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Journal of Social Archaeology 2008; 8; 298
DOI: 10.1177/1469605308095007

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ISSN 1469-6053 Vol 8(3): 298–319 DOI: 10.1177/1469605308095007

Valuing the past

Perceptions of archaeological practice in Lydia and the Levant

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ABSTRACT

In both western Turkey and the Levant, archaeology has a long history, with the rise in interest and discovery beginning in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While many have focused on the history of excavations in both of these areas, we approach historical analyses from a different perspective. Utilizing the voices of local actors, this article aims to understand the social reactions of local communities to the increasingly prominent role of people practicing archaeology – archaeologists, diplomats, explorers – through the lens of the antiquities trade over the last two centuries. Interlacing examples from Lydia and the Levant, we provide an overview of archaeological praxis and then offer the positions of the participants,

gathered from archival and published materials as well as more recent interviews, conversations, and correspondences.

KEYWORDS

archaeological practice ● archives ● Bedouin ● Dead Sea Scrolls ● diplomats ● ethics ● ethnography ● looting ● Lydia ● museums

In both western Turkey and the Levant archaeology has a long history, the rise in interest and discovery beginning in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with plunder for riches beginning much earlier during the Roman period. The tourist boom of the eighteenth century contributed to the rise of the dilettantes and their need to fill cabinets of curiosities. Material remains from archaeological contexts took on an economic value, the value defined by their antiquity and authenticity. These objects evoked in a vivid and portable form the distinctiveness of places visited. To fill this burgeoning economic market, new social networks emerged that incorporated archaeologists and diplomats (often the same people) engaged in exploration and excavation; locals also prospected for antiquities to fill this economic niche market, and, thus, set in motion the early stages of what would become a thriving trade in antiquities that continues to the present.

Central Lydia in western Anatolia represents one ancient landscape hard hit by these early days of plunder. In particular, marble and limestone burial chambers richly outfitted with sumptuous (i.e. marketable) items were targeted; the looting has yet to cease, and the social contexts in which looters and middlemen operate reflect flexible and adaptable networks that adjust to economic demand, as explored in our first case study. Critical histories of the commodification of the past and the actors – archaeologists, dealers, collectors, and looters alike – who initiate and carry on processes that enhance value (economic and scholarly) also become clear through an analysis of the Dead Sea Scrolls, our second case study. These ancient Hebrew or Aramaic parchment texts, which recount scriptures, hymns and prophecies, have become highly prized on the market, yet it has become increasingly difficult to separate the value of the scrolls: as purely scholarly works; as economic investments for local communities (as saleable items) and international dealers; and as symbols of the ancient landscapes and communities of the Levant.

In each example we provide a broad overview of the interest groups involved in the antiquities trade. Specifically, we explore the juncture of local communities, national governments, and foreign archaeologists with respect to issues of protection, education, and the commodification of archaeological heritage. Information from these participants is gleaned



from archival and published materials as well as from more recent interviews, conversations, and correspondences.

While researchers have focused on the history of excavations and the progressively more prominent role of nationalism in both of these areas (for the Levant see Abu El Haj, 2001; Silberman, 1982; for Turkey see Davis, 2002; Gates, 1996; Goode, 2004, 2007; Hodder, 1998; Kohl, 1998; Özdoğan, 1998; Tanyeri-Erdemir, 2006), studies have not explored the reactions of local communities and archaeologists to the developing antiquities trade over the last two centuries. In doing this, we offer a history of how local populations, who often loot and sell antiquities, respond to archaeological fieldwork conducted by foreigners, as well as a history of the reactions of archaeological practitioners to their hosts and the networks of looting. This lens allows us to probe how the practices of archaeologists guide local perspectives in valuing the past. Archaeological approaches, then, must encompass a constantly evolving need to re-evaluate current social and political conditions in order to proceed in a climate of plunder, collecting and increasingly sensitive nationalistic agendas.

Major debates between the sphere of academically driven field research and collectors frequently focus on ownership of objects and the relevance of context, yet this dialogue (often hostile) may neglect to consider the monetary value of objects and places at the core of the debate. Site protection is impossible if sites are continually viewed as treasure troves; and while the development of tourism for alternative revenue may help the situation, tourism alone will not stop looting if there remains demand for objects. In the last decade researchers have increasingly focused on the concept of subsistence digging and financial security for communities (Hollowell, 2006; Matsuda, 1998). Also, research continues to show the extreme financial differential between what is paid to the looters for objects and final prices at auction or in private sales to dealers (Brodie, 1998; Brodie and Renfrew, 2005: 348; Kersel, 2006). Our analysis accepts first and foremost that the past has a price tag and that local communities capitalize on its monetary value to make ends meet, yet we argue that the economic reward supplements and enhances financial stability, rather than serving as a fundamental necessity for it. Dealing and collecting communities advocate for legal mechanisms to buy and sell objects in the marketplace, allowing market forces to guide prices (Merryman, 1986: 489, 1998; see papers in Fitz-Gibbon, 2005; Mackenzie, 2005), arguing that nation states should not control access. Archaeologists continue to advocate for preservation of context, often working with local communities to protect sites and monuments. This juxtaposition of the past as a commodity to be sold, purchased, and owned, on the one hand, and the past as a commodity to be shared, developed, researched, and protected, on the other, creates a challenging dialogue that field archaeologists, collectors, and local communities continue to redefine.

Local populations understand that objects have monetary values and that the contemporary professional archaeologist does not usually participate in the financial realm of the antiquities trade. However, the work of the field archaeologist may inadvertently contribute to the monetary value of objects (Brodie and Luke, 2006); and local individuals and communities engaged in the looting of sites and the sale of objects are often keenly aware of what is marketable based on local knowledge of the antiquities trade and demand, as well as of auction catalogues and scholarly publications (Atwood, 2004; Brent, 2001; Donnan, 1982; Kersel, 2006). Having recognized that the monetary value of objects constitutes a large part of what drives the antiquities trade, we seek to understand also how this financial component intersects with the social consequences of negotiating fieldwork in highly charged political climates (Kohl, 1998; Meskell, 2002; Pollock and Bernbeck, 2005). Hamilakis (1999, 2001) has written on the social consequences of archaeological fieldwork and the need for greater reflexivity on the part of archaeologists. Pluciennik (2001: 4) warns that ‘the act of subscribing to a Code of Ethics can become a substitute for the continuing importance of reflexivity and contextuality’. While most archaeologists are members of professional organizations that have ethical codes (AAA, AIA, ASOR, SAA, SHA, etc.), many find it challenging to adhere to these codes in the field, particularly when the codes appear to prioritize the advancement of science over dialogue with local populations regarding the sensitive issues (similar issues often arise with funding agencies) of power and access to the archaeological record as well as ongoing plunder.

■ CASE STUDY 1: LYDIA

The tomb of Alyattes is the largest known of the earthen tumuli in Bin Tepe, commonly referred to as the royal burial ground of Sardis, some 10 km north of the Lydian capital across the Hermus plain. In the mid nineteenth century, Spiegelthal, the Prussian Consul-General at Smyrna (modern day İzmir), undertook excavations at the tomb of Alyattes, often using Roman looters’ tunnels for guidance (Butler, 1922: 9–10). Thus, by the mid nineteenth century, diplomats knew of the rich contents of these monuments. In their writings, early explorers and diplomats in the greater area of Lydia reflect on local businessmen and farmers plundering tumuli (Sayce, 1880: 86). They comment also on contacts in Smyrna who were involved with the selling and acquiring of materials (Paton, 1900: 64, 69, 72). A letter written by Francis Bacon, then excavating at Assos, about work conducted in Bin Tepe by George Dennis, British Consul at Smyrna, recounts that Dennis was ‘much disappointed with his excavations. There are about one hundred and thirty mounds in all, and he thinks they have every one been opened’ (Bacon, quoted by Butler, 1922: 10). Bacon tells us also that Spiegelthal himself was



known for shipping materials off to 'different European Museums in return for which he [was] made member of many learned societies' (Bacon, quoted from Butler, 1922: 12–13). Other reports confirm the plunder and destruction of marble chambers and sculptures in hopes of finding gold (Paton, 1900: 69), illustrating the development of a local lore associating finely worked stone and gold that continues to result in the destruction of the archaeological record today (Roosevelt and Luke, 2006a: 181).

The first formal excavations at Sardis began under Howard Crosby Butler in 1910. In addition to researching the excavations, Butler was also keenly aware of plunder and recognized the precarious role of his own expedition in attracting attention to the past as well as in providing training for local diggers:

We have taught hundreds of natives more than they had ever known before about excavating, and one would not be astonished to find that they had put their new learning into practice during our absence, and at places outside of our immediate supervision. (Butler, 1922: 13–14)

Unable to supervise what happened in the off-season, Butler reports of local interest and activities:

The natives' reports of their own digging are varied. They say that they sometimes find the gold which they are looking for, and they send this to Smyrna, in other cases they find no gold; but, gold or no gold, they always find pots; these are often broken, and, if not found in broken state, they are broken intentionally or unintentionally, sooner or later, for they are of no use anyhow. Little dependence is to be placed upon these statements; but when the stories of many natives agree in certain particulars we have a basis for belief. (Butler, 1922: 13)

The frequency and consistency of local reports leads Butler to place credence in local knowledge, which allows him to understand how archaeological practice influences the antiquities trade and the monetary value of objects.

In one example of seals discovered in tombs from the Necropolis at Sardis, Butler tells us that locals not only know about the antiquities market but also make strategic decisions about how to treat finds in light of it. Locals usually separated seal gems from their mountings. During the excavation of the Necropolis, Butler noted that a 'large proportion of these seals [were] found with their mountings' in contrast to 'the seals to be seen in antiquity shops, and most of those in museum collections [that] have lost their mountings' (1922: 142).

[The finder removed] the engraved stone, which to him [had] only a precarious value, from the mounting which [had] intrinsic worth, and [sold] the two to different buyers. The gold [could] be melted and readily disposed of, but the 'antica' [was] a dangerous possession, and [could] be sold only to a special kind of merchant. (Butler, 1922: 142)

Gold could be melted down, a relatively easy and very lucrative endeavor. Once melted, all traces of the antiquity vanished with only the pure monetary value of the gold remaining. The gem, however, was valued precisely because of scholarship, yet this ‘value’ could only be turned into cash through a dealer, not an archaeologist.

Archaeologists working at Sardis did not act on behalf of dealers. In fact, the Sardis expedition ‘kept agents in Smyrna’ (Butler, 1922: 143) – the central hub for antiquities from across Asia Minor (pp. 13–14). İzmir dealers sold to tourists and made shipments to ‘museums and big collectors of Europe’ (pp. 13–14). Thus, the dangerous possessions – antiquities – provided a financial windfall for local populations, but only if they had access to the dealing community. As far as Butler was concerned, he saw it as part of his duty to monitor the movement of artifacts, ‘in addition to the elaborate precautions taken to prevent theft on the spot, to keep close and secret watch upon this outlet, for the purpose of protecting [the] excavations’ (p. 13).

In other correspondences, Butler wondered also about other materials, particularly those from contexts that archaeologists had not had the chance to explore in detail (Butler, 1922: 13–14). Of specific concern were the dregs from plundered monuments and sites and the role of the diplomatic core:

Generally speaking, the ancient plunderers of tombs took away only the objects in precious metals, leaving or breaking the pottery, the clay figures, and other things without intrinsic value. If the consuls discovered such leavings of the earlier tomb-breakers, the question arises, what did they do with them? (Butler, 1922: 14)

By 1920 a trade in materials from Lydia was thriving, both with locals selling to dealers and busy diplomats combing through what they could find. Locals sold material, while diplomats may have gifted a fair amount as political favors.

Prior to 1922 the involvement of the Ottoman government in the rural hinterlands was fragile. The opening of the area via railroad lines allowed access for foreign archaeologists; it also provided for transportation to ship materials to the capital and/or out of the country; and in 1884, under the first comprehensive antiquities law, the Ottoman government limited the export of materials (Shaw, 2003: 131–48). Yet, protection of archaeological sites often came into conflict with development, particularly for railroads. For example, the finely worked stone seating blocks of the theater at Sardis were said to have been used in the bedding of the railroad that now runs through central Lydia – clearly an indication of the conflicting policies of site protection. At Sardis, protection fell on the shoulders of the expedition, particularly with the looming Turkish War of Independence and the Greek occupation of the area (Butler, 1919; Davis, 2002). As Goode (2004, 2007) and Davis (2002: 152–3) demonstrate, diplomats,



archaeologists, and others made great efforts to move material from Sardis to İzmir, İstanbul, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met) in New York City. The Met's role became so highly suspect that the legitimacy of even its temporary possession of material from Sardis threatened international diplomacy. In subsequent years (late 1920s and early 1930s), Ankara's policy on nationalistic agendas in archaeological research strengthened, emphasizing the archaeology of certain periods and places over others (Tanyeri-Erdemir, 2006) and solidifying an export ban for all excavated materials (Goode, 2004: 59). Regardless of the increased attention to antiquities laws and export bans of archaeological material, from the 1940s through to the 1960s plunder in Lydia continued with demand primarily driven by prominent western institutions.

George M.A. Hanfmann, director of the excavations at Sardis from 1958 to 1976, provides detailed accounts of looting and dealer networks in Turkey. Hanfmann, though, unlike Butler, acknowledges a competition between archaeologists and looters. Hanfmann directed some of his efforts to being a 'good ambassador' for archaeology as the Sardis expedition appealed to the locals to aid in the fight against looters, whom he considered to be working against the best interests of the local population. Based on the sentiments expressed in his letters (Hanfmann, 1972), he viewed looters as a discrete group of individuals working closely with İzmir dealer networks (Roosevelt and Luke, 2006b).

The well-known Lydian Hoard material illustrates the rabid collecting practices of the Met in the 1960s and especially the targeting of tumulus tomb chambers in the provinces of Manisa and Uşak for looting. Much of this material was returned to Turkey in 1993, after testimony from the looters revealed the exact tombs from which the Met materials had come (Kaye and Main, 1995; Özgen and Öztürk, 1996; Roosevelt and Luke, 2006a, 2006b). The cooperation of local looters in international cases where provenance must be proven resolves the issue of regional, even site-level context (see Atwood, 2004, for a comparable case in Peru), yet it does not necessarily resolve how to combat local plunder in Lydia, nor how to balance relationships between Ankara, museums, and local communities. In at least the one case of Uşak, such relationships were problematic: the former director of the museum and the key figure in the collection of looters' testimony for the Lydian Hoard case is currently on trial for his *possible* role in forging one of the most prized pieces of the Lydian Hoard (*Turkish Daily News*, 2007). This example (as well as a number of other recent museum cases in Turkey) highlights the presumed (initial) innocence of local professionals (i.e. museum staff) when compared to suspicious local looters. Finally, reports from the 1960s to recent times indicate that certain members of local law enforcement may cooperate with looters, middlemen, dealers, and others in their participation in the antiquities trade (Roosevelt and Luke, 2006b).

After more than a decade of intense scrutiny in the press about the devastating impact of plunder in Lydia, we might have expected a downturn in plunder and Lydian material available on the market, and even some concern voiced on the part of local communities. Yet material from Lydia, often labeled as East Greek to disguise its provenience, still appears on the international market and across glossy auction catalogues, most of it without archaeological context and/or informative provenance (the object's history of ownership). In an attempt to understand the degree of looting on the ground and the involvement of local communities, the Central Lydia Archaeological Survey (CLAS) has begun a program that systematically monitors tumulus condition and attempts to gather preliminary information about how locals view the past as well as the looting of tumuli (see Roosevelt, 2007; Roosevelt and Luke, 2007; Roosevelt and Luke, 2008). Part of the approach is purely quantitative.

Each year the project revisits 10–20 per cent of the tumuli in the survey area – the area around the Gygaean Lake, including Bin Tepe; an assessment of tumulus condition is made, noting agricultural practices on or nearby the tumulus as well as any new signs of looting and human (e.g. agricultural plowing) or environmental disturbance(s). In 2005, 119 tumuli in Bin Tepe were documented, the first systematic recording of these monuments; Dennis noted 130 in the late nineteenth century and felt that all had been looted (Butler, 1922: 10). Of those recorded in 2005, 96 per cent had signs of recent looting. In 2006, 20 per cent of these tumuli were revisited. Over half of these had been disturbed within the year: fresh signs of looting were unmistakable on the landscape (Roosevelt and Luke, 2008). In 2007, CLAS again revisited 15 per cent of these tumuli in Bin Tepe in addition to another initially documented during a systematic survey in 2001 (Roosevelt and Luke, 2006a). Of the tumuli revisited in Bin Tepe, half had been disturbed within the last two years and the one tumulus revisited from the 2001 study had also been badly looted, along with another tumulus newly discovered in 2007 (Roosevelt and Luke, 2007).

We noted that several of the most egregious cases of looting in Bin Tepe took place on those tumuli revisited in 2006, then in good condition, leading us to speculate that our presence may call attention to specific monuments. Of particular concern was one previously undocumented tumulus tomb chamber that had been barely accessible through a looter's trench in 2006. Upon inspection of the exterior of the tumulus in 2007, we found that tobacco farmers from a nearby town had constructed a seasonal shelter next to the tumulus. In addition, the opening into the chamber had been widened, cleared, and was being used as a latrine.

The latrine incident left us wondering about the conflicting viewpoint locals must have towards the ancient landscape in which they now live. Clearly a disregard for preservation and documentation runs rampant. Yet, through our informal conversations with locals, we learn about looting



practices, dealer and collector networks, and perceived notions of access to the landscape, often hostile and laden with fear. As the landscape tells us, locals still loot, smashing marble sculpture and chambers in hopes of finding gold. They use a variety of tools, including particle masks to avoid breathing in dust. They work at night to avoid detection and tend to target the sides of tumuli least visible from main roads and local population centers (Roosevelt and Luke, 2006a, 2006b).

People know the relative monetary value of certain types of objects, from gold jewelry to wall paintings (Roosevelt and Luke, 2006a). They still sell material to dealers and collectors in İzmir and İstanbul, often working on retainer fees (Roosevelt and Luke, 2006b). Here we see a new type of system, one that actually employs people to find material, instead of payment pending the discovery of a specific object or hoard. It has also become clear that most villagers are well aware of the key participants in the trade, whether or not they are personally involved in it. In some cases such individuals are among the wealthiest in their village and may have connections with law enforcement. What remains unclear is whether looting enhances their ability to gain wealth, or whether wealthy individuals use their power and status to tap into looting networks to increase their already favorable economic positions. This power dynamic contributes to a diverse set of reactions to the archaeological past on the part of those who are excluded from these power relationships.

Among the most disturbing reactions are emotional responses of anger and frustration. In one case a local destroyed a tomb chamber because he was angry that it had been previously looted, echoing a case from İkiztepe in the Uşak-Güre region (Özgen and Öztürk, 1996: 11). In other cases, farmers backfill looters' trenches dug in their fields in hope of evading explanations to local officials that they [the farmers] did not conduct the looting. Farmers routinely smash monuments and bulldoze land to erase remains of the past in hope that their land will not be expropriated by the government and/or declared first degree protection lands, under Turkish Law, forbidding any agricultural or building activities; compensation for land tends to fall below market value. In other cases, looters threaten those who cooperate with authorities. That is, there may be good reasons from some current local perspectives to erase, avoid, and/or ignore the ancient landscape.

In a way similar to the local view of archaeologists in the Levantine case study below, locals in Lydia do not always understand what it is archaeologists do. The very concept of locating and documenting sites, particularly in survey-based studies, to gather basic chronological and settlement pattern information remains foreign. Beyond a false impression that survey-focused research is akin to treasure hunting, it is also clear that local understanding of archaeological periods is limited. Locals are surprised to learn of occupation in the area that predates the Lydian and Archaemenid

periods, particularly when we describe that the early landscape would have been devoid of the imposing monuments that now define the landscape of Bin Tepe. It is the earlier periods that are indeed most foreign, with comparatively greater local interest in the Islamic and Ottoman (even early modern) past, periods that have traditionally been excluded from archaeological research in the region (cf. Bernbeck and Pollock, 2004).

Our preliminary research, then, suggests that locals, particularly those in small villages, are unaware of the rich history of the ancient landscape. Villagers tend to identify little with the long history and prehistory of the area; they themselves may have relatively recent Turkish backgrounds and/or be part of the population exchange between Turkey and Greece in 1922 that makes parts of modern Greece their more familiar 'homelands'. Even more recent groups (usually seasonal workers) come from distant areas in eastern Turkey. Often Kurdish, these groups are brought in by wealthy landowners to help with the harvest and they live in makeshift shelters. These groups, then, have few, if any, direct ties with the local landscape.

We have found, however, that local people, when given the opportunity for dialogue, are generally interested in learning why archaeologists are there, regardless of their ethnic and economic backgrounds. Many are interested in the potential for treasure (i.e. gold) in looted burials and the monetary value of finds. Others wish also to know when excavations may take place and ask about the potential need for site guards, excavation crews, and other staff to manage an expedition – all economic opportunities that a new foreign project could bring to an area. Finally, worthy of mention here, and a subject for future research, is that some local populations, including the wealthy landowners, have the view that, while they may own the surface of their landscape, everything beneath the surface belongs to the American foreigners to whom legal access has been given by the Turkish government (cf. Hanfmann, 1972: 184).

The final examples provided here that reflect the conflicting roles of archaeologists and locals come from Sardis. First, a local villager working in the excavation crew of the Archaeological Expedition of Sardis allegedly planted a rare silver coin of Miletus into a mid-sixth-century BCE archaeological context; it was recovered during sieving in 2002 (Cahill and Kroll, 2005; Stone et al., 2005: 614–15). During conservation, the coin was found to have been cleaned recently and thus had to be intrusive. Upon investigation, the workman confessed to planting the coin in the sieve; his wife had found it in a field, he said, and fearing punishment from local authorities, they wanted to get rid of it. The worker later altered this story, claiming that the coin had been found elsewhere. What is strangest about this account is that coins of this date have never been found in or reported from fields near Sardis. And the context in which it had been placed, presumably randomly, was very close to perfect in terms of chronology. The publishers of the tale



do not believe that the workman could have known the significance of recovering this coin in a field, certainly not well enough to 'plant' it in such a logical context. The workmen 'appear to be totally unfamiliar with the devices, styles and chronology of coins and other artifacts, apart from some pottery . . . [and] the worker who recovered the coin . . . showed no such familiarity' (Stone et al., 2005: 614–15).

In a final example, we find evidence of knowledge that suggests a more familiar network. In the winter of 2006–7 two sculpted heads were plundered from the Bath Gymnasium complex at Sardis. What is uncanny is that these were the only remaining original heads; the others were accurate replicas installed during a large touristic reconstruction project in the 1970s. Clearly those involved knew which heads to target.

It is clear from CLAS research as well as from events at Sardis that local knowledge of the past and perceptions of how to treat it differ greatly from those of archaeologists, and that there is a long history of disconnection. While some locals are deeply involved in looting and dealing, others actively try to hide evidence to avoid investigation and potential expropriation of land. The perception of archaeological research and of those who participate in it involves a complex set of reactions from local communities. Seen as potential employers, archaeologists must balance their own interest in the past with how their modern-day hosts perceive them. Archaeologists must also recognize that locals not involved with the trade may not understand the complete disjuncture between professional research conducted under official Turkish permits and networks of plunder. Furthermore, by associating with the Turkish government (under official requirements), archaeologists affiliate themselves with a professional group of Turks, often with sets of values about history and general ways of living different from the small village communities in which archaeological projects are based. This multi-layered identity is further complicated by the perception that differential access to archaeological lands is granted to foreigners, particularly in light of the increasing nationalist sentiment throughout Turkey and the growing resistance to what is seen as US imperialism.

In closing we should say that the archaeological community working in Lydia knows little about who deals in Lydian material. As part of this community, we have not actively probed the trade networks, and we would be unsure how to do so. It would certainly be interesting to understand the networks both within and outside of Turkey. Ideally they might be able to shed light on archaeological context, perhaps even begin a long process of local engagement. Yet, ethically, how would one consider going about such practices? How does one protect informants, particularly informants who are also looters? In the early years of excavations in Turkey, expeditions often purchased antiquities from local looters and learned from where the

finds came – to our knowledge this is no longer permitted under current policies. Under current regulations, Turkish museums can purchase artifacts from locals for good prices – all supposedly chance finds recovered during normal agricultural practices or local construction projects. The justifying rationale here is to dissuade locals from selling to international markets in order to keep objects in local museums. In some areas of the Levant, to which we now turn, there is a far more open trade than in Turkey, yet here the purchasing of antiquities – even a Dead Sea scroll – by an archaeologist has resulted in serious problems.

■ CASE STUDY 2: THE LEVANT

Traditionally a pastoral nomadic group, the Bedouin were (and are) well suited to discovering archaeological material and sites as well as facilitating the movement of material from its original context to middlemen and dealers throughout the region. Silberman (1982) states that as early as 1868 the Bedouin were well aware of western interest in ancient artifacts. In the mid 1930s French consul and noted prehistorian Rene Neuville often hired members of the Taamireh Bedouin tribe as day laborers for his archaeological excavations at Wadi Khareitun southeast of Bethlehem. Neuville employed a practice of financial compensation where the laborers who recovered intact pots and other archaeological finds were monetarily compensated for the goodies (Silberman, 1994: 32). Neuville also encouraged his workmen to bring archaeological material found at other sites in the region to him, and he encouraged the Bedouin to apply systematic archaeological techniques in object recovery and to keep a notebook of find spots.

Financial rewards or *baksheesh* for artifact discovery had been a standard practice at most large-scale digs in the region since the turn of the nineteenth century. In an examination of the public perception of archaeological practice in the region at that time, one may question whether or not this system of rewarding laborers for the discovery of finds functioned as a precursor to paying looters for archaeological material, and whether archaeologists, through the employment of a large workforce, were actually training the future looters and middlemen of today's antiquities trade, as echoed in the excerpt about Sardis above. With a trained workforce and regional unrest, it is no wonder that looting and prospecting for artifacts continued apace in Lydia and the Levant.

Recent interviews with archaeologists and dealers (Kersel, 2006) confirm that looters from the Deir Samet area were trained on the El Qôm excavation to recognize Iron Age tombs, which they then looted for profit. The excavator of El Qôm, William Dever, confirms this practice:



And then the other dramatic thing that happened after I left the site, I couldn't control it. We dug in 1967 in the Fall and in the Spring and Fall of 1968 and finally in the summer of 1971. And we did a little investigation of the Iron Age site and we determined that Khirbet El-Qôm was certainly biblical Maqqidah, a very important border fortress. After we left the site there was no control and the villagers must have resumed digging, because the market a few years later was flooded by hundreds of Idomaean ostraca inscriptions on pottery, ink inscriptions from the Persian and early Hellenistic periods. Basically our excavation must have trained the villagers as future looters. (W. Dever, pers. comm. 2004)

By the 1940s local perceptions of the practice of archaeology by the Bedouin had resulted in an entrepreneurial ethos in which artifacts were sought for sale to the highest bidder and archaeology and archaeologists were viewed as rivals in the quest for material. The Bedouin often viewed looting and the hunt for antiquities as a vocation, one that ran in families (cf. Atwood, 2004; Hollowell-Zimmer, 2004: 31; Kersel, 2006, 2007; Roosevelt and Luke, 2006a; Smith, 2005). Younger members were trained in an apprenticeship-type setting by other family members through a process of shared knowledge. Many Bedouin worked as laborers on archaeological excavations and much of their experience was utilized when searching for archaeological sites and artifacts. This point echoes the words of Butler (1922) for western Turkey as well as contemporary ethnographic accounts (Kersel, 2006; Roosevelt and Luke, 2006a). Although trained as amateur archaeologists, many Bedouin do not understand the rationale behind archaeological practice, as is clear from ethnographic research (Kersel, 2006). As one Bedouin informant stated: 'What is the purpose of all of this digging? Do the archaeologists sell the artifacts? I know someone who will buy them' (Miscellaneous 2, as quoted in Kersel, 2006).

During the 1940s in the Qumran area, this perceived competition between the Bedouin and archaeologists resulted in the discovery and subsequent sale of the famed Dead Sea Scrolls. Accounts of the initial discovery and fate of the Dead Sea Scrolls vary widely. In his examination of the Scrolls, Silberman (1995: 32–3) explains that the original finder was not a naïve shepherd boy (as commonly asserted in popular accounts – the ignorant local), but three wily members of the Taamireh Bedouin tribe, who had some inkling of the importance of archaeological material owing to previous associations with Neuville's excavations and interaction with others interested in purchasing artifacts. Ethnographic interviews conducted by American biblical scholar John Trever (1979) in the 1960s, in order to get the 'real story' behind the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Trever, 2004), describe that when the Bedouin descended to the Dead Sea area with their flocks in search of water and grazing areas in the winter of 1946–7, a small rock thrown into a cave by an inquisitive shepherd led to one of the most startling discoveries of the period (Trever, 1979: 98–9).

The stone thrown by the Bedouin teen shattered one of the ceramic jars containing the scrolls:

Jum'a Muhammed Khalil noticed a hole among the rocks. It was hardly big enough for a cat to enter. Jum'a threw a stone in to see how deep the hole was, and to his astonishment a peculiar sound was heard within.

(Muhammed Ahmed el-Hamed, as quoted in Trever, 1979: 191)

The sound of breaking pottery indicated that there might be something of value in the cave, so further investigations were made by the three Bedouin shepherds (Silberman, 1994: 33). Examination of the cave revealed a number of tall jars with lids, some of which contained brittle leather scrolls wrapped in linen. 'We removed two complete jars with covers from the cave. We then took them to 'Ijha, an oriental carpenter who also dealt in antiquities to find out their worth', stated Khalil Musa, one of the three Bedouin who made the original startling discovery (Khalil Musa, as quoted in Trever, 1979: 192).

After being informed that the scrolls were not of any great value, one of the original discoverers decided to take the scrolls to a cobbler named Khalil Iskander Shahin, who was commonly known as 'Kando'. Silberman (1994: 34) states that 'it is another misconception that the Bedouin brought the scrolls to Kando because they stupidly assumed that the leather rolls might be useful to a cobbler as raw material', once again reinforcing the stereotype of the ignorant local. The brittleness and delicate condition of the scrolls make claims such as this untenable, but assertions like this one allow for westerners to stress the lack of awareness of the Bedouin. It turns out that Kando was not only a cobbler, but also a reputable antiquities dealer familiar to the Bedouin of the area as someone who would provide a fair price for artifacts. He knew the ideal customer for the scrolls: they were sold to the archbishop of Jerusalem's Syrian Orthodox community. Kando paid the Bedouin roughly \$65 for the scrolls while he was paid \$97 by St Mark's Monastery, netting \$32 out of the deal (Trever, 1979: 102).

Identifying a willing and wealthy customer in the monastery, Kando sought more merchandise. Some months later he sent an envoy with two of the original Bedouin excavators back to the area to search for further scrolls – the hunt proved to be very successful. Kando's representative George Isha'ya requested that Jum'a Muhammed lead him to the cave where the scrolls had been discovered:

They then took a taxi from Jerusalem to the Jericho–Dead Sea junction. From there they went on foot for an hour until they reached the cave. As they left George Isha'ya placed some stone markers to help him find his way back to the cave again. (Khalil Musa, another of the original discoverers of the Dead Sea Scrolls, as quoted in Trever, 1979: 192)

At the same time, word of the remarkable discovery was out and other dealers in the Bethlehem area offered more lucrative deals to the Bedouin



for future scrolls – the scrolls had become an avidly desired commodity. Once the scrolls' importance to the nascent state of Israel was identified, tales of the daring adventures of Eleazar Sukenik of the Hebrew University to purchase the scrolls on behalf of the newly formed nation became well known. For the Bedouin, the scrolls – disassociated from their archaeological importance – became a cash cow on which they could rely. The hunt for Dead Sea Scrolls by the Bedouin and others continued until the late 1950s, with further discoveries and further looting of archaeological sites (Magness, 2002; Silberman, 1994). It became a race against the archaeologists to recover scrolls to meet the ever-growing consumer demand.

The saga of the Dead Sea Scrolls – their discovery, their sale, their move to the USA, and their eventual home in the Shrine of the Book at the Israel Museum – is far too long and complex for discussion in this article (but see Magness, 2002; Silberman, 1994; Trever, 1979). The importance of this tale for our purpose here is to emphasize the Bedouin's perception of archaeology and archaeologists: the role of early training and the perceived lack of local understanding of what archaeologists do and what archaeology is. This lack of understanding and the supposed competition between archaeologist and Bedouin is illustrated in more contemporary events.

In recent interviews with archaeologists (Archaeologists 9, 15, 21, quoted in Kersel, 2006) and dealers (Dealers 5, 12, 14, 32, quoted in Kersel, 2006), it was corroborated that the Bedouin are still involved with the movement and looting of archaeological material in Israel and Palestine. A Bedouin elder suggested that there were fellow tribesmen who worked in construction during the day, scoping out the archaeological terrain and returning in the evening to loot the area:

My brothers [not biological] work for the construction company building new roads. As they work, archaeological material is often uncovered. At night they return to the construction site and dig for more artifacts. (Miscellaneous 2, as quoted in Kersel, 2006)

Continuing a tradition from the previous century, the Bedouin are often employed as workmen on various archaeological sites in the area. As such, these Bedouin are well versed in the potential material culture available in the region, as well as being familiar with the existing networks to facilitate the movement of artifacts from the ground to the legal market in Israel (Kersel, 2006, 2007) – they are not ignorant locals as once thought.

Skepticism about the motives behind archaeological practice, a lack of interaction with archaeologists on a personal level, evidence of continued demand for archaeological artifacts, and persistent thoughts of competition between the two camps – archaeologists and Bedouin – all combine to foster an ongoing situation in which archaeological sites in the Levant are threatened by looting. The actions of some archaeologists in the twenty-first century do little to dispel the accepted wisdom among the Bedouin that

archaeologists sell the material they excavate. A recent report concerning an incident involving fragments of Dead Sea Scrolls illustrates that archaeologists are sometimes implicated in the consumption end of the trade, adding further credence to the feelings of distrust displayed by the local Bedouin population.

In August 2004, Hanan Eshel, a noted Dead Sea Scroll scholar, received a call from his research assistant who informed Eshel that one of the Bedouin workers on their current excavation project in the Judean Desert claimed that his family had an ancient scroll. The Bedouin worker was willing to show the scroll fragments to Eshel so that he might get an appraisal of their worth (Anonymous, 2006). The four fragments were from the book of Leviticus, and the workman asked for \$20,000 for the remnants. The seller had taken the fragments to an antiquities dealer in Hebron for a market assessment, once again undermining the image of the ignorant local (Rubinstein, 2007). In October 2005, Eshel and an associate were arrested (and later released) under suspicion of violating the Israeli Antiquities Law of 1978 after it was revealed that Eshel had purchased what was believed to be a 1900-year-old biblical scroll from a Bedouin family for US \$3000 (Lefkovits, 2005). After making the purchase, Eshel failed to inform officials from the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), in direct violation of Chapter 2, Section 3 of the law, which states: 'A person who discovers or finds an antiquity otherwise than in an excavation under a license pursuant to this Law shall notify the Director within fifteen days of the discovery or find.' Eshel claimed that 'he did not report the find to the Antiquities Authority because he was afraid that "they [the IAA] would steal the credit", for the miraculous find' (Lefkovits, 2005). Eshel averred that he bought the scroll in order to *save it* for the state of Israel, and that his final intention was to donate the fragments to the Israel Museum, once he had completed his studies and translations (Lefkovits, 2005). As part of this investigation three Bedouin were arrested for illegally selling antiquities; they have since been tried and convicted of the offence of dealing in stolen antiquities (Rubinstein, 2007). The three were heavily fined.

In a subsequent announcement in the daily Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* the Archaeological Council of Israel (advisory body to the IAA) was critical of the actions of the IAA against Eshel (Barkat, 2005). The Archaeological Council stated that, 'We are convinced that Eshel *rescued* [emphasis added] the scroll fragments, which otherwise could have been lost.' The protest supported Eshel's actions even though they are in direct contravention of Israeli law (Antiquities Law, Chapter 2, Section 3). Not mentioned in any of the reports consulted was whether the original find spot of the fragments was in Israel or Palestine, adding another dimension to this highly controversial case. Just after this incident was reported, the opportunity arose to re-interview some of Kersel's PhD respondents regarding this case. Many of those archaeologists adamantly opposed to the trade in antiquities



in their original interviews felt that Eshel had *done the right thing* by purchasing the fragments to save them from their supposedly assured destruction (Kersel, 2006).

In this latest incident, the Dead Sea Scrolls could be conceived of as dangerous possessions, although not for all parties. The Bedouin purveyors of the scrolls were arrested, tried and convicted, but the archaeologist purchasing the goods remains free, despite breaking the law. Can the Dead Sea Scrolls still be considered dangerous to the Bedouin involved, as the prices realized for the artifacts may in fact be worth the risk of jail time and/or the monetary fine? Regardless of Eshel's assertions of altruistic and benevolent motives, here is a recent example of a reputable archaeologist purchasing an artifact from Bedouin middlemen (it remains unclear whether the three Bedouin who were subsequently arrested for illegally selling antiquities were the original looters) who procured the material illegally. Many believe that the involvement of an archaeologist in this business does little to dispel the feelings of competition and distrust that the local Bedouin population harbors, feelings that are echoed in the responses and practices of the looters in Lydia.

■ SOME CONCLUSIONS: PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

In his examination of archaeological looting in Sicily as a deviant activity, Migliore (1991) states: 'the local people [Sicilians] regard treasure hunting as an acceptable way of improving their financial status; they do not identify treasure hunters as criminals'. The same is true of the Bedouin communities in the Levant and of the locals in Lydia: looting can be a dependable source of income for those whose income may be uncertain (French, 1999), yet the data from Lydia and the Levant indicate that people loot and sell loot for extra, not necessarily needed, income. In fact, in some cases, the sales serve to generate substantial surplus wealth for specific individuals who control a specific commodity or the trade in a region. As in the case of Sicilian looters (Migliore, 1991: 165), our research shows that locals from Lydia and the Levant may not completely understand the rationale behind cultural heritage protection and archaeological practice. Traditionally, archaeologists have done little to elucidate these issues for the local populations invested in the areas in which they work. Instead, the locals often see the enforcement of protectionist laws as redirection of local wealth to foreigners (either through foreign excavations or tourism) – sentiments reiterated in the work of Hollowell-Zimmer (2004) and Thoden van Velzen (1996), and reinforced by the flouting of the Israeli law in the recent Eshel case and the continued pattern of looting in Lydia.

Many come to view archaeologists as looters themselves, but 'looters who operate above the law' (Miscellaneous 1, as quoted in Kersel, 2006). Many

follow Smith (2005: 165) in asking ‘is archaeology simply the public face of looting’, as it is considered by many of the locals interviewed in Peru? Recent accounts of the relationships between archaeologists and local populations have stressed that communication is virtually non-existent (Luke and Kersel, 2005; Thoden van Velzen, 1996). In many examples locals cannot help but wonder if artifacts recovered in scientific excavations are bound for the antiquities market. Local looters question the motives of archaeologists (both foreign and native), who come, excavate, find artifacts, and then take them away from the area where they are never again seen by the local population, even if they have been removed to a nearby museum or official repository. In many instances archaeologists are viewed as direct competitors for archaeological material, echoing the earlier positions of looters in Lydia and the Bedouin of the Levant. Archaeologists see themselves as saviors of the past – but for whom are they saving it?

In other cases, locals have become fearful of having dangerous possessions in their fields. Not wanting to give material over to local authorities, dreading that their lands become sites for archaeological investigation, and thus entangled in local politics for months if not years, and not wanting to sell the material to local museums or dealers, they try to dispose of the artifacts in different ways – all to avoid association with the past and the increasingly complicated social and political relationships involved.

So, what can we learn from these examples? Archives and ethnographic research help us understand the history of looting, just as they help us understand the history of excavations, while situating these histories in the present day. They also reveal that networks have been in place for centuries. Yet, most disturbing, these sources illustrate the failure of the archaeological community over the centuries to grasp fully their involvement in local affairs. Furthermore, it is the economic value of the past, through the antiquities trade, tourism development, and/or archaeological expeditions, that local communities often find most relevant during the initial dialogue with archaeologists about cultural heritage resources – local pride and knowledge are often an outcome of education and development. Archaeological research sets the stage for the vast majority of purely economic rewards from the past: it provides knowledge about specific objects and styles, which is used by the trade for auction and private sales (as well as insurance purposes); it provides knowledge about artifacts and their contexts for site tours and installations as well as for museum collections and exhibitions, and savvy looters and middlemen may use such knowledge when making sales and determining where to dig; and it provides employment for local support staff during fieldwork. Local interaction and engagement may not be what archaeologists have focused on traditionally, but they should become priorities, as should reflexivity and introspection in analyzing our own actions and how these actions (our physical presence and publications and reports) have direct consequences on economic systems and social networks. At the very least, efforts to inform the public about the specific research



goals and methods of archaeology may help decrease the needless destruction of marble monuments in quests for gold or the seeding of real stratigraphic contexts with rare finds. And they may lead to finds of more Dead Sea Scrolls in situ and, perhaps, the discovery of a pristine Iron Age tomb chamber in Lydia, if any still exist.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the members of local communities who spoke with us in the field. We would also like to thank the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey, the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Palestinian National Authority Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities for the opportunity to conduct research in these states. Yorke M. Rowan and four anonymous reviewers provided insightful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

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