

Recensioni - Book Reviews



Fabio Maniscalco (ed.), *Tutela, conservazione e valorizzazione del patrimonio culturale subacqueo*, monographic series “Mediterraneum. Tutela e valorizzazione dei beni culturali ed ambientali”, vol. 4, Massa Publisher, Naples, 2004. (389 p., 35€, ISBN 88-87835-50-0)

How far the relatively new field of underwater archaeology has come in the past half century is amply demonstrated by the contents of this volume. The acceptance of underwater archaeology as an important branch of archaeology allows scholars to turn their attention from methods of excavating and conserving shipwrecks and sunken cities, with resultant interpretations and publications, to such specialized topics as the protection of coastal and marshland sites, and the protection of sites in international waters.

I would like to address here three problems of concern to me:

To whom do ancient shipwrecks in international waters belong? Thank goodness the idea that they belong to the nation of “cultural origin” has been abandoned. Nearly half a century after my excavation of a Bronze Age shipwreck at Cape Gelidonya, Turkey, scholars still publish articles debating whether it was Mycenaean Greek, proto-Phoenician, or Cypriot in origin. If the world’s finest experts cannot agree, how could any court assign nationality? And if a court decided that the ship was sailed by, say, Canaanites, should the ship and its contents belong now to modern Syria, Lebanon, or Israel? Similarly, the eleventh-century wreck I excavated at Serce Limani, Turkey, was sailed by Bulgarian merchants who lived on the shore of the Sea of Marmara, in present-day Turkey, and who picked up their cargo of medieval Islamic glass and glazed pottery at some site on the Syro-Palestinian coast, perhaps at Caesarea in Israel, or perhaps nearer Beirut in Lebanon. To whom should this cargo be given if it had been excavated in international waters? Under the assumption that the excavator had the internationally accepted credentials to excavate the site, I personally feel that the contents of the site might go to the excavator’s museum, for the benefit of all humankind, regardless if that museum is in Japan, France or Brazil. Can anyone say that a Roman wreck found far out in the Atlantic sailed originally from North Africa or Great Britain or Italy? Why, then, should it go to any one of those places instead of to the Louvre? Indeed, France could have been its country of origin.

Note that I speak only of ancient wrecks, whose origins may forever be in doubt. Those closer to shore, of course, should be treated like terrestrial sites, belonging to the nations in whose waters they have been found.

My second concern has to do with treasure hunting.

Some nations, even among those that have signed the UNESCO convention, still allow and even promote commercial treasure hunting in their own waters, at the expense of true archaeology, in the naïve belief that sunken treasures will allow them to help pay off their national debts. Can anyone name a single country that has profited from giving licenses to treasure hunters? It is well known that most treasure hunters make money not from finding treasure, but from enticing investments from people gullible enough to believe their exaggerated tales. Nations that promote archaeology, on the other hand, profit greatly. One example is the Bodrum Museum of Underwater Archaeology, now the most visited archaeological museum in all of Turkey, whose quarter million visitors a year bring in \$ 1,500,000 in ticket sales alone; add to that the amount each visitor spends in the museum shop, or on local restaurants, taxis, and sometimes hotels, and the amount is much more. When I lectured in Göteborg, Sweden, my wife and I spent hundreds of dollars on train, restaurant, taxi, and ticket costs in order to see the *Vasa* Museum, the major tourist attraction in Sweden. Yet, as I write these words, a nation that first invited the Institute of Nautical Archaeology to excavate an important early sixteenth-century wreck, has changed its mind and asked a treasure-hunting firm to undertake the task - believing the treasure-hunters' promises of cannons filled with emeralds!

Lastly, I would like to mention the problem of mixing legitimate tourism with the protection of underwater sites.

Tourists rightly are encouraged to visit ancient cities on land, but many nations have laws that restrict divers from diving wherever there may be ancient shipwrecks. Thus, the average person will never have the emotional thrill of seeing an ancient wreck. I would encourage governments to establish national underwater parks where there are shipwrecks in diving depths. These could be managed either under the free-enterprise system or by government employees. When I dived on a colorful coral reef off Bonaire in the Caribbean, I was allowed to do so only while accompanied by a guide, who made sure we did not break off bits of coral as souvenirs, or in any way harm the tropical fish. The guide was from the private firm from which I had rented my diving equipment, and it clearly was in the financial interest of that firm to protect the reef at all costs. I was charged for my dive. A similar government center could also charge for dives.

The problems which I have just mentioned, as well as many other questions associated with the protection and uses of our underwater cultural heritage in international wa-

ters, are treated in the 4th volume of the prestigious monograph series “Mediterraneum. Tutela e valorizzazione dei beni culturali ed ambientali”.

The volume, edited by Fabio Maniscalco, has two sections: the first deals with international regulations and national rules having to do with the protection and proper utilization of our underwater cultural heritage. The second section is subdivided into geographical areas and analyses, based largely on individual experiences, which show the multiple aspects of the protection, conservation and enhancement of our underwater cultural patrimony. The book also contains a large and exhaustive bibliography, and numerous panels that discuss various questions raised.

Contributions by: Adrian Anastasi, Paulo Fernando Bava de Camargo, Carlo Beltrame, Stefano Benini, Franco Bocchieri, Christopher Brandon, Paolo Caputo, Jacques Collina-Girard; Katerina P. Dellaporta, Sarah Dromgoole, Andrej Gaspari, Andrea Gioia, Ian M. Godfrey, David Gregory, Matthew Harpster, Robert L. Hohlfelder, Susan B.M. Langley, Thijs Maarleveld, Martijn Manders, Mario Mango Furnari, Fabio Maniscalco, Luigi Mrino, Jasen Mesić, Atilio Nasti, David Nutley, Inger Nyström, Liuba Ognenova-Marinova, John Peter Oleson, Levon Petrosyan, Jelka Pirkovič, Hristo Pirkovič, Gianfranco Purpura, Irena Radić Rossi, Gilson Rambelli, Anna Maria Reggiani, Vicki Richards, Flávio Rizzi Calippo, Lorena Salvatelli, Paola Sportelli, Felix Ter-Martirosov, Alessandra Toniolo, Roberto Torre, Attila J. Tóth, Elisa Trani, Sebastiano Tusa, Mónica Patricia Valentini, Robert Veccella, Christer Westerdahl.

This last volume of the monograph series “Mediterraneum” is a valuable document not only for experts in our field, but for all those who care about safeguarding international underwater cultural heritage.

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