

Empire And Its Aftermath in Four (Post-)Colonial Settingsⁱ

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Introduction

This chapter explores the history of prison tourism and its various contemporary manifestations in four colonial and post-colonial settings associated with the British Empire: Fremantle (Walyalup) and Rottnest Island (Wadjemup) in Western Australia; the Andaman Islands of India; and Changuu [Prison] Island in Zanzibar. It will analyse how and why each of these sites emerged historically as tourist attractions, and how and why they remain appealing to visitors today. Part of the explanation lies in the ecology of spaces that were attractive as prisons and remain alluring as leisure destinations, but it is also to do with their imbrication in wider narratives of nationalist struggle, (de)colonisation and nation building.

Convicts were sometimes used as a means of colonizing remote locations and, even where they were not, colonial prisoners were often sent to jails in the furthest reaches of Empire. Islands were especially popular choices as their relative isolation and sea boundaries seemed to cut off prisoners from their previous kin networks, and offer barriers to escape. At the same time, the distance of such islands from mainlands, and their often pristine natural settings, made them highly desirable as leisure destinations, even whilst they were still operating as penal sites. Their appeal in this respect remains important today, particularly with the development of beach resorts and eco-tourism. However, hunter-gatherer peoples hostile to colonial invasion sometimes lived on the borders of penal settlements and colonies, and the violence of colonisation and Indigenous displacement through convict settlement remains unresolved. This is reflected in both their past history and its presentation in many such sites today.

The appeal of colonial-era penal sites to tourists in some places relates not just to their natural beauty, but their association with colonial-era struggles for independence, and the connection between the incarceration of freedom fighters and nation making. The demographic transformation effected by convict settlement and family formation in some places is also significant here. The former has rendered some carceral sites important to narratives of freedom fighting, and ultimately the history of decolonisation. The latter celebrates jails as foundational moments in the making of new societies, in which prisoners and their descendants were pioneers. In both respects, former imperial penal sites have played important roles in the narration and construction of shared histories of resistance to Empire. Some former prisons have been transformed into museums where anti-colonial resistance can be celebrated, and new postcolonial histories can be written. Others display history in such a way as to stress

convict work, convict-built infrastructure and their importance in the making of new societies. Alternatively, in places where prison history challenges other kinds of regional or national desires and identities, including that of Indigenous people, the relationship between penal history and population change can be side-lined altogether, disappearing within a larger, preferred pattern for local development or exploitation. This historical rendering has its own complex history and contemporary settler colonial context.

By placing a range of prison and penal colony sites and their particular political, social and cultural contexts into dialogue with one another, this chapter draws our attention to their history, their tourist audiences, and the silences and elisions that surround them. In so doing, it sheds new light on the global legacies of colonialism, stressing difference and distinction, and highlighting the tensions that underlie penal heritage in avowedly post-colonial nations.

Western Australia

In 1770 British naval lieutenant and explorer James Cook sailed the *Endeavour* down the east coast of a large land mass known to Europeans as *terra australis*, charting the eastern coastline and claiming the territory for Britain. Seventeen years later a fleet of eleven ships set sail from Portsmouth, and on 26 January 1788 they made landfall in a place Cook had named Botany Bay. These 736 transported convicts were the first of over 160,000 who saw out their sentences in the Australian colonies of New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land and Western Australia between 1788 and 1868 (Christopher and Maxwell-Stewart, 2013). The social experiment undertaken by the British authorities of transforming convicts into settlers, and expanding their colonial possessions through their labour and the expropriation of Aboriginal lands, achieved its aims. The colonies thrived, and attracted free settlers who brought with them 'respectable society'. The violent dispossession of Indigenous peoples across the continent, which continued into the twentieth century, gradually became subject to a communal 'forgetting'. Aboriginal peoples were understood to have largely disappeared, and many contemporaries saw this as an unfortunate if inevitable side effect of the introduction of civilisation (MacGregor, 1997). The federation of the six Australian colonies into an independent Commonwealth nation in 1901 marked a new beginning for the young country, further distancing citizens from their distasteful carceral origins.

Over the past half-century huge shifts have taken place in academic and popular understandings of convict transportation, Aboriginal dispossession and frontier conflict. These understandings have been shaped by important legislative and quasi-judicial milestones: the doctrine of *terra nullius* (empty land), which had legally justified British colonisation, was overturned by the High Court in 1992, Aboriginal land rights have been recognised in a number of cases, and issues such as Aboriginal deaths in custody

and government policies of child removal have been the subject of royal commissions, subsequent reports and official apologies (Reynolds, 1996). At the same time, the growing historical distance between convict ancestors and their descendants has seen an enthusiastic 'rediscovery' of convict origins (Smith, 2008). This was especially marked around the time of the 1988 Australian bicentenary, the 200th anniversary of British colonisation. While many historians (eg. Nicholas 1988, Karskens 1997) followed John Hirst's (1983) pioneering work in carefully reassessing the nature of convict society, accounts which emphasised the harsh, punitive aspects of convict transportation chimed better with the public imagination. Convict society was more easily conjured as a 'hell on earth' than a project of settlement in which most transportees enjoyed a degree of freedom. The former narrative, best epitomised in Robert Hughes' *The Fatal Shore* (1986), underpinned a retelling of family histories in which convicts could be re-cast as the victims of an unjust system, and celebrated anew as national founders. Since the 1970s, sites associated with convict labour, accommodation and incarceration have been recognised as significant to Australia's national heritage, and in 2010 eleven sites were awarded World Heritage Status (UNESCO, 2010: 197-199). The convicts have become, in Prime Minister Tony Abbott's words on Australia Day 2015, 'our first modern migrants' (Abbott, 2015) However, the carceral 'stain' which marked European Australia's birth has not entirely dissolved. As Jacqueline Wilson (2008) argues, avowed 'pride' in convict ancestry is often constructed defensively, and in recent decades, the convict past has become decidedly unfashionable, not even warranting representation in the opening ceremony of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. The two Western Australian convict heritage sites under consideration here, Fremantle Prison and Wadjemup (Rottnest Island), exemplify these somewhat ambivalent changes in attitude whilst revealing the ongoing tensions that underlie the concept of convict founders in a land that was already richly mapped, settled and owned by its first peoples.

The Swan River Colony (now Perth) was founded in 1829 as a free settlement, but struggled to attract colonists. In a bid to become economically viable the colony accepted around 9,700 convicts between 1850 and 1868 (Gibbs, 2001). Convicts worked either on assignment for free settlers or on vital public infrastructure projects, building bridges, jetties, and even their own prison. Mixed usage characterised the 136 years of operation of Fremantle Prison. The site first operated as a barracks, housing convicts at night when they had returned from work, whilst also providing separate cells for punishment of repeat offenders. Following the end of transportation to Western Australia in 1868, the prison continued to accommodate convicts completing their colonial sentences until 1906, whilst operating as a regular prison for those tried in the state. For a brief time during the Second World War it was used as an internment centre for 'enemy aliens', as well as a military gaol. Fremantle Prison accepted Aboriginal prisoners from as early as 1856. From the 1950s until 1991 between 30 and 40 per cent of its inmates were of Aboriginal descent (Fremantle Prison Gallery, 2013). The year after its closure in 1991 it reopened to visitors, and plans were enacted to

transform the buildings into a social history museum. The imposing main cell block, which was built to accommodate 1000 men, along with the chapel, refractory cells, gallows and kilometre-long tunnel network now play host to a range of tours designed for school groups, and domestic and international tourists, some 2.7 million of whom have visited the site in the past 20 years (Fremantle Prison heritage and visitor services, 2012). Tours highlight famous convicts, bushrangers, escapees, and notorious criminals who were held in the jail in the twentieth century.

The transformation of a contemporary prison into a museum focusing on a comparatively small slice of the site's history has prompted local historians and heritage practitioners to ask questions about whose pasts are being officially 'remembered' though the site, and why. Andrea Witcomb has observed:

The distant past ... is far more romantic and populated by unthreatening characters whose crimes can be explained as the result of difficult social and political conditions. In other words, they were not real criminals but characters worthy of either our respect or sympathy. (Witcomb, 2012: 67).

The site's management has begun to address these concerns through a series of temporary exhibitions, including on the history of Indigenous incarceration as well as the modern prison. However, convict narratives dominate. Each year the prison facilitates and hosts Descendants' Day, a ceremony where certificates are presented to those who can prove family ties to convicts, pensioner guards or warders. These ceremonies, often accompanied by re-enactments, encapsulate the idea of convicts as founders and nation builders, and elide more problematic histories of forced migration, labour and bodily punishment, and their links to contemporary practices of incarceration (Strange, 2006).

Wadjemup, or Rottnest, is an island eighteen kilometres from Fremantle. It was used as a prison for Aboriginal convicts between 1839 and 1903, and continued to hold Indigenous inmates as an annex of Fremantle Prison until 1931. The island's history as a holiday destination began while it was still a prison, at first solely for the governor and his friends, and from 1902 for the general masses. During the First World War part of the island also served as an internment camp for enemy aliens and prisoners of war (Wartime internee records, 2015). In 1917 the island gained A-class reserve status, which prevented permanent settlement and preserved its natural beauty. Almost a century later, it was the most popular tourist destination in the state; 540,000 visits were made by private boat, ferry and plane to Rottnest between June 2013 and May 2014 (Rottnest Island Authority, 2014: 40).

Despite the increased popularity of convict heritage generally, Rottnest Island Authority (RIA) has often chosen to elide, rather than memorialise, the island's carceral history. The site has the potential to present dual narratives of the dispossession of Aboriginal people alongside more familiar tropes of incarceration, escape and corporal punishment. The RIA's unwillingness to do so is primarily due to the visitors'

problematic position relative to the historical subjects under lock and key. The ancestors of most visitors to Rottnest are no convicts, but members of a society who supported the dispossession, prosecution and incarceration of the Aboriginal inmates. Since 2008, the RIA has begun actively pursuing a policy of reconciliation by promoting Aboriginal culture, history and employment opportunities on the island (RIA, 2009). It pursues a broad interpretation of Aboriginal history has been pursued that centres pre-colonial and colonial historical narratives with the goal of achieving post-colonial reconciliation.

An example of these changing priorities is the use of the former prison site. Since 1914 visitors to Rottnest have slept in the converted prison accommodation and adjacent buildings, re-branded as Rottnest Lodge. In the former prison block comfortably sized rooms were created by knocking three cells together - a single cell would have housed between five and seven Aboriginal prisoners in the 1880s (Green, 1997: 27, 83). The central yard, where prisoners were executed in front of inmates, now provides space for picnic benches and sunbathers. Holiday apartments, restaurants and conference facilities augment the original colonial-era buildings. Though structures built by convict labour remain, the prison that housed them is completely devoid of signage or commemoration. The foremost historian of Rottnest Island, Neville Green, described the use of prison buildings as tourist accommodation as akin to turning Auschwitz into a holiday camp (Green, 1997: 83). In 2014, documentary filmmaker Glen Stasiuk proposed that the RIA use the island's carceral remnants to attract visitors, citing the success of the UNESCO World Heritage Port Arthur Historic Site in Tasmania (Cox, 2015). He also drew an international parallel with Robben Island in South Africa, which tells the dual histories of racial subjugation and incarceration within a touristic setting (Stasiuk, 2015: 161-167).

In January 2015 a new agreement for the lodge redevelopment was signed between the leaseholders and the state government. Under its provisions, the prison building will be returned to the RIA to be developed into a cultural site, whilst the Karma Royal Group redevelop land behind it into 80 holiday units. Another site that is likely to be reinterpreted, pending the success of external funding requests, is the Aboriginal prisoners' burial ground, which is currently cordoned-off with a sign, but lacks any further material recognition. When the plans were announced, acting tourism minister John Day said that the former prison would 'be redesigned to appropriately interpret and reflect the very significant Aboriginal history - given that it was a prison in the early days of the state, sadly' (*ABC News*, 2015). These moves may be seen as encouraging steps towards acknowledging the trauma of past carceral and colonial practices. But Day's emphasis on the brevity of the prison's overlap with independent statehood glosses over contemporary culpability for Indigenous peoples' incarceration. As Michael Welch (2012) argues, penal tourism sites usually present the visitor with a narrative of human progress. In the case of Rottnest, this narrative may be used as a strategy to ensure the ongoing patronage of non-Indigenous Australians.

Temporary exhibitions such as 'From Wadjemup to Walyalup' present an alternative to the view of carceral progress in history. This year-long exhibition at Fremantle Prison (2013-14), which was later transferred to Rottnest Island Museum (2014), traced the history of Indigenous imprisonment from the colonial period to the present day. The curatorial narrative inverted the progressive representations of colonial history, as Western Australia's continuing high rate of incarceration of Aboriginal people is explained as a modern-day legacy of colonialism. The exhibition presented visitors with a surprising, and sometimes unwelcome, confrontation with what Jane Lydon calls the 'grimly visceral' evidence of Aboriginal incarceration, through the display of chains and other material remnants of incarceration (Lydon 2014: 230). It also used visual media to confront the visitor, opening with Stasiuk's video of Aboriginal actors in a reconstructed Rottnest prison cell (Murdoch University, 2012). However, as a temporary addition to permanent galleries, the legacy and impact of this interpretation is limited. For the time being, the carceral history of Rottnest Island will continue to be hidden beneath the play of sand and surf (as Sally Morgan's 1988 painting 'Greetings from Rottnest' chillingly demonstrates), while Fremantle Prison will cater for visitors both local and global who are attracted to tales of Western Australia's so-called dark convict past.

The Andaman Islands, India

The British settled the Andaman Islands in 1858, as a penal colony for the sepoy (soldier) mutineers and other rebels sentenced to transportation in the wake of the Great Indian Revolt of 1857. These convicts were followed by tens of thousands of ordinary criminal convicts, from all over the Indian Empire (including Burma), as well as several hundred political prisoners. In the 1860s, the latter included several Wahabis (at the time called Muslim 'fanatics'), in the 1870s members of the Manipuri royal family sent into exile after the Anglo-Manipuri War, and in the 1920s over one thousand Moplahs, who were shipped to the Islands following the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. Most famous of all the political convicts were 350 elite nationalists who were transported for anti-colonial agitation during 1910-16 and again in 1932. Unlike the ordinary convicts who spent a short time in the Islands' notorious Cellular Jail (est. 1906) at the start of their sentence, the nationalists were incarcerated there for their entire term. The penal colony remained open right up to the Second World War, when the Japanese occupied the Andamans (1942-5). After Japan's surrender, the British returned to oversee reoccupation and reconstruction. The penal colony was then formally abolished, and after some discussion about the Islands' fate, in 1947 the Andamans joined independent India, and in 1952 became a union territory of the new republic (Anderson, Mazumdar and Pandya 2015).

There are three related areas of concern that are key to understanding the development of prison tourism in the Andamans since Independence. These relate to the history of memorialisation and commemoration, and in particular to the distinction between the desires and concerns of the Islands and those of the mainland. The first is

that prior to colonisation, the sole inhabitants of the Islands were Indigenous peoples. There were no free migrants or settlers. Second, from the middle of the nineteenth century many ordinary, criminal ex-convicts and their descendants did not return to India, but settled in the Islands, and ultimately came to form a cosmopolitan community known as 'local-born' or 'pre-42' (the Japanese occupied in 1942). With their ancestors shipped to the Islands to work in forest clearance, road building and agriculture, many local-born people – including the descendants of Moplahs - have seen their forebears as freedom fighters against the British and pioneers. Third, in contrast, after serving their sentences, the twentieth-century elite nationalists were without exception repatriated to the mainland. Despite the presence of Indigenous peoples in, and the long history of convict transportation and settlement, it is largely this latter group that is centred in the built structures that commemorate the history of the Islands that are celebrated by mainland visitors to the Islands today.

The history of the transformation of the Cellular Jail into a national memorial exemplifies these tensions. Despite the fact that it was badly damaged by an earthquake in 1941 and was partially demolished during the subsequent Japanese occupation, after 1960 mainland based associations of freedom fighters formerly incarcerated in the jail started to lobby the Indian government for the erection of various memorials, and for its conversion into a national memorial (Setting up of a plaque, 1960). The local administration was initially opposed to their demands. It pointed out that much of the jail had been destroyed or dismantled, and that the nationalists had totalled only a small minority of prisoners. The chief commissioner of the Islands noted:

A kind of sentiment is being woven on the mainland around the Cellular Jail, irrespective of the fact that it had harboured several thousand hardened criminals ... It does not deserve the honour which the sentimental persons ... would like to bestow on it. (Martyrs' Memorial Conference, 1960/61).

This was the background to a local decision to mount a masonry column at Marina Beach, at the bottom of the hill on which the Cellular Jail stands. It commemorates the 'heroes' of the 'national revolution of 1858', who it represented as the first settlers of the Islands. (War memorial, 1967). Mainland campaigners continued to push for the conversion of the jail into a national memorial, however, themselves drawing connections between the 1857 Revolt and later nationalism. The Calcutta-based Ex-Andaman Political Prisoners' Fraternity Circle wrote to the chief commissioner in 1968 to draw attention to the importance of the Cellular Jail as a symbol of the sufferings of the freedom fighters, from the 1857 Revolt to the 1937 mass hunger strikes that took place within its walls. 'Many of the brave sons of this country laid down their lives in that dungeon fighting against the British imperialists for the freedom of the country. It reminds us of the tremendous cost at which we achieved our freedom.' (Preservation of cellular jail, 1968). The Fraternity Circle succeeded in its campaign, and the jail became a national memorial in 1969.

Since Independence, mainland freedom fighters and their families have made regular visits to the Andamans, calling the visits *mukti tirtha* (pilgrimages of salvation). Their trips often coincide with Republic Day, 14 August. Since 1969, when the Cellular Jail became a national memorial, the Andamans have occupied a central imaginative place in the struggle against the British, and the number of commemorative structures has risen. They include a huge bronze statue of Subhas Chandra Bose, the leader of the Indian National Army who visited the Islands to meet his Japanese allies during the Second World War (War memorial, 1967). In 1985, a new monument within the Cellular Jail was inaugurated for the 'heroes of the first war of independence – 1857 – and all those brave sons of India who were incarcerated in these islands during their ceaseless struggle for freedom of our beloved motherland.'

The Cellular Jail remains the focal point of official visits, including by the families of former inmates, as well as mainland politicians who lay flowers and otherwise pay their respects to the people they view as the fathers of the Indian nation. In this respect, the concept of prison tourism as leisure in historic places of incarceration does not quite capture the contemporary political meaning of the site. Indeed, the Cellular Jail has been at the heart of post-colonial Indian efforts to write a shared history – a history of struggle and martyrdom – that can bring together the diverse peoples of a new nation in the years since 1947. The Islands have facilitated the writing of a new national history, of uninterrupted progression from an anti-colonial war of 1857 to the sacrifices of twentieth-century prisoners. Rebels, criminal convicts and nationalist prisoners alike have been transformed symbolically into freedom fighters.

In the last ten years, with the development of cheap air travel, there has been a rapid rise in the number of visits by ordinary tourists too. In the early 1980s, around 10,000 tourists visited the Islands each year, a figure which had risen tenfold by the year before the 2005 tsunami. Since then, numbers have continued to rise: 136,426 tourists visited in 2008-9, and 195,396 in 2010-11. The vast majority of tourists are Indian: 90% of visitors come from the mainland (Reddy 2006, 5, 18, 19; Arrival of Tourists, 2011). With a population of less than 400,000, for every one hundred persons in the Islands, there are 3 tourists at all times of year. All tourists arrive in Port Blair, and for every resident of the capital there is a phenomenal 10 tourists (*Rethink Tourism*, 2008, 27; Census 2011).

Foreign tourists from Europe and elsewhere are overwhelmingly backpackers who tend to head to the beaches on smaller islands like Havelock as soon as they arrive. Most domestic tourists go on sightseeing tours. The Cellular Jail Museum is always included in their itinerary, and is the most visited site by tourists overall (*Rethink Tourism*, 2008, 31, 32, 47). Tourists can walk around the grounds, visit cells and the gallows, and look at exhibitions explaining the history of the jail, and displaying historic photographs. In the evening, there is a sound and light show, alternately in Hindi and English, an audio performance of the history of the jail that places it within a larger narrative of anti-imperialist nationalism. It ends with a cry of *jai Hind!* (long live India!)

and the orange, white and green of the Indian flag beamed onto one of the jail's three-storeyed wings. Some tourists scatter petals at the gallows, or respect a moment of silence following the show. Others bow their heads in memory of the nationalist prisoners whom they consider martyrs. In this, and though ethnographic analysis of tourist mobility in the Andamans is wanting, their navigation of the jail as a site of commemoration seems to mirror that of official visitors.

Zanzibar – the prison that never was

The case of Zanzibar in this chapter offers a curious anomaly in the history of prison tourism: –the island known since the 1890s as 'Prison Island,' has never actually been used to house prisoners. The names applied to the island – including Tortoise Island and Changuu Island in kiSwahili – indicate the various associations it has held over the last 150 years, although Prison Island will be used in this chapter for consistency. Though it was initially designed as a jail, the concurrent need for a quarantine station in East Africa meant that it became the main locale for the isolation of potentially disease-carrying vessels. Despite this connection with disease and disease-prevention, from its first years of development the island became a popular health resort for Europeans. In this section of the chapter, we will trace the history of Prison Island, discuss how it developed locally as a recreational retreat, and reflect on the way in which its material carceral remnants, in contrast to other sites, are acknowledged as a tourist destination today.

Zanzibar enjoyed its commercial heyday in the nineteenth century under the Omani Busaidi dynasty, responding to global demand for cloves, ivory and slaves, after millennia of involvement in Indian Ocean trading networks (Sheriff, 1987). British interest in the region steadily increased throughout the century and in 1890, Zanzibar became a Protectorate of the British Empire (Lyne, 1905). Throughout the nineteenth century, Zanzibar's prison was housed in the seventeenth-century fort located on the seafront in the town. In the 1880s, its squalid and inhumane conditions appalled Sir John Kirk, then British Agent and Consul General (ZNA, AA1/36: 1884). In 1891 little had changed when Consul C.S. Smith encountered prisoners crammed into small, unventilated and fetid spaces, and noted that the 'hot, heavy, foul air' nearly made him vomit (ZNA, AA2/52: 1891). The British, as the protecting power, took responsibility for improving the situation, and acted on Smith's suggestion that a new prison should be built on a nearby island, some five kilometres to the west, facing Zanzibar town. The project was led by General Sir Lloyd Mathews, the formidable First Minister to the Sultan's Government (Lyne, 1936). Progress was gradual in the succeeding years, and the jail was completed in the mid-1890s (ZNA: AC4/2, 1895). Even before the jail was completed, the island had become popular as a sanatorium for local Europeans. They relished its healthy surroundings, the clean air and sea breezes. They used bungalows

on the island originally intended for prison staff as comfortable temporary lodgings (TNA, FO 2/912: 1899).

The creation of the new jail coincided with extension of British control on mainland East Africa and the Uganda Railway from the coast to Lake Victoria. Over 30,000 indentured labourers were brought from India to build nearly 1000 km of railway (Gunston, 2004). This influx of labourers after 1895 heightened fears of smallpox and bubonic plague spreading from the subcontinent. This was a very real concern – the plague epidemic in East Africa in 1898 was believed to have originated in India (Issa, 2009: 119–20). A quarantine station was required for the whole East African region and the colonial authorities in Whitehall proposed in 1899 to assign Prison Island for this purpose. The Zanzibar Government's strong objects to this proposal were futile and in 1899, Prison Island became the main East African quarantine station (Issa, 2009). The various buildings intended for the prison were used for a medical centre and to house ships' passengers and labourers. The real jail in Zanzibar remained in the old Fort until a new prison was built in Kilimani in the 1920s, two kilometres from the town.

Prison Island maintained its function as a quarantine station well into the first half of the twentieth century but number of quarantined ships fell considerably after completion of the railway and the associated drop in indentured labour importation (Issa, 2009). The island however retained its use as a leisure resort, and was consistently popular with town dwellers seeking either a convenient picnic spot or brief restorative trips. By the 1950s, permits introduced to regulate numbers, with priority given to residents over tourists and cruise liner passengers (ZNA, AB35/4: 1956). Although Zanzibar epitomised notions of the 'exotic' in the western imagination (Longair, 2015), European colonial-era residents found the reality of living in this 'island paradise' far from idyllic. They sought an alternative island retreat away from the heat of the town and the stifling labyrinthine streets. Prison Island became a convenient location for temporary restoration and isolation.

Today, overseas visitors are vital to Zanzibar's economy, attracted by enduring perceptions of the 'island paradise'. Prison Island is firmly on the tourist trail, with independent and hotel group visits occurring daily. The journey takes about twenty minutes by motorboat. About half of the island has been landscaped with brick pathways, while a private hotel takes up the other half, fenced off from day-trippers (Changuu Private Island Paradise, 2006). Cultural norms do not encourage sunbathing on the seashore around the older Stone Town quarter (and tourist hub) of Zanzibar Town, so many tourists take the opportunity to spend a day on Prison Island (where sunbathing is acceptable with a small fee to use the beach). There is the added attraction of seeing the resident giant tortoises, a gift from the Government of the Seychelles in 1919 (Changuu Private Island Paradise, 2006). The European Bungalow (assigned to European passengers on quarantined vessels in the early twentieth century) has been converted into the 'Mathews Restaurant' – recalling the First Minister

who was integral in the building project in the 1890s – although this is currently closed. The ‘Prison Restaurant’ is open, though, and dining tables are arranged on a patio in front of the intended, though never used, prison block.

Throughout the site, display panels explain the history of the island and include reproductions of archival documents. Although rather faded now, it is clear that a great deal of time and expense was at one time devoted to providing this in-depth historical information. In the absence of a prison heritage of incarceration, the interpretation focuses upon the site’s construction. Although these extensive panels deal carefully with the transformation from jail to quarantine centre, the references to the prison (including a craft shop named the ‘Prison Boutique’) dominate the branding of the built structures of the island. There is clearly potential traction in alluding to a carceral heritage, replete with barred windows on the buildings. Yet the studious visitor must read the full complement of display panels to uncover the more entangled history of the site. In contrast, the Old Fort in Zanzibar Town – the site that actually functioned as a prison in the late nineteenth century – chooses to foreground its multiple and diverse historical usages, including as an army barracks, a railway terminus, the ladies’ club and an amphitheatre.

The heritage landscape in Zanzibar is complex. Beyond the challenge of celebrating Swahili culture while also interpreting the intertwined histories of colonialism (both Omani and British), there is also a desire to represent slavery and revolution effectively within various historic sites. A central ambition of the Zanzibar National Museum redisplay project in the early 2000s was to present balanced interpretations of these complex histories (Sheriff, Voogt & Luhila, 2007). Christ Church Cathedral, built by the British on the site of the former slave market after 1873, remains the central site for remembering slavery. The World Monuments Fund is currently restoring the cathedral and establishing a new centre devoted to the history of East African slavery although slave heritage remains a contentious issue (World Monuments Fund, 2015). The majority of sites cater for overseas tourists, yet often these visitors stay only briefly in the town before heading to one of Zanzibar’s many resorts and beachside villages. The persistent historical misnomer of ‘Prison’ Island epitomises the complicated layers of Zanzibar’s colonial history, relating to the era of abolition, labour movement from India, colonial governance and punishment, and disease prevention. Fading display panels, often bypassed by tourists, describe the island’s history of quarantine and heritage voices speak of a jail that never was. Yet ironically, Prison Island’s most consistent and enduring use for over a century remains that of voluntary and recreational isolation.

Conclusion

As tourist sites, Fremantle and Rottnest Island in Western Australia, the Andaman Islands and Prison Island in Zanzibar all offer visitors easy access to the brilliant blue

waters of the Indian Ocean, and in the case of the three islands, the chance to relax and unwind in isolation from the mainland. But the body of water connecting these sites also speaks to the imperial and carceral undercurrents which complicate the ways that leisure and history sit alongside one another in contemporary 'heritage' interpretation. In each location the very buildings constructed by convicts, and other coerced or free workers, now serve as destinations for curious tourists, reverent pilgrims or weary travellers. Indeed, prisons provide durable structures for sleeping, eating and working - for inmates, tourists and hospitality and tourism workers alike. All have served different purposes, from the ruined prison turned national memorial in the Andamans, to the almost-prison turned quarantine station and now restaurant in Zanzibar, and the Aboriginal prison turned tourist accommodation and now proposed cultural site on Rottneest Island. Even Fremantle Prison, which remained in operation until 1991, has seen a number of reincarnations as a museum site, most recently in a successful bid to gain world heritage status together with a range of other convict sites in Australia.

The repurposing of prison buildings points to the ongoing layering and transformation of the heritage landscapes in each place, in concert with changing attitudes to histories of colonisation, empire and incarceration. While the pursuit of relaxation and recreation requires more commercial rather than intellectual considerations on the part of administrators, the need to acknowledge and interpret the past embroils them directly in questions of local and national identity, and conflicting or sometimes competing versions of history. Of course, as we have seen, penal pasts can also be profitable, but it is the far past, rather than the more recent, which often proves more palatable. And the positive story sells better too - whether it is the progress from a dark colonial past to a modern, democratic nation (which seems a likely future narrative at Rottneest), or the celebration and commemoration of freedom-fighting forefathers of the Indian nation at the Cellular Jail in the Andamans. Further nuancing the representation of the past is the significance of prison sites to the families or descendants of former inmates and prison workers. The descendants of former-prisoners from the Indian mainland have dictated the memorial strategy at the Andamans, linking it to the story of independent nationhood. At Fremantle Prison, Descendants Day provides an opportunity to celebrate convict ancestors as pioneers and founders. Yet on Rottneest Island, the wishes of Aboriginal descendants have, until very recently, been widely ignored in order to safeguard the appeal of the island as a leisure destination for non-Indigenous tourists. The question of whose pasts are remembered through heritage, and how, is an important one, but unless the 'heritage pull' is key to visitor numbers (as it is at Fremantle Prison), or interest groups manage to gain enough support to effectively lobby local authorities, it will often play second fiddle to the more saleable-aspects of the site. For islands, these aspects remain very close to those that made them attractive as penal sites to nineteenth-century colonial administrators.

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