12

PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Mike Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina

This paper examines different strategies of public involvement in two communities at opposite ends of the world which we have both visited for purposes of archaeological research. One of these is the semi-arid region of Androy in southern Madagascar and the other is the island of South Uist in the Scottish Western Isles, also known as the Outer Hebrides. Problems of what constitutes 'indigenous' and whether there is a standardized 'indigenous public archaeology' are examined. The concept of 'indigenous' is fraught with problems – of purity and exclusivity – which can be overcome by focusing on the more inclusive concept of 'local'. Within an increasingly globalized society, everyone is a local somewhere.

What is 'indigenous'?

Both of us were lucky enough to attend the World Archaeological Congress in Cape Town in January 1999, thanks to a windfall of building society shares. One morning we were intrigued to see that conference-goers were invited to 'an indigenous archaeologists' breakfast'. Neither of us went and we wondered whether anyone from the 'first world' – with or without a white skin – would dare to go. Could our session chair, Tim Schadla-Hall, have gone? He is, after all, a member of a community with a distinct identity within Britain, known for its peculiar customs, dialect and folkways. As a Yorkshireman doing fieldwork in Yorkshire, he could surely consider himself to be an indigenous archaeologist. Yet might even his considerable charm and engaging self-confidence have been insufficient to mask a certain awkwardness were he to have sat at that breakfast table?

The dictionary definitions of 'indigenous' – as native to a country or aboriginal – are wholly insufficient to do justice to the political nuances of the word. When 'indigenous' is used by archaeologists, can they be presumed to be talking about the same thing, given that there are at least four possible meanings to the term?

1. *A person native-born to the region or place where they work.* This definition, close to that of the lexicographer, includes people such as Tim together with many amateurs or avocational archaeologists, some of whom might consider that their roots in a country or region endow them with a justification to excavate and interpret that place's past which is not available to any incoming team of professional archaeologists.
2. *A member of a small-scale community with long-term and ancestral ties to its land.* But in the globalized and uprooted cultures of today can those who have become displaced for their work, education or livelihood still consider themselves 'indigenous' once they are no longer resident in their place of origin? Perhaps only those who have not suffered such upheavals – those who have never left – can lay claim to the term.
3. *Everyone apart from Europeans or people of European descent.* In other words, those inhabitants of colonized or post-colonial nations whose ancestors were there before the arrival of the colonists. In this definition, 'indigenous' is commensurate with 'first-nation' status within the developing world – the ethnically distinct people who were there first, before the arrival of the colonizers. Alrhough the term is commonly used thus by archaeologists, such a definition avoids the thorny question of pre-colonial migrations and settlement, presupposing a past both immobile and unchanging before colonization and 'the beginning of history'.
4. *Anyone whose community has been colonized or subjected to outside political control or suppression, regardless of skin colour, language or global location.* By including Europeans, this broader definition raises another temporal problem. How recent does the colonization have to be? The conquest of England by French invaders in 1066 is just too long ago – the oppositional identities of Norman/Saxon have long vanished, subsumed into an English (or Btitish) identity and not still 'suffering' from the effects – whereas the French colonization of Madagascar between 1895 and 1960 is so recent that the difference between Malagasy and French is unmistakeable.

Many archaeologists would probably feel comfortable with this last definition yet still be prepared to accept that the other three are also used in specific circumstances. 'Indigenous' is as slippery a term as 'ethnicity' and it contains within it the unspoken presupposition of an identity of opposition and contrast. Our example from the Western Isles of Scotland illustrates the complications.

The Western Isles – an indigenous community?

'No offence pal but I hate the f**king English' is one of those immortal phrases which summarizes certain Scottish attitudes to the descendants of their conquerors of old. During fieldwork in the Western Isles, university students from England react with hurt puzzlement when their hosts cheer for the opposing side whenever the English football team is playing an international match. For

From:
Merriman, Nick, ed. 2004. *Public Archaeology*.
London: Routledge. ISBN: 0-415-25889-8
Total pages in book: 306

many of the students have never been to Scotland before and, politically naive, are startled to discover that being Scottish is an oppositional national identity – the Scots are vehemently not English.

Identities in the Western Isles are even more complex since the people of the islands have an utterly distinct and unassailably self-confident regional identity which other Scots often find annoying. Scottish Gaelic may be spoken by only 2 per cent of the Scottish population but it is an almost universally spoken first language in the Western Isles. Even lowland Scots culture is thus excluded by language and by traditions. The tiny population of the islands is also subdivided by religious identity – Protestants live in the north and Catholics in the south – which on a day-to-day basis is probably invisible to many outsiders. People also express a local identity, belonging to a particular township (parish or dispersed settlement).

Hebrideans – the people of the Western Isles – can be considered 'an indigenous community' for several reasons. They have been perceived as not just different, but primitive. Until the 1930s archaeologists considered the people of this ethnically distinct community to be 'living Ancient Britons', inhabiting drystone longhouses and occupying the lower rungs of the Victorian evolutionary ladder. They are a colonized people with a recent history of exploitation and forced emigration as bitter as that of many of the world's colonized nations.[1] They are a small community with strong ties to their land, and an identity in opposition to that of the rest of the nation. Like other peripheral communities living under the control of a far-away dominant elite and political system, their existence is economically precarious, dependent on global changes outside their control such as EC subsidies, the defence industry and limited tourism.

Yet this community fails to meet one of the apparent criteria for being considered 'indigenous', the question of ancestry and long-term ties to the land. Strangely enough, a large number of the people who live in the Western Isles today cannot be described as indigenous in this sense since the ancestors of many families arrived only in the nineteenth century, after the forced migrations of most of the native population to North America. Many descendants of the true indigenes actually live in Nova Scotia, in Canada. To add to the confusion of definitions, the Medieval and Norse period evidence suggests that this deported population may well have had few genetic links to the people who lived on the islands before the area was colonized by the Vikings.

So does this mean that the term 'indigenous' is useless and misleading or that only certain groups who fulfil all the criteria may be considered 'indigenous'? It is from the perspective of self-definition that 'indigenous' has meaning: it serves to distinguish insiders from outsiders. As used by archaeologists, the term always possesses a political dimension, in that 'indigenous' exists only in relation to 'colonized'. People who are indigenous can only be defined as such through their relationship to outsiders or to colonists who have obtained rights over their current and former lands. And yet within the two communities in which we

have worked, the Western Isles and Madagascar, this definition is still inadequate since the relationship between the community, the archaeologists and the archaeology contains further subtleties.

Public archaeology in the Western Isles

From a Malagasy perspective, South Uist is exceptionally cold, with weather so unrelentingly stormy that it seems to presage hurricanes which would destroy our caravan accommodation in an instant. And yet it is an ideal world from many other perspectives. People can remain close to the land, keeping animals and cultivating, whilst at the same time they enjoy running water, electricity, television, telephones and impressive access to education, protected by the copious government and European subsidies which make modern economic life possible and prevent these islands from being instantly depopulated should the jobs and money disappear.

The islands are a tightly knit community free from car theft, robbery and burglary, where misdemeanors are largely drink-related. After some sticky moments ten years ago, the archaeologists – formerly referred to in the bar as 'the gynaecologists' – have become a recognized part of annual life. In the early years of the project there was relatively little communication and dissemination of results, generating a degree of mutual suspicion. Since then archaeology has made a big impact in terms of information, economic benefit, community life and prospective development.

People on South Uist are no more or no less interested in archaeology than anyone else in Britain. Some individuals are passionate about it and others cannot see the point at all. It is mainly the men and not the women who take an active interest, coming along to join in the digging, helping with the environmental sample processing, or providing other help in kind. Children are also encouraged through visits with parents or school parties. Archaeology gives them opportunity to learn about their own place's history because otherwise they learn nothing about it in the national curriculum.

The archaeological presence has risen to an annual complement of 120 people from five universities over two summer months. This makes a profound impact on a population of only 2000 people. The archaeologists not only provide a resource for tourists – albeit modest in the form of archaeological sites under excavation – but they are also themselves part of the tourist trade. Large block bookings of accommodation and heavy use of local shops, garages and bars provide a substantial cash injection to the local economy. The project's staff and students also join in with the life of the community in ways that other tourists do not. They participate fully in the public parts of community life, attending events such as the *ceilidh* dances and building friendships that strengthen over the years. The private life of the inhabitants, dependent on family ties and the Catholic faith, remains fairly closed, since few students are churchgoers and no-one has as yet pursued a romantic liaison as far as marriage and local residence.

In this sense the archaeologists remain outsiders, transient visitors. Indeed, they are ideal tourists because they are predictable, relatively high spenders and are known to the community. South Uist has a relatively embryonic tourist trade, especially when compared to Skye, its neighbour in the Inner Hebrides. No one locally seems to want Uist to become a tourist mecca to the extent that Skye has become. Yet tourism is seen as the growth industry to replace a defunct seaweed industry, the uncertain prospects of the military rocket range and base, the declining building trade and the increasingly lean returns from farming and fishing. Tourism currently revolves around specialized holidays. The upper classes come here to fish and shoot. The middle classes come for birdwatching and cycling holidays. Few come – as yet – for the heritage aspects of Gaelic culture and archaeology but the recent £0.5 million extension of the museum and a growing number of heritage-related activities and sites to be seen are laying the foundations for this new direction.

If visitors come to South Uist to explore their Hebridean roots, are they part of the 'indigenous community'? Such tourists are certainly not local, but in terms of self-identity they may well perceive themselves as having a very strong link to the land of their ancestors. The Western Isles have a long history of movement away from the islands, both for emigration and in search of work, before and after the clearances. The population of South Uist has never been static. Today many native-born islanders leave either temporarily or permanently and new residents arrive. People who settle in small communities without pre-existing family ties – 'incomers' – always have to negotiate their social position. In a society with an identity as strong as that of South Uist, being an incomer can be a difficult social role. Some non-native residents are deeply interested in the island's history and archaeology and as archaeologists we often have contact with this part of the population – those members of the community who are certainly 'local' but who are not 'indigenous'.

This difference between the 'local' and the 'indigenous' in practice goes far beyond defining the status of individual community members. Even on an island as small as South Uist – only some 30 km long north to south, with all settlement confined to a strip barely 5 km wide east to west – our contacts with the inhabitants are at two levels. Island-wide contact is made with the indigenous community as a whole (including the incomer members) at a fairly formal, semi-official level. Through leaflets, magazine items, site tours, local radio and television news items, open days, museum exhibitions and public lectures people have the opportunity to find our that South Uist has some of the rarest and best preserved archaeological remains in Britain.

Yet our most successful presentations of archaeology are at a local level, in the geographically tiny area in the south of the island in the townships where we live and work. Personal relations are crucial: people know who we are and what we are doing and their driving interest in the archaeology is that it is on their doorsteps. With the discovery in 1998 of a 1500-year-old skeleton in a tomb on the beach – referred to as 'Kilpheder Kate' – there has been an

explosion of interest in archaeology in the immediate area, leading to packed houses at archaeological talks and presentations arranged not for the island-wide community, nor for the tourists, but for the residents of the township. Local community involvement is the key and has been extremely successful on South Uist because of our own efforts at creating personal relationships combined with the overarching sense of identity of the indigenous community.

The indigenous community in southern Madagascar

From an English perspective, the region of Androy is a dry, hot and desolate desert lacking in all the creature comforts that make life bearable. In the words of a Tandroy saying, it is 'drier than a dog's crotch in the dry season'. There is no electricity or running water and the tiny wooden houses possess no furniture other than straw mats. There is scarcely any standing water in the nine-month-long dry season and the dry riverbeds are pockmarked by holes dug into the sand to seek out the hidden water below. There are fleas, lice, cockroaches, poisonous spiders, scorpions and (non-poisonous) snakes.

Most Tandroy are still pastoralists. People here in the arid south sometimes struggle to ensure that their families stay alive, as they watch their cattle herds dwindle and their crops wither. Drought and famine are ever-present dangers in this fragile and hostile environment. Medical and hospital provision is exceedingly limited and there has been barely any provision for education since the government lost its ability to pay village teachers' salaries some ten years ago. There are Tandroy politicians in central government but promises of government aid and subsidies have largely come to nothing. Many have emigrated to find work in the plantations and cities in other parts of Madagascar, working as wage labourers, nightwatchmen and mechanics.

Tandroy attitudes to outsiders are largely antagonistic. The politically and economically dominant people of Madagascar's central highlands, more Indonesian in appearance than most southerners, have been referred to for centuries as 'dog-pigs'. The delicacy and politeness of the highlanders is alien to the Tandroy who pride themselves on speaking their mind, and being blunt and forthright in their dealings. Anyone who is not Tandroy is a *vazaha*, a stranger or foreigner, regardless of whether they are Malagasy or not. Like the relationship of Scottish to English culture, Tandroy culture is a distinct regional variant with its difficult dialect, its own economic practices (cattle pastoralism and manioc cultivation as opposed to the prevalent rice cultivation of the rest of the island) and its disdain for the soft life lived by other Malagasy, in opposition to which the distinctive lifestyle of the Tandroy has been forged.[2]

The Tandroy know and talk about their fairly recent arrival in Androy. Genealogies list clan ancestors and oral histories tell how these ancestors came from the east and migrated across the south; archaeological survey places these migrations in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. It could be claimed that existing Tandroy notions about the past, manifested in genealogies, oral

traditions and the presence of the ancestors, make archaeology an intrusive and unnecessary form of knowing the past. Much the same was once conveyed to the archaeologists working on South Uist until people realized that there was an unknown and fascinating history being retrieved and reconstructed.

Our own approach is not that archaeology should serve to undermine traditional authoritative discourses but that it is a complementary and integral aspect of knowing the past. The past is important to people and archaeology is a way of broadening horizons and stimulating curiosity. There are certainly conflicts and contradictions between orally transmitted and archaeologically derived interpretations of particular archaeological sites but these are not to be shied away from. The Tandroy know that they have not always lived on the land they now occupy and seem to have no philosophical problem with accepting archaeological evidence of their own migrations or with the knowledge that there were other people living in the region before they arrived.

Public archaeology in southern Madagascar

Madagascar is the sixth poorest nation in the world. In this economic climate archaeology will seem to some to be an unnecessary luxury and yet the state supports a Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie, a Centre d'Art et d'Archéologie at the Université d'Antananarivo and a few archaeology and history posts in the provincial universities. Even during the years of Malagasy cultural reconstruction, when foreign influences and products were largely discouraged or unavailable, the Musée built up its international links and welcomed foreign archaeologists, ensuring that its research efforts went that much further through contact with French, American, and British academic institutions. Museum staff have worked intermittently in the south, and specifically in Androy, since 1961, carrying out field surveys of settlement sites and tombs, and excavations of major type sites dating from 1000–500 years ago.[3]

After 1984 there was a hiatus in Musée research in Androy until our own project commenced in 1991. However, Georges Heurtebize (a French resident of Androy, a geologist by training and an ethnographer by vocation) has carried out a certain amount of field survey and, together with the anthropologist Sarah Fee, has constructed an impressive museum of Tandroy life in the nature reserve and tourist attraction of Berenty in eastern Androy.[4] He also encouraged and trained our Tandroy colleague Retsihisatse as an archaeologist and anthropologist.

Our work in Androy is not possible without Retsihisatse.[5] There is a powerful social norm of hospitality throughout the south but people are very suspicious of outsiders. Retsihisatse's participation in the project enables us to break through this barrier. We have come across many stories of misunderstandings and confrontations between Tandroy and outsiders, both Malagasy and European, which have occasionally resulted in murder. There have long been tales of how 'foreigners', especially white ones, will steal hearts, livers and

tongues. In 1993 a new rumour began that white people were head-hunting to extract brains in the search for an AIDS cure. The rumour started in association with two Frenchmen in a red car ostensibly on a fact-finding mission into primary education – of which there is none. Within this climate of suspicion it was only a matter of weeks before the description of the suspects matched our team and Landrover – the head-hunters were now pretending that they were looking for old pottery . . .

The head-hunting rumour is still circulating today and has made fieldwork extremely slow and difficult. Few people know anything at all about archaeology, let alone what our research team is doing. In one sense this is a good thing because it means that we must spend even more time than we would ordinarily in talking to everybody about what we are looking for, and why. As one little girl asked when out fieldwalking with the team, 'Are these the good foreigners or the head-hunting foreigners?' In Androy we are considerably restricted in terms of the media available for communication and dissemination of our fieldwork intentions or results. In a society which has a low rate of literacy and where paper is valued primarily for rolling cigarettes, the printed word is of little use in public presentation. Our only means of communication is face-to-face. There are no 'village halls' so meetings take place in the open air within the framework of *kabary*, the Malagasy style of public speaking and debate.

Yet practice rather than talk is the best way of involvement and in the last eight years many more Tandroy than Hebrideans have done some archaeology. Many people, especially the children, come fieldwalking (Figures 12.1–12.3). The novelty and interest tend to fade after the first day or so and yet there are some individuals who have a strong interest and a good knowledge of the archaeological remains in their locality. Several people, young and old, have shown the level of interest out of which may develop a life-long enthusiasm

Figure 12.1 Children joining fieldwork on the site of the nineteenth-century royal village at Ambaro in 1993. Photo by Jean-Luc Schwenninger.

Figure 12.2 Excavarions at Ambaro in 1995, the site of a nineteenth-century royal village, are inspected by Tsihandatse, whose ancestors, the royal dynasty of the Tambaro Andrianmañare, formerly lived here. Photo by Karen Godden.

Figure 12.3 Children of the village of Montefeno took part in excavations in 2000 on this seventeenth-century royal village site. They were particularly talented at identifying species and parts of animal bones. Photo by Mike Parker Pearson.

but there is no infrastructure of community funding or support which could ensure that Retsihisatse has protégés and a local 'amateur' network for the future.

Tandroy manners are such that people are not slow in coming forward and the archaeologists are a known and reliable source of presents, medicines and free rides to market. Our bizarre behaviour is also a source of sometimes hilarious entertainment for both children and adults. Our financial input to the local economy is substantial through gift-giving, food purchasing, market shopping, accommodation payments, fees to guides and provision of animal sacrifices. Yet there are aspecrs of people's lives which we cannot begin to improve. Access to drinking water, professional medical and hospital facilities, a better transport infrastructure, bigger cattle herds, and even more enormous stone tombs are the things that people most want.

Our mission is primarily archaeological and can only provide a very intangible benefit. We think that our work is appreciated for two reasons. People enjoy telling us what they know about their history in terms of the places, traditions, genealogies and stories about the past. Perhaps our most significant role is in validation of Tandroy heritage. It is not only just as important as anyone else's but specialists have come from the national museum and from far away overseas to find out about it. Secondly, people are often interested in our discoveries but to a lesser extent and often only if they themselves have a pre-existing interest and aptitude. This is particularly the case with some of the men who have worked as paid guides and local helpers.

But, just as in South Uist, it is difficult to distinguish whether the communities with whom we have had contact are best described as 'indigenous' or as 'local'. Working with Retsihisatse, an indigenous archaeologist by most definitions, we are able to explain our motives and the importance of the ancient settlements on Tandroy territory as well as calm any suspicions about what we are up to. Archaeologists working with 'indigenous' communities are there at the behest of their hosts or by their agreement. This means participating on the community's terms, respecting their beliefs and traditions. Even though both of us were raised as Christians we are happy to participate in non-Christian rituals, such as sacrificing to the ancesrors to gain their blessing before embarking on an excavation.

Despite a climate of fear in which our appearance has occasionally caused children to run away screaming, we have nevertheless managed to build good relations with many of the local presidencies and villages in Androy. Bur Androy is a big region of 5000 square kilometres with a population of about a quarter of a million. Our worst problems, such as being held hostage, have happened when we were furthest from Retsihisatse's home village, in areas where no-one had ever heard of him or his family. Retsihisatse may be indigenous but, crucially, he isn't always *local*.

In both Androy and South Uist, people are intrigued by archaeological finds on their own land but expanding that local interest to encompass their entire

region and ethnic group needs methods beyond personal contact, and becomes a goal which is difficult to attain in South Uist and currently still distant in Androy. In addition, much as we have obligations to the local communities with whom we work, we also owe duties to a myriad of different public audiences that archaeology serves. In national terms, for example, we have a responsibility to disseminate knowledge to the people of Madagascar. Although in 1989 there was an exhibition on Androy in the capital Antananarivo, prejudices against the people of the south, seen as fearsome, uncivilized and dangerous, are still strong throughout the rest of the country.[6] In international terms we have an audience to reach amongst both scholars and the wider public. This is not simply because the long-term archaeology and history of Androy is fascinating for its contributions to understanding issues like megafaunal extinction and monumental tomb-building but because it is also a location where European and Malagasy history became inextricably entwined during the pre-colonial period of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries.

How can this be expressed at a local level in Androy? Primarily through Georges Heurtebize's efforts, there is a growing sense of a history to be objectified and preserved. Oral traditions are being recorded, new archaeological sites are being discovered and there are the beginnings of a museum collection for the benefit of the local community in one of the oldest houses in Androy at Benonoke. Although the museum at Berenty is for the benefit of tourists, its very existence is a first crucial step which indicates to the Tandroy and the wider world that Tandroy culture and history are valued by people outside the indigenous community.

Just as tourism to the Western Isles has increased over the last ten years, so the numbers of American and European tourists to Madagascar have grown in tandem with newspaper articles describing it as a stylish adventure playground inhabited solely by cuddly lemurs. As our project's results are published to a wider European and American public so more people will want to visit Androy. Currently Androy is well off the beaten track of tourism. Public buses and tour buses pass through without stopping. Some non-Tandroy and Europeans live in the few small towns but otherwise the only white people to be seen, other than some of the archaeologists, are occasional aid workers and UNICEF water engineers, the Catholic priests and Protestant missionaries, some conservation personnel and the rare tourist who manages to explore beyond the roadside towns. The lemur reserve at Berenty is, however, specifically directed at overseas toutists. Many come to this insulated shady paradise unaware that they have the only running water, electricity, French food and cold beer for miles around. In Georges Heurtebize's' museum there they can learn about Tandroy life without the discomforts of having to live it or, conversely, without inflicting themselves on the Tandroy.

In spite of their wariness of strangers, some Tandroy are keen that mote visitors should pass through. There may not be a tourist infrastructure as such but there are marketing opportunities for women to sell the beautiful woven

mats and locally made textiles that are distinctive to the region. This is a contradictory state of affairs in which tourists will be feared and welcomed at the same time. Many in the tourism industry consider that Tandroy culture would suffer from the exposure and that overseas tourism in Madagascar should be restricted as far as possible to the 'honey pots' at places like Berenty. For better or for worse, our work will – to an admittedly minute degree – increase the influx of travellers who wish to encounter Tandroy life and culture for themselves at first hand.

Indigenous archaeologists, local archaeologists

If we fail to apply any political loading to the term 'indigenous', both authors of this article may be described as indigenous archaeologists. Each usually works in the island (or islands) to which they belong by birth and citizenship, one in Britain on British prehistory, the other in Madagascar on Malagasy prehistory. With the added political dimension, only one author may be described as 'indigenous' in that his island was colonized in recent history. And yet is this term acceptable to cover an entire nation?

There are enormous problems to be tackled in the history of colonialism, the condition of the post-colonial nations and the public perception of non-European history but we must address these questions with a more sophisticated approach than one which resorts to categorizing our colleagues. The lumping together of all non-European archaeologists creates an oppositional identity – an 'us and them' defined by skin colour – which has an inherent danger of attaching certain qualities to (and disguising differences in experiences and attitudes within) that 'indigenous' identity.

The political dimension of the term 'indigenous archaeologist' indicates a relationship of opposition. There are two such oppositions at work here. One is economic – the inequalities between nation states. The other is intellectual – the unequal value still ascribed to the histories of European as opposed to indigenous (non-European) peoples. But these relationships which patently hinge on gross inequalities should not be conflated with the relationships between members of the archaeological community. Archaeology in Madagascar certainly has minimal funds and a fragile infrastructure when compared to archaeology in Britain but in terms of its professional practitioners, it is of qualitatively the same calibre – the only inequality in the relationship between Malagasy archaeologists and British archaeologists today is in their access to money and resources. We wish to emphasize, not deny, the economic, political and academic struggle faced by the post-colonial nations and would suggest that it should be supported by open debate and action by the archaeological community, not ghettoized by inviting under-funded archaeologists to have breakfast together.

At the local level, in the two regions described neither of us is an indigenous archaeologist in any meaning of the term. We rarely work in the particular

areas within each island – Bezanozano and Wessex – which we consider ourselves to be from, in terms of ancestry and birth. Both of us are outsiders when we work in the Western Isles and in southern Madagascar because the communities with which we work perceive us as such. In some ways, these are situations to be cherished since they provide interactions, economic as well as cultural, which would not come about if we restricted ourselves to our own patches.

There is no indigenous archaeologist on South Uist but there is a local history society which has supported and advised the archaeologists over the last decade. Other support comes from a locally based museums officer and from the regional council archaeologist based on the Isle of Lewis far to the north. Native-born islanders and incomers all play their part in community involvement. Although we would argue that many of the inhabitants of South Uist make up an 'indigenous community', it is the *local* community which is most involved in archaeology. Even in such a technologically sophisticated environment, personal contact has proved the best way of communicating our interpretations of the archaeology of the Western Isles to the people on whose land we found it.

In Madagascar, our colleague Retsihisatse is a member of the Tandranatelo lineage of the Afomarolahy clan of the Tandroy people – an indigenous archaeologist *par excellence*. Although he makes his living predominantly from his animals and crops, his income is augmented by our project. He enjoys his role as part of an international team, associate of the Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie, and 'fixer' for all visiting specialists researching fauna, flora, local arts, and ethnography as well as archaeology. He mediates between local residents and outsider archaeologists, protecting the interests of both because he has a stake in both. At a different level, the quasi-indigenous identity of Georges Heurtebize in Tandroy society has echoes of the identity acquired by the socially adept incomer on South Uist. Such an individual's inside/outside status can make important contributions to public archaeology and should never be denigrated.

Conclusion

Some people might think that archaeology amongst indigenous communities should be done only by indigenous archaeologists and only for the benefit of the indigenous audience and no one else. Such feelings are entirely understandable in an academic world which is recoiling from – and still in the grip of – colonialist and nationalist agendas in archaeology by which cultural treasures have been removed to a distant capital or country, and histories written with little or no local input and no concern for local self-determination. Yet this antithetical stance is as untenable as the colonialist/nationalist ethos which it seeks to replace. Archaeology can be a way of removing us from the concerns of the here and now and breaking down the political and cultural barriers that

divide people. It is a way of bringing together people with a common interest in the study of the past. The success of the Cape Town conference was precisely that people working in their small area could listen to others working in their adjacent – or even distant – small areas and grasp the bigger picture and the shared theme. They were not alone in their local problems and dilemmas.

Without the continuous interaction between indigenous and outsider archaeologists we will never learn to see the world from different perspectives. One of the greatest gifts that archaeologists can bring to each other and to the communities with which they work is that of their experiences and ideas (money and equipment also help, it has to be said!). Over the years in which we have worked together, each of us has profoundly changed the other's way of seeing our own culture. Retsihisatse has also opened our eyes to aspects of his culture that would otherwise have been closed to both of us.

Our experiences in the Western Isles and southern Madagascar have made us think more carefully about what it is to be indigenous and about the pitfalls that surround its definition and championing. Equally, working with these two communities has made us appreciate the need to work closely with their represenratives. The attitudes, needs, interests and facilities of these two indigenous communities in Madagascar and Scotland have been wholly different but we would argue that in both cases *local* communities are the level at which archaeologists must operate in the field since personal contact is an irreplaceable means of communication.

In neither South Uist nor Androy do we claim to be working there for the indigenous community's exclusive and sole benefit: archaeology is driven by research which has to be multi-layered just as its audiences are multiple and globally dispersed. The world is too small to allow retreat into self-referential and closely circumscribed 'parish pump' archaeologies which feed local chauvinisms about indigenous purity and exclusion of the wider world, erecting instead barriers of intolerance and misunderstanding. Yet in the practice of field archaeology, that parish pump may be all important. Local communities call many of the shots, and rightly so, but archaeologists musr be conscious of the inherent dangers in any 'indigenous' archaeology. Archaeology may sometimes lend itself to the redressing of great injustices but it will not always support beliefs held very dear by a dominated or disenfranchized community. In neither South Uist nor Androy, for example, can our research ever be used to confirm the present population as autochthonous. These indigenous communities live today on land once inhabited by others, people who were not their ancestors. These traces of past societies are nevertheless 'their' history which they can learn about with pride and interest, recognizing that there are others in this world who also have the right to know, either because they are the descendants of rhe thousands of enslaved Malagasy or impoverished Hebridean peasants shipped to North America, or because the projects were financed with public money, or just because archaeology fascinares them.

Acknowledgements

This paper was first delivered at the 1999 WAC session entitled 'Public Archaeology' and we wish to thank its chair, Tim Schadla-Hall, and all those who provided feedback on the paper. We wish to thank Karen Godden for editing this text. Funding for the projects in question has been provided in recent years by the National Geographic Society and Historic Scotland.

Notes

1 Our colleague Jim Symonds has been studying the archaeology of resistance during that unhappy time (Symonds 1999a, b, c).
2 The thorny question of Tandroy ethnicity has been addressed elsewhere (Parker Pearson *et al.* 1999b).
3 Notable contributions have been made by Pierre Vèrin and Chantal Radimilahy (Battistini *et al.* 1963; Radimilahy 1988; Radimilahy and Wright 1986).
4 Georges Heurtebize has many publications on Tandroy ethnography and archaeology, of which the principal ones are Heurtebize (1986a, b, 1997).
5 For some of this work see Parker Pearson *et al.* (1994, 1999a).
6 The museum exhibition was accompanied by a publication (Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie 1989).

Bibliography

Battistini, R., Vérin, P. and Rason, R. 1963. Le site archéologique de Talaky: cadre géographique et géologique; premiers travaux de fouilles; notes ethnographiques sur le village actuel proche du site. *Annales Malgaches* 1: 111–53.

Heurtebize, G. 1986a. *Histoire des Afomarolahy (extrême-sud de Madagascar)*. Paris: CNRS.

Heurtebize, G. 1986b. *Quelques aspects de la vie dans l'Androy*. Antananarivo: Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie.

Heurtebize, G. 1997. *Mariage et Deuil dans l'Extrême-Sud de Madagascar*. Paris: Harmattan.

Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie 1989. *L'Androy*. Antananarivo: Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie.

Parker Pearson, M., Godden, K., Ramilisonina, Retsihisatse and Schwenninger, J.-L. 1994. Finding Fenoarivo: fieldwork in central Androy. *Nyame Akuma* 41: 41–5.

Parker Pearson, M., Godden, K., Ramilisonina, Retsihisatse, Schwenninger, J.-L. and Smith, H. 1999a. Lost kingdoms: oral histories, travellers' tales and archaeology in southern Madagascar. In P. Funari, M. Hall and S. Jones (eds) *Back from the Edge: Archaeology in History*. London: Routledge.

Parker Pearson, M., Ramilisonina and Retsihisatse 1999b. Ancestors, forests and ancient settlements: Tandroy readings of the archaeological past. In P.Ucko and R. Layton (eds) *Landscape Archaeology*. London: Routledge.

Radimilahy, C. 1988. *L'Ancienne Métallurgie du Fer à Madagascar*. Oxford: BAR Supplementary Series 422.

Radimilahy, C. and Wright, H.T. 1986. Notes sur les industries de pierre taillée dans le sud de Madagascar. *Taloha* 10: 1–8.

Symonds, J. 1999a. Songs remembered in exile: integrating an unsung archive of highland life. In A. Gazinch-Schwartz and C. Holtdorf (eds) *Folklore in Archaeology*. London: Routledge.

Symonds, J. 1999b. Toiling in the vale of tears: everyday life and resistance in South Uist, the Outer Hebrides, 1760–1860. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 3: 101–22.

Symonds, J. 1999c. Surveying the remains of a highland myth: investigations at the birthplace of Flora MacDonald, South Uist. In M. Vance (ed.) *Myth, Migration and the Making of Memory: Scotia and Nova Scotia 1700–1990*. Halifax: Fernwood.