Heritage and tourism have often been regarded as conflicting spheres where cultural values maybe compromised for commercial gain or tourism values compromised when viewed as detrimental to heritage (McKercher et al 2005). This book draws attention to these two disjointed spheres showcasing the far reaching social impacts of both in the developing world through a thorough examination of the Angkor World Heritage site. Following the inscription on to the world heritage list, critical changes to promote tourism introduced by the Cambodian government along with a number of other factors led to a steep 10000 percent rise in tourism within a decade. Managing world heritage on the other hand remained focused on restoring monuments and consolidating ruins centred on tangible heritage excluding the intangible social values thereby reinforcing the nineteenth century European narrative of the ‘discovery of a lost civilisation’. This book fills a much-needed gap in an arena of Cambodian research which until recent years was predominantly centred on monumental architecture, art history and archaeological discoveries in the Angkor region.

The book begins with the emergence of tourism after years of heritage dissonance and tourism the author sets the turmoil in a post-colonial society. Examining discourses within heritage dissonance and tourism the author sets the background for much of his analysis exploring the interconnections between symbolic economies of tourism and the actual tourism in Angkor amidst a restoration culture focussed on monumental vestiges exclusive of the residential population and its living heritage. Further, the extent of the early European influence in freezing Angkor in time is revealed through his comprehensive accounts of the ‘exclusionist’ approach in the colonial presentation of the ‘high period’ of Angkorian glory untainted by the contemporary population. His critical analysis illustrates how this has continued through to the present world heritage listing and designation of protected zones for management of the cultural heritage. Drawing on Smith’s ‘logical positivism’ (2004), he highlights how the concerted efforts of UNESCO and the international community have succeeded in reinforcing the early European allegory of ruins emerging from the jungle. His review establishes the extent to which the world heritage status acts as a form of ‘neo-colonialism’: the devastation after the conflicting years led to a convergence of international assistance and investment for not just the French through the re-imposition of Eurocentric understandings of the place, culture and history but also for Japan, India and China to stake a claim in shared cultural patronage.

Although subject to the influence of multi-national players, Angkor’s iconic status has also enabled the Royal Government to build a ‘Khmer’ identity consolidating the sense of sovereignty over its past. The author highlights the role the Cambodian government has played in transforming the world heritage landscape to a ‘touristscape’. In order to demonstrate what he refers to as ‘touristscape’ the author gives an exhaustive account of the Cambodian government’s strategic policies, staged manoeuvres and political reforms that opened the skies of Cambodia leading to an unprecedented increase in tourism numbers that promoted rampant development. In poignant prose he clarifies the transformation of iconic Angkor to a ‘cash cow’ in promoting development and economy. Despite the huge cash inflow, the province of Siem Reap where Angkor is located has remained one of the poorest and tourism development continues to exclude local communities creating major wealth imbalances.

Furthering the arguments made throughout the book, the author’s original research presents the viewpoints of both international and domestic tourists visiting Angkor. Not surprisingly there are marked differences in their opinions but also some similarities in sharing the glorious past of an ‘imagined Angkor’. Finally, the author brings together all the various assertions in his critical analysis of the two case studies of temple restoration at Preah Khan and Ta Prohm. He asserts that the moves to protect Angkor in isolation from domestic, political and legal contexts has led to forms of alienation resulting in ‘cultural heritage management’ as a process of isolation detaching from its broader social and historical context.

The book indeed fills the void in research on Angkor bringing together the widespread impacts of heritage and tourism on a post-colonial nation rebuilding from war and conflicts. Winter argues for the need to integrate the political, economic and socio-cultural processes that shape heritage and tourism or, here warns, there may be potentially grave risks for Cambodia trapping itself once again in a mono-cultural, mono-ethnic nationalism. Even though parts of the narrative are vivid with an ominous undertone, it nevertheless accentuates the criticality of world heritage management at Angkor. The book is comprehensively discursive and persuasive in highlighting the imminence in integrating heritage and tourism. This book is timely and an important read for practitioners and academics in both heritage and tourism in understanding the potential implications of politics, economic development and cultural heritage management on contemporary society.

Reference

Senthilpavai Kasiannan
Redemption of a Slave Ship The James Mathews

By Graeme Henderson
Western Australian Maritime Museum, 2009
ISBN 9781920843991

Graeme Henderson is well known as the former Director of the Western Australian Maritime Museum and for his numerous publications in maritime archaeology. With this book Henderson turns to look at a well known shipwreck, the James Mathews, which was wrecked off Fremantle in July 1841. Four seasons of excavation directed by Graeme Henderson were carried out on the wreck site between 1973 and 1977. But this book is not so much about the archaeology of this important shipwreck, as about the ship itself and the lives of people associated with it.

The James Mathews had a prior career -as the slaver Don Francisco. Built in Bordeaux as the brig Voltigeur in January 1835, the ship was sold in August 1836 and renamed the Don Francisco. The new owner, Francisco Felix de Souza, was a well known slave trader on the West African coast in the 1820’s and 1830’s. The Don Francisco was intercepted on a trading voyage by HMS Griffon in April 1837 and the ship, its crew and the slaves were brought to the Caribbean Island of Dominica. There the ship was condemned and later sold. The slaves were not truly liberated but stuck in Dominica where their descendants still live.

Henderson’s response to this fascinating history is to write a book in the genre which could best be described as “Life and Times of the Don Francisco/James Mathews”. The reader is presented with a considerable amount of the history of the slave trade at this time and of the slaves themselves. This supplements an understandably thin historical record of the Don Francisco and its voyages. Henderson writes this story in a mixture of first person narrative and historical reporting.

The writing of such a complex book is a difficult task and not for the faint hearted. On the one hand, the narrator’s voice can become uncontrolled and take over the book; and on the other, the contextual material can drown the historical evidence relating to the events being described. I think Graeme Henderson largely succeeds in his endeavour although there are places where I feel a good editor may have helped shape the material in the book a bit more. For example the contrast between the Don Francisco’s slave carrying voyage in 1837 and the James Mathew’s voyage to Western Australia in 1841 is a little over emphasised and drawn out. There are also places where repetitive or redundant information is presented. In one place an out of context comment is made about Mark Staniforth’s interpretation of the James Mathew’s cargo which would have been better argued in a professional journal on maritime archaeology.

Nevertheless, this book is for the reader who loves the highways and byways of history and succeeds in bringing the whole slave trade and the British anti slavery actions into focus alongside the history of the ship. Slavery abounds in clichés but the detail and the complexities of the trade in the 1830’s, during the time of the initial British abolition of slavery, are well set out by Henderson. The slaves from Don Francisco were not liberated by the Royal Navy but in Dominica were “apprenticed” to either the 1st West India Regiment or to planters on Dominica. Apprenticeship a nominal form of employment, was supposedly to be undertaken of a person’s free choice but, even at the time, doubt was expressed by British officials about whether the slaves actually knew anything about their freedom at the time. Henderson agrees with the view that they probably viewed their fate in Dominica as simply being slavery; especially since it seems unlikely they could speak English or understand lofty British notions of “freedom”.

Of the 93 slaves joining the 1st West India Regiment, some had prominent roles in a mutiny or rebellion of the regiment in Trinidad in June 1837. Henderson suggests this may have been an attempt of the slaves to try and return to their African homeland. With due, but probably incorrect process, three were shot as the ringleaders. Ironically, one of the other mutineers - “Henry Torrance” was sentenced to be transported to Australia, arriving in 1839 and eventually being reported dead in June 1851.

The slaves “apprenticed” on Dominica were eventually recognised as being in essence “free” as slavery had been abolished and the system of “apprenticeships” which was designed for existing slaves in British territories, did not apply to them. It was the Ministers, Governors and public servants that forced the local authorities to recognise the Don Francisco slaves as being free by early 1838. The story, unfortunately, thins out at this stage, no doubt due to the lack of government documentation about the lives of the liberated slaves. Henderson was, however, able to trace the history of Fanny Firmin, who became a sharecropper and whose descendants still live in Dominica.

Of the ship itself, Henderson is clear on the significance of the wreck of the James Mathews. The ship was built with fine lines (i.e. shape) specifically for the slave trade which required speed above all (to avoid losses on the voyage). Plans of slave ships are rare but the James Mathews is the physical evidence of the slave hull form and construction. There seems to be little evidence of slave accommodation in the wreck, presumably it was stripped out after capture, but an intriguing find of a clay pipe in the wreck may be from the slave ship period.

The book is well served by a thorough index and extensive notes and illustrations.

I would recommend the book to anyone not wanting an archaeological report on the James Mathews shipwreck but who is generally interested in the broader contexts of the life and times of the Don Francisco/James Mathews. Books of this type may also be the redemption of maritime archaeology.

Dr Iain Stuart

Archaeology as a Tool of Civic Engagement

By Barbara J. Little and Paul A. Shackel, AltaMira Press, 2007
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There are many ‘archaeologies’ available to us today (‘community’, ‘contact’, ‘contemporary’, ‘cross-cultural’, ‘shared’ – to name just a few). Therefore one might wonder what contribution another archaeology would make, or at least how archaeology might be seen as a tool of civic engagement. In this collection of papers civic engagement seems to have, on the one hand, much in common with these existing
archaeologies, yet on the other hand, seems to have more restricted and defined goals.

In Chapter 1 Barbara J. Little, defines what civic engagement means in an archaeological context. It is identified as part of a broader civic renewal movement. The goals of this apparently ‘somewhat loosely defined, yet quite real, movement include community building, the creation of social capital, and active citizen engagement in community and civic life’ (p. 1). There is thus a strong applied emphasis in the approach with the intention of ‘using archaeological histories as pathways toward restorative justice’ (p. 1). Elsewhere it is noted that civic engagement empowers people ‘to build communities and participate effectively in democracy’ (p. 173). In Chapter 10, Meagen Brooks notes that the roots of civic engagement can be found in Charles McGimsey’s 1972 book Public Archaeology (p. 205). Patrice Jeppson notes ‘that it isn’t up to us to write another community’s history … Communities should and need to be free to write the history that they want and need’ (p. 192). This might be a touch esoteric for some.

I found the most interesting paper (even though a general review) was that by Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh for its passionate outline of how archaeologists might be involved in ‘the identification of massacre victims, telling the stories of those whose past was erased, or bringing resolution among different people still in conflict’ (p. 39). Overall however I think that Australian archaeologists would find the papers in this volume disappointing for a number of reasons.

First, the Australian literature dealing with public or community archaeology is well developed and sophisticated (a search of books and papers by Denis Bryne, Sarah Colley, Hilary du Cros, Jane Lydon and Tracey Ireland to name just a few would lead to a host of references) but the only Australian reference in this collection of papers was to Lilley (2000). While civic engagement is not exactly the same as public or community archaeology there is a level of sophistication in the Australian debates that put them ahead of the American literature.

Second, out of 12 Chapters dealing with specific studies only one (Chapter 3 by Gallivan and Moretti-Langholtz) relates to the relationship between cultural heritage practitioners and Native American Indians. Here we learn that ‘sustained dialogue between cultural resource management archaeologists and Native communities is still rather rare in Virginia’ (p. 56). Australian archaeologists who deal with Aboriginal Australians on a day to day basis will therefore have little to learn from this paper. Most papers in the volume deal with class and race issues, in particular the history of African Americans. In Australia there is no direct equivalent to the African American diaspora and therefore many of these papers would be of only passing interest to Australian scholars.

The most disappointing aspect of all the papers was the difficulty in actually seeing or understanding the links between the issues of class and race put forward by the authors and the actual archaeological records. Chapter 6 for example discusses the collapse of the Cypress Freeway in West Oakland San Francisco, after an earthquake and its replacement by a new freeway. Between 1994 and 1996, archaeologists worked on twenty-two archaeologically sensitive city blocks that would be affected by construction of the new freeway. Of the nearly 2,600 archaeological features discovered, 121 were deemed legally important and were fully analysed. These features contained more than 400,000 artefacts and ecofacts dating between the 1850s and around 1910. The scale of the archaeology over thirteen years is thus impressive but how this relates to the issues of race and class is more oblique. While it is claimed that the ‘project’s achievements in the realm of social justice are more impressive’ (p. 127) this is not obvious in this brief paper. At least in this case the original reports are still available on the World Wide Web for the intrepid reader to follow. One would need to visit these original reports to gain a more detailed understanding of the relationship between the data and civic engagement.

Archaeologists are constantly searching for new ways to make their research relevant in the modern world and it is encouraging to see new ways to engage the public. Some of the papers in this volume would probably be antithetical to many in the academy who advocate a rigorous and academic archaeology. For others, and students in particular, this volume includes some interesting reviews of aspects of an archaeology of civic engagement. However readers will have to delve deeper than the content of these papers to understand how a civic archaeology actually works in practice.

Reference


Mike Rowland