

IN LIEU OF COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY? MANDARA ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT (1984-2008) OUTREACH AND INVOLVEMENT IN HERITAGE ISSUES — REVISITED IN 2020

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Forward

Much has changed since the first version of this paper appeared as David and Sterner (2016), the product of a workshop on Community archaeology and heritage in Africa: decolonizing practice, organized and edited by P.R. Schmidt and I. Pikirayi, and published in London, UK, by Routledge. First and foremost Sukur has rebounded from the vicious Boko Haram attacks of 2014 which in the paper could only be mentioned in a hurried Postscript. The attacks were followed by a partial abandonment of upper Sukur, the “hilltop village”, which was within a year followed by a return of most of its inhabitants accompanied by many refugees from the lowlands. Such a movement into the hills reproduced a much earlier pattern of flight from plains dwelling attackers, often states and slave raiders. Although we have no reliable information on the numbers of refugees, it would seem that their presence led to pressure on natural resources and perhaps especially on wood and grass for cooking, heating and construction. We suspect that, with a reduction of Boko Haram activity in Adamawa state in 2015-16 some, perhaps most, of the refugees subsequently returned to their villages on the plains.

We have even less knowledge of events in Cameroon, where in late 2019 and early 2020 it would appear that Boko Haram is again attacking settlements more or less abandoned by the forces of order.

At Sukur important ceremonies such as the initiation of young men, B̄ar, and Yawal, a celebration of the Hidi and his Dur clan, began to be celebrated again in 2016. In 2017 ND initiated the successful nomination of the Sukur World Heritage Cultural Landscape to the 2018-19 Watch List of the World Monuments Fund, and we had plans to lead, in conjunction with with the National Commission on Museums and Monuments (NCMM) and Adamawa state institutions, an expedition to make a systematic inventory of cultural features and facilities and to train Sukur field assistants and guides. In 2018, a recrudescence, happily brief, of Boko Haram violence in the region forced us to abandon this project.

Nonetheless there is hope. In the body of this paper we criticize the NCMM’s stewardship of the Sukur World Heritage site — and we stand by these criticisms — but we are pleased to acknowledge that since 1917 when Dr Aliyu Abdulfattah took over overall responsibility for its management, the NCMM is not only taking a more active role but is also exploring with Cameroonian counterparts the possibility of inaugurating some kind of international peace park, as first suggested by Sterner and David (2007-08). Despite Boko Haram and political unrest in anglophone southern Cameroon’s Northwest and Southwest provinces, there is reason to be cautiously optimistic on the future of the northern Mandara mountains.

The remainder of this article reproduces, with minor changes and updates, the content of David and Sterner’s (2016) publication. Readers are invited to refer also to our websites: www.bokoharamvictimsrelief.org and www.sukur.info.

Introduction

We have never participated in community archaeology in the sense of *archaeological research undertaken by and for a community* nor, alas, in *community-based participatory research* (CBRP) (Atalay 2012). We have, however, together conducted ethnoarchaeological, archaeological and related research in the context of the Mandara Archaeological Project (MAP), directed by ND in Cameroon and Nigeria between 1984 and 2008. Were we taking part in a colonial enterprise? Or were we engaged with host communities in ways that benefited them and larger publics, and the discipline of archaeology?

Some terminology: by heritage we refer to *aspects of culture, tangible and intangible, that are recognized by a community as intrinsic to and demonstrative of its historical identity and which are formally performed in support of that identity*. Whereas the community referenced in the phrase “community archaeology” generally relates to descendant or native communities, the range active in heritage matters is wider. It extends from the local community, to administrative entities such as the municipality, state and region, to the nation, even (through UNESCO) to humankind. Communities that generate heritage, tangible or intangible, that is of potential interest to UNESCO, have a territorial base. None are virtual, even though virtual communities may create a form of heritage (Harrison 2009). Neither are they monolithic: even the local community is often riven by factions. Thus heritage discourse is inherently political, reproducing power relations within the community besides embedding social values and meanings, forms of knowledge and ideology (Smith 2006:4). Professionals such as archaeologists and museum curators act as producers and mediators of the raw materials of heritage but do not themselves constitute a heritage community.

Heritage is celebrated in many and diverse ways in sub-Saharan Africa. A fundamental division is that between expressions of heritage that are primarily directed by local or ethnic communities towards themselves, versus expressions produced by higher order communities to inform, influence and otherwise affect a variety of publics. The first category comprises, but is not limited to, rituals and ceremonies that take many forms – processions, divinations, music and dance, feasts, sacrifices and the like – that formally express community styles, values, power relations and ideology. These constitute indigenous or *living* heritage, frequently incorporated into local patrimony by a process of sacralization (Datouang Djoussou (2013).

Higher order African communities generally develop heritage by secular processes that appropriate the sacred to various extents and see to its performance before wider audiences. In such cases heritage incorporates local and indigenous elements, but is characterized by borrowings, often from the ex/neo-colonial West. Antiquities departments, museums and Festivals of Arts and Culture are heritage institutions foreign to sub-Saharan Africa that represent aspects of cultures to varied audiences, tending to downplay the originality of local indigenous elements in favor of the imagined national or pan-African. Such hybrid expressions characterize *cultural heritage*, a concept with Western origins. *Living heritage* is alive and well in Nigeria, Cameroon and elsewhere. Imported institutions, most obviously religions, have for long recognized the vitality of such expressions and attempted either to eradicate them, for example by the prohibition of music and dancing, or to manipulate them by accommodating syncretisms.

Note that much that is traditional, for example Mafa ceramic traditions, must by these definitions be excluded from the cultural heritage category since, while formally (if not always explicitly) identified by a relevant community as a definitive feature of its identity, they are not performed before wider audiences. This does not deny that ceramics and other domains of material culture are constitutive of cultural identity, and part of living heritage. This is a major finding of the ethnoarchaeology of style (e.g., Hodder 1982; Sterner 1989; David and Kramer 2001:169-224).

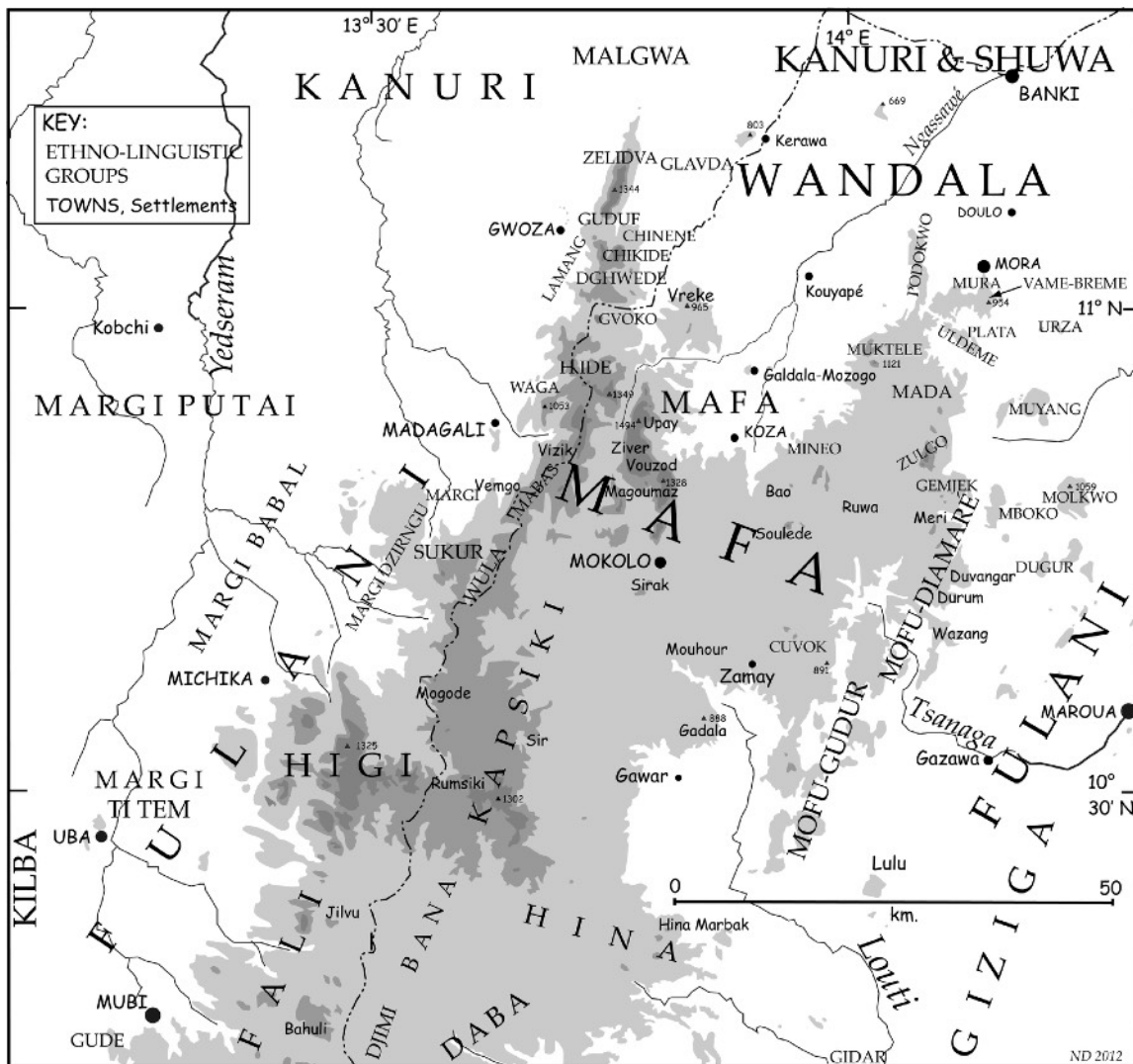


Figure 1. The northern Mandara Mountains and surrounding plains showing topographic features and selected ethno-linguistic groups, towns and settlements. The Nigeria-Cameroon border is indicated. Contours at 2000, 3000 and 3500 feet (610, 915 and 1067 m).

The working out of the tensions between living and cultural heritages is discussed below in a description of the MAP's engagement with communities and heritage issues over a quarter century in the Far North region (formerly province) of Cameroon and the neighboring Adamawa (formerly Gongola) state of Nigeria and in relation both to the DGB sites of Cameroon and to Sukur (Fig.1).

Contexts of Research

Three contexts were critical to our work:

1. Canadian academe and research funding structures.
2. The Cameroonian and Nigerian national and regional institutions responsible for authorizing and overseeing our research.
3. The local communities with and amongst which we worked.

All changed during the course of our research.

The Canadian university context and the SSHRC

In the 1980s the evaluation of academic performance at Canadian “graduate and research” universities emphasized the publication of peer-reviewed research. Media other than the printed word were barely taken into consideration. The primary source of research funds for archaeology was, and remains, the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The research climate of the 1980s did not conceive of collaborative or participatory research involving partnership with a local community, nor was it interested in the heritage of the Other, excepting Canadian Others in which it had colonial, economic, aesthetic and other interests.

A further contextual constraint on researchers, especially expatriates, is the limited time available for fieldwork, even when funding is available.

Cameroonian contexts

ND had directed the Upper Benue Basin Archaeological Project (UBBAP) in Cameroon in the period 1967-71. Authorization was at that time and later obtained from the national Ministry responsible for research upon presentation of a letter accompanied by the project proposal and information on project members’ identities. In 1984, armed with a ministerial authorization, we made contact with the Institute of Human Sciences (IHS) in Garoua, capital of the Far North region. Our only formal obligation was to supply the Minister with a written report at the end of each season. This was never acknowledged; nor were the publications or video programs that we submitted. While a National Museum of Yaoundé had been founded in 1972, this has never extended its reach to northern regions. In the UBBAP period our collections of archaeological finds were deposited with the Garoua administration. In 1984 we found only remnants of these materials. We were invited to store MAP materials at the IHS’s Garoua station, to which we and other researchers were contributing artifacts intended for a future museum. Alas, in 1990 the IHS ceased to exist. Political dissent, we were told, had resulted in its suppression; police and the military had plundered or destroyed its and our matériel and collections. There is still no substantial museum in the whole of northern Cameroon.

We always visited government authorities above the village level. Administrators, rarely interested in the cultures of the local inhabitants, needed to know that our visit was sanctioned by Yaoundé. The peoples amongst whom we worked were for the most part montagnards, descendants of small populations speaking closely related Chadic languages who, as mixed farmers, occupied the region in the first and early second millennium AD. From perhaps AD 1200 settlement in the mountains began to increase and in the 15th century there is localized evidence of communities constructing impressive monumental sites (David 2008; MacEachern 2012: 52-55). Most groups are likely to have been organized into petty chiefdoms. They made their living, as did their 20th century descendants, primarily by subsistence farming, animal husbandry and crafts that included iron smelting and smithing (Hallaire 1991; Sterner 2003; David (ed.) 2012a). Despite political and linguistic fragmentation, montagnard groups maintained close relations with their neighbors.

Montagnards were and remain very poor. Their mean purchasing power parity income is significantly less than Cameroonian *per capita* PPP, which in 1984 was \$1510 *per annum*.¹ Few of the adult montagnards we met in the period 1984-90 had attended primary school. Most with secondary education had migrated to the towns. Although Christianity was competing with Islam, local religions remained strong in the countryside where people had little familiarity with whites. Then and now the functions of most montagnard chiefs relate more to the ceremonial round than

¹ <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#> accessed 15 Dec. 2013.

to secular rule; they act as gatekeepers to their communities. Under such circumstances, community archaeology was out of the question. Outreach, “at another place on the collaborative continuum” and more or less “community engaged” (Carol McDavid, pers. comm., 2014), was another matter.

Throughout our time in the field we benefited from the privilege of being both white and having access to, by comparison with those amongst whom we lived, extraordinary amounts of money and matériel (although living for months at a time in a mud hut without potable water or mains electricity!). White privilege greatly facilitates initial access to people throughout society and protects to some extent against misuse of power by bureaucrats and officials, it does not guarantee respect. Among montagnards, dependent upon self-reliance for survival, respect has to be earned. Anthropological fieldwork cannot productively proceed without it (David 1994). The stories and photos of life in Canada we shared dissipated but did not extinguish the aura of white privilege.

MAP outreach and involvement with heritage

Cameroon 1984-90

Given the multiplicity of montagnard languages, communication presented difficulties as few villagers spoke French, here the official vehicular language. We relied upon interpreters, wherever possible drawn from the communities in which we were working. This has its hazards, but with experience one can find and train assistants who combine the roles of interpreter, informant, guide and often, sooner or later, confidant and friend.

In 1984, we were aiming to gain familiarity with the region and its past. A search for archaeological sites combined stratified random with judgmental sampling (David and MacEachern 1988). Our relations with the people we met on survey were necessarily fleeting and superficial. One of the two sites that we tested was located in the bush north of the Bama ridge, the other, a mound complex northeast of the town of Mémé, next to a Fulani village from which we recruited our labor force (Wahome 1989). Two University of Yaoundé undergraduates contributed to our work. Unfortunately, although we regularly extended invitations to their department we received only one subsequent visit.

In 1986 five graduate students and the authors returned as a team of ethnoarchaeologists, focusing on expressions of style and their meanings. We were involved in daily interactions with various communities, often visiting craft specialists of both genders in whose wards we became familiar figures. Four were based in Mora: Maureen Reeves, Diane Lyons (1992); Ian Robertson and Scott MacEachern (1991). We lived in Mokolo and Ghanaians Kodzo Gavua (1990) and his wife, in a Mafa village where they became fully engaged with their Mafa neighbors. JS worked mainly at Sirak though she later took a regional approach (Sterner 2003) and ND (2012b) undertook comparative work in a variety of ethnic settlements. Robertson (1992, 2012) apprenticed himself to Wandala smiths, obtaining precious insights into their technology, styles and marketing practices. Sterner became well known to residents of Sirak and also mediated on occasion between villagers and Care Canada. Our interest in their lives was appreciated by host communities, more accustomed to receiving orders, information and complaints from Europeans who, like southern Cameroonians and Muslims, commonly regarded their cultures as “primitive”.

Montagnard appreciation of our re-evaluation of their cultures was nowhere more evident than in their reaction to the filming of Dokwaza’s smelting and forging of iron (David et al. 1989; David and Le Bléis 1988). In 1984 and 1986, ND had considered videography as a means of recording material culture, had neither money nor time to equip and train any member of the team. Then we met Yves Le Bléis, a linguist working on a dictionary of the Mafa language (Barreteau and LeBléis 1990). He in turn introduced us to Dokwaza, a Mafa furnace master who had been

carrying out mini-smelts for tourists, and to Henri Augé, a priest making educational and documentary video programs. Lengthy negotiations ensued before ND and Dokwaza settled on a price for a complete chain of operations from building the furnace to making a hoe with the iron produced. On the appointed day, with the whole MAP team assisting, ND “directing”, and Le Bléis’ interpreting and advising, Augé filmed Dokwaza’s reenactment of a traditional smelt from early morning to after dark, accompanied by music and the enthusiastic participation of Dokwaza’s family and neighbors. Later we filmed his fining and forging of the metallic iron, ranging from low carbon ferrite to cast iron, recovered from the bloom mass. From these video materials we produced *Dokwaza: last of the African iron masters* (David and Le Bléis 1988). Copies were duly sent to the Cameroonian Ministry for onward transmission to national media.

The editorial process, undertaken with the technical assistance of the University of Calgary’s Communications Media personnel, constituted for ND an education in videography. And so in 1989 a smaller team, consisting of ND, JS and Scott MacEachern returned to the Far North. There, joined by archaeometallurgist David Killick, we recorded two smelting reenactments, by Dokwaza and by Ajokfa, a Plata smelter. Plata footage appears in *Black Hephaistos: exploring culture and science in African iron working* (David 1995). ND acted as cameraman, writer and, again with technical assistance, editor. In this season we also acquired materials for *Vessels of the spirits (Demeures des Esprits)* (David 1990). In 1989, we arranged public showings of *Dokwaza* to audiences in Maroua, where it was attended both by Dokwaza and the Governor of the Far North; in Mokolo, with Dokwaza and his family in attendance; and in Garoua. In Mokolo it received an especially enthusiastic reception with younger Mafa interrogating Dokwaza about an indigenous technology they had never seen in action but which greatly impressed, especially when they learned that Dokwaza had intentionally produced cast iron besides steel and wrought iron.

Reflecting on these films a quarter century later, we are very conscious of the absence of native voices and of images of ourselves. Present instead is the disembodied voice of the narrator. ND chose this format for two reasons. At a time when Africans were still regarded by many Westerners and not a few Africans as technologically retarded, he felt the need to convey to audiences the respect we all felt for the extraordinary technical achievement we had been privileged to witness and that David Killick and other scientist collaborators had succeeded in deciphering from analyses of samples of charcoal, ore, clay, slag and metals (David et al. 1989). The same motivation applies to the African components of *Black Hephaistos*, while in *Vessels of the spirits* we were concerned both to document the uniquely African tamper and anvil-mold pot-forming technique (Stern and David 2003) and to explicate the “technomic, sociotechnic and idiottechnic” (see Binford 1962) roles of pots in Mandara montagnard societies and the potent metaphor of containment and release of spirits characteristic of the montagnard world view (Stern 2003:116-41).

If we had wished to document not Dokwaza’s practice but his understanding of his craft we might have asked him to speak directly to the camera. However, this would have conflicted with local custom and practice, in which complex technologies and their underlying metaphoric structures (David 2001) are acquired by apprentices primarily through diligent observation and copying of the craft master or mistress. In the case of *Vessels*, we were presenting a thick description and semiotic analysis of a material domain arrived at through anthropological analysis that no montagnard lacking appropriate training could have formulated any more than a Glaswegian could have deconstructed the relationship between a bride and her wedding cake described in 1987 by Simon Charsley (David, Stern and Gavua 1988). While we obviously got many clues from our informants, to have introduced montagnards as spokespersons would have been to use them as puppets.

During the 1984-90 period the MAP was not explicitly involved in cultural heritage issues although our publications of those years provide quantities of relevant information. Apart from

continuing discussions with Cameroonians of all walks of life, our attempts at outreach relating to the research years 1984-90 were largely limited to video and the collection of materials for an eventual North Cameroonian museum.

Cameroon 2001-2007²

While even before the start of the new millennium our Canadian academic context had evolved in the sense that a wider range of research products and formats had come to be regarded as potentially meritorious, there was, despite scrupulous institutional concern for researchers' individual subjects' rights, no change in the lack of consideration for host communities as partners.

In 1986 Gerhard Müller-Kosack had introduced us to the DGB sites, "ruins of chiefly residence" (David 2008). They are located on and around the Oupay massif, the highest in the Mandara Mountains. Clusters of platform and terrace sites of then disputed function, they included DGB-1 and 2, the most impressive indigenous stone-built complex between the *zimbabwes* of southern Africa and the Sahara Desert (<http://www.mandaras.info/Research.html>). Armed with an SSHRC grant, we obtained authorization from the Ministry in 2001. Procedures had not changed, while in the north no institution had replaced the IHS. Now a team member, Müller-Kosack, whose ethnological studies focused on the settlement history of the Gousda village complex (2003), introduced us to Hon. Jean Gonondo, a Mafa member of the National Assembly and a vigorous supporter of sustainable development and of primary schools and health clinics in his constituency. He became our mentor.

Gousda is a village that bridges old and new. It has a secondary school and a weaving cooperative, skilled workers in various trades, Catholic and Seventh Day Adventist churches, and considerable experience with expatriate researchers. Although some of its better educated have moved to the towns, several remained: we recruited a knowledgeable assistant with excellent French. However there is no DGB site within Gousda itself. The other villages in the complex and those beyond in which DGB sites are located are more traditional, with many fewer Christians and with village heads who either combine their administrative functions with ritual responsibilities or share authority with a chiefly priest.

During a short December-February 2001-02 season we conducted an extensive reconnaissance, establishing the locations of 15 sites. We surveyed the DGB-1 and 2 site complex and made summary plans of the others, inquiring as to their histories and present functions. We selected two sites for excavation, the small though architecturally rich DGB-8 and the larger and more complex DGB-2, and we obtained permissions to excavate from the heads and elders of the villages in which they are located. In September 2002 we returned with a larger team, including graduate students Andrea Richardson from Calgary and J.-M. Datouang Djoussou from the University of Yaoundé I. While the excavations, for which we hired laborers from each village, were similar to those of 1984 in terms of archaeological practice, they differed in that shrines serviced by community members were located on the sites. These are respected and to a degree conserved by the Mafa who, although they claim to have found the monuments abandoned at the time of their movement into the locality, regard them as places charged with power. Most have long been incorporated into the ritual life of their villages and become part of living heritage. Datouang Djoussou (2011) usefully distinguishes four levels of heritage creation which move from the living to the cultural. His diagram (Fig. 2) suggests these are sequential, though this is not necessarily the case, and subject to feedback between levels.

² We lack space to discuss ethnohistorical research undertaken in the Gudur ritual paramountcy in 2004 and 2005 (Sterner and David 2009; David and Sterner 2009 and forthcoming).

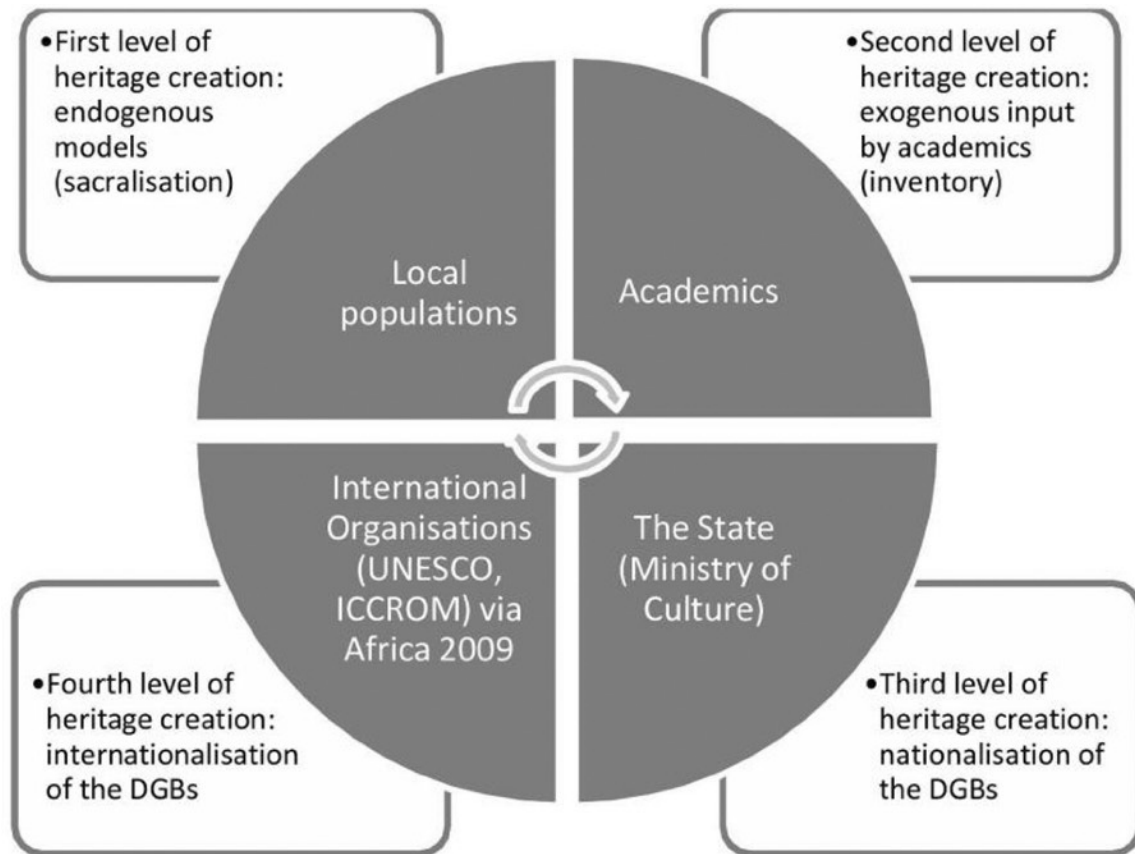


Fig. 2. Levels of DGB heritage creation (reproduced with permission from Datouang Djoussou 2011).

Greatly impressed by the architecture and sophistication of the dry stone façades and conscious of their potential as heritage sites, ND had initiated the third level of heritage creation by approaching the International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM). As a result Edward Matenga (2002), Conservator of Great Zimbabwe, visited us in the field and prepared a report that stimulated limited action on the part of the Ministry. This has included visits to the sites by its representatives and again by Matenga (2005), who prepared a management plan in 2005, substantially reproduced by Datouang Djoussou as Appendix 3 of his 2013 dissertation. However the main recommendations of the management plan have never been implemented, no substantive action having been taken regarding conservation, training of local masons, and protection and development of the sites. In 2006 the Ministry chose to place only the DGB-1 and 2 site complex on the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative list.³ The reasons for this unfortunate decision are unexplained. There was no consultation with researchers, nor with local communities. That the third and fourth levels of cultural heritage creation are in this instance seriously flawed will become obvious if and when the authors' suggestion that the DGB sites be included within an International Mandara

³ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/4017/> accessed 19 Dec. 2013

Mountains Peace Park (see below) is seriously considered by Cameroonian and Nigerian authorities.⁴

Nigeria 1991-2008

Contexts

During this period, besides fieldwork in Cameroon, the authors carried out research focused upon Sukur, described as a sacred kingdom (Kirk-Greene 1960) and thus apparently very different from the petty chiefdoms found over most of the Mandara Mountains (David and Sterner 1999). Unlike other Mandara montagnard communities, Sukur has had an international reputation since the 19th century. The German explorer Heinrich Barth (1965 II: 100 [1857-59]) was the first European to write about Sukur as “a powerful and entirely independent pagan chief in the mountains south from Mándará”. To this day many of its neighbors consider Sukur as ritually senior, and the Hidi (chief) plays a role in the installation of several of his counterparts. Besides the chiefly clan of the Margi Dzirngu (Vaughan 1970), some more distant Kilba (Huba) claim Sukur origins (Hananiya 1993). However the sociocultural similarities between Sukur and other montagnard groups outweigh the differences (Smith and David 1995; Sterner 2003).

Since the end of slave raiding in the 1920s (David 2012b, 2014), there has been considerable movement down from the mountain plateau (Upper Sukur) into plains wards (Lower Sukur) where residents have been exposed to schooling and Christianity. A considerable number of men and women (the Sukur diaspora resident in Nigerian towns and cities) have achieved success as administrators, technicians, teachers, merchants and the like. Christianity was slow to penetrate Upper Sukur but by the 1990s both Protestant and Catholic catechists were attracting a considerable proportion of the youth, to the point that sustaining major sacrifices was becoming difficult. Nonetheless, the Sukur have great pride in their culture and its past and ambitions for the future. Major ceremonies such as the biennial male initiation, continue to be enthusiastically attended and in 1974 a Sukur Development Association (SDA) was formed by younger men to advance the interests of Sukur, whether living on the plains or on the mountain.

The Nigerian institution responsible for authorizing the work of archaeologists and ethnographers who are not the employees of national universities is the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), an organization that as of September 2014 has no substantial presence on the World Wide Web. This is symptomatic of the fortunes of an institution that has experienced a checkered history since Dr Ekpo Eyo resigned the position of Director-General in 1986. In the early to mid-1990s we obtained our research authorizations promptly, were appointed as official Research Workers and assisted with visa extensions. We prepared reports supported by photographs on our research and collaborated productively with their staff in and out of the field. At that time the NCMM was producing its own journal, *Nigerian Heritage*, funded in part by a levy of \$500 per person per project on expatriate researchers that ND had himself suggested. We contributed papers (David and Sterner 1995, 1996). In 2008 we found the NCMM in a disarray that seems to be continuing despite the appointment of a new Director-General in 2009.⁵ We comment critically below on the NCMM’s failure to manage Sukur, Nigeria’s first UNESCO World Heritage site and Africa’s first World Heritage Cultural Landscape. This, we argue below, is not merely the result of the failure of the Nigerian government to provide the NCMM with a viable operating budget.

⁴ As of 2019, a version of the Peace Park initiative was being discussed by Nigerian and Cameroonian authorities.

⁵ See <http://sunnewsonline.com/new/trending/inde%E1%BC%80nite-nationwide-strike-hits-national-museums/#!prettyPhoto> accessed 21 Dec. 2013.

During a brief first visit to Sukur in 1991 we sought and obtained permission from the then chief⁶ to undertake a long term project. Returning in August 1992 we spent seven months living in Upper Sukur in 1992-93 and a further four in 1996, followed by shorter visits in 2004 and 2008. In comparison with the neighboring Mandara Mountain region of Cameroon, the Nigerian Mandara has received very little attention from ethnographers. We therefore needed to investigate Sukur ethnography, history and social anthropology (see Sterner 2003 and <http://www.sukur.info>) in order to situate our ethnoarchaeological and archaeological research. Our understanding of regional variation on the Nigerian side of the frontier was enriched by informal collaboration with Müller-Kosack (1996), by this time working in the northern Nigerian Mandara Mountains.

Sukur is the highpoint of our fieldwork careers on account of the depth, variety and duration of the engagement with our hosts. We were given Sukur names and integrated into the kinship system, ND as a clan brother of the chief and JS as a classificatory co-wife, relationships with obligations, as for example when JS was required to dance at the funeral of a male of the chiefly clan.

Outreach

Discussion here is limited to archaeology, the Sukur website and videography. Our activities in the heritage area are considered in the following section.

We conducted only one test excavation, on a large midden above but close to and associated with the chief's residence. This dig been arranged in collaboration with Ahmadu Bello University faculty, who were to supply equipment, and with senior NCMM staff. Unfortunately, the ABU contingent was unable to participate. Meanwhile junior NCMM staff arrived without equipment. We nonetheless proceeded with an excavation conducted before the eyes of the Sukur public, whose input, for example on the Sukur identity of the artifacts was most valuable. An account of this excavation is available on the Sukur website (David 2013). Despite the simple tools employed, it produced important historical results.

The website, www.sukur.info, initiated by the authors in 2002, aims to make our work and other information on Sukur widely available, especially to Sukur and other Africans who can not afford books or journals but who have some access to a computer if not always to the internet. Various versions have been distributed over the years as a CD to be copied and circulated as widely as possible. Another aim is to provide a forum for Sukur and others to contribute new material and to question received information. Unfortunately the first and only message from a Sukur to reach us via the website was news of the death of Isnga Dalli Sukur, a much appreciated assistant whom the MAP had supported through a Certificate in Museum Studies at the Institute of Archaeology and Museum Studies at Jos in 1997 and who had subsequently become the first NCMM guide to Sukur.

In the same vein as the website, a 50 minute video program, *The 13 months of Sukur: Africa's first World Heritage Culture Landscape* (David 2010), was made using footage recorded between 1992 and 2008. The only ethnographic film that covers a complete annual cycle, it is designed to celebrate Sukur culture while introducing the viewer to the meaning of cultural landscape and a range of anthropological concepts. Nigerian rights to it have been transferred to the Sukur Development Association, which also receives the major portion of revenue from sales in the rest of the world.⁷

⁶ Hidi Zirankwade Matlay died before our return in 1992 and was succeeded by Hidi Gezik Kanakakaw (d. 2011), succeeded by his son, Luka Gezik, the present Hidi.

⁷ This and other MAP ethnographic films are now freely available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/user/nicdavid37>

Heritage

Sukur's way to World Heritage status

In essence, the older generation of Sukur knew what they were and were confident of themselves outside the community. It was the younger generation that lost their cultural identity along the line as a result of their ignorance of their historical past. This ignorance debunked them of their cultural values, which should have provided them with a positive self-image or personality that will enable them to interact positively with the outside community. (Extract from a speech by Saleh Kinjir, representing the SDA, delivered in March 1993 on the occasion of the departure of the authors from Sukur. Ms. in the authors' possession)

In 1962 Hamo Sassoon (1964) recorded a brief revival of iron smelting at Sukur. Twenty years later Nigerian historian Bawuro Barkindo, who had conducted research at Sukur in the 1970s, was contacted by members of a BBC team looking for suitable communities in which to record part of Basil Davidson's (1984) documentary series *Africa*. This led to the filming of a segment focusing on iron smelting, agriculture and the "kingship". Barkindo referred to this encounter in 1989 in a presentation at the launch of a SDA appeal made to raise funds to complete the primary school in Upper Sukur, build a dispensary, renovate the chief's house, provide clean water, build tourist quarters and construct a road to the base of the mountain. In his concluding remarks Barkindo suggested that the "Sukur Causeway and palace of the Hidi" be declared national monuments.

The development of a Sukur concept of cultural heritage was stimulated by influences from beyond but was taken up and developed by the SDA (2008). The association has its origins in the early 1970s when young Christian Sukur, mainly men, of different settlements began to hold meetings and in 1974 founded the organization. In the following years chapters were established in other villages, towns and cities where Sukur had settled. In 1989 the SDA asked the NCMM to declare the Hidi's residence a National Monument.⁸ In May 1992 and on the initiative of the SDA, a single-room Sukur "Mini-Museum" was opened on the Patla ceremonial area outside the chief's residence.⁹ Sukur material culture was exhibited and photographs of a second iron smelt were donated by representatives of the Adamawa State Council of Arts and Culture. Support also came from the National Museum, Yola, and the newly formed Madagali Local Government Area. The SDA asked the NCMM to provide a guardian and the Arts Council for a custodian. These not being forthcoming, shortly after its opening those who had loaned exhibits reclaimed them, citing fears of theft and Cameroonian traders seeking "traditional" objects. The empty museum was soon to find another use. Arriving in August 1992 for an extended stay, we were installed there by Hidi Gezik as a semi-permanent exhibit.

At Yola, where we had gone to notify the state authorities of our arrival in 1992, we were warmly received at the National Museum and the Adamawa State Arts Council. We also met members of the SDA executive who saw our presence at Sukur as a means to promote their political and development agendas. The SDA was lobbying for the creation of a Sukur district. This was established in 1992 and a Sukur District Head installed. The coincidence of our presence and the

⁸ In 1994 the Hidi, the District Head and the councilors of Sukur submitted a document to Madagali Local Government Area stating that they "on behalf of the Sukur citizens at home and abroad have agreed to offer the old palace of "Thidi Sakun' on the Sukur plateau ... to the National Commission on Museums and Monuments to be declared as one of the National Monuments" (NCMM 1998: Appendix C).

⁹ A different version of the Mini-Museum is presented in the NCMM's (1998) Management Plan. This states that the "local museum started by Nicholas and Judith Sterner is being maintained in the hills by a young Museum-trained Sukur resident keeper". This was the late Isnga Dalli Sukur, the NCMM guide mentioned above.

creation of the district led many Sukur to believe, mistakenly and despite our denials, that we had political clout. Our representations to the NCMM and Adamawa state officials regarding the World Heritage cultural landscape, a proposed international peace park and other matters (see below) have had negligible effects. We were on the other hand able to raise funding from the Leggatt Trust (UK), for Sukur schools. We also played a part in bringing a linguist to Sukur to make the first study of *sakun*, the Sukur language (Thomas 2013).

In 1994 Patrick Darling, a British archaeological consultant, contacted JS while making an inventory of possible World Heritage sites for the Leventis corporation, the NCMM and the National Parks Board (Darling 1994). In 1996, in anticipation of an official visit and in consultation with the chief, we prepared a draft of request for World Heritage listing. Darling and G.O. Imonirhua of NCMM arrived in Upper Sukur shortly afterwards and incorporated our draft into a formal citation (NCMM 1996). The area proposed for designation (though smaller than that proposed in our draft) included not only the chiefly residence, but parts of the surrounding cultural landscape and of the ancient paved ways.

In 1996 Nigeria asked UNESCO for help in providing international assistance for preparation of the World Heritage Site nomination. US \$15,000 was approved. Dr. J. Eboreime (NCMM) and Zimbabwean Dawson Munjeri (ICOMOS) visited Sukur in May 1997. While Munjeri's report to UNESCO on the Sukur site visit is unpublished, his views on the nomination process appear in a paper (2004) that compares four African World Heritage sites. Here he states that at Sukur "Non-participatory strategies were adopted and even the heritage authorities of Nigeria were involved only superficially because the drive was coming from elsewhere" (ibid.:79). The first phrase of this sentence is true. He also correctly points out that the "boundaries of the site were ... arbitrarily determined", but mistakenly implies that it included only the Hidi "palace". He concludes that ultimately the voices of the locals were heard by "the national authorities who magnanimously withdrew the earlier nomination dossier and initiated a fully comprehensive consultation that put the local community at the core". The revised dossier (NCMM 1998), titled "Sukur Cultural Landscape", including a management plan as Appendix B, was submitted in 1998 (Eboreime 1999:68). Sukur was inscribed as a World Heritage Cultural Landscape in 1999.

Besides the addition of misinformation on Sukur culture and a new emphasis on spirituality, a significant change to the nomination dossier between 1996 and 1998 concerns the size of the site, which was extended to include the entire northern paved way: "By a unanimous decision the Hidi and the councillors had decided and resolved to have the site 'Sukur at large' on the World Heritage List" (NCMM 1998:13, emphases omitted). The change is actually a reversion, with minimal modifications, to the specifications set out in our original draft (Fig. 3). Is there other evidence "that a fully comprehensive consultation that put the local community at the core" actually took place, as claimed by Munjeri (2004:79)? The nomination dossier (NCMM 1998:13) states that "The communities have been briefed and sensitized as well as involved in issues related to the enlistment of Sukur into the World Heritage List."¹⁰ This is hardly comprehensive consultation. And the community participation envisaged is largely the provision of labor, as the NCMM:

...intends to collaborate with the Hidi-in-council to set a sustainable bottom-up participatory machinery that will encourage urban based youths who come home during the annual traditional festival to be involved in repair work to supplement the efforts of a fast aging indigenous population" (ibid.: 19).

¹⁰ "Nicolas David and Judith Sterner who are accredited by the National Commission for Museums and Monuments to carry out research in Sukur, had prepared the minds of the community on the benefits and responsibilities associated with the inclusion of Sukur along with the Hidi Palace into the World Heritage List." (NCMM 1998: 13).

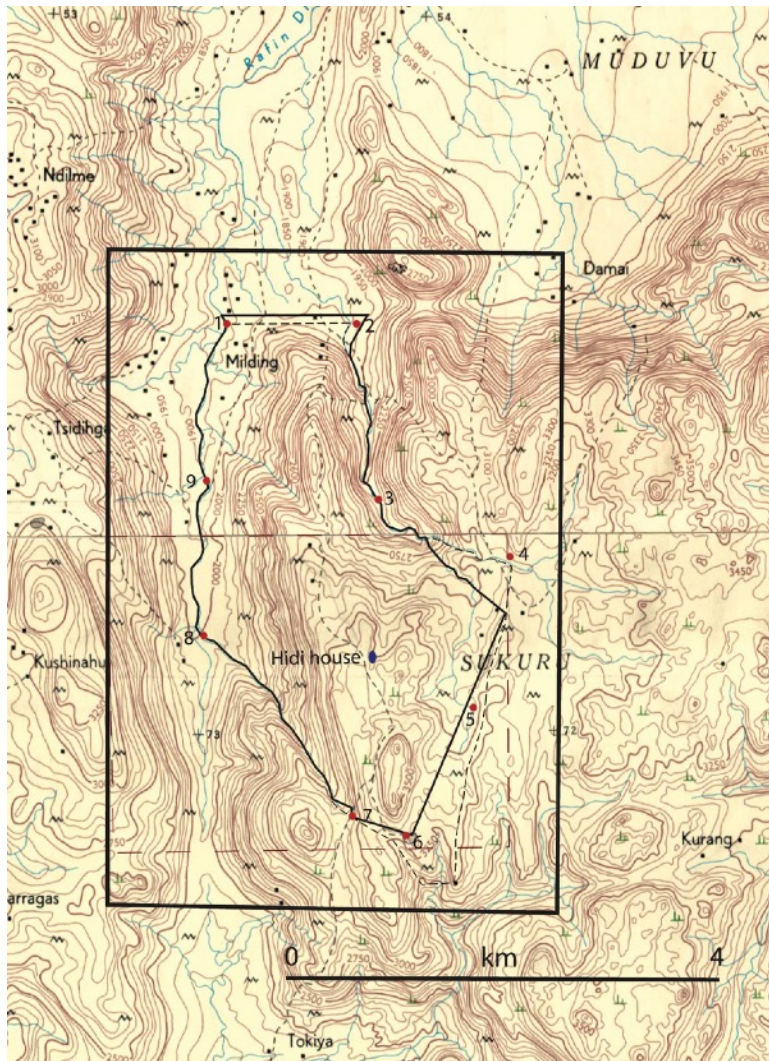


Figure 3. Sukur cultural landscape boundaries:

Outer solid line: Buffer Zone boundary as specified in the NCMM's (1998) nomination of Sukur to the World Heritage Committee.

Area delimited by long dashes: Cultural Landscape boundary as suggested in the NCMM's (1996) draft nomination first submitted to UNESCO. Though focused on the Hidi house it is essentially arbitrary, omitting much of the northern paved way.

Inner solid line: Cultural Landscape boundary as drawn in NCMM 1998: Fig. 6. This does not correspond exactly to the specifications on page 1 of the same document (see next category).

Numbered dots: Cultural Landscape boundary as specified by latitude and longitude in NCMM 1998: 1.

Short dashed lines: Whereas the boundaries we discussed with Hidi Sukur were generally accepted by UNESCO, the northern, south and southeast boundaries differ as indicated. For much of its length in the southeast our suggested boundary follows a ridge top that is of cultural significance and traversed by a paved way.

Base maps: Nigeria 1:50,000, Madagali, sheets 136 N.W. and S.W. Edition 1, published by the British Directorate of Overseas Services for the Nigeria Government, 1969 and 1965.

No such machinery has been created. The Management Plan (ibid.: 41) also notes that “the greatest strength and resource is the local community which has displayed total commitment over the years to conservation through communal labour and service”. For example, “The Hidi, uphill and his brother in the plains together with their councillors are always ready to give hospitality and act as guides for no fees” (ibid.: 6). Such fatuous statements deny the workings of reciprocity.

Ishanlosen Odiava (2012: 272), a Nigerian architect whose doctorate in art history from the Sorbonne incorporates a case study of Sukur, states that Sukur’s inscription on the World Heritage List was the first time that traditional institutions were considered the equivalent of administrative and bureaucratic structures in matters of site management and conservation. Similar statements regarding “traditional or customary management system[s]” are made by Cleere (2006: 70) and Ngoro and Chirikure (2009:71). But what exactly is a “traditional or customary management system”? According to the Sukur Management Plan (and the 1998 dossier) it is “communal labour” that has sustained the cultural landscape over the centuries and will continue to sustain it as a World Heritage Cultural Landscape. This view is reiterated in a World Heritage publication entitled “Cultural Landscape Management Framework”:

The Indigenous Sukur Development Association and the Nigerian National Commission for Museums and Monuments working with the Hidi and other local stakeholders are involved in participatory reconstruction of the outer palace which takes place at the annual communal labour presentation to the Hidi. ... (Mitchell et al. 2009:79).

Communal labor at Sukur takes many forms, for example, a young man performs tasks for future in-laws and there are informal gatherings to assist friends on their farms. The *sakun* word for work party is *zozowa*. Work parties organized by neighborhoods are referred to as *zozowa soji*. *Soji* are formal associations with titled officers. Association officers have titles such as *tlidi* or *xidi* (chief) and *wakili* (chief’s representative), *alkali* (judge), *dogari* (Native Administration policeman), and inspector. The word *soji* is a corruption of soldier and it and all but the first of the titles are borrowings from Hausa and reflect the experiences of Sukur men during and after the mandate period.¹¹ Work parties ordered by the Hidi were formerly called *xidi mbaldavay* (chief’s initiates) and more recently *xidi soji*. Traditions change, though the nomination dossiers emphasize continuity and changelessness. Neighborhood organizations prepare and weed fields, and come together in the annual clearing of Sukur’s paved ways ordered, or rather announced by, the Hidi. The chief gets some help from members of his clan, titleholders and neighbors in work on his fields and minor maintenance of the Hidi house and the Patla. Male initiates also undertake tasks for him after the biennial ceremony. In 2001 the NCMM facilitated restoration work within the Hidi house and contributed to the purchase of thatching (NCMM 2006: 32). It is some combination of these practices that appear to provide the foundation for the NCMM’s unrealistic expectations regarding traditional maintenance of Sukur’s cultural landscape.

Sukur today is not the Sukur that built the Hidi house and the paved ways. In those days that go back to the 19th century or earlier and ended with Hidi Matlay (ruled 1934-60), the chief was a fount of substantial economic benefits for his people, as a leader in the society’s industrial specialization in iron production, and as patron and guarantor of an iron market that serviced the region and traders from the north (David and Sterner 1996; David 2012b). This gave him real power, including to tax his people in products or labor and to sanction non-compliance with physical force. Public works, including the Hidi house and the paved ways, would have been built and maintained through use of this power. Nowadays Hidi receives a salary from the Adamawa state government and most Sukur men are farmers and small time cash croppers, many forced to supplement their incomes by migrating for months at a time to make mats in Nigerian and

¹¹ Following World War I and until Nigerian and Cameroon independence in 1960, the former German colony of Kamerun was divided into French and British mandated territories under the League of Nations and later the United Nations.

Cameroonian cities and towns or sell their labor to Kanuri farmers in Borno state. Hidi is no longer the patron of the local economy and lacks the power to command, as opposed to coordinate and authorize, the building or preservation of public works. The NCMM's expectation that the Sukur population annually provide a million naira (about US\$6200) worth of unpaid work on the cultural landscape can in no way be characterized as bottom-up participation. Rather it is top-down exploitation, of Sukur residents by the NCMM – and it has failed, which is no doubt one of the reasons why no serious conservation has been undertaken at Sukur since inscription in 1999. It is some consolation that overall conservation of the Sukur landscape is a by-product of the every day farming and other activities of its inhabitants.

As is apparent from this account, a combination of internal and exterior influences acting in particular through members of the SDA led to a growing Sukur interest in what was becoming cultural heritage in the 1970s, 80s and 90s. Barkindo's research, Darling's initiative, our own involvement, and Adamawa State and NCMM interests all interacted with Sukur's concerns, eventually leading to international recognition. Far from a coherent developmental process, a multitude of strands were thrown rather than woven together in a complex discourse to produce the end result. It remains a mystery how such serious misrepresentations as a "customary management system" could percolate up to UNESCO. Doubts we entertained in 1996 that the NCMM was prepared to manage a Sukur World Heritage Cultural Landscape have proved well-founded.

The Aftermath of Inscription

Our knowledge of the post-inscription period derives from letters, UNESCO documents, the Nigerian press, and visits in 2004 and 2008 (Sterner 2010:1197). In 2004 we were impressed with the installation and upgrading of electrical and road infrastructure on the plains, reaching to the foot of the mountain. By 2008 several unintended and largely negative consequences of World Heritage status had become apparent. Here it is necessary to list the stakeholders and their responsibilities, the clearest statement being that of NCMM staffer Aliyu (2004). His paper incorporates an early draft of the 2006-2011 Management Plan (NCMM 2006). Extracts are included in the following:

- The NCMM "oversees the faithful implementation of the operational guideline of the world Heritage Convention as it relates to Sukur cultural landscape. It carries out documentation, restoration and conservation works on Sukur cultural features and adopt measures to safeguards the integrity of the landscape. The NCMM conducts researches and publishes information on Sukur for scholars and tourist and conducts public enlightenment programmes and training sessions for the stakeholders." (Aliyu 2004: 38).
- The Adamawa State Government, "the most important stakeholder in this alliance", is "to develop infrastructure and provide social amenities as a basis for tourism development at Sukur" (ibid. 39). It has indeed brought electrification and greatly improved roads from the Maiduguri-Yola highway to the foot of the mountain. It also constructed "an entrance gate" and a "craft centre" at the junction of the Bama to Yola highway and the road to Sukur. These structures were not in use in 2008.
- Madagali Local Government Authority looks after local infrastructure, cultural festivals, and commissioning of the site.
- The Sukur community, legal owners and residents of the site, are "the main agents for the conservation and preservation of the site. ... Therefore their involvement at every stage of development of Sukur programme is crucial. ... Notwithstanding their position, Sukur community is assigned some specific duties, which are usually carried out through communal work ..." (ibid.: 39).
- Somewhat coincidentally, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), undertook various community development projects in Madagali LGA during 1999-2003.

- Other government agencies, NGOs and the private sector have various interests that to a lesser extent affect the Cultural Landscape. Space constraints preclude their discussion.

In the remainder of this section we comment on the extent to which the NCMM has fulfilled its responsibilities as set out in the nomination dossier of 1998 and the 2006 management plans (broader coverage is provided by Sterner in her 2010 paper and detailed treatment by Odiua [2012: 272-84]). We then address divisions that have become more apparent between Sukur communities, and of the naïve and counterproductive NCMM (and possibly UNESCO) concepts of community.

The Nigerian online press reports that the NCMM Director-General, Yusuf Abdallah Usman, noted NCMM's various achievements at Sukur. Among those claimed are inauguration of a management committee, the hiring of site guides and the appointment of a site manager, a skill acquisition program for women, a fire prevention workshop, the purchase of fire fighting equipment, and provision of a generator (Ujorha 2010a and b; Sowole 2012; The Nation 2012). However comparison with the evaluation of achievements under the previous 1999 to 2005 management plan (NCMM 2006) renders it obvious that little was achieved after 2005, and nothing substantial in the way of preservation, conservation, inventory or research. Odiua (2012: 282) reported no progress in the alleviation of poverty or the provision of potable water for Upper Sukur, however more recently the NCMM has had a considerable number of wells dug. This notwithstanding, the program of the second (2006-11) management plan – inaugurated only in January 2010 (Odiua 2012: 178 fn) – is, insofar as the NCMM is concerned, remarkably similar to that of the first. Its aims are just as unlikely to be achieved since the present site manager, an archaeologist of Kilba ethnicity, resides in Hong, located over 130 kilometres from Sukur via a terrible stretch of the Bama-Yola highway. His predecessor was based even further away in Yola. Since the death in 2007 of Isnga Sukur, guide Simon Waida is the only NCMM employee resident in Sukur. He is a Sukur and much respected.

NCMM's failings are not only ones of omission. It has been responsible for two disastrous initiatives that were never part of any management plan. The first was the building in 2006 of a room, variously described as a gallery or museum, on the ceremonial plaza or Patla. It is built of rocks and untraditional cement. About 10 m in diameter, it has proved unroofable and unusable and not only restricts the space available for ceremonies but actually destroyed a mound raised over the burial of a Hidi's horse. Second, whereas the first management plan mentions the provision of solar lighting to Upper Sukur, a large used generator was purchased and after some years brought to the foot of the mountain and in 2010 set on a concrete base. There seems no possibility that this will ever function, and indeed installation of the infrastructure required would conflict with the values the cultural landscape enshrines (Odiua 2012: 278-80). While the motivation for these actions remains unexplained, it is clear that considerable funds were expended that should have been deployed towards achievement of aims set out in management plans.

Before addressing some of the perceived negative consequences of Sukur's World Heritage status, it should be stated that the Sukur are proud of this recognition (Finanga and Husain 2013; Odiua 2012: 272-84). However the Upper Sukur community resents an imbalance of benefits and obligations that is felt to be to the advantage of the plains dwellers. UNDP Poverty Alleviation Projects included drilling of boreholes on the plain, rural road building, micro-credit, literacy education, training of health workers, and agricultural programs. Those on the mountain justifiably perceived these projects, and Adamawa state's improvements to infrastructure, as disproportionately benefiting Lower Sukur and others living on the plain. Their resistance and discontent were most notably expressed in an aborted road project that has left "a wide gash in the hillside [that] is still visible from where the village men started digging a road" (Shirbon 2007). This "Community Road Project", designed to "reduce the suffering of the people", was initiated by the Upper Sukur Branch of the SDA in September 2005, with the approval of its

national chairman, the Hidi and the District Head. Community work parties carried out the labor. The road crosses the northern paved way, a key heritage component, twice and for part of its length runs above it, subjecting it to erosional damage. It was not until February 2006, when NCMM representatives visited Sukur to attend the Yawal festival, that an NCMM manager became aware of the problem and ordered work to cease (Sternier 2010; Odiava 2012). At the time of our visit in 2008 no mitigation had been undertaken; elsewhere along the paved way erosion continued unchecked. Despite two communications from ND bringing these and other matters to the attention of the NCMM in 2008, nothing appears to have been done to rectify any of these problems.

Odiava (2012:275-276) discusses the discontent and anger of those on the mountain towards the federal and state authorities in 2006 following the stoppage of the road project. Those living on the mountain still had to walk up and down, carrying the sick to seek health care or their produce to market or to attend secondary schools. In Upper Sukur water shortages are acute during the later dry season and early rains and the quality dubiously potable. A road up the mountain negotiable by 4x4 vehicles and motorcycles would have gone some way towards bridging the gap between levels of development on the mountain and the plains. It is true that Upper Sukur was not neglected by choice but because of the terrain. To build such a road is difficult in a developed country, and borehole drilling equipment can not be brought up to the plateau in its absence. However, the very success of development projects focused on Lower Sukur and other plains dwellers contributed to the anger expressed by Upper Sukur against the authorities (Odiava 2012: 275). In both 2004 and 2008 we received delegations requesting our assistance in solving Upper Sukur's problems. Beyond scouting an alternative road route up from the south, there was little we could or can do beyond talking and writing.

Various hints at a division between the SDA executive, drawn largely from the Sukur diaspora, and the Hidi and other Sukur stakeholders are confirmed in the 2006-2011 Management Plan. In the section on stakeholders, it is stressed that the Sukur Community are both the owners of the site and its "central focus", however for the "sake of effective management, the community has been assigned specific tasks which are usually carried out through communal work under the auspices of the Sukur Development Association (SDA) and a "Sukur Monument Support Group" unknown to us. In the same document it is stated that the "traditional management system is operated through the traditional authority of the chief (Hidi) and his council of titled men" (NCMM 2006: 18). In a paper on rural tourism that takes Sukur as a case study, Tagowa (2010: 685) states that:

Although the Sukur Conservation, Preservation and Management Master Plan recognizes the traditional management system of the Sukur people, representatives of Sukur community in the recently inaugurated Management Committee are town, city or plain dwellers except the Hidi Sukur himself. This makes the management system heavy-handed and top-down.

However, the division is not only between a traditional and a "modern" management system or between the largely uneducated residents of the World Heritage cultural landscape and the educated elites of the diaspora. It is between different Sukur communities. As Chirikure and Pwiti (2008: 468) state,

Layers of complexity are entangled in the definition of "community". Whilst the contemporary discourse of community has an implicit residential bias, there are other forms of communities, among them those based on interests. Communities of interest are called "stakeholders" and transcend communities of place and geographical boundaries

There is no single Sukur community but rather several. There are the Sukur that live in and around the World Heritage cultural landscape, those in Lower Sukur, and the self-described "Sukur Educated Elites" or diaspora (SDA 2008). According to Croke (2010: 19) "within the

community there is a hierarchy of those who are the most active, assume leadership, and defend cultural markers. These are the people that create and sustain community and draw the members together.” It is the elites that have assumed the greater part of leadership, for they have connections and can communicate directly and as equals with representatives of state and other institutions. Unfortunately their initiatives and some misunderstandings have resulted in partial alienation of their less educated kin.

It is unfortunate that the institutions and experts responsible for developing and assessing plans for Nigerian heritage have a naïve view of Sukur and its landscape as essentially changeless, and that they, along with Munjeri (2004), regard Sukur society as characterized by Durkheimian mechanical solidarity. They show no recognition of the tensions between Upper and Lower Sukur and the diaspora. Far less it seems are they aware of tensions between Sukur men and women, or within Upper Sukur between younger men and elders who fear that their sons will leave the mountain, and between the predominantly chiefly and allied clans who occupy the Jira wards and those in the somewhat lower Teka wards. Without understanding these tensions and taking them into account, plans for the communally structured participation of Sukur in the conservation and development of the World Heritage cultural landscape and its environs are doomed to failure, as shown above in relation to the use of communal labor.

This is doubly unfortunate since, as we look back at the history of Sukur with community archaeology and heritage in mind, it is apparent that Sukur had and still has the potential to be an active and equal participant in managing the Sukur Cultural Landscape. Construction of a route up to the plateau that does not impinge on the paved way is feasible and would do much to alleviate internal Sukur tensions and for overall development. The Sukur History Committee of the SDA (2008) has produced a draft of its Sukur History Project. More recently members of Sukur clans have contributed their clan histories to the project. The Upper Sukur Branch of the SDA is clearly capable, despite limited formal education, of working with other Sukur to achieve their aims, and, as of 2010, had notified the NCMM that they were again preparing to re-launch road construction up the mountain.

Conclusions

Engagement and outreach

This paper began with a call for contextualization of archaeological endeavors before their evaluation in terms of their compatibility with the ideals of community archaeology. We went on to present the work of the Mandara Archaeological Project in the contexts of the Canadian academic and research funding environments, African governmental regulations and practices, and arrangements at the village level. Despite much collaboration with individual researchers and institutions, we found that in the absence or very low level of Western-type education, especially among elders, and given the inevitable brevity of expatriate researchers’ stay in any particular village, community archaeology in the strict sense was impossible. This did not prevent us from engaging with communities in a manner that was mutually beneficial, though in the short term more so to ourselves and to anthropology than collectively to our hosts.

Our focus was on research and the publication of scholarly works based on information gathered from people who had freely entered into relations of reciprocity with us, besides on archaeological samples for analysis and purchased ethnographic artifacts. Our findings continue to be disseminated as widely and freely as possible. While realizing that our scholarly output in written form would have little immediate relevance to local communities in Cameroon, we took the long view appropriate to archaeologists that our work constitutes a banking of information of

value to their posterity.¹² We hope that our work will one day be repurposed by Cameroonians, rather in the same way that George Abungu (this volume) describes James Kirkman's meticulous archaeological work at Fort Jesus, Kenya, serving as a foundational contribution to the site's re-imagining and integration into the cultural heritage of its several stakeholder communities. In Nigeria, our research is cited in NCMM and other publications and played a part in the inscription of the Sukur cultural landscape on the World Heritage list. Our presence in the field, our film on Sukur, the Sukur website and the publications available through it are appreciated by the Sukur and have stimulated such initiatives as the writing of clan histories. In such ways our scholarly and outreach contributions are proving of direct benefit to the communities amongst and with whom we conducted research. Thus we take issue with community archaeology enthusiasts who emphasize community over archaeology, claiming that scholarly publications are mere tickets to high salaries and academic honors. Archaeology, despite some persisting colonial and other entanglements (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008:3), is an honorable pursuit, indispensable to our knowledge of ourselves.

The writing of this paper has required us to reflect on our performance, and we realize that we might have put more effort into packaging research products into formats easier for Africans to access and into publicizing our early videos. This would however have reduced our research output, putting funding at risk. It seemed preferable to postpone most of our efforts in this area to ND's retirement and then to focus on the Sukur website. Recent developments in video hardware and editing software have brought high definition videography and professional quality editing within the reach of individual researchers, journalists and others, including African institutions of tertiary education. In the field phase of video production the researcher has advantages over the professional that are no longer outweighed by the latter's superiority in post-production. However "amateurs" have yet to convince distributors and those who control film festivals that anthropological substance ultimately trumps style of presentation. Production of a video such as *The 13 months of Sukur* requires a commitment of time and effort comparable to that of a monograph. The structure of Canadian academe suggests that this too is something best put off till retirement.

Heritage

Our involvement in cultural heritage in Cameroon and Nigeria came about by our own initiative in the former country and unexpectedly in the latter. Despite our efforts in writing and speaking out for those resident and making their living in the DGB and Sukur cultural landscapes, we have been less than successful in helping their voices to be heard and acted upon by national and international levels of heritage creation. We are not greatly surprised. Cultural heritage is, as already noted, both profoundly political and a recent introduction (as is archaeology itself) to most of Africa. In Sub-Saharan Africa independence is generally a phenomenon of the 1960s and half a century too short a time to weld a nation together or produce its cultural heritage. Therefore it is not surprising that in Cameroon, a diverse country dominated by its Christian south, little effort has been expended in supporting the claims of any – natural or cultural, tangible or intangible – of the candidates for World Heritage status named on its 2006 tentative list, let alone for a candidate that celebrates the monumental achievements of "pagan" northerners. The destruction of heritage materials, as occurred in Garoua, and the failure to protect and conserve archaeological sites or to insist on a greater contribution to national interests from expatriate-led research projects are all expressions of the same lack of interest in Western-derived cultural heritage. A flourishing tourist industry might provide motivation to change these attitudes. But neither in Cameroon nor in Nigeria does tourism, whether internal or external, contribute

¹² Archiving is a form of scholarship banking. Unfortunately, neither the Cameroonian nor the Nigerian national archives presently offer secure curation of archives over the long term. Part of our records of montagnard life in the period 1984-2008 is already deposited in the University of Calgary's archives, with much more to follow.

substantially to the economy. Nigerian school and college groups are the most common “tourists” to visit Sukur. This we applaud, while noting that they spend little or nothing there. The visa requirements for expatriate tourists make it difficult for groups, and more so for individuals, to visit either country.

It should therefore be no surprise that, while living heritages are celebrated throughout the Mandara Mountains and beyond, forms of cultural heritage attract little support in post-independence Nigeria or Cameroon unless repurposed, as in the case of festivals associated with political parties, or subverted to other ends. The Nigerian conception of public institutions as welfare systems for the support of staff has, combined with the excessive respect demanded by hierarchical superiors from their juniors, for long stifled the research, museological and other aspirations of the those NCMM employees with the highest potential to make a difference. In neither Nigeria nor Cameroon is there an active public, vigorous university or functioning national archaeology. From the mid-1980s, a generation after independence, the European-introduced cultural heritage construct was losing traction. At present there appears to be no Cameroonian institution responsible for archaeology on a national scale. Museums fare no better; in 2002, we bitterly regretted that there was no safe depository in northern Cameroon, and decided with community approval to rebury “museum quality” DGB artifacts. In the Nigerian NCMM, support for research has taken a back seat to the opening in every state of dusty museums, deserted by all but their overgrown staffs. The NCMM has forgotten that its responsibility includes the creation of a national cultural heritage. The Museum of Nigerian Traditional Architecture in Jos, opened in the 1970s but conceived by Bernard Fagg and Zbigniew Dmochowski before independence, brings fine examples of Nigerian architecture together from all over the country, and, when we last saw it in 1991, was a model of what a national museum should be, representing traditional Nigerian architecture to its citizens. We have visited only two of the state branches of the National Museum but believe that these are typical in that, rather than celebrating *Nigeria's* past, they focus on the archaeology and ethnography of their *states*. Cameroon pays even less attention to such matters, although its National Museum in Yaoundé makes a feeble effort to cover the country. This is sad but not unexpected. African governments, often subject, it must be said, to First World pressures including the demands of the World Bank and the IMF, have concentrated their attention on technical and economic development, ignoring the need to bring into existence societies that are truly national and capable of supporting sustainable development without the socially catastrophic growth of sectarianism, tribalism and inequality.

Not all our efforts in the area of heritage failed. In the international arena our case for the recognition of African bloomery iron-smelting as of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage status (David and Sterner 2011) has played a small part in the creation of a Metal Africa Scientific Network on African Metallurgy (<http://www.metalafrika.info/>) to serve as a center of research and documentation on African metallurgy on a continental scale. Our projects have also furthered the careers of African scholars, two Ghanaian, one Cameroonian and one Kenyan, besides several Canadian members of the MAP project.

We also hope to have provided the seed for a form of sustainable development that could benefit all the montagnards amongst whom the MAP worked from 1984 to 2008. In 2006 Nigeria and Cameroon, having accepted a World Court decision of 2002 relating to their common border, completed the implementation of the Nigeria-Cameroon Mixed Commission by peacefully and cooperatively making adjustments to their shared frontier from Lake Chad south to the Bakassi Peninsula. It occurred to JS that this admirable process, unique in postcolonial Africa, would be appropriately celebrated by the creation of an International Mandara Mountains Peace Park (Sterner and David 2007-08). This would incorporate Sukur and the DGB sites and the most impressive and environmentally varied mountain landscapes, together with their numerous and varied resident ethnic groups. We argued for grassroots involvement, eco-cultural tourism and a pro-poor approach that would ensure sustainability (see <http://www.sukur.info/Mont/>)

[montindex.htm](#)). We dare to hope that our proposal will one day be taken up by energetic and powerful voices. Such things take time – after all the Sukur World Heritage Cultural Landscape has still not been formally inaugurated!

We end on a personal note. A well-trained and widely informed assistant is by no means the least legacy that a researcher can leave to the community studied, especially if he or she dares speak truth to power. Such persons have inevitably learned a great deal about their own communities – and also about the researchers in particular and, in our case, whites in general. Others with whom we interacted have also been affected, perhaps by something more than demystification of whites. And we too have been profoundly changed, and in many ways, by our experiences amongst Mandara montagnards. Our affection and respect for them are immense though not uncritical.

Postscript (written in early 2015, see the Foreword and www.sukur.info for updates)

This paper describes a world that is no more. In October 2014 Sukur and its region were overrun by the Boko Haram Islamist insurgency. Men in Lower Sukur were killed, women and girls kidnapped, houses burned, property destroyed or looted, and those unable to flee forced to Islamize. Many fled up onto the plateau. In December dozens of militants carried out a major raid on Upper Sukur, burning most houses, including that of the chief, and stealing livestock and anything they could carry. The fate of the Sukur is now that of most villagers and townspeople in Borno, and in large parts of Yobe and Adamawa states. Families are dispersed, education, medical and other services cut off, harvests interrupted and famine on its way. Cholera has already arrived. Neither governments – including that of Nigeria – nor NGOs nor the private sector have offered effective opposition or assistance, and the Western media barely report on a catastrophe affecting some thirteen million Nigerians over an area four fifths the size of Syria and that has spilled violence across frontiers into Cameroon, Niger and even Chad. Sadly the majority of the insurgents are Nigerian-born, young men whose experience of a corrupt and exploitative society gave them no reason either to invest in it or defend it. We are doing what we can including incorporation of a non-profit corporation, Boko Haram Victims Relief, and have submitted a request that UNESCO inscribe the Sukur Cultural Landscape on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

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