

Book review

D.J. Timothy and L.G. Tahan (eds), *Archaeology and Tourism: Touring the Past* (Channel View Publications, Bristol, UK 2020)
230 pp.

Warwick Frost

Professor of Tourism, Heritage and the Media, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia

This is an interesting book about a different type of heritage dissonance. Normally we think of heritage dissonance as occurring amongst different groups of stakeholders who wish to claim the past and its meaning for their own interpretation of history (for instance Graham et al. 2005). An example of this might be two religious groups claiming the same sacred site as exclusively their own. For some who want certainty in the world this can be disconcerting – destination marketing organisations, for instance, are often greatly put out by multiple perspectives. For others, dissonance makes history more interesting. In the case of this book, the dissonance comes from opposing views of how heritage should be managed. Its particular focus is on the sometimes uneasy relationship between archaeology and tourism. Archaeologists are interested in an historical site for what it can tell us about the past, through the application of scientific and systematic techniques and hypothesis testing. Tourism researchers – in contrast – are interested in its tourism potential, including how it can be managed to provide satisfactory experiences and interpretation. Potential conflict comes from different approaches to management and even conflicting worldviews about heritage.

This valuable book consists of a range of chapters written by both archaeologists and tourism researchers. Each of the chapters is thematic, balancing explanations of the key concepts and issues with examples from around the globe. While the current hot topic of over-tourism is not specifically the subject of a chapter, material related to the damage done by large numbers of tourists is woven through many of the contributions. Unlike most edited books in tourism, this is not a collection of case studies, and the focus on thematic chapters adds to its depth and authority.

Chapter 1 is by editors Timothy and Tahan and introduces the collection, emphasising the uneasy relationship between tourism and archaeology. In Chapter 2, Gillot investigates this theme further. As with the introductory chapter, regrets about contestation are balanced by the view that it is possible to encourage the two disciplines to work better together. In Chapter 3, Burtenshaw examines the economic benefits from archaeological tourism, arguing that recognition of these is important for more sustainable developments. The possible privatisation of museums and heritage attractions is considered by Gürsu in Chapter 4. Rounding off this cluster of business-orientated chapters, in Chapter 5 Fyall, Leask and Barber balance an overview of marketing with a case study of developments in Oaxaca, Mexico. In Chapter 6, Timothy discusses volunteering at archaeological digs as a form of tourism. The links between religious tourism and archaeology at sacred sites is the

subject of Chapter 7 by Farra-Haddad. The hot topic of the destruction of archaeological sites and finds is considered by Tahan in Chapter 8, with equal consideration of massive numbers of visitors, tourism developments and deliberate damage by religious fanatics and iconoclasts. Further exploring this theme, Chapter 9 by Timothy looks at the illicit trade in archaeological artefacts. Chapter 10 by Matthews shifts the focus from damage to protection, arguing that the combination of responsible tourism development and meaningful community engagement is needed. Chapter 11 by Hodges considers the important topic of visitor interpretation (and I would have liked to have seen this expanded to perhaps two or even three chapters). The political uses of archaeological sites, including links to nationalism and identities, are considered by Jorayev in Chapter 12. The final chapter by the editors ties these varied topics together and points to the need for further research.

From the perspective of qualitative research, it would have been valuable if some of the thematic chapters had utilised data such as semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders – for example archaeologists, museum directors, heritage authorities, destination marketing organisations, government officials and tour operators. Unfortunately, this is a common limitation in many studies concerning cultural heritage and museum studies, which is often surprising, as in my experience employees of large cultural institutions are usually very keen to be interviewed for research studies. Certainly, this valuable book lays the foundations for early career researchers to undertake further qualitative studies on the issues it has raised.

This book gives equal weight to mass tourism and niche tourism. It notes the broad appeal of archaeological sites, stating that ‘archaeology is one of the most ubiquitous tourism resources in the world and one of the best known manifestations of cultural heritage’ (p. 205). Many of the most popular and appealing cultural heritage tourist attractions in the world are connected to archaeology, including such examples as Stonehenge, the Colosseum, Pompeii, the Parthenon, the Pyramids, Petra, Angkor Wat, Easter Island, Machu Picchu and Chichén Itzá. In addition, artefacts uncovered by archaeologists grace the great museums of the world. Paired with world heritage status, publicity through archaeological discoveries provides a strong marker to potential tourists that here is a place worth visiting.

Archaeology also provides fascinating forms of niche tourism. While many museums and tourism attractions focus on displaying the output of archaeologists, in some cases the archaeological discovery is the story that attracts and fascinates tourists. A striking example of this is the King Richard III Visitor Centre in Leicester, England. In 2012, archaeologists began a dig in a car park near Leicester Cathedral. They were searching for the remains of Richard III, who had been killed at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485. There were various historical clues that his body had been buried in this area just after the battle, though there was much scepticism as to whether anything could be found. Extraordinarily, a skeleton was found on the first day of the dig, which forensics ultimately identified as Richard. Furthermore, it was revealed that he suffered a twisted spine through scoliosis. This was consistent with William Shakespeare’s iconic representation of him as a hunchback, a portrayal hitherto widely thought to be a literary invention. Within the visitor centre, it is the extraordinary details of the archaeological dig and forensic analysis that holds pride of place.

Niche tourism is also manifested in the growing field of archaeologically based volunteer tourism. All over the globe, enthusiasts are happy to pay to engage in archaeological explorations, with the revenue partly financing the digs. Such a phenomenon may be seen as a subset of the expanding citizen science movement, which is allowing lay people to contribute to scientific research as a form of serious

leisure. This widespread fascination with archaeology is apparent in the wide range of documentary television shows, including my favourite, Britain's *Time Team*, in which a group of professional archaeologists and volunteers investigate a site for just three days. It ran for 286 episodes across 20 seasons from 1994 to 2014. Such longevity indicates a strong passionate following for all things archaeological. As this book demonstrates, that interest in archaeology is one of the main drivers of cultural heritage tourism.

REFERENCE

Graham, B., Ashworth, G.J., Tunbridge, J.E. (2005): The uses and abuses of heritage, in: Corsane, G. (ed.), *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, London: Routledge, 26–37.