

Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger and Ian Scott, eds, *Recent Developments in Research and Management at World Heritage Sites*. (Oxford: Oxford Archaeology, Occasional Paper Number 16, 2007, 75 pp., ISBN 978 0 904220 47 6)

This volume contains the papers from a seminar in London in May 2005, dedicated to recent developments in research and management at world heritage sites and is published in cooperation with English Heritage (unfortunately, someone at Oxford Archaeology forgot to put the year of publication in the book). On the one hand, the rather broad title is somewhat misleading, because the seminar was part of a project looking at World Heritage Sites in just two places: Malta (the prehistoric temples) and southern England (Stonehenge and Avebury in Wiltshire). On the other hand, the book also contains an article by Tim Williams about a cultural landscape in China, an article by Dave Batchelor on research frameworks for World Heritage Sites, and an analytical article by Peter Fowler on World Heritage cultural landscapes that is global in scope. In the foreword by Christopher Young – who else? – a brave but not entirely convincing attempt is made to show that the book is a coherent whole. This does not mean, however, that this small book is not well worth reading, and not just for those who are interested in World Heritage issues.

The Wiltshire–Malta World Heritage Exchange Project was funded by a European Union programme (AER Centurio) so it is yet another example of support by the EU for work promoting the objectives of the World Heritage Convention. One thing that both sites have in common – apart from being prehistoric and megalithic – is that they were inscribed in the 1980s. At that time, UNESCO did not require State Parties wishing a site to be inscribed on the World Heritage List to submit a management plan together with the nomination dossier. Such a plan deals in a coherent way with issues of research and understanding, conservation and presentation, among others.

The main body of the book starts with articles by Katya Stroud and Caroline Malone on the remarkable Maltese megalithic temples that date to the fourth and third millennia BC and constitute a unique ensemble of monumental prehistoric architecture. The two temples of Ġgantija on the island of Gozo were inscribed already in 1980 on the World

Heritage List. On the island of Malta, the temples of Ta' H'agrāt Qim, Mnajdra and Tarxien as well as the Ta' H'agrāt and Skorba complexes were added in 1992 as an extension of the existing World Heritage Site. Due to the early investigation (or 'clearance', as Malone describes it) of most of the temples, the conservation issues connected with these sites are now rather complicated. As in so many other places, undoing the harmful consequences or errors of earlier restoration and conservation interventions is a major challenge and in some cases no longer possible. Malone's article studies aspects of the visibility of, and access to, the temples and their funerary facilities, as well as the significance of distribution patterns of prehistoric ritual objects. It offers new interpretations to a better understanding of the sites that, as Young rightly points out, is of crucial importance for management: 'If we do not understand the nature and significance of the sites for which we care, how can we know what aspects need to be protected or enhanced or how these should be interpreted to visitors'. How well this is in fact achieved on Malta can be judged by EAA members personally during the upcoming Annual Meeting of the Association at Valletta in September 2008.

Like the Maltese temples, 'Stonehenge, Avebury and associated sites' together constitute a single World Heritage site that was inscribed in 1986. In two articles, Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger and Isabelle Bedu describe current management issues at Avebury and at Stonehenge. The problems with Stonehenge are well known. Even 15 years ago it was described as 'a national disgrace' by a parliamentary committee and although there has been a management plan since 2000 and much more, the disgrace remains because paper is patient; it requires a government to take a costly decision on the road system before Stonehenge can be reunited with its surrounding landscape. Bedu's article is a useful summary of all that has been going on around Stonehenge in recent years. And so is Pomeroy-Kellinger's article on Avebury, which has had a revised management plan since 2005. Her contribution concludes with the very important remark 'that it is the development process, rather than the physical existence, of the management plan, which is the most important in terms of building the consensus and partnerships necessary for the management of a site like Avebury'. No doubt this is

true everywhere else and it is a very valuable insight.

This section of the book is closed by an article by Margaret Bunyard on an education project for schools that is rather British in scope, and by the earlier mentioned article on research frameworks that has more general implications. Then follows Tim Williams's report on strategies for the management of the Neolithic cultural landscape of Niuheliang, Liaoning Province, in China. He makes some drastic recommendations such as reburial of excavated sites in the context of a landscape interpretation strategy. Whilst very interesting in itself and providing a transition to the final article by Peter Fowler, it does not really fit well into the book.

The final contribution is a highly critical and refreshing analysis by Fowler of the relatively new phenomenon of 'cultural landscapes' as World Heritage. It is clear that there is a globally unbalanced distribution of World Heritage Sites, which is mainly due to the fact that stone buildings and architectural ensembles have long dominated western notions of heritage and that has obviously led to a European bias. One of the solutions for this was the recognition of cultural achievement as expressed in landscapes. In principle this allows 'Third-World countries' to inscribe landscapes of 'outstanding universal value', which is the main criterion for the list, so that their options for inscriptions are enlarged. By itself, this does not necessarily lead to a more balanced list, because the category could also include (though it hardly does so far) industrial landscapes (in western countries). In addition, the countries concerned often lack the resources for a proper nomination. That is very unfortunate, but equally regrettable – as those who follow the work of the World Heritage Committee know – is that the Committee is now so severely politicized that it has in recent years accepted nominations against professional advice and against its own rules.

There are more problems, as Fowler shows, because of the reasons for cultural landscapes to be considered as having outstanding universal value. Very often, this is connected to the presence of a continuity of ways of life/landuse, a landscape shaped by farming/agriculture, and the presence of towns/villages. Maintaining traditional lifestyles or modes of production, however, may not be in the best interest of a local

population wishing to enjoy the benefits of living in the twenty-first century. Of course there can be creative and successful solutions to such potential dilemmas, but it is hardly likely that those can be found without a well thought through management plan.

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David A. Barrowclough and Caroline Malone, eds, *Cult in Context – Reconsidering Ritual in Archaeology* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007, 368pp. hbk, ISBN 978 1 84217 303 9)

This volume (the publication was supported by the Templeton Foundation and Heritage Malta), is the outcome of a two-day conference entitled 'Cult in Context' that was held in December 2006 at Magdalene College, Cambridge, where a number of renowned and upcoming archaeologists got together to discuss cult and ritual phenomena that could have taken place in the context of archaeological sites.

Some of the articles reflect research that was carried out under the project 'Explorations into the conditions of spiritual creativity in Prehistoric Malta', whilst others explore 'Cult in Context' beyond Malta and the Mediterranean, in a bid to provide an exchange of interpretations about controversial and sensitive issues such as ritual, cult and religion. Reviewing all the individual articles would require much more length than is possible here and therefore I will focus mainly on those that relate to Malta and its archaeology.

Interpretations of words such as ritual, cult and religion vary, and Colin Renfrew's article provides a very good introduction to the topic by defining these words. He also points out, as does Katya Stroud in her article, that some traditional terms, such as 'temples', given by past scholars, influence the way we nowadays interpret these megalithic structures. Stroud, who gives an overview of the discovery, excavations, interpretation and restoration of the Maltese 'temples', takes this further by cautioning us that 'what is passed on to the future may indeed be shaped by the way we interpret these sites today'.

The Maltese prehistoric megalithic structures are the basis of various discussions and, as Michael Anderson and Simon Stoddart