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Public Memorialisation and the Politics of Historical Memory in Africa

In 2020, a global wave of anti-racism movements contributed to widespread reconsideration of previously honoured people. From Bristol's slave trader Edward Colston, to confederate generals across the American South, to King Leopold II of Belgium, statues now seen as symbols of white supremacy have fallen.[1] Campaigns in Africa challenged state-endorsed memorialisations, thus contributing to the recent groundswell of alternative interpretations of the past. In the Ethiopian town of Harar, Oromo groups toppled a monument to Haile Selassie's father, Ras Makonnen, seeing both father and son as imperialist oppressors.[2] In Cape Town, a statue of white supremacist Cecil Rhodes at Rhodes Memorial on the slopes of Table Mountain was decapitated.[3] In 2015, protests over another statue of Rhodes located at the University of Cape Town (UCT) channelled memories of past injustices into widespread mobilisation for change, a movement known as #RhodesMustFall (RMF).[4]

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1 For the removal Confederate memorials: "George Floyd Protests Reignite Debate Over Confederate Statues," *New York Times*, 3 June 2020, accessed 7 December 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/03/us/confederate-statues-george-floyd.html?action=click&module=Related-Links&pgtype=Article. For Leopold II, see Monika Pronczuk and Mikir Zaveri, "Statue of Leopold II, Belgian King Who Brutalized Congo, Is Removed in Antwerp," *New York Times*, 9 June 2020, accessed 6 December 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/09/world/europe/king-leopold-statue-antwerp.html. For Colston, see "Edward Colston Statue: Protesters Tear Down Slave Trader Monument," *BBC News*, 7 June 2020, accessed 7 December 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-52954305.
2 "Ethiopian Opposition Politician held as Protests Continue," *France24*, 7 July 2020, accessed 8 December 2020, https://www.france24.com/en/20200701-ethiopian-opposition-politician-held-as-protests-continue.
3 "Cecil Rhodes Statue in Cape Town has Head Removed," *BBC News*, 15 July 2020, accessed 6 December 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53420403.
4 In March 2015, Chumani Maxwele, a student at the University of Cape Town (UCT), threw human excrement at a statue of Cecil John Rhodes, prompting calls to remove the statue and sparking a movement to reckon with racist pasts and decolonise higher education. These actions have been the focus of a growing body of scholarly work, including: Anton Van Vollenhoven, "Dealing with Statues, Monuments and Memorials in South Africa: A Heritage Based Response to Current Controversies," *South African Journal of Cultural History* 29, no. 1 (2015): 7–21; Shanade Barnabas, "Engagement with Colonial and Apartheid Narratives in Contemporary South Africa: A Monumental Debate," *Journal of Literary Studies* 32, no. 3 (2016): 109–128; and Sabine

Protests of colonial-era markers and what they represented reverberated across South Africa and beyond. The push to remove the statue of Rhodes in 2015 spread from UCT to universities across the country and to Rhodes' alma mater Oriel College in Oxford, where students marched to remove a memorial of Rhodes overlooking Oxford's High Street.[5] Officials at UCT bowed to pressure and removed the statue of Rhodes. After previously rejecting the demand, Oriel College stated its intention to take down their statue.[6] The demonstrations following the killing of Eric Garner, George Floyd and others in the United States fuelled widespread anger, while in Oxford, RMF campaigns surged, drawing thousands.[7] These campaigns not only took aim at colonial era memorials, monuments, and even street and building names, they also sparked extensive public debate over colonial and apartheid history. Student protesters appealed for change at institutions of higher education and proposed to "decolonise" the academy, insisting on the transformation of institutional practices, personnel, and reading lists, among other concerns.[8]

Discontent with monuments honouring Colston, Rhodes, Robert E. Lee and others was hardly new. However, in the words of historian Robert Gildea, many communities had not yet "gained a voice to demand the symbolic righting of wrongs."[9] Buoyed by what French historian Pierre Nora calls the "democratization of history" as well as global shifts in power, people now question the pres-

Marschall, "Targeting Statues: Monument 'Vandalism' as an Expression of Sociopolitical Protest in South Africa," *African Studies Review* 60, no. 3 (2017): 203–219.

5 Britta Knudsen and Casper Andersen, "Affective Politics and Colonial Heritage, '#Rhodes Must Fall' at UCT and Oxford," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 25, no. 3 (2019): 239–258.

6 Aamna Mohdin, Richard Adams and Ben Quinn, "Oxford College Backs Removal of Cecil Rhodes Statue," *The Guardian*, 17 June 2020, accessed 5 December 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jun/17/end-of-the-rhodes-cecil-oxford-college-ditches-controversial-statue.

7 Estelle Shirbon, "Oxford College Says It Wants to Remove Statue of Colonialist Rhodes," *Reuters*, 17 June 2020, accessed 7 December 2020, https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-statues-rhodes/oxford-college-says-it-wants-to-remove-statue-of-colonialist-rhodes-idUKKBN23O3B1.

8 Anye Nyamnjoh, "The Phenomenology of Rhodes Must Fall: Student Activism and the Experience of Alienation at the University of Cape Town," *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 39, no. 1 (2017): 256–277; Gurminder K. Bhambra, Dalia Gebrial, and Kerem Nişancıoğlu, eds., *Decolonising the University: Understanding and Transforming the Universities' Colonial Foundations* (London: Pluto Press, 2018); and Robbie Shilliam, "Behind the Rhodes Statue: Black Competency and the Imperial Academy," *History of the Human Sciences* 32, no. 5 (2019): 3–27.

9 Robert Gildea, *Empires of the Mind: The Colonial Past and the Politics of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 12.

ervation of historic tributes to discredited individuals.[10] Public activism contributed to a transformative agenda and altered the cultural landscape, while public appetite for reconsidering the past expanded, animated by these trends as well as demand for racial redress.

As Albert Wirz and Jan-Georg Deutsch observe, "History always involves a reflection on the present. Those who write history – or study history – can therefore never circumvent the question of when, how, why, by whom and for whom a certain kind of historical knowledge was produced and written down."[11] Inspired by the life of Jan-Georg Deutsch, who mentored the authors of this book, and by recent public interest in commemoration and the politics of historical memory, this volume contributes to a growing body of work that examines the monuments, tributes, and cultural objects that evoke colonial history in Africa.[12] It also augments existing work on the politics of historical memory with new studies from across the continent.[13]

The chapters of this volume, dedicated to Deutsch, relate the past to the present through a critical examination of the politics of historical memory and its commemoration in particular African contexts. This introductory chapter examines issues that mediate between the past and the present and show how both have been framed in different contexts in Africa and beyond the continent. Subsequent chapters offer a selection of cases from colonial Nigeria, Algeria, Kenya, a transitioning South Africa, postcolonial Somalia, and Liberia, all examining events in each country and how they were remembered and memorialised.

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10 Pierre Nora, "Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory," *Eurozine*, 9 April 2002, 2. See also Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, 3 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996 – 98).

11 Albert Wirz and Jan-Georg Deutsch, "Geschichte in Afrika: Einleitung und Problemaufriß," in *Geschichte in Afrika: Einführung in Probleme und Debatten*, eds. Jan-Georg Deutsch and Albert Wirz (Berlin: Verlag Das Arabische Buch, 1997), 6. Quote translated by the authors.

12 Liz Stanley, *Mourning Becomes...: Post/memory and Commemoration of the Concentration Camps of the South African War 1899 – 1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Ifi Amadiume and Abdullah An-Na'im, eds., *The Politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice* (London: Zed Books, 2000); and Dominik Geppert and Frank Muller, eds., *Sites of Imperial Memory: Commemorating Colonial Rule in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

13 A growing literature at the intersection of knowledge production, politics, and memory in Africa informs this work, including: Derek R. Peterson and Giacomo Macola, eds., *Recasting the Past: History Writing and Political Work in Modern Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009); Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi, ed., *Remembering Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinmenn, 2002); and Derek R. Peterson, Kodzo Gavua and Ciraj Rassool, eds., *The Politics of Heritage in Africa: Economies, Histories, and Infrastructures* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press and the International African Institute, 2015).

The final chapter considers how collective memory of shared experiences shapes historical writing. Symbols of the past in Africa – including memorials and monuments as well as parades, postage stamps, obituaries, and even alcoholic beverages – are tied to understanding political realities of the continent. These understandings of the past played out not only in the decisions of national leaders of African states but also in everyday discussions and actions.

Of Memory, Commemoration, and Monuments

Though past events are immutable, their significance and interpretation by subsequent generations are not. Re-evaluation can devalue revered figures and commemorative monuments can become focal points. "Historical representations – be they books, commercial exhibits or public commemorations – cannot be conceived only as vehicles for the transmission of knowledge," declared Michel-Rolph Trouillot in *Silencing the Past*, his seminal 1995 interrogation of power and the making of history.[14] He further asserts that historical narratives must respond to present injustices in order to establish an authentic relation to that knowledge.

Collective memory joins the past with the present. In *Commemorating and Forgetting: Challenges for the New South Africa*, Martin Murray defines collective memory as "a shared understanding that belongs to social groups and collectivities of all kinds" and that in general this understanding rests not on a firm foundation of shared values but rather on contested perspectives.[15] Collective memory is derived by way of a wide range of commemorative forms which carry political meaning, including monuments, statues, official holidays, landmarks, rituals, images, symbols, and so forth. Murray adds, "Commemorative practices have always been deeply invested in the shaping of political and national identities."[16]

Trouillot describes memory-history as a particular storage vessel of the past developed by a collective. He critiques this vessel to emphasise that the consequences of a historical event may not correlate to the space allotted to it in pop-

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14 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press Books, 1995), 149. For work on the impact of *Silencing the Past*, see Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, "Still Unthinkable? The Haitian Revolution and the Reception of Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past*," *The Journal of Haitian Studies* 19, no. 2 (2013): 75–103.
15 Martin Murray, *Commemorating and Forgetting: Challenges for the New South Africa* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 4.
16 Murray, *Commemorating and Forgetting*, 7.

ular as well as official recollections of the past. As evidence of this disparity, he notes that the Haitian Revolution played a key role in the ultimate eradication of a global slavery system, yet it endured longstanding omission from history textbooks in France and elsewhere. Confronting the dissonance between events and scholarly analysis of them, Trouillot underscores the silences that pervade the historical record. His concern is with power and selection in the landscape of knowledge production because "the ways in which what happened and that which is said to have happened are and are not the same may itself be historical."[17] Affirming Trouillot's observations, Derek Peterson and Giacomo Macola spurred an awareness of power, politics and ethics in knowledge production about African history in *Recasting the Past: History Writing and Political Work in Modern Africa*.[18]

Momentous events punctuated by the "The Year of Africa" in 1960 when 17 countries declared independence generated continent-wide opportunities for investigating the political uses of memory. Many African leaders removed, reworked or substituted colonial-era memorials with fresh symbols.[19] Streets, buildings, and even countries were renamed, as new national historiographies were crafted.[20] As Derek Peterson observes in his introduction to *The Politics of Heritage in Africa*, "the lifeways of the past were made into capital, a store of authentic knowledge on which contemporary political actors could draw."[21] Yet memorialisation in these new independent states also proved particularly fractious. A statue of independent Ghana's first president Kwame Nkrumah in Accra erected in 1958 was attacked for the first time in 1961 and then decapitated and toppled after a coup in 1966. In 1992, a government that approved of Nkrumah's rule created a replica. Fifteen years later, a new government with a different view of Nkrumah resurrected and displayed the original beheaded statue alongside the replica.[22] This dual commemoration of Nkrumah, while satisfying neither side, nonetheless communicates a more nuanced commemoration of

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17 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 22.

18 Peterson and Macola, *Recasting the Past*.

19 Heike Becker, "Commemorating Heroes in Windhoek and Eenhana: Memory, Culture and Nationalism in Namibia, 1990 – 2010," *Africa* 81, no. 4 (2011): 519 – 543.

20 Carola Lentz and Dave Lowe, *Remembering Independence* (New York: Routledge, 2018); Ruramisai Charumbira, *Imagining a Nation: History and Memory in Making Zimbabwe* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015); and Felicitas Becker, "Remembering Nyerere: Political Rhetoric and Dissent in Contemporary Tanzania," *African Affairs* 112, no. 447 (2013): 238 – 261.

21 Derek R. Peterson, "Introduction: Heritage Management in Colonial and Contemporary Africa," in Peterson, Gavua, and Rassool, *The Politics of Heritage in Africa*, 2.

22 Carola Lentz, "'Ghanaian 'Monument Wars': The Contested History of the Nkrumah Statues," *Cahiers D' Études Africaines* 52, no. 3 (2017): 551 – 582.

him, both as father of the nation and as an authoritarian leader who suppressed opposition.

In North Africa, the potency of monuments as well as their removal has a long tradition. Historian Emily Teeter observes that for ancient Egyptians, figurative representation served more than a decorative function and that "portraying an individual ensured that person's existence as long as the image itself was preserved [...]. Conversely, if the image of an individual was effaced, the existence of that person was effectively erased."[23] As Christianity spread in Egypt, many depictions fell victim to iconoclasts who rejected the ideas of previous generations of Egyptians, yet recognised the power of their visual representations.[24] Converts effaced sculptures in temples and at graves, often removing the eyes from stone figures in a symbolic act intended to deny their power to instruct.

Studies of public memorialisation and memory in post-apartheid South Africa are numerous.[25] Memory studies scholar Sabine Marschall considers how people and events are represented in that country's monuments, which she defines as structures that are "commemorative" and "intentionally construct-

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23 Emily Teeter, "Religion and Ritual," in Melinda Hartwig, ed. *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2015), 328.

24 For discussion of Christian iconoclasm in Egypt, see David Frankfurter, "Iconoclasm and Christianization in Late Antique Egypt: Christian Treatments of Space and Image," in *From Temple to Church: Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity*, eds. Johannes Hahn, Stephen Emmel, and Ulrich Gotter (Boston, MA: Brill, 2008), 135–160.

25 See, for instance: Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee, eds. *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998); Ciraj Rassool, "The Rise of Heritage and the Reconstitution of History in South Africa," *Kronos* 26 (2000): 1–21; Sabine Marschall, *Landscape of Memory: Commemorative Monuments, Memorials, and Public Statuary in Post-apartheid South Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Lynn Meskell, *The Nature of Heritage: The New South Africa* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Daniel Herwitz, *Heritage, Culture, and Politics in the Postcolony* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); and Murray, *Commemorating and Forgetting*. For museums commemorating communities fractured during apartheid, see Ciraj Rassool and Sandra Prosalendis, eds. *Recalling Community in Cape Town: Creating and Curating the District Six Museum* (Cape Town: District Six Museum Foundation, 2001); and Sean Field, "Imagining Communities: Memory, Loss, and Resilience in Post-Apartheid Cape Town," in *Oral History and Public Memories*, eds. Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008), 107–124. For work on the public memorialisation of South African sport, see Peter Alegi, "The Football Heritage Complex: History, Tourism and Development in South Africa," *Africa Spectrum* 41, no. 3 (2006): 415–426; Ciraj Rassool and Virgil Slade, "'Fields of Play': The District Six Museum and the History of Football in Cape Town," *Soccer and Society* 13, no. 2 (2012): 188–206; and Marizanne Grundlingh, "Showcasing the Springboks: The Commercialization of South African Rugby Heritage," *South African Review of Sociology* 46, no. 1 (2015): 106–128.

ed."[26] Focusing on issues of style, design and form, rather than on who or what is being commemorated, she notes that Western traditions have long influenced South African monuments and that this trend continued after apartheid through the "filling of old forms with new content."[27] In her 2003 work on *Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*, Annie Coombes asserts that the significance of a monument is always renewed in conversation with the past.[28] New sites such as the Robben Island Museum, Apartheid Museum, Constitution Hill complex, Nelson Mandela Heritage complex, Ncome/Blood River Museum, Luthuli Museum and Freedom Park did not displace older colonial monuments and were often deliberately juxtaposed with existing monuments.[29] Almost a decade before the #RhodesMustFall movement, Marschall noted that commemorative monuments reflect post-apartheid South Africa's "delicate balancing act."[30] Memorials that preserved the country's fractured history permitted discussion of contested interpretations of the past. Disagreements over the symbolic realm, which includes official monuments such as statues of high-profile individuals and important events, could "inflame powerful emotions and even lead to violence," testing efforts to reconcile and build a post-apartheid state.[31]

The statuary of Cecil Rhodes served as one such focus of controversy. As RMF gained momentum, some approved of public displays of the British imperialist. Others condemned his continued memorialisation. Political scientist Anthony Lemon contends that Cecil Rhodes must "be assessed in terms of the values of his day" and Robert Gildea summarises this view, stating, "Rhodes was a man of his time and that was that."[32] Dissenters emphasise that opposition to Rhodes existed during his lifetime. In an article titled "Why Rhodes Must Fall," historian John Newsinger argues that reverence for Rhodes rested on the fortune he amassed as one of the founders of De Beers Consolidated Mines, which was built on the exploitation of Black labourers, as well as the leading

26 Sabine Marschall, "Transforming the Landscape of Memory," *South African Historical Journal* 55 (2006): 166.
27 Marschall, "Transforming the Landscape," 178; Murray, *Commemorating and Forgetting*, 4.
28 Annie Coombes, *History After Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 12.
29 Coombes, *History After Apartheid*. See also Rassool, "The Rise of Heritage"; Marschall, "Transforming the Landscape of Memory"; and Sabine Marschall, "The Long Shadow of Apartheid: A Critical Assessment of Heritage Transformation in South Africa 25 years on," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 25, no. 10 (2019): 1088–1102.
30 Marschall, "Transforming the Landscape," 184.
31 Marschall, *Landscape of Memory*.
32 Anthony Lemon, "'Rhodes Must Fall': The Dangers of Re-Writing History," *The Round Table* 105, no. 2 (2016): 217–219; Gildea, *Empires of the Mind,* 12.

role he played in British colonisation in southern Africa, which included the colony of Rhodesia named after him.[33] Cultural historian Yuliya Komska emphasises that the ultimate significance of protests over memorials stems not from their demolition or preservation but from the intensified scrutiny that these representations engendered. In her words, "The removal of the relics of a hateful social order is not in itself cause for celebration. It is the aftermath that matters."[34]

Cultural productions of historical memory and the campaigns they incite become elemental components of contemporary politics. In European nations, where descendants of previously colonised peoples have become citizens, long-standing monuments honouring imperialists have sparked wider discussion about which people and events are worthy of collective celebration. In Ernest Renan's 1882 classic "What is a Nation?" he observed that a nation is partially constructed around a collective narrative of the past and that the creation of a nation depends on "forgetting" and "historical error."[35] If the demographic composition of the nation changes to include descendants of those victimised by that nation's imperialism, that collective narrative and its public representation become negotiable. For Gildea, battles over the memory of empire do not "remain simply as memory."[36] They continue to shape politics and public commentary.

Some suggest that tangible cultural markers inherited from a previous order should be preserved and that nations should retain commemorations of previous leaders, however reprehensible, as valuable reminders of slavery, colonialism, and racism. Scholars of memory Cynthia Mills and Pamela Simpson observe that public memorials can serve as spaces in which layers of history can accumulate, noting that "the old message is not erased, but new language is written over it or beside it."[37] A memorial to World War Two leader Erwin Rommel in his hometown of Heidenheim in Germany is one example.[38] Rather than remove a massive stone monument to Rommel, city officials added a silhouette of a man who has lost one leg to a land mine. The starkness of his impairment in

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33 John Newsinger, "Why Rhodes Must Fall," *Race and Class* 58, no. 2 (2016): 70 – 78.

34 "What to do with Confederate Monuments: Seven Lessons from Germany," *Washington Post*, 17 August 2017, accessed 5 December 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2017/08/17/what-to-do-with-confederate-monuments-seven-lessons-from-germany/. See also Barnabas, "Engagement with Colonial and Apartheid Narratives."

35 Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 11.

36 Gildea, *Empires of the Mind,* 11.

37 Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson, eds., *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), xxv.

38 Marschall has termed these types of adjustments "strategic juxtaposition." See: Marschall, *Landscape of Memory,* 298.

front of the original monument alters it in a way that emphasises the fact that under the German general's command, untold numbers of mines were buried in northeast Africa to devastating effect for allied soldiers and local populations.[39] Heidenheim Mayor Bernhard Ilg declared, "A statue does not proclaim a truth, but encourages people to seek it."[40]

Struggles over controversial statues go beyond altering their original meaning. In his study of monuments of the civil rights movement in the American South, historian of architecture and material culture Dell Upton argues that many who oppose removing monuments believe that these memorials represent a historic reality.[41] He observes that people often draw distinctions between memory and history in an effort to understand the past and that for monument preservationists, to damage or alter a public memorial is to erase history. From this perspective, the removal of a statue constitutes an insupportable deprivation for future generations of the instruction that these creations impart. In contrast, in his book *#RhodesMustFall*, inspired by the movement to topple Cecil Rhodes' statue at UCT, social anthropologist Francis B. Nyamnjoh observes that removing that statue was only an erasure of history to those who had veiled Rhodes' past in order to forget fraught aspects of this life.[42] "Invariably," argues Nyamnjoh, "such a stance would entail an enforcement of a disconnect with history, an inducement of amnesia, so as to mask a fundamental truth of history together with its enduring legacy of violence."[43]

Many descendants of enslaved people in West Africa continue to experience marginalisation based on their heritage. Yet governments and local communities struggle to address this injustice in a public forum. Harvard historian Emmanuel Akyeampong has outlined the challenge as follows:

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39 One South African example of the "juxtaposition model" can be seen in Freedom Park, an anti-apartheid struggle memorial built opposite the Voortrekker Monument (VTM), which commemorates the Great Trek. See: Marschall, *Landscape of Memory*, and Mia Swart, "Name Change as Symbolic Reparation after Transition: The Example of Germany and South Africa," *German Law Journal* 9, no. 2 (2008): 105–121. For a study of the VTM, see Robyn Autry, "The Monumental Reconstruction of Memory in South Africa: The Voortrekker Monument," *Theory, Culture & Society* 29, no. 6 (2012): 146–164.

40 Darko Janjevic, "Germany: Amputee Statue Added to Erwin Rommel Monument in His Hometown," *Deutsche Welle*, 12 July 2020, accessed 8 December 2020, https://www.dw.com/en/germany-amputee-statue-added-to-erwin-rommel-monument-in-his-hometown/a-54300881.

41 Dell Upton, *What Can and Can't be Said: Race, Uplift and Monument Building in the Contemporary South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

42 Francis B. Nyamnjoh, *#RhodesMustFall: Nibbling at Resilient Colonialism in South Africa* (Mankon, Bamenda: Langaa Research & Publishing CIG, 2016).

43 Nyamnjoh, *#RhodesMustFall*, 277.

> Perhaps, because those of slave descent constitute significant proportions of local populations in various parts of West Africa, to bring slavery and its legacy within the realm of public discussion threatens national integration in recently independent countries. Even in pre-colonial times, the powerful state of Asante acknowledged the large incorporation of peoples of unfree origins into its polity by enshrining a prohibition in its national laws against highlighting anyone's slave origins.[44]

The memory of indigenous slavery has proven to be persistent if not ineradicable. Its legacy taints social and political life and coming to terms with that legacy presents many challenges. University of Ghana professor Victoria Ellen Smith explains how in the Akan region of Ghana, the *Ntam Kɛse* oath forbids any mention of ancestral slavery.[45] However, the very need for an oath of silence emphasises the persistence of the inequities spawned by indigenous slavery. Oaths of silence do not necessarily improve the lives of individuals whose ancestors were enslaved. They and others advocate for a more truthful representation of ancestral slavery. These efforts, in addition to new memorials chronicling that history, are necessary for those threatened by dominant narratives of the past. As Akyeampong contends, "memory is simultaneously political and moral, and 'preserved' memory can serve political and/or moral agendas."[46]

Reassessment of slavery continues worldwide. Scholars at the University of Glasgow, Brown University and other institutions have engaged in a public reappraisal of their university's ties to and benefits from slavery. In 2019 officials at the University of Glasgow and The University of the West Indies struck an unprecedented agreement to develop a Glasgow-Caribbean Centre for Development Research to raise public awareness, both in Scotland and in the Caribbean, about the history and impact of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.[47] Glasgow University's "reparative justice" laid the groundwork for future discussions of reparations for past wrong-doings of exploited peoples and territories.

Academics, institutions and governments in recent years have sought to address the imbalanced landscape of memorialisation across the African diaspora. Christina Sharpe, scholar of English literature and Black Studies, addresses the

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44 Emmanuel Akyeampong, "History, Memory, Slave-Trade and Slavery in Anlo (Ghana)," *Slavery and Abolition* 22, no. 3 (2001): 1.

45 Victoria Ellen Smith, "Secrets of West African Slave Ancestry: Fante Strategies of Silence and the Didactic Narrative in Ghanaian Literature," *Journal of West African History* 2, no. 2 (2016): 109 – 131.

46 Akyeampong, "History, Memory, Slave-Trade and Slavery," 2.

47 "Historic Agreement Sealed Between Glasgow and West Indies Universities," University News, University of Glasgow, 23 August 2019, accessed 7 December 2020, https://www.gla.ac.uk/news/headline_667960_en.html.

topics of monuments, memory and reparations in her work *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* wherein she examines the construction of new public memorials and museums that attempt to undo past narratives by creating new discourses about the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. She draws attention to "Mémorial ACTe" in Guadeloupe, which is dedicated to the memory and history of slavery and slave trade in the Caribbean archipelago and the Ark of Return located at the African Burial Ground in New York City. These memorials have played a role in inspiring people to address the question of reparations. Sharpe asks, "But what is a moral debt? How is it paid? Is it that Black people can only be the objects of transaction and not the beneficiaries of one, historical or not?"[48]

Unresolved questions over memory, commemorations, and the legacy of slavery and colonialism occupy current discussions. From Cape Town to Charlottesville, societies are grappling with historical consciousness and the evolution of public memory. Officials entrusted with maintaining national commemorative landscapes are increasingly held accountable for holistic representations of the past. How and why communities remember and forget, what should serve as symbols of collective memory, and whether there exists space for multiple memory cultures are topics of on-going debate. These discussions present challenges to national commemorative landscapes and interpretations of the past.

Chapter overviews

Philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs drew a distinction between various groups' collective memories and the official interpretation of national history.[49] Shared memories are part of a group's identity, and ordinary citizens can preserve a collective consciousness of the past in ways that oppose the official remembrances of elites. In his ethnographic work on political terror and memory in South Africa, cultural anthropologist Allen Feldman affirms the potency of collective memory in sustaining an understanding of the past that the state intended to erase.[50] In Chapter Two of this volume, Natacha Filippi observes these dynamics in a Cape Town prison and in a psychiatric hospital. Apart-

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48 Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2016), 60.

49 Maurice Halbwachs, *La Mémoire Collective* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1997 [1950 posthumous]). See also Nicolas Russell, "Collective Memory Before and After Halbwachs," *The French Review* 79, no. 4 (2006): 792–804.

50 Allen Feldman, "Political Terror and the Technologies of Memory: Excuse, Sacrifice, Commodification, and Actuarial Moralities," *Radical History Review* 85 (2003): 58–73.

heid-era prisons had been incubators for subversive activity, where radical politics were harboured and where severe injustices had occurred. In post-apartheid South Africa, some prisons, most notably Robben Island, became museums for the memorialisation of the horrors of the apartheid era. However, at other prisons, incarcerated South Africans' collective memories differed from governmental proclamations of reform. Filippi shares the challenges she encountered in these controlled institutions that limited her ability to interact with the subjects of her study. She observes that remembrance consists of more than the written or spoken word and that architecture, objects, and even tattoos can transfer memories.

In Chapter Three, Casper Andersen discusses contributions that academics and international organisations made to the politics of African memory formation during the early decades of the independence era. In 1964 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) initiated the *General History of Africa*, an ambitious multi-volume book project comprising 30 years of collaborative work among more than 230 historians who sought to reconstruct the entirety of the continent's past. The eight-volume collection addressed racial biases and the general lack of knowledge of African history. Andersen's work takes up Frederick Cooper's call to examine how the politics of historical knowledge production were involved in supporting or discrediting power.[51] Andersen highlights the exuberant hope for liberal democracy that African scholars involved with the project held but their optimistic anticipation for democratic state-building faced the harsh realities confronted by these nascent states. Applying Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's concept of the "quest for relevance," Andersen explains the ambitions of these authors who saw political independence and decolonised, African-centred histories as inextricable.

With the onset of independence, people across the continent wrestled with how to reconcile conflicting legacies of colonial rule. The names that post-colonial governments attached to national days of remembrance carried important symbolism and political weight. At independence in 1963, the government of Kenya declared October 20th Kenyatta Day, a national holiday dedicated to the new nation's first Prime Minister. In Chapter Four, Ed Goodman traces the history of Kenyatta Day, the rituals that marked it, the stories people told about it and the demands that emerged from the mid-1990s to recast the day as "Heroes Day." In the early postcolonial years, Jomo Kenyatta was revered as an adherent of Kenyan nationhood. People hoped that respect for him would transcend long-

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51 Frederick Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking African History," *American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (1994): 1516–1545.

standing ethnic divisions in the country. By the 1990s, as opposition to the government of president Daniel arap Moi smouldered, critics recast the day's meaning, claiming that post-colonial governments had forgotten the nation's true heroes. With commemorative days dedicated first to Kenyatta and then to Moi, critics protested these deliberate ploys by authoritarian governments to symbolically reinforce their autocratic regimes. Many argued that Moi and Kenyatta Days should be replaced by a more inclusive Heroes' Day, as promulgated in the 2010 constitution. Kenyanist historiography on memory principally concerns the Mau Mau rebellion of the 1950s, which many scholars have described as "state sanctioned amnesia" about that conflict.[52] Goodman's chapter breaks new ground with his analysis of what the state *did* remember.

In Chapter Five, Mohamed Haji Ingiriis addresses the challenges faced by post-civil war Somalis in their efforts to build an independent nation. Grievances stemming from that conflict deepened divisions not only between Somaliland and southern Somalia but also between and within clan and sub-clan groups. Ingiriis demonstrates that injustices meant to legitimise an independent Somaliland simultaneously inhibited the emergence of a broad "Somalilander" identity. From interviews with a broad range of interlocutors, he demonstrates that memories of violence of the civil war as well as specific events such as the "Hargeisa Holocaust" evolved as a new generation sought to make sense of that past. Applying Ernest Renan's theory of nationhood, Ingiriis' work affirms the link between nationalist narratives and memories of violence and loss. Though not specific to Africa such connections comprise the core of nation building. Ingiriis demonstrates that recognition of the horrors people endured during that conflict offer a collective catharsis and can lead to social change.

Obituaries are another form of memory production. In Chapter Six, Rouven Kunstmann and Cassandra Mark-Thiesen examine West African obituaries and in-memoriams from the 1940s to the 1960s. Regarding the Asante people of Ghana, historian Tom McCaskie observes, "Death was and is a social event, conceived of and observed as something that happens to an individual person, but only within the contexts of family (ancestry and posterity as well as the living)

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52 See, for instance: Annie E. Coombes, Lottie Hughes and Karega-Munene, eds., *Managing Heritage, Making Peace: History, Identity and Memory in Contemporary Kenya* (London: I.B Tauris, 2014); Marshall S. Clough, *Mau Mau Memoirs: History, Memory, and Politics* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998); and Julie MacArthur, ed., *Dedan Kimathi on Trial: Colonial Justice and Popular Memory in Kenya's Mau Mau Rebellion* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2017).

and community."[53] In Nigerian and Liberian newspapers, death notices were similarly seen as rituals with social and political implications. Extensive text-only obituaries of the elite published by the state are analysed next to succinct in-memoriams, usually featuring a photograph of the deceased, placed in newspapers by private citizens. Kunstmann and Mark-Thiesen demonstrate that obituaries have as much to do with the future of the mourners as they do with the memorialisation of the deceased.

In Chapter Seven, Nina Studer looks at interactions between local populations and French colonists in colonial Algeria. Observing the significance of alcohol and particularly wine in French self-image, she examines what people thought about the drinking habits of the French settlers and the political meanings that they attributed to its consumption. Nostalgia for the early years of colonial conquest often coalesced with reference to alcohol in accounts of that period, or what Studer calls "Frenchness in a bottle." Ironically the French feared that immoderation by both colonised and coloniser threatened their oversight of Algeria.

In the final chapter, historian of memory Ruramisai Charumbira stresses the importance of indigenous languages in historical writing and reflects on the dissonances that arise when historians attempt to erase themselves and their worldviews from their writings. In contrast, what she calls "embodied writing practices" create space for indigenous theories of knowledge because these practices highlight "the importance of bodies *and* places to accessing the past and maintaining history."[54] Her work complements Ross Gibson's claim in his 2015 *Memoryscopes* that "memory-work" is "lodged in human bodies, but also in places [and] in landscapes."[55] Charumbira focuses on three scholars who employ this practice: Kenyan activist and Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai, Professor of Indigenous Education Linda Tuhiwai Smith of the University of Waikato in New Zealand, and State University of New York Professor of Environmental and Forest Biology Robin Wall Kimmerer, a member of the Potawatomi Nation. Each has devised ways to connect academic work with personal and cultural his-

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53 Tom McCaskie, "Writing, Reading, and Printing Death: Obituaries and Commemoration in Asante," in *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self*, ed. Karin Barber (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 342.

54 Jodie Stewart, "History by Doing: Reclaiming Indigenous Women's Sovereignty through Embodied History," *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal* 25 (2019): 95. Emphasis added.

55 Ross Gibson, *Memoryscopes: Remnants, Forensics, Aesthetics* (Crawley: University of Western Australian Publishing, 2015), 7. See also Deborah Bird Rose, "Writing Place," in *Writing Histories: Imagination and Narration*, eds. Ann Curthoys and Ann McGrath (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2000), 64–74.

tories that centre the natural world, what Charumbira calls "indigenous ways of knowing and being."

The Politics of Historical Memory and Commemoration in Africa: A final note in honour of Jan-Georg Deutsch

This *Gedenkschrift* is a communal effort honouring Jan-Georg Deutsch. By publishing this volume, we honour his life and legacy and the appreciation we share for his range of interests and the influence that he has had on our lives. To our knowledge, this volume is unique in connecting the theme of memorialisation with the concept of a *Gedenkschrift* – a memorial publication commemorating a respected scholar, developed posthumously – to honour a historian whose work was itself focused on historical memory. Except for the final essay by Ruramisai Charumbira, his doctoral students wrote and edited all chapters in this volume. In early 2017, we first discussed the possibility of a commemorative volume, and in January 2018, exactly one year after his funeral, we met in Basel, Switzerland to discuss the content of this work. We are grateful for all we learnt from Jan-Georg Deutsch, for the laughs we shared, and for the inspiration we gained from him. In the spirit of Georg's graduate seminars, we suggest that you enjoy a packet of biscuits or chocolate while reading the chapters of this volume.

Jan-Georg Deutsch was born 1956 in the small German town of Marburg and grew up close to Hannover, where he attended university. He went to London to write his doctorate at the School of Oriental and African Studies. Under the supervision of Richard Rathbone, he completed his dissertation in 1990, titled "Educating the Middlemen: A Political and Economic History of Statutory Cocoa Marketing in Nigeria, 1936 – 1947."[56] Deutsch eventually returned to Germany, where he first affiliated with the University of Düsseldorf, followed by the Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) in Berlin in 1996. Among other publications, he co-edited with Albert Wirz *Geschichte in Afrika: Einführung in Probleme und Debatten*, a volume on problems and debates in African history.[57] He completed his

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56 Jan-Georg Deutsch, *Educating the Middlemen: A Political and Economic History of Statutory Cocoa Marketing in Nigeria, 1936 – 1947*, Studien (Förderungsgesellschaft Wissenschaftliche Neuvorhaben. Forschungsschwerpunkt Moderner Orient); Nr. 3 (Berlin: Verlag das Arabische Buch, 1995).

57 Deutsch and Wirz, eds. *Geschichte in Afrika: Einführung in Probleme und Debatten*.

Habilitation in 2000 on "Slavery under German Colonial Rule in East Africa, c. 1860 – 1914" at Humboldt University.[58] In 2002 he became a fellow at St. Cross College, Oxford University where he remained until his untimely death in December 2016. One of his final research projects, which remains unpublished, was a comparative examination of memory sites, including South Africa's Robben Island, Gorée island off the coast of Senegal, Elmina Castle in Ghana, and the Slave Market Memorial in Zanzibar. He leaves behind a meaningful academic imprint on the history of social, economic and political life on the African continent and in research areas ranging from slavery to colonial law and order, and economic relations across the continent of Africa.

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58 His habilitation became the basis of a monograph: Jan-Georg Deutsch, *Emancipation without Abolition in German East Africa, c.1884 – 1914* (Oxford: James Currey, 2006).

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