

Impact case study template (REF3b)

Title of case study: Archaeology and World Heritage Status on the Cape Verde Islands

1. Summary of the impact

The Republic of Cape Verde is an island nation of approximately 500,000 people off western Africa. Following a history of European colonization, particularly in the context of slave trading, it achieved independence in 1975. Its economy is largely service- and tourism-oriented, making enhanced recognition of its heritage of paramount social and economic importance. At the invitation of the University Jean Piaget, Cape Verde, and working with the country's *Ministério da Cultura*, the University of Cambridge has conducted excavations since 2006 and trained local archaeologists since 2007. This work helped underpin the Ministry's successful bid, in 2008 to 2009, for Cape Verde's first World Heritage Site (WHS) – overturning a previous negative decision by the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee in 1992.

2. Underpinning research

Since 2006, Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and Christopher Evans (respectively Reader in the Division of Archaeology and the Executive Director of the Cambridge Archaeological Unit, both employed by the University of Cambridge for over twenty years) have conducted pioneering archaeological investigations on the Cape Verde islands, focusing on the Portuguese early slave-transport port-of-call centre of Cidade Velha (also known as Ribeira Grande). Prior to their involvement there had been no professional archaeological investigation of the early colonial history of these islands and their important position within the emergence of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Until their work, the history of Cape Verde had only been known through textual sources. This archaeological research has therefore added invaluable new information including the layout of the earliest settlement (Cidade Velha), the character and phasing of the earliest religious structures, and the development of local cultural forms. The archaeological works undertaken by Sørensen and Evans have begun to reveal the contribution of the island's African population, which hitherto was almost invisible despite the country's existence being the result of the slave trade. Through such discoveries their work has contributed in important ways both to grand narratives, such as studies of Portuguese imperial expansion in the Atlantic World, and to specific socio-political discussions of the construction of creolized cultures, in particular whether west-African Luso-African identities and cultural-political practices extended to Cape Verde.

Between 2006 and 2011 Sørensen and Evans conducted an environs landscape survey and located several of the major building complexes from the foundation of Cidade Velha reconstructed on the basis of early maps. Concurrent test excavations led to the discovery in 2007 of the remains of *N. S. da Conceição*, the earliest known European church in the tropics (fifteenth century AD) as well as the remains of an early hospital and a Jesuit seminary (both sixteenth century AD). Rescue excavations were also conducted within the waterfront-area of the early town.

The work altered understanding of the historical importance of Cidade Velha, as it provides material proof of text-based interpretations of the presence of fifteenth-century religious structures and the sixteenth-century presence of the Jesuits. The archaeological work has revised previous assumptions about the layout of the earliest settlement and its subsequent development, and complements evidence of worldwide-trade previously only witnessed

through commercially rescued shipwrecks. In addition, the work demonstrates that there are still several unexplored ruins covered by alluvial deposits.

The significance of the research has been widely recognized by key scholars in the field of Portuguese early colonialism: Abulafia (Cambridge), Manuel (Lisbon) and Caritas (Funchal). Arguably its most significant academic contribution underpinning the WHS bid is in revealing that there is a tangible physical record of the early colonial activities, including the slave trade and the emergence of a creole Luso-African culture.

3. References to the research (in alphabetical/chronological order)

Key Research Outputs:

1. Evans, C., Sørensen, M.L.S. and Richter, K. 2012. An early Christian church in the Tropics: Excavation of the N. S. da Conceição, Cidade Velha, Cape Verde. In Green, T. (ed.), *Brokers of Change: Atlantic Commerce and Cultures in Precolonial Western Africa*. (Proceedings of the British Academy 178.) Oxford: Oxford University Press/British Academy, 173–192. INT1* category peer-reviewed publication on the European Reference Index for the Humanities. ISBN: 9780197265208
DOI: 10.5871/bacad/9780197265208.001.0001
2. Sørensen, M.L.S. 2007. What does sustainability have to do with it? Reflections upon heritage language and the heritage of slavery and missionaries. In Carman, J. and White, R. (eds), *World Heritage: Global Challenges; Local Solutions*. (BAR International Series 1698.) Oxford: Archaeopress, 75–80. ISBN: 9781407301402
3. Sørensen, M.L.S. and Evans, C. 2011. The challenge and potentials of archaeological heritage in Africa – Cape Verdean reflections. *African Archaeological Review* 28: 39–54. INT1* category peer-reviewed publication on the European Reference Index for the Humanities. DOI: 10.1007/s10437-011-9094-4
4. Sørensen, M.L.S., Evans, C. and Richter, K. 2011. A place of history: Archaeology and heritage at Cidade Velha, Cape Verde. In Lane, P. and MacDonald, K.C. (eds), *Slavery in Africa: Archaeology and Memory*. (Proceedings of the British Academy 168.) Oxford: Oxford University Press/British Academy, 421–442. INT1* category peer-reviewed publication on the European Reference Index for the Humanities. ISBN: 9780197264782
DOI: 10.5871/bacad/9780197264782.001.0001

*INT1 – International publication with high visibility and influence among researchers in the various research domains in different countries, regularly cited all over the world.

4. Details of the impact

Discovering the existence of an almost totally unexplored archaeological record of the history of the early settlement of Santiago Island has had impact of clear reach and significance. As all prior attention had focused on the standing ruins in Cidade Velha, this discovery greatly influenced the thinking of the Ministry of Culture of Cape Verde and resulted in the overturning (in 2009) of a previous decision (in 1992) by the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee to deny Cidade Velha inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List. Discovery of the earliest church and other early remains at Cidade Velha, as a result of Sørensen and Evans' archaeological excavations, was used in supporting documentation for the Ministry's new and

successful World Heritage Site bid, with the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) noting that “there is no doubt about the authenticity of the monumental ruins and archaeological remains of Ribeira Grande”. The impact of the Cambridge research is both implicitly and explicitly acknowledged by UNESCO in their emphasis on continued international cooperation and mention by the ICOMOS Advisory Body of “Archaeological research ... inside the property, particularly in the cathedral, in cooperation with the United Kingdom”.

Archaeological training by Cambridge (from 2007 onward) also figured in the initial WHS bid document, and two trainees have gone on to work in the newly established World Heritage Office in Cidade Velha. Given the success of this initiative ICOMOS have recommended that the Management Committee for the Cidade Velha site continue to “pay particular attention to the competencies and training of the personnel directly in charge of the property” – a priority which the Cambridge archaeologists are continuing to support with on-going provision of training.

The Cambridge discoveries of buried ruins of important buildings have significantly influenced the shape of the 2013–2017 Management Plan for the Cidade Velha WHS drawn up by the Ministry of Culture, and they have asked Sørensen and Evans to act as advisers on its implementation. Their archaeological research and professional involvement have contributed importantly to satisfying UNESCO’s expectation of care for the archaeological resource, as well as demonstrating the potential for further enhancement of the town’s historical significance and added value in terms of tourism. Thus the archaeological research and management plan together offer the potential of sustainable local socio-economic development.

As Cape Verde is an extremely poor country, the importance of developing high-revenue, but low-impact, tourism is obvious. Recognizing this imperative, the mayor of Cidade Velha has now purchased land including the earliest church with a view to full excavation and public display. As a direct result of Cidade Velha gaining World Heritage status, the town has become a much more attractive tourism destination, and will thus be a source of local employment and increased tourist revenues. The value of Cambridge’s archaeological work for tourism is unambiguous, one example being its inclusion in the 2011 edition of the *Brandt Travel Guide* for Cape Verde.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (in alphabetical/chronological order)

1. République du Cap-Vert. 2008a. *Cidade Velha, centre historique de Ribeira Grande, Cap-Vert: Proposition d’inscription sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial* [pdf]. Available at: <<http://www.cidadevelha-pm.cv/dossier.pdf>> [Accessed 11 July 2013].
2. République du Cap-Vert. 2008b. *Plan de gestión 2008–2012 de Cidade Velha, centre historique de Ribeira Grande* [pdf]. Available at: <http://www.cidadevelha-pm.cv/documentos/Plan_de_gestion.pdf> [Accessed 11 July 2013].
3. République du Cap-Vert. 2008c. *Cidade Velha Património Mundial* [online]. Available at: <<http://www.cidadevelha-pm.cv/index.php>> [Accessed 11 July 2013].
4. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. 2009a. *Advisory board evaluation no. 1310, Cidade Velha (Cape Verde)* [pdf].

Available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/1310.pdf>
[Accessed 11 July 2013].

5. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. 2009b. Cidade Velha becomes Cape Verde's first World Heritage site. *News and Events* [online]. 26 June.
Available at: <<http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/527>> [Accessed 11 July 2013].
6. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. 2009c. *Cidade Velha, historic centre of Ribeira Grande* [online]. Available at: <<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1310/>> [Accessed 11 July 2013].
7. Wilson, C. and Irwin, A. 2011. *Brandt Travel Guide: Cape Verde (5th edition)*. Guilford: The Globe Pequot Press. ISBN: 9781841623504