

ones are encouraged. Clearly, this book highlights the importance of yesterday's bridges in relation to today's and tomorrow's bridges.

References

- Gonzales, Anna. 2006. *Bridging the Past, Present and Future: A Conservation Management Action Plan for Malagonlong Bridge Tayabas, Quezon Province, Philippines*. Unpublished Manuscript. Lund University, Sweden.
- Harrison, David. 2007. *The Bridges of Medieval England: Transport and Society 400-1800*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- DeLony, E. 1996. Context for World Heritage Bridges. From ICOMOS. Accessed 6 October 2010, from <http://www.icomos.org/studies/bridges.htm>.
- National Historical Institute. n.d. *Criteria for Identification of Historic Sites and Structures*. Manila: N.P.

The Letter and the Scroll:

What Archaeology Tells Us about the Bible

Robin Currie and Stephen G. Hyslop

2009. Washington D.C.: National Geographic

Review by Melodina Sy Cruz

Graduate student

Archaeological Studies Program, University of the Philippines

The Letter and the Scroll, a comprehensive book on the Biblical world, starts with an introduction to the Bible, narrating briefly how the Bible came to be what it is now, from the selection of the books to be included to the translations that have been made. It delves into archaeological finds, the most famous of which is the complete version of the Book of Isaiah which was part of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered near the ruins of Qumran by Bedouin shepherds in 1947. The authors also explain the importance of the Bible as a written record of the Biblical world which encompasses the Near East or the Middle East, as well as parts of the Mediterranean, the whole known as Ancient Mesopotamia. Moreover, it is a record of the interaction of the Hebrew people with other groups (Old Testament), as well as the co-existence of the Christians with non-Christians (New Testament). Finally, the Bible is seen as a guide in the archaeology of the Biblical World.

This book is targeted at those who hold a deep interest in the Bible, for if there's one literary work that has generated much controversy, it would have to be the Holy Bible. Since the Christian Medieval Period in Europe, people have long proposed various interpretations that have caused great disputes. Indeed, while being beset with problems both internally and externally throughout the years, Christianity as a whole, as well as its forebear Judaism, has been strong even with the changing times and even with scientific progresses that gave us Darwin's theory of evolution and Lyell's uniformitarianism which challenged views on the Judeo-Christian religion. With the discovery of Neolithic tools, Bishop Ussher's computation of the age of the earth was questioned. Indeed, archaeology was first seen as an added menace to the increasing attacks against the Judeo-Christian religion. But that was so yesterday. At present, instead of rejecting claims made by archaeology and insisting on the truth of the Bible, the clergy has sought the discipline as a friend rather than as a foe. The main aim is to use archaeological discoveries in verifying the things mentioned in the Bible, which would not only preserve the validity of the Bible as a historical account, but also to increase faith among the religious groups.

The book is optimistic that through archaeology, a better understanding of the Bible can be attained. According to Currie and Hyslop, authors of the book, the purpose of the book is "not to prove or disprove the Bible, but to explore the world that gave rise to its scriptures and consider them in their historical context—an approach that can enhance one's appreciation of the Bible, both as a work of history and a statement of faith." (p. 19)

Indeed, the book is consistent with its goals. With maps that go alongside the texts and crisp pictures of unearthed finds, it is relatively easy for readers to follow the narrative and to locate where specific important events occurred as these are plotted in the maps of the ancient world. The maps also serve as a useful tool to allow readers a glimpse of the extension of the different empires which had interactions with the Hebrews and the first Christians. To complete the very visual appeal of the book, famous Biblically themed paintings from different periods created by European painters are inserted. Famous archaeologists are also mentioned together with their invaluable work.

One of the most interesting chapters is Chapter One, wherein the focus is on Leonard Woolley and his discovery of the alleged evidence of

the Great Flood. And because when talking about floods, it is inevitable to discuss also the other flood myths of Mesopotamia, photos of clay tablets with brief interpretations are thoughtfully included. In Chapter Two, which covers the Biblical Egypt, the most interesting part is how archaeology aids in the explanation of seemingly incredible accounts of the plagues. It is revealed that plagues and natural disasters were recorded in myths as well as on an extant Famine Stela. Moreover, a photograph of swarms of locusts in Southern Israel, taken in November 2004, is shown. These swarms allegedly came from Egypt.

Another notable archaeologist featured in the book is Austen Henry Layard who excavated at Nimrod and discovered a black marble obelisk, as presented in Chapter Six. He also discovered the palace of King Sennacherib wherein the walls are adorned with reliefs depicting the king's many achievements, with the conquest of Lachish (second most important city in Judah after Jerusalem) being the most Biblically relevant and significant. The Taylor Prism, where the conqueror-king boasted the tribute of 30 talents of gold and 800 talents of silver given to him, stands in contrast to the 30 talents of gold and 300 talents of silver demanded by the king as recorded in the *Book of Kings* 18:14. (pp. 194-196)

Another interesting topic covered by the book is that of the esoteric communities like the Essenes. Chapter Six mentions that in the Qumran cave, all books except the Book of Esther can be found. The authors did not probe the details nor try to investigate the reason for the exclusion of the said book. It is therefore incumbent upon the reviewer who has read the entire Bible many times over to explain why. In all the books in the Bible, it is curious to note that the *Book of Esther* is the only one and only book which presents a narrative without any divine or supernatural intervention. Perhaps it is because of this exclusion of divine forces in the workings of history that led to the exclusion of the book by whatever sect that lived in the Qumran caves.

Chapter Seven focuses on the life of Jesus Christ as can be backed up by archaeology and the Bible. While many people are hungry for details about the Holy Grail, this book disappoints in that it does not even bother to mention even that myth. But it is quite pardonable since there is already a lot of literature going around regarding the Grail myth and perhaps with the belief that it is just one of the many intrigues conjured to make Jesus' life more appealing. Still, the inclusion of the grail myth would have made this chapter more exciting. It would also be of worth to

know what the authors think of the said myth.

To compensate for the lack of reference to the grail myth, however, one controversial artefact is presented, also in Chapter Seven. The elaborate ossuary has the name Yehoseph bar Qypa inscribed on its side. It is believed to be the tomb of the high priest Joseph Caiaphas. It is disappointing though, that the authors failed to mention the many hoaxes created involving tombs and ossuaries. In fact, in a news article published in the World News section of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* dated 31 December, 2004, it was found out that the ossuary of Jesus' brother James, which was earlier believed to be authentic, was nothing but a forgery. It would have been nice if hoaxes and frauds involving Biblical finds were also included in the book, just so readers would be aware that sometimes, people are wont to do anything to prove something.

While the contents are truly engaging and interesting, it would have been better if the authors have included or discussed briefly the methods employed in Biblical archaeology so as to convince readers that Biblical archaeology is not just some discipline working under a religious propaganda. It could have also explained how ancient scripts are deciphered. The book lacks information on how interpretation is done, merely presenting interpretations and leaving the reader to take a leap of faith that these archaeologists indeed know what they are doing. Another shortcoming is the lack of measurements of the artefacts. Only a few are given estimate measurements, and only a few are described as to what they are made of. The rest are just presented as is, in crisp and clear photos, with their names. It is quite understandable, however, that the book is not a site report, and as such, it is practically targeted at the general public who is merely interested in Biblical archaeology but who does not wish to delve deep into the archaeological world. Making the book look like a site monograph would indeed have turned people off at the mere sight of incomprehensible photos and descriptions.

On the whole, the book is an invaluable source of photos of unearthed artefacts from Ancient Mesopotamia, as well as concise information on Biblical sites. That the authors exerted effort in consolidating archaeological works already done, together with interpretations and comparisons with Biblical accounts is appreciated.

Reference

Currie, R. and S. Hyslop. 2009. *The Letter and the Scroll: What Archaeology*

Tells Us about the Bible. Washington D.C.: National Geographic.

Kalman, M. 2009. "The Burial Box of Jesus' Brother: A Fraud?". In *Time World*, September 5. Accessed 20 July 2011, from <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1920720,00.html>.

Submissions

Papers may be submitted throughout the year. Articles are reviewed by at least three specialists from a pool of international scholars. Reviewers' comments and suggestions are forwarded to the author(s), who should implement them in the final version of the paper. The main text, including captions, must not be more than 7,000 words provided that this can stand on their own and have not been previously published. Book reviews are also accepted. We also accept longer articles. Manuscripts may be mailed or personally submitted with a soft copy to:

The Editor
Hukay
Archaeological Studies Program
University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City
Philippines 1101

Or the articles can be sent to **Grace Barretto-Tesoro** at mdbarretto@up.edu.ph

For orders, please contact The University of the Philippines Press at press@up.edu.ph or <http://www.uppress.com/>

For more information, please visit <http://asp.up.edu.ph/hukay/>



Hukay

Volume 16

2011

A Report on the Archaeological Survey Along the Coastal Area of Misamis Oriental, Philippines

Lee M. Neri

Spacing Archaeological Sites: An Application of the Geographical Information System to Philippine Archaeology

Katherine K. Esteves

Incorporating a Tourism Agenda in Public Archaeology Work

Jack G. L. Medrana

BOOK REVIEWS

Timothy Clack and Marcus Brittain (Eds.). 2009. *Archaeology and the Media*.

Review by Froilyn Anne Naparan

Hojjat Adeli (Ed.). 2008. *Historic Bridges: Evaluation, Preservation and Management*.

Review by Kathleen Tantuico

Robin Currie and Stephen G. Hyslop. 2009. *The Letter and the Scroll: What Archaeology Tells Us about the Bible*.

Review by Melodina Sy Cruz