who could not visit Bissau in person. But this was not because they were considered to contain 'classified' information. It was

rather that it was explicitly acknowledged that these were maps which expressed the extent of ignorance of the historical meaning of the material vestiges of the Guinean past.

So the maps were unpublished. They were 'working' documents in more senses than this, however. It was upon these maps that the national strategy for both research and conservation was based, and from them that the monitoring of resource base erosion and elimination was effected. Nor was the use of such maps in Bissau the province of individuals. The context of their use was in seminars devoted to the recapitulation of (primarily oral-historical) research results and to the planning of interventions both in the research sphere, and in response to particular preservation crises or campaigns. The coordination of the maps was effected by use of a 1: 200,000 master based upon the Portuguese/French survey made early in the war years. The sites marked included surface occurrences of stone tools, cave sites, shell-middens, settlement mounds, indigenous walled enclosures and European forts. However, the sorting of these locations by date was deliberately cautious: only definitely 'early' sites and on the other hand recently documented sites were attributed any bracket. The dating of all other sites was unequivocally recognised to be 'uncertain'.

So in the Guinean case the purpose of reconnaissance was to register chiefly the presence of cultural features, without trying to represent groupings of such features as having any definite cultural or temporal significance. At all times the dual role of maps produced thereby was explicit, and as such they were an active resource for the planning of archaeological intervention. At the same time the purpose of not publishing was clear: until they could be dated the features included would remain a record of ignorance, and should not become fossilised as if they were a more meaningful record.

Studying and Saving the Megaliths: Some Individual Perspectives

No other feature of the Senegambian prehistoric heritage has been the subject of such interest to Europeans as the megalithic stone settings of Sine-Saloum and the lower Gambian plains. As noted above, these and related monuments cover a vast area and are to be numbered in their thousands. They comprise mainly circular settings of rounded or angular pillars of laterite, some of which have elaborate 'portals' featuring stones carved with phallus-like tops, or bifurcating into so called 'lyre'-shapes. Such circles have been shown by excavation to have in some cases been closely associated with grave mounds and cairns not surrounded by standing stones. Dates so far available have placed them within the first millennium AD, but it seems likely that they are manifestations of successive points in a long tradition of megalithic construction. The most obvious reason why they have aroused European interest is their similarity to prehistoric stone settings in Europe.

This abiding interest provides us with an opportunity to examine contrasts in expatriate attitudes to archaeological conservation in respect of a single material phenomenon. To do so, I shall characterise the

views of four individuals whom I met and interviewed concerning the investigation and conservation of the megaliths during my stay in Dakar. I was additionally able to observe the reaction of two of these individuals to the megaliths in the field. In the case of each of the four individuals concerned I have attempted to summarise, as far as possible without misrepresentation, their attitudes to three aspects of the question of an approach to the megaliths: their investigation, preservation and their public presentation. In each case I have then tried to relate these attitudes to specific actions concerning the megaliths and to the consequences of these actions.

Of the four, three were francophones, the fourth an anglophone. I shall initially discuss the fourth since he has recently been involved least directly in their study (if not their preservation and presentation). The three francophones, unlike the latter, were all employed as professionals. One was making a research trip to Senegal, while the others were based semi-permanently in Dakar. Only one was employed by the French Government as a French national working overseas. The other two were from two other European countries, one funded continuously to work in Senegal, the other taking time out from University teaching responsibilities in Europe to direct a specific piece of field research in Africa. The anglophone had been an amateur from the time of his first involvement in the area as an employee of the Colonial Government. His romantic interest in the 'enigmatic' stone circles had induced him to carry out various small-scale excavations but no detailed records survive and the finds have been lost. Nevertheless, his fascination for the stones remained with him along with his amateur interest in archaeology. His love for The Gambia had also very evidently been constant and in retirement he had, by various means, been able to secure the support and approval of the President to make periodic return visits to inspect the Museum and the site preservation facilities as well as the sites themselves and to advise on means of improvement and consolidation.

For him such visits were as much about the affectionate renewing of old acquaintances, as about 'business' or the fulfillment of romantic ideas about Africa. His paternalism was both a fond and a materially powerless one, his influence benign. What was his view of the megaliths? As befitted a man with his background, he deferred both to professional archaeologists and to professional decision-makers. He believed that the megaliths were there to be investigated, but mainly as a means of making their mystery a little more tempered with knowledge. And this knowledge was to be made accessible to a public comprising both Gambians (school children) and foreigners (exchange-earning tourists). The recommendations he made to the Government of The Gambia concerning the megaliths, following the visit he made in 1981 were therefore full of practical ideas concerning the means of best siting amenities so as not to damage or spoil the view of the stones, and how to provide the means of safeguarding them (such as by grazing cattle or bush fire).

Unfortunately, his advice was only site-specific and was directed to what were considered by him to be 'the best' sites which lay within The Gambia's borders (for the purposes of promoting tourism). The

criteria used for selecting the 'best' included (implicitly) those which (understandably) were best preserved, but also those which had the most unusual features (such as 'lyre'-stones), and which had easiest access from tarred roads or rivers. The solution to the problem of erosion was the appointment of caretakers for the two sites concerned, Ker Batch and Wassu. Yet this could only ever constitute a partial solution to the damage problem since (by definition) the erosion of other sites of equal importance (registered either archaeologically or in terms of localities valued by indigenous communities) had already progressed further than these two. His attitude to the megaliths was summed up well during a visit I made with him, other archaeologists and visitors to a site at Balingho. Here his aims were threefold: to locate for his professional colleagues a site he had 'discovered' and investigated thirty-five years earlier, to hear any new ideas on the dating, meaning or conservation of such sites that these colleagues might have had, and to introduce new visitors to the stones as a compelling prehistoric phenomenon.

An enthusiasm for the visual spectacle which the megaliths presented characterised an aspect of the attitude of the first of the francophone archaeologists to be considered here. Like the other two professionals, he had been directly involved in recent excavation projects on megalithic sites in Senegal. Although questions concerning their preservation were put to him on more than one occasion, he commented that this particular aspect had been considered in greater depth by his colleague at the IFAN, and in general he shared the latter's view on the question.

However, he was also present during the field visit to Balingho, and helped to coordinate an associated visit to the site excavated earlier that dry season by the expedition led by the second francophone to be discussed below. It was on that visit that one striking aspect of the archaeologist's view of conservation of these monuments became clear. What appeared to matter most to him was that they should be visited and appreciated in their 'natural' setting. That is to say, they should not be packaged or artificially preserved in the way that the man advising on their preservation in The Gambia was attempting to see done. This was graphically illustrated by his reaction to an attempt to protect one of the stones in the second site made by its recent excavator. The latter had packed earth around and over the decorated top of this monolith which projected only slightly at an angle from ground level. As soon as he saw this the archaeologist now visiting the site exclaimed that this idea was nonsensical, and proceeded to clear the earth away with his hands in order to reveal it again. I was not immediately sure of the motivation for this action: was it to make it visible so that it was not trodden on by man or beast? I then realised that he wholeheartedly believed that the monument should be seen. But the question then arises -- by whom, and why? I think there are two possibilities. One is that it is realistic to assume that anyone who comes this distance to see these remains must have an idea of their worth as a national asset and thus potentially has power to influence other peoples' awareness of their worth. If they see to the full how spectacular the individual elements of this prehistoric sites are, they will

plead their value harder to those in a position to either provide funds for their exploration or enforce legislation or practical policy for their preservation.

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The second francophone viewed his expedition as both a scientific project and as a cultural contribution. His approach to the monuments was the strictest in scientific and moral terms that I believe had ever been followed in the history of their study by Europeans. One of his attempts at protection has already been noted, but it was the professionalism of his approach to the project of investigation (formulating alternative hypotheses to examine by survey or investigation; limiting excavation to the solution of specific problems; taking time to consult the local traditions concerning origins and attributions) which initially made the contrast with previous work (mostly concerned simply with dating or exploration or mapping) so marked.

Rather than discuss his project in detail, I wish to focus on two aspects of it, one of which will find a prominent place in his final report, the other of which will, for obvious reasons, be only hinted at in the acknowledgements. The first aspect is the placing of the excavated sites in its field context. The site in question was chosen after a close survey of the broad shallow valley selected for initial study had been made. This revealed seventeen stone circles, but among and beyond them a much greater number of earthen tumuli. The site of excavation was chosen partly for logistical reasons, but also to examine the association between these kinds of monuments. This had obviously beneficial research implications but such a systematic approach (focusing on a location which would most likely provide answers to the maximum number of historical questions and situating it in respect of a thorough survey of the monumental elements of a coherent area of former settlement) would also have important value for the development of preservation strategies. This is because rather than looking in isolation at well preserved individual monuments and investigating these for the sake of 'something to say', this approach gave something more tangible. It provided the administrators with an appreciation of the interrelatedness of all the monuments in the area (and served thereby as

rather that it was explicitly acknowledged that these were maps which expressed the extent of ignorance of the historical meaning of the material vestiges of the Guinean past.

So the maps were unpublished. They were 'working' documents in more senses than this, however. It was upon these maps that the national strategy for both research and conservation was based, and from them that the monitoring of resource base erosion and elimination was effected. Nor was the use of such maps in Bissau the province of individuals. The context of their use was in seminars devoted to the recapitulation of (primarily oral-historical) research results and to the planning of interventions both in the research sphere, and in response to particular preservation crises or campaigns. The coordination of the maps was effected by use of a 1: 200,000 master based upon the Portuguese/French survey made early in the war years. The sites marked included surface occurrences of stone tools, cave sites, shell-middens, settlement mounds, indigenous walled enclosures and European forts. However, the sorting of these locations by date was deliberately cautious: only definitely 'early' sites and on the other hand recently documented sites were attributed any bracket. The dating of all other sites was unequivocally recognised to be 'uncertain'.

So in the Guinean case the purpose of reconnaissance was to register chiefly the presence of cultural features, without trying to represent groupings of such features as having any definite cultural or temporal significance. At all times the dual role of maps produced thereby was explicit, and as such they were an active resource for the planning of archaeological intervention. At the same time the purpose of not publishing was clear: until they could be dated the features included would remain a record of ignorance, and should not become fossilised as if they were a more meaningful record.

Studying and Saving the Megaliths: Some Individual Perspectives

No other feature of the Senegambian prehistoric heritage has been the subject of such interest to Europeans as the megalithic stone settings of Sine-Saloum and the lower Gambian plains. As noted above, these and related monuments cover a vast area and are to be numbered in their thousands. They comprise mainly circular settings of rounded or angular pillars of laterite, some of which have elaborate 'portals' featuring stones carved with phallus-like tops, or bifurcating into so called 'lyre'-shapes. Such circles have been shown by excavation to have in some cases been closely associated with grave mounds and cairns not surrounded by standing stones. Dates so far available have placed them within the first millennium AD, but it seems likely that they are manifestations of successive points in a long tradition of megalithic construction. The most obvious reason why they have aroused European interest is their similarity to prehistoric stone settings in Europe.

This abiding interest provides us with an opportunity to examine contrasts in expatriate attitudes to archaeological conservation in respect of a single material phenomenon. To do so, I shall characterise the

views of four individuals whom I met and interviewed concerning the investigation and conservation of the megaliths during my stay in Dakar. I was additionally able to observe the reaction of two of these individuals to the megaliths in the field. In the case of each of the four individuals concerned I have attempted to summarise, as far as possible without misrepresentation, their attitudes to three aspects of the question of an approach to the megaliths: their investigation, preservation and their public presentation. In each case I have then tried to relate these attitudes to specific actions concerning the megaliths and to the consequences of these actions.

Of the four, three were francophones, the fourth an anglophone. I shall initially discuss the fourth since he has recently been involved least directly in their study (if not their preservation and presentation). The three francophones, unlike the latter, were all employed as professionals. One was making a research trip to Senegal, while the others were based semi-permanently in Dakar. Only one was employed by the French Government as a French national working overseas. The other two were from two other European countries, one funded continuously to work in Senegal, the other taking time out from University teaching responsibilities in Europe to direct a specific piece of field research in Africa. The anglophone had been an amateur from the time of his first involvement in the area as an employee of the Colonial Government. His romantic interest in the "enigmatic" stone circles had induced him to carry out various small-scale excavations but no detailed records survive and the finds have been lost. Nevertheless, his fascination for the stones remained with him along with his amateur interest in archaeology. His love for The Gambia had also very evidently been constant and in retirement he had, by various means, been able to secure the support and approval of the President to make periodic return visits to inspect the Museum and the site preservation facilities as well as the sites themselves and to advise on means of improvement and consolidation.

For him such visits were as much about the affectionate renewing of old acquaintances, as about "business" or the fulfillment of romantic ideas about Africa. His paternalism was both a fond and a materially powerless one, his influence benign. What was his view of the megaliths? As befitted a man with his background, he deferred both to professional archaeologists and to professional decision-makers. He believed that the megaliths were there to be investigated, but mainly as a means of making their mystery a little more tempered with knowledge. And this knowledge was to be made accessible to a public comprising both Gambians (school children) and foreigners (exchange-earning tourists). The recommendations he made to the Government of The Gambia concerning the megaliths, following the visit he made in 1981 were therefore full of practical ideas concerning the means of best siting amenities so as not to damage or spoil the view of the stones, and how to provide the means of safeguarding them (such as by grazing cattle or bush fire).

Unfortunately, his advice was only site-specific and was directed to what were considered by him to be 'the best' sites which lay within The Gambia's borders (for the purposes of promoting tourism). The

criteria used for selecting the 'best' included (implicitly) those which (understandably) were best preserved, but also those which had the most unusual features (such as 'lyre'-stones), and which had easiest access from tarred roads or rivers. The solution to the problem of erosion was the appointment of caretakers for the two sites concerned, Ker Batch and Wassu. Yet this could only ever constitute a partial solution to the damage problem since (by definition) the erosion of other sites of equal importance (registered either archaeologically or in terms of equal value by indigenous communities) had already progressed further than these two. His attitude to the megaliths was summed up well during a visit I made with him, other archaeologists and visitors to a site at Balingho. Here his aims were threefold: to locate for his professional colleagues a site he had 'discovered' and investigated thirty-five years earlier, to hear any new ideas on the dating, meaning or conservation of such sites that these colleagues might have had, and to introduce new visitors to the stones as a compelling prehistoric phenomenon.

An enthusiasm for the visual spectacle which the megaliths presented characterised an aspect of the attitude of the first of the francophone archaeologists to be considered here. Like the other two professionals, he had been directly involved in recent excavation projects on megalithic sites in Senegal. Although questions concerning their preservation were put to him on more than one occasion, he commented that this particular aspect had been considered in greater depth by his colleague at the IFAN, and in general he shared the latter's view on the question.

However, he was also present during the field visit to Balingho, and helped to coordinate an associated visit to the site excavated earlier that dry season by the expedition led by the second francophone to be discussed below. It was on that visit that one striking aspect of the archaeologist's view of conservation of these monuments became clear. What appeared to matter most to him was that they should be visited and appreciated in their 'natural' setting. That is to say, they should not be packaged or artificially preserved in the way that the man advising on their preservation in the Gambia was attempting to see done. This was graphically illustrated by his reaction to an attempt to protect one of the stones in the second site made by its recent excavator. The latter had packed earth around and over the decorated top of this monolith which projected only slightly at an angle from ground level. As soon as he saw this the archaeologist now visiting the site exclaimed that this idea was nonsensical, and proceeded to clear the earth away with his hands in order to reveal it again. I was not immediately sure of the motivation for this action: was it to make it visible so that it was not trodden on by man or beast? I then realised that he wholeheartedly believed that the monument should be seen. But the question then arises -- by whom, and why? I think there are two possibilities. One is that it is realistic to assume that anyone who comes this distance to see these remains must have an idea of their worth as a national asset and thus potentially has power to influence other peoples' awareness of their worth. If they see to the full how spectacular the individual elements of this prehistoric sites are, they will

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an indicator of the likely complexity of the situation elsewhere also). It also served to give them a more representative picture of the overall historical and cultural setting of the monuments, rather than potentially unrepresentative dating and constructional details from a site chosen without an understanding of its true relation to neighbouring sites.

The second aspect was revealed to me graphically as we approached the site in question via the nearby Tukur village. As they saw Europeans approaching in a vehicle all the children of the villagers rushed out to greet us, thinking that we were the former expedition returning. Now it may be that this can be dismissed as a usual reaction to the possibility of renewal of potentially lucrative (in sweets and so on if nothing else!) contact with visitors from the fabulously wealthy North. But it transpired that the relations established by the archaeologists among our third man's group had been positive beyond these 'normal' reactions. The long term effects of goodwill cannot readily be gauged, but in a context where too often the relationship even in the process of daily contact is seen as exploitative, its potential value should not be lightly dismissed. If, as seems likely, an earnest effort was made to explain locally the aims of this particular archaeological project, it may have both a direct and lasting, if somewhat localised, effect on the fate of the remains in question. After all, the people whose cattle graze among the stones, and whose millet fields lie among and even on the tumuli are the custodians first and last of these cultural vestiges.

The consequences of not appreciating the value systems of these *situ* curators were strikingly illustrated to me in 1981 in respect of the third francophone to be considered here. This man had a long record of diligent service to archaeology and to physical anthropology in Senegal. His work and his attitudes appeared to be both cautious and sensitive, and he was certainly modest of his achievements. It was he who had been most active in following up salvage opportunities and who had formulated ideas on preservation.

It was this man's solution to the problem of industrial extraction of shell debris from the Sine-Saloum delta middens which was so simple and direct, but problematical. In relation to megalithic sites he identified two sources of erosion as most destructive in their effects. The first was the lighting of bush fires in the dry season. A widespread activity in the West African grasslands, the stated aim of this exercise is in most areas the facilitation of new growth and the eradication of vermin. The second identified source of erosion was the presence of large trees which have over many generations grown up among the stones and the roots of which have broken and displaced these stones. His solution was that the only way to prevent the trees from effecting total destruction of some of the sites would be for someone to visit the 'most important' among them with a chain-saw and cut down all the offending trees, regardless of their (often enormous) girth. Unlike the coastal patrol for the shell-midden sites, however, this idea was something that he himself could put into practice. So, at the site of Kodiam where

there was a monolith four meters high and where he had noticed that there were four large trees growing against the stones, he went out and cut them all down.

It was only some time after the interview in which the man told me of this solution, that I heard again of the site of Kodiam, from another francophone archaeologist who was not one of the four individuals above, nor on the staff of the IFAN. The site in question was held up by the fourth archaeologist as an example of how beneficial such a drastic solution would be. These sites were not at risk from the local people, he said, because they were sacred. His intervention simply removed the primary 'natural' agency of destruction. What he had neglected to do, however, was discover from the local inhabitants at Kodiam exactly what was sacred to them about these sites. And unfortunately for his scheme, it was in fact the trees which were sacred. Apparently, the effect of his cutting them down was to desecrate the site such that the stones lost all importance to the inhabitants. Consequently, the site became a quarry: not only for the firewood now available so abundantly, but also for the monolith-shaped blocks of laterite which could now be used for building materials.

Conclusion

I have taken a limited and anecdotal view of historic preservation in the West African context in this paper, focussing mostly upon the activities of archaeologists in this region. Given the contrasts identified herein, is it possible to make any generalisations concerning what, in the title of the paper, has been referred to as praxis? In discussions of ideology, praxis refers to the translation of theories about what should be done into actions which best fulfil the theoretical intent. However, what has been referred to here is not a coordinated body or bodies of theory, but rather a range of mental templates which have determined attitudes. It is in the formation and expression of these attitudes that the templates operate as an instrument of ideology in the case of each individual concerned.

There is always some measure of disjuncture between the aims of archaeological intervention in the historic heritage as stated, and the actual practice of such intervention. Among the factors conditioning the degree of disjuncture, are the perennial problems of finance, and the practical difficulties of dealing with entrenched bureaucracies. In this final section of the paper I shall consider how the attitudes characterised (but I hope not caricatured) in this paper themselves constitute an intervention between ideals and practice in the activities affecting the historic heritage in the countries concerned.

The point has already been made that archaeologists based at the IFAN at Dakar were responsible neither for formulating nor implementing conservation policies. This was paralleled by a greater freedom from red tape for them, than would have been the case if they were more directly within a governmental agency. Their advice was occasionally sought concerning preservation matters in an emergency of one kind or

another. At the same time, as host to visiting groups, the IFAN was in a position to channel research effort to national-level research and conservation objectives and it is here, as well as at the level of their own individual activities, that the attitudes of these IFAN-based archaeologists lent direction to the overall response to the conservation issues in Senegal.

Despite occasional funding, logistical or administrative setbacks, then, IFAN researchers were able to plan their research, carry out their fieldwork and prepare documentation of their findings with little direct reference to a national policy on historic preservation, whether or not they had a hand in preparing such policy. In contrast with what I earlier characterised as a 'nationalistic' view of conservation and research, this has obvious benefits for participating individuals in that, in theory, purely scholarly considerations can determine the nature, scale and duration of their involvement and the framing and answering of research questions as well as the degree to which the work also contributes to the survival and 'survivability' of the material aspects of the cultural heritage.

Although systematically designed and implemented projects might well make their positive contribution along these lines, there was no way (perhaps with the exception of the Gorée project) that most of the continuing activities at the IFAN could be described as anything but erratically pursued. Such a model was simply a continuation (albeit with slightly more methodical field techniques and the support of scientific techniques of analysis) of the dilettante activities of colonial-era antiquarianism. The response to selective destruction of elements of the heritage from quarrying, road building or natural agencies was therefore post facto, partial, and sometimes totally unconsidered.

It was within the context of such activity that other foreign archaeologists were encouraged to operate in Senegal. Such concern and restraint as has been documented to some extent in this paper in respect of one of them was entirely self-imposed. The rôle of archaeologists at the IFAN therefore did not include the channelling of outside efforts to meet the perceived or stated objectives of the Government in respect of the national heritage. This is not to say that no interest was taken by these archaeologists in the work of outside teams. There were some instances where, as in the case of a project studying subterranean 'dwellings' in the Casamance region, they dissociated themselves from the research in question on grounds of professional disquiet.

An overview of research conducted by expatriates from the IFAN in 1981 would therefore characterise it as concentrated on localised research projects in early prehistoric studies, mostly in the Cap Vert area, and otherwise wide-ranging but related to individual interests associated with the more obtrusive monuments of the 'Iron Age', and devoted mostly to survey work, elsewhere in the country. Conservation had only recently become recognised as an area where thought and action needed to be applied to the problems posed by development, but the actions concerned were remedies for immediate situations, not solutions

to overall problems. The consequences of such actions as were put into effect had not been gauged prior to, nor had been realised subsequently to, their implementation.

By contrast, systematic research in The Gambia had been limited to the activities of the foreign expeditions, all of which had been concerned with the excavation of stone-circle sites. The conservation advice put forward in 1981 was therefore not a by-product of such activity. Rather, it was the by-product of another activity: the active promotion of the more spectacular elements of the material heritage in the interests of education, but especially, of the tourist industry.

Lastly, in Guiné, there was a contrast in attitudes not fully brought out in the discussion of the activities of the Bissau oral historians in this paper. This reflected a wider contrast in attitudes to outside contacts in the years following Independence. On the one hand, the personnel formerly associated with the revolutionary cadres of the liberation struggle were interested in promoting, as far as possible, self-sufficiency and a strong degree of state-intervention and control in matters affecting the nation as a whole. On the other hand, the 'progressives' wished to end the years of colonial isolation and integrate Guiné more directly with the regional francophone environment, especially in the economic and political spheres.

Each of these general attitudes was reflected in the thinking and actions of the individuals in all areas of public service in Bissau, and the rivalry between the two groups was and remains reflected in the chronic instability of the leadership of each institution there, where changes in directorship are practically annual. In terms of the historic environment, the 'revolutionaries' were interested in having expert advice as logistical support in archaeological endeavours, but maintained as a priority, nationally-sourced research objectives, coupled with a clearly-formulated scheme of conservation aims to which all research was to contribute. Thus, monitoring of the resource base was continual, and responses to the development threats were based upon both pre-existing criteria, and pre-estimated potential.

In contrast, the 'progressives' were interested first and foremost in finding qualified researchers to carry out survey and excavation. As such, they were actively soliciting assistance from beyond the borders of Guiné and Guinée, and, in accordance with the overall aim of integration, were focussing their attention upon francophone expatriates. As noted, this had already met with some success. However, through training and inclination, some personnel belonging to this camp looked beyond the francophone sphere -- to the major source of finance and pursuer regionally of global influence, the USA. In this way, interesting parallels emerge between Guiné and Guinée, where similar factions could be identified in 1981, and a similar release of 'national' control appears to have taken place since the death of Sekou Touré.

Structurally then, the choice in Guiné, as probably elsewhere, appears to have been between national control without funding and a measure of loss of such control but with the prospect of research actually going ahead. What was happening in 1981 in Senegambia and Guiné was something of an oscillating balance between these alternatives. However, one background change was unidirectional. This was a change in personnel: not only has the number of nationals with professional training been increasing but also the means of reproduction of such a cadre, whether in class training in the University of Dakar or in situational apprenticeship in Bissau, has been becoming locally based. Moreover, this change in personnel is also true of expatriate involvement and in this there lies the hope of an accommodation between indigenous and foreign interests in the African past. In 1981 this was registered in a spectrum of attitudes concerning the Senegambian megaliths, depicted above, by the overseas francophone team whose project sought to bridge the requirements of international scientific practice, and local perceptions of the material heritage.

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ARCHAEOLOGY, IDEOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT: MOZAMBIKAN PERSPECTIVES

Paul J.J. Sinclair

Recent discussions amongst some archaeologists working in East Africa have centred on possible rôles for archaeology in contributing more directly to the range of current development programmes in the region and on the importance of including cultural resource management projects in overall development planning. At the TILMIAP (The Louis Leakey Memorial Institute for African Prehistory) workshop in Nairobi in 1979, in which archaeologists from five East African countries were represented, discussion centred particularly on the potential that archaeology has for contributing a balanced perspective on the past to national education systems. Recommendations were put forward to encourage the institutions which fund archaeology in the region to consider the educational relevance of research work both for East African scientists and educational systems. It was also thought important to encourage an even-handed approach to the study of different periods of the East African past in order for archaeological research to provide more effectively material of educational relevance.

Since then, discussion has arisen (Miller 1980 and comments), placing the debate in a wider frame of reference. At the 1982 Theoretical Archaeology Group Conference in Durham (England) a considerable awareness of issues concerning the ideological content and the rôle of archaeological research in different countries was shown by the participants. In Sweden, there exist the beginnings of an active exchange between archaeologists and anthropologists. This is reflected in a recent symposium (Hjort 1983) and in discussions of the place of both disciplines in relation to the different concepts of development under consideration in the wider Swedish context (Krantz 1980).

For an archaeologist, the array of different concepts of development is quite bewildering. Following Hettne (1982), differing national strategies will be conceptualised here as the outcome of interaction between development theory, ideology and internal and external power structures. At the risk of over-simplification we shall focus primarily on examples from capitalist and non-capitalist systems. Ultimately, it should be possible to outline a framework for considering aspects of the articulation of archaeology with development theory and in turn to provide some elements which should be included within the definition of various concepts of development archaeology.¹

These issues are further elaborated in this paper in relation to Mozambican archaeology, support for which has been forthcoming from SAREC (Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries) during the last four years. Particular attention will be given to the contribution of archaeology towards an historical consciousness and