

Reviews

Denis Byrne, Helen Brayshaw and Tracy Ireland, *Social Significance: a discussion paper*. Research Unit, Cultural Heritage Division, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service, 2001; 161 pp; paperback; \$10.00; ISBN 0731363655.

This study draws on the anthropologist Clifford Geertz' observation that 'man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun', to understand the cultural landscape. *Social Significance: a discussion paper*, published by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), suggests that the cultural landscape, with its places and sites, is a two dimensional web. Our interaction with those places, our memories and attachments, forms the third dimension to the web (p. 23). The NSW NPWS, in moving on from a site-based approach to the cultural landscape, is aiming for a more holistic understanding of cultural heritage than has previously been held. The focus is on understanding the third dimension of the web by using the significance assessment process and the potential for expanded community involvement in heritage management. A great strength of the discussion paper is its recognition that very few post-contact Aboriginal sites have been identified and listed through NSW's heritage management framework.

At a time when the policy focus in cultural heritage management is shifting towards devolving responsibilities for heritage to communities, this book raises important issues about how to engage the community. The authors' intentions are to 'translate' complex concepts into an accessible language and they are to be commended for succeeding in this. The discussion paper provides a very useful overview of the history and current situation of conservation in New South Wales. It is divided into four parts: 1) 'Stating the problem', 2) 'Deeper issues', and 4) 'Conclusions and recommendations' being written by Denis Byrne; while Part 3, 'Legislation, policy and practice', looking at both Aboriginal heritage and non-Indigenous historic heritage, was researched and written by Helen Brayshaw and Tracy Ireland. The discussion paper sets out to document the neglect of social significance assessment in the NSW NPWS; to examine the causes for this; and to contextualise them within the history of Australian heritage practice. This has produced a valuable contribution to the history of conservation in NSW: the historical time line for cultural heritage management, the discussion of deeper issues and the section on legislation and policies are all useful resources.

In Part 1 the problem is defined as the fact that, from the 1970s, two different frameworks operated in NSW for community involvement in cultural heritage assessment. In non-Indigenous communities, heritage professionals addressed the concept of 'social significance assessment', however often with no community involvement. For Aboriginal communities, heritage professionals and agencies were engaged within the framework of Indigenous rights, so while Aboriginal people were present during archaeological fieldwork, no assessment was done on how the place being recorded may have been valued by the contemporary Aboriginal community. Heritage agencies or practitioners are considered not to have recognised these two separate approaches. The authors ascribe this lack of recognition to a belief that the *Burra Charter* principle that all heritage places, whether Indigenous or not, should be assessed for their significance prior to management decisions being made, had been neglected in practice. The discussion paper focuses on the gap it perceives between the concept and practice.

One of the key controversial concepts put forward is the challenge to the *Revised Burra Charter's* (1999) definition that 'cultural significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects'. The discussion paper theorises that values and meanings are culturally constructed and therefore located in communities and individuals who may share understandings about the meanings of places, rather than in the places themselves. Based on this social construct theory, a new social significance model is proposed in place of the *Burra Charter's* concept of aesthetic, historical, scientific and social values of significance, referred to as the 'four-in-a-line' framework for the equity ascribed to each value. The authors consider however, that social value has been the poor cousin of other values, which have been privileged by professionals. The new model proposes society as an environment in which the aesthetic, historical and scientific categories of significance are embedded along with various social groupings including class, ethnicity and gender. The conceptual argument for this model is supported by reference to the *Nara Document of Authenticity* (UNESCO 1994) which gives priority to social value above other values. The discussion paper recommends it as a reference point for NPWS policy in cultural heritage management.

There is no discussion in the book of the value of having a common language for heritage conservation in Australia, which I argue is one of the great strengths of the *Burra Charter* and one for which it is acknowledged internationally. While the book suggests that the US National Parks Service dispensed with significance categories altogether (p. 8), this is not correct, as is in fact made clear in the section on overseas legislation (p. 80). Another agreed framework for conceptualising the significance of cultural heritage places that is not referred to is that used globally by the World Heritage Convention.

One of the guiding principles proposed by the authors for significance assessment is that of comparability (p. 9), to ensure any framework can accommodate and be appropriate for both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous historic heritage. I suggest however, that any model inconsistent with *Burra Charter* concepts, would make comparability with sites outside the NSW NPWS' system more difficult and opportunities for thematic or regional comparisons may be lost.

The discussion paper proposes that comprehensive assessments should be undertaken which document all strands of the significance of a place (p. 9). This is a key recommendation and one that is underpinned by the *Burra Charter*, which aims to retain all aspects of the cultural significance of a place. When a comprehensive assessment of all the values of a place results in the identification of conflicting values, the co-existence of these values should be accepted and policies developed to manage the place accordingly. While the concept 'heritage as social/cultural action' underpins this book, it would have been useful to have seen some discussion of the issues of the integration of values raised in *Diversity, Place and the Ethics of Conservation* (Domicelj & Marshall 1994), such as the acceptance of value difference within Australia's culturally diverse society.

Two other principles proposed appear to conflict with each other. While one suggests that archaeology, architecture and history should be recognised as fields of expertise, rather than categories of significance, so professionals in the field are not seen as having a monopoly on such expertise. The other principle recommends balance between, rather than downgrading of any categories of significance. It suggests the NPWS should endeavour to bring assessments of social and

historic significance up to the level of archaeological and architectural significance assessment. Using the *Burra Charter* and the definition for Indigenous heritage values in the *Draft Respecting Indigenous Places: A practical guide*, (no author, 2001, developed to complement the *Burra Charter* and the *Natural Heritage Charter*), these principles could be combined into one which recommends balance to achieve integrated assessments. Work being done by the Australian Heritage Commission on integrated assessments of significance, including the Indigenous, historic and natural environments, may provide a useful model.

Chapters on the old and new models—heritage as material versus heritage as social action—will provoke the discussion intended. Notions of ‘inherent significance’ versus ‘attributed meaning’ are compared, and while archaeologists are seen to have rejected the principle of representativeness, they are criticised for not taking the implications of this rejection to its logical conclusion. If significance is relative, non-archaeologists may value places in different ways. Archaeologists are accused of not being advocates for a greater community voice. The section ‘Reality check’ sets out why the authors believe the ‘inherent meaning paradigm’ will continue in cultural heritage management: because it provides predictability and transparency. This section could have been strengthened by a discussion of the responsibilities of heritage agencies that have a mandate to protect heritage places. These agencies exist because society has endorsed such a structure and believes it to be beneficial. This could be considered a ‘social’ or ‘community value’ which is paramount, rather than the more particularistic social values considered during the assessment of significance.

In the spirit of the *Burra Charter*, which separates assessment and management, the discussion paper focuses only on significance assessment. However a discussion of some of the management issues which flow from significance assessment would have been useful, such as managing places for their intangible values, or the negative consequences of privileging social value above other values. Would we retain physical fabric if it were assessed as having no social significance, yet possessed other identified values? Currently some heritage practitioners consider that social value can be retained through recording alone, without retaining the physical fabric. Can we retain the associations, memories and meanings attached to places or landscapes if the physical elements, the two-dimensional web, that comprises the place or landscape is not also retained? To map all of the web we need to take a holistic approach and make use of all resources. All communities of interest, Indigenous and non-Indigenous with their ‘insider’ knowledge, and the relevant heritage professionals should work together to assess the web, and provide input into management practices to retain its significance.

The book’s useful review of current practice is separated into two sections: the first reviews reports on Aboriginal

heritage, the manner and extent local communities have been involved in the assessment process and how, and to what degree, social significance has been taken into account. The following chapters consider historic (non-Indigenous) heritage practice in NSW, based on a small number of reports sampled, as well as interviews with heritage practitioners. The findings indicated that value given to a place by a community could relate to all heritage values and may not be confined to what is thought of as ‘social value’. The study also found that social significance is a neglected field and identified a need for a methodology and guidelines on social significance assessment in heritage management. One omission of this section is any reference to the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999* and the foreshadowed amendments to include heritage within the scope of this piece of legislation.

As an ASHA member and historic heritage practitioner, I suggest that all archaeologists and heritage professionals working in NSW should read this, as the discussion critiques our practice and the principles with which we work. Archaeologists are criticised for not keeping abreast of new thinking even in their own fields. Many will argue that archaeologists, architects and planners have worked within the framework of changing NSW NPWS policies and the EIS process which themselves have caused the identified gaps and deficiencies.

Chris Johnston recommended in 1994 that it was ‘vital that heritage professionals be informed about social value and the means available to them and to communities to articulate the meanings embodied in places, and thereby argue for their conservation’ (Johnston 1994: 26). While progress in undertaking social value assessments has been made, this book demonstrates that there are still issues to be resolved and identifies the need for a clear methodology and guidelines for its use.

The policy changes foreshadowed in the conclusions are designed to address some of the issues raised. Moving towards a holistic process for the assessment of places, which identifies all values, including intangible ones, is an important step with accompanying management implications. A successful model which informs heritage practice elsewhere in Australia should provide a framework for comparisons. While you may disagree with some of the concepts put forward in the book it is a very useful and timely contribution to the debate on social value assessment and the management implications which arise from it.

Kirsty Altenburg
Australian Heritage Commission

References

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Michael McCarthy, *Iron and steamship archaeology: Success and failure on the SS Xantho*. Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2000; 234 pp; hardback; \$83.00; ISBN 0 306 46365 2.

This hardbound publication, one of ‘The Plenum Series in Underwater Archaeology’, reflects the work that Mike McCarthy has put into obtaining recognition for iron and steamship archaeology as a valid sub-discipline of maritime archaeology. In traditional European–Mediterranean terms, the study of shipwrecks has been more often associated with ancient hand-built, wooden craft, rather than nineteenth- and

twentieth-century wrecks for which plans and photographs may exist. This book summarises the past two decades of iron and steamship archaeological studies, for which the wreck of the screw steamship *Xantho* (1848–1872) at Port Gregory, Western Australia, has been a notable ‘guinea pig’.

In Chapter 2, McCarthy discusses the history of marine engineering and the Western Australian colonial setting to place the *Xantho* in its social, economic and technological context. The *Xantho* was an aging iron vessel with a second-hand, Crimean War gunboat engine which had been modified (incredibly) to run backwards! Its lightly constructed hull was

originally designed for use in sheltered waters rather than lying beached on the tidal flats or amongst the heaving swells of Western Australia's coastline. This apparently unremarkable ship was wrecked in shallow water and forgotten even by 'wreck bashers', as it lay camouflaged by marine concretions. However it has yielded one of the best preserved marine engines of its type,—a fascinating example of adaptation and reuse.

In this book, which is a little-edited version of the author's PhD thesis, McCarthy demonstrates convincingly how iron and steamship wreck sites (including engines) can reveal information about past human actions, motivations and behaviour. The *Xantho* was involved in the early colonial exploration, settlement, and pioneering phases of north-west Western Australia. In particular the ship was a crucial factor in the fortunes of its owner, Charles Broadhurst, and his wide-ranging entrepreneurial activities. In fact the questions raised by the *Xantho* site resulted in the creation of a broader *Xantho*–Broadhurst project. As McCarthy writes:

What sort of person would purchase (the *Xantho*) for use on the sparsely populated, poorly serviced Western Australian coast, far from the nearest marine engine repair facilities at Adelaide and Surabaya? Was he an impulsive individual with vision and access to capital yet lacking the necessary experience of practical, frontier capitalists? Worse still, was he a rich gentleman eccentric (a fool even) given to grand and ill-considered schemes, as first thought? (p. 122)

Broadhurst was a significant colonial entrepreneur, who was involved in the development of the pearling, guano and fish-canning industries. Upon his death, the *West Australian* wrote 'Mr Broadhurst was one of the most indefatigable and persevering exploiters of the infant industries of Western Australia in his day' (1 May 1905; p. 127). McCarthy concludes that Broadhurst was 'an undoubted visionary', whose decision to buy the *Xantho* was justified as the outcome of an 'identifiable and logical process' (p. 192).

As well as these questions concerning Broadhurst and his motivations in purchasing the *Xantho*, McCarthy attempts to develop appropriate archaeological theory that can be applied to the study of iron steamships, such as the *Xantho*. In this he considers the pivotal role of the *Xantho* to Broadhurst's plans; the history of the Broadhurst family; analysis of the wreck site including site formation and post-depositional processes; and the excavation and conservation of the wreck material.

The *Xantho*'s steam engine—a maritime Model 'T' Ford—was the focus of the excavation and subsequent studies in conservation. The Western Australian Museum's Maritime Archaeology and Conservation Departments, as well as many

volunteers, have put an enormous amount of work into the recovery, de-concretion, recording and conservation of the engine since 1986. As McCarthy states, it was 'an intact example of the rare trunk engine type...an example of one of the earliest high pressure engines and the first mass-produced, high-revolution engines used at sea' (p. 129). It provided the blueprint for the first working replica model to be made of a marine steam engine recovered from the sea. The *Xantho* engine also provided numerous lessons for archaeologists and conservators concerning the likely condition of complex iron machinery from other marine sites, including details concerning surface graphitisation and iron iron-concretion formation. The *Xantho* was also the first site where conservators were trained to dive in order to conduct in-situ assessments of the physical, chemical and biological factors involved in its degradation.

Unfortunately the book suffers from some editorial and production errors. Even though the publisher supplied another copy of the book when the original review copy was found to have entire chapters missing, the replacement copy still contains errors. In some parts the page numbers do not match up with indexed chapter headings; the index often has wrong page numbers for the subject being sought; and some figures also have incorrect numbers—these being consistently out by a couple of pages. A list of illustrations would also have been useful.

While McCarthy hopes that the 'successes and misfortunes' of the conservation of the *Xantho* engine components presented in this work will be sufficient to prepare a 'suitable foundation for similar studies' he does not indicate whether the Museum would be prepared to undertake a similar project again! Comparative work underway currently is the recovery of the *USS Monitor*'s engine by the well funded NOAA agency in the United States, which has well heeded the lessons of the *Xantho* project. The *Xantho* can also be seen a benchmark study for future costings of projects such as the proposed raising of Australia's AEII submarine in the Sea of Marmara, Turkey.

Overall the book contains a wealth of practical information for both an academic and general readership. As well as presenting an important case study, the discussion of site formation and post-deposition theory is applicable to other iron and steamship sites. Historical archaeologists interested in colonial Western Australian settlement and entrepreneurial activity will also find much of interest in McCarthy's research into the Broadhurst family, and North-West pearling industry.

Ross Anderson
Maritime Heritage Unit, Heritage Victoria

Robin Torrence and Anne Clarke (eds), *The Archaeology of Difference: Negotiating cross-cultural engagements in Oceania*. One World Archaeology series no. 38, Routledge London & New York, 2000; 440 pp; hardback; £80.00; ISBN 0415117666.

This collection of studies of Indigenous–colonial exchange in Oceania prompted very strong responses from me. I found some of the editors' introductory claims to be puzzling and polemical, and the papers themselves I thought uneven, ranging from excellent to poor. But I also intend to hang on to this book, because I know I will come back to it again and again as an important source of ideas and examples.

What I really liked about this collection was the emphasis on landscape and large-scale analysis of changing patterns of

material culture following 'contact'. Drawing upon the work of Carmel Schrire (1972), the editors Robin Torrence and Anne Clarke point out (pp. 21–23) how broad patterns of change following contact, evident within the archaeological landscape, may signal cross-cultural engagement. As Schrire showed in her Arnhem Land study, disruptions to older travelling or economic patterns can result in either a 'gravitational pull' toward centres of contact, or restriction of movement within traditional lands which may be reflected in an intensification of site use at remote locations.

This approach frames Sarah Colley's discussion of the Greenglade Aboriginal rock shelter at Disaster Bay, New South Wales, which demonstrates 'continuity of traditional indigenous life into at least the mid-nineteenth century' (p. 280), and

possibly more frequent use of the rock shelter after European contact. Similarly, Ursula Frederick examines the 'graphic implications and shifting social contexts of rock art production arising from culture contact' (p. 300) in Watarrka National Park, central Australia. In focusing upon the diverse relationships between Luritja and European peoples, she shows how the rock art marks changes in physical, economic and social spheres, within the emergent colonial landscape. For example, a shift in site use from 'large shelters suitable for family camping to small clusters of single event sites' strengthens the interpretation of itinerant land use, and more intensive use of a 'contracted landscape' (pp. 323–325). This move away from the mechanistic equation of European materials, such as flaked glass, with 'contact' represents a welcome broadening of analytic focus.

Other aspects of the introduction I found less congenial. For example, readers of this journal will note that the editors took pains to distinguish their approach from that of historical archaeology. They assert that the view through 'prehistorians' spectacles' has allowed them to incorporate 'long time scales' which are 'crucial to a new understanding of European contact', as well as 'types of sites and data not usually considered by historical archaeologists' (that is, non-European sites). Hence the 'necessary broadening of scales in time and space ... is due to the background of most of the practitioners in prehistory, rather than to a change in historical archaeology' (pp. 6–9). I was surprised by this because a number of the contributors either are historical archaeologists or have derived key arguments from historical archaeology, and particularly because the strength of recent approaches toward cultural exchange and material culture is surely to be found in the skilful, multi-disciplinary collation of different sources of data and theory. In her paper Colley explicitly argues against these kinds of disciplinary subdivisions in the study of cultural exchange (pp. 295–297). In short, I wondered why the editors felt this to be an important point to make.

This niggling doubt was crystallised by Torrence and Clarke's claim for the historical specificity of these studies as making 'a radical break from previous scholarship' (p. 11). Claims to be new in taking this approach can only be sustained by ignoring the large body of literature which surrounds this issue, most notably in 'historical anthropology', which in turn builds on much older debates about the relationship between structure and event (eg Giddens 1979, Sahlins 1985). More importantly, I felt that it was precisely in the contextualisation of the cultural processes they addressed that several papers in the collection would have benefited from a more explicit and skilful use of historical methods.

However, overall I was impressed by the way that many of the papers drew from an array of material in presenting a rigorous and persuasive account of the complex process of cultural negotiation. Caroline Phillips' study of 'post-contact landscapes of change' along the Waihou River, in New Zealand's North Island, for example, combined excavation, oral history and documentary records in providing a scholarly and fine-grained account of the dramatic transformations experienced by Maori people during the first half of the nineteenth century. Again, Christophe Sand uses archaeological evidence for the entire prehistoric sequence of New Caledonia to characterise Kanak society before European contact, arguing for a new interpretation of demography,

settlement and social organisation: population density was much higher, for example, before introduced disease prompted social reorganisation into the smaller, more mobile clan groups described by early European observers.

In another approach Paul Rainbird examines transformations between different cultural structures at Chuuk Lagoon, in the eastern Caroline Islands. The Japanese occupation, especially between 1941 and 1945, left behind military installations, clusters of buildings and cairn groups, a landscape largely forgotten by the Chuukese, but which has been continuously commemorated by the Japanese as testament to the hardships of war.

Deborah Bird Rose writes of the 'twinned' processes of the attempts by Jesuit missionaries to civilise and convert the Aboriginal people of the Daly River frontier in the Northern Territory at the turn of the century, and the Aboriginal socialisation of missionaries 'into their own social networks and cosmology' (p. 215). Beautifully written, this nuanced reading of Jesuit diaries traces a series of 'intercultural encounters', such as the syncretic cult of Tyaboi, which served to tame the wild and socialise the missionaries, including the 'punitive practices of the cross' (p. 228). Bird Rose re-tells the myth of the great Angamunggi, treacherously killed by his son Tjiniman, drawing a parallel with the historical experience of the Aboriginal people attacked, seduced and finally abandoned by the missionaries. The Aboriginal 'search for moral relationships between settlers and indigenous peoples' (p. 233) is a central thread linking these events on the 1890s Daly to the later resurgence of revitalisation cults in Western Australia.

Isabel McBryde's paper returns to her research into cross-cultural exchange at Port Jackson between the Eora people and white settlers. She notes how 'Captain Cook stories' express indigenous views of these invaders, foregrounding how quickly exchange took place, how pervasive it was and how enduringly integral it remained. In asking why this was so, McBryde aims to recover indigenous objectives, examining the important role of exchange in Aboriginal societies, and tracing the fluctuating role of exchange over several decades with meticulous historiography.

The study of cross-cultural engagement has great currency among historians, anthropologists, and increasingly archaeologists. This foray into the field is marked less by conceptual uniformity—although a number of key concerns, such as collaboration with living indigenous communities, are shared by most writers—than by a rich diversity of approaches and instances which together make a substantial contribution to the field.

Jane Lydon
La Trobe University

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Clayton Fredericksen and Ian Walters (eds), *Altered States: Material Culture Transformations in the Arafura Region*. NTU Press in association with the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 2001; xiv + 160 pp; paperback; \$33.00; ISBN 1 876248 55 6.

Fredericksen and Walters have assembled an important collection of papers showing new directions in the study of the changing meanings of material culture in the dynamic cultural environment of the Arafura region. In some cases the familiar artefacts discovered during Australian archaeological fieldwork are examined, however the book also delves into less familiar areas such as the cultural landscape of Ashmore reef and monuments in the eastern provinces of Indonesia (Maluku, Papua and Nusa Tenggara Timur).

In their introduction Fredericksen and Walters write that the 'topics addressed by each paper are open to different interpretations and emphases, and we have no doubt scholars will take issue with some of the conclusions and hypotheses proffered here. If this book succeeds in engendering such discourse then it will have achieved its purpose' (p. xiii). This book certainly succeeds in this aim. The conclusions brought forth by each of the six contributors will be controversial for many different reasons. For example, Dwyer's conclusion (p. 51) that the Australian government has caused the blossoming trade in illegal immigrants by denying Indonesian fishermen access to their traditional fishing grounds at Ashmore reef, will cause debate in some circles.

The topics covered in this book include: an analysis of monuments and images from eastern Indonesia by Jill Forshee and Chris Healey; David Bulbeck and Barbara Rowley discuss Macassan archaeological sites in northern Australia; the changing meanings behind a Shako plate from Fort Dundas are analysed by Clayton Fredericksen; Dan Dwyer writes about the shifting role of Indonesian sailors at Ashmore reef; Malene Bjornskov discusses Chinese ovens in the Northern Territory; and a set of Laotian drums in the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory are analysed by Patricia Puig and Ian Walters. Each subject is as varied as the different cultures that used or created these objects and places.

The paper by Forshee and Healey takes a new look at the meanings of monuments from Indonesia. They have come up with the conclusion that 'monuments celebrate the authority of the state, yet through their very public displays these structures enable other authoritative interpretations that simultaneously destabilise state authority' (p. 25). This volume is particularly enriched by the inclusion of the study of Indonesian fishing boats and the Ashmore reef. Here Dwyer analyses the reef as not only an archaeological site, but also as a cultural artefact in itself. Dwyer has done the landscape school of archaeology proud with this subtle analysis. He argues that to understand the changes in the culture around it, the meaning of the place as a cultural artefact, which has changed substantially over time, must be understood.

The paper by Bulbeck and Rowley clarifies the history and chronology of Macassan activities in the Northern Territory through a comprehensive analysis of all the known archaeological sites and discoveries in the region. This paper will serve as a useful reference source for those studying this area of contact archaeology. In the next paper, Fredericksen takes the unusual approach of basing an entire paper on a single artefact. However this approach holds up extraordinarily well. The history of the Shako plate found at Fort Dundas is examined in careful detail, using historical documents to highlight the changing meanings of this artefact over time.

Puig and Walters present an extremely well documented analysis of two Laotian, Heger II drums acquired from Thailand in 1982 by the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. This paper traces the possible history and creation date of these two drums by using stylistic analysis, while also demonstrating the changing role the drums had in Laotian culture. Another study that deals with Asian ethnicity and material culture is Bjornskov's paper on Chinese mining ovens in the Northern Territory. This is one of the most detailed studies ever produced on the practices behind the use of these ovens in Australia. Bjornskov delves into details of the use of pork in celebrations by the Chinese. Most analyses of the material remains of the Chinese in Australia fail to adequately explore change and continuity of Chinese cultural practices, such as Feng Shui, but Bjornskov's paper is a happy exception to this. Her approach produces a much more subtle understanding of the lives of Chinese people in the Northern Territory.

I have only minor criticisms of this enjoyable and useful collection of papers. In my view, the paper by Fredericksen provides too much extraneous detail on the life of the first Commander at Fort Dundas, while the paper by Puig and Walters would have benefited from a more concise description of the relationships between the various stylistic groupings of decorated Laotian drums. Bjornskov's brief history of Chinese mining in Australia focuses on the Palmer River in Queensland and the Northern Territory, with little mention of the other States. This may be because the majority of 'Chinese ovens' are located in these two states. However, as at least seven ovens are located in Tasmania, according to her paper, perhaps a broader overview of Chinese mining was required. Nevertheless, the material that is presented is very valuable.

Overall this book is an excellent outline of some of the new work being done on the changing meanings of material culture in the Arafura region, a crucial location for the study of culture contact and exchange in the wider Australian region. All the papers are well written and I found this book highly engaging. Two enthusiastic thumbs up.

Katrina Stankowski
PhD Candidate, Flinders University

Mark Staniforth and Michael Hyde (eds), *Maritime Archaeology in Australia: A Reader*. Southern Archaeology, Blackwood, South Australia, 2001; 337 pp; paperback; \$30.00; ISBN 1 876675 54 3.

This book is a collection of 46 reprinted articles on Maritime Archaeology in Australia and related subjects. It is designed as an easy reference for undergraduate students and as such it is a huge advance on the photocopied 'bricks' of articles regularly sold to undergraduate students. This book at least has a decent cover and the blessings of the journals in which the articles first appeared.

The articles are arranged in 13 chapters which represent the 13 weeks of the course

1. Maritime Archaeology: reviews and overviews
2. Theoretical approaches
3. Artefact studies
4. Thematic studies
5. Individual shipwreck-site case studies
6. Shipwreck and survivors camps
7. Underwater archaeology
8. Nautical archaeology
9. Ethical issues
10. Historic shipwrecks legislation
11. Underwater cultural heritage management
12. Maritime Archaeology and maritime museums
13. Interpretation, cultural tourism and diver education

What can be made of all this? For a non-maritime archaeologist, this book gives a great introduction to the broad themes of maritime archaeology in Australia. The papers illustrate the way maritime archaeology was going in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, you can see the struggle that maritime archaeologists had with the thorny issue of giving their work some sort of meaning beyond mere antiquarianism by adopting a theoretical approach. Here the editors, Mark Staniforth and Michael Hyde, reproduce two key papers by Mike McCarthy and one by Staniforth that represent attempts to develop a theoretical approach. Personally, I feel these attempts are not fully developed and there is yet to be a more comprehensive theoretical approach (or approaches) that gives maritime archaeology meaning beyond the provision of data for seemingly endless numbers of shipwreck dive trails and interpretive brochures.

In contrast papers by Coroneos on the working lives of wooded sailing ships and by Wark et al. on wreck site formation demonstrate a sophisticated approach to what might be called 'mid-range theory building' or site-formation processes. This is one of the strengths of maritime archaeology in Australia and these papers deserve a broad audience.

The papers in the artefact-studies section are curious in that they were all published in this journal, are all related to Victorian wrecks and have a strong link to the program of research into artefacts undertaken by the Victoria Archaeological Survey. It is an unusual role for a CRM agency to promote such research but this reflects the lack of interest in such studies by universities at that time.

Curiously, there are no papers on maritime history. I find this a bit odd as I look at my bookshelf and see authors such as Blainey, Broeze and Dening (not to mention Samuel Elliot Morrison) and wonder why. There is no shortage of interesting maritime history and its absence is a bit puzzling.

Also puzzling is the lack of a section on the history of ship technology and ship-building. Again there are some very interesting examples of ship technology underwater as well as quite a bit of information on Australian ship-building. There is a vast literature on the topic and I have always thought that archaeologists studying ships need to understand how one is constructed and worked, in order to interpret the shipwreck event and the archaeological remains.

Of course, we all have our preferences for what we would put in and leave out. Staniforth and Hyde have produced a very useful book of readings that showcases maritime archaeology in Australia.

It is interesting to speculate on what Staniforth and Hyde might include in the next edition, say in 2010. Certainly we would expect more contributions from students from the two new Maritime Archaeology courses at Flinders University and James Cook University and it will be interesting to see how these vary from the Western Australian approach. Of course there will be several papers along the line of 'Maritime Archaeology in NSW over the last 30 years' and 'shipwreck trails: a 30-year retrospective'. Hopefully, however, there will be more studies in the wake of work by Coroneos, Staniforth, McCarthy, and Wark, Larcombe and Veth, that has served to interest and inspire us.

Iain Stuart
HLA-Envirosciences

Breaking down the barriers? A review of the Australasian Archaeological Association Annual Conference, Hervey Bay, Queensland, 6–8 December, 2001.

I have just returned from AAA, in Hervey Bay, Queensland, hosted by the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit* and the School of Social Science at the *University of Queensland*, and organised with clockwork smoothness by Sean Ulm, Ian Lilley, Annie Ross, Jon Prangnell, Catherine Westcott, Jill Reid and Luke Kirkwood. The undulating lawns and swaying palms of the Kondari Resort, and the cushioning tropical heat, gave proceedings a relaxed and humid bonhomie outside the air-conditioned meeting hall.

Several participants, including veteran Peter White, voted it 'the best AAA ever'—the generally high quality of papers perhaps may be attributed to factors such as the rigorous paper-selection process, and a clear theme: *Barriers, Borders,*

Boundaries. Over three days sessions addressed 'Regions and boundaries' and the process of linking patterns of landscape use to social organisation, 'Written in Stone: regional, technological and temporal boundaries in Australian stone artefact assemblages', 'The archaeology of isolation', which examined the archaeological character of marginalised groups and places, 'Boundaries of archaeological thinking' which explored the recent broadening of disciplinary outlook to consider cultural landscapes, and perspectives which complement our traditional emphasis on the material, 'Frontier-Games: Rock Art Variability in the Arid Zone', and 'The Reality of Barriers: the evidence from biological anthropology', which drew upon evolutionary theory to address human group definition and interrelationships.

Best student paper was awarded to June Ross (University of New England) for a reevaluation of rock art techniques in Central Australia, with implications for relative chronology

and our understanding of how art systems functioned in mediating social interaction. Other student presentations which I found especially good were Dee Gorrington's (University of Queensland), investigating a Yanyuwa song cycle as an unbounded 'land and seascape' which demonstrates the Indigenous insistence on intangible aspects of their cultural heritage, Melissa Carter's (James Cook University) discussion of the relationship between peoples of Torres Strait with PNG and Australia, using a wide range of evidence including pottery from her recent excavations on the Murray Islands in eastern Torres Strait, to provide fresh insight into this debate, and Michael Morrison's (also JCU), which explored the role of shell mounds at Weipa, Cape York Peninsula as monuments in the social landscape.

Best paper was split: Ken Mulvaney (Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, NT) provided a wonderful exploration of the way that for the Warlampa and adjoining tribal groups in the region north of Tennant Creek, the Dreaming tradition of Milywaru, Two Snake Sisters, 'interleaves' with the physical and cultural landscape. Ken was assisted by his dazzling use of PowerPoint (he prefaced his presentation by observing, from the laptop, that he 'preferred not to let others play with his technology', for which he won a Big Man award)—maps, objects, landscape were conjured up in delightful harmony with—rather than dull mimicry of—his text.

Co-winners Martin Gibbs and Peter Veth (JCU) made the fascinating and compelling argument that the movement of the circumcision rite into the south-west region of Western Australia, observed by Daisy Bates, involved social mechanisms they term 'ritual engines', an understanding of which helps to explain the rapid expansion of Western Desert culture from around 1500 years ago.

The *Australian Association of Consulting Archaeologists Inc.* presented the inaugural *Laila Haglund Award* for best paper presented by a consultant, to Luke Godwin, Scott L'Oste-Brown, Bob Ellis and Mike Morwood (Central Qld Cultural Heritage Management, Environment Protection Agency, and UNE) for their discussion of radiocarbon-dating bark coffins from the central Queensland highlands, revealing the antiquity and persistence of this practice, and exploring its implications for the Native Title process. Robert Theunissen won *best poster* for his work on carnelian beads. *Best student poster* went to Alison Crowther, who described her discovery of taro starch on Lapita pottery, a world first. *Best group poster* went to Awoonga Alliance's Nikki Johnson, Anne-Marie Johnson, Trisha Coleman, Robyn Yow Yeh, Gabrielle Blackman and Tamara Blackman, presenting the *Awoonga Dam Cultural Heritage Project Stage 2* which they are conducting in collaboration with members of the Gooreng Gooreng, Gurang and Bailai Native Title claimants in the Boyne Valley of central Queensland.

This was my fourth AAA and I really loved catching up with old friends, meeting new people and learning from the diverse range of papers. Despite the traditional emphasis on Aboriginal archaeology, there were also several historical archaeologists presenting or in the audience. Perhaps this reflects the holistic curriculum achieved by institutions such as JCU and UQ, whence most delegates came? Perhaps it reflects a dissolution of the boundaries between sub-fields, and a more active interest in Aboriginal archaeology of the historic period?

I wondered however, about the barriers that students had to surmount: in my view, a few junior presenters were given an overly harsh reception. This is not to say that inaccuracies do not need to be corrected, nor that narrow, ill-informed or logically flawed arguments should not be criticised. It seems to me, however, that such critique can always be framed constructively—indeed, that the *challenge* is to be constructive. One or two people during proceedings alluded to the need to respect students' relative inexperience, and one brave PhD student actually made this point during the AGM, but was shouted down—she was told that students were to be treated 'as equal participants', just like everyone else in the egalitarian AAA community.

If we subscribe to the matey, blokey culture of AAA—and I have to say I like it myself, mostly—then we might say that no-one means any harm—it's a trial by fire—get out there and just do it. But I don't believe this myself—I think some established, secure, senior archaeologists forget what it's like to get out there for the first time—or even the second, or third... and to feel unsure of their welcome. I think this attitude works to suppress new or marginal voices, and while it may help to preserve high academic standards (although I question this), it also maintains other, less desirable hierarchies. I think the thongs-and-stubby friendliness of the AAA social scene needs to be extended to the conference hall.

Overall, there seems to be a broadening of the AAA intellectual agenda toward social approaches to archaeology, engaging with disciplines and ideas across the social sciences as well as with Indigenous perspectives. The best papers posed interesting and important questions about the relationship between archaeological evidence and past social organisation, and drew upon a wide range of material in making their arguments. The dismantling of traditional barriers between 'prehistory' and 'historical' archaeology is another aspect of this emphasis on meaning and the social and has a lot to interest readers of this journal. I predict that next year's joint AIMA-ASHA-AAA event in Townsville will be more open and accessible than ever before.

Jane Lydon
La Trobe University