

Incorporating a Tourism Agenda in Public Archaeology Work

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Abstract

Initiatives for the development of heritage tourism in a locality could be integrated in Public Archaeology. This is shown by a case study of the annual field schools of the Archaeological Studies Program of the University of the Philippines. There are at least five field schools where work of this kind has been done, namely in the Oriental Mindoro municipalities of Naujan, Bongabong, Bulalacao, and San Teodoro; and Opol, a municipality of Misamis Oriental. An archaeological project in El Nido, Palawan has also been included in this paper because it likewise has a thrust for Public Archaeology. From an examination of the work done in the field schools, it appears that a good program related to local tourism development includes an identification of stakeholders, making the development of local tourism a priority, identification of markets, and a strong sense of heritage among the cultural claimants.

Introduction

Archaeology has come of age from being a traditionally academic discipline to a field gradually being seen as having economic potential. The practical uses of archaeology to the wider society could be grouped into at least two sets. The first set is characterised by its appeal to a large audience

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because of the perceived romantic, adventurous, nostalgic and mysterious elements inherent in archaeology as could be seen by portrayals of the archaeologist and the archaeological in film, television documentaries, popular magazines, and video games (Gardner 2007; Holtorf 2007a; Stern 2007). The second set of uses relate to the valuation of heritage, in which archaeological sites and materials are considered a form of cultural heritage. The latter has resulted in the creation of policies and legal instruments for the conservation of heritage, like the conduction of Archaeological Impact Assessments (AIA) in some countries, and the official recognition of certain cultural places as “heritage sites.”

Conservation of a so-called “archaeological heritage” in the Philippines is encouraged by laws to protect and find more of these resources. The “Cultural Properties Preservation and Protection Act” (Republic Act 4846) with its subsequent amendments through Presidential Decree 374 has been one of the first to ensure that archaeological resources are only to be retrieved by qualified archaeologists, and only under supervision from the National Museum (Barretto 2001). This has been powerfully echoed in the recently formed Republic Act 10066 which is the “National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009” (NM, NCCA, FHFI 2010). Salvaging of these resources through the AIA meanwhile is implied in the production of an “Environmental Impact Statement” as required by Presidential Decree 1586 and its revisions, for projects in “environmentally critical” areas (Barretto 2001:30).

In the two sets that show use of archaeology to the public, it could be said that one of the major drivers of demand is consumption through tourism. Using archaeology for tourism, or what some advocates from the discipline would call *archaeological tourism* or *archaeotourism* (Archaeological Institute of America *et al.* n.d.:3), is a utility of archaeology that the public easily understands and is ethically acceptable. This evolving attitude towards archaeology comes as a consequence wherein cultural heritage is beginning to be treated as assets or resources and therefore is being perceived with utility (Conservation Institute 1999). Archaeological resources are finite just like most other resources, and with the issue of sustainability come the need for conservation.

The prevailing model for the significance of archaeology in a demand-driven system follows what Freeman Tilden had thought about work on heritage resources:

Tilden's central thesis – 'through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection' – offered a resounding rationale for interpretation in the service of conservation (Bryant 2006:173).

To uphold archaeologists' values that call for the conservation of archaeological resources, the public needs to share these values and to make archaeology necessary for them in terms of education, entertainment, and/or leisure. The question of financing the sustainability of the archaeological resource could find solutions by cultivating ties with the tourism industry (McManamon 1993) to expand the public's exposure to archaeology and its applications.

Archaeologists and cultural workers lament about the ignorant attitude given by the public to cultural materials and structures. The rational economic man (or society), one would argue, would place very little importance to cultural materials if his (or its) needs are not met by these things. When there are instances of using these resources for profit, it is usually in the context of treasure- or pot-hunting, which not only is against archaeological values but also downright unsustainable.

Presenting archaeology and cultural heritage as a viable resource for tourism appears to be the most workable enterprise among local communities that makes use of archaeological and historical resources. The Philippine government's priority on tourism has resulted in the creation of tourism councils among local government units to develop the industry. It has also caused strategic planning for tourism to be always integrated in the master plans of most municipalities. It is within this setting that a possible way of incorporating archaeology and cultural heritage to help the local economy could be made. One good way of initiating this agenda is through the interface of archaeological research with community education now being done in the field schools.

Archaeology as Tourism Product

The literature on the interface of archaeology and tourism is growing. A staunchly academic discipline by tradition is facing up to the challenges of an ever-dynamic world pervaded by economic necessity and globalisation. By treating archaeology as heritage, tourism has transformed and packaged it as a product of a "heritage industry" (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996:2).

The issues cropping up from the "commodification of heritage" in a tourism product based on archaeology are similar to the ones

encountered in other kinds of cultural heritage tourism. McManus (1997) has presented a good outline of the topic using the situation of a heritage attraction in Ireland. One is the conflicting goal between conservation and selling, in which the priority of preserving a site or structure depends on its potential to generate income. This fear of conservationists regarding the reduction of “cultural” decisions into “economic” ones has been exposed by Professor David Throsby of Macquarie University as he discussed about Australian cultural heritage, saying that:

We cannot conserve everything and so choices must be made. Furthermore, resources are costly; if they are used for the maintenance and preservation of heritage they are not available for other uses, so they incur opportunity costs. The range of tangible and intangible costs that may be implicated in heritage decisions is extensive and multifaceted. (Throsby 2006:4)

However, he suggests that heritage resources should be considered not only as capital in terms of financial value, but also as “cultural capital” that carries value because of the importance ascribed to its historical, cultural, or aesthetic aspects. Likewise heritage resources have also to be seen through non-use values that could refer to:

...the asset's existence value (people value the existence of the heritage item even though they may not consume its services directly themselves); its option value (people wish to preserve the option that they or others might consume the asset's services at some future time); and its bequest value (people may wish to bequeath the asset to future generations). (Throsby 2006:6)

It appears that the conservative opinion of maintaining heritage as community identity than as tourism product (McManus 1997) is the more prevailing sentiment among archaeologists. Much noise has been created about the issue of interpretation, which in one axis involves the translation of information produced by the archaeologist and given to the consumer, and in another talks about democratising representation by giving the various cultural stakeholders their voices in the translated information. There are, for instance, concerns about the “Disney-fication” of the past, in which information about the past is being distorted and over-simplified to suit the wants of the tourist (McManus 1997:93). Although most archaeologists consider this as anathema to the discipline, some like Holtorf (2007b) see this as a strategy to engage the public in a way that makes use of effective marketing instruments existing at present.

There are calls for archaeologists to be aware not just of ideology and literary genre, but of present economic structures too that affect archaeological interpretation (Silberman 2007). Cultural stakeholders as consumers also determine interpretation, such that archaeology and the

related fields of study have been talking about the concept of “multiple pasts,” which according to one author (Kehoe 2007) should not be taken as failures in interpretation but should be viewed as expressions of diversity but guided by ethics.

Despite these concerns from the academe, using archaeology as tourism products have been seen in the positive light by governments of some nation-states, which use as their leverage their country image and archaeological resources for economic development while promoting national identity (Stritch 2006). At the local community level, projects creating tourism enterprises oftentimes come in the form of sustainable development programs with a sensitivity for community ownership and participation. An agenda for promoting tourism through public archaeology could thus turn archaeological sites and museums in local communities into public education tools, increase income through tourism development, provide a rationale for resource integrity and inculcate a stewardship ethic among the community (Hoffman *et al.* 2002).

Case Study: Public Archaeology initiatives of the Archaeological Studies Program (ASP)

Field schools are annually held by the Archaeological Studies Program of the University of the Philippines as a formal course that forms part of the masters degree programme of the office. For a period of around three weeks in April or May graduate students work on an archaeological site to receive training in field methods. The field school is generally academically-oriented as it is where methods and theories in the core courses of the graduate degree programme is demonstrated, but since 2004 the ASP has integrated within it a “public archaeology” component. Dr. Victor Paz, director of the ASP and team leader of its field schools from 2002 to 2008, has defined public archaeology as “the practice of archaeology with clear concerns to communicate with a living community connected geographically with the archaeological research area” (Paz 2007:55).

From the definition stated by Paz, public archaeology has revolved around enriching cultural heritage and this is true regarding the field schools during the past five years. This has solidified as one of the objectives of these annual projects, which is to “actively inform local communities about the significance and value of heritage and its management at the level of communities” (ASP 2006; 2007). Paz (2007:55-56) mentions the “base-to-top” approach as a particular framework for

public archaeology where work is to commence from the community to the larger public. The public archaeology facet of the field school is a venue in which the agenda for archaeological tourism could be appropriately pursued.

ASP is tasked to advance the study of archaeology about the Philippines and Southeast Asia through research and instruction. Annually since 2004, ASP has conducted its field schools in five different sites with a public archaeology component, alongside a project in El Nido, Palawan that has been engaged with the municipal tourism office (Figure 1). The first project conducted by the ASP with a public archaeology component was done in the church ruins located at Barangay Bancuro, in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro in 2004 (Paz 2004). This was a problematic case,

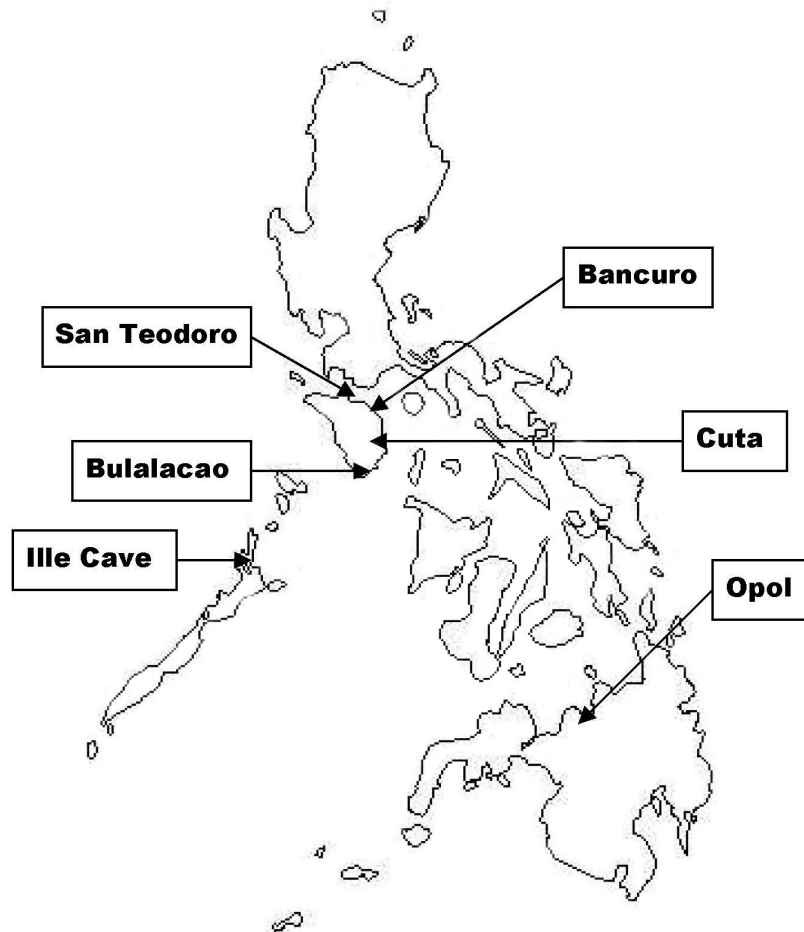


Figure 1. The locations of archaeological sites in the Philippines mentioned in the article. (by the author, using blank map from <http://geography.about.com/library/blank/blxphilippines.htm>)

not only because it is the first of such projects but also due to peculiar situations happening during that time. The ruins, dating to the Spanish Occupation, were already a pilgrimage site of the Roman Catholic faithful even before the project was done, and a modern chapel, built within the old church site and where mass is held only in particular occasions, may have been one of the reasons for people to visit it. The place was identified as a potential archaeological site because of the existence of ruins and because it qualifies for being the previous main settlement of Naujan as told in old written documents.

Paz (2007) narrates the experience of the team in its excavation of the Bancuro site. An issue that proved difficult to manage was the trust of the local community to the team, which was for the most part embedded in an atmosphere of heightened political conflict as the 2004 national and local elections drew nearer. The field school, which was supported by the incumbent officials, was at the same time attacked by members of the opposition party who accused the team members of treasure hunting. Their accusations derived from the activities of a previous group that, according to people in the village, came to Bancuro for a medical mission but at nighttime went to dig among the ruins looking for treasure. Also suspicious of the ASP team were people in-charge of the chapel who similarly entertained the idea that the team could be digging for treasure instead of doing archaeological work.

The ASP team members however, managed to continue the field school, and allowed the community to watch the daily excavations as they went on. At the end they put up an exhibit that showed the results of the project, accompanied by the holding of a thanksgiving program at the site that lasted until nighttime. The exhibit consisted of several of the actual artefacts recovered from the excavation and many panel illustrations and photographs related to the excavation and archaeological site. While the exhibit materials were placed under the care and ownership of the community afterwards, the actual artefacts on display were later sent to the National Museum in Manila for storage. Surprisingly after a year when the ASP members were returning to Mindoro for another field school, the team members discovered that the exhibits were now being curated in a special room of the chapel, complete with panels and glass casing built in which to present the materials. The initiative for this came from the chapel wards, who were before suspicious of the ASP team, while labour and funds were contributed by other community members. Since then the municipal and provincial governments have introduced the

ruins at Bancuro as one of their tourist attractions, alongside Lake Naujan and other ecotourism spots.

Lessons from Bancuro were applied one year after in the next field school at the hamlet of Cuta in Barangay Anilao, Bongabong municipality of the same province (Paz 2007). The site also featured ruins of a church dating to the Spanish Occupation but was not a well-known tourist site like the Bancuro ruins. The community in Cuta was generally much supportive of the project. During the public archaeology program at the excavation's end, people were so much involved as they displayed how meaningful to them the stone structures were in terms of heritage. Aside from participating in the mass held on-site, they showed for instance how these ruins figured largely in their folklore as they lit candles and performed offerings as a way of acknowledging and giving thanks to the supernatural. Exhibits pertaining to the site and its archaeology were also put up, and afterwards were entrusted to the community. Although the place remains undeveloped as a tourist site as of this writing, the church ruins at Cuta has already been recognised as one of the cultural attractions of Bongabong.

In 2006 the field school went to the southernmost part of the province, which is the municipality of Bulalacao. We have here an archaeological site featuring the Spanish Occupation ruins of what could be an old fort or church on top of a hill located in the middle of a mangrove swamp. In this field school season we saw the active involvement of the local government in the project (ASP 2006). The archaeological project was seen as complimentary to the development plan drawn by the municipal administration of transforming the swamp area into an ecotourism destination. Officials of the municipal administration aim to convert this area into a wildlife sanctuary, with boardwalks that would bring visitors to a tour of the forest and its floral, faunal, and cultural attractions, like this archaeological site and an existing Mangyan village nearby. With the help of archaeology, they hoped to find out more about the old structures so that they could sufficiently present it to visitors. The usual public archaeology program was held in the last days of the field school, with exhibits, tour of the site, a mass, and a party in the evening. Similar to the previous seasons, the exhibits were left in the care of the municipal government.

During the 2007 field school we were working again on Spanish Occupation ruins of what seemed to be a fort situated on the beach at San

Teodoro (ASP 2007), a neighboring municipality of Mindoro's most popular destination, Puerto Galera, at the island's north coast. The site is recognised as a municipal attraction, but pales much in comparison to the marketed ecotourism features such as Mount Halcon, beach resorts, and the numerous caves and waterfalls abounding in the area. It is however relatively popular among the locals as a place of pilgrimage and picture-taking venue. The ruins were reconstructed decades ago in form of a *baluarte* or fort, like what the community perceives it to be, and the barangay chapel was eventually relocated beside it. A statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary was placed inside it, but after an earthquake toppled the statue of the Blessed Virgin from its pedestal, it was then placed in front of the chapel where it presently stands. The year 2007 was again election season but we did not encounter challenging situations like those in Bancuro. The property owners, incumbent officials in various levels of local government, and the rest of the community were very accommodating of our project. There were instances of treasure hunting in the past several years but the trust of the community was easily formed and maintained right from the very start of the project.

From Oriental Mindoro the field school site shifted to the municipality of Opol in the province of Misamis Oriental in 2008. Close to the bustling provincial capital of Cagayan de Oro, Opol has potentials as a place of cultural heritage because of several archaeological sites identified within the municipality (Neri and Ragraio 2008). Opol's present Roman Catholic church stands beside what many believe was its precursory church building in the 19th century. There are ruins of walls outlining a perimeter of what could be the area of this old church. The municipal administration and members of the local community have demonstrated their support for the project. Although the church ruins were already included in the municipal tourism plan long before the project was conceived, there are no immediate actions yet to develop it as an attraction. What was seen in this project's public archaeology component was the invitation to the exhibit and program of people who are potentially helpful in developing the area for cultural tourism. Among these are members of the Cagayan de Oro Chamber of Commerce who told me what they think of developing the site from an entrepreneurial perspective.

Intensive archaeological work is being conducted at Ille Cave at the northern end of Palawan Island. Located in Barangay New Ibajay within the municipality of El Nido, Ille Cave is on a karst which stands on

the valley of the Dewil River. Excavations at Ille Cave do not constitute part of the annual field school, but are part of a separate project covering a whole valley in El Nido that has great archaeological potential. Present archaeological excavations in the area were initiated by a collaboration between the NM, UP-ASP, Non-Government Organisations like the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM), the Southeast Asian Institute of Culture and Environment, Inc. (SEAICE), and a private company, the Ten Knots Development Corporation. Since 1998, surveys and excavations conducted almost annually have provided data on human activity at Ille, with the earliest dating to at least 10,000 years BP (Before Present) and with almost every cultural phase represented up to recent times (Paz *et al.* 2009).

El Nido is the quintessential representation of Palawan. With its lagoons and reefs, islands, mangrove swamps, caves, cliffs and forests, it is a popular ecotourism and sports tourism destination in the country. Cultural tourism has only started to pick up recently with the growing interest in Ille Cave of tour operators and the local government. The municipal administration would begin creating a museum in town showcasing artefacts from Ille Cave and other archaeological sites of the municipality. It is also assuming responsibility for the site by purchasing the property in which the caves are located. The marketing of these cultural sites is gradually being seen in advertisements made by the local government and business sector. While the Tabon Cave Complex is gaining fame as cultural heritage, the Ille Cave in El Nido has just been receiving its first break. With no big clout to show yet, the archaeological site of the Ille Cave is an inevitable but far less spectacular appendage to the climb of this cave's limestone tower, which is the foremost tourist attraction of the barangay. Thus a flyer to promote tourism in the area a few years ago invites visitors to:

Explore the historical Ille Cave, a 45 minute drive away from El Nido! It has attracted the interests of various archaeologists over the last few years. Human remains were found and excavations are still going on.

For the adventurous...climbing the mountain over the cave is another challenge and (sic) [with] the panoramic view over the rice fields, karst mountains and Sharkfin Bay in the east (El Nido Tour Guides Association n.d.).

Updating the local government and community with new information about archaeological activities happening in Ille and the other surrounding caves has been purpose of the public archaeology of these

excavations. This has been done through a series of dialogues, lectures, and exhibits (Paz *et al.* 2009).

Conclusion

The public archaeology component of the field school has provided a space for experiments in the development of archaeological tourism. With the primary objective of advancing cultural awareness and heritage, the “ASP brand” of public archaeology can be extended to building community-based, tourism-related work and enterprises that could provide livelihood, instill a stronger sense of heritage, and simultaneously make cultural projects sustainable.

Among the things identified from these experiences that are crucial to a good program of public archaeology related to tourism development include identification of stakeholders and a good dialogue with them. Stakeholders in this case are people who have interests in the site and/or project, which may include political actors such as officials in the different levels of public administration, political camps, and influential entities; property owners; fund givers; entrepreneurs and business owners; non-governmental organisations like heritage advocates, church groups, and cultural organisations; and other cultural claimants. The development of a tourism program in a locality only becomes possible and successful with the collaboration of the different sectors involved in the place. For instance, dialogues should also include talks with groups like the business sector which may have more effective ideas on how to develop the enterprises, or with local community residents who may have suggestions or positive and negative reactions about the project. The attitude of the community is also affected by the timing of the activity, and we can cite the conduction of the field schools in relation to important events happening, like the national and local elections.

Another thing is when tourism becomes a priority industry of the local government unit (LGU) and entrepreneurs. Localities that have some experience with the industry of tourism are likely to be keen in developing archaeological attractions. Those that are adjacent to known tourism centres also tend to capitalise on their potential resources. We can cite as examples the case of Bulalacao which have vast potential resources in the form of unspoiled beaches and islands, mountains, forests, seafood and agricultural production, and accommodating Mangyan communities. It should also be noted that boat trips are now being organised from here

to the world-famous island resort of Boracay in Aklan province less than one hundred kilometres away. These make the LGU optimistic in developing the archaeology of the municipality as part of their tourism resources. The second example in our case study is El Nido. Having the most popular of Palawan's ecotourism attractions, developers of the tourist industry here are gradually including the archaeological resources of El Nido as a supplement to the destination of Bacquit Bay, its islets, and dive sites.

Identification and development of markets are important. The experiences of the ASP, for example, partly show that archaeological sites where its field schools were being conducted could satisfy the needs of different kinds of visitors. These visitors could either be pilgrims, heritage tourists, or people from the locality. Depending on the consumer type, enterprises should then invest in the necessary facilities to encourage tourism development in the area. Finally, communities that have formed a strong sense of heritage among themselves are likely to have a positive attitude for stewardship of archaeological resources, viewing them not only in terms of economic benefits but in other forms of rewards as well, like in the case of Bancuro, Cuta and San Teodoro where the sites are deeply imbued with religious importance.

Archaeology has great potentials in developing the tourism industry of the Philippines, as more actors and avenues now exist to advance archaeology in the country. Although the community of archaeologists in the country has been proactive in working for their discipline, there should also be a conscious effort in considering the needs of the various cultural stakeholders to which archaeology could readily show its application.

At present a much greater fraction of public archaeology being done in the Philippines is more of educating the community about basic information on culture and history. While this is an important aspect of archaeologists' relationship to the public, it is equally important to identify things by which the public could relate to archaeology and cultural heritage in a more "realistic" and ethical way, that which takes into consideration their resources, needs, and perspectives. By introducing them to a framework that makes their cultural resources valuable to their community in terms of both short and long term needs, people would understand that they would need to take care of these resources and guard their comparative advantage, while being part of a culture and heritage that they are proud of. Enhancing the role of the

community in conserving archaeological and cultural resources the sustainable way entails capacity-building, means for preservation and effective management.

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