

Landscapes as Standpoints: Important Lessons from Coastal Washington State: A Review of Mapes' *Breaking Ground* and Stapp and Longnecker's *Archaeological Disasters*

Breaking Ground: The Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and the Unearthing of Tse-whit-zen Village

Lynda V. Mapes. With foreword by Frances Charles. 2009. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 288 pp., 92 color illustrations, two maps, notes, and glossary.

Avoiding Archaeological Disasters: A Risk Management Approach

Darby C. Stapp and Julia G. Longenecker. With contributions by Roderick Sprague, Thomas F. King, Michael S. Burney, Mary Rossi, and Adrian Praetzellis, and illustrations by Anthony Smith. 2009. Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, CA. 119 pp., 21 b/w figures., three tables, four appendices, glossary, bibliography, and index.

At the nexus of identity and politics lies the crucial terrain of ethics. Part of our problem rests with the illusion that the subjects of our research are dead and buried, literally.

—Lynn Meskell (2002:293)

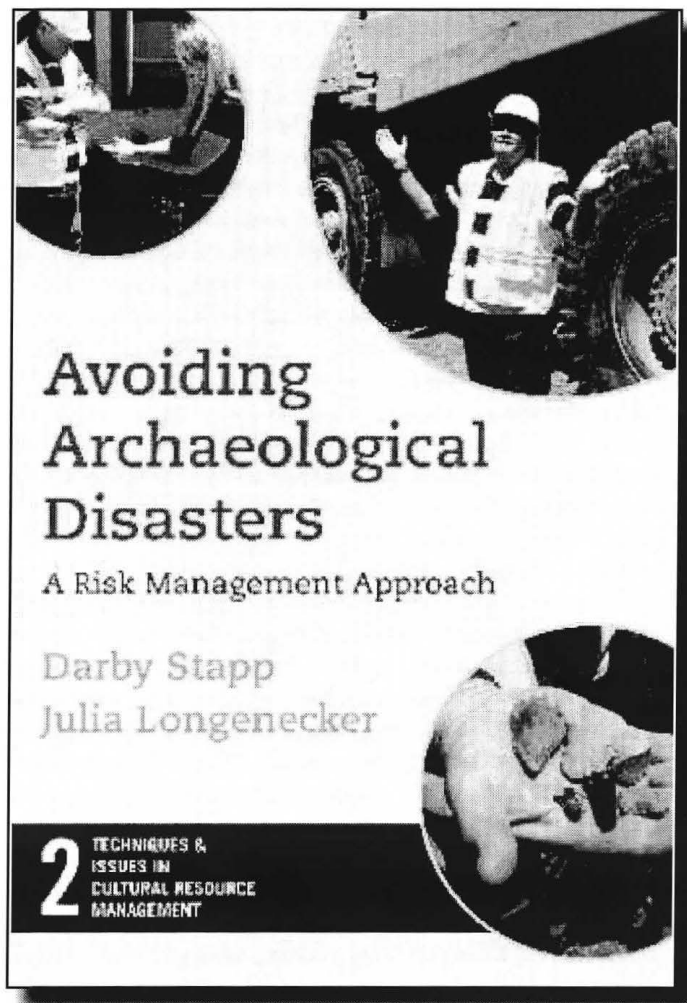
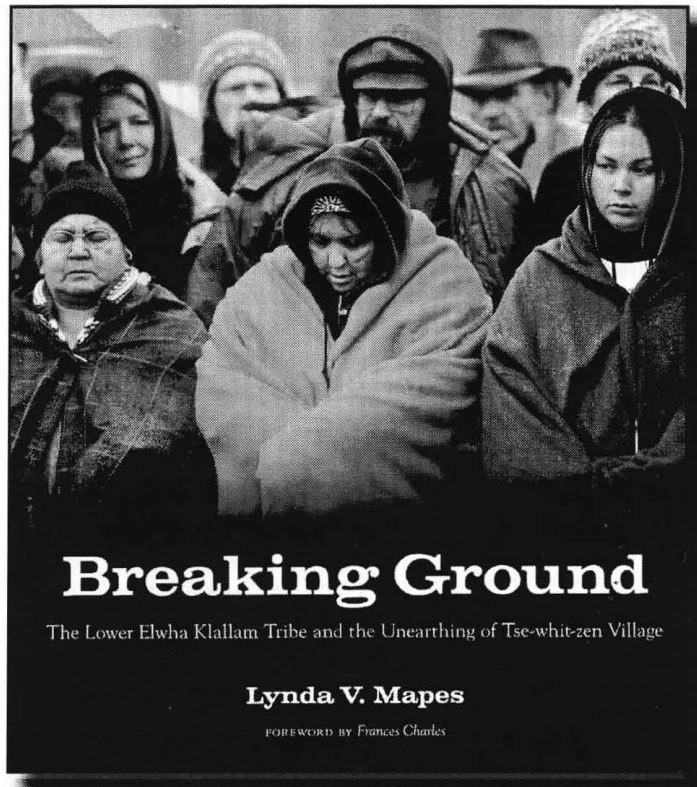
[Viewing the recent history of archaeological disasters] illustrates how costs can be more than financial. For the developer or agency involved, archaeological problems can lead to schedule delays, bad press, upset neighbors, and lawsuits. For the community and cultural groups who lose an important resource, these archaeological problems often lead to heartbreak, distress, and loss of quality of life in the community. For the archaeologists working for the developer or government agency, archaeological problems can lead to lawsuits, damaged careers, and embarrassment. Nobody benefits from these events.

—Darby Stapp and Julia Longenecker (2009:14)

No one said anything about Indians. Or history. Or burials. Or waterfront villages. No one. Not one person with the port or with the city.

—Lynda V. Mapes (2009:100)

Mapes' *Breaking Ground* and Stapp and Longnecker's *Avoiding Archaeological Disasters* should represent a collective benchmark and crucial turning point in Northwest Coast archaeological practice. Sadly, and for the same reason the 2010 Gulf of Mexico (BP) looks like the 1989 Prince William Sound (Exxon) and the 1969 Santa Barbara Channel (Union Oil), they will not. The reason for this is awkwardly and painfully simple: landscapes are standpoints (Hicks and McAtackney 2007). As a consequence, landscape archaeologies, which include both academic archaeology and cultural resource management, are "often explicitly political: distinguishing how 'people, differently



engaged and differentially empowered, appropriate and contest their landscapes” (Bender 1993:17 in Hicks and McAttackney 2007:15). It is in this vein that these books find their value, and it is in communication they find their hope.

Journalist Lynda Mapes’ heartfelt yet objective telling of the Tse-whit-zen story (see Charles, this issue) is all about communication, both good and bad. Invited by the Lower Elwha Klallam to relate the saga, the book’s objective is to not ‘get the story right,’ but to instead give voice to people’s very personal experiences with an ‘archaeological disaster,’ to use Stapp and Longnecker’s term. For Mapes (2009:226), the voices of those affected “needed a wider audience and a place of permanent, public record because the views they express set a marker for our development as a people and a region. They tell us who we are and who we are becoming.” It is in this light that Mapes sensitively uses nearly 100 color illustrations and accompanying personal narratives, most derived from interviews with government representatives, archaeologists, construction workers, Port Angeles business owners and residents, and Lower Elwha Klallam Tribal members, many of whom were hired to work at the site, to explicate what had long been portrayed as an ‘uncontested’ landscape.

Despite an apparent regard by the City of Port Angeles for the concerns of the Lower Elwha Klallam, as detailed in their 1995 *Shoreline Master Plan Regulations*, in 2002 the City sold to the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) a 22.5 acre (9.1 hectare) waterfront parcel. The site was to be used as the location of a 200,000 cubic foot (5,663 cubic meter) dry or ‘graving’ dock to facilitate the replacement of the Hood Canal floating bridge, a project expected to total \$30 million. Construction and use of the graving dock, projected to cost around \$19 million, was a massive and unexpected infusion of wealth (and power) into the relatively small community of Port Angeles. “*This would prove to be a mistake*, as over a 24 month period, WSDOT would disrupt 276 full burials and 500 partial burials of Lower Elwha Klallam ancestors. The costs for recovering the burials and the millions of artifacts were staggering” (Stapp and Longnecker 2009:41, emphasis added). By 2008, four years after the Port Angeles project had been abandoned by the State, the estimates for the bridge and graving dock had ballooned to \$291 million and \$85 million, respectively.

Money is only one aspect of the story, however. I will focus here on the historical component, for this too is where Mapes (2009:215) shines her light. Not unexpectedly, project ‘abandonment’ did not bring closure, for “breaking ground at Tse-whit-zen uncovered not only the past of this place but its present.”

The true history under every footfall, along every shoreline, is often silenced by collective amnesia. But here, on a twenty-two-acre waterfront property, the ground spoke: of the Indian village here, and of a river that once sustained an entire ecosystem and way of life. Of uncounted Indian burials, ancestors of the Klallam people. Of the sawmill built right over their village and cemetery, transforming the look, but not the truth, of this ground (2009:xi).

For Mapes, when the State of Washington “broke ground” for their bridge project in August 2003, inadvertently unearthing Tse-whit-zen, they “actually broke ground for a different sort of

bridge altogether,” on leading to a “sense of history” (2009:xi). *Breaking Ground* is presented in three parts: ‘Tse-whit-zen,’ ‘Amnesia,’ and ‘Enough is Enough.’ Part one serves as an introduction to the 2003 Tse-whit-zen/Port Angeles cultural landscape (Ch.1, ‘Buried Past Comes Alive’), to the pre-contact Klallam cultural landscape (Ch. 2, ‘Abundance’), and the to the colonial era cultural landscape (Ch. 3, ‘Calamity’), which includes the introduction of smallpox to the region. Colonialism, of course, extends mostly unabated to present day society, including the world of archaeology (Nicholas 2006). This point Mapes makes painfully clear in her reference to a recent publication on Port Angeles history. Concerning the origins of the Indians of Port Angeles, author Paul Martin, in his 1983 book, *Port Angeles, Washington: A History* (Pen Print, Port Angeles), asks the following:

From what remote place did he come? What ancient land spawned this mysterious creature whom early explorers found practicing strange customs and displaying even more peculiar dress. [...] Indians were the children of Babel, doomed forever to a primitive life as penance for their sins. [...] From an early explorer’s standpoint, the Indians and their magnificent land lay yawning and exposed like a giant pearl longing to be discovered (Martin 1983, in Mapes 2009:56).

Building on the history of colonial encounters, part two of *Breaking Ground* addresses four subjects: ‘Conquering the Last Frontier,’ ‘The Big Mill,’ ‘Collective Amnesia,’ and ‘This Ground Speaks.’ Here, Mapes traces the radical and rapid transformation of the physical and cultural landscape, from the displacement and subjugation of the Lower Elwha Klallam people to the ruination of their montane (logging), riverine (damming), and waterfront (milling) landscapes. The Lower Elwha Klallam’s history on this land “was buried by 150 years of disease, dispossession, forced assimilation, and attempted annihilation. Within the tribe, a cultural gap had opened. This town, this state, and the tribe would soon fall into it together” (2009:96). It is around these memories that people, including archaeologists, had gained ‘collective amnesia.’

The point of parts one and two are clear: history has a habit of ‘interfering’ with everyday life, often complicating engagements that are already socially and/or politically charged. As a consequence, individuals or groups are frequently forced to take a stand, simultaneously defending their memories and explicating their (often conveniently) forgotten pasts. The lesson is simple: histories, even ‘lost’ ones, rarely remain hidden or uncontested for long. This is because who we are, as individuals and as groups, both defines and is defined by our ‘landscape.’ In this sense, our identities create and reflect the tensions that exist between contested landscape histories. Landscapes, however, are ultimately negotiated and defined through human communication, a realm where politics and power rule.

In part three of the book, Mapes relates the complicated history of what were often very personal and emotional negotiations concerning the post-2003 Tse-whit-zen landscape. Despite an enhanced understanding of the complex archaeology and history of the site, the National Historical Preservation Act still allowed for those parts of the village that lay in the path of the project to be destroyed, so long as archaeological research was undertaken. For former Washington State secretary of transport-

tation Douglas MacDonald, "that wasn't good enough. He told the tribe early and often that he would restart the project only with the tribe's agreement" (2009:146). For MacDonald, "[a] lot of community work is going out and sitting and talking to people, and the power of the commitment and transparency and willingness to communicate was huge. [...] I'm listening, and learning, and it's what I've done my entire life. It's not an exercise in cultural anthropology; I'm just doing what you do" (Mapes 2009:146).

For Mapes (2009:13, 10), "the buried past came alive" on the Port Angeles waterfront; but it is not the burials but rather "the invisibility of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, here for more than 10,000 years, that is the real surprise." In this sense, "Port Angeles still seems perplexed by the Indians who refused to die off. Local histories of the town usually give scant mention to the area's first residents. They are often consigned to a misty realm, usually with a combination of romanticism and insult" (2009:56). Mapes (2009:107) thus uses archaeology to confront head-on deeply rooted and ongoing colonial structures, challenging along the way "the history of the forgetting," a "collective amnesia [that] is so profound that no one even asked the question," what about the Indians? The Tse-whit-zen story thus parallels the history of colonialism and Native-white relations on the Pacific Northwest Coast, where they, for a variety of reasons, "don't understand each other's history" (2009:120).

As we see in Mapes' sensitive and diligent treatment of this exceedingly complicated and emotionally charged (archaeological) experience, tensions not only exist in our world(s), *they define our world(s)*. Tensions exist between people, and between people and the land. Not only do they exist between different groups (or 'cultures'), but between people in the same group; between, for example, men and women, young and old, and rich and poor. Tensions exist between governments and communities, and between communities and corporations; between academic archaeologists and cultural resource managers, and between archaeologists and the communities they 'research.' Resistance to such tensions is not only 'played out' on the landscape, it *is* the landscape. The lesson here is that while conflict cannot be avoided (it should in fact be expected), the process of landscape contestation can and must become more humanized, a process that begins and ends with dialogue and listening.

For archaeologists and project managers, *Avoiding Archaeological Disasters* picks up where *Breaking Ground* leaves off. Stapp and Longnecker (2009:21) begin with a simple query: "So what can professionals do to avoid a project disaster when archaeological remains are discovered during construction? For a project manager, the answer is straightforward: become aware of the *possibility* of a problem and recognize the basic steps that should be taken prior to starting construction."

In an attempt to characterize the 'Anatomy of Archaeological Disasters,' the authors begin with a detailed review of two "classic examples of what happens when basic principles of risk management are ignored" (2009:26): the Blaine Wastewater Treatment Facility project and the Tse-whit-zen/Port Angeles project. In the Blaine case,

[a] community began an expansion of its municipal sewage treatment plant [in the 1990s] with a loan from a federal agency. The cultural sensitivity of the area in and around the

existing plant was well understood, and the project manager obtained archaeological expertise to help [navigate] the approval process. Archaeological sampling and data recovery were completed, and the project was approved to go forward, with construction monitoring by archaeologists. Soon after construction began, the heavy equipment operator encountered the ethnohistoric cemetery that many knew was in the area. About 60 full and partial graves were removed in hasty fashion, and no one notified the local tribe as required by a previous agreement with project proponents. When the local tribe [Lummi Nation] discovered that the ancestral remains were being removed, tribal members called state officials and the project was shut down. The tribe was furious to learn that 20 boxes of bones had been transported to an out-of-state laboratory, which also violated the agreements regarding the procedures for handling remains. The project was abandoned, and the community had to find a new location to construct its water treatment plant (2009:25).

Stapp and Longnecker's detailed account of the Blaine project, which is in turn done for the Port Angeles case, includes important insights into (1) The initial assessment, (2) Defining the regulatory compliance requirements, (3) Obtaining expertise, (4) Developing the agreement documents, (5) Pre-construction mitigation, (6) Construction monitoring, and (7) Project shutdown. They include important observations about the weaknesses of each project that contributed to their ultimate failure, including problems with archaeological compliance, tribal consultation, contractor funding and qualifications, and following agreed-to procedures. What makes this approach so valuable is the fact that such insights rarely make it into print, thus little is ever learned from most archaeological disasters, regardless of size or impact.

The remainder of the book examines the stages of a typical construction project, in the process exploring "the types of actions that project managers can take to minimize the potential for archaeological problems as their projects evolve" (2009:56). Chapter three, for example, describes the actions that managers can take to start mitigating an archaeological situation. This includes suggestions for consulting with stakeholders, budgeting for and hiring of archaeologists, and identifying regulatory requirements. Subsequent chapters describe the kinds of archaeological investigations that can be initiated during the different project phases to minimize risk and detail a risk management approach that can use to evaluate the potential scenarios facing a project. This is followed by the presentation of three short case studies (African Burial Grounds, New York; White Swan Campground, South Dakota; and Manhattan Project Landfill, Washington) that show how the risk management might have altered their 'disastrous' outcomes. This is followed by a chapter dealing solely with the unique challenges associated with the discovery of human remains.

Stapp and Longnecker (2009:119) conclude by offering ten basic principles for avoiding an archaeological disaster:

Actively manage the heritage resource component of the project just as you manage other critical project components.

Hire professional, qualified expertise to advise you on heritage resource issues and to conduct the assessment and

fieldwork needed.

Learn the regulatory requirements that have been established for your project area.

Identify and consult with interested parties regarding the heritage resources important to them.

Conduct a comprehensive background research analysis and site records check on the project area and don't fall for the 'it's disturbed' claim unless your research can confirm the disturbance.

Incorporate the archaeological risk-management approach into project decision making.

Minimize destruction of heritage resources whenever possible because they are non-renewable and important to communities.

Be prepared for the unexpected; have contingency plans in place.

Be open, transparent, and honest from the beginning.

Just follow the process and don't fall prey to accelerated approaches, streamlining, or other innovative approaches if they violate basic heritage management principles.

Avoiding Archaeological Disasters includes four important appendices. While the first offers guidance developed by the World Bank for dealing with cultural properties, the second identifies numerous archaeological organizations that are recognized for their professional ethics and standards. The third provides ethical codes drawn from various heritage management organizations. The final appendix is a 'global guide' to heritage management that includes a country-by-country listing of procedures and relevant government organizations. Also included is a glossary of common archaeological and project management terms.

Returning to the themes I presented at the outset, I am somewhat wary of Stapp and Longnecker's bold assertion that if a project manager is able to incorporate their principles, "the risk of turning the project into an archaeological disaster will be *virtually eliminated*" (2009:23, emphasis added). I am concerned that this statement may be taken too literally, in the process simplifying and underestimating the dynamic, multifaceted, and inherently social and political nature of the archaeological landscape (David and Thomas 2008; Nicholas 2006). Frances Charles succinctly identifies two major concerns. Regarding policy and hindsight: "Everyone would go back and say, 'What we would we do differently?'" It's good to have a checklist. But what is the next crisis going to be?" (Mapes 2009:117). Her point, I think, and one emphasized by Stapp and Longnecker, is this: checklists are for the expected, not the *unexpected*. If anthropology has taught us anything, it is that history repeats itself. Yet history never reproduces itself perfectly, thus the landscape, including the archaeological landscape, is subject to change, for

better or worse. In this sense, these perspectives are in line with Hicks and McAtackney (2007:15), who suggest that landscapes are complex and uneven, "where many past and present voices are silenced or erased." Charles' second point cuts closer to the quick: "I don't blame [DOT]. I don't blame federal highways. I blame the City of Port Angeles. They knew what was here 150 years ago. They knew the heritage, of what was here. They can't sit there and be unaware. They ignored it because of their greed" (Mapes 2009:117).

As with oil spills, another archaeological disaster will happen on the Northwest Coast. The question to be asked, then, is when and how bad? And more importantly, how far can we put off the inevitable into the future and how can we minimize its effects? It is here where these books find their greatest value. It is in their accessibility, and their efforts to effect positive change, that they can work to break down barriers and promote communication between multiple, potentially conflicting audiences. This, however, requires that the ideas contained within these books become part of public discourse. It is this notion that should give us most cause for concern. It is also this issue that these books tackle: *Breaking Ground* makes painfully clear the problem, *Archaeological Disasters* offers a way forward.

Both books are appropriate for all audiences, and both should be considered required reading for all archaeologists. *Breaking Ground* is, by design, geared for the general reader, but its content is so valuable that it should be considered required reading for all, no matter the focus of one's work. *Archaeological Disasters*, on the other hand, is written specifically for project managers and archaeologists, both applied and academic. The strength of these books ultimately lies in their ability to communicate in an accessible way what are otherwise complex and rarely discussed issues, particularly in the context of Northwest Coast archaeology. The objective, I think, is clear: "We don't want the generations behind us to go through what we did. [...] For too long, people have been cheated. They never learned any of this in school. The history books were tainted" (Frances Charles, in Mapes 2009:xv).

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