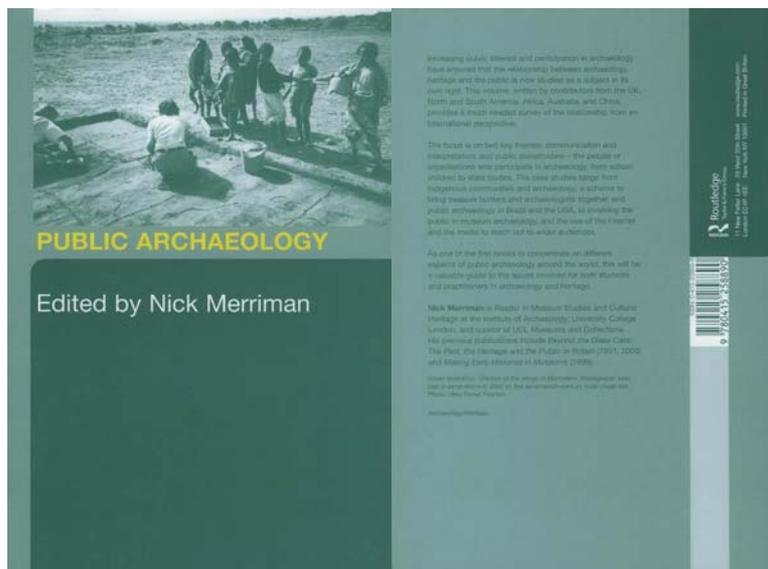


Merriman, N. Ed. 2003. Public archaeology. – London/New York, Routledge.

Book review by S. Ikram



Public archaeology, a volume edited by Nick Merriman, explores the many faces of archaeology and its relation to the public in the contemporary world. The book grew out of a session of the 4th World Archaeological Congress in Cape Town (1999), with some of that session's papers and other contributions making up the book, with a total of 16 contributors. The book's basic concern is the interaction between the public and archaeology all over the world, including not just excavations, but also excavated materials in museums. Following an introduction by Merriman, the book is divided into two main parts: 'Spreading the word: communication and interpretation', and 'In the public interest? The stakeholders'.

Merriman's introduction sums up the different practical and theoretical issues that effect archaeologists with regard to the public and the role(s) of archaeology in today's world. He defines the different 'publics' and their interest/roles in interacting with archaeology. He also stresses communication between the different types of public and the archaeologists. The book then continues with essays relating to specific areas. Two specific essays focus on the United States. The first, by John Jameson Jr., traces the history of archaeology and the public in the United States from the 18th century onward, and the second, by Karolyn Frost, relates to education and archaeology in the U.S. These are followed by a more general paper by Merriman on archaeology, museums, and the public in England, with a paper by Sally MacDonald and Catherine Shaw on a specific museum's experience, the Petrie Museum, following. The last three essays in this section all relate to how scholars can present their finds to the public in an accessible way. These include using the media, being used by the media, and exploiting the internet.

The second portion of the book relates more to who sponsors archaeology and what they gain from the work. It starts with an essay on the role of the state in sponsoring archaeological work in Britain with a second article on Brazil. Local versus national interests, academic versus local interests and the relevance of archaeological work to the community in which it is carried out is discussed in the articles in this section. 'Alternative' archaeology (formerly known as fringe, lunatic, pseudo-scientific, etc.) is also addressed in one paper in this section. The two final essays in part two of the book relate to antiquities theft and trying to get the public to feel responsible toward any incidental finds that they make; this includes, for Britain, an excursus of laws that encourage the reporting of chance discoveries of archaeological importance, such as the Treasure Trove Law.

This book fills the gap in archaeological literature in terms of how archaeologists and different branches of the public should and do interact. The contents are both intellectually engaging, and of practical use. The use of media to further the goals of archaeology, nationalism, public awareness, and many other issues are discussed, and are very relevant to the role of archaeology today throughout the world. The different essays are all well-written and informative, and the evidence, information, and discussions clearly presented. Nowadays the relationship between archaeologists and the public is much more relevant than previously, and plays a vital role in understanding, funding, and the continuation of many excavations; this book explores this relationship and provides options for all parties concerned so that a better understanding of what is at stake is understood by all, and can be of use to all, especially those who are involved with bringing the results of archaeological

investigations to the public. I recommend it highly, and believe that it is a must read for anyone interested or involved with cultural research management.

Merriman, N. Ed. 2003. *Public archaeology*. – London/New York, Routledge. 320 pp. ISBN 0-415-25889-8. £ 22.99 (paperback).