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Nationalism, Archaeology, and the Antiquities Trade in Turkey and Iraq

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Nationalism, Archaeology, and the Antiquities Trade in Turkey and Iraq

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Honors Project

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Introduction

One of the allures of studying Classics is not only in learning about the ancient world, but also in discovering how it intersects with modern life. We are molded by the past – not just our own, but the past of our people and the others around us. The antiquities trade is an area in which the ancient and the modern converge, and analyzing it necessitates navigating the politics of portraying the past. I first became interested in the antiquities trade when I came across Morag Kersel’s fieldwork on illegal excavators in Israel and Palestine, which sparked my desire to learn about the non-professional participants in the trade, those who do the most work and get paid the least.

This paper investigates how nationalism affects the antiquities trade – specifically, it asks if nationalistic ideologies affect those non-professional illegal excavators and looters. My research demonstrates that while economic concerns are paramount, nationalism does affect the way in which participants interact with the illicit market.

This paper consists of five analytical sections. The first concerns the mechanics of the antiquities trade – who the players are, and the logistics of how objects are smuggled across borders. The second discusses archaeology and nationalism, with an overview of the ways in which archaeology and the past have been incorporated into nationalistic ideologies throughout history. The third is a case study of Turkey, which includes an examination of the development of archaeology in the country, along with the state of archaeology, nationalism, and the antiquities trade there today. The fourth is a case study of Iraq, which discusses not only the development of archaeology and nationalism throughout the last few centuries of the country’s history, but also the looting

of the Iraq Museum in 2003. (The case studies of Turkey and Iraq were chosen based on the amount of information available and their relevance to the overall research.) Finally, the fifth section concerns archaeotourism and community archaeology, and the ways in which socially conscious archaeological practices benefit everyone involved, archaeologists and local people alike.

The Antiquities Trade

The antiquities trade is vast and complex. For an archaeological object to travel from the ground to a buyer, it goes through a variety of stages, both licit and illicit, including looting, export, distribution and sale.¹ This section explains the mechanics of the antiquities trade, including the key players: looters and illegal excavators, middlemen (traffickers, wholesalers, and retailers), and buyers. This paper focuses mainly on the first two categories; the focus of this project's research is on those who do not make their primary living in the trade.

Illegal Excavators

If players in the antiquities trade were to be placed in a pyramid, on the bottom level would be the looters, or illegal excavators, the group that contains the most people who earn the lowest income. These tend to be poor and uneducated people who live in source countries (nations where antiquities are abundant). As such, most illegal excavators in the Middle East loot for financial reasons. Many are subsistence diggers;

¹ Blythe Bowman, "Transnational Crimes Against Culture: Looting at Archaeological Sites and the "Grey" Market in Antiquities," *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 24 (2008): 232.

that is to say, they are motivated primarily by poverty.² Some are indebted to larger networks of organized crime, or are otherwise caught in socioeconomic circumstances from which they cannot escape.³

Morag Kersel, who did extensive field research in Israel and Palestine, has identified four main motivational factors for criminal excavators in the geographical region, which can exist in a variety of combinations. One, as already mentioned, is gainful employment. As an illegal excavator, one can work outside in the sunshine; for many, it is preferable to factory employment.⁴ Most of the looters in Kersel's fieldwork are low-income Palestinians, some of whom actually loot as a leisure activity – a second motivational factor. For example, some Palestinian construction workers employed in the Modi'in area camp out overnight in fields using makeshift tents and loot nearby sites in order to combat boredom and earn extra income.⁵ A third motivational factor is that this practice can also constitute a form of protest. Not only are these Palestinians violating Israeli law by looting, they are privileging the material remains on Palestinian-controlled lands by choosing to ransack sites in Israel.⁶

For some looters, it is a traditional practice – the fourth motivational factor. Looting can become a regular activity if a family depends on the income. Nomadic desert-dwelling groups such as the Bedouin have discreetly moved objects across the Israeli/Palestinian border for decades, to the point where it has sometimes become a well-

² Kimberly Alderman, "Honor Amongst Thieves: Organized Crime and the Illicit Antiquities Trade," *Indiana Law Review* (2012): 6.

³ Bowman, 234.

⁴ Morag Kersel, "Transcending Borders: Objects on the Move," *Archaeologies: Journal of the World Archaeological Congress* 3, no. 2 (2007): 87.

⁵ Kersel 2007, 88.

⁶ Kersel 2007, 93.

established family trade. In fact, many of those who participate in the illicit antiquities market, whether Bedouin or not, have a trained eye – they have learned from their relatives how to spot a valuable artifact and how to avoid fakes.⁷ For example, in 2003 at a ransacked museum in Mosul, Northern Iraq, looters took only the most valuable pieces and the rarest manuscripts, which indicates that they knew exactly what to look for.⁸

Proponents of the legal antiquities trade, such as dealers and collectors, often argue that looting provides impoverished participants with income they would not otherwise earn. However, while looting can sometimes generate a stable income, it often does not. And although there is a substantial amount of money to be made in the antiquities trade, looters generally make very little of it. In fact, they make less than one percent of the final market price – the majority of the profits go to the middlemen.⁹

Middlemen

Middlemen negotiate the transport of antiquities as well as the sale to their final owners. In general, they tend to be of higher socioeconomic status than looters, and sometimes have an alternate legitimate profession, such as working in an established business, which can lend itself to understanding economics and consumer demand.¹⁰ The disparity in earning levels between middlemen and looters is quite striking – middlemen make over 98% of the final market price.¹¹ For example, in 1988 when a Turkish farmer sold a broken marble statue of Marsyas he found on his property to the dealer Ali Kolasin

⁷ Kersel 2007, 90-91.

⁸ Alderman, 14.

⁹ Alderman, 7.

¹⁰ Kersel 2007, 86.

¹¹ Neil Brodie, "Pity the Poor Middlemen," *Culture Without Context* 3 (1998): 1, <http://www.mcdonald.cam.ac.uk/projects/iarc/culturewithoutcontext/issue3/brodie.htm>.

for \$7,400, the object went on to be displayed in New York for £540,000.¹² There are three kinds of middlemen: traffickers, wholesalers, and retailers.

Traffickers and wholesalers

Traffickers and wholesalers transport antiquities across international borders and secure object documentation. They use several methods to smuggle items through customs. One is to lie on the bill of burden – that is to say, mislabel a package that actually contains antiquities. Another option is to hide ancient objects among other commercial goods, or simply to use private shipping companies such as FedEx and UPS, which are monitored less stringently.¹³ However, some form of corruption is usually necessary, such as the bribing of border agents.¹⁴

In order to be sold, an object needs to make a transformation from illicit to licit.¹⁵ This change usually happens by forging papers of provenance in international waypoints such as the UK, Hong Kong, Belgium, or Switzerland.¹⁶ Switzerland especially is a nation through which a great many stolen artifacts are laundered, and its role in the trade is well acknowledged.¹⁷ There are several reasons why Switzerland is a convenient waypoint in the journey of stolen artifacts. One is that it has multiple international borders, including entry points into France, Italy, Germany, and Austria. Another, more

¹² Brodie, 1.

¹³ Alderman, 19.

¹⁴ Alderman, 18.

¹⁵ Bowman, 226.

¹⁶ Morag Kersel, "From the Ground to the Buyer," in *Archaeology, Cultural Heritage and the Antiquities Trade*, ed. N. Brodie et al. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), 189.

¹⁷ Michele Kunitz, "Comment: Switzerland & the International Trade in Art & Antiquities," *Northwestern Journal of International Law & Business* (2001): 2.

significant reason, is that compared to drug trafficking, the punishment from the government for dealing in antiquities are very light.¹⁸ And though the state-enacted penalties for such actions are small, the profits are potentially enormous. Circumstances are similar in the US - drug smugglers are often sentenced to many years in prison, while art smugglers are sometimes not given any jail time at all.¹⁹ However, unlike in the US, in Switzerland, property laws favor the buyer of a “good faith purchase”: if a buyer purchased an object without knowing it was illegal, the original ownership is then void. If it cannot be proven that a buyer knew or should reasonably have known the object was illegal, it still belongs to him or her.²⁰

Retailers

The retailer, a different type of middleman, acts as an intermediary between wholesalers and an object’s buyer. One example of a retailer is an antiquities dealer, such as the owner of an antiques shop. Others sell online, and there are even those who work closely with specific collectors or curators and coordinate a “loot-to-order” service. For example, during the looting of the Baghdad museum in 2003, witnesses described having seen European-looking men in suits talking on cell phones. There was special equipment present for moving specific pieces, which led some officials to surmise that Western art dealers and collectors had placed orders in advance.²¹

Some dealers sell their wares in source countries, which eliminates the need to transport objects over borders. Since these retailers primarily target tourists, an object

¹⁸ Kunitz, 2.

¹⁹ Kunitz, 2.

²⁰ Kunitz, 6.

²¹ Alderman, 14; 21.

will not fetch as high a price as it would in a Western market nation.²² Morag Kersel describes in her article “From the Ground to the Buyer” how licensed antiquities dealers in Israel circumvent the law to marginally offset this discrepancy.²³ The trade of antiquities in Israel is legal, but only for antiquities unearthed before 1978, the year of the national patrimony law, which states that objects excavated after that time are considered property of the state. In order to keep track of the objects bought and sold, every legal item has a registration number along with its description catalogued in a government database. Every time a tourist buys a piece, the dealer gives him or her a certificate of authenticity and an export license that lists the item’s registry number. However, the dealer need only give the customer an export license if requested, which a tourist usually does not do, being unfamiliar with the system. Then when the tourist leaves with the item, there is technically no official record of the sale of the object under that registry number, and the dealer can reuse the number by assigning it to another item with a similar description. If a registry item is labeled simply as “red Bronze Age vase,” it’s easy to fill that description with a new, looted item.²⁴ In this way, dealers exploit the legal system to allow new objects to fill their shops and to make more money from tourists.

Another prominent example of a retailer is an auction house. Thirty to forty percent of all the world’s antiquities pass through auction houses, making them the most public face of the antiquities trade. Up to ninety percent of the antiquities auctioned are

²² Alderman, 21.

²³ Kersel 2006, 195-198.

²⁴ Kersel 2006, 196.

illegal.²⁵ Auction houses are ideal places to sell illegal antiquities, because they answer to no higher authority overseeing their procedures. In recent years, major auction houses such as Sotheby's have pledged via institutional statements to increase their oversight concerning the provenances of their antiquities, including establishing departments for that very purpose. However, they still rely on provenance as described by the original owner of the item, which is often unreliable.²⁶ Vague descriptions of origin such as "From a Swiss gentleman's collection" are common in auction houses, which neatly sidestep the issue of archaeological origin by suggesting that the item was excavated so long ago that the provenance has been lost.²⁷

Buyers

Buyers of illicit antiquities are usually either museums or collectors, and collectors are usually of high socioeconomic status in highly developed, Western countries.²⁸ Museums today generally adhere to codes of ethics such as the one by American Museum Association that prohibits the acquisition of any objects of unverifiable provenance; however, collectors are private citizens and need answer to no authority regarding their purchases.²⁹ Many prominent archaeologists such as Colin Renfrew argue that "collectors are the real looters" and that their support of the market is

²⁵ Alderman, 22.

²⁶ Alderman, 23.

²⁷ Kersel 2006, 194.

²⁸ Bowman, 226.

²⁹ "Code of Ethics for Museums," American Association of Museums, accessed November 15, 2011, <http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/ethics/coe.cfm>.

what sustains the cycle of looting.³⁰ However, this paper primarily focuses on the bottom half of the antiquities trade pyramid, and a discussion of collectors is outside of this paper's parameters.

Antiquities and other illicit actions

As a general rule, there is more money to be made in the illicit trade of goods than the licit.³¹ Indeed, there is a substantial connection between the antiquities trade and other forms of illegal trafficking such as drugs and weapons. Smuggling antiquities allows traffickers to develop habitual smuggling routes that are then used for other illegal goods.³² In Spain, police blocked the efforts of an international smuggling ring to trade antiquities for cocaine. On a Mexican smuggling plane in Colorado, American authorities found highly valuable pre-Columbian artifacts along with marijuana with a street value of thousands of dollars.³³ In the United States, there is a growing problem of meth addicts unearthing and selling Native American objects they find for drug money.³⁴ The revenue generated from the sale of illicit antiquities is also reported to have funded terrorism. In 2005, the German Secret Service released information that Mohammed Atta, a hijacker from the first plane to hit the World Trade Center on September 11th, may have tried to sell Afghan antiquities to a German professor. He reportedly told the professor he was saving money to buy an aircraft. There is also anecdotal evidence to

³⁰ Colin Renfrew, "Collectors Are The Real Looters," *Archaeology* 46, no. 3 (1993): 16-17.

³¹ Brodie, 3.

³² Alderman, 19.

³³ Bowman, 231.

³⁴ Samir S. Patel, "Drugs, Guns, and Dirt," *Archaeology* 62, no. 2 (2009): 45-47.

suggest that the sale of illegal antiquities funds the activities of the Taliban.³⁵ Selling illicit objects is also a method of money laundering, because the regulations for these actions are less stringent than those for trafficking drugs or weapons, and therefore the punishments are much lighter.³⁶ It is clear from this evidence that economic concerns play a chief role in how and why participants interact with the antiquities trade.

Archaeology and Nationalism

Issues of ownership

In the 18th and 19th centuries, when archaeology was just beginning and antiquarianism was becoming a popular interest, systematic excavation was not yet a common practice. Nor were there many national antiquities laws in source countries; Western archaeologists often brought home the objects they found abroad, such as Heinrich Schliemann at Troy (discussed below). Today, stringent laws exist in most source nations, regulating the export of any and all antiquities.³⁷

International bodies such as UNESCO accept various nations' claims to cultural property and material remains found in or retrieved from lands within their borders. However, since the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, it also proclaims some material remains to be the "cultural heritage of all mankind."³⁸ Two decades later, at the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, UNESCO began to designate

³⁵ Alderman, 23.

³⁶ Bowman, 231-232.

³⁷ Neil Brodie and Colin Renfrew, "Looting and the World's Archaeological Heritage: The Inadequate Response," *The Annual Review of Archaeology* 34 (2005): 347.

³⁸ Robin Skeates, *Debating the Archaeological Heritage* (London: Duckworth, 2000), 20.

certain locations and monuments to be World Heritage sites, declaring that these sites belonged to everyone, “without prejudice to national sovereignty or ownership . . . irrespective of the territory on which they are located.”³⁹ These laws contribute to a sense of ownership that nations already often feel over objects found on their land. By codifying the idea that modern nations can correspond to ancient civilizations, UNESCO essentially legitimizes archaeology for nationalistic purposes.

Uses of archaeology

Creating narratives is a fundamentally human practice, and archaeology has been used to do just this throughout the centuries.⁴⁰ Royal families and other powerful groups have traditionally promoted themselves by claiming connections to a glorious past or to the gods. Monarchs and emperors throughout history have claimed divine connection in order to legitimize themselves.⁴¹ For an academic example, in the Renaissance, scholars used archaeological evidence in order to legitimize political change by citing historical precedents, especially from the revered classical world. In the same period in the east, Arab culture promoted historical scholarship, but only of the time after the pre-Islamic period, the Jahiliyyah, a dark “age of ignorance.”⁴² More recent leaders in both Turkey and Iraq have used the past to legitimize themselves, as is explained in the case studies below.

³⁹ Skeates, 20.

⁴⁰ Neil Asher Silberman, “Promised Lands and Chosen Peoples: the Politics and Poetics of Archaeological Narrative,” in *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology*, ed. Philip L. Kohl and Clare P Fawcett (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 253.

⁴¹ Silberman, 266.

⁴² Silberman, 267.

Scholars have identified several interpretive paradigms of archaeology that use the past in very different ways.⁴³ These include colonialist archaeology, imperialist archaeology, and nationalist archaeology.⁴⁴ This section is divided into explanations of archaeological paradigms typically used by a dominant cultural group, and those used by the suppressed.

Archaeology of the majority

Colonialist archaeology is an analytic paradigm practiced by western colonizers in regions settled by Europeans since the 16th century. It is a method of archaeological interpretation notorious for emphasizing the primitive nature of native peoples and their historical lack of importance. In fact, colonizers often construct a quasi-“chosen people” narrative for themselves, proclaiming that because their technology and prowess brought them to a new land, they deserved to rule it and its people.⁴⁵ This rhetoric has been used not only to justify colonization itself, but extreme discrimination against native peoples and even crimes against humanity such as ethnic cleansing.⁴⁶ Any archaeological interpretation with such ties to blatant political gain may be suspect.

Colonialist archaeology has also been perpetuated by American and Western European academics of the last two centuries who considered themselves to be the intellectual and political descendents of the Greeks and Romans. This provided them with a connection to the Ancient Mediterranean and Middle East, even if they lacked a

⁴³ Junko Habu, Clare P. Fawcett, and John M. Matsunaga, *Evaluating Multiple Narratives: Beyond Nationalist, Colonialist, Imperialist Archaeologies* (New York: Springer, 2008), 1.

⁴⁴ Silberman, 250; 261.

⁴⁵ Silberman, 257.

⁴⁶ Habu, Fawcett, and Matsunaga, 1.; Silberman, 249; 250.

substantive ethnic link.⁴⁷ The notion that westerners were the true cultural heirs of the region further legitimized any territorial expansion and subjugation of the people who originally lived there.⁴⁸ It also gave them a sense of privilege, a right to appropriate any cultural artifacts they found or excavated, and display them in cultural institutions in Europe.

Another analytic paradigm of the discipline is called imperialist archaeology. This refers to the archaeological tradition produced by nations with worldwide cultural, economic, and political power. These countries have the resources and power to conduct excavations and to have their findings be given credence by the international community at large.⁴⁹ Nations with dominant, imperial archaeological traditions generally don't question the universal applicability and validity of their methods, because the rest of the world rarely has the means to challenge them. This means non-Western countries are analyzed solely within a western epistemological framework; in fact, there is a long history of western archaeologists criticizing the biases of regional archaeologies in places such as the Near East, still "trapped in the throes of culture history."⁵⁰ The Western archaeological tradition remains dominant and imperialist because it is the method in which most archaeologists from all over the world are ultimately trained.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Silberman, 255.

⁴⁸ Another way of legitimizing the actions of colonizers in their home countries was the propagation of the "archaeologist as hero" motif, which is common in films such as Indiana Jones. These movies legitimize exploring untouched, hidden places and taking the antiquities found there without thought or apology. For more, see Silberman, "Promised Lands and Chosen Peoples," 252.

⁴⁹ Habu, Fawcett, and Matsunaga, 1-2.

⁵⁰ Lynn Meskell, "Introduction: Archaeology Matters," in *Archaeology Under Fire: Nationalism, Politics and Heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East*, ed. Lynn Meskell (London: Routledge, 1998), 2.

⁵¹ Habu, Fawcett, and Matsunaga, 1-2.

Archaeology of the minority

Nationalist archaeology, the most common analytic paradigm, emphasizes the important historical role of a particular group of people.⁵² This archaeological interpretation is often used when one group of people (usually the minority) has been oppressed by another: it can provide the subjugated people with pride, morale, and even a means of resistance.⁵³ As new nations gain independence and begin to emerge as distinct entities, nationalist archaeology is often used in the service of the state to form a new identity, unconstrained by colonizers. Constructing an archaeological narrative for a new country usually involves identifying an admired trait of an ancient people, a trait that is still accessible, that has stood the test of time and cultural change.⁵⁴ This trait is then connected to a present day group of people, and independence is framed as a “resurrection” of the nation’s former glory after a long period of subjugation.⁵⁵

Nationalist archaeology can prompt investigation and academic work about the societies of indigenous peoples, topics most likely ignored by colonial archaeologists.⁵⁶ However nationalist archaeology, like colonial archaeology, is also inherently exclusionary. Despite its potential benefits in illuminating understudied topics and supporting the cause of subjugated groups, it generally fails to leave room for multiple identities within one nation. Vastly disparate peoples are lumped together into one

⁵² Silberman, 250.

⁵³ Siân Jones, “Archaeology and the Interpretation of Ethnicity: Israel and Beyond,” *Anthropology Today* 10. no. 5 (1994): 20.

⁵⁴ Silberman, 256.

⁵⁵ Silberman, 253.

⁵⁶ Bruce G Trigger, “Romanticism, Nationalism, and Archaeology.” In *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology*, ed. Philip L. Kohl and Clare P Fawcett (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 272.

category because they all share the same passport. This rigidity is unsettlingly reminiscent of both colonial and imperial archaeologies; they share “the same notions of superiority and the same strategies for exclusion.”⁵⁷ And vastly disparate groups of people within one country may not agree on what a nationalist interpretation should be, especially when scientific evidence fails to corroborate a politically charged myth such as Masada in Israel or Custer’s Last Stand in the United States.⁵⁸

The exclusionary nature of nationalist archaeology is constant, even when being employed by a minority group. Nations recently independent of colonialism have leaders from the formerly oppressed population who (consciously or unconsciously) formulate their new nation’s identity. Thus, the process of selecting a “chosen people” and highlighting a particular golden age begins anew, leaving another group in the dust.⁵⁹ Celebrating only one group of people above the others can and often does lead to the misappropriation of historical evidence for political reasons.⁶⁰ This is, of course, what colonialist archaeology does as well. Archaeology in the service of politics, no matter whose, is liable to be a misrepresentation. In fact, when citing instances of these nationalist paradigms, scholars often point to Nazi Germany and the USSR, who used archaeology to advance their agenda. However, there are nations not nearly so prominent or notorious that also engage in the practice.⁶¹ The way in which a government utilizes

⁵⁷ Yannis Hamilakis, “Through the Looking Glass: Nationalism, Archaeology and the Politics of Identity,” *Antiquity* 70, no. 270 (1996): 977.

⁵⁸ Silberman, 258.

⁵⁹ Silberman, 256-257.

⁶⁰ Trigger, 272.

⁶¹ Silvia Tomášková, “Nationalism, Local Histories and the Making of Data in Archaeology,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9, no. 3 (2003): 488.

archaeology can both reflect and reinforce its values and policies.⁶² For example, in Israel, national Jewish symbols such as Masada are very well funded, whereas Christian sites and especially Islamic sites are not.⁶³ In reality, the line between using nationalistic archaeology for pride and morale and using it for political manipulation is, at best, blurred.⁶⁴

Self-reflexivity for archaeologists

When archaeologists criticize the bias that accompanies nationalistic ideology, they overlook the fact that there is no such thing as true objectivity in their field. Archaeological narratives cannot be dissociated from their cultural context or the society for which they are constructed.⁶⁵ In fact, the West has always used the past to form its identity, often doing so in opposition to the Eastern “other” (for an example of this, please see the discussion of a “scholarly fault line” in Turkey on p. 24).⁶⁶ Archaeologists’ commentary can be constrained externally by political situations and economic incentives. But they can also be constrained due to personal, internal biases, including their culture, their era, their personality, contemporary scholarship, and the resources at their disposal.⁶⁷ Fortunately, as time goes on and the archaeological community develops a more extensive base of data and knowledge, there will be more forces counteracting an archaeologist’s personal bias.⁶⁸ While objectivity can never truly

⁶² Silberman, 249.

⁶³ Trigger, 271.

⁶⁴ Silberman, 251.

⁶⁵ Silberman, 261.

⁶⁶ Meskell 1998, 3.

⁶⁷ Trigger, 265.

⁶⁸ Trigger, 275-276.

be reached, one can strive for it by evaluating the world with one's own subjectivity in mind.⁶⁹

According to Siân Jones, author of “Archaeology and the Interpretation of Ethnicity: Israel and Beyond,” part of the issue is that scholars have traditionally approached aspects of identity, such as ethnicity and nationalism, as fixed, atavistic traits. This primordialist and essentialist notion of identity belies the diversity that exists within every society.⁷⁰ Not only is a person not born with a set identity, but it can also change over time, and differs from person to person. Just because two people share a nationality does not mean they share the same values.

A movement called “post-processual archaeology” attempts to combat these widespread conceptions. It encourages alternate interpretations of the past and challenges the notion of an “academic monopoly of truth.”⁷¹ Scholar Ian Hodder calls for inclusion of multiple viewpoints in archaeology, a practice called “multivocality.” The purpose is to empower underrepresented groups, especially indigenous peoples, and to allow for multiple archaeological interpretations.⁷² However, according to post-processual archaeology, nationalism is fundamentally at odds with multivocality because it makes sweeping generalizations.⁷³ The development of multivocality was influenced by the rise of civil rights movements for women and minorities and also by the decline of colonial political structures. This has resulted in giving indigenous peoples a stronger public

⁶⁹ Habu, Fawcett, and Matsunaga, 2.

⁷⁰ Jones, 20.

⁷¹ Hamilakis, 977.

⁷² Habu, Fawcett, and Matsunaga, 2-3.

⁷³ Hamilakis, 977.

presence and voice, and it has even led to political victories for indigenous peoples such as NAGPRA, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.⁷⁴

It is evident that archaeology has been used prominently to support nationalistic ideology, spanning multiple cultures and time periods. It stands to reason, then, that nationalism affects the way looters and illegal excavators approach the past, archaeology, and the antiquities trade.

Archaeology and Nationalism in Turkey

My first case study is on Turkey, which I chose to investigate based on the amount of information and fieldwork available, as well as its location on the boundaries of what are traditionally considered the Eastern and Western worlds. This section covers archaeology, nationalism, and the antiquities trade from the early 19th century up to the present day.

Turkey under the Ottomans

During the tourist boom of the 18th century, antiquarianism was on the rise and with it a desire to collect antiquities, whose value was defined by age and authenticity.⁷⁵ Antiquities were a popular item for collectors because they evoked images of an exciting history and enhanced one's ability to better imagine the past. In the Western Turkish region of Lydia during the early 19th century, the antiquities trade began to grow as American archaeologists traveled to Turkey for archaeological digs. However, at that

⁷⁴ Habu, Fawcett, and Matsunaga, 3.

⁷⁵ Morag Kersel, "Valuing the Past: Perceptions of Archaeological Practice in Lydia and the Levant," *Journal of Social Archaeology*, no. 8 (2008): 299.

time, there was not an organized illicit trading network of the kind that exists in contemporary Turkey (see p. 28, *Archaeology in Contemporary Turkey*). The looters, usually farmers and others normally employed outside the trade, did not have such established access to middlemen as they have today, so they could only participate if they specifically had ties to a community of dealers.⁷⁶

The Ottoman government in the early 19th century was not overtly concerned with the preservation of archaeological heritage. In fact, they built a railroad track over the stone seating blocks for the theatre at Sardis.⁷⁷ This suggests that they prioritized development far above cultural heritage. One reason for this is that the classical education that most of Europe idealized, learning Latin and Greek and studying ancient texts, had little to do with the lives of the Ottomans, for whom a classical education meant studying Islamic texts.⁷⁸ American and other Western archaeologists used to come and simply walk away with pieces of classical art, and the government was mostly indifferent to it.⁷⁹

Only in the second half of the 19th century did European cultural influence in Turkey become more prominent, demonstrated by the Turkish government's adoption of some Western-style institutions, including a European educational system.⁸⁰ Ottoman authorities also began to pay closer attention to practicing archaeology in a controlled, documentable fashion. The Sultan Abdulmejid and his son-in-law Fethi Ahmet Pasha

⁷⁶ Kersel 2008, 303.

⁷⁷ Kersel 2008, 303.

⁷⁸ Charles Gates, "American Archaeologists in Turkey: Intellectual and Social Dimensions," *Journal of American Studies of Turkey*. no. 4 (1996): 47.

⁷⁹ Gates, 48.

⁸⁰ Mehmet Ozdogan, "Ideology and Archaeology in Turkey," in *Archaeology Under Fire: Nationalism, Politics and Heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East*, ed. Lynn Meskell (London: Routledge, 1998), 112; 114.

began an antiquities collection in 1845, which in 1868 would become the base for the Ottoman Imperial Museum (which then in 1891 became the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul).⁸¹ The Ottoman government eventually implemented laws regulating archaeological activity, the first of which was passed in 1874.⁸² Because of the focus of Western archaeology at that period, the excavations tended to be Hellenistic, Roman, or Byzantine, and thus the museum collections became filled with these objects.⁸³

In 1884, Osman Hamdi Bey, curator of the Ottoman Imperial Museum, successfully formulated a law prohibiting the export of archaeological objects, which made all antiquities property of the state.⁸⁴ This was very unusual for the time, because archaeologists were accustomed to traveling to any country and taking what they wanted with relative ease. Archaeologists kept much of what they discovered, in large part because bringing back antiquities was the motivating factor for museums and universities to fund them.⁸⁵ So, many Westerners ignored this new legislation by Turkey because they wanted to bring back objects, but also because they didn't consider Turks civilized or intellectual enough to properly study the remains.⁸⁶ In fact, the notorious archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann expressed this sentiment when he said that he would not turn his finds over to the government: "by keeping them all to myself, I saved them for science. All the civilized world will appreciate what I have done."⁸⁷

⁸¹ Gates, 48.

⁸² Gates, 50.

⁸³ Ozdogan, 115.

⁸⁴ James Goode, "Archaeology and Diplomacy in the Republic of Turkey, 1919-39," in *Turkish-American Relations: Past, Present and Future*, ed. Mustafa Aydin and Çağrı Erhan (London: Routledge, 2004), 115.

⁸⁵ Goode, 53.

⁸⁶ Ozdogan, 115.

⁸⁷ Ozdogan, 115.

As Edward Said has famously demonstrated, the Near East at this time was portrayed by the West as a despotic and dark region, existing as an “other” to Western Europe, a comparison that highlighted the accomplishments of the new Western democracies that were forming.⁸⁸ In 1925, the preeminent scholar of European prehistory, V.G. Childe, said that he viewed the “foundation of European civilization as a peculiar and individual manifestation of the human spirit.” To him, European civilizations were exemplary beyond anything the East could produce.⁸⁹ The scientists of the era also contributed to this perception in their unequal scientific treatment of certain parts of the world. The original estimates for the start of sedentary civilization in both Southeastern Europe and Anatolia had been set at 3,000 BC. But as Carbon-14 dating became prominent, the dates for Southeastern Europe were pushed back 2,000-3,000 years. Anatolia was not analyzed with Carbon-14, leading to a misconception that European civilizations were much older than the Anatolia ones.⁹⁰ Contemporary scholar Colin Renfrew, criticizing this discrepancy, called this a scholarly “fault line” between Europe and Asia.⁹¹ (While issues of portraying Eastern nations as “backward” still persist, this discrepancy in dating systems has today been rectified.)

⁸⁸ Edward W Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

⁸⁹ Ian Hodder, “The Past as Passion and Play: Çatalhöyük as a Site of Conflict in the Construction of Multiple Pasts,” in *Archaeology Under Fire: Nationalism, Politics and Heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East*, ed. Lynn Meskell (London: Routledge, 1998), 125.

⁹⁰ Hodder, 126.

⁹¹ Hodder, 126.

The early Turkish Republic

Under the Ottomans, archaeology was a specialized occupation with no focus on meeting a local population's needs. Archeology was a concept that developed in Europe and was linked to European ideology, so the number of Turks who knew how to practice it was small: they had to have received an education in Europe. But it stopped being an elite practice once archaeology was incorporated into the ideology of the new republic, a practice that began with Osman Hamdi Bey and continued with the first president of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In fact, Turkey is now one of the few countries where a local tradition in archaeology has developed, including trained tour guides.⁹²

The Republic of Turkey was founded on October 29th, 1923. Archaeology in this new state was used to create a strong national identity out of the past and to prove that it was a nation capable of contributing to a scholarly field.⁹³ The desire of Turkish leaders to create this sense of unity from the outset was eloquently expressed by the Turkish intellectual, Selahattin Kandemir, in 1933: “[a] tree that doesn't have its roots deep in the soil cannot grow. The root of national power is national identity. What creates national identity is national history.”⁹⁴ In particular, the new government wanted to combat the stereotypes of Turks as uncouth barbarians. To that end, the Turkish Historical Society was founded on June 4th 1930, and its first task was to “investigate the roots of Turkish history and come up with an historical thesis that could be tested through future research.”⁹⁵

⁹² Ozdogan, 111.

⁹³ Tugba Tanyeri-Erdemir, "Archaeology as a Source of National Pride in the Early Years of the Turkish Republic," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 31, no. 4 (2006): 381.

⁹⁴ Tanyeri-Erdemir, 382.

⁹⁵ Tanyeri-Erdemir, 382.

The main idea of the thesis was that the ancestors of the modern-day Turks were originally people from Central Asia who brought civilization to a variety of peoples in China, India, the Middle East, North Africa, the Balkans, and parts of Europe. They also postulated that the Turks were descendants of the Hittites and the Sumerians, which in turn means that their ancestors made significant contributions to the development of what would become the ancient Greek civilization. It suggests they are simultaneously the ancestors and the descendants of all the civilizations ever to have lived on Turkish soil.⁹⁶

Turkish nationalism developed in a unique environment, due to the position of the country right in between what were considered the Eastern and Western worlds. The Turks were thought to be neither quite Arab nor quite European, and had to juggle the influences of both cultures in the newly developing state. Under the Ottoman Empire, an Ottoman identity was considered more important than a Turkish identity, which was why nationalism in the new Turkish republic was initially such a novel concept.⁹⁷

The “ethnohistorical” thesis was presented publicly at the First Turkish Congress of History in 1930, organized by the Turkish Historical Society.⁹⁸ The congress lasted nine days and the presented research, all of which supported the new thesis, spanned the Paleolithic period to the present day. The president of the Turkish Republic, Atatürk, attended every session of the conference, which suggested the gravity and import of the occasion.⁹⁹ The bulk of the audience was made up of schoolteachers and middle school students, a strategic move to inculcate the new nationalistic ideas into the minds of the

⁹⁶ Tanyeri-Erdemir, 382.

⁹⁷ Ozdogan, 116.

⁹⁸ Ozdogan, 116-117.

⁹⁹ Tanyeri-Erdemir, 383.

young and their educators. Essentially, the thesis fosters Turkish national pride through the presentation of a prestigious legacy.¹⁰⁰

In the years that followed, archaeologists set to work trying to find anthropological evidence to support their thesis. They went about this process very carefully and precisely, following the logic that archaeological developments could demonstrate the development of a nation. On this topic, Remzi Oguz Arik, in his narrative on the excavations at Golludag, remarked: “Because archaeological sites belong to all of humanity, the excavations are always of international importance. Every good excavation receives praise from every nation, and, likewise, clumsy excavations will be condemned by all.”¹⁰¹

New archaeological findings were presented at the Second Turkish Congress of History in 1937. This congress was aimed less at an internal, national audience than an international one, and archaeologists shared their meticulously recorded data with pride. Participants were even given specially made pins to wear of an ancient Hittite symbol, once again equating modern Turkey with a glorious past.¹⁰²

In fact, this conference represented a shift in the purpose of archaeology in the early Turkish Republic. It began as a vehicle for inspiring national pride based on a past of luminary civilizations, and transitioned to inspiring national pride based on the ability of Turkish academics to conduct meticulous archaeological excavations and ultimately contribute to international scholarship.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Tanyeri-Erdemir, 384.

¹⁰¹ Tanyeri-Erdemir, 385.

¹⁰² Tanyeri-Erdemir, 385.

¹⁰³ Tanyeri-Erdemir, 386.

Archaeology in contemporary Turkey

Turkey is a largely Muslim country that still capitalizes on the pagan, non-monotheistic icons of its past. The famous archaeological site of Çatalhöyük, near the city of Çumra, has particularly famous representations of the nude Mother Goddess that have been used as motifs in fashion, art, and tourist items.¹⁰⁴ In some ways, this use of a pagan symbol is counterintuitive, considering the prevalence of monotheism and the importance of modesty for women in Islam.¹⁰⁵ However, locals know the economic benefit of Çatalhöyük - archaeological projects provide jobs and attract tourists.¹⁰⁶ Hodder's research suggests that they choose to look past the religious implications of the goddess image and instead focus on its importance as an indicator of Anatolia's glorious past.¹⁰⁷

In today's antiquities trade, looters and illegal excavators in Turkey tend to be agricultural workers who pad their savings with income from the antiquities trade. Treasure hunting is many times a local, family-oriented activity.¹⁰⁸ Looters often remove items with precious metals in them so that they can be melted down for other uses, but sometimes they also take pieces with a nice sculptural job or design idea. While monetary gain is likely the primary reason for looting, there is another: traditional folklore. There are mounds in Lydia with such labels as "Treasure Hill," "The King's Grave," and "The Mound Where Money Was Found." It was said that precious metals

¹⁰⁴ Hodder, 128.

¹⁰⁵ Hodder, 129.

¹⁰⁶ Christopher H. Roosevelt and Christina Luke, "Looting Lydia: The Destruction of an Archaeological Landscape in Western Turkey," in *Archaeology, Cultural Heritage, and the Antiquities Trade*, ed. Neil Brodie et. al. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), 183.

¹⁰⁷ Hodder, 135.

¹⁰⁸ Roosevelt and Luke, 180.

lay in the walls and floor, which meant that, decades ago, looters tore up every part of the tomb. This not only took the objects out of their archaeological context, it destroyed the context itself. After the looting it was no longer evident where the mound even lay, which meant scholars could learn nothing about the size or placement of the tomb in relation to others in a burial ground.¹⁰⁹

In Turkey today, for heritage sites to be monitored and protected, they must be registered with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism as First Degree or Class One protection sites. On the local level, especially in more rural areas, monitoring falls to the provincial museums. But the staff of small museums tends to be stretched thin, so busy with registering archaeological activity, acquiring objects, and keeping track of construction projects that there is not always time to personally check the excavations. There is a system of payment for “accidentally looted” objects or antiquities found on the land, which means there is an incentive for locals to hand over objects to the government. On the one hand, this policy keeps objects in Turkey proper and off the black market, but on the other it creates the incentive for a small but thriving market of antiquities. Issues can arise when found objects are reported to the government, because the government then has the capacity to take that person’s land away for excavation and study. These people, often farmers or other rural dwellers, can have their homes taken away from them, and are almost never compensated adequately. Understandably, some choose to pass the object off to a dealer for a small sum of money rather than risk having their livelihood torn from them. Even if this farmer does believe in the importance of Turkey’s cultural heritage, the government’s actions make it potentially unviable to act

¹⁰⁹ Roosevelt and Luke, 181.

upon these beliefs.¹¹⁰ It is therefore clear that nationalism may and likely does have an effect on the way people approach the antiquities trade, but it is overshadowed by economic concerns.

Archaeology and Nationalism in Iraq

The second case study is of Iraq, which I chose based on its relevance to current events and on the resulting attention paid to the status of its antiquities in the past decade. Throughout the modern history of Iraq, archaeology has been used to justify many regimes and ideologies, and has thus often been the subject of debate.¹¹¹ Iraq is a diverse nation, made up of peoples of varied ethnicities and religions, including the Kurdish people, Sunni and Shia Muslims, Christians, and Jews.¹¹² This diversity makes crafting a unified national identity particularly complicated. Delineating an Iraqi identity using archaeology has largely been a top-down process, and two primary models for nationalist unity have fought for primacy in the Iraqi government: Pan-Arabism and Iraqism.¹¹³ This section will trace the use of archaeology in Iraqi nationalism from the early 1920s through today.

¹¹⁰ Kersel 2008, 301-309.

¹¹¹ Magnus T Bernhardsson, "Archaeology and Nationalism in Iraq, 1921-2003," in *Controlling the Past, Owning the Future: The Political Uses of Archaeology in the Middle East*, ed. Ran Boytner, Lynn Swartz Dodd, and Bradley J. Parker (Tucson: Arizona State University Press, 2010), 60.

¹¹² Bernhardsson, 57.

¹¹³ Bernhardsson, 57; 65-66.

Mesopotamia through Western eyes

In the book *Archaeology Under Fire: Nationalism, Politics and Heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East*, Zainab Bahrani argues that Mesopotamia, framed as the cradle of civilization, was necessary for a Western meta-narrative.¹¹⁴ Couched in the “progress of civilization” rhetoric, Western archaeologists have traditionally posited that the enlightened Mesopotamian ideals were transferred to the Greek and Roman empires, which in turn came to shape today’s Western Europe.¹¹⁵ When the first archaeologists began working in the field, their finds were interpreted within this pre-established framework – not to mention that early archaeological trips to the Middle East were often considered “civilizing missions.”¹¹⁶ Mesopotamia works well as a narrative precursor to modern society because it can be construed as enlightened and Western while simultaneously uncivilized and Eastern.¹¹⁷ Therefore the progressive ideals of Mesopotamia have been preserved in the Western regions of the world, while the “barbarism” of the ancient civilization prevailed in the Middle East. By this reasoning, contemporary Iraqis don’t deserve to be afforded any respect.¹¹⁸

Early Iraq (1920s)

In the 1920s, Iraq was under the British Mandate, who appointed the country’s leader. Faysal I, Iraq’s first king, was not Iraqi – he was from Hijaz, Saudi Arabia – but his

¹¹⁴ Zainab Bahrani, “Conjuring Mesopotamia: Imaginative Geography and a World Past,” in *Archaeology Under Fire: Nationalism, Politics and Heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East*, ed. Lynn Meskell (London: Routledge, 1998), 160.

¹¹⁵ Bahrani, 162.

¹¹⁶ This idea was already prevalent – Hegel brought it into the mainstream consciousness in the 1830s; Bahrani, 162; Bernhardsson, 62.

¹¹⁷ Bahrani, 163.

¹¹⁸ Bahrani, 263.

family, the Hashemite Monarchy that ruled from 1921-1958, played a large part in establishing “Iraqiness.”¹¹⁹ However, as mentioned previously, the disparate groups of people that made up Iraq were hard to unite. In 1932, ten years into Faysal’s reign, he was still frustrated about this, saying that in “Iraq there is no Iraqi people . . . but unimaginable masses of human beings, devoid of any patriotic ideas, imbued with religious traditions and absurdities, connected by no common tie.”¹²⁰ Iraq is unique in this respect because many other nations at the time identified with ancient civilizations, such as Lebanon with the Phoenicians, Pahlavi Iran with the Sassanians and Achaemenids, and Turkey with the Hittites.¹²¹

The Iraqi government did not show much interest in archaeology, but many Westerners wanted to excavate there. Gertrude Bell, the famous archaeologist who helped establish the Hashemite dynasties in Jordan and Iraq, was the impetus behind much of this archaeological work. She acted as Director of Antiquities for a time, and even founded the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad. When artifacts were dug up in sanctioned excavations, they were distributed between the Western and the Iraqi archaeologists, the latter receiving only a small percentage of the finds.¹²²

In 1927, the Iraqi government showed the first substantive interest in antiquities when the British Director of Antiquities was accused of stealing artifacts and smuggling them abroad. The government decided to add Iraqi supervision to the excavation sites and the National Museum, and they allocated funding to send two students abroad to

¹¹⁹ Bernhardsson, 57.

¹²⁰ Bernhardsson, 58.

¹²¹ Bernhardsson, 59.

¹²² Amatzia Baram, "A Case of an Imported Identity: The Modernizing Secular Ruling Elites of Iraq and the Conception of Mesopotamian-Inspired Territorial Nationalism 1922-1992," *Poetics Today* 15, no. 2 (1994): 283.

study archaeology and cuneiform.¹²³ These students, Taha Baqir and Fu'ad Safar, went on to become two of the most important archaeologists in Iraq.

Transitional period (1930s)

In 1930, the parliamentary education committee called for archaeology courses in Iraqi high schools and for renovation and expansion of the National Museum. This indicated a growing public interest in the archaeological past of Iraq, an interest mostly out of the concern that Iraq was being robbed of its treasures (by such figures as Gertrude Bell) rather than its history.¹²⁴ However, authorities were reluctant to establish stringent antiquities laws, possibly because greater restrictions on Western archaeologists would mean there would be fewer finds, which would bring less prestige to Iraq.¹²⁵

In any nation's process of self-identification, nationalism can fluctuate between a "positive" and "negative" identification. A positive identification defines a people by who they are, and a negative identification defines a people by who they are not. A negative identification requires a point of comparison – an "other," so to speak – which was hard to find in a country as linguistically, ethnically, and religiously diverse as Iraq. So for the most part, Iraq has stressed a positive identification, either in the form of Pan-Arabism or Iraqi particularism.¹²⁶

During the 1930s, Pan-Arabism was most favored by the government. This is partially because of the diversity of the nation, and also partially because it was seen as a

¹²³ Baram 1994, 284-285.

¹²⁴ Baram 1994, 285.

¹²⁵ Baram 1994, 286.

¹²⁶ Bernhardsson, 58-59.

way of allying with nearby Arab nations against the colonialists.¹²⁷ In fact, focusing on the things that made Iraq unique could potentially have been interpreted as an act of isolationism.¹²⁸ Al-Husri, the Director of Antiquities at the time, proclaimed that the uniting factor of a country was language, which also connected Iraq to the other states around it.¹²⁹ Since Islamic heritage, deeply important to most Iraqis, was all but ignored by the Western archaeologists, al-Husri decided to build a huge collection of Islamic antiquities that could be a source of national pride.¹³⁰ Beginning in 1934, al-Husri began to direct his own excavations and reconstruction projects; several years later, an Arab-Islamic Museum was established in Baghdad.¹³¹

During this decade, Iraqi journalists began a media campaign against foreign archaeologists because they felt that their country had been robbed of its treasures.¹³² They urged the government to train Iraqi archaeologists to safeguard their cultural heritage. In 1936, the government passed a more stringent antiquities law, making all antiquities the property of the state.¹³³

The late 1930s were also a time when the Iraqi government began to look to pre-Islamic history and archaeology to create the missing sense of Iraqi unity. The new Director of Education in Iraq, ultra-nationalist Dr. Sami Shawkat, gave a series of talks to Iraqi high school students about the Baghdad-based Abbasid Caliphate and how they ruled over 200 million people all across the Middle East. This speech implied that Iraq's

¹²⁷ Baram 1994, 288.

¹²⁸ Baram 1994, 287

¹²⁹ Baram 1994, 289.

¹³⁰ Baram 1994, 289.

¹³¹ Baram 1994, 290.

¹³² Baram 1994, 292.

¹³³ Bernhardsson, 64.

role in Islamic history had meaning for what Iraq's role should be in the world today. Shawkat's interpretation did take historical liberties, as history for nationalistic reasons often does.¹³⁴ The issues of Iraqi diversity were sidestepped by saying that any and all people living on Iraqi soil have a long history of great accomplishments. They didn't identify with one particular people, but rather with many – the law-abiding nature of Hammurabi's society, for example, or the fighting prowess of the Assyrians and the scientific progress of the Abbasids.¹³⁵ While al-Husri was careful to call Mesopotamians “ancient dwellers of Iraq” rather than Arabs or Iraqis, Shawkat implied a direct blood connection.¹³⁶

As mentioned above, in the mid-1930s, the government sent two students overseas to study archaeology and ancient languages, and they became Iraq's two leading archaeologists, Taha Baqir and Fu'ad Safar.¹³⁷ The curricula of high schools were also changed to include the histories of the Sumerians, Akkadians, Sargon I, Hammurabi and his laws, Nebuchandezzar and Babylon, and other components of ancient Iraqi history.¹³⁸ This message was also spread through other governmental institutions such as the army.¹³⁹ Adding to the development of nationalism was the creation of a linear, progressive timeline that stated that all past civilizations on Iraqi soil culminated in the modern Iraqi nation-state. Archaeological evidence supported this by showing that “Iraqis” have been living on the same soil for millennia.¹⁴⁰ In fact, in promotional

¹³⁴ Bernhardsson, 58.

¹³⁵ Bernhardsson, 59.

¹³⁶ Baram 1994, 291.

¹³⁷ Baram 1994, 293.

¹³⁸ Baram 1994, 293.

¹³⁹ Bernhardsson, 60.

¹⁴⁰ Bernhardsson, 60.

material for the National Museum, King Faysal was portrayed as the latest in a long line of magnificent Iraqi kings, including Sargon I, Hammurabi, and Nebuchadnezzar – a message of Iraqi continuity.¹⁴¹ Connecting the past to the present so strongly implies that the spirits of ancient civilizations are alive and well. If modern citizens are direct cultural, political descendants of past civilizations, contemporary actions can be validated by ancient precedent.¹⁴²

Thus, the Iraqi connection to the past was defined as cultural rather than ethnic, which is much more fluid and easy to manipulate than nationalism based on race, religion or language. This is due to what scholar Magnus T. Bernhardsson calls “paradigmatic nationalism,” based on somewhat vague, shifting ideas of cultural paradigms. Ultimately, history is open to many interpretations, each serving a different purpose.¹⁴³

1940s-1960s

During the next three decades, the government interest and investment in archaeology grew. In 1951, the Institute for the Study of Antiquities and Ancient Civilizations was created, which trained Iraqi archaeologists.¹⁴⁴ They became important players in the scholarly field, and began to publish academic journals.¹⁴⁵ The notion that Iraq’s ancient dominance precipitated and destined its modern-day dominance prevailed in the emerging scholarship.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Baram 1994, 296.

¹⁴² Bernhardsson, 61.

¹⁴³ Bernhardsson, 60.

¹⁴⁴ Baram 1994, 296.

¹⁴⁵ Bernhardsson, 64-65.

¹⁴⁶ Baram 1994, 298.

The Ba'ath Party

The Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party was a political entity formed in 1947 in Syria, whose main tenets included secular nationalism, anti-imperialism, and socialism.¹⁴⁷ After seizing power in a 1968 military coup, the Iraqi Ba'ath Party launched an Arab-Iraqi cultural revival campaign. Their campaign had three prongs: promoting Iraqi folk art and dance, allotting more land and funds to archaeological excavations, and hosting a version of the Mesopotamian spring rites, a festival held annually in Mosul.¹⁴⁸ Saddam Hussein and the leaders of the Ba'athists had gone to school during the time when Mesopotamian legacy and heritage was heavily emphasized, so they grew up fully entrenched in these ideas.¹⁴⁹ Saddam Hussein and his government promoted his rule as a culmination of many Iraqi empires. This lent his government prestige, gave justifications for his actions, and overall emphasized his nation's historic role in the world.¹⁵⁰ Saddam called for the repatriation of many Iraqi antiquities, especially the stele of Hammurabi in the Louvre, even as a precursor to oil deals, which suggests the importance of the objects.¹⁵¹ Overall, it is clear that archaeology has played a major role in the formation of a contemporary Iraqi identity, including Iraqi self-perception.

¹⁴⁷ Amatzia Baram, *Culture, History & Ideology in the Formation of Ba'athist Iraq, 1968-89*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 10.

¹⁴⁸ Baram 1994, 302-303.

¹⁴⁹ Baram 1994, 299.

¹⁵⁰ Bernhardsson, 65.

¹⁵¹ Baram 1994, 303.

The Looting of the Iraq Museum

The US invaded Iraq in 2003, toppling Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime and beginning the Iraq war. The invasion of Baghdad is infamous partially due to the damage done to the National Museum of Iraq, which was looted in the process.

Before the war

The American government was somewhat aware of possible issues regarding the Baghdad museum before the invasion of Iraq, but did not consider them particularly serious, despite warnings to the contrary. Members of archaeological community grew anxious as the US prepared to invade, including academics such as the University of Chicago's McGuire Gibson. He contacted Lt. Col. Kraig Kentworthy, a marines Civil Affairs coordinator in charge of cultural issues, exhorting him to verify museum security, noting that "if the mobs hit the safe-deposit vault of the Central Banks, they will have access to the most important objects from the Iraq National Museum, and they will see them as mere gold to be melted down."¹⁵²

Additionally, the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) and the American Association for Research in Baghdad (AARB) collectively sent a letter to Colin Powell, George W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, and Tony Blair, as well as James Burger, the Defense Department's general counsel, Larry Hanauer at the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, and Maj. Chris Varhola of the US Army Civil Affairs Command. They also emphasized the necessity of museum and archaeological site

¹⁵² Rothfield, 83.

protection, arguing that it was mandated under the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.¹⁵³

The invasion

The government had taken some precautions regarding the Baghdad Museum, such as making it number three on the no-strike list, but this did not prevent the destruction that took place.¹⁵⁴ Looting often happens during times of change and transition in power, and accordingly the Department of Defense expected the most overtly Saddam-related institutions to be ransacked, such as presidential palaces and governmental buildings – but they also underestimated how much the museum represented Saddam’s regime to the people of Iraq.¹⁵⁵ In fact, Saddam did control the museum tightly – since 1991, it had only been open to the public on one day: his birthday, April 28th, 2000. The US government thought that the importance of Iraq’s heritage would be enough to prevent looting at the museum, that Iraqis would see it as stealing from themselves rather than from an oppressive regime. Even the museum staff itself was surprised at the scale of the destruction.¹⁵⁶

In the days leading up to the looting, there was fighting in the area.¹⁵⁷ The Ministry of Culture had drafted the museum staff to guard the museum, but that became a more and more dangerous job, especially since they were representing a government

¹⁵³ Rothfield, 84.

¹⁵⁴ Matthew Bogdanos, “Thieves of Baghdad: The Looting of the Iraq Museum,” in *Antiquities Under Siege: Cultural Heritage Protection after the Iraq War*, ed. Lawrence Rothfield (Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2008), 33.

¹⁵⁵ Bogdanos, 40.

¹⁵⁶ Bogdanos, 33-34.

¹⁵⁷ Rothfield, 88.

under military attack, and they were still only civilians. It was also dangerous even to travel from their homes to the museum, and many of the staff had fled the country. The last of the museum staff left their guard posts – even the live-in security guard – on April 7th, when they saw men in the museum gardens with rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) and machine guns.¹⁵⁸

The looting

During the evening of April 10th, the museum was looted. One witness reported three or four hundred looters at the height of the raid.¹⁵⁹ When later analyzing the situation, officials categorized the looters into three groups: amateurs, professionals, and insiders.¹⁶⁰ While the amateurs and professionals were clearly distinguishable from one another, it is likely that both had help from insiders – especially the professionals, as they in particular may not have been mutually exclusive from the insiders.

Professionals

There were clearly professional looters in the museum that night, likely ones who had been lying in wait for an opportunity to enter the museum, some even coming over from Jordan for the job.¹⁶¹ They had prepared sufficiently to move the larger pieces that museum staff had been unable to remove before the invasion, and they had a discriminating eye – from the aboveground floors and galleries, they took forty of the museum's most treasured pieces, leaving all the copies, fakes, and less valuable

¹⁵⁸ Rothfield, 86-87.

¹⁵⁹ Bogdanos, 36.

¹⁶⁰ Bogdanos, 40.

¹⁶¹ Bogdanos, 41.

objects.¹⁶² For example, there was an exhibit of twenty-seven cuneiform bricks, spanning languages such as Sumerian, Akkadian, Old Babylonian, and New Babylonian. Only nine of the most exquisite pieces were taken, a few from each time period, and all the rest were left.¹⁶³

The worst looting took place in the basement storage rooms of the museum, clearly by people with intimate knowledge of the building's layout, suggesting an insider's help. They walked past rooms filled with valuable artifacts all the way to the back room where the museum's most highly prized objects were stored. They took 5,144 priceless cylinder seals and 5,542 bottles, pieces of jewelry, and other trinkets.¹⁶⁴ They had the key and they knew where to look. Only luck saved the very most precious of the collection: the basement was dark, and one of the looters lit flammable foam in order to see, but the fumes were so acrid that they then had to leave.¹⁶⁵

These looters can also be identified as professionals due to the connections needed to fence and sell such high-profile objects as the ones stolen.¹⁶⁶ Given the level of preparation, these people were likely hooked into a vast network of middlemen, who had the objects smuggled out of the country and trafficked on the international market.¹⁶⁷

Amateurs

There were also many undiscerning, amateur looters who took approximately 3,000 items in total from the museum's underground storeroom, mostly excavation site

¹⁶² Rothfield, 95.

¹⁶³ Bogdanos, 41.

¹⁶⁴ Bogdanos, 43.

¹⁶⁵ Rothfield, 97-98.

¹⁶⁶ Bogdanos, 40.

¹⁶⁷ Bogdanos, 43.

items such as jars, vases, and potsherds. These were clearly amateurs, as shelves of fakes were taken while neighboring shelves of valuable artifacts were left.¹⁶⁸ However, there were no signs of forced entry into these rooms, again suggesting inside help.¹⁶⁹

Indiscriminate looters also dragged large statues from the galleries out of the museum, wrapped in foam padding put there by the staff to shield them from bomb blasts.¹⁷⁰ Sometimes these uninformed looters unknowingly took fakes on display, and sometimes they walked off with priceless objects, such as the Sacred Vase of Warka.¹⁷¹ The ransacking was destructive not just for the objects being taken – overall, twenty-five valuable pieces on display were damaged or destroyed in the course of looting other objects.¹⁷²

Following the looting

The next day, on April 11th, there was still fighting around the museum, and the commotion made it difficult for US soldiers to tell how many looters still remained in the museum. Without this information, troops could not enter the building without risking a battle that could destroy the entire museum.¹⁷³ By April 12th, the damage was done. The on-site museum staff came back to guard the compound, and there was no more

¹⁶⁸ Bogdanos, 42.

¹⁶⁹ Rothfield, 95-97.

¹⁷⁰ Bogdanos, 40.

¹⁷¹ Bogdanos, 40.

¹⁷² Bogdanos, 40.

¹⁷³ Bogdanos, 37.

looting.¹⁷⁴ The US military waited four days until they secured the museum on April 16th, a move that has been disparaged by the critics of the invasion.¹⁷⁵

There has been a great deal of criticism regarding the US military's handling of the museum looting. But Colonel Matthew Bogdanos, of the United States Marine Corps, who has written a great deal on the subject, asserts that the military, in most regards, could not have ameliorated the situation. He fully concedes that the four-day wait to secure the compound was egregious. However, he takes issue with critics who do not understand combat tactics.

For example, on April 10th, the day of the looting, there were soldiers in the general area of the museum, but they lacked any riot gear, and facing a horde of looters without such equipment would potentially have been dangerous. The troops in the area also lacked adequate auxiliary support to risk securing the museum. The museum was in a compound with a football-field-sized garden in front of it. Without backup troops, tanks, and additional firepower, a reconnaissance force approaching the building across a large, open space could potentially have become a massacre. Even if looters at the upper windows of the museum had not picked off the troops by the time they reached the building, there could have been an ambush waiting just inside the doors. And even with the auxiliary troops, this move would have been dangerous.¹⁷⁶

Overall, the success of the US military made Baghdad fall months sooner than it was expected to. However, this means the security concerns were greatly underestimated. There was a lack of a sense of urgency on the part of the military

¹⁷⁴ Bogdanos, 37.

¹⁷⁵ Bogdanos, 39.

¹⁷⁶ Bogdanos, 37.

planners and, as mentioned, an underestimation of the extent to which the museum was tied to Saddam's regime. But, according to Bogdanos, even if these concerns had been raised, the army still would not have been able to spare the manpower to defend a building with no living people in it.¹⁷⁷

Reclaiming the objects

After the looting, the military started an amnesty program for the missing objects whereby anyone who brought in a looted item would be compensated rather than punished. This initiative provided an economic motivational factor to return any of the museum's items. It was instituted all over Iraq, and was quite successful. Customs checks at borders were also made more thorough, and more pains were made to catch participants in the illegal antiquities trade.¹⁷⁸ There were also many objects that quietly reappeared in the weeks following the looting from guilty staff members who thought better of their thievery.¹⁷⁹

As of December 2003, seven of the museum's most valuable objects from the galleries were returned or found, including the Sacred Vase of Warka and the Golden Harp of Ur.¹⁸⁰ Of the 5,400 pieces recovered, in Iraq and abroad, 1,950 were through amnesty and 3,450 were through seizure.¹⁸¹ At least 8,500 pieces are still missing,

¹⁷⁷ Bogdanos, 40.

¹⁷⁸ Bogdanos, 44.

¹⁷⁹ Bogdanos, 41.

¹⁸⁰ Bogdanos, 41.

¹⁸¹ Bogdanos, 44.

including priceless objects such as the cuneiform bricks and the Lioness Attacking a Nubian Boy.¹⁸²

It is clear that economic concerns were paramount for the looters at the Iraq Museum in 2003, demonstrated by the prevalence of destruction by amateurs, the extensive strategic theft of high-price objects by professionals, and the inside help provided by museum staff, whose job it was to protect the objects. However, it is also clear that nationalism may have and almost certainly did affect some of them.

Assessing how nationalism affected the antiquities trade in Iraq is a complex task, and in truth, there is no one answer. Even the definition of “nationalism” is unclear in this context – does it mean loyalty to a certain regime? Does it simply mean a loyalty to one’s nation? Does that include a loyalty to a nation’s past? Different Iraqis would define nationalism in various ways. The biggest mistake the US made was to assume that loyalty to a nation’s past would trump anger against an oppressive regime. It is actually possible some looters did consider destroying the museum a nationalist move, perhaps “reclaiming” the country from Saddam’s grip, especially considering the importance he assigned to Mesopotamian antiquities. These same looters could also have considered returning the objects a nationalist act, although there was also monetary compensation involved. Ultimately, most people don’t perform an action for any one reason, and I can only simply say that conceptions of nationalism must inevitably differ from Iraqi to Iraqi.

¹⁸² Bogdanos, 45.

Archaeotourism and Community Archaeology

Archaeotourism

Archaeologists have traditionally not assumed responsibility for the public presentation of sites or the circumstances of the local community. But the younger generations of archaeologists have become more and more aware that their work has a real impact on living people, and also that their interpretations are inherently biased and necessarily have an agenda.¹⁸³ Lynn Meskell calls ignoring a living population “privileging the ancients,” and one way to fight against this tendency is to include the local population in the archaeology itself, including presenting the site to tourists.¹⁸⁴ “Touristic archaeology,” a method in which revenue is as important or more important than scholarship, has its advantages and disadvantages.¹⁸⁵ It is positive because it creates jobs, doesn’t deplete great amounts of natural resources, and allows local people to engage with their history and culture. Unfortunately, it can also push the nation’s archaeological narrative to become much less nuanced; it packages many aspects of identity into one idea and turns culture and heritage into something to be capitalized on.¹⁸⁶

When creating a cultural attraction that is meant to be profitable, one must consider the needs of one’s audience, which leads to the presentation of sites in a culturally simplistic manner. The aim is to present visitors with a clear vision of who lived in and/or used a site, without too many technical details or shades of grey. This

¹⁸³ Lynn Meskell, “Sites of Violence: Terrorism, Tourism, and Heritage in the Archaeological Present,” in *Embedding Ethics*, ed. Lynn Meskell and Peter Pels (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2005), 123.

¹⁸⁴ Meskell 2005, 133.

¹⁸⁵ Silberman, 261.

¹⁸⁶ Meskell 2005, 130.

leads to funding for the larger, sprawling, impressive sites, and then only the positive aspects of each are highlighted.¹⁸⁷

When a nation becomes invested in touristic business, it then chooses to invest resources in sites that seem good for tourism but not necessarily scholarship or anthropology. Negative aspects are glossed over or erased altogether. Also, when site management is handed over to bureaucrats and businessmen, the presentation will necessarily lose scholarly cohesion and nuance.¹⁸⁸

Constructing archaeological tourism can cement a nation's identity, and what tourists claim to desire most is authenticity. Those who manage tourist archaeology often project a façade that makes it seem like they know more than they do; tourists don't want to hear about unknowns. This is problematic because, as archaeologists and scholars know, our knowledge of the past is usually at least somewhat fragmented. Not only that, but trying to tie the cultural groups of the past in with the cultural groups of the present is sometimes impossible; the cultural, ethnic, and national identities that exist today are often relatively recent cultural constructions.¹⁸⁹ In fact, the notion that an ethnicity constitutes a homogenous group of people is a fairly modern one.¹⁹⁰

In many cases, archaeological sites are actually presented as something set apart from the present, particularly in developing countries. Egypt, for example, has often been described by archaeologists as a civilization in decline, promoting the Pharaonic past over the Islamic and even the Classical. When tourists arrive in Egypt to see the remnants of its past only to ignore its present, it implicitly suggests that contemporary

¹⁸⁷ Silberman, 259.

¹⁸⁸ Silberman, 260.

¹⁸⁹ Trigger, 273.

¹⁹⁰ Jones, 20.

Egypt is backwards because its glorious past is more important than the people living there today.¹⁹¹ Of course, tourism can provide substantial economic benefits to a community. So, conversely, privileging the past that outsiders find more interesting can be an investment in one's future, towards a more developed, industrialized country.¹⁹² Tourism can also boost other heritage-based industries such as handicrafts.¹⁹³ But those who work at archaeological sites are often trained to present the land as something devoid of present influence, which is reductive of one's own role as a modern inhabitant of that land.¹⁹⁴ It is also possible for local populations to be exploited and to do work for less than they deserve, for example.¹⁹⁵

In order to employ local people at an archaeological site, training is necessary in a variety of areas: insight into guests' expectations and language instruction, along with relevant historical and archaeological information – the “narrative of a region.”¹⁹⁶ They can also be employed as security guards to protect the site at night as well as when tourists are there, who can easily destroy valuable parts of the site if unsupervised.¹⁹⁷

Community archaeology

Community archaeology, as defined by Lynn Marshall in an introduction to an issue of *World Archaeology* on the subject, is the practice of actively involving local people in an

¹⁹¹ Meskell 2005, 131.

¹⁹² Meskell 2005, 131.

¹⁹³ Meskell 2005, 132.

¹⁹⁴ Meskell 2005, 133.

¹⁹⁵ Eugenio Yunis, “Sustainable Tourism at Archaeological World Heritage Sites,” in *Of the Past, for the Future: Integrating Archaeology and Conservation*, ed. Neville Agnew and Janet Bridgland (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2006), 176.

¹⁹⁶ Meskell 2005, 189-190.

¹⁹⁷ Michael Bawaya, “Archaeotourism,” in *Archaeological Ethics*, ed. Karen D. Vitelli and Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh (Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2006), 163.

archaeological excavation, and indeed relinquishing partial control over to them at every step of the way.¹⁹⁸ A general goal of community archaeology is also to replace traditional, colonial models of archaeology with ones that promote social and political self-consciousness, ultimately aiming to incorporate different cultural perspectives in the interpretation of the past.¹⁹⁹ In my research, I have found a fair amount of literature concerning community archaeology in places with local indigenous populations such as the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.²⁰⁰ Archaeologists in New South Wales, Australia, created a list of guidelines for conducting ethical and effective community archaeology, including “fostering social relationships between the community and the archaeological team, maintaining a presence in the area between field seasons, seeking funding for the employment of local people, members of the local community relaying archaeological information to the wider community, and the retention of some kind of archaeological collection in the area.”²⁰¹ An example of a long-running archaeology project that fulfills all of these guidelines is located on the Red Sea in Quseir, Egypt.

Quseir

The project in Quseir is the first of its kind in the nation, and indeed the only I could find (at least perhaps on such a large scale) in the Middle East. The aim of the

¹⁹⁸ Yvonne Marshall, “What is Community Archaeology?” *World Archaeology* 34, no. 2 (2002): 212.

¹⁹⁹ Stephanie Moser et. al., “Transforming Archaeology Through Practice: Strategies for Collaborative Archaeology and the Community Archaeology Project at Quseir, Egypt,” *World Archaeology* 34, no. 2 (2002): 221.

²⁰⁰ Marshall, 212.

²⁰¹ Moser et. al., 223.

project is to involve local people in all aspects of the excavation, and ultimately to create a heritage center with a permanent display about the site for both residents and tourists.²⁰²

According to the authors of the 2002 article on the Quseir project, Stephanie Moser et. al. from Southampton University, England, “it is no longer acceptable for archaeologists to reap the material and intellectual benefits of another society’s heritage without that society being involved and able to benefit equally from the endeavor.”²⁰³ They also endorse the general goal of ‘community archaeology’ to replace the traditional colonial model of archaeological practice with a socially and politically self-conscious mode of research, aiming ultimately to incorporate a variety of cultural perspectives in their interpretation of the past.²⁰⁴

The excavations began in 1999 at the ancient Roman harbor site of *Myos Hormos*, known today as Quseir, or Quseir al-Qadim (Old Quseir).²⁰⁵ The residents of the city showed an interest in their past and the government an interest in how an excavation might impact tourism, so involving the community in the project was not difficult to propose.²⁰⁶ Quseir is not a homogenous community, however – it is filled with diverse groups of people, which means that one cannot generalize about its population. But although this might provide a challenge to archaeologists, it does not by any means preclude a sensitive treatment of community archaeology.²⁰⁷

Stephanie Moser et. al. have identified several important components of their community archaeology project. The first is communication and collaboration with the

²⁰² Moser et. al., 221.

²⁰³ Moser et. al., 221.

²⁰⁴ Moser et. al., 221.

²⁰⁵ Moser et. al., 221.

²⁰⁶ Moser et. al., 226.

²⁰⁷ Moser et. al., 222.

local community at all stages of the project – not just when the British archaeologists need help, or need something approved. As the archaeologist L. Derry has said, “if the community does not help define the questions, the answers probably won’t interest them.” Formulating these framing questions involves partnerships with local organizations such as the Quseir Heritage Preservation Society.²⁰⁸ They and the project team collaborate to release reports of the excavation work written in “plain language,” a narrative format comprehensible to non-archaeologists.²⁰⁹ The leaders of the Quseir project value this sort of transparency and openness with the local community, which can be achieved by employing them in every part of the excavation team, whether it be in the field, in the office, or even back in the UK. According to Moser et. al., with openness also comes the necessity of generally being friendly and accepting, and dealing with any issues in a head-on, straightforward manner, but with tact.²¹⁰

Another important component of the Quseir excavation project is the public presentation and exhibition of their findings, with a permanent display still in the planning stages at the time of the article written. This requires a great deal of input from many different sources, as well as the use of a variety of media.²¹¹ The displays will ultimately cover the site’s history as the Roman trading port of *Myos Hormos*, the Islamic port of Quseir al-Qadim, and per the interests of its residents, its development in the 19th century as an important site for the exportation of grain. At the exhibition itself, there will be residents on hand to comment on the objects, a strategy that was chosen for its ability to highlight the community’s personal connection to the excavation. In advance of

²⁰⁸ Moser et. al., 229.

²⁰⁹ Moser et. al., 230.

²¹⁰ Moser et. al., 230-232.

²¹¹ Moser et. al., 234.

the completion of the permanent exhibition, there also have been temporary exhibits that keep people informed as to the progress of the excavation.²¹² This sort of heritage tourism puts money into the pockets of local people rather than large corporations, and this money allows the resources to be developed in a manner that is sensitive and relevant to the interests of the local people.²¹³

On a related note, another important component of the excavations at Quseir is the provision of educational resources about the site's history. This includes a photograph and video archive, an artifact database, guided site visits, and even children's books on the subject.²¹⁴ For items such as these, the leaders of the project identify community-controlled merchandising as an important consideration. In "Promised Lands and Chosen Peoples: the Politics and Poetics of Archaeological Narrative," Silberman argued that merchandise in mass tourism can potentially lead a community to become a "parody of itself" – for example, in Quseir, there are Pharaonic symbols, motifs, and trinkets everywhere, even though the town is at least four and a half hours from any Pharaonic site or monument. So the site team has initiated a project whereby actual Quseir-inspired souvenirs of good quality are being manufactured. In fact, a set of replica pottery has already been designed by a ceramic specialist.²¹⁵ Residents have also designed a logo for the site that includes references to both the past and present, highlighting industry, the sea, Rome, and Islam.²¹⁶

²¹² Moser et. al., 234-236.

²¹³ Marshall, 215.

²¹⁴ Moser et. al., 238-240.

²¹⁵ Moser et. al., 241-242.

²¹⁶ Moser et. al., 242.

Benefits of community archaeology

The majority of excavations conducted by Western archaeologists do not include local communities, and these archaeologists give primacy to their own interests and those of tourists.²¹⁷ This is one of the facts that practitioners of community archaeology try to combat, not only on behalf of the local people, but also under the premise that community involvement actively improves the quality of archaeology being practiced. If people familiar with local history and culture are involved in archaeological interpretation, there will almost invariably be a more comprehensive view of the data. It also changes the way archaeologists go about the actual process of excavating and affects the research process.²¹⁸

Community archaeology is most often associated with cultural resource management rather than academia, and is generally considered a less prestigious approach to the field. The notion of an archaeologist working with local people is generally considered a rather one-way conversation, with the archaeologist speaking in the role of an educator.²¹⁹ Collaborative archaeology promotes the idea that academia and scholarship can genuinely benefit from the viewpoints of outsiders.²²⁰ Peter R. Schmidt and Thomas C. Patterson, authors of the book *Making Alternative Histories*, assert that to take full advantage of having community input into a project, archaeologists must take care not to disassociate academic, externally constructed history from local and

²¹⁷ Moser et. al., 222.

²¹⁸ Moser et. al., 222.

²¹⁹ Moser et. al., 213.

²²⁰ Moser et. al., 223.

oral history and mythology, as the importance and validity of either is entirely relative.²²¹ One must let go of preconceived notions of the superiority of an academic approach.

To this end, the Quseir excavation project conducts a variety of video interviews with residents about such subjects as the site and area's history, national, regional, and local perceptions of the past, perceptions of the work archaeologists do, and the role of archaeology in Quseir's past and present. Not only do these interviews give new analysis into the site, they also help the team gauge how the project is affecting local people.²²² The benefit of these interviews is already evident, having provided archaeologists with insights into such topics as the reasoning behind the layout of mosques, or the significance of particular religious or cultural objects.²²³ The participation of non-professionals also "fosters respect for the value of the archaeological resource, and discourages vandalism and the looting of sites."²²⁴

Ultimately, if executed effectively, community archaeology should have a profoundly positive impact on people of the local community, including the way they see their city, their past, and themselves.²²⁵ To quote one local resident, "history gives Quseir value; archaeology gives us substance."²²⁶ While we know that most looters and illegal excavators in the antiquities trade are motivated by economic concerns rather than attention to the past or pride in one's community, the excavations at Quseir provide an excellent model for combating this trend. The attention to community archaeology and

²²¹ Moser et. al., 224.

²²² Moser et. al., 236-238.

²²³ Moser et. al., 243.

²²⁴ Moser et. al., 223.

²²⁵ Moser et. al., 221.

²²⁶ Moser et. al., 243.

the resulting local pride and involvement in this small community on the Red Sea is a testament to the power of one's ties to the past to affect one's actions.

Conclusion

I began research on this project out of a desire to understand some of the motivations that drive looters and illegal excavators in the antiquities trade. These are the people who do the work most integral to the trade itself, yet they are the poorest participants, and the result of the system's structure is that they stay poor. In light of this fact, I wanted to know what brings people into the antiquities trade, and what keeps them there. The topic is incredibly vast and complex, and this paper examining only a small portion of those motivational factors. But the evidence is clear: although economic concerns are perhaps the most important motivating factor for looters, nationalism does indeed affect the way illegal excavators interact with the antiquities trade. This is evident in Turkey, where the country uses the pagan symbols of its past to bolster nationalistic pride, although the government's policies make acting on these ideologies practically unviable. It is evident in Iraq, where the National Museum in Baghdad was extensively looted despite the US government's predictions to the contrary, and that so many of the looted objects were returned afterwards. It is also clear that practicing community archaeology is an effective way to offset damage done by looting, create jobs, and add an element of multivocality to an excavation. The success of the excavations at Quseir demonstrates the power of the past to bring a community together and to reduce the destruction of cultural heritage.

As I wrote this paper, I found myself to be continually troubled by the manner in which looters are often discussed in contemporary scholarship, as people without personal agency. My research and writing on archaeotourism and community archaeology grew out of my frustration with this issue, because I wanted to find instances of archaeologists considering the interests of local people out of a genuine understanding that the history and understandings of a nearby community could actually improve an archaeological project, and that working together as equals was to everyone's benefit. I, coming from the world of Western academia, cannot navigate these issues of marginalization and heritage with perfect deftness. However, I have attempted in this paper to continually point out the problematic aspects of traditional Western archaeology and to refer to looters and illegal excavators as humans, not just as people with prescribed roles. As the success of excavations like Quseir demonstrates, granting agency to local people not only reduces the prevalence of economically motivated looting, it reduces looting altogether, and thus the destruction of cultural heritage.

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