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Heritage in Southern and Eastern Africa: Imagining and Marketing Public Culture and History

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⁹In press. Alfred Metraux, The Morale Division. An Ethnography of the Misery of War, edited and with an introduction by Edgardo Krebs.

¹⁰ Metraux had a series of positions and titles during his time at the UN and UNESCO, all of them in the Division of Social Sciences. At UNESCO he directed an important series of studies on race and racial prejudices as well as a project on basic education in Marbial Valley, Haiti. All these activities were under the umbrella of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which had been passed by the UN in 1946.

¹¹ The author wishes to thank the Wenner Gren Foundation for supporting his research in Paris during the years 2000 and 2001 through a grant from its Historical Archives Program.

HERITAGE IN SOUTHERN AND EASTERN AFRICA: IMAGINING AND MARKETING PUBLIC CULTURE AND HISTORY

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From 5-8 July 2004, nearly seventy delegates from Africa, the US and Europe convened in Livingstone, Zambia, for a conference on 'Heritage in Southern and Eastern Africa'. The organizers chose Livingstone because it is the home of the Livingstone Museum (founded in 1934) and near the world heritage site Victoria Falls. Having the conference in Zambia also facilitated the attendance of African scholars, curators, archivists, archaeologists and representatives of the heritage industry from eastern and southern Africa and, especially, from the relatively neglected area of central Africa.

This conference aimed to explore how the culture and history of central, southern and eastern Africa are imagined and represented in public places such as museums, monuments and heritage sites. In recent years the issues surrounding heritage have sparked public debate throughout the region and have been the object of a large body of academic writing. The end of colonial rule and apartheid necessitated the decolonization of public displays in line with the creation of new national and postcolonial identities. Furthermore, the growth of tourism and recognition of the industry's development potential focused attention on sites and traditions potentially exploited for tourist income, raised the profile of archaeology, and reinvigorated museum studies. This trend also politicized not only issues relating to the distribution of tourist revenue, indigenization and local involvement, but also raised questions relating to whose heritage is being represented by whom and how. The mounting popularity of cultural tourism has led to a proliferation of 'traditional villages' and commoditized re-inventions of authentic local life for international visitors. These various public representations of culture and history thus play a key part in the production of ideas not only about national community and the colonial past, but also about ethnicity and Africanness, tradition and modernity.

The rationale motivating this conference, its topic and its site, was to encourage the presentation of papers by African scholars at work on contemporary issues of public culture and material culture in eastern and southern Africa. During the conference, African anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, human geographers, museum curators and others engaged with expatriate scholars in exploring topics that have been the subject of much

anthropological work in recent years. These include the anthropology of memory and the ways that the culture and history of central, southern and eastern Africa are imagined and represented. They also include the anthropology of performance, which has recently focused on the interpretation of public performances involving music, dance or traditional ritual. Development anthropologists have also explored debates over community involvement and participation in the tourism and heritage industry in southern and eastern Africa, as well as the debates surrounding the preservation of cultural and physical environments. A major topic of the conference was the place of material and public culture in the imagining of national and community identity.

The conference themes reflected broader intellectual shifts in the ways in which heritage is understood. Museums, for example, used to be seen as static warehouses of artifacts, best analyzed for their presentations of exotic cultures versus the achievements of civilization. But now they are seen as active producers of knowledge and have become sites of conflict for the different interest groups that build and use them. This has led to battles over the repatriation of artifacts, controversies over the validity of museum displays, and disagreement over the relative importance of local publics and tourist dollars. The latter debate raises the issue of funding for museums in Africa, which are often struggling with problems of crumbling infrastructure and underpaid staff and are, thus, vulnerable to the agendas of international donors.

Understandings of the region's natural heritage and its vast protected areas of 'wilderness' have also shifted dramatically in recent years. Not only has the 'new conservation' moved away from exclusive state control, increasingly promoting privatization and community participation, but also the international heritage industry has redefined natural landscapes as inseparable from cultural meanings. Thus World Heritage Sites, many of which were formerly protected for their 'natural' value alone, now must incorporate and promote cultural values in order to retain international funds. Local communities excluded both physically and imaginatively are now supposed to be included. Thus disputes have arisen not only between the state and 'indigenous' communities claiming deep historical and cultural ties to the sites, but also between communities with conflicting claims, between state departments responsible for wildlife and national monuments, and between competing notions of ecological, archaeological, historical and cultural value.

The Livingstone Museum was being refurbished in 2004, and on the evening before the conference the delegates attended a welcome event there. Home to many of David Livingstone's letters, the Museum also houses some of the oldest ethnographic collections in the region, gathered by Rhodes-Livingstone Institute anthropologists from the 1930s through the 1960s. Donald Chikumbi and Nick Katanekwa of the Zambian National Heritage Conservation Commission (NHCC) welcomed the conference delegates and described the work of the NHCC and the Museum, while the conference organizers and Edwin Mbulu, of the Livingstone Railway Museum, informed the delegates about conference arrangements and the conference excursion, hosted by Chief Mukini, to nearby Mukuni Village and its village museum.

The Zambian Minister for Tourism, Environment and Natural Resources, the Hon. Mutale Nalumango, opened the conference, reminding her audience of the impact of HIV/AIDS on history and heritage in the region. Conference panels included 'Heritage and Identity', 'Monuments, Landscape and Symbols', 'Africa's Museums and Heritage in the 21st Century', 'Communities, Museums and the Contested Past', 'Heritage of Violence and

Resistance', Performing Heritage', 'The Tourist's Gaze', 'Imagining Africa in the West', 'Managing Sacred Sites', and many others. The conference keynote speaker was Abdul Sheriff of the Zanzibar Museums and Archives. The conference ended with a plenary session which included final reflections by Innocent Pikarayi, Peter Ucko, Lyn Schumaker and Terence Ranger.

The conference was organized by the Zambian National Heritage Conservation Commission and National Museums Board, the British Institute in Eastern Africa, and the Journal of Southern African Studies. It was generously funded by the above mentioned organizations and the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the African Studies Association (UK) and Public Archaeology. Conference organizers were Paul Lane (BIEA), JoAnn McGregor (JSAS) and Lyn Schumaker (JSAS). Selected papers are being published in special issues of Public Archaeology and the Journal of Southern African Studies (in 2006).

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY, COLONIAL ETHNOGRAPHY AND THE MUSEUM OF TERVUREN: A HISTORY OF BELGIAN ANTHROPOLOGY (1882-1925)

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The history of anthropology in Belgium has received relatively little scholarly attention.¹ Yet, Belgium's anthropological museum at Tervuren played a crucial and contested role in the history and colonization of Africa. This short essay, based on my doctoral dissertation, explores the ways in which Belgian anthropology reflected European ambivalence about modernity and industrialization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Informed by the theory of social memory and the product of original archival research, my work explores how the Congo served both in celebrations of Western progress and as a foil for the European search for a preindustrial past.²

The Rise of Belgian Anthropology

The anthropological tradition in Belgium began with the study of physical anthropology at the Société d'Anthropologie de Bruxelles founded in 1882. Highly influenced by the French tradition, Belgian physical anthropologists debated criteria of race classification as they attempted to construct a racialized history of their own nation. They contested various versions of Belgian racial hierarchies, comparing the Flemish in the nation's north and the Walloons in the south by measuring physical characteristics such as brain volume, eye color, and skull form. When Belgium took possession of the Congo, this debate was exported to Africa. But physical anthropological methods failed to produce clear distinctions between Congolese racial groups, and physical anthropology increasingly appeared mired in acrimonious, irresolvable debate. As a result, anthropologists turned increasingly to ethnography, and most particularly to the study of Congolese material culture, to understand the history and evolutionary meaning of their new colony.

The study of anthropology in Belgian accompanied the colonizing project and its display in the metropole. Congolese material culture was collected for a series of exhibitions in the in 1880s and 1890s, culminating with the world exhibition of Tervuren in 1897. Leopold II ordered the creation of the Colonial Palace for the exhibition, and in 1898, the Palace became Belgium's first anthropological museum. The establishment of the museum