

Social Dynamics of Field Archaeology in Parts of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT This paper addresses some of the conceptual and methodological issues centring on archaeological practice in Africa, using the Tiv and Ungwai peoples of central Nigeria as our reference point. Research efforts to-date, show in a fascinating manner that archaeologists can raise the level of intelligibility of the material remains at their disposal if models rooted in humanistic subjects such as oral tradition and ethnography are carefully applied. Similarly, subjectivity, which blurs the true picture of the past of man, can be reduced to the barest minimum when we are able to obtain a new understanding and appreciation of the centrality of the local people to archaeological field operations. Suffice it to say that the local people of a given study area are the custodians or descendants of the custodians of the set of heritage resources the archaeologist is investigating. Therefore, by tempering rugged technical expertise (involving an array of surveying methods and excavations among other things) with a new spirit of collaboration with the local Tiv and Ungwai, we were able to produce some archaeological knowledge devoid of imaginary tendencies.