

B eing Here

Heritage, Belonging and Place Making

A Study of Community and Identity Formation at Avebury (England), Magnetic Island (Australia) and Ayutthaya (Thailand).



Avebury, village and megaliths

Magnetic Island, the beach at Alma Bay

Ayutthaya, school groups at Wat Phra Si Sanphet

**'Being Here': Heritage, Belonging and Place Making.
A Study of Community and Identity Formation at Avebury (England),
Magnetic Island (Australia) and Ayutthaya (Thailand).**

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in September 2004**

**for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the School of Anthropology, Archaeology and Sociology
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STATEMENT OF ACCESS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at the way cultural heritage can be more broadly considered to include intangible aspects of our lives. Such intangible heritage encompasses the general values and worldviews of a community and enshrines a community's character and identity. Through meanings, associations, values and ways of life, people individually and collectively create a meaningful relationship with place. Place and community are mutually constituted through social action and practice and the attribution of meaning in a process of 'place making' and of reasserting belonging.

It is recognised that communities are fluid categories that can be 're-sited' in relation to new questions or different places and times. Both individual and community identity are a form of production, and consist as a process that is never complete. That is, identity is not only a matter of 'being' but also a process of 'becoming'. By addressing case studies in three World Heritage listed locations – Magnetic Island (Australia), Avebury (England) and Ayutthaya (Thailand) – the thesis considers the dissonance between heritage as defined and practised through hegemonic instruments and discourses (including international organisations, bureaucratic structures and the Academy), and heritage as conceived by contemporary communities as being the aspects of their lived existence that they desire to retain for future generations.

Through discussion of emplaced communities and a series of case studies, consideration is given to the hegemonic dominance of sanctioned determinations of heritage that attribute significance and in the process can mute local values and narratives. The thesis challenges the ongoing emphasis on tangible aspects of heritage and reviews the natural/cultural heritage dichotomy, demonstrating that attachments to nature are predicated on experiences, practices and engagements with the environment that are grounded in social and cultural processes. I further explore the way in which the voicing of opinions in a struggle over place can be regulated by prevailing scientific discourses and discursive fields, placing a reliance on arguments about conservation that are ancillary to more specific but less articulatable concerns to do with place and identity. Finally, I illustrate the significance of the lived traditions, rituals, ceremonies, skills and practices of the contemporary communities to a holistic understanding of heritage at both the local and broader levels.

I conclude that it is by understanding what it is that communities find important, and how such attachments and values are formed, transmitted and retained to create a 'sense of place', that community participation in heritage can be meaningfully achieved. Community assertions of the aspects of their lives that can be considered important to pass on to their children are not enshrined in the monuments, structures and archaeology that heritage professionals are more likely to identify, but in the sense of belonging that arises through the mutual construction of community and place, reinforced through social practices, memories and local narratives.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work is my own in that I have certainly pondered on, researched, analysed, written and edited the final document. However, it has been a joint project in that the blood, sweat and tears, the joys, highs and lows, and particularly the moments of inspiration, have been shared with a veritable multitude.

As my research has been primarily with and about people I will remain eternally grateful for the universal warmth and willingness to assist that has characterised all my contacts. The openness and generosity of the people with whom I have worked has been extraordinary, and I am humbled by the charity that has prompted total strangers to share their thoughts and feelings. Not to mention their hospitality. It is not possible to name all the people who helped me, as many of them were interviewees and must remain anonymous. As this thesis is their story, I owe them the greatest debt of gratitude.

My work in Thailand could not have happened without the preliminary and ongoing assistance of colleagues and friends: Cliff Ogelby and Denis Byrne provided the inspiration to work at Ayutthaya. Doug Miles was a font of academic assistance. I owe a great debt to Bunyong (Toi) Miles who not only taught me the Thai language but also despatched me to the care and hospitality of her extended family in Bangkok. Surin Maisrikrod kindly extended his Research Student Monitor duties to dedicate further time to discuss various academic issues and Thailand. I thank both Craig Reynolds and Helen James from ANU for their advice and contacts. Once in Thailand I was valuably assisted by Pisit Charoenwongsa, the Director of SPAFA, who provided me with the company of his assistant, Patcharawee (Jay) Tunprawat, for my first trip to Ayutthaya. At Chulalongkorn University, Dusadee Thaitakoo and Yongtanit Pimonsathean both took time out from their teaching commitments to talk with me, as did Detlef Kammeier from the Asian Institute of Technology. Sunait Chutintaranond, the Director of the Thai Cultural Studies Program at Chulalongkorn University, met with me on both my trips and was very supportive. In Bangkok I also received encouragement from Richard Engelhardt, the UNESCO Regional Adviser for Culture in Asia and the Pacific.

At Ayutthaya I am particularly grateful for the time and assistance given to me by Anek Sihamat, the Director of the Ayutthaya Historical Project (Fine Arts Department). He generously allowed me to call on the services of his department as needed, and provided me with an excellent contact in one of his archaeologists Sermuka (Nok). My fieldwork was greatly aided by the guidance of Ajarn Suutam, the Chair of the Cultural Centre at the Ayutthaya Rajabhat Institute. Among other contacts, he introduced me to Preechaa Chindawan, an officer with the Department of Welfare and Community Development with the Ayutthaya Municipality, who gave generously of his time.

During my first short trip to Thailand, I was a guest in the home of Porntip and Choosak Sadagolama. I thank them for their generosity and kindness. On my second trip I was cared for by the family of Thittaya (Noi) Posri. Noi's mother, Nan, is a very special woman who managed to make me feel warmly at home, despite our language differences. Noi generously uprooted herself from her home in Bangkok to come with me to Ayutthaya and to work as my field assistant. I am indebted to Noi for her efforts and assistance. When Noi found it necessary to return to Bangkok, Chonticha (Joy) Muangkam assisted me for the rest of my time in Ayutthaya. Both Noi and Joy were wonderful and I extend my thanks to them for their help. My stay in Ayutthaya was transformed by Nuangnoi Boonyanate from the Thai Cultural Studies Program. She introduced

me to her brother, Deecha (Bau), who was renovating the family home in Ayutthaya and was looking for a 'caretaker'. As the home is a magnificent teak-building on the Pasak River, I found myself in luxury beyond any fieldworker's dreams. I am grateful to Bau and his family for their hospitality and kindness, and to Bau for the introduction to his friend Charun (Run). Run's assistance with contacting various people and general running around was invaluable. I must also thank Somphat Meephan of the Ayutthaya Elephant Camp, Paitoon Khoamal of the Thai Boat Museum, and Pongsawasdi Suksawasdi for introducing me to the intricacies of khon-mask artistry.

While living in Paris I was very grateful for the support from various UNESCO and ICOMOS representatives. At the World Heritage Centre I must particularly thank Sarah Titchen, Mechtild Rössler and Peter Stott. Suzanne Ogge provided with me an excellent background to the UNESCO Masterpieces and Intangible Heritage convention. I also thank Tim Curtis and Derek Elias for their comments. At the ICOMOS Secretariat I was given all possible assistance by the Director, Gaia Jungeblodt. I remain grateful to Jose Garcia, the ICOMOS archivist, for his diligence with ferreting out interesting material and guiding me to the right shelves. I must thank Henry Cleere and Peter Fowler, whose ICOMOS World Heritage duties brought them past my desk at the Secretariat. Both were very supportive and particularly enthusiastic about my work at Avebury.

The research at Avebury was aided by Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, the Avebury World Heritage Site Officer. I also thank Rosie Edmunds and Ruth Taylor from the National Trust. I remain grateful for the kindness in terms of both hospitality and time that was extended by John Cronk, the then Chair of the Parish Council, and his wife Betty. I was similarly taken care of and made to feel warmly at home by Astrid Charteris and her family. I cannot thank Brian Edwards enough for the hours he spent with me, sharing thoughts from his own research and familiarity with Avebury. I extend my thanks to the volunteers who work in the library to the Wiltshire Heritage Museum and aided me with my archival research. While I was in England I had the opportunity to meet with Barbara Bender and I must thank her for her generous comments and support. Finally, the opportunity to work at Avebury reunited with me a special friend, Gillian Ephgrave. Above and beyond the call of duty, Gill took me in and offered me her home for the time of my fieldwork. I remain grateful to Gill and her sister Rosie for their hospitality and friendship.

My work at Magnetic Island owes similar debts of gratitude. I acknowledge and thank the CRC Reef Research Centre for the financial support provided through an augmentative scholarship. I also acknowledge the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority for their provision of a research grant to aid my project. At GBRMPA I must give a special thank you to James Innes, the Manager of Research and Monitoring - Human Dimensions. I was also assisted by various officers of Environment Australia in Canberra, and thank David Walker in particular for his time and advice. On the island I am grateful for the acknowledgment of my work by the Wulgurukaba people, the Traditional Owners, and to Melissa George for several inspiring meetings. I was given great assistance by Zanita Davies, the Chair of the Magnetic Island History and Craft Centre, and various other members of that group. I owe a considerable debt to Vandhana, not only for her generous provision of a bed when needed, but more particularly for her friendship, inspiration and wisdom. I also thank Peter Veth for conveniently being both a member of the academic staff and (at the time of my a fieldwork) a resident of the island.

There are various members of the School of Archaeology, Anthropology and Sociology whom I wish to acknowledge. I extend my thanks to my colleagues generally, and particularly to the administrative staff. I must of course single out my two supervisors, Shelley Greer and Rosita

Henry. Apart from acknowledging their efforts in steering this project along its often rocky path, they have provided a level of emotional support that goes beyond the normal parameters of the territory. In the process they have also become good friends and I will always value this. Thank you. I also thank my JCU colleagues and friends who have helped guide me through this project, particularly Sally Babidge, Cat Heath, Anna Morgan, Annette Field, Darlene McNaughton, Kirsty Bell, Ewen McPhee, Steve Beck and Chris Klease. I offer an additional thank you to Julie Lahn and Phil Winn. I would also like to thank Rohan Bastin. It was on his suggestion that I applied to do my PhD at JCU. If I had not done so, I doubt I would have done this particular thesis and hence not travelled the road I have finally followed.

A number of people offered (or were variously coerced) to read draft chapters and have given generous and valuable feedback and comments. To this end I thank Peter Veth, James Innes, Brian Edwards, David Roe, Denis Byrne and Barbara Bender. I am grateful for your support and consideration in undertaking what is always a time consuming task.

If nothing else could reassure me of the value of my endeavours, it would be the immense support I have received from my family and friends. My cousins Joanne O'Connor and Penny Greig and their families have kept me fed and amply provided with on-the-ground family support. The stress of finalising the thesis was greatly alleviated by the encouragement and tolerance of Jo McDonald, as an employer and a friend. I remain grateful for the unwavering support from my friends Lea and Steve Dunn and for their hospitality while I was in London. I must also thank Alex Kaplan, Liz Feenane, Deb Warren-Smith, Michelle and John Atkinson, Simon Fortune and Geoff Reid, all of whom have variously provided support, assistance and encouragement. I shall always be grateful for the friendship and unconditional support I have received from Rachel Brennan and Andrea Fortune.

Finally, I must thank my Father, brother and sisters – and their families – without whose support this thesis may have never been much more than an idea. Dad, Michael and Deb, Helen and Sarah this would not have happened without your love, tolerance, indulgence and encouragement. And to my Mother, who has not been with us for many years, thank you for the belief that I could give anything a go and it didn't matter if I failed, as long as I gave it my best along the way.

STATEMENT OF SOURCES

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given. I also declare that all research procedures reported in the thesis have received the approval of the relevant ethics committee.

Signature..... Date

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