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REVIEWS

Robert Bittlestone with James Diggle and John Underhill 2005. *Odysseus Unbound: The Search for Homer's Ithaca*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Hardback. xiii, 598 pp., figs, plates, 5 appendices, bib., 2 indexes. \$AUD75.00.

Janet Davidson, Ngakuta Bay, Marlborough

This is one of the most enthralling books I have read for a very long time. The blurbs on the dust jacket do not exaggerate. It reads like a first class detective story. It is not a 'who done it', except marginally at the end, but rather a 'where was it'.

This book is not primarily about archaeology; indeed, archaeology plays only a relatively minor role, although the book's thesis has implications for future archaeological work. Rather, it is a quest to reveal an ancient landscape, part of which has been totally transformed by tectonic events. Anyone living in 'shaky isles' on major fault lines will be sobered by the changes that are shown to have taken place on one Greek island in the last 3000 years.

The Iliad and the Odyssey are considered by many to be the foundation works of Western literature. The action of the Iliad takes place in and around the city of Troy in modern Turkey. Anyone interested in the history of archaeology will know something of how an amateur enthusiast, Heinrich Schliemann, began excavating the site of Troy in 1870. The Odyssey, too, has posed geographical problems. Scholars and adventurers from Gladstone to Severin have endeavoured to trace the epic journey of Odysseus around the Mediterranean after leaving Troy. But much of the action of the Odyssey actually takes place in and around Odysseus' home on the island of Ithaca. Unfortunately, modern Ithaca does not match up with the Ithaca described in considerable detail in the Odyssey.

There have been two scholarly responses to this problem over the years. The first, and more common, identifies Homeric Ithaca with modern Ithaca. Supporters of this view argue that the Odyssey contains much that is fabulous and is therefore a work of fiction, so a true-to-life Ithaca is not necessary; what is more, "Homer" probably never went there. In countering this argument Bittlestone points out that scholars of the future would be ill advised to argue that Fort Knox did not exist just because some of the deeds of James Bond are beyond the capability of any normal human. He also points

out that most of the fabulous parts of the *Odyssey*—involving cyclops, sirens and sorceresses—occur during the voyage, whereas the parts set on Ithaca seem to describe real people and real places without supernatural additions.

The second response is to try to identify a ‘real’ Ithaca somewhere else. In an appendix Bittlestone lists 22 previous attempts to identify Ithaca, ranging from Strabo in 1 AD to Tzakos in 2002; Bittlestone, Diggle, and Underhill are number 23. Most previous writers have in fact opted for modern Ithaca, but there have been various other suggestions. In this appendix each theory is checked against four key questions derived from the *Odyssey*: that Ithaca is “lowest and to the west” of a group of four islands; it has a bay with two distinctive jutting headlands; a ship can leave Ithaca harbour driven by a wind from the west; there is a two-harboured island called Asteris, with windy heights, in the straits between Ithaca and the island to the east—this Asteris is a suitable place from which to ambush a passing ship. There is then a list of 27 named places on or near Ithaca with the modern equivalents according to each theory. Three previous writers have made the same identification of Ithaca as Bittlestone, but they have not answered all four key questions. In the course of the book, Bittlestone tests and refines his hypothesis against these key questions.

Bittlestone proposes that the present peninsula of Paliki, on the west side of the island of Cephalonia, was once the island of Ithaca—“lowest and to the west.” The book is his first hand account, step by step, of how he conceived this idea and went about trying to prove it. By the end of the book he has persuaded Diggle, Professor of Greek and Latin at Cambridge, and Underhill, Professor of Stratigraphy at Edinburgh, that his hypothesis is correct, and they have each written an appendix with supporting specialist evidence. He has shown how Paliki has become joined to the rest of Cephalonia, and he has convincingly identified on the ground all of the places mentioned in the parts of the *Odyssey* that relate to Ithaca and its immediate surroundings. He does not pretend to be anything other than a passionate and determined amateur in the fields of geology and Homeric studies and he makes no pretence at all to be an archaeologist. Indeed, one of his most cherished identifications, the site of Odysseus’ palace, is shown to be wrong by the first classical archaeologist he takes there. Others of his initial identifications fall by the wayside too, but he carries on undaunted, refining his identifications and gathering more evidence.

He does it partly with very modern technology, particularly the extensive use of two- and three-dimensional satellite imagery. In his normal life, Bittlestone is a specialist in visualisation, and this is the particular skill he brings to his quest. He provides numerous references to web sites with helpful

hints about what is free and who is cooperative. The technological tools are usefully summarised in a short appendix. The book is also lavishly illustrated with coloured photographs of all the places under discussion.

The crux of the hypothesis is that there was once a channel between Paliki and the rest of Cephalonia. This gains some support from the ancient geographer Strabo, who described a channel between the two 2000 years ago (although Strabo himself believed that modern Ithaca, already so-called, was ancient Ithaca). This channel seemed impossible today, because there is not just a low isthmus between Paliki and the rest of Cephalonia; the land between has a minimum height of more than 150 m above sea level. But Bittlestone and Underhill show how landslips caused by the major earthquakes that affect this area have not merely filled in the channel but obliterated all signs of it. If it is accepted that Paliki was once a separate island, in which case it was indeed “lowest and to the west”, it is possible to see the landscape of Paliki as the landscape described in the *Odyssey*. Diggle’s contribution, apart from lending the authority of a distinguished classicist to the cause, is to take some of the crucial lines from the *Odyssey*, and show how they can be translated in various ways to assist in identifying the places described.

The book is very much a personal account, including places stayed at, people met, planes nearly or actually missed; the travel diary (almost a blog) of an educated amateur who writes well and has the gift of explaining complicated ideas in simple language. At times, Bittlestone uses the technique used by some of the better writers of the lunatic fringe, leading the reader gently forward and asking “could this be the site of Eumaios’ pig farm?” in the same way that we may be asked “could this be a sign of pre-Maori settlement in New Zealand?” But Bittlestone goes on to admit his mistakes and provide the hard evidence in support of his hypothesis.

His argument is a fascinating interweaving of bits of Homeric text with geology, a little bit of archaeology, some adventures of his own, and an intense exploration of a landscape, parts of which have changed dramatically, parts of which have changed much less. In the process, chunks of the *Odyssey* come to life, firmly rooted in a real landscape. Only an enthusiastic amateur would have told the story this way, admitting how he raced along, making mistakes, misreading evidence, picking himself up, checking out alternative possibilities and constantly refining his central idea.

One of his conclusions is that whoever composed the *Odyssey* must have lived on Ithaca at some time to be so familiar with it, and at the end of the book he touches on the much debated questions of who composed the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and who first wrote them down. The implications for archaeologists lie in this new reading of an ancient landscape and, if the site

of Odysseus's palace has indeed finally been located, whether modern excavation will reveal details of a Bronze Age settlement in ways no longer possible at the famous sites of Troy itself, Mycenae, Tiryns and Knossos, all of which were first excavated more than a century ago.

Ann B. Stahl 2001. *Making History in Banda: Anthropological Visions of Africa's Past*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Cloth, xx + 268 pp., figs., bib., index. £50.00, \$USD70.00.

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I was drawn to this book by the methodological similarities between Ann Stahl's work and my own research, and her thought-provoking discussions on the use of analogy in an earlier paper (Stahl 1993). Ann Stahl and colleagues have been involved in "The Banda Research Project" since 1982. This is an interdisciplinary approach drawing on evidence from documentary sources, oral accounts, and archaeology. Banda is an area measuring about 30 x 40 km in west central Ghana. It lies in savannah woodland south of the Black Volta River and is more than 300 km north of the coast. The people belong to five different ethnic and linguistic groups who are united under the Banda paramount chieftainship.

In the first chapter Stahl examines the roots of anthropological, historical and archaeological approaches to Africa's past. To date much of the research has been focussed on examining changes between traditional and post-colonial societies. It is against these limited studies that Stahl sets her research agenda. She advocates an interdisciplinary approach, but is cautious not to repeat past mistakes: those which have not examined their theoretical bases, or sought appropriate lines of research that could accommodate the different types of material; and those that have a pasted-together feel, a criticism she aims at the Sahlins and Kirch 1992 Anahulu volumes. Stahl proposes a supplemental approach that aims to interrogate each line of evidence, each of which is compared against the other, while being alert for points of divergence between the sources. She argues that the beginning point should be the present, where the logic of contemporary practices can be captured and compared to the findings of the past (termed 'upstreaming').

Chapter 2 is based on her 1993 paper, and is concerned with the methodology of interdisciplinary studies. In particular, she critiques the use and abuse of analogy, arguing that past researchers have often been uncritical in their selection (she uses Wylie's 1985 term 'source-side' concerns) and the purpose ('subject-side' concerns) of the analogy. A point of significance in New Zealand and the Pacific, where a strong ethnographic record would nor-

mally be regarded as an essential component within archaeological research. Stahl's preference is for interrogating political-economic processes rather than structural reproduction. Due to an absence of language-based sources in Banda, Stahl has turned to 'taste' (citing Bourdieu 1984). She asserts that taste preferences are "locked into a dance of supply and demand, production and consumption, shaped by past choices and dispositions (*habitus*), but continually reframed by social tensions both within and outside the local setting" (p. 35).

In Chapter 3 Stahl introduces Banda: the location, economy and politics of the present and recent past, the peoples and their different languages and cultural practices. Being guided by Trouillot's 1995 models of 'historicity 1' (socio-historical process or what actually happened) and 'historicity 2' (historical narratives, or what is said to have happened), Stahl and the research team undertook an oral history study. The project had unforeseen results when the paramount chief disagreed with some of the other accounts and requested that changes be made. Stahl later commented that narratives of the past are shaped by contemporary concerns, and while her interests were focussed on change, amongst the Banda, tradition and continuity with which to establish identity and practices as ancient were of fundamental importance.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the history of regional and sub-continental political economy. Unfortunately the maps associated with this are not adequate. Tables outlining significant events with the possible impact on the Banda area, or the questions they raised, would have been useful. Despite this, there are some fascinating details in the sections relating to oral history and personal British accounts, such as the official known locally as the "breaker of walls", and another who, according to his wife, burnt houses that he thought were dirty or untidy, 'galvanised' the inhabitants into laying out straight roads, constructing stone-lined drains and disposing of the dead in a cemetery.

Chapters 5–7 examine local life in Banda from 1300–1700, 1725–1825, and 1825–1925 respectively. The frontier nature of the area has meant that it has been subjected at different times to political influences from the Niger to the north, the expanding Asante empire and the European slave trade from the south and, finally, colonisation by Britain. These larger events provide the framework for these three chapters, against which the findings from three excavated sites are set. Significantly, the times of greatest stress do not register in the recorded archaeology. It is only when people returned to more-or-less normal life that villages were established.

The archaeology section is the least satisfying. Despite the long period of research, the excavations are small: two or three houses and a midden area

are sampled within each village. It is not clear how big the villages were and, as the houses are generally in compounds with 2–6 rooms around an enclosed space, the partial excavation of one or two rooms does not enable the reader to see what the whole might have looked like. This is not helped by poor illustrations. Contour maps of the villages are set at 0.5 m intervals, yet the house/compound mounds are sometimes only 0.4 m high. Moreover, while there are some illustrations of pottery and metal objects, the distinction between the periods is described, not illustrated. Tables outlining the historical events, with key sites and excavations would have been useful, as would others comparing the proportion of different fauna, or fauna from different environments. Despite these faults, Stahl is very good at being reflective. Every time there is a conflict between the sets of data, or uncertainty over interpretation of the findings she explicitly states it; a method of analysis which is refreshingly honest.

In her final chapter Stahl reflects on the implications of her case study. She argues that to examine meaning depends on analogical argument and is therefore problematic, but that a focus on practice is more amenable to archaeological evidence. At this point, reliance must be put on our sociological and historical imaginations. But here her arguments fall down, and her insistence on working back from the present contradicts the order of her chapters.

In summary, Stahl provides some insightful comments and debates throughout her text. One example is on treating ethnographic traits as ‘packages’: although both the Asante and British introduced different rituals, village layouts and material goods to the Banda she asks did these new things become absorbed piecemeal or did they transform society; and if imported goods were used, what were the changes in domestic production? Stahl also asserts that while we may be able to identify patterns in the past, our interpretation depends on illustrative analogical models. This only works if there are language-based sources contemporaneous with the object and produced by those who inscribed the objects with meaning (a challenge to historical linguistics!).

Despite being at times difficult to read and data-rich, this should be essential for archaeologists, anthropologists and linguists interested in ethnography, interdisciplinary studies, and analogy.

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Jane Balme and Alistair Patterson (eds) 2005. *Archaeology in Practice: A Student Guide the Archaeological Analysis*. Blackwell, Malden MA. xxvi + 438 pp, figs., tables, bib., index. Hardback. £55.00 (£19.99 paper).

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Archaeology in Practice is a well presented volume that covers a wide range of topics from consulting indigenous stakeholders to writing up results. Most contributors include case studies which highlight how methods and theories presented in their papers can be applied. It also features notes or subheadings in the margins that allows quick access to relevant sections for future reference.

Chapter One deals with ‘Finding Sites’ and focuses on remote sensing and underwater reconnaissance with some discussion of more traditional pedestrian surveys. David explains the science and practical application of many common methods of finding sites with an emphasis on various magnetic techniques. He then tackles underwater geophysical techniques. Many of these discussions of detection methods are highlighted with illustrations.

‘Consulting Stakeholders’ is a personal account that highlights positive experiences dealing with indigenous groups in North America. Zimmerman includes a discussion of various international legislations designed to protect indigenous peoples, their heritage and material culture. The acknowledgement that students will work globally and encounter different rules and regulations is important. Zimmerman also touches on issues of stewardship and responsibility.

Chapter Three explains the production, recording and analysis techniques for ‘Rock-Art.’ The section on documentation is particularly useful as rock art is notoriously difficult to record. Included is a discussion of how

to attribute a date or dates to rock-art through weathering, spatial analysis, superimposition and others. McDonald also offers a detailed case study in which formal methods are used to analyse a set of macropod prints for which no ethnographic accounts exist.

Balme and Paterson offer a chapter entitled 'Stratigraphy.' It begins with the basics, such as the law of superimposition, and proceeds to discuss the effects of taphonomy and site formation processes as well as site disturbance on the stratigraphic profile observed by the field archaeologist. They emphasise the recording and interpretation of stratigraphic profiles and include a case study which details the use of the Harris Matrix.

'Absolute Dating' aptly follows and after a brief discussion of the mechanics of chronometric methods including radiocarbon, thermoluminescence, and Uranium-Thorium, Holdaway goes on to discuss the limits on chronology. Included in this chapter is an important discussion of ensuring a relationship between samples collected for dating and human events and behaviours in the archaeological record. He includes two case studies from his own work to highlight the points made in the main text.

Chapter Six provides 'An Introduction to Stone Artifact Analysis.' This discussion includes a heavily detailed description of flint knapping techniques rich with the jargon students will encounter when reading lithics literature. This is supplemented with two large figures to illustrate the terms used in the text. Clarkson and O'Connor then provide a specific guide to designing a research proposal and analysing lithics.

Fullager examines 'Residues and Usewear' in chapter seven. He discusses controlled replicative experiments, types of residues, types of wear and more. He ends with a discussion of difficulties posed by taphonomy in the creation of wear and how this is addressed in analyses.

'Ceramics' are an important part of many archaeological sites, both ancient and historic and this topic is tackled by Ellis. She concentrates the bulk of the chapter on post-excavation care and inventory including analytic techniques. Ellis also addresses specialist ceramic studies such as usewear and dating.

Chapter Nine is focussed on 'Animal Bones.' O'Connor and Barrett take the view that one is planning an excavation for the purposes of collecting fauna for analysis. They walk the student through developing a research question to directing the excavation, choosing an appropriate sampling strategy, collection and packaging of remains and laboratory analysis. They also discuss strategies for quantification of remains.

Beck's paper on 'Plant Remains' follows with instructions for determining the context of botanical remains, retrieving the best possible sample

and methods for analysis. A case study shows how these methods are applied to understand the complex interactions between people and plants.

Chapter Eleven covers 'Mollusks and Other Shells' with a background to middens, what they are, where they are and how to deal with them. Bowdler provides sampling strategies and some ideas about analytical techniques to get the best representative sample from these often large and complex sites. Particularly useful are the diagrams that show the major traits and characteristics used to describe shellfish.

'Sediments' are omnipresent in archaeological field work and Huckleberry offers a summary of an introductory course he offers that covers granulometry, pH, organic matter and phosphorus. It includes a chart of analysis types, appropriate methods and references for each.

'Artifacts of the Modern World' by Lawrence concentrates on the enormous task of analysis and interpretation of artefact rich historic sites. She covers categories of artefacts commonly recovered and a short history of materials like bottle glass and clay pipes to assist with typology. This is followed with a discussion of analytical techniques.

Chapter Fourteen follows with a discussion of 'Historical Sources.' Little examines the challenges and benefits of historical sources. She highlights the importance of a research journal and provides some guidance on how to find and evaluate information as well as how to relate documentary to archaeological evidence.

The final chapter is provided by White on 'Producing the Record.' This chapter is very important for undergraduate students and a great refresher for the rest of us. It presents a well laid out, step-by-step plan with examples and includes advice about writing for publication.

From initial planning, locating sites on the landscape, consulting with indigenous peoples, doing a variety of analyses to writing up, this text will give students the basics for dealing with archaeological materials and their analyses. This book would serve well as a textbook for an upper level undergraduate applied methods course supplemented with practical labs and hand-on work with existing collections. Without the practical side students may, at times, feel overwhelmed with terminology without a context in which to apply it. This would also act as an excellent reference for less experienced postgraduate students and specialists embarking on large cooperative research projects who need to coordinate several recovery strategies into their excavation plans.

Jo Littler and Roshi Naidoo (eds) 2005. *The Politics of Heritage: The Legacies of 'Race'*. Routledge, London. xvi + 270 pp, figs., bib., index. Paper. \$66.95.

John Coster, Tauranga

The term 'heritage' tends to be used in two different ways. The primary meaning, derived from the concept of inheritance, relates to valued objects and material: money and property, including land, buildings, furniture and artworks; taonga tuku iho. In this sense, heritage managers talk about 'tangible heritage', 'built heritage', 'sites', 'objects', 'places' and 'landscapes', as well as 'cultural heritage' and, more recently, 'intangible cultural heritage', including customs, language, music and traditional knowledge.

The second usage is more metaphorical, referring to people, events, memories and traditions, as in 'the nation's heritage' or 'what is your heritage?' In this sense, heritage is harder to define. It comes close to mythology, comprising a body of stories and beliefs, elements of folklore and particular interpretations of historical events. It may even include simple posturing, intended to maintain or establish a position of advantage, or to avoid examining alternative versions of past events. It may easily be confused with tradition or nostalgia and, at its loosest, it may merely refer to different interpretations of history. What we might term 'mythic heritage' is used to explain or justify a society's past and the nature of its present.

It is largely in the second, mythic, sense that this book refers to heritage and it examines the role of racism as a means of determining who is within and who is without the heritage of any particular society.

The Politics of Heritage, consisting of sixteen essays brought together by members of the Media and Cultural Studies department of Middlesex University, is of variable quality. At its worst, it presents an impression of British academics of various colours tying themselves in knots over the legacy of colonialism. Its main thrust is a determinedly post-modernist examination of the nature and effects of English racism, whether in Ireland, England itself (both in the present and going back to medieval times), or in Asia and the wider British Empire during the last three hundred years. In pursuing this endeavour it examines a number of issues relevant to New Zealand.

Students of cultural studies, museum studies and historiography, as well as heritage practitioners generally, will find bits of the book useful.

In a keynote essay Stuart Hall defines 'heritage' as "the whole complex of institutions, organisations and practices devoted to the preservation and presentation of culture and the arts" (including galleries, museums, collections and sites). Following Derrida, who uses 'the heritage' in the sense of "the dominant Western tradition", he has extended the concept of heritage to

a point very far from that of someone used to dealing on a daily basis with its tangible manifestations: landscapes, archaeological sites, buildings and objects. Hall examines the nature of English resistance to recognition of the last fifty years' diaspora from Asia and the Caribbean which has transformed the culture and, he would argue, "the heritage" of Britain.

The issues of racism in Britain (and indeed the other white remnants of Empire, including New Zealand) are comprehensively summed up by Jim McGuigan of Loughborough University in his discussion of the reaction in England to the Government-commissioned report *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (2000), drafted under the auspices of the Runnymede Trust.

John Hamer, a former history teacher and writer, presents a very useful paper, exploring the nature of 'heritage' and its confusion with, and distinction from, history. He clarifies a number of issues relating to the interpretation of the past and, although generally using the term in its mythic sense, also acknowledges heritage in the sense of legacy or inheritance.

In the one paper relating directly to New Zealand, Lynda Dyson, from Middlesex University, discusses the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, almost blowing her credibility early in the essay by misusing the term 'interpolate' and then referring to the New Zealand flag as having five stars. Dyson also enters into a discussion of 'shopping' at Te Papa, making the useful point that the museum is designed to function as a mall, but her main argument relates to the potential for the "deconstruction of Te Papa's 'bicultural' projection of national identity", which she characterises as skipping the colonial phase of our history in order to produce "a version of nation fit for the neo-liberal global economy."

Bill Schwarz, University of London, concludes the book with a useful essay on post-colonialism and the reiteration of past attitudes in the present, which incidentally throws light on New Zealand's Treaty Claims process by examining the social roles that procedures for national reconciliation play. By acknowledging the events of the past we are enabled to move on from them. S. I. Martin's account of the black presence (or rather absence) in British public archives also evokes resonances with New Zealand, Maori and the Treaty process.

In examining what 'heritage' means to the British (or, more accurately, the English) this book conveys an impression of a culture teetering on the brink of uncertainty—no longer the proud white imperial masters, not even the plucky targets of Hitler's blitz, but a small island nation coming to terms (as ancient Rome must have done) with an influx of people from its former colonies who are not white, not necessarily Anglican, and not going to go away. The parallels with New Zealand are clear.