

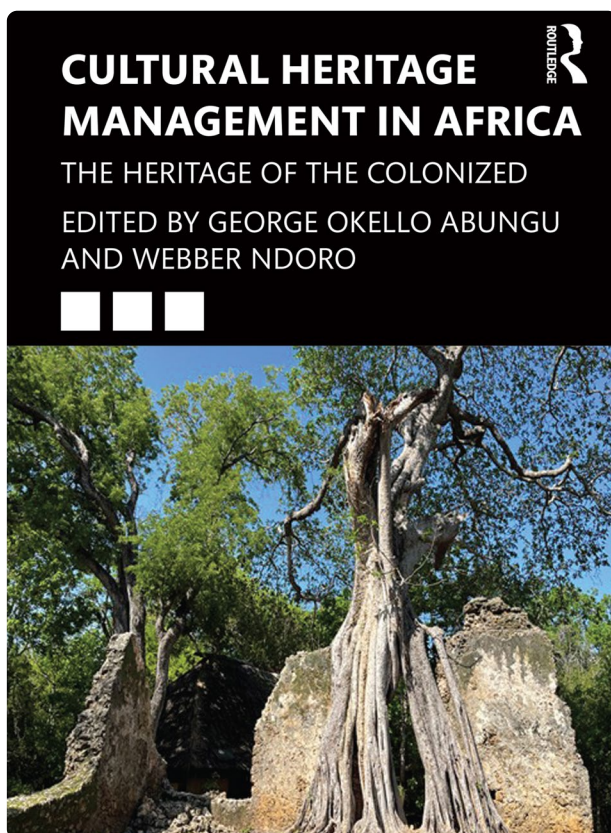
BOOK, CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION REVIEW

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Cultural heritage management in Africa: the heritage of the colonized, edited by George Okello Abungu and Webber Ndoro. Routledge, Abingdon, 2023. 285pp. ISBN9781032055619

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Cultural heritage management in Africa: the heritage of the colonized analyses and assesses African heritage management and mainly reclaims its decolonisation. It also shifts the Western former Coloniser dominant narrative of what heritage is and how to manage it; towards a local understanding of heritage and traditional management approaches, which are less divisive and more inclusive. The book is interdisciplinary, including African and cultural studies, postcolonial studies and heritage studies. It covers sustainable and participatory heritage management and discursive approaches, specifically the interaction between African heritage and the Eurocentric 'AHD: Authorized Heritage Discourse' (Smith 2006). In addition, it conveys a strong message of reappropriating Africa's history, culture, and heritage and furthers the discussion to emancipate African heritage from dominating influence of Western approaches and worldviews. Moreover, this message is even more manifested as the book is written by African scholars and professionals to assert an African discourse about heritage management based on local perspectives.

Cultural heritage management in Africa is a collective book of 18 chapters, including the editors' extended introduction (Chap. 1) and conclusion (Chap. 18). The individual chapters are complementary, and each focuses on a specific facet of African heritage management issues and challenges, especially the ones related to colonisation influences and postcolonial continuous imposition of Western heritage meanings, values, categories and conservation systems.

The main idea on African heritage management is found in Chaps. 1, 5, 6, 11 and 15. The material-based

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approach implicit in the notion of Western heritage was imposed in Africa in denial of what heritage meant to local communities, an attitude supported by the colonial ideology based on racial prejudice and ‘civilizing the uncivilized’ false assumptions (Chap. 1). African heritage was reduced to ‘exotic’ objects, estates, archaeology, palaeontology, or other material manifestations of African culture as perceived by the Coloniser, excluding local communities and thus failing to understand the true essence of heritage in local perceptions. Therefore, challenges in preserving and protecting cultural heritage in Africa arise from colonial European views imposed on the region. The authors critically analysed the heritage governance in post-colonial Africa (Chaps. 5 and 6) as primarily a mere continuation of the colonial approach regarding alienating communities from the heritage process and centralised state-based management. Consequently, the state and communities often have contrasting views on heritage, how it should be managed, and why (see Aouchal, Boufenara, and Verdini 2022). Indeed, the challenge is to reconcile heritage preservation with socio-economic development for local communities and to face the ‘emerging issues’ of this era. Moreover, in the frame of the African Union Agenda 2063 goals, African heritage legislation must adopt and regulate development-oriented heritage management strategies (Chap. 6). Furthermore, the divide in cultural and natural property management (Chap. 15) is inherited from colonisation and endorsed by Eurocentric international laws and institutions. This opposition to local African understanding of heritage can be seen in the case of Ethiopia (Chap. 11), where combining traditional and religious management systems with formal ones is advocated.

Chapters 7 and 8 focus on community involvement in heritage management. Chapter 7 examines the ‘community conservation discourse’ in environmental conservation in southern Africa, particularly the ‘Community-Based Natural Resource Management’ (CBNRM) approach, which can be considered a response to the colonial-influenced ‘fortress conservation’ mindset, which viewed communities as a threat on natural resources. Zimbabwe’s CAMPFIRE (Communal Areas Management Programme For Indigenous REsources) is an example of CBNRM that aims to assist rural communities in managing natural heritage for their socio-economic development. The author is critical of the ‘community conservation discourse’ in Africa, seeing it, in most cases, as a mere political slogan where communities are often consulted to support predetermined goals and do not genuinely participate in decision-making or benefit from heritage conservation. Chapter 8, in the spirit of ‘nothing about us, without us’, evaluates community participation in heritage management in Ghana

and Nigeria. Heritage management in Ghana is primarily state-based and practised by the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board. Moreover, to delve into the gap between colonial-influenced material-based state heritage governance and communities, the authors share an experience of a funded project to work with communities to identify and manage slave heritage sites in a participatory approach. The project focused on intangible aspects such as memories, stories and relics, leading to community engagement and some socio-economic development. In Nigeria, heritage management has also been affected by continued colonial approaches. However, establishing the National Commission for Museums and Monuments in 1979 has progressively led to a more bottom-up and community-based practice. Nevertheless, some top-down development approaches have failed to engage communities and haven’t benefited heritage or local communities, such as the case of *Sungbo Eredo’s* tourism development plan. It was concluded that it is crucial to adopt bottom-up and community-based approaches, prioritising the development of traditional systems and avoiding over-dependence on Western heritage constructs.

In Chaps. 9, 10 and 16, the African heritage is explored, focusing on the lasting effects of colonial actions and practices on African societies and their postcolonial national identity. These include slavery, indentured work, and remaining symbols of colonisation, such as statues. Slavery and the slave trade were the main focus of Chap. 9 in Kenya and Mauritius. The impact of such a heinous crime resulted in social injustices and exclusions, shame, stigma, and poverty transmission for generations. In addition, the shame or dissociation often associated with this heritage did not impede its economic and political use. With the abolition of slavery, indentured labour was necessary for the Coloniser, and the particular case of Mauritius was analysed in Chap. 10. It’s a pluri-ethnic and multicultural nation, and diversity results from colonisation, slavery and indentured labour. This motivated the post-independence government’s political choice of representing and promoting indenture and slavery resistance heritage as common national assets in an attempt to create a national identity respecting the nation’s diversity. Furthermore, African cosmology was altered upon colonisation, and language, toponyms, and statues Europeanised the African landscape. These are considered potent political tools of colonisation (Chap. 16). Statues are physical and public symbols of colonisation, leading to a postcolonial problem; removing colonial statues, is it decolonising or destroying African heritage? Postcolonial reactions differ; anti-colonialism removal, liberation heritage substitution, or retention. Although some of these statues can become tolerated by communities’

ignorance of their colonial representation, by use, or by their reinterpretation diverging from colonisation (see Marschall 2008), the authors' position emphasises their colonial intention of dominance and humiliation, which constitutes a challenge to the postcolonial decolonisation process.

Chapters 12, 13, 14 and 17 of the book critically examine UNESCO's (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) World Heritage recognition, Convention, and institutions. The authors explore the conflict between universal and local significance and management of heritage. The book argues that World Heritage has a Eurocentric bias that focuses on the material manifestations of authenticity, excluding some African heritage, such as the Barotse landscape, or anti-colonial memory sites, such as Rwanda's Genocide sites (Chap. 12). This has led to the under-representation of African heritage on the World Heritage List, despite the Nara Document promoting authenticity in different contexts. The need for more understanding of the holistic African notion of heritage is discussed in Chap. 13, focusing on three African World Heritage case studies. The divide in World Heritage categories and values opposes the interactive and holistic understanding of African heritage, continuing the colonial approach that alienates communities from their natural heritage. In addition, the book argues that natural assets gain meaning through cultural and religious practices and community representation with which they are indissociable. The recognition of World Heritage also fails to consider new typologies and values of heritage, such as the African Liberation Heritage (ALH) (Chap. 14). ALH is a post-colonial heritage typology that celebrates freedom from colonisation. However, the book argues that achieving World Heritage status for ALH is challenging due to its perceived negativity, divisiveness and politicisation. The authors emphasise the need to depoliticise ALH and set alternatives to promote it, such as the ALH Programme shared with African nations. Chapter 17 focuses on heritage education, specifically the connection between heritage education and World Heritage training in a Western conception of heritage. This has marginalised traditional knowledge and systems while it is emphasised the importance of contextualising heritage education to decolonise it.

The practices of archaeology and museums in Africa were introduced during colonial times and have significantly impacted heritage management, national identity, and communities. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 delve into the origins of these practices and how they have shaped a Western understanding of African heritage, excluding traditional pre-colonial concepts of heritage management. Chapter 2 examines the impact of colonisation on

many postcolonial countries in East Africa, highlighting the need to decolonise African heritage and archaeology by integrating local communities and their traditional knowledge. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on museums, respectively, in West Africa and Kenya. These colonial museums have become national museums in postcolonial Africa, perpetuating Western perceptions of heritage. African museums must be decolonised and defined by African perspectives to represent African identity truly. The case of Kenya and its National Museums of Kenya is discussed in Chap. 4, showcasing the challenges of the need for museums to be 'Africanized' in the African postcolonial context. It is essential to note the role of colonial looting in the history of archaeology and museums in Africa and the ongoing demand for the repatriation of African heritage. This issue is central to genuine development partnerships between the West and Africa.

The conclusion (Chap. 18) lays recommendations and perspectives on African heritage while contextualising it and its decolonisation to current events and issues such as climate change, development strategies, Covid-19, and integrating traditional knowledge, sustainability, and digitisation in African heritage management.

This book is unequivocally about Africa, written by Africans, and intended for both Africans and the global community. It provides unparalleled insights into heritage, particularly African heritage. It gives a platform for the unheard voices of the (ex.)Colonised, who, despite their independence, still struggle to be heard over the (ex.)Colonisers. The book addresses the issue of power imbalance and delves into the importance of preserving African heritage and achieving economic development equilibrium.

The book's scope is limited to specific Sub-Saharan contexts, despite applying to all African nations. It would have been beneficial to include discussions on the North African history of colonisation and its effects on postcolonial heritage meanings and management, as it would have contributed to the debate on decolonising African heritage.

Consequently, the book can offer valuable insights to heritage scholars and professionals, whether architects, historians, archaeologists, anthropologists and experts in African studies and museums.

Abbreviations

AHD	Authorized Heritage Discourse
ALH	African Liberation Heritage
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resource Management
CAMPFIRE	Communal Areas Management Programme For Indigenous Resources
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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