

archaeology, and therefore primary sources are important in order to understand and situate past material culture.

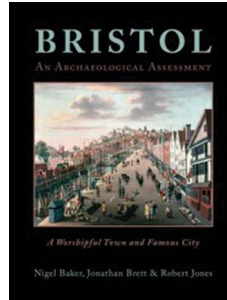
The next sub-section is devoted to trade and connectivity, with an interesting, although again poorly illustrated, chapter on dhow trade. Two further high-quality chapters by Walz and Kusimba examine the relationships between the Swahili and inland areas. The chapter on the currencies of the Swahili world is rather vague and would have benefited from greater input from numismatists. On the other hand, the chapters by Marilee Wood (on beads), by Seth Priestman (on Islamic ceramics) and by Bing Zhao and Dashu Qin (on Chinese ceramics) are excellent and well documented, with ceramic drawings and even photographs of the Chinese material.

Horton's chapter on the Islamic architecture of the Swahili coast deals exclusively with religious architecture: mosques and tombs. I would question whether this categorisation is appropriate—one could equally argue that Islamic architecture also encompasses palaces, forts, town walls and houses. This chapter also misses out some key German and French publications. Fortunately, the following chapter by Gensheimer does deal with Swahili houses and is more grounded in recent literature, despite again having too few illustrations.

Part III is devoted to the early modern and contemporary Swahili coast. I am pleased that this part attempts to acknowledge that Swahili culture is still very much alive. The chapter on 'Islam in the Swahili world' by Bang is essential to understanding coastal Muslim traditions and society. It is important to take into consideration the Sufi brotherhoods throughout the Indian Ocean, not only for anthropologists but also for archaeologists seeking to explain the presence of multiple mosques at sites such as Songo Mnara or Kua on the Tanzanian coast. The article by Biginagwa and Mapunda on the Kilwa-Nyasa caravan route provides insights into a major axis of the ivory/slave trade with the hinterland, an alternative to the famous route from Bagamoyo-Ujiji. Overall, this book has many positives, but is firmly focused on the Anglophone world.

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NIGEL BAKER, JONATHAN BRETT & ROBERT JONES.
Bristol: a worshipful town and famous city. An archaeological assessment. 2018. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78570-877-0 £40.



This substantial volume follows in the footsteps of a series of pilot studies for the Urban Archaeological Strategies programme carried out for Cirencester, York and Durham, commissioned by (then) English Heritage in 1992.

These were then extended to detailed studies of some 30 towns with extensive archaeological remains, including Bristol. The database of evidence, which is at the core of this book, was created in 1996 and the first draft of the text was produced in 2002. This is therefore a project more than 20 years in the making.

Bristol seems to have its origins in the late tenth or early eleventh century, although prehistoric and Roman activity are known in the area, including near the city centre, albeit under thick natural deposits of 4m or more. Bristol became a major town during the medieval period as a result of its involvement in overseas trade, first with Europe and then with America; this in turn fuelled the emergence of new industries in the city at the end of the seventeenth century and raised its fortunes before a gradual decline in the nineteenth century. The book is divided into three parts: the background to the archaeological study of the city (approximately 40 pages); the development of Bristol (around 345 pages); and the assessment of the archaeology (some 23 pages). An appendix lists a selection of 'events' or interventions that have produced significant archaeological results.

The first part includes a fast-flowing resumé of the history of Bristol with few bibliographic references (Chapter 1); the setting, geology and topography (Chapter 2); and the history of research (Chapter 3). For a city that is 'topographically complex' (p. vii), the maps in the introductory chapter do little to help the reader grasp its setting or principal features. The first figure is a map of the area, lacking a scale, north sign, any major labels (e.g. Wales, the River Severn) or the standard British Isles inset to place the area

into context. Key elements mentioned in the text, such as the rivers, the Floating Harbour and the historic core of the city are not identified in subsequent figures (until Chapter 5), and this makes the narrative hard to follow unless the reader is already familiar with the city.

The second part, the main body of text, gathers all the evidence available and reconstructs the urban structure and development of Bristol by period, area and monument type (city defences, churches, monasteries and the like). The expansion of the urban area is well attested in the thirteenth century, when new suburbs were added along the city's fringes, including on reclaimed wetland. Active management of the river required raising the ground above flood levels and the use of riverside revetments, sometimes reusing ships' timbers. The text here uses cross-references to the 'events' in the appendix, rather than to bibliographic references, so that checking the original source becomes a two-step process, complicated by the fact that the events are not combined into a single numerical list. Most of the excavation drawings are extracted directly from the original sources, and no re-working or integration of the data is attempted (for example, Bristol Castle; figs 5.10–5.11), but the general maps for the location of the main features are extremely useful. This part of the text makes use of the stunning collection of early maps, nineteenth-century watercolours and early photographs, mainly of buildings, many of which have long since disappeared.

Bristol's population grew from 20 000 in 1700 to 125 146 in 1841, and to a third of a million people at the beginning of the twentieth century (p. 298). This growth was accompanied by new areas of housing and a marked expansion of industry, with controlled leases on buildings to restrict industrial growth in residential areas, as well as a remodelling of the city centre. Although the emphasis here is on buildings, perhaps influenced by recent research and publication (Leech 2014), remains from a wide range of these industries have been found during archaeological investigations, especially over the last 15 years through the excavation of large open areas (Chapter 8).

Archaeologically, Bristol has long been a daunting prospect: the very rich and informative maps, especially from the nineteenth century, and regular excavations from the 1970s onwards anticipate a richness of

information that has been truncated by piecemeal publication. The backlog of material waiting to be studied is still a real concern. It is in the assessment (part 3) where all these issues are explored further, setting a valuable agenda for the future by identifying the gaps in our current knowledge. An issue that comes through clearly is the gulf between earlier excavations and more recent investigations carried out by large commercial units; the latter are not only publishing detailed reports, but also include studies of animal and fish bones and botanical data. These sorts of reports would allow for the synthesis of bioarchaeological data to explore victualling and food supply, something that is called for in the research agenda (part 3). Other themes identified as requiring further investigation include: the interaction of the town with monastic houses, and especially with rural communities and its hinterland through the ages; the study of new industries related to transatlantic trade; port and docks infrastructure; shipbuilding; and studies of local industries, especially of glass and pottery manufacture. How welcome it would be to see some of these ideas being progressed by the city (museums and university alike). What opportunities might there be for public engagement and dissemination?

This book contains a wealth of information from many different sources and it is full of entertaining details, such as the use of forged documents in the eighteenth century to write the history of the city. The collection of early engravings and watercolours (Chapter 3) is particularly interesting. Heavily oriented towards the urban fabric and structure, rather than material culture, it covers the life of the city from its medieval beginnings to the nineteenth century, and provides an essential first step for anyone wishing to explore Bristol with an eye on its historic environment.

References

- LEECH, R. 2014. *The town house in medieval and early modern Bristol*. Swindon: English Heritage.

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