

STATUES ALSO DIE

DESTRUCTION
AND PRESERVATION
IN ANCIENT AND MODERN TIMES

Proceedings of the International Symposium
Turin 28th-29th May 2018



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Serie a cura di

Christian Greco

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INTRODUCTION

Christian Greco

WHY WE SHOULD PRESERVE THE PAST: THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEMORY

The idea has taken root that society has a moral obligation to preserve ancient artifacts for posterity, thus countering the destruction caused by the passage of time. To fully understand the relationship between humanity and its past, it is, therefore, useful to define certain categories such as “memory” and “oblivion”.¹ We all perceive death as a traumatic passage, a dramatic break between the present and the past. This imposes a decision regarding the preservation of the memory of the dead. Keeping alive in the present the memory of those who have left us, making their names endure and preserving the traces of their actions is certainly a conscious choice. In ancient Egypt, a number of practices were performed to allow life to go on beyond the limits of earthly existence and the memory of ancestors to live on in posterity. By personally arranging for the construction of their funeral monuments, the Egyptians had texts engraved on them containing their name, titles and the principal activities they carried out in life, thus permanently preserving the memory that, in general, is merely entrusted to posterity instead.

The commemoration of the dead is undoubtedly the original core of what must be understood as a culture of remembrance. If a culture of remembrance is mainly built on reference to the past, and if the past comes to be when one becomes aware of a difference between the present and more distant times, then death is the primal experience of this difference and the memory associated with the dead is the original form of cultural memory. If we distinguish between communicative memory and cultural memory, it is evident that the commemoration of the dead belongs within communicative memory, yet at the same time, it is cultural memory to the extent that it involves its bearers, its institutions and its specific rites. The memory of the dead is also articulated as retrospective and prospective recollection. Retrospective commemoration is the most general,

¹ Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, 1999; Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 1992.

primitive and natural form of commemoration. It is how a society lives with its dead and keeps them alive as the present progresses, thus constructing an image of itself as a whole that necessarily includes the dead. In the prospective dimension, however, the central point is that of glorification and fame, the tools, that is, for making oneself unforgettable and acquiring celebrity. The central aspect of the retrospective dimension is that of *pietas*, namely ways to personally ensure that others are not forgotten. With its combination of the retrospective and the prospective dimension, the commemoration of the dead in ancient Egypt is a special case. This combination did not arise only from the fact that the single individual, having just risen to the summit of high state offices, was in a position to have an imposing tomb erected and thus to construct his own commemoration prospectively. Behind and beyond such expenses, there was a specific form of reciprocity, whereby from posterity they expected a piety at least similar to that which they dedicated to their ancestors. The social network of reciprocity was thus translated here into a temporal dimension that could lead as far as eternity. Ancient Egypt, therefore, stands as an extreme case, and not only by virtue of its immense necropoleis with their grandiose funeral monuments. The tomb of imposing dimensions was nothing but the outward symbol, the physical representation of an exemplary life conducted according to the dictates of morality. “The true monument of a man is his virtue,” says an Egyptian proverb. The virtues of reciprocity – gratitude, love of family, civic sense, solidarity, loyalty, awareness of responsibility and duties, fidelity and piety – played a central part in Egyptian ethics. These virtues informed and were meant to direct the daily existence of each person before his or her death. Their logical continuation was in the afterlife, and was equally important to the Egyptians. However, material monuments were not the only vehicles of this perpetuation. A name could live on even simply by being uttered: “A man lives if his name is spoken,” as another Egyptian saying goes. In a more or less attenuated form, the principle of memory in its two dimensions – the glorious action that exhorts others to remember, and piety which, in its turn, remembers with honor – is active in all societies. The hope of continuing to live in a community and the idea of your own dead being with you as the present progresses probably belongs to the elementary and universal structures of human existence. Commemoration of the dead is the paradigm of a memory that establishes a sense of identity; through its bond with the dead, generated by memory, a community is sincere in its identity.

HERITAGE

The past, as preserved in material culture, collections, museums and archives – the so-called “places of memory” – displays a complex stratigraphy and a layering of meanings, and consequently offers multiple possibilities of interpretation. We need to be aware that our vision is not complete, but always involves an interpretative partiality. In their daily curatorial activities, museums seek with ever greater conviction to slow down or stop the naturally destructive course of history by using material culture as a support for memory. They preserve, protect and defend objects collectively chosen to represent the past and the culture of a people. This action, arising from the wish to hand down a certain conception of society to posterity, ensures the existence and role of museums. Museums’ narratives and methods of presentation, on the other hand, are destined to continually change in response to the needs of the community. In order to clearly understand the meaning and mission of museums, we need to define, in addition to the categories of time and memory, the concept of heritage in the sense of the formation of a cultural identity and relationship with one’s community.

In recent years, the conception of what we believe ought to be preserved, including activities, objects and places that were not considered to belong to this category until a few decades ago, has changed radically. The definition of heritage set forth by the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention (2005) is that of resources inherited from the past, with which people can identify by reflecting on their constantly evolving values, beliefs, traditions and knowledge. Before the 19th century, social memories and material culture were a pervasive part of everyday life, but not an object of commemoration. Today, however, it is believed, in a conscious way, that objects and activities considered at risk due to economic, environmental and social threats need to be preserved.² In any case, a distinction should be made between the intrinsic value of material culture and the added value that derives from the conservation process; for example, the development of a sense of identity and the perception of a continuity within the community. Since it is impossible to grasp the original experiences of the past, we look at the fragments that previous generations have left us. Museums that

² Seglow, “Cultural Heritage, Minorities and Self-respect”, in: C. Holtorf et al. (eds.), *Cultural Heritage, Ethics and Contemporary Migrations*, 2019, pp. 13-26.

preserve works of art, objects and images are not neutral containers but impose their own vision, consciously endowing the public perception of the past with a meaning. We could even define them as mediators that transform what is exhibited into cultural heritage. This enables us to understand how strong the relationship is between material culture and the museum that contains it, and why changes in layouts or itineraries generally stir up some very heated debates. There is a fear of explanatory distortion, and that a history visualized by artifacts may lead to excessive simplifications and not convey with sufficient clarity the sense of painful historical processes such as conflicts, social exploitation, or colonial practices. Apart from the interpretational layering, which can lead to distortions, the relationship with places is a fundamental factor. We have already mentioned the definition of “places of memory” given by Pierre Nora, who reflects deeply on how the physical heritage is constituted spatially. For this reason, careful consideration has to be given to where one chooses to place monuments and museums, as their positioning is an integral part of semantics and their communicative function. When an artifact is removed from its context to be subsequently placed in a different taxonomic setting, its meaning changes. Even the simple selection and positioning of some objects inside a display case, to the exclusion of others, creates a layered interpretation that always has to be taken into account.

Time is another variable that binds us to heritage. In common perception, objects that have survived the flow of history are linked to the past, and not everyone is aware of their strength and the influence they exert within today's society. It is the contemporary generations that make use of them and determine their purpose within society, making the artifacts, albeit ancient, always comprehensible and even flexible to the needs dictated by contingency. Furthermore, we need to be aware of the ways the ruling classes can use the past to determine social stability and power relations, thereby strengthening institutional continuity. In observing the nature of heritage, we can also state that its conservation is inevitably bound up with the preservation of the material culture that belonged to the ruling class, hence a class in which there existed the ability to finance the work of artists, to gather and collect artifacts, and preserve them in their homes. It follows, therefore, that there exists an imbalance with respect to what remains of the past and that the lowest classes are obviously the least represented. Hence the need to insist, once again, on the importance of making a hermeneutical ef-

fort capable of understanding and explaining effectively what is being exhibited. It is then advisable to introduce some other highly topical issues, namely the increase of public participation in cultural life, the social significance of museums, and the need to avoid cheapening their message. This makes it necessary to rigorously uphold scientific correctness, avoiding any reckless uses and abuses of heritage itself.³

OBLIVION, THE GREATEST RISK TO HERITAGE

Although museums try to stop the natural decay of material culture and strive to preserve it and hand it down to future generations, heritage continues to be in danger. Its very survival is often at risk. Undoubtedly, a lack of knowledge of the monuments and artifacts of the past and a lack of awareness of their importance in the community they belong to constitute the greatest peril.

There are various ways of destroying fragments of memory that have come down to us. For example, the need for new land to be used for cultivation to feed a steadily growing population puts a strain on the work of archaeologists and their attempts to care for, record and preserve stratigraphic deposits. Economic development, often impetuous, requires ever greater mobility and the creation of infrastructures that intersect, cross and sometimes even destroy archaeologically significant sites. Furthermore, in recent years, the exponential growth in global mass tourism has caused significant overcrowding, threatening cultural sites, cities of art, archaeological precincts and even objects held in museums.

Then there are deliberate attacks against the symbols of the past. The motives are various and connected with ideologies, religious fanaticism and a desire to eradicate symbols that constitute a matrix of an identity rejected by certain groups in the population. At the end of World War II, the general hope was that we would never again witness dramatic scenes of heritage destruction. Unfortunately, however, in the 1990s, the ethnic war in the territories of the former Yugoslavia led to the physical elimination of mosques and churches, places of worship belonging to either side in the conflict. On the secular front, a symbol

³ Onciul et al. (eds.), *Engaging Heritage, Engaging Communities*, 2017; Little, *Archaeology, Heritage, and Civic Engagement*, 2016; Insoll, *The Archaeology of Identities*, 2007; Kadoyama, *Museums Involving Communities*, 2018.

of these devastations was the attack and subsequent collapse, on November 9, 1993, of the Mostar bridge, built in 1566 at the behest of Suleiman the Magnificent. The Taliban's fanaticism and religious extremism were the cause of the destruction, at the Bamiyan site in Afghanistan, of two monumental statues of the Buddha carved in the rock no less than eighteen hundred years ago. Other objects – statues, ivories, relics from the Hellenistic age – housed in the national museum in Kabul were likewise destroyed by the fury of the fundamentalists. The whole world responded with sorrowful and baffled astonishment, all the more so because this did not happen during a conflict but was the deliberate act of a group driven exclusively by religious fanaticism. Unfortunately, other museums were not spared. In 2003, due to the occupation of Baghdad by the US-led coalition and the power vacuum created in the country, the National Museum of Iraq was looted uncontrollably. Priceless objects in this museum such as the Warka Vase were stolen (the vase was luckily recovered later). The Baghdad National Library was attacked and burned twice, and a military base was built on one of the world's most important archaeological precincts, the ancient site of the city of Babylon. In 2011, on January 28th, following the clashes that took place in Egypt during the "Arab Spring", thieves managed to break into the galleries of the Tahrir Square Museum in Cairo and steal some important artifacts, which were fortunately recovered. Then, in a rapid succession of events, the instability in the country allowed attacks on archaeological sites and the concomitant looting of warehouses. In 2013, it was the Mallawi museum that came under attack. Two mummies were burned, some coffins and statues were damaged, and a substantial number of artifacts were stolen and never recovered. With a video released in February 2015, the regime of the Islamic State in Iraq staged the most serious act of destruction witnessed in recent years. The face of the winged bull from the Nergal Gate of Nineveh, near Mosul, in northern Iraq, was defaced with a jackhammer. In the museum in the same Iraqi city, life-size statues of the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE from Hatra, Western Iraq, were smashed. A few weeks later, in April 2015, at Nimrud, 30 km south of Mosul, the Northwest Palace was destroyed. Excavated and published by Layard in the 19th century, it was the monumental residence built by king Ashurnasirpal, ruler of the Assyrian Empire in the 9th century BCE. The audience chamber and throne room bore vivid testimony to one of the earliest empires in history. These heinous acts, branded as war crimes by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon,

although committed with the aim of striking at symbols of the past, also served to fill the coffers of the Islamic state with thefts and looting and illegal sale of antiquities by the terrorists. Further very serious looting has ravaged Syria by striking Mari, an important Bronze Age site, and the nearby Seleucid city of Dura Europos. The images of the devastation of Palmyra remain etched in everyone's memory. The Islamic State had Khaled al Asaad, director of the archaeological site, beheaded in a public square, on August 18, 2015, five days after destroying one of the principal temples on the site, the Temple of Baal Shamin, a few score meters from the Roman theater of the city, where the IS had already staged some macabre public executions. Unfortunately, this mayhem was followed by other such acts, with the destruction of part of the proscenium of the theater, the temple of Bel, the triumphal arch, the tetrapylon and many symbolic places of the city.

These examples, however, do not exhaust this terrifying series. Regrettably, many other sites have been the subject of deliberate attacks in recent years. We, therefore, have to ask ourselves once again whether the past is really relevant to contemporary society. We have seen that museums and places of culture are of primary importance for the formation of a collective consciousness. But to what extent are museums inclusive? And what efforts should they make to root themselves in their context, in the attempt not to be forgotten? There are a number of immediate actions that museums need to take. We have seen that, alongside the targeted destruction of heritage for political and ideological reasons, there is constant stealing, looting, and pillaging, which enrich their perpetrators while producing irreparable damage. We need only to think of the citadel of Aleppo, the library of Timbuktu with its archive of over seven hundred thousand manuscripts, or the mosque of Jonah in Mosul. Such dramatic lists necessarily prompt us to reflect on essential issues related to the preservation of the cultural heritage received from the past and its roots within our communities. In spite of the treaties agreed upon at a global level, practices of monitoring and active conservation, and national policies for heritage protection, and the work of international organizations charged with ensuring that the monuments and material culture of previous generations are preserved and passed on to our successors, unfortunately, the illegal art market remains widespread, pervasive and broadly tolerated.⁴ A first form of prevention can be achieved by a civic ed-

⁴ Renfrew and Bahn, *Archaeology*, 2016, pp. 552-584.

ucation in archaeology and historical and artistic heritage, which museums can implement by their exhibition designs. This means we have to try to move beyond the concept that artifacts can be exhibited completely separated from their historical context, by simply displaying them as objects of particular beauty. This is not conducive to an understanding of artifacts. Completely isolating them from their original context precludes our understanding of a period that makes sense only when we place these objects in relation to each other as testimonies of a shared experience. In recent decades, the field of Museum Studies has been questioning itself deeply to find ways that will make it possible to deal satisfactorily with the complexity of exhibiting “the past”. On the international level, the idea is now widely shared that museums are theaters of memory where local and global identities are defined, and where different visions of the past and present meet the future.⁵

MUSEUMS AND IDENTITY

In the 19th century, the flourishing of nation states went hand in hand with the founding of many museums, which have since acquired a fundamental role in the epistemological process connected with the conception of cultural heritage. The nation state, understood as a central authority, a political entity that exercises its government within a defined space, is linked to an ideology and a world view shared, albeit to varying degrees, by a group of people who live within a specific territory, who recognize a specific government authority they are subject to, and participate in the benefits deriving from citizenship. Within this framework, phenomena such as patriotism and nationalism have developed, leading to extremes of closure based on an alleged superiority derived from place of birth or territorial belonging. These phenomena that run through political and civil society are also of great importance in the development of museum policies. Another cue for reflection comes from the concept of ethnicity and the increased awareness of various groups that live together in the same territory, but have different cultural backgrounds, languages, traditions, religious beliefs, customs, material cultures and histories. The awareness of a part

⁵ Macdonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies*, 2011.

of the population regarding the sharing of certain values, often experienced in opposition to the ruling classes, plays a fundamental role in the struggle for the recognition of rights, in the demand for a share of the decision-making power, in movements for liberation from colonial forces, whether political or economic, and in attempts to create a sense of unity within a given society. All this informs methods of self-representation and inevitably affects museums in their exhibition policies, in their efforts to involve communities, in their relations with the source countries, in the definition of a code of ethics, and in their consideration of possibilities for the restitution of museum items.

In the definition of identity, religion also plays an important part, having influenced humanity's behavior for millennia. Faith can be used and bent to underpin ideologies intended to show the superiority of one group over another; it can become the means to bring together groups of people and, at times, to pit them against some other group. Cultural heritage, as a symbol of a given community, can therefore be attacked and devastated, as we have seen, for being deemed contrary to the dominant morality, or simply in order to destroy the material culture on which the collective memory of a part of society rests. All too often we have unfortunately witnessed instrumental attacks on the heritage and museums, seen as symbols of a past to be eradicated, being interpreted and condemned as associated with the imperialist and colonial West.

Within museums, some fundamental questions are increasingly dominating the discussion and require credible and concrete answers. We try to understand who the past belongs to, how we can be inclusive, how we can avoid generalizations and how to bring out the micro-stories linked to the communities that heritage stems from. New museological trends tend to emphasize prosopographical features, to insist on episodes of everyday life, trying to connect them with the experiences of visitors. Autobiographical documents and personal testimonies are being given greater space within exhibition galleries, in an attempt to present a plurality of voices and limit the self-referential role of museums. Globalization has brought with it profound demographic changes which have an immediate repercussion on the logics of exhibition.

The concept of the nation state is losing its key role as a mediator of past experience and a primary interlocutor for future expectations. If states are no longer perceived as clearly defined models, capable of providing a key to the interpretation of reality with reference to a specific territory and its population,

they lose the role of authoritative referents for the economic responses and educational perspectives of new generations. Thus, the concept of spatial-cultural continuity that unites a population residing in a given territory is gradually diminished. Global mobility and strong migratory pressures accelerate this process. Within even very small communities, political, religious, linguistic, and cultural differences can be found that lead to a stratification of different visions and perspectives, as well as a continuous dialogue and exchanges between the local and global levels. These changes in society have important consequences in the definition of exhibition spaces and museum policies, which are increasingly attentive to cultural diversity and the rights of minorities. In many European museums, we can see how a post-modern identitarian culture tends to be presented, within which attempts are made to interact with a plural society, giving space to the coexistence of a wide range of values. In this way, with increasing frequency, museums are becoming places in which to create and share a collective memory.

MUSEUMS IN THE GLOBALIZED WORLD: MIGRATORY DRIVES AND NEW EPISTEMOLOGIES

The Swedish scholar Mats Burström argues that archaeology can make the world a better place by inculcating in society the awareness of the cultural diversity of heterogeneous persons who have coexisted, over time, in a given place. Observing the complexity of the past enables us, in other words, to understand the current situation more profoundly. From the epistemological point of view, therefore, a change of perspective is required, one taking account of space as well as time.⁶ The material culture preserved in museums does not connect generations only in a diachronic arc, starting from the assumption that there is some correspondence between those who live in the same place, albeit in different eras. It also forces us to reflect on the mobility of the ancient world, on trade, international relations and demographic stratifications. It thus tends to undermine nationalistic interpretations that see a close relationship between a territory, its current inhabitants, and its past residents. The past, says Burström, is a

⁶ See Burström, "Cultural Diversity in the Home Ground", *Current Swedish Archaeology* 7 (1999), pp. 21-26.

foreign country, and it is really difficult to find a close connection between very distant times and those who currently live in a specific place. On the contrary, why should we think that the material culture that has been preserved interacts less significantly with immigrants than with indigenous peoples? Religious monuments may be more comprehensible to a community that developed in a particular place and still shares a set of beliefs, customs and rituals. However, the further away one gets in time, the more interpretational support is needed to fully understand the objects on display. On the other hand, the concept that indigenous peoples are able to perceive certain cultural heritage as particularly closely connected with their community, establishing an almost proprietary relationship with it by virtue of a nationalistic identification, is based on assumptions that are today largely obsolete. Instead, the discussion has to focus on accessibility, on education, on the interpretation of museums as boundary spaces, cultural interfaces that play an essential role in educating both indigenous citizens and newcomers. Of course, appropriate programs have to be developed at the same time, finding ways to arouse the interest of people who, having settled in a new context, can be guided to learn about the past. The extent of the current phenomena of migrations should impel museums to identify suitable responses. The debates over refugees coming from conflict zones and escaping from fierce civil wars, or those who have abandoned their places of origin driven by poverty and the hope of building a better future in the country of arrival, very rarely involve museums.⁷ But it is precisely these custodians of the past, these dynamic places accustomed to relating with the Other, that can become missionary laboratories of inclusion and dialogue. In the tense climate of recent years, with growing localisms and nationalisms, some of them even blatantly intolerant, museums are called on to break the identitarian bond between nation and heritage, to adopt a broad view, to involve sociologists, anthropologists and philosophers to promote lines of research focusing on the relationship between cultural heritage, human rights, freedom of movement and participation. These are questions that require serious investigation, and that often admit more than one answer. This new diaspora may at times seem a shortcut for not addressing vital issues in contemporary museology, such as decolonization, dialogue with countries of origin and restitution. Using as an alibi the fact that newly settled

⁷ Labadi, *Museums, Immigrants and Social Justice*, 2018.

populations must be able to benefit from their material culture, one could try to delay the due analysis of the origin of the artifacts, of the transparency regarding the dates and methods of acquiring collections. A primary role in the cultural agenda of contemporary museums should be given to serious research that takes into consideration all aspects of the biography of each object and avoids simplistic reinterpretations of the past; it should be capable of dealing with the themes of injustice and the illicit appropriation of finds, contextualizing what happened in times relatively close to us.

WHO DOES THE PAST BELONG TO?

Since the end of World War II, with the disappearance of the great colonial empires and as a result of the acceleration initiated by the process of globalization, we are seeing a rethinking of the role that Europe had and has on the international scene. In the museum world, this has raised questions regarding the legitimate ownership of heritage from Third World countries currently preserved in some Western museums. The reflection and debate on these topics are very timely, and have stimulated a proliferation of writings by international scholars as well as the production of works of contemporary art.

In 2016, on the occasion of an exhibition entitled *A Taxonomy of Fallacies: The Life of Dead Objects*, held at the Sursock Museum in Beirut, the Lebanese artist Ali Cherri created two very interesting works, which were subsequently also displayed at the Museo Egizio in Turin in 2018, as part of the exhibition *Anche le statue muoiono*. In the composition *Fragments*, Ali Cherri arranged on a backlit table some archaeological artifacts bought on the legal antiques market. The objects were exhibited without captions identifying and dating them. Without a context, they became suspended artifacts, as if detached from their place of origin. Over them hung a pharaoh eagle-owl, which seemed to be gazing greedily at these artifacts. The same raptor, which in the artist's view represents the predatory instinct of the West, also appears in the video of the documentary *Petrified*, shot in the Museum of Islamic Civilization and the Sharjah Nature Reserve in the United Arab Emirates. The visualization ended with the words of the writer Abd al-Rahman Munif who, in the 1980s, described how the discovery of the oil fields had radically transformed Bedouin life.

Through this quote, the artist sought to relate the economic boom in the Gulf countries with the spectacularization of the museum exhibition. “When we try to save a ruin from its own decline,” says Ali Cherri’s narrator in Arabic, “aren’t we really denying its nature of being a ruin?”. This brings us back to a reflection I already alluded to above, namely, whether museums, by trying to stop the natural process of transformation and destruction of objects, end up by crystallizing them. The artist states with conviction that the finds are dead and are not asking to be saved. Cherri also addresses the issue of the destruction of cultural heritage by pointing a finger at colonialism, the ideological use of material culture by nationalistic policies, and the connivance that exists between these and the art market. A museum, as a living, non-static entity, cannot help questioning itself about such fundamental issues and needs to find answers.⁸

The 1970 UNESCO convention (Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property) decisively raised the issue of how to stop the hemorrhage of artifacts suffered by source countries. While this treaty undoubtedly regulated the market for ancient artifacts and led museums to make careful inquiries before making a purchase, there remain very important unresolved questions concerning disputed heritage. Many steps have been taken thanks to the adoption of the Washington Principles, issued in 1998 to undertake a careful examination of inventories to identify artifacts with accession dates between 1933 and 1945. It should be stressed that responsibility for ascertaining the legitimate acquisition of an artifact and ruling out that it was seized by an act of force by Nazi-Fascist regimes from Holocaust victims lies with the museums themselves. These, therefore, need to perform due diligence proactively in verifying the provenance of items in their collections.

The question of the restitution of colonial heritage is also much debated, especially with reference to atrocities that took place in Africa between 1884, the date of the Berlin conference, and the start of World War I. In a speech delivered at the University of Ouagadougou, in Burkina Faso, in November 2017, French President Emmanuel Macron affirmed as a priority the return to Africa of cultural heritage from the continent, either permanently or in the form of long-term loans. The subsequent report signed by Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy,

⁸ The artist’s work was presented in: C. Ciccopiedi (ed.), *Anche le statue muoiono*, 2018, pp. 88-89.

commissioned by the Elysée, set as a starting point the need to be transparent and accurately distinguish between different modes of colonial acquisition. In a very clear statement, the two scholars urged the need to establish what we could define as “the mode of removal” of objects present in Western collections, i.e., to carefully examine and classify artifacts to establish whether they were stolen or plundered, and how they were taken away from the populations they belonged to. Only thus, as stated by Dan Hicks, curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, will it be possible to arrive at a “necrography” of objects, meaning the representation of just how much pain, suffering, destruction and death was involved in their acquisition by the great museums.⁹

On October 6, 2020, the French National Assembly unanimously approved a law providing for the return to Benin and Senegal of objects brought to France as spoils of war. Going back in time, what happened in March 1897 in the Kingdom of Benin deserves some careful consideration. Following the Berlin conference, starting in 1884 the great European potentates carved out their respective areas of influence in Africa. The Kingdom of Benin tried to thwart British ambitions by blocking access to the interior of Nigeria. The tension intensified when nine British envoys, contravening what the sovereign of Benin had told them, entered the country during a religious ceremony, a moment when entry was ritually not permitted to foreigners. As a result, they were ambushed and most were killed. This event triggered British reaction in the form of a punitive expedition. The capital, Benin City, was seized and razed to the ground, putting an end to the kingdom’s independence. Only eight British lives were lost, while loss of life among African civilians amounted to tens of thousands. The soldiers took away all the precious objects as spoils of war. Some of these were subsequently sold and are currently preserved in about fifty European and North American museums. According to many, these objects, which include symbols of royalty and religion, being testimonies of the culture of a people who lost their sovereignty and independence as a result of an act of war, should be returned to Benin.

However, the positions are conflicting and the discussion inevitably shifts from the past to the present. Condemnation of perpetrated violence, increasingly often officially denied by the perpetrator countries, is obviously a fundamental step. Consequently, the real point of the question becomes the function of the

⁹ Hicks, *The British Museums*, 2020.

museums that house the artifacts, their role as testimonies, by the very fact of their presence, of those cruel events. The situation is further complicated when dealing with the problem of objects removed from their countries of origin in the absence of a local legislative frame of reference, although not necessarily in the context of war or physical violence.

There are those who believe, like Dan Hicks, mentioned above, that museums should not be interpreted as a point of arrival, but a constantly evolving conceptual and exhibition process, and that all the objects taken from Benin should be returned to that country, lest we abet an imperialistic, colonial ideology fomenting racial violence. Repatriation of objects should hence be perceived, not as a deprivation, but as an opportunity to rethink a museum's role within their community, redefine its objectives and make it into a place where collective memory can find a space for dialogue and reflection regarding what happened in the past. Keeping objects acquired under such circumstances in a collection, instead, would only symbolically prolong the violence of the colonial war.

A different position is expressed by the Humboldt Forum in Berlin, an institution soon to be inaugurated. The Humboldt Forum promises to address the problems of European colonialism and the exploitation of the African continent in a critical way. Faced with mounting criticism of the opening of this museum, dedicated to the "culture of the world" and housed in the reconstructed imperial palace in East Berlin, its director Neil MacGregor, who formerly headed the British Museum from 2002 to 2015, has stated that it is necessary to contextualize the project, bearing in mind that the German capital is a cosmopolitan city, which belongs to the world. Its collections narrate and explain the future of humanity. This is a clear nod to the idea of the universal encyclopedic museum, seeking to present the development of various civilizations, their connections and their reciprocal influences in an evolutionary continuum. It is important to remember, however, that the concept of an institution that gathers artifacts from all over the world under one roof was forcefully asserted in 19th-century Europe, a period strongly characterized by expansionist and colonialist policies. It should therefore be reaffirmed with conviction that these institutions cannot and must not elude the debate on this issue.

In the next few years, the debate over cultural ownership is certainly bound to become increasingly lively and museums would really be making a big mistake if they took a passive, waiting position. This means they have to call themselves

into question, act in full transparency and start research into how they acquired their collections. It is advisable to ask whether the authorities that permitted the acquisition and export of the finds had the right to do so, to reflect on the nature and importance of the artifacts to the communities of origin in the case of, for example, sacred objects and religious or royal symbols, which a community may feel it has been deprived of. Then there will be different ways of trying to start a dialogue with the countries of origin, to mutually develop a fruitful collaboration. New technologies will undoubtedly help, cultural exchanges will be intensified, and the sharing of data and research results will be essential. Of course, it will no longer be tolerable to use arguments based on covert racist assumptions or a misplaced sense of superiority, such as the inability of source countries to take adequate care of their cultural heritage. A recommendable criterion would be to assess whether what is present in museum collection is there against the will, aspirations and cultural development of third parties associated with it.

Once again, memory, oblivion and repression play an important role in defining a society's attitude to delicate issues such as the restitution of objects stolen during colonial rule. Starting in 1980, Italy returned some finds to countries it had occupied in the 20th century: the Venus of Leptis Magna, donated by Italo Balbo to Hermann Göring in 1940 and returned to Libya in 1999; the goddess of Butrint, taken from Albania in 1928 and returned in 1984; the stele of Axum, stolen from Ethiopia in 1937 and returned in 2005. The case – masterfully analyzed by Simona Troilo¹⁰ – of the Venus of Cyrene, returned to Libya in 2008, is significant. The reactions aroused by the decision to repatriate show how we are not yet able to relate serenely to our colonial past. Found by chance at the end of 1913, following torrential rain that fell on the Italian military camp at Cyrene, it was brought to headquarters, transferred to Benghazi, restored and finally moved to the Museo Nazionale Romano. This was done disregarding the comprehensive law protecting cultural artifacts passed in 1909, subsequently extended in 1912 to the conquered lands. This rule required a conservational tie between place and object, prescribing the preservation of archaeological finds at their discovery sites. After the law was abolished, the statue became part of imperialist rhetoric, reinvigorated a few years later by the Fascist regime. The discovery of the sculpture was understood first and foremost as an omen, a wel-

¹⁰ Troilo, "Casta e bianca", *Memoria e Ricerca. Rivista di storia contemporanea* 1 (2018), pp. 133-155.

come to the Italians, successors to the Romans, who had returned to the lands of their fathers, carrying on the imperial destiny of the Eternal City, *caput mundi*. This then segued it into a racial argument. The delicate whiteness of the marble and its elegant and sinuous forms were typical of the Mediterranean race and therefore belonged to Italy, which had managed to rescue the Venus from the African land. Images of the statue were used on postage stamps, postcards and advertising posters. When the decision was finally made to return the sculpture to Libya with a decree issued in 2002 by the Ministry for the Cultural Heritage and Activities, headed at the time by Giuliano Urbani, a lively debate broke out in Italy, which culminated in an appeal of Italia Nostra – a foremost Italian heritage and environmental protection independent agency – to the administrative tribunal (TAR). The arguments put forward against restitution were patriotic honor, the cultural continuity between the object in question and the other finds in the Museo Nazionale Romano, and that Rome as the custodian of classical culture was a subject better qualified to possess and preserve such a find than a nation of Islamic culture. In this discussion, two factors that we have addressed in the previous pages clearly emerge, namely, how heritage can be exploited to support an identitarian narrative and a distorted perception, and how arguments such as these betray ill-concealed feelings of cultural superiority. Furthermore, in the discussion Italy was paradoxically cast as the source country, a victim of the removal of assets. Thus, the dispute was not placed in its proper context, that of confronting Italy's colonial past and addressing the question of how to deal with war booty. The TAR rejected Italia Nostra's appeal and the statue was returned to Libya in 2008. In 2015, the controversy broke out again following the unconfirmed news of the alleged disappearance of the Venus. The thesis, often used in the European debate, that heritage is better protected in continental institutions than it could be in its countries of origin is a symptom, as I have noted above, of a belittling racism that never really dies.

The time has come to systematically address the creation of an international legislative framework capable of applying uniform criteria to deal with the whole range of requests for restitution made by countries that have suffered the removal of objects belonging to their cultural heritage. A first draft was presented by the human rights lawyer Geoffrey Robertson in his book *Who Owns History? Elgin's Loot and the Case for Returning Plundered Treasure* (2019). The identification of shared criteria will certainly provide important tools to redress,

at least in part, some of the wrongs committed in the past, and at the same time serve as a point of reference for discussing the role and function of museums in the near future.

TOPPLING THE SYMBOLS OF THE PAST OR ESTABLISHING A NEW SEMANTICS?

Over the past few years, we have witnessed repeated iconoclastic phenomena, aimed at toppling the symbols of colonial empires and racial segregation. In 2015, in the context of student demonstrations that led to the closure of universities across South Africa, students at the University of Cape Town began to protest against the presence of a statue of Cecil Rhodes on campus. Thus, the uprising – which had started with the aim of lowering university fees and changing study regarded as too Eurocentric – symbolically focused on the monument of a person who was linked not only to colonial policies but also to the racial theories that led to the institution of apartheid. On April 9, 2015, the statue was removed. From South Africa, the protests, which reached Oxford, quickly spread across the globe, leading to several instances of the removal from public view of monuments representing Rhodes. In France, there have been large collective demonstrations requesting the removal of statues linked to that country's colonial past from public spaces, such as those of Colbert, author of the "Black Code" of 1685, which regulated the lives of slaves in the colonies. Statues of Confederate soldiers have been removed throughout the United States.¹¹ This current trend, often manifested in sensational actions at a transnational level, requires some important reflection. Works of art, monuments, palaces and churches are historical records that convey information about landscape changes through the centuries. The positioning of simulacra, effigies, symbols and statues in a public space is a powerful means by which the community affirms, legitimizes and shares a given vision of the world. The narratives that society decides to associate with these monuments become tools to establish how much should be remembered and what can be condemned to oblivion, while giving us an interpretative key to contemporaneity. The heated debate that these monuments

¹¹ Kessi, "Towards a Decolonial Psychology", *Museum International* 71 (2019), pp. 78-87.

arouse leads us to reflect on how crucial historical research and curatorial work are, and on the role that museums ought to play in the public debate. It becomes extremely important to make a careful examination of the past, study the biographies of objects, highlight all aspects of them and develop forms of display that will create a new semantics.

The wave of protests by the Black Lives Matter movement, which arose in the United States and worldwide in 2020 after the killing of George Floyd and other African-American citizens by the police, has not left museums indifferent, even in Italy. Many have begun to take a stand and, in some cases, even carry out activities of communication and dissemination dealing with the art-related claims of the African American (and more generally African) community.

A first basis for the reflection was provided on June 3, 2020, by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the body that represents museums around the world, which described the assassination of George Floyd as “senseless” and “the last of a harrowing list”, recalling that there is still a long way to go before we reach racial equality, but also that the time to act is now, especially for museums. According to ICOM, museums cannot be neutral in the face of what is happening. They cannot be divorced from their social context, from the structures of power, or from the struggles of their communities. In other words, they have a responsibility and a duty to fight against racial prejudice at every level, from the stories they tell to the way their staff is treated.

Museums, as repositories of collective memory, have the responsibility to provide a context, to provide a key to interpretation. Probably the most effective answer is not the removal of statues and monuments, the removal from the public vision of symbols considered detrimental by their contemporary political and social significance. We often tend to underestimate the strength of absence and the danger that derives from it, namely oblivion and, as one of its extreme consequences, the denial of tragic episodes in human history. Sometimes even a non-presence can reinforce the symbolic value of a given place.

It is therefore advisable to find new forms of display, to develop semantics expressing the values of a post-colonial, post-apartheid society, and seeking to overcome all racial prejudice.

Two attempts, very different from each other, can serve as an example. At the University of Cape Town, during the protests in 2015, the students decided to place clothes on the statue of Sarah Baartman, a woman born in South Africa,

sold as a slave in Europe and humiliated in the name of science. Suffering from steatopygia, a hypertrophic development of the adipose masses of thighs and buttocks, she was forced by her masters to exhibit herself naked in England and later in France, where she died of an infectious disease at the age of twenty-five. Her skeleton, genitals and brain were exhibited at the Musée de l'Homme, and the remains of this person, who was known as the Hottentot Venus, remained on display in Paris until 1974, to be finally returned to South Africa only in 2002. The collective “dressing” movement aimed to restore dignity and provide a key to interpretation that would enable us to see that statue as the representation of a person who had been terribly humiliated and needed to be looked at with different eyes. The gesture of the students, in addition to general approval, also aroused some opposition on the part of those who appealed to freedom of opinion. In 2018, after the librarian removed the clothes put on the statue by the students, the university’s art commission decided to remove it permanently from the library and make it the center of an installation in the Ritchie Gallery on campus. Here the statue has finally found its place, contextualized with sound installations, images and representations recounting the human story of Sara Baartman. In December 2018, a central hall, in the heart of the campus, was named after her. This installation is an exercise in memory, a narrative seeking to interpret different approaches and emotions, trying to make people understand that art, instead of being disruptive and divisive, can help to compose in a transformative process the vision of a post-colonial society, which has to relate to a difficult past, not forgetting it, but attempting to provide an interpretation of it. It could therefore be argued that cultural heritage needs to be protected not only from destruction but also from misuse, and from what Arianna Arisi Rota terms “brutal decontextualization”.¹²

Another example of a transformative process, the construction of a conscious collective memory, is what we tried to develop in Bolzano. This city in Alto Adige was annexed to Italy at the end of World War I. After this, and during the Fascist period, it underwent a process of forced compliance with the Italian cultural model. It preserves in its urban context a monument to victory, designed by the architect Piacentini, celebrating Italy’s defeat of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

¹² See in this volume: Arisi Rota, “Political Destructions and the Long 19th Century: Cases from the American Revolution to Pre-WWI Europe”.

The bas-relief, 36 meters long, which its sculptor Hans Piffrader intended to commemorate Fascism's triumph, has become the subject of a reinterpretation. The municipality of Bolzano launched a competition of ideas which received 486 submissions. The purpose was to find a way this monument could continue to speak, be contextualized and become a historical document, a warning, bearing witness to a troubled moment in the history of the city and of the country as a whole. The winning project superimposes on the bas-relief a work of contemporary art consisting of LED lights that form a sentence by Hannah Arendt, the German political scientist, philologist and historian, who became a naturalized American after being deprived of German citizenship by the race laws. The sentence reads: "No one has the right to obey".

The process of interpreting the past, its careful study, understanding and present relevance makes museums active players in defining a collective memory capable of providing answers to the questions that arise in society over time.

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REFLECTING ON THE EXHIBITION ANCHE LE STATUE MUOIONO

Caterina Ciccopiedi, Paolo Del Vesco

1. INTRODUCTION

Anche le statue muoiono. Conflitto e patrimonio tra antico e contemporaneo (*Statues Also Die. Conflict and Heritage in Ancient and Modern Times*) is the title of a temporary exhibition that brought together four institutions based in Turin: Museo Egizio, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Musei Reali and Centro Ricerche Archeologiche e Scavi di Torino (CRAST). It gave rise to an interesting experiment both in contents and displaying methods. First of all, the exhibition was ‘multi-sited’. It was held simultaneously at three different venues – Museo Egizio, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo and Musei Reali – from March 9, 2018, to January 6, 2019. In all three, ancient artifacts were displayed in dialogue with works of contemporary artists. Dialogue being the focal point of the entire project: the dialogue between museum curators and researchers of other disciplines, between ancient and contemporary art and culture, and between museums and their publics.

The twofold purpose of the multi-sited exhibition was to allow artworks from different ages and geographical contexts to explore the transversal theme of the destruction and the creation of memory, while discussing issues of conservation and protection of cultural heritage.

The group of curators who worked on *Anche le statue muoiono* followed an approach that created opportunities for discussion and dialogue, while preserving the specificity of each venue. This choice was in partial opposition to other recent exhibitions showing objects of different time periods together. A good example is offered by the Théâtre du Monde exhibition, which was held at the Maison Rouge in Paris in 2013-2014. Jean Hubert Martin, who curated the show, is known for having initiated a type of curating that he defines ‘transhistorical’. His approach abolishes cultural or chronological categories and taxonomies, which are at the basis of traditional museology, to privilege a single narrative derived from the free association of different objects placed side by side. Martin was interested in how the public perceives and relates to these objects without the

mediation of the museum captions and interpretation panels, which inevitably alter the visitors' experience.

In contrast, the curators of *Anche le statue muoiono* put great care into contextualizing the objects and the museum 'container' in which they were displayed by means of specific captions. The intention was to bring out and highlight the processes underlying the display of objects within a museum, showing that they are never neutral and in fact always bound up with ideological, political, and economic agendas.

The museum galleries became a central part of the dialogue between ancient and contemporary objects, which in addition was facilitated by the variety of the curatorial team: archaeologists and contemporary art historians mutually benefitted of their different skills and backgrounds, while scholars and researchers worked side by side with museum curators. The process developed out of a long gestation period, during which the synergies between the curators and the researchers led to the creation of a single catalogue for the three exhibition venues.¹ After the opening of the exhibition, the dialogue continued with a two-day international symposium held in May 2018. The speakers approached the theme of the destruction of cultural heritage from a diachronic and multidisciplinary standpoint. The role of museums and their impact on processes of conservation and destruction was also addressed. This volume presents a selection of the contributions offered on that occasion, some of which have been reworked in the light of discussions occurred during the visits to the three venues offered to the conference attendants.

2. THE ROUND TABLE

At the closing of the temporary exhibition, more than a year from the start of the project, the curators gathered again to rediscuss the initial ideas in the light of a greater awareness acquired through the interaction with the public and the considerations arisen from the international conference. The goal was to understand whether and how the project had changed through the 'encounters' that every exhibition produces. The result was a passionate dialogue, summed up in this chapter, which addressed five main axes of discussion: the perception of the public, the researchers and the museum professionals; the relationship between

¹ Ciccopiedi, C. (ed.), *Anche le statue muoiono. Conflitto e patrimonio tra antico e contemporaneo*, Modena 2018.

contemporary art and archaeology; restoration as a destructive or reconstructive process; post-colonialism; restitutions.

Many thanks are due to all those who were present at the round table: Christian Greco (Museo Egizio), Elisa Panero (Musei Reali), Stefano De Martino (CRAST), Irene Calderoni (Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo), Paolo Del Vesco (Museo Egizio), and Caterina Ciccopiedi (Museo Egizio), to the participants to the conference, to the contributors to these proceedings who patiently waited for the publication, and to the public who made the exhibition a lively and stimulating place.

2.1 Perception

Exhibitions are like a theater in which the encounter of exhibits, artists, curators, venue space, and the public produces significant and sometimes unexpected effects. What happened in the microcosm of the Anche le statue muoiono exhibition? How did the curators' perception change after meeting up with those of the public and the artists?

The exhibition provided an opportunity to exchange different perspectives on contemporary art and archaeology, as well as for the curators to meet different audiences. Each institution interpreted the central theme of the destruction of cultural heritage on the basis of its own collection and experience, and expanded on themes derived from its collection. Therefore, the main topic was also received differently depending on the exhibition visited. The publics of the Musei Reali and the Museo Egizio were the least familiar with contemporary art. Mariana Castillo Deball's work *Mshatta-Fassade 2014* is a more than twenty-meter-long monumental surface made of a light, almost transparent fabric bearing the ornamental motif of the palace façade of Qasr al-Mshatta, in Jordan. The imposing fabric was installed at the Musei Reali, suspended from the ceiling at the center of the impressive space of the Salone delle Guardie, in the Palazzo Reale. The public's reaction was one of great astonishment, at times of bewilderment. Yet, at the end of the visit, once the general narrative of the exhibition was understood, that feeling had left the place to a profound reflection on the mechanisms of colonial destruction and appropriation of the past.

An effect of astonishment and estrangement was also elicited by the works of contemporary art exhibited in the galleries of the Museo Egizio, which were perceived as strongly intrusive in the context of an antiquarian/archaeological museum, usually characterized by a more 'traditional' display. Although all the

works exhibited, ancient and modern alike, had long explanatory labels, there were no explanatory panels in the rooms, which usually provide a narrative covering the whole itinerary and offer an over-arching and uniform interpretation of the exhibition. Perhaps the absence of such a clear and unified interpretation, quite common in most contemporary art displays, further increased the visitors' sense of disorientation. Most of the persons who decided to tour the exhibition without a guide, often appeared to be moving hesitantly through the galleries, passing through the first rooms without pausing to read the object labels, and often failing to complete the itinerary, retracing their steps about halfway through the exhibition and then quickly leaving the premises. The uneasiness of a public more familiar with circulating through a museum space where artefacts are kept in showcases became clearly apparent in their physical interaction with free-standing contemporary artworks. For instance, *Heritage Studies #1* (2015) by Iman Issa, an installation consisting of a wooden sculpture in the shape of a sharply pointed pyramid with a rod projecting from the top and descending at an angle almost to the floor [Fig. 1], was accidentally bumped into and damaged several times by the people wandering in the gallery. In stark contrast to the unguided visitors, the public of the Museo Egizio who visited the temporary exhibition with the commentary of a guide greatly appreciated the exhibition design, the richness of the contents, and the reflections stimulated by the display. In this case, the visitors' comments revealed that the exhibition not only was perceived as comprehensible and fascinating, but also stimulating in reinterpreting the whole museum's permanent collection from a new critical perspective, questioning the role played by museums and collections in the conservation, interpretation and narration, but also in the dispersal and sometimes destruction of cultural heritage.

The public more familiar with contemporary art, on the other hand, appeared generally more receptive to the themes and layouts of this exhibition project, perhaps due to a certain tendency in the world of contemporary art to present cross-cutting gazes, contaminations, highly critical perspectives, and long-term projects.

In recent years, various archaeological museums are sharing the fascination for displaying ancient objects along with contemporary works, but they often aim to amaze and intrigue their public or simply convey the idea that archaeology is not just dusty old clutter. In many instances, such displays seem more like



Fig. 1 Iman Issa, *Heritage Studies #1*, 2015

marketing operations. In contrast, the exhibition *Anche le statue muoiono* created a dialogue between ancient and contemporary works based on a specific underlying theme, that of the destruction of heritage seen over the long term and analyzed in its political, religious and economic implications, without neglecting the role played by the collecting practices and the museum institution itself. The role of archaeology, collections, and museums, as potentially destructive agents of cultural heritage for their contribution to the dismemberment of ancient contexts and the loss of identity of the objects for the sake of their market value, for instance, was a theme explored through the works of Ali Cherri and Walid Raad. Their contemporary artworks were exhibited at the Museo Egizio and their presence in an archaeological museum created a veritable short circuit that prompted the archaeologists, the specialists of ancient art history, and the curators to reflect critically upon their respective disciplines and work. As a consequence, they were able to offer the public more complex and thought provoking viewpoints on the collection. In this respect, the prolonged interaction and exchange with both the contemporary artworks and the visitors contributed to the continuous reshaping of the curators' perception of the exhibition throughout the whole period of its opening.

2.2 Relationship between contemporary art and archaeology

What are the shared spaces, also on a methodological level, between the two disciplines? What added value could derive from their interaction?

Contemporary art's fascination with and interest in archaeology is now well known. Many contemporary artists have even borrowed the working and recording methods of this discipline for the creation of their own works and installations, or have tried to capture and reproduce the appearance and 'aura' of archaeological finds and ancient ruins. Think, for example, of William Turnbull's bronze sculptures, Kate Whiteford's geoglyphs, or designer Piergiorgio Robino's handcrafted wooden furniture enclosed in amber like fossils from a remote past in his *Souvenir of the Last Century* series. Then think of Damien Hirst's recent *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable* (2017), a complex multimedia operation described as 'art for a post-truth world', in which the artist invents a past, a mythology, an archaeological excavation and a museum display and presents them as real. But above all, think of Scott Hocking's installations that imagine an archaeology of the future (*Rusty Sputnik*), inspired by ancient monuments

(*Ziqqurat*), exploring the effects of time on materials (*The Reptile Room: Mercury Retrograde*), and creating new taxonomies and modern ‘Wunderkammern’ and reliquaries of objects found in contemporary metropolises (*Relics* in Detroit and *Babel* in Lille).

The contemporary artist who most explored these themes in depth, though, remains Mark Dion. For his famous installation *Tate Thames Dig* (1999), at the Tate Gallery, London, he carried out a true archaeological excavation, with the help of volunteers, taking care of the documentation and the cataloguing of all the objects found as well as their sorting and display in the museum. In subsequent works, Mark Dion also meticulously analyzed the materials associated with the archaeological practice (*Concerning the Dig*, 2013). He highlighted and criticized the arbitrariness, and at the same time the power, of the taxonomies of the past and the present (*Cabinets of Curiosities*, 2001; *The Classical Mind*, 2017). Dion’s interest is directed at the process of preserving traces of the past, the construction and control of knowledge and its cataloguing and display, and therefore at museums as places where all these processes come together. A similar interest in documenting and archiving the past also characterizes the work of artists such as Pamela Bannos, Susanne Kriemann, Susan Hiller (*From the Freud Museum*, 1991-1996) or Lothar Baumgarten (*Unsettled Objects*, 1968-1969). Between 2013 and 2014 a collective exhibition entitled *The Way of the Shovel: Art as Archaeology* was held at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. It attempted to describe ‘the interest in history, archaeology, and archival research that defines some of the most highly regarded art of the last decade’, bringing together works by some of these artists and many others in a single exhibition.

All these works have introduced an enriching epistemological turn. Contemporary art’s ‘fascination’ for archaeology, mainly intended as the excavation and exploration of unsolved problems, found place in the *Anche le statue muoiono* exhibition as well. For the artists involved, the process of creation of the artwork was as important as the artwork itself. Their works were strongly narrative, they recounted a story, a process. In this respect, Mariana Castillo Deball or Simon Wachsmuth have deeply reflected on the relationship between document and monument, and the idea that such a twofold quality exists. In the monument – which often embodies a desire for public commemoration – a documentary potential is also inherent (for example, this is how Wachsmuth approached the graffiti traced on the so-called Gate of All Nations in Persepolis in his artwork

Signatures). Hence, the monument is no longer observed only as a whole, as bearer of a unique meaning. Rather, it is broken down and studied as a veritable archaeological deposit, consisting of layers of documents and different meanings.

The fascination of contemporary artists for archaeology also has the merit of bringing the past into a contemporary perspective, not just relating it to the present, but questioning it in relation to contemporary issues. This key to interpret archaeological collections can help curators in communicating more effectively with the public, since it seeks to bridge the past-present gap with contents that are neither sterile nor superficial. The same interpretation key can also help the public to approach the collections of antiquities with greater empathy.

Relating archaeological data to the present – when a critical approach is adopted – is an interesting process. The gaze and voice of those who study archaeological data and artefacts are grounded in the present, just like the act of displaying ancient objects in museums and the consequent gaze of the public or the artist. An effort is therefore made to combine an historical perspective (dating, contextualization) with the ‘interpretation/reception’ in the present. How much of the curatorial intervention is actually perceived and understood by the visitors? Is an object that is meaningful for the curators (due to its historical relevance for instance) equally meaningful for the public? Is empathy a factor too often ignored in museums? This dialogue also helps both archaeologists and visitors remember that every contemporary reality will one day be in the past and that every historical reconstruction of the past is necessarily an interpretation with a degree of approximation, which is unavoidable.

The fascination of contemporary artists for archaeology and museum collections appears all the more clearly when one observes the works of Middle Eastern artists, such as those showcased in the three venues of the exhibition *Anche le statue muoiono*, especially with regard to the relationship between archaeology and politics. The political-military theme of the destruction of cultural heritage in times of conflict was at the center of the reflection underlying the Turin exhibition project. Why do art, historical memory, and excavations become targets of violent attacks? Because objects contain elements of collective identification, they are often used as symbols of ethnic, cultural or religious affinity. And depending on the times and the political agendas, certain pasts (and the representations thereof) become reasons to establish new identities, even new communities. Archaeological objects are then tools in the hands of current

events. In combination with new references, they can reshape the past on the basis of current political needs. In this respect, the commemorative bricks inscribed in the name of Sennacherib, a neo-Assyrian ruler of the 7th century BCE, which were displayed at the Musei Reali were enlightening. They come from the palace of Nineveh, a site in northern Iraq that has been recently devastated by ISIS militias. Similar bricks were made more than two millennia later, their inscriptions commemorating Saddam Hussein and the buildings he had erected, in an attempt to associate modern Iraq with a past of indisputable grandeur as well as to find some sort of 'justification' for his own power and aggressive policy towards surrounding countries.

The instrumentalization of the past is an eminently political issue today. Perhaps, this is the very reason it has often attracted the interest of contemporary artists. Similarly, another fascinating modern theme is the dialogue between the subject looking at an object on display and the object itself, which is somehow 'reactivated' and responds to ever new questions.

The title chosen for the exhibition, 'Statues also die', might seem ambiguous, even contradictory. It is borrowed from the title of the short film *Les statues meurent aussi* (1953) by Alain Resnais, Chris Marker and Ghislain Cloquet. Among the ideas that emerge from the film is the observation that museums can have a devastating effect on the works they contain and exhibit, in particular on the cultural heritage of Africa. The primary purpose of the film is obviously to attack the violent practices of appropriation and eradication of the African cultural heritage by European colonialism. Such practices were harshly condemned two years later also by Aimé Césaire in his celebrated *Discours sur le colonialisme*: "(...) it would have been better never to open those museums that [Monsieur Callois] boasts about (...). Europe would have done better to tolerate all the extra-European civilizations by its side, prosperous and dynamic, unscathed and not mutilated, (...) it would have been better to let them develop and flourish, instead of letting us admire, duly labeled, their scattered limbs, their dead limbs." Alongside the anti-colonial discourse, also a more general consideration is expressed in the film and it refers to the idea of the museum display as an act that inflicts death on the objects by defunctionalizing and decontextualizing them. We believe it is important to counterbalance this thought with the more optimistic idea that the gaze of the visitor, the scholar and the artist, which is necessarily alive, might somehow 'revitalize' the objects. In this sense, it is extremely rele-

vant and fruitful to focus also on the second ‘life’ of objects, on the new existence beginning when the objects are accessed in a museum and that is intimately linked to encounter and dialogue. During the symposium organized in May 2018, several considerations emerged from the deliberately provocative title of the exhibition, among which also that the statues continue to live, although taking on new meanings. The central point is to raise awareness of the continuous transformations that objects endure, the multiple uses they are forced into, the innumerable variations of meaning they suffer. Whenever an object is exhibited, it is the curator’s duty to make these modifications explicit, so as to show not only an object but also its complex biography.

The exhibition focused on the concept of object’s biography: the life story of the artefacts, from their birth, at the time of their creation, to the present, intended as the moment when a visitor sets eyes on them, combined with the intricate network of relationships created throughout. The intention was to make the public understand how the very act of looking and interpreting is a vitalistic one, since it is at that moment that the object comes back to one of its lives. The object is not just seen, but its function and history are subject to a new interpretation, which is necessarily contemporary. While it is true that the objects in the museum environment are decontextualized and therefore, in a certain way, dead, it is also true that archaeology tries to restore them to life, on the one hand by reconstructing their biographies and contexts, and on the other by reflecting on their new lives and new contexts. Within a frame of dialogue with contemporary society and self-critical assessment, museums have all the potential to be not only the place of death of objects but also of their ‘revitalization’.

2.3 Restoration

How does the act of preserving/integrating the artwork or the archaeological object relate to contemporaneity and to the past?

Restoration is closely connected to the encounter between past and present through the active intervention of contemporary subjects on ancient objects. In this case, however, the intervention is selective and partial. Sometimes one decides to restore and preserve a single phase, only one of the many lives of an object. The reconstruction of an alleged original form of an object also automatically triggers the dilemma of how far to go. For example, in the case of a medieval fresco, anything painted over it is very often removed in later stages of

restoration. But who makes this choice and why?

John Ruskin said that restoration is the worst form of destruction, because it provides a false reality in comparison with the ‘true’ one, now destroyed. His words seem to be echoed in a work by contemporary artist Kader Attia, *Untitled (Sacred)* and *Untitled (Violence)*, consisting of two light-boxes with glass splinters, exhibited at the Museo Egizio. The work exposes the objects’ wounds, narrates their imperfections, highlights the fractures, and in some way enhances the fragmentation. This vision is somewhat reminiscent of the Japanese art of *kintsugi*, a recomposition of broken pots in which the fractures, and therefore the individual fragments, are highlighted and embellished with gold.

In the West, it was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that the fragment began to acquire its own aesthetic independence. Alongside the still preponderant culture of integration, considered as an irreplaceable instrument of knowledge, a new sensibility arose about the fragment as an independent element with its own value. The awareness that integrative restoration basically represents a subjective ‘interpretation’ offered by the restorer spread very slowly. In an 1884 conference held in Turin, Camillo Boito explicitly expressed this concept and added, “restore nothing; and immediately throw away, without remission, all those works that have been restored to date, whether recent or old.” Together with the culture of the fragment, the practice of derestoration began to spread, although through selective and partial choices, seeking to preserve the state of the object during one precise historical phase, while removing all subsequent restorations or additions. In fact, only one of the object’s many lives was valued.

Some fundamental issues in modern Western restoration were subsequently addressed in Cesare Brandi’s 1963 book *Teoria del restauro* (*Theory of Restoration*), in which the term ‘conservation’ was introduced for the first time. Brandi saw the restoration as based on two contrasting impulses: an aesthetic and a historical one. The restorer has the task of striking the correct balance between these two poles through a continuous choice between removing or maintaining the historical additions. It is therefore clear how big a role the subjectiveness, or ‘taste’, of the restorer played.

Brandi also devoted ample space in his book to the aesthetic treatment of lacunae. Once the practice of mimetic integrations was abandoned, the idea that an artwork could and should not be restored to its state of production grew stronger and stronger. This idea set the basis for the two fundamental points of

modern Western restoration: every intervention needs to be immediately identifiable and reversible.

At the end of the 20th century Giovanni Urbani provided a new key to interpreting Cesare Brandi's theory, and stated: "If what you fear is that the original aesthetic message is adulterated by subsequent aesthetic interference [of the restoration], are you sure that 'the signs of aging', the patinas and the fragmented surfaces, do not also fall within this kind of interference, all the more so if they are discreetly highlighted by the educated taste of the restorer?"

In this respect our Western approach contrasts sharply with what is done in East Asia, for instance, where ancient artefacts, such as temples, are completely reconstructed utilizing the finest modern materials and those most suitable for the work. In this case, the aim is to preserve the function and the knowledge of the technical and craft skills employed in its construction, more than the place of worship in its original materiality. Preserving function and technical knowledge means grasping the full meaning of an ancient artefact.

Many may remember the controversies that broke out in Italy following the restoration of the lower basilica of Assisi. The intervention was harshly criticized, especially by British restorers, for the incomplete reconstruction of Giotto's ceiling, despite the presence of repetitive decorative elements and the rich documentation of its state prior to the destruction would have allowed for a total reconstruction. The Italian restorers, who, among Europeans, have the least 'interventionist' approach, opted for a non-invasive method that enhanced the value of the original fragments rather than the ceiling as a whole. Italy stands out for this sort of 'sacralization' of the original element. The same approach applies to interventions on an ancient Egyptian coffin: available information would allow to restore part of the polychromy, but it is deliberately chosen not to.

Does such an obsession with the original, however fragmentary, jeopardize the very understanding of what we look at? How useful would it be for a non-specialist public to observe a complete reconstruction of an ancient artefact? The wider community should always be kept in mind in the case of a shared cultural heritage. As stated in Article 9 of the Italian Constitution, cultural heritage belongs to the Republic. And if part of this cultural heritage is not understood by the public, one can hardly think it is being preserved correctly. Therefore, in many cases reconstructing represents the only possible way, especially when it aims to improve communication and understanding of the heritage.

So why is there so much reluctance to intervene? Is there a sense of sacredness in what survives from the past? Why is the original preserved at the expense of all these considerations? It is the very idea of heritage that in some circles seems to be untouchable, crystallized. This can also be observed in the architecture of Italian cities, where there are very few contemporary interventions, for fear of contaminating what is left of the past.

The fundamental element of any intervention on an object or a place from the past is the awareness of its arbitrariness and subjectivity. Objects, like places, do not have a single life. They are stratified and complex, and any intervention on them will add to this complexity. The chapel of the Holy Shroud in Turin provides an interesting case: being part of a museum may disrupt its function as a place of worship, but on the other hand being framed in the context of the royal palace enhances its history as a chapel of the royal House of Savoy. We cannot let ourselves be paralyzed by the complex stratification of the past. In fact, we are very often called on to take action. The important thing is to act with awareness.

2.4 Post-colonialism

What are the challenges that current post-colonial thinking poses to archaeology and the museum institution?

Colonialism has changed its form and appearance, but it still insinuates itself almost unnoticed into the recesses of the processes of production and dissemination of knowledge about the past. It surfaces in the approach of a ruling class that lags behind the introduction of a renewed and more 'just' set of relations between European and decolonized nations, in the imbalance between resources and control that still characterizes much of the archaeological activity carried out in non-European countries, and in the resistance to change still found in many museums. In particular, museums today are blamed for failing to critically highlight and discuss colonialism in their exhibits. Very often museum narratives, especially in the context of archaeological collections, tend to focus on a chronological, functional, or thematic distribution of the objects, while their acquisition and their second 'life' in the collection are kept in the background or omitted all together. Even when a history of the museum collection is included in the visiting path, it is often limited to the sequence of the main historical or architectural stages of the institution development, rarely setting them in a broader historical or socio-political context, or to the almost hagiographic nar-

rative of the results achieved by the various directors alternating at the head of the institution.

Reconstructing our collecting practices requires a balanced and clear view. This past is deeply entwined with the intellectual and cultural development of our societies. At the same time, many of the objects that are now proudly exhibited in European museums have been acquired through acts, often violent, of colonial appropriation of other cultures' past.

Many contemporary artists from Middle-Eastern countries reflect critically on these issues and place them at the center of their work. They often see the activities of Western archaeologists in their countries still as an expression of a Western neo-colonial attitude. Archaeology, like anthropology, undoubtedly originated and developed in a historical and cultural context dominated by the imperialist expansion of European countries. Its history is therefore inextricably bound up with colonialism and its plans to conquer and control the lands and assets of other peoples. Archaeologists and anthropologists were in many cases important supporters of this project, whether they were conscious of this or not. Archaeology outside Europe certainly became complicit in the colonial project through its processes of classification and control of the past, of construction and support of unbalanced identity narratives, as well as the appropriation, both material and intellectual, of the histories of other peoples. Recognizing, explaining, and critically dismantling this past has become essential to a true renewal of the discipline. Fortunately, today strong impulses towards an archaeology that is increasingly 'postcolonial', 'indigenous', 'cosmopolitan', collaborative and attentive to the demands and needs of local communities are spreading.

In the Middle-East, many archaeological projects are now carried out by joint missions, with the equal participation of European and local archaeologists and cultural institutions. Obviously, the financial burden of these projects is borne by the Western partners, and no artifact found during the excavations can any longer be taken out of its country of origin. Although many Western universities and museums are now engaged in programs to enhance the cultural heritage of these countries, some elements of imbalance remain and perpetuate the image of archaeology as not yet emancipated from its colonial past. First, there is the economic power gap that often separates Western archaeologists from their peers in countries where the excavations are conducted. Then there are disparities in the actual participation of local archaeologists in the scientific debate.

How difficult is it for non-Western scholars to obtain a visa or find the financial means to travel? How often do European scholars make sure to invite colleagues who live, study and work in Middle Eastern countries? An imbalance clearly exists: nearly all conferences – the subjects of which are excavations and objects that come from those countries – are held in Europe or America. A similar bias is also evident in the languages used and accepted by the scientific community in most publications, and ultimately in the control of the production of knowledge, which often leaves out many of the scholars living in the countries from which data are extracted.

The criticism leveled at museums for their failure to stress the colonial past of their collections and neo-colonial bias of their narratives, often due to carelessness and negligence, has prompted various responses, especially in the last decade. The exhibition *Anche le statue muoiono* sought to bring to the surface all the problems relating to the ‘Museum container’, in which some information are typically selected at the expense of others, inevitably providing partial narratives. It is believed that a reflection on these issues can be a first step toward questioning ourselves (as well as the contribution of a museum narrative about the colonial question), so that all past and present imbalances can be highlighted.

Are Western scholars colonizing the postcolonial debate as well? This is a provocative question, but one that starts to be asked, especially within the debate in anglophone countries. We must hope for a profound self-critical reflection, look for solutions, and restructure our displays in order to make our colonial past explicit, but if we continue to do so without involving other voices besides that of the West, will we not fall once again into a new impasse?

2.5 Restitution

Can a violated, dismembered, stolen or dispersed cultural heritage be recomposed through restitution policies? What is the impact of restitution on the material culture of the past?

On November 28, 2017, during a speech in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), Emmanuel Macron declared his commitment to create within the shortest delay possible the conditions for making temporary or definitive restitutions of displaced African heritage to Africa. For the first time, a president of the French Republic took a stand on the question of African artworks and objects that are preserved in French museums, as a result of more or less legitimate purchases

or veritable predatory acts during the colonial era. Macron's position was in absolute contrast with previous official resolutions, which had promptly rejected the requests of restitution made by some African countries. Macron's statement raised some concern and reignited a complex and long-running debate on the relations between colonial powers and their former colonies, questioning at the same time the role of museums as active subjects within colonial dynamics.

On March 22, 2018, the Elysée, following up on the previous year's statement, commissioned a full report on the matter to two academics, the French Bénédicte Savoy and the Senegalese Felwine Sarr. The 232 pages of the report, devoted essentially to the relations between France and Sub-Saharan African countries (the cases of Algeria and Egypt are excluded as they refer to very different legislative frameworks), present an overview of the current situation and suggest 'responding favorably to the requests for restitution'.

However, the logic of the report drafted by the two experts on behalf of the French government raises a series of difficult questions and challenges. If one wanted to act in strict accordance with the recommendations, thousands of works preserved in French museums, as well as others throughout Europe and much of north America, could be affected by these returns in case the countries or communities of origin were to request them. The regulatory framework which the countries requesting the repatriation of the artworks refer to is mainly based on treaties signed at the end of Second World War. They include the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, which establishes the protection of art-historical heritage in case of armed conflicts and territorial occupations, and invites the signatories to prohibit looting of such works by an occupying power. The subsequent 1970 UNESCO Convention was then designed to prevent the illegal import, export, and transfer of ownership of cultural artefacts. It is rather difficult to imagine the scientific, cultural and political consequences of a possible policy of generalised returns, and the Savoy-Sarr report remains silent about this point. Issues raised by historians, art historians, museum curators, etc. include for instance concerns about who determines what and how much material should be returned? A generalised restitution policy might also affect the debate on the Parthenon Marbles, which, now on display at the British Museum in London, were removed, allegedly with Ottoman permission, and taken from Greece to Britain by Lord Elgin.

The 2019 General Conference of the International Council of Museums (ICOM)

in Kyoto, Japan, also addressed the issue, bringing out its problematic nature. Representatives of museums around the world agreed on one point: the need to enhance the value of communities and foster a proactive approach against contemporary neocolonialism. With this in mind, the restitutions should not only involve the repatriation of some artworks to their countries of origin, but also strengthen the communities to which such objects are returned. According to the vice-president of the Kolkata Centre for Creativity, in India, the recovered artifacts could “revive art forms, cultural production and the entrepreneurial spirit in previously colonized countries.” On the other hand, when the conditions for repatriation are not met, or the option of non-restitution is chosen, the museums that currently host the contested collections or items should reassess their approach to this sensitive issue: instead of presenting a single view of history, for instance, widening the perspective and embracing multiple narratives, including those of the communities of origin of the collections.

A concept that the *Anche le statue muoiono* exhibition focused on was that of the life of objects. As already mentioned, in a museum an object enters a new phase of its history, a new part of its life. In the case of objects that have been kept in museums for centuries, it is often difficult to understand what their ‘original nature’ was and to decide whether this or their subsequent museum life should be favored and presented. With this in mind, it is not so paradoxical to ask whether the strongest sense of ‘Italianity’ would be conjured by a *Mona Lisa* displayed in the Louvre or by a *Mona Lisa* displayed in an Italian museum. When speaking about restitutions, one implicitly denies the second or third life of an object, privileging its (often presumed) original function and context. The Museo Egizio in Turin is paradigmatic in this respect, given the provenance of its objects, which originated in a culturally and geographically distant Egypt. And yet this museum has slowly become, during the last two hundred years, an integral part of the identity of the people of Turin and Italy as well. It is part of the city life and tells part of its history: the Savoy family’s interest in a distant past, the desire to legitimize itself through the search for mythical origins. When an object is taken away from its context of origin it is certainly decontextualized, but at the same time it starts a second life, and within the new context it can become an element of the identity of a different community.

Walid Raad’s work, which was displayed at the Museo Egizio, brings out the contradiction that emerges between the theme of appropriation, more or less

historically placed, and the concept of restitution. This is done from a particular viewpoint: the opening of a large international museum, the Louvre Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates. It is an encyclopedic museum in full Western style, bearing in itself a narrative that aims to embrace all civilizations and eras, and that relates to its public with a certain authority on those narratives, in an educational way. Specifically, the artist worked on the Islamic art collections in the Louvre that were later meant to become part of the new museum. Along with the objects, the museum also exported the Western narrative that had been superimposed on them. This contradiction emerges from his work through the combination of multiple objects and overlying colour patterns into a single image, in which the original explanatory captions are also overlapping and become unreadable. What the artist wants to represent is not the object, but the product of the encounter that somehow distorted it, creating a new stratification, a new object.

Another work displayed at the Museo Egizio enables us to further investigate the complex theme of restitution. The works by Liz Glynn are part of the series *Surrogate Objects for the Metropolitan* (2011). They are faithful replicas of some ancient artifacts that the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York returned to Italy between 2006 and 2010, at the end of a long dispute with the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage. The so-called ‘Morgantina Treasure’ is a set of 16 silver-gilt objects, comprising plates, bowls, and other ritual vessels dating from the 3rd century BCE, which were found during illegal excavations in the early 1980s at the archaeological site of Morgantina, near Aidone, in the Sicilian province of Enna. Archaeological research by an American mission conducted in the late 1990s on the presumed site from which the objects were smuggled out, made it possible to establish that the cache of silverware was probably hidden around 211 BCE, when the inhabitants of the city had to abandon it following the Roman conquest of this region at the end of the Second Punic War. In 1987 scholars identified the Morgantina treasure, which was also briefly described in some ancient sources, with the objects exhibited in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which had been bought on the Swiss antiquity market just a few years after they had been stolen.

In keeping with Liz Glynn’s typical work method, in *Surrogate Objects for the Metropolitan* the replicas of the original ancient objects are made out of waste and natural materials. Thus, they acquire the value of ideal placeholders for lost, destroyed, or decontextualized artifacts in museum ‘non-places’, prompting crit-

ical reflection on the frailty of cultural heritage and the tyranny of the present over the past. In Glynn's work, focus is not so much on ancient objects and their historical past, but on the theme of cultural appropriation, expressed through the acquisition and the physical and conceptual eradication of a find from its context. Her work particularly targets those museums that, in order to expand and enrich their collections, fail to accurately verify the origin of their objects, thus indirectly feeding the illegal antiquities market.

It remains clear that the theme of restitution – investigated by artists, discussed by politicians, and studied by museum curators – raises endless questions, while offering very few answers. No conclusive argument can be offered, and at the moment no conceptual, historical or legal frameworks are available to settle the question. However, it is essential to take into account the complex biography of every single object, always bearing in mind that there are legal factors that cannot be ignored.

3. CONCLUSION

These are just some of the considerations raised during the round table of the exhibition curators, which should in any case be connected with what was said at the start of this adventure, in the texts created for the exhibition catalogue. One should not separate the moment of the initial production of the catalogue, that of the exhibition at its three venues, seen and questioned by the public, and that of the conference, during which the main themes of the exhibition – including the destruction of heritage and the role of museums – were addressed again by specialists from different viewpoints.

It is hoped that this round table does not mark the end of this experience, but rather just one stage of an ongoing reflection, which will keep the dialogue extending well beyond the closing of an exhibition or the publication of the present book.

MUSLIM, CHRISTIAN OR BRITISH? ICONOCLASM UNDER EVERY SKY*

Salvatore Settis

Ut pictura poësis (poetry is like painting): very few sayings have been quoted so often or the subject of so much commentary in the European cultural tradition as these famous words from Horace's *Ars Poetica*. And yet, while this declaration of principle was passing through the centuries, its most radical criticism was articulated with a singular effectiveness by a "homo sanza lettere", a man without a literary training: Leonardo. In a famous page of his notes *On Painting*, he contrasts poetry and painting. First he suggests measuring the merits of each of the arts through a comparison between "the fury of a battle" painted by a "good painter" compared to "another one written by the poet". Then, Leonardo says brusquely: "Put the name of God in writing in one place, and put his figure by it for comparison. You will see which is more revered". The text makes it clear that the image always wins over the word, even when it comes to representing the divine, because, thanks to its immediate emotional power, it is better able to arouse in the observer an inner awe that is translated into visible acts of devotion.

The clear antinomy between word and image in the representation of the divine is based on the assumption that the image is "material", the word not; but this assumption is itself a cultural formation that should be analysed as such. The written word also has its own materiality, whose elements are the writing support, the instrument and the writing aids (from the ink to the chisel), the language and the writing system, and finally the gesture of writing itself. Even in the case of oral tradition, the material dimension is not absent, nor can it ever be: the chain of transmission from generation to generation necessarily passes through people and voices. If it is true that word and image are radically dissimilar modes of quotation, representation or evocation of the divine, their diversity cannot consist in the presence or absence of a material component, but in the distinction of different levels of materiality. It can be assumed that these levels

* An expanded version of this text (with footnotes) will be published by the British Museum as Chapter 1 of the book *Imagining the Divine*, due Spring, 2021.

are culturally determined, and that consequently the word-image opposition (or rather their nature or function with respect to the divine) is structured variously within “interpretive communities” (in Stanley Fish’s phraseology) historically differentiated in relation to multiple frames of reference.

Poised between the opposite extremes of a total absence from the perceptible sphere and an impossible real presence within a visible and tangible space or object, the epiphanies of the divine have given artists, theologians and the communities of the faithful the opportunity to explore an inexhaustible range of possibilities, to be measured with the double standard of the artistic tradition and their operational effectiveness or agency. For this reason the discourse about the divine in the space of ritual, if we wish to interpret it between the absence and presence of a dimension that is material in various degrees, can also be understood as a mediation between presence and absence, or as an interplay of substitutions, subtractions, additions and changes made depending on the various cultures, religions and rituals. An eloquent example can be found in the “numismatic dialogue” at a distance between the Roman Emperor of the East Justinian II (685-695 and 704-711 CE) and the Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (646-705 CE), who built the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. This “dialogue” begins with gold coins (*solidi*) which show on the recto the emperor Heraclius with his two sons (all crowned and holding a globe surmounted by the cross), with on the verso the cross set on a flight of steps. Inspired by these Byzantine coins, Abd al-Malik struck coins bearing the same three figures on the front, but without crowns or crosses on the globes, and on the verso he replaced the cross with the sceptre of the Prophet. Justinian II “replied” by replacing the imperial image on the recto with that of Christ, with the Latin inscription *Rex Regnantium*, and placing himself on the verso, beside the cross, with the inscription *Servus Christi*. Immediately after this Abd al-Malik issued a gold dinar, which preserves the sceptre of the Prophet on a pedestal on the verso, but on the recto has a figure armed with a sword, perhaps the caliph himself. Finally, the caliph decided to forego all images. On his coins he placed only inscriptions, with texts from the Koran. To reach a safe haven, remote from the dangers of idolatry that every image necessarily evoked, Abd al-Malik therefore came to completely replace the images on the Byzantine coinage with Koranic writings, though in the tiny space of the coin the materiality of the writing it is hardly much less than that of the figures **[Fig. 1]**. We should note two essential points: first of all, this



Fig. 1 Gold coins:

- A) Solidus of the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (629-641)
- B) Dinar of the Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik (c. 690)
- C) Solidus of the Byzantine emperor Justinian II (692-695)
- D) Dinar of the Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik (c. 695)
- E) Dinar of the Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik (about 696-697)

sort of “iconic cleansing”, which eliminates images by replacing them with Koranic writings, came about by degrees, through a process of progressive removal of iconographic elements. Furthermore, in this dialogue at a distance between two sovereigns of different religions, the merely textual presence of the divine (in Damascus) necessarily relates to the horizon of images of the rival Christian culture of Byzantium. The negation of images “responds” to their exaltation; the absence of images requires and evokes their presence.

But the practice in which the convergence between various cultures and religions is more evident is also the most radical: the destruction of the divine images or iconoclasm. This was practised at different times and in different ways by the three religions of the Book (Jews, Christians, Muslims). We cannot speak of this theme today without feeling it to be timely, given that our age is experiencing a new wave of iconoclasm, which began in 2001 with the demolition of the two giant Buddhas of Bamiyan (ca. 550-615 CE), done as complying with the most rigorous Islamic orthodoxy. To legitimise the destructive gesture, a historical precedent was then invoked: that of Mahmud of Ghazna, who reigned over an immense region extending from India to Persia between 998 and 1030. He is still seen today as an archetypal example of an irreducible enemy of idols. We know, however, that coexistence with the two giants of Bamiyan was peacefully accepted for centuries, starting with the very learned al-Biruni, who wrote a (lost) book about those statues while at the court of Mahmud of Ghazna. Closer to our own time, Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890-1988), the “Muslim Gandhi”, leader of the movement for the independence of the Pashtuns (the ethnic group to which the mullah Muhammad Omar, who ordered the destruction of the Buddhas, also belonged), considered those statues highly representative of the cultural tradition of his people as “incomparable examples of perfection in the art of sculpture”.

Starting from the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, the American scholar Barry Floyd proposed a new approach to iconoclasm as practised in the Islamic context, in particular distinguishing between “instrumental iconoclasm”, in which a specific action is performed with a view to a superior end, and “expressive iconoclasm”, in which the destructive act itself contains and exhausts within itself the desire to express a religious conviction or one’s own feeling. The immediately political relevance of the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas is evident from the frequent comparison between this episode and the destruc-

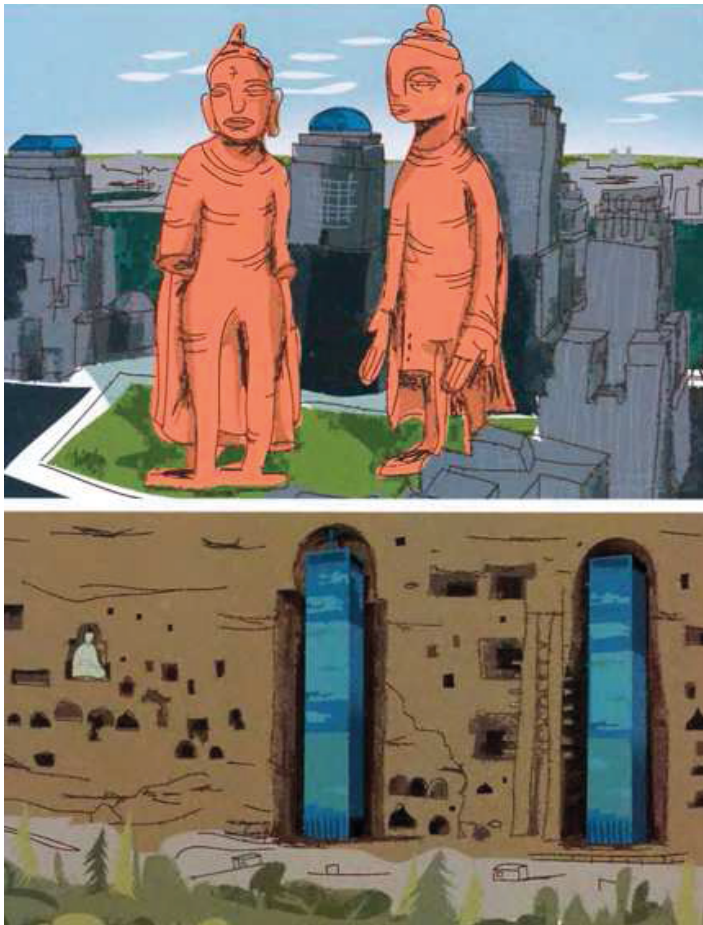


Fig. 2 Otto J. Seibold, © “New Yorker” – The Bamiyan Buddhas reconstructed on a 1:1 scale at Ground Zero, New York; in the Bamiyan valley, the niches filled with scaled-down copies of the Twin Towers.

tion of the Twin Towers exactly six months later. An icastic drawing by Otto J. Seibold in the “New Yorker” imagines the Buddhas rebuilt on a scale of 1:1 in New York in the place of the Towers, and the niches at Bamiyan filled with two scaled-down copies of the Towers as refugee housing [Fig. 2].

It is these recent experiences, from Bamiyan to Palmyra, that have given rise to the frequent prejudice that iconoclasm is exclusive to Islam, or at most a passing phase of the religious history of Byzantium. This is not the case. We need only remember Claudius, bishop of Turin from 816 to 828, an irreducible practitioner of militant iconoclasm, so much so that according to his contemporary Jonas of Orléans, “burning with boundless and unrestrained zeal, he devastated and destroyed in all the churches of the diocese not only the paintings of sacred history, but even all the crosses”. But we can quote Claudius of Turin himself, who condemned religious images by resorting to the harshest language and the most violent sarcasm:



Fig. 3 Destruction of images of Catholic worship in England, c. 1550 (From: John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments of These Latter and Perillous Days*, second edition, 1570).

Here all the churches are full of sordid, cursed and lying images, yet all worship them. So I am destroying them one by one alone, with my own hands, to combat superstition and heresy. [...] Christ was on the cross for six hours, and should we venerate all crosses? Should we not then also venerate manglers, since he was in a manger, boats because he was often in a boat, asses because he entered Jerusalem on an ass, briars because of the crown of thorns, spears because of the spear that pierced his side?

No less active was Protestant iconoclasm, which was launched in Zurich in 1523 and then spread to all the countries north of the Alps. Among the examples of British iconoclasm [Fig. 3], retraced a few years ago by an exhibition in London, was the Puritan William Dowsing, a scrupulous bureaucrat of these destructions, who in his diary notes one by one the devastation committed in 245 English parish churches in 1643-44, as in this diary note:

[Haverhill, Suffolk, 6 January 1644]

We brake down about a hundred superstitious pictures and seven fryers hugging a nun; and the picture of God and Christ; and divers others very

superstitious. And 200 had been broke down afore I came. We took away two popish inscriptions with Ora pro nobis; and we beat down a great stoning cross on the top of the church.

As for the Buddhas of Bamiyan, we know that at some unspecified date their faces had been cut off, as had their hands. Strange as it may seem, these destructive acts met with the approval of Goethe. In the *West-Eastern Divan* (1819) he rages against the Buddhas of Bamiyan, “crazy idols erected and worshiped on a gigantic scale”; and praises without reservations Mahmud of Ghazna: “we must approve the zeal of this destroyer of idols, and in him we must deeply admire the founder of Persian poetry and the highest culture”. So we are compelled to correct the too sharp contrast between “us” as Western custodians of historical memory and “them”, the intolerant and destructive Muslims. Iconoclastic movements, insurgencies, gestures or thoughts can break out anywhere from multiple causes, and are not “innate” or acts peculiar to a single culture. Between the 9th and 19th centuries, Claudius of Turin and Goethe of Weimar show that some inclination to iconoclasm can also be found among “us”. These examples, and even more those (extraordinarily instructive because they are better documented) of our own time, show that iconoclasm, under every sky and in every age, takes on its full meaning only to the extent that it is discussed, staged, recorded. Whoever wants to show that the divine is “immaterial” must necessarily do so through “material” acts. The recent destructions (for example at Palmyra), performed and exhibited in the name of a total war against images, also show this. And yet those who destroy those images of ancient gods and human beings immediately convey the images of destruction with every means: the depraved idolatry of the ancients is thus replaced by an iconisation of the self that requires intense use of the media (45,000 Twitter accounts spread the images of destruction by ISIS).

NINEVEH IS DEAD. LONG LIVE BABYLON!*

Simonetta Graziani

The title I gave to my paper is a paraphrase of the well-known formula announcing the death of a king and the ascending of his successor to the throne.

I chose it because it perfectly fits my topic: the rising of the Neo-Babylonian empire¹ from the ashes of the Neo-Assyrian one, and the long life of Babylonian culture, tradition and memory, from the antiquity to the modern time, which was the important historical legacy of the last independent short period of Mesopotamian history, for better or for worse.

1. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

1.1 The fall of Assyria

The Neo-Assyrian empire, the most powerful one the ancient Near East had ever known until then, collapsed in 612 BCE, destroyed by a joint force of Babylonians and Medes. The sudden downfall of Assyria was a result of manifold reasons: the kings' policies, such as the practice of mass deportation of conquered populations, the need of frequent military campaigns to impose and maintain their dominion over the subdued territories, and demographic and climatic factors, as it has been recently suggested.²

* I am deeply indebted to the organizers, and especially to my dear friend Stefano de Martino, for inviting me to the very stimulating Turin conference devoted to such a momentous topic. This paper is the revised version of the speech I gave at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo on May 28th. I greatly benefited of the many comments and stimuli I received by all the other speakers.

¹ For the notion of 'empire' in the Ancient Near East see Liverani, "Imperialism", in: S. Pollock and R. Bernbeck (eds.), *Archaeologies of the Middle East: Critical Perspectives*, 2005, pp. 223-243; Gehler, Rollinger (eds.), *Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte*, 2014, and more recently Liverani, *Assiria. La preistoria dell'imperialismo*, 2017.

² Schneider, Selim, "No harvest was reaped", in: *Climatic Change*, 2014.

1.2 The Neo-Babylonian Empire (626–539 BCE)

The long-lasting Assyrian domination³ and the efforts, often brutal, to maintain control over Babylonia, which was always reluctant to accept foreign rule, generated strong resistance for more than two centuries and reached its climax when Nabopolassar, a Chaldean leader, made an alliance with Cyaxares, king of the Medes. They successfully launched attacks against the Assyrian cities and destroyed the imperial capital Nineveh in 612, thus bringing the Assyrian power to an end.⁴

As M. Jursa has significantly pointed out “The existence of the Neo-Babylonian empire cannot be disconnected from the vicissitudes of Assyrian rule over Babylonia and from the fate of the Assyrian empire in general”.⁵ Shortly after the fall of Assyria, the Babylonians filled the void left by their oppressors and exercised their imperialist control over much of the Near East, up to the Mediterranean shores, for ca. 70 years.

1.3 The Chaldean Dynasty⁶

The Babylonian dynasty was founded by Nabopolassar (626–605 BCE), who was probably the Assyrian governor of the southern city of Uruk. In his celebrative inscriptions he strongly claims to have freed Babylonia from the Assyrian yoke:

*The Assyrian, who had, because of the wrath of gods, ruled the land of Akkad and who had oppressed the people of the land with his heavy yoke – I, the weak, the powerless, who constantly seek after the Lord of Lords, with the might of Nabû and Marduk, my lords, I chased them (the Assyrians) out of the land of Akkad and caused (the Babylonians) to throw off their yoke.*⁷

³ History of Babylonia during the Assyrian domination in Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire. Babylonian Society and Politics*, 746–626 B.C., 1984, and Frame, *Babylonia 689–627 BC. A Political History*, 2007.

⁴ Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East*, c. 3000–330 BC., 1995, p. 541: “the Assyrian heartland had lost any real significance by the end of the seventh century”.

⁵ Jursa, “The Neo-Babylonian Empire”, in: M. Gehler and R. Rollinger (eds.), *Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte*, 2014, p. 125.

⁶ For a brief survey of Neo-Babylonian history see Graziani, “L’età neo-babilonese”, in: A. Barbero and S. De Martino (eds.), *Storia d’Europa e del Mediterraneo*, vol. II, 2006, pp. 527–566. And more recently Jursa, “The Neo-Babylonian Empire”, in M. Gehler and R. Rollinger (eds.), *Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte*, 2014.

⁷ Nabopolassar Cylinder: Al-Rawi, “Nabopolassar’s Restoration Work on the Wall ‘Imgur-Enlil’ at Babylon”, *Iraq* 47, 1985, I 8–33, II 1–5.

His son and successor, Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 BCE), extended and secured Babylonian dominion over much of the former Assyrian territory, including Syria and the Levant: Damascus, Tyre, and Jerusalem were conquered and the Egyptians defeated at Carchemish.⁸ The Babylonian empire was thus the heir to the Assyrian empire.

Under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar the economy of Babylonia had an exceptional flourishing⁹ due to the enormous amount of tributes and booty flowing from the conquered land and invested by the government in the colossal project of reconstructing the entire region, prostrated by the long Assyrian domination: all the major cities were affected by the rebuilding of city walls and temples, as well as the countryside where works of restoring hydraulic infrastructure to relaunch agriculture were undertaken.

The efforts of the king were especially devoted to the rebuilding of the capital, Babylon, the “holy city”,¹⁰ which had been severely destroyed by Sennacherib who had sacked and demolished the city and its temples in 689 BCE, “in an act of unprecedented violence”,¹¹ as the king himself boasts in his inscriptions:

I destroyed, devastated, (and) burned with fire the city, and (its) buildings, from its foundations to its crenellations. I removed the brick(s) and earth, as much as there was, from the (inner) wall and outer wall, the temples, (and) the ziggurat, (and) I threw (it) into the Arahtu river. I dug canals into the center of that city and (thus) leveled their site with water. I destroyed the outline of its foundations and (thereby) made its destruction surpass that of the Deluge. So that in the future, the site of that city and (its) temples will be unrecognizable, I dissolved it (Babylon) in water and annihilated (it), (making it) like a meadow.¹²

Nebuchadnezzar made Babylon the largest city of the ancient Near East, cel-

⁸ Nebuchadnezzar Chronicle 21946: Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 2004, pp. 226–231.

⁹ Jursa, *Aspects of the Economic History of Babylonia in the First Millennium BC.*, 2010.

¹⁰ Unger, *Babylon*, 1931; Graziani, “Babylon caput mundi”, in: S. de Martino and C. Lippolis (eds.), *Mesopotamia XLVI* (2011).

¹¹ Jursa, “The Neo-Babylonian Empire”, in: M. Gehler and R. Rollinger (eds.), *Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte*, 2014, p. 123.

¹² Grayson, Novotny, *The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704–681 B.C.). Part 2*, 2014, pp. 316–317, 50b–54a.

ebredated in biblical and classical sources, which became the paradigm of the gigantic oriental city in Western tradition.¹³

The last Neo-Babylonian king, Nabonidus (555–539 BCE),¹⁴ was not of royal blood. Born in Assyria during the reign of Ashurbanipal, he was an usurper, brought to the throne by a conspiracy:

*[...] They brought me to the Palace and all of them prostrated themselves at my feets and kissed them. They kept praising my kingship.*¹⁵

Nabonidus made military campaigns in the West, i.e. present day Jordan and Northern Arabia,¹⁶ and he spent ten years in Tayma', an oasis in Northern Arabia where he built fortification walls, hydraulic structures and a palace "like the Palace of Babylon" as reported by the so called *Verse Account*,¹⁷ a pro-Persian and anti-Nabonidus text written shortly after the Persian conquest.¹⁸ The choice to move the capital in such a territory was an attempt to establish Babylonian control over the caravan commercial route stretching from Southern Arabia to the

¹³ Liverani, *Immaginare Babele. Due secoli di studi sulla città orientale antica*, 2013. For the "image of the city" and a semiotic reading of 6th century BCE Babylon, see van de Mieroop, "Reading Babylon", *American Journal of Archaeology* 107 (2003), pp. 257-275; more recently, Graf, "Visual Culture", in: A. Gunter (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Near Eastern Art*, 2019, pp. 129-151. For the importance of Babylonia in Near East after the fall of Assyria in the late 7th and the 6th centuries BCE and its demographic and economic expansion see Jursa 2014, p. 135.

¹⁴ For the reconstruction of the controversial reign of Nabonidus on the base of a reassessment of the chronology of his inscriptions and the data of the archival texts dated to him see the invaluable Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon 556–539 B.C.*, 1989. The whole corpus of Nabonidus' inscriptions and the pro-Persian propaganda texts are published in Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon*, 2001.

¹⁵ Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon 556–539 B.C.*, 1989, p. 88, V, 1-7; see now Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon*, 2001, pp. 517-518.

¹⁶ Da Riva, "A Lion in the Cedar Forest", in: J. Vidal (ed.), *Studies on War in the Ancient Near East*, 2010; Da Riva, *The Twin Inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar at Brisa*, 2012; Da Riva, "Neo-Babylonian Monuments at Shir es-Sanam and Wadi es-Saba (North Lebanon)", *WZKM* 103 (2013), pp. 87-100; Da Riva, "Assyrians and Assyrian Influence in Babylonia", in: S. Gaspa, A. Greco et. al. (eds.), *From Source to History*, 2015, pp. 99-125; Joannès, "Un relief inscrit de Nabonide à Padakka/Hayit", *NABU* 2014/2, p. 51; Hausleiter, Schaudig, "Nabonidus at al-Hayit/Padakku", *NABU* 2014/3, p. 70, and Hausleiter, Schaudig, "A New Rock Relief with Cuneiform Inscription of King Nabonidus from Al-Hā'it", *ATLAL* (forthcoming). For Adummatu to be identified with modern Dumat al-Jandal see Loreto, "The Role of Dūmat al-Jandal in Ancient North Arabian Routes from Pre-History to Historical Periods", in: M. Luciani (ed.), *The Archaeology of North Arabia*, 2016, pp. 299-316; Loreto, *Alle origini degli Arabi*, 2017; Loreto, "Results from the 2009–2016 Excavation Seasons in the Historical Centre of Dūmat al-Jandal, Ancient Adummatu", in: J.J. van Rensburg, H. Munt et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies*, 2018, pp. 151-164.

¹⁷ II, 28'-29'. See now Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon*, 2001, p. 568.

¹⁸ Kuhrt, "Nabonidus and the Babylonian Priesthood", in: M. Beard and J. North (eds.), *Pagan Priests*, 1990, pp. 119-155.

Mediterranean. Ten years later Nabonidus came back to Babylon (543) and in 539 he was defeated in a battle near Opis by the Persian army.¹⁹

On march 29th Cyrus II king of Persia (559-530 BCE) entered Babylon and took the traditional Mesopotamian title “King of Babylon, King of the Lands”.²⁰

“Babylonia was integrated into the Persian empire which, after defeating the Medes and Lydia, had in a short period of time become the most powerful state in the Near East and was on its way to ‘world’ dominion”.²¹

Notwithstanding the loss of political independence after millennia of self-government, administration and daily life did not change in Achaemenid Babylonia: the most part of high officials and priests of the principal cities and temples retained their position at least during the reign of Cyrus.²²

1.4 Persians and Greeks

The Persian conquest of Babylonia in 539 BCE did not diminish Babylon’s political importance: the Achaemenid kings acknowledged the prestige of the ancient city and its strategic position, and made Babylon one of the many capitals of their empire stretching from Central Asia to Egypt.

The Cyrus Cylinder,²³ written shortly after the conquest,²⁴ clearly shows that the Achaemenid king aims at presenting himself as the legitimate king of Babylonia, commanded by Marduk to substitute the sacrilegious king Nabonidus and restore the correct traditional cults of the great Babylonian gods.

I returned the gods to their cities, from [Babylon] to Ashur and Susa, including Akkad, Ešnunna, Zaban, Meturan, Dēr at the border to the land of the Gutians,

¹⁹ For a synthesis of the reasons of the sudden collapse of Babylonian empire see Jursa, “The Transition of Babylonia from the Neo-Babylonian Empire to Achaemenid Rule”, in: H. Crawford (ed.), *Regime Change in the Ancient Near East and Egypt*, 2007, pp. 74-77.

²⁰ Verse Account VI 25'-28, Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon*, 2001, p. 572.

²¹ Jursa, “The Neo-Babylonian Empire”, in: M. Gehler and R. Rollinger (eds.), *Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte*, 2014, p. 125.

²² Jursa, “The Transition of Babylonia from the Neo-Babylonian Empire to Achaemenid Rule”, in: H. Crawford (ed.), *Regime Change in the Ancient Near East and Egypt*, 2007.

²³ Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon*, 2001, pp. 550-556, with previous bibliography.

²⁴ “The Cyrus Cylinder probably represents a consensus opinion within literate Babylonian society at the time, is that Marduk summoned Cyrus from abroad to dispel the incompetent indigenous king, Nabonidus, and set things straight”: Waerzegger, “Babylonian Kingship in the Persian Period: Performance and Reception”, in: J. Stökl and C. Waerzeggers (eds.), *Exile and Return*, 2015, p. 184.

*all the cities in the transtigridian regions, the old cultic centres which had been neglected for a long time.*²⁵

The Babylonian kingship was thus inherited by the Achaemenid kings and survived into the Persian Period²⁶ as well as under the Macedonian rulers who in the same way acted according to the Babylonian kingship tradition.²⁷ “The conception of Babylon as axis of the world survived long after the Assyrian’s counter-effort in Ashur. The idea of Babylon as axis of the world was certainly the reason that Xerxes had Esagil razed to the ground, but it was probably also the reason why Alexander intended to build it again in order to erect the center of his world-empire here – in the old Babylonian spirit – at the «center of the world»”.²⁸

Alexander the Great chose Babylon to live in, and in Babylon he passed away in 323 BCE as an astronomical diary informs us.²⁹ Antiochus I Soter (280–262 BCE) wrote the last Babylonian inscription known to us using the standard formulas and titles of Babylonian kings³⁰ and Antiochus III wore the purple cloak of Nebuchadnezzar II during a religious ceremony performed in Esagila in 187 BCE, as recorded in another astronomical diary.³¹

Babylon remained an important urban and especially religious center in the Seleucid period,³² despite the foundation of a new capital, Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, in 300 BCE, as well as the major temple complex of the region, such as the Bīt Reš and the Ešgal at Uruk, which continued to exist and flourish, well into the Parthian period.

²⁵ Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon*, 2001, 553, ll. 30-32.

²⁶ For the Assyro-Babylonian heritage in the structures of the Achaemenid Empire see Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander. A History of the Persian Empire*, 2002, p. 3.

²⁷ Kuhrt, in: A. Kuhrt, S. Sherwin-White (eds.), *Hellenism in the East*, 1987.

²⁸ Maul, “The Ancient Middle Eastern Capital City”, 1997.

²⁹ Sachs, Hunger, *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylon*, vol. 1, 1988: pp. 204-207 and pl. 34. See also Q. Curtius Rufus, *Historiae Alexandri Magni*, X, 5: 1.

³⁰ Stol, van der Spek, “The Cylinder of Antiochus I from the Ezida temple in Borsippa (BM 36277)”, 2008, and Stevens, “The Antiochus Cylinder, Babylonian Scholarship and Seleucid Imperial Ideology”, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 134 (2014), pp. 66-88.

³¹ Sachs, Hunger, *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylon*, 1989, vol. 2, pp. 332-333.

³² For the royal involvement in temple building and the cults of many Babylonian gods which spread far beyond Babylonia – Syria, Egypt, Greece, Iran and Bactria – during the Greek domination, see Baker, “The Image of the City in Hellenistic Babylonia”, in: E. Stavrianopoulou (ed.), *Shifting Social Imaginaries in the Hellenistic Period*, 2013, pp. 51-66.

When Babylonia became marginalized between Rome and Persia, the old cities become deserted:

*Babylon, Chaldaicarum gentium caput, diu summam claritatem inter urbes obtinuit toto orbe, propter quod reliqua pars Mesopotamiae Assyriaeque Babylonia appellata est, amplexa muris ducenos pedes altis, quinquagenos latis, in singulos pedes ternis digitis mensura ampliore quam nostra, interfluo Euphrate, mirabili opere utroque. Durat adhuc ibi Iovis Beli templum; inventor hic fuit sideralis scientiae. Cetero ad solitudinem rediit exhausta vicinitate Seleucia.*³³

2. THE NEO-BABYLONIAN KINGSHIP: TRADITION VS. INNOVATION

2.1 Mesopotamian royal ideology

According to the Mesopotamian royal ideology, “kingship came down from heaven” and was therefore a divinely decreed institution.

The notion that kings were chosen for their office by the gods is expressed in the royal inscriptions of all historical periods. Mesopotamian kings since the Early Dynastic period were keen to transmit records of their achievements for posterity and so did the Neo-Babylonian kings.

2.2 Neo-Babylonian Kingship

Neo-Babylonian kingship appears as a perfect synthesis of tradition and innovation, the latter being the unavoidable result of new political trends and of the Assyrian influence.³⁴

Notwithstanding the fact that they were actually the heirs of Neo-Assyrian kings – “an incidental heir”, in the words of M. Jursa³⁵ – Neo-Babylonian royal propaganda appears at first sight totally different from the Assyrian one: the cel-

³³ Plinius, *Nat. Hist.* VI, XXX, pp. 121-122.

³⁴ On Assyrians and Assyrian influence in Babylonia especially on the political and ideological structures of the Neo-Babylonian empire see the seminal study of Da Riva, “Assyrians and Assyrian Influence in Babylonia”, in: S. Gaspa, A. Greco et al. (eds.), *From Source to History*, 2014.

³⁵ Jursa, “The Neo-Babylonian Empire”, in: M. Gehler and R. Rollinger (eds.), *Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte*, 2014, p. 140.

celebration of the king did not focus on the might and invincibility of the sovereign, nor on his military conquest. Royal self-representation was primarily religious, reflecting the need to establish the kings' legitimacy by highlighting their bond with their predecessors, and the principal concern and duty of the Neo-Babylonian king, which were what Leo Oppenheim named "the care and feeding of the gods". Kings' epithets stress on their pious devotion and the more than 150 Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions,³⁶ as sober as the Assyrian ones were bombastic and self-celebrative, concentrate on the kings' monumental architectural projects, comprising palaces, temples and ziggurats, city walls, processional streets, hydraulic infrastructures, and defensive structures. Record of the military campaigns of the king are instead referred to the Chronicles which report the events without any emphasis, even though the Babylonian king was as much a destroyer as the Assyrian king had been and made devastation in the conquered land.³⁷ Even the two Babylonian sieges of Jerusalem, the final conquest of the city, the destruction of the temple and the deportation of the king, the court and a large part of its inhabitants to Babylonia, which were so crucial events in Jewish history, significantly marking the Jewish tradition and deeply affecting the Western cultural heritage, in the perception of the Babylonians were not very significant because they were part of the war routine.

The king's celebration was however only apparently modest: in reading Neo-Babylonian inscriptions we have to keep in mind the communicative conventions in use – the literary models are very rigid and based on previous inscriptions – and the ideological audience to which they address, that is the gods and future kings. To quote M. Liverani: "The very same activity of building temples and concentrating wealth in their furnishing is a metapolitical activity: it is devoted not to the direct care of the country and people, but to the care of the gods who are ideologically considered to be responsible for the care of country and people".³⁸

³⁶ Da Riva, *The Neo-Babylonian Royal Inscriptions*, 2008.

³⁷ "Archaeological evidence from Palestine suggests widespread (but not universal) destruction and demographic decline in the area, presumably owing to the destructive activities of Babylonian armies": Jursa, "The Neo-Babylonian Empire", in: M. Gehler and R. Rollinger (eds.), *Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte*, 2014, p. 138. For the imperial control in the West see Vanderhoof, "Babylonian Strategies of Imperial Control in the West", in: O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, 2003; for the effects of Babylonian imperialism outside Babylonia itself see Baker, "The Neo-Babylonian Empire", in: D.T. Potts (ed.), *A Companion to the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East*, 2012, p. 927.

³⁸ Liverani, "The Deeds of Ancient Mesopotamian Kings", in: J. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, 1995, p. 2360.

The military conquest and the mass deportation of the conquered land, which were traditionally the routine of the war, were certainly means of procuring manpower for reconstructing the country, dramatically impoverished because of the long Assyrian domination;³⁹ however, in Babylonian ideology conquered people become part of an *oykuméne* in which winners and defeated are all integrated:

I let the inhabitants of Lebanon lie in safe pastures, I did not allow anyone to frighten them.

So that nobody should oppress [them], I have [put] an eternal image of my royal person [...]

[I gathered?] the wi[despread] people in the whole inha[bited] world.⁴⁰

“Peace and availability of goods make people happy”.⁴¹

2.2.1 The king's representation

According to the traditional Babylonian kingship ideology conveyed by the royal inscriptions, the pious Neo-Babylonian king is portrayed worshipping the gods on the royal stelae located in the temples.⁴² On the other hand, the legacy of Assyria is undeniable on the rock reliefs in the western part of the empire where the Neo-Babylonian kings are represented according to the Assyrian iconographic models. Located in highly strategic settings,⁴³ rock reliefs and inscriptions of

³⁹ Zadok, “The Representation of Foreigners in Neo- and Late-Babylonian Legal Documents”, in: O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, 2003, pp. 471-589.

⁴⁰ Wadi Brissa inscription X, 1-9: Da Riva, *The Twin Inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar at Brisa (Wadi esh-Sharbin, Lebanon)*, 2012: pp. 62-63. “The Neo-Babylonian empire certainly gave peace and economic prosperity to an important part of the Near East for more than half a century. However, the reverse side of this image of prosperity in the imperial core is the archaeological evidence for widespread destruction and impoverishment in at least some parts of the imperial periphery in the West, in keeping with the common model of ‘exploitative’ imperial formation”: Jursa, “The Neo-Babylonian Empire”, in: M. Gehler and R. Rollinger (eds.), *Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte*, 2014, p. 142. For the tens of thousands of the Neo-Babylonian cuneiform texts of administrative and legal content informing about the economic and social history of Southern Mesopotamia, that is the core of the empire, see Jursa, *Neo-Babylonian Legal and Administrative Documents*, 2005, and Jursa, *Aspects of the Economic History of Babylonia in the First Millennium BC*, 2010, for the economic history of the region.

⁴¹ Liverani “The Deeds of Ancient Mesopotamian Kings”, in: J. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, 1995, p. 2360.

⁴² See for example Nabonidus’ stelae.

⁴³ For the concept of “a veritable lieu de mémoire” “readapted for Assyria and other ancient Near Eastern

Nebuchadnezzar in Lebanon⁴⁴ and Nabonidus in Jordan and Northern Arabia⁴⁵ are the visual expression of their imperial control in the West. On the very damaged relief of Wadi Brisa in Lebanon, Nebuchadnezzar is represented fighting a rampant lion, according to a well known motif in Mesopotamian iconography representing victory over the enemy and the forces of chaos, and highly developed in the royal lion hunt, the typical Neo-Assyrian figurative topos characterizing the commemorative reliefs of the royal Palaces. The image of the king fighting a rampant lion is also the Neo-Assyrian representation of the imperial seal.

2.2.2 Nabonidus, the last King

The reign of Nabonidus⁴⁶ is a paradigmatic example of the Neo-Babylonian kingship, merging tradition and innovation.

In his many inscriptions⁴⁷ he repeatedly underlines his homage and respect to the very Babylonian tradition, for the veneration of the Babylonian past played an important role in Neo-Babylonian royal ideology. A chronicle tells us that the king had found a damaged statue of Sargon of Akkad, digging the foundation of the Ebabbar, the temple of Šamaš at Sippar:⁴⁸

*He saw in this sacred enclosure a statue of Sargon, the father of Narām-Sîn: half of his head was missing, and it had deteriorated so much as to make its face hardly recognizable. Given his reverence for the gods and his respect for kingship, he summoned expert artisans, restored the head of this statue, and put back (his face). He did not change its place but installed it in the Ebabbar (and) initiated an oblation for it.*⁴⁹

monumental realities" see Fales, "Khinis/Bavian: Changing Models for an Assyrian Monumental Complex", 2017, p. 19 and fn. 89.

⁴⁴ Nahr el-Kelb, Wadi Brissa, Wadi es-Saba', Shir es-Sanam: Da Riva, "A Lion in the Cedar Forest", in: J. Vidal (ed.), *Studies on War in the Ancient Near East*, 2010; Da Riva, *The Twin Inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar at Brisa*, 2012; Da Riva, "Neo-Babylonian Monuments at Shir es-Sanam and Wadi es-Saba (North Lebanon)", *WZKM* 103 (2013), pp. 87-100.

⁴⁵ Sela' and Padakku: see fn. 16.

⁴⁶ Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon 556–539 B.C.*, 1989.

⁴⁷ Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon*, 2001.

⁴⁸ For the relation between Nabonidus and the élite of Sippar and the officials of the Ebabbar temple see Zawadzki, "Nabonidus and Sippar", in: H. Neumann, R. Dittmann et al. (eds.), *Krieg und Frieden im Alten Vorderasien*, 2014, pp. 875-884.

⁴⁹ Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 2004, pp. 314-315, III 29'-IV 37'.

Sometimes statues also live again!

On the other side, Nabonidus calls the Assyrian kings “my royal ancestors”, promotes the cult of the Aramaic moon god Sin of Harran, to whom he plans to build a temple, and abandons the capital Babylon for ten years, to live in an oasis of the Arabian desert where he founds a new capital. For his detachment from the Babylonian tradition, a pro-Persian propaganda text, the so-called *Verse Account*,⁵⁰ portrays the king in an extremely negative light for his impious behaviour and his deviation from the traditional religious practice. Certainly, the king is mad!⁵¹

The modern historical critique has restored Nabonidus’s honor and depicts a completely new image of the king, who anticipated the great cosmopolitan Iranian empire by means of merging the several ethnic, religious and linguistic elements of the empire, in so deeply politically innovating the ancient Near East.

3. THE (NEO-)BABYLONIAN LEGACY

The most important historical legacy of the Neo-Babylonian empire, the last, short period of Mesopotamian independence, “consists in its having served [...] as a cultural bridge: it transmitted important forms of government and imperial rule that had been developed in the Assyrian empire to its Achaemenid successor”,⁵² as well as the Babylonian intellectual achievements which have continued to enrich human culture.

The Babylonian temples continued to transmit the traditional knowledge, assuring the survival of cuneiform culture, especially in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, and medicine.

⁵⁰ Now Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids*, 2001: pp. 563-578 with previous literature. *Verse Account* and related texts represent “the clearest case of a literary reflection on the rise and fall of the Neo-Babylonian empire”: Jursa, “The Neo-Babylonian Empire”, in: M. Gehler and R. Rollinger (eds.), *Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte*, 2014: pp. 139, 125, fn.7 for different scholars evaluations of the texts against Nabonidus and the reasons of the fall of Babylon.

⁵¹ Beaulieu, “Nabonidus the Mad King”, in: M. Heinz, M. Feldman (eds.), *Representations of Political Power*, 2007; Schaudig, “Nabonid, der «Gelehrte auf dem Königsthron»”, in: O. Loretz, K.A. Metzler and H. Schaudig (eds.), *Ex Mesopotamia et Syria Lux*, 2002, pp. 619-645.

⁵² Jursa, “The Neo-Babylonian Empire”, in: M. Gehler and R. Rollinger (eds.), *Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte*, 2014, p. 140.

As for astronomy,⁵³ Michael Jursa has recently pointed out that in the 4th century “Babylonian astronomy/astrology underwent the crucial transition from a paradigm centred on the interpretation of a traditional corpus of texts to a more mathematical mode in which rigorous observation of astronomical phenomena was increasingly paired with mathematical modelling for predictive purposes [...]. The temples, and in particular Esangila, were the general setting for this fundamental epistemological shift”.⁵⁴

However, the most enduring legacy of the Neo-Babylonian empire is certainly the image and the strong memory of Babylon, the city that had been “the glory of the Chaldeans’ pride” (Is 13, 19), transmitted by the Hebrew Bible and the Classical sources,⁵⁵ as well as the Jewish re-elaboration of Babylonian motifs such as the Tower of Babel or the Deluge. This memory, partially mythical and legendary,⁵⁶ has come down through the centuries as a set of mental and ideological representations that have allowed Babylon to survive the ravages of time, and have undoubtedly exerted a powerful fascination on later cultures, both eastern and western, up to the archaeological discovery of Mesopotamian civilization in the 19th century.⁵⁷

4. BABYLON TODAY:⁵⁸ USE AND ABUSE OF THE PAST

The use, and more often the abuse, of the past is a well-known means of political propaganda and legitimation of power, in antiquity as well as in modern time, for the relationship between past and present is a fundamental, powerful part of identity.

The fame of ancient Babylon and its glorious past made the ancient Nebu-

⁵³ Ossendrijver, *Babylonian Mathematical Astronomy*, 2012.

⁵⁴ Jursa, “Cuneiform Writing”, in: K. Radner and E. Robson (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, 2011, p. 198.

⁵⁵ Rollinger, “Babylon in der antiken tradition - Herodot, Ktesias, Semiramis und die Hängenden Gärten”, in: J. Marzahn, G. Schauerte (eds.), *Babylon Wahrheit*, 2008, pp. 486-504.

⁵⁶ Allard, “Der Mythos Babylon vom 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert”, in: M. Wullen and G. Schauerte (eds.), *Babylon. Mythos*, 2008, pp. 145-167.

⁵⁷ For Babylon in arabic and islamic sources see Haase, “Babylon in der arabischen und islamischen Überlieferung”, in: J. Marzahn and G. Schauerte (eds.), *Babylon. Wahrheit*, 2008, pp. 509-518.

⁵⁸ Curtis, “The Present Condition of Babylon”, in: E. Cancik-Kirschbaum, M. van Ess and J. Marzahn (eds.), *Babylon. Wissenskultur in Orient und Okzident*, 2011, pp. 3-18.

chadnezar capital the iconic symbols of the new borne state of Iraq since 1920.⁵⁹

With the emergence of Saddam Hussein and its nationalistic ambitions for the republic of Iraq, Babylon perfectly served the political propaganda of his regime and became the symbol of continuity with Nebuchadnezzar reign. In order to rebuild the splendour of Neo-Babylonian era Saddam Hussein started on a vast scale the “Archaeological Restoration of Babylon Project”,⁶⁰ aiming at the reconstruction of the centre of ancient Babylon, in 1978. Coins bearing images of the Ishtar Gate, the Lion of Babylon, the Stele of the ‘Code’ of Hammurabi and the reconstruction of the ziggurat, were issued to commemorate the project, together with small metal tablets with cuneiform inscription celebrating Saddam Hussein as the restorer of Babylon.⁶¹

Three enormous artificial mounds were built on the site, and on the top of one of them a palace was built for Saddam Hussein: bricks stamped with his own inscription in Arabic, reading “In the era of Saddam Hussein, protector of Iraq, who rebuilt the Royal Palace”, continued the ancient practice of Mesopotamian kings.⁶²

Many years later, soon after the Second Gulf War in March-April 2003,⁶³ occupying allied forces considerably enlarged the military camp previously established right in the heart of ancient Babylon,⁶⁴ causing serious damages to the Processional Way where original paving slabs were damaged by military vehicles, and to the Ishtar Gate, by removing bricks showing the dragon and the other animal figures sacred to Marduk. Not to say of the irreparable damage caused by contaminating sandbags, deep trenches, heavy vehicle traffic, fuel contami-

⁵⁹ See the lion of Babylon on Iraqi stamps from 1941 onwards in Curtis, “The Present Condition of Babylon”, in: E. Cancik-Kirschbaum, M. van Ess and J. Marzahn (eds.), *Babylon*, 2011, fig. 3.

⁶⁰ For the restoration of Nebuchadnezzar Palace in particular see Curtis, “The Present Condition of Babylon”, in: E. Cancik-Kirschbaum, M. van Ess and J. Marzahn (eds.), *Babylon*, 2011, p. 6.

⁶¹ Curtis, “The Present Condition”, in: E. Cancik-Kirschbaum, M. van Ess and J. Marzahn (eds.), *Babylon*, 2011, p. 5, Fig. 5. For medals showing the profiled portrait of Saddam Hussein overlapping that of Nebuchadnezzar II issued to commemorate the Babylon Festival in 1987 see Fig. 6.

⁶² Curtis, “The Present Condition of Babylon”, in: E. Cancik-Kirschbaum, M. van Ess and J. Marzahn (eds.), *Babylon*, 2011, p. 5.

⁶³ After the 3rd September 2003 Babylon became Camp Alpha for the Multinational Division Central South. See Curtis, “The Present Condition of Babylon”, in: E. Cancik-Kirschbaum, M. van Ess and J. Marzahn (eds.), *Babylon*, 2011, p. 9.

⁶⁴ Curtis, “The Present Condition of Babylon”, in: E. Cancik-Kirschbaum, M. van Ess and J. Marzahn (eds.), *Babylon*, 2011, Fig 9. For the complaint of the international scientific community for the “desecration” of Babylon and the consequent decision to close down the camp and hand control of Babylon back to the Iraqi side, see in particular pp. 9-10.

nation and vandalism, showing up the barbarity of our own age.⁶⁵

However, notwithstanding the ravage of time and the negligence of the present the memory of ancient Babylon and its many cultural achievements continue to be preserved, due to the untiring, combined efforts of the scientific community – archaeologists, philologists, and historians – who make Babylonian culture, tradition and memory live forever.

For this: long live Babylon!

⁶⁵ Curtis, "The Present Condition of Babylon", in: E. Cancik-Kirschbaum, M. van Ess and J. Marzahn (eds.), *Babylon*, 2011, pp. 12-15, Figs. 12, pp. 15-16.

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SHADOW SITES

An interview with Jananne Al-Ani by Cécile Bourne Farrell

In this interview with curator Cécile Bourne Farrell, artist Jananne Al-Ani discusses her aerial films Shadow Sites I (2010) and Shadow Sites II (2011) and the representation of landscape, from the Middle East to the American south-west, in relation to Kitty Hauser's book Shadow Sites: Photography, Archaeology, & the British Landscape 1927–1955 (2007) a study on the emergence of aerial archaeology and the role of the sun's movement in materializing latent histories embedded in the landscape. A French translation of the interview first appeared in issue 59 of the journal Multitudes.

Cécile Bourne Farrell (CBF): *You seem to be very much interested in the notion of the disappearance of the body, and somehow the denial of the ground that existed in the way of speaking about the Iraq war.*

Jananne Al-Ani (JAA): One of the most powerful events to occur in the immediate aftermath of the 2003 war in Iraq was the uncovering of mass-graves of those who had disappeared during 35 years of dictatorship. Although the loss of civilian life in times of conflict is a universal phenomenon, the war in Iraq reminded me of so many events in the region in which people had disappeared on a scale that is hard to comprehend. From the Armenian genocide of 1915 to the depopulation of over 400 Palestinian villages after the formation of the state of Israel in 1948, and the disappearance of thousands during the brutal reign of the Baathist regime in Syria, to the missing victims of the bloody Civil War in Lebanon. It also made me question what happens to the physical evidence of atrocity and genocide, how might one begin to search for the traces of the disappeared, and how this affects our understanding of the often beautiful landscapes into which the bodies of victims disappear.

CBF: *Here I would like to mention the story you introduced me to of the forensic anthropologist Margaret Cox who was working in Kosovo in the late 1990s to identify victims of genocide carried out by Serbian forces. The story begins with her going into the countryside, in search of blue butterflies that feed exclusively on the wild flower Artemisia Vulgaris. However, there's no joy when she finds them for they are*

the by-products of what she terms a 'geophysical anomaly'. We know it by its common name: a mass grave.

JAA: Yes, I came across an article on Cox's work in 2004 because she was working on mass graves in Iraq at that time. What was most striking about her work in Kosovo was the way in which nature had revealed the evidence of atrocity in such a subtle and beautiful way, for wherever the soil had been disturbed and the nutrient levels increased as a result of decomposing bodies, the flowers and the butterflies could be found in abundance.

It brought to mind the way in which the landscape of northern Europe had 'healed' itself after the end of World War I. For hundreds of miles along the Western Front the landscape had been utterly devastated but, in a relatively short time, the land was rehabilitated, either naturally with trees, grasses and wild flowers growing again or later still, with the return to farming and the rebuilding of towns and villages. The analogy of scars on the body with those in the landscapes made me look again at Sophie Ristelhueber's work *Every One* (1994), which consists of monumental black and white photographs of post-operative bodies, in contrast with *Fait* (1992), a series of photographs she took from the air and on the ground in the immediate aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War. It was as if the images of Iraqi trenches dug in the desert were echoed in the bodies of people who had undergone major surgery.

I'm interested in the tension between the physical body, what real damage can be done to it in a war situation, and the virtual way in which the body can be made to disappear in the landscape through the technologies of image making. That is why I became interested in Virilio's work on the relationship between war and cinema and of course Baudrillard's provocation, in response to the extreme control of the media by the allies, by questioning whether the war had really taken place or was it simply a fictional media event?

Also, the 1991 Gulf War was the first war viewed almost exclusively from the air; the perspective of the coalition forces and not that of the Iraqis on the ground. In stark contrast with the trench warfare of the early 20th century, when combatants faced each other across a battlefield, the sophistication of aerial warfare, including the use of remotely guided missiles and other unmanned aerial vehicles by the end of the century, created a watershed, not only the way war was to be fought in the future but also how it was represented. Looking at Ristelhueber's photographs of the Iraqi trenches, deserted and littered with the

detritus of daily life left behind by the fleeing soldiers, one is struck by how pathetic a gesture it must have been to dig such useless defences when faced with the extraordinary air power that passed overhead.

One of the most striking effects an aerial view offers is the possibility of flattening and abstracting any standing structures on the ground, including the human body. When used in war, the privileged perspective of those in the air can reduce the visibility of the population on the ground: the image of the landscape becomes like a two dimensional cartographic illustration.

CBF: *That perfection is also very attractive somehow?*

JAA: Absolutely, it makes war appear to be clean, efficient and accurate. It becomes like a game, reduced to targets on a screen. So it matters less if you fail, because it is just a game.

CBF: *I'd like to stay with the notion of war games, and how they infiltrate our lives, by letting our children play them at home without even questioning ourselves about the use of them?*

JAA: I am not surprised that our children play games that involve so much virtual killing. I grew up in Iraq and left in 1980 as a teenager so, like most people living in the western world, I witnessed the first Gulf War from a safe distance. It was a real shock to see how a place I knew so well, in all its geographic, historic and social richness, was so easily flattened and emptied out, reduced to somewhere utterly anonymous, with no complexity and no detail. An old Orientalist trick, which in the modern world, helped to give the impression that the war was happening in a faraway place, an utterly barren environment, with no history and no population to speak of. Just like the spaces generated in gaming environments.

The fact that most of the allied forces involved in the war were professional armies, and the soldiers were not forced to fight through conscription, meant that the general populations of the countries involved were able to take a more distanced view of the conflict. If this detachment is how the majority of the adult population respond to conflicts that are subsidized by the taxes we are paying, then it's hardly surprising that our children are not engaged with the world but prefer to inhabit the virtual space of gaming.

CBF: *Would you say that your methods include all these different tools, the abstract images and these narrations?*

JAA: Interestingly, while the images from the Gulf War were so powerful, the official narrative was often utterly banal. Listening to the American General, Nor-

man Schwarzkopf, during his frequent media briefings, he often joked to journalists about air strikes, most famously laughing at ‘the luckiest man in Iraq’ while showing footage of a truck which had just passed through the cross hairs of a cruise missile seconds before the bridge it was travelling on was blown apart. Considering the degree to which the infrastructure of Iraq was targeted and destroyed during the Desert Storm campaign, from the collapse of the telecommunications systems, the destruction of roads, railway lines and bridges, to the targeting of dams and sewage treatment plants, there was no debate whatsoever in the western press about the implication this had for the civilian population.

CBF: *You were mentioning the implications it had in your country?*

JAA: Just imagine what would happen if France suffered the same fate? Overnight there would be no telephone or radio communication with the outside world, all transport in and out of the country would be halted, no trains, planes or cars able to move, no clean running water, no electricity... it’s the stuff of nightmares!

CBF: *You’ve mentioned on a number of occasions how large format cameras were used during World War I to photograph the battlefields from the air. When shooting your films Shadow Sites I and II you also worked in this way.*

JAA: I think it’s very important to place current discussions around aerial surveillance and the use of drones in a wider historic context. Personally, I wanted to go back to the early 12th century and investigate in more depth the circumstances that first brought the technologies of photography and flight together. So, during the development of the work, I carried out research in a number of institutions, which was really important in relation to the form and content of my films. I visited a number of photographic archives among them the Air and Space Museum in Washington DC, where I discovered the unpublished reconnaissance photographs of the Western Front, taken by a unit established by Edward Steichen while working for the Aerial Expeditionary Force during World War I. This was the first instance of a really systematic and strategic use of aerial photography, which resulted in striking images of landscapes obliterated by shelling and criss-crossed by trenches, but abstracted to such a degree as to have become like exquisite and minimalist works of art. This new perspective had a truly radical impact on our relationship to landscape and in some sense Google Earth and the all-seeing drone are not new phenomena, just the logical refinement of this early technology.



Fig. 1 Jananne Al-Ani, still from *Shadow Sites II*, 2011, single channel digital video. Photography Adrian Warren. Courtesy the artist and Abraj Capital Art Prize.



Fig. 2 Jananne Al-Ani, still from *Shadow Sites II*, 2011, single channel digital video. Photography Adrian Warren. Courtesy the artist and Abraj Capital Art Prize.

Obviously being able to fly over enemy territory provided the perfect opportunity to deliver weapons from above. Interestingly, some of the earliest experiments in aerial bombardment were carried out by the British Air Force in the north of Iraq in the early 1920s, after the end of World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

Of course the marriage of flight and photography had an impact in areas other than the military, and one of the most significant outcomes of this period of research was the revelation that the discipline of aerial archaeology had developed as a direct result of the discovery of previously unknown sites during aerial operations carried out in the course of World Wars I and II. For at certain times of the day, when the sun is low in the sky, the outlines of archaeological features on the ground are thrown into relief. Searching for such 'shadow sites' is one of the simplest methods of identifying archaeological ruins, which normally remain undetected when seen at ground level.

CBF: *World War I had a dramatic impact on the Middle East with both allied and German forces establishing outposts in the region. In your work you made them tangible, reappear, can you speak about this?*

JAA: It's common knowledge that the end of World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire marked the birth of the modern Middle East, with nation states established under French and British Mandate, which remain to this day. However, until I started looking at contemporary aerial photographs of the region to research locations, I hadn't realized how many traces from World War I still remained visible. There is a trench system that appears in *Shadow Sites I*, in the south of Jordan, that was dug by an Ottoman garrison stationed around the town of Ma'an, which was of strategic importance because the Hejaz Railway ran through it. The Central Powers were using the railway to move supplies and it was under constant attack from British and Arab forces, so the trenches were dug in the high ground surrounding the town in order to defend it.

Funnily enough while I was doing research in the Imperial War Museum collection, I came across a painting from 1918 by Richard Carline, an aerial view of the Somme, a sea of mud in a scene of utter destruction, which looks uncannily like the trenches around Ma'an. After the end of the war Carline travelled to the Middle East with his brother Sydney, who was also an artist, and they produced aerial paintings of towns and cities, including Gaza and Baghdad, in bright sunlight and surrounded by fertile agricultural land. If asked to identify the loca-

tions in the paintings, I'm certain most contemporary observers would mistake these Middle Eastern landscapes for somewhere in Europe and vice versa.

CBF: *Your position as an artist then is to reveal something different to us. Can you speak about this?*

JAA: I'm interested in the shifting and complex ways in which we understand and interpret visual material, be it historic or contemporary. So, when the Carline brothers made those paintings, I'm certain they would have considered them to be a pretty accurate record of how those two landscapes looked at the time. In the 100 years since the paintings were made however, so much has changed, both in terms of the political landscape and the way in which place itself is represented, that the paintings seem to present a startling contrast to what might be expected now. The Carline paintings undermine our perceptions of what a European or a Middle Eastern landscape might look like, and it's that disruption of visual conventions that I'm hoping to achieve in my work too. Whether it's to show how intensively populated the desert landscape is, or how there is more in common between the Middle Eastern landscape and the American landscape, or even to review the way we think about the impact of World War I on a global rather than just a European scale.

CBF: *Archaeology, where/how did this interest come up to you? In your work it seems that you are working with archaeology, like a geologist would do to reveal the potentiality of the image, be it from 3000 years before Christ or from the modern Middle East today.*

JAA: Although the origins of archaeology date back to the enlightenment in Europe, it became an established science in the 19th century, as did the related fields of anthropology and ethnography. From the beginning, all three disciplines developed an intimate relationship with the new and revolutionary technology of photography. Within a decade of the birth of photography, European enthusiasts were heading for the Middle East, mainly in search of Pharaonic sites in Egypt and those relating to biblical tales in 'The Holy Land'. By the end of the 19th century large numbers of French, German and British-led archaeological digs had sprung up across the region, and some of the most spectacular Mesopotamian and ancient Persian sites, such as Babylon in modern day Iraq and Persepolis in Iran, were excavated. The history of archaeology in the Middle East is very interesting because it mirrors the complex and growing pressure on political, ideological and economic relations between the Ottoman administra-

tion and European powers in the run up to World War I.

One of the things that struck me about the story of Margaret Cox was the parallel between the work of forensic anthropologists and that of archaeologists: through the delicate and painstaking deconstruction of a site, digging in the dirt, photographing and recording every scrap of evidence and eventually reconstructing the events leading to the formation of a given site. Obviously the objectives are quite different, the job of the forensic anthropologist is to repatriate the remains of victims and to gather enough evidence to prosecute the perpetrators, but there seemed to be so much in common in terms of process.

I also wanted to look at the differences between photographs taken by archaeologists working at ground level and those taken from the air. While doing research in the library of the Arab Image Foundation in Beirut, I came across a number of publications on the work of early pioneers of aerial photography in the region. These included the French archaeologist and Jesuit missionary Antoine Poidebard, who produced the most stunning aerial photographs of Roman sites in Syria in the mid-1930s, some of which look startlingly similar to contemporary images made of cities that have suffered intense aerial bombardment.

While in Washington, I also had the opportunity to carry out research in the archives of the Freer and Sackler Galleries where I came across the extraordinary landscape photographs of the German archaeologist, Ernst Herzfeld. From 1903 to 1934 he carried out fieldwork across the Middle East and his beautiful sepia-toned panoramic prints show the vast and often bleak landscapes in which the sites he was excavating were situated. I was particularly interested in a pair of photographs printed from the same negative, showing the great arch at Ctesiphon (in modern day Iraq). In the first print, Herzfeld's shadow appears quite clearly in the foreground and in the second image, he has retouched the print and removed all trace of it. I was impressed by the way in which this simple intervention could transform our understanding of the image by magically removing the evidence of his presence as the photographer. It reminded me of the story Virilio recounts in his essay *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* (the title of which I have borrowed for this body of work) about the film pioneer George Méliès. While filming in the street one day, Méliès' camera jammed unexpectedly for a short time and through this happy accident, he discovered how to make people disappear.

Méliès is often referred to as the first 'cinemagician' and in addition to the

‘stop trick’, he went on to experiment with time lapse, dissolves and multiple exposures, all technical interventions, like those of the photographic re-toucher, which are simple but extremely powerful.

But to go back to the subject of archaeology, while I was doing my research I discovered a book that had a big impact on my thinking. In *Shadow Sites: Photography, Archaeology & the British Landscape 1927–1955*, the historian Kitty Hauser provides a wonderful account of the development of aerial photography, the impact it had on archaeology and the way it influenced artists’ relationship to landscape. As I mentioned earlier, aerial archaeology, as a specialism, developed as a direct result of the discovery of previously unknown sites during aerial operations carried out in the course of World Wars I and II.

Hauser describes how pilots who were flying missions at dawn or dusk discovered new sites because, in the short window of time when the sun was at its lowest, the shadows cast by the slightest undulations on the ground created fleeting apparitions, only visible from above.

For Hauser, aerial archaeology, like film and photography, rests upon the idea that the past is recoverable and she refers to Freud’s book *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), in which he compares early experiences embedded in the subconscious with a photographic exposure, to be processed at some time in the future, presumably by undergoing psychoanalysis. For me, Hauser takes this analogy in a more interesting direction in her suggestion that the ground itself might act as a photographic plate where a latent image (the foundations of a building, for example) is periodically revealed as the sun rises and sets over the site.

CBF: *Is this how you came to choose the title for your films Shadow Sites I and Shadow Sites II?*

JAA: Yes, it is. The term ‘shadow site’ is the technical definition in aerial archaeology for a site that only appears when the sun is low in the sky and casting long shadows. So, in 2010, I travelled to Jordan, hired an aerial film specialist and a light aircraft and took this as my guiding principal when shooting, working only in the first hour or two after sunrise. I chose to work in Jordan because it sits at the centre of a number of highly contentious and contested sites – just east of Israel and occupied Palestine, and sharing borders with Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Syria. Although it is a relatively young nation state, historically it has been a major crossroads for both trade and warring empires, and it is incredibly rich in archaeological sites, ranging from the prehistoric to the modern in-



Fig. 3 Jananne Al-Ani, still from *Shadow Sites II*, 2011, single channel digital video. Photography Adrian Warren. Courtesy the artist and Abraj Capital Art Prize.



Fig. 4 Jananne Al-Ani, still from *Shadow Sites II*, 2011, single channel digital video. Photography Adrian Warren. Courtesy the artist and Abraj Capital Art Prize.

cluding Nabatean, Roman, Islamic, Crusader, Ottoman and British sites from the mandate period.

Shadow Sites I (2010) was shot on 16mm film and is made up of a succession of vertical aerial shots, which dissolve one into the other in a rather hypnotic way. Replicating the point-of-view of a military aircraft or an unmanned surveillance drone, it scans the rich and varied traces imprinted on the landscape by agricultural, industrial and military activity ranging from the ancient to the contemporary. Sites appear in roughly chronological order, reflecting the way the land has been occupied and put to use, including bronze age copper mines, Nabataean settlements, Roman forts and the trenches I mentioned earlier, which were dug by Ottoman troops to defend the Hejaz railway line.

Focusing on a similar range of sites but including many more ambiguous and abstracted images, *Shadow Sites II* (2011) is made from a series of high-resolution aerial photographs, which dissolve from one image to the next in one long, continuous zoom. The film suggests the vantage point of a Predator drone or a cruise missile and replicates the action of locking on to a target in anticipation of a strike. Its point of view moves into, rather than across, the plane of the image: zooming in, as if the camera itself is boring into the landscape.

CBF: *More recently with Groundworks, conceptually you seem to be linking the US (industrial zones) with the Middle East (war zones). Can you talk a bit about this?*

JAA: Yes, *Groundworks I–V* (2013) is a five channel video installation, which focuses on the landscape of the south-western United States. The work consists of four subtly animated aerial photographs shot on flights over the Sonoran desert in Arizona in 2008, including open cast mines, industrial farms and abandoned World War II airfields. The fifth element is a 16mm film featuring a colony of ants building a nest in the sand.

In contrast with the large scale projections of *Shadow Sites I* and *II*, each of the five *Groundworks* films is shown on a small scale and cropped, using a series of bespoke frames, in a range of geometric shapes including a square, circle and triangle, which reflect the outline of the sites featured in the films while creating a further layer of abstraction. I included the film of the ants for a number of reasons, firstly to address the ambiguity of scale in the films and to accentuate the juxtaposition between the still and moving image. I also wanted to create a tension in the installation between the ‘microscopic’ view on the ground and the long-distanced cartographic view from the air, by recalling the kind of footage

shot by fighter pilots in action, which dehumanizes their targets by reducing those on the ground to an insect-like scale.

By shifting the focus from the Middle Eastern to the American landscape in *Groundworks I-VI* I wanted to draw on the similarities rather than the differences between these territories. The 20th century sites in the Sonoran Desert echo a number of the ancient sites that appear in *Shadow Sites I* and *Shadow Sites II*, such as copper mines, arable field systems and military sites, some redundant and disappearing and others still in use. So, by linking signs of similar activities in the landscape, my intention was to pull the North American and Middle Eastern territories closer together, both literally and metaphorically.

I am now working on the third and final chapter of this series, a film titled *Black Powder Peninsular*, which focuses on the British landscape and, by implication, Britain's historic role in the formation of both the United States of America and the modern Middle East.

CBF: *Often artists and curators collaborate on the idea of intervening within a collection or in a museum. Here I am thinking of exemplary projects of Marie Laure Bernadac at the Louvre in Paris (with Walid Raad), or Clémentine Deliss in Frankfurt at the Weltkulturen Museum (with Otobong Nkanga). Recently you were invited by the Courtauld Institute to engage with one of the masterpieces from the collection, the Courtauld metal 'bag'. Could you tell me a bit about this project?*

JAA: Three years ago, Dr Sussan Babaie took up post as the first historian of Islamic Art at the Courtauld. It was a strategic appointment designed to expand the institute's curriculum beyond the western tradition, part of its stated aim to engage with 'world' art history. At that time the Courtauld Gallery was preparing an exhibition titled *Court and Craft: A Masterpiece from Northern Iraq*, focusing on the Courtauld metal 'bag', one of the most important objects in the collection. Dr Babaie is very keen for contemporary artists to engage with objects in the collection and, along with the curator Dr Alexandra Gerstein, she invited me to think about working with the bag in some way.

The Courtauld bag is unique, no object like it is known to exist in any other collection. Made of brass and intricately inlaid with gold and silver, it is thought to have been made in the early 14th century in the city of Mosul, in the north of modern day Iraq, during the Mongol Ilkhanid dynasty. In 1966 it was donated to the Courtauld Collection by the grandson of the Victorian collector, Thomas Gambier Parry, who bought the bag in Venice in 1858.

I was lucky enough to have a number of encounters with the bag in the run up to the opening of the exhibition. I was able to handle and examine it closely on a number of occasions, and to be present while the curators of the exhibition, and Islamic art historians and metalwork specialists from other museums and institutions, were debating the origin and function of the bag. Most interesting was the speculative nature of this process. Although based on a great deal of knowledge and expertise, the piecing together of the story of the bag still involved a level of subjective guesswork that was really fascinating. After all, this was an object that had effectively gone missing for 550 years, from the time of its making to the moment it was acquired by Gambier Parry in Venice, nothing at all is known about its travels.

I was also present to witness the bag being cleaned by the conservator, in preparation for the exhibition, a process which involved working on it under the microscope. Being able to examine the surface of the object in this way was extraordinary. With the sudden change in scale, the bag shifted from being a functional three-dimensional object to an abstracted, topographical representation of a new kind of 'landscape'. The repeat patterns on the surface of the bag were suddenly transformed into what looked like an aerial photograph of the Grand Canyon!

After the bag was cleaned it was then photographed using specialist equipment to create a 3D imaging model. An animated film of this virtual model was included in the exhibition to allow visitors to see fine details on the surface of the bag, which could not be appreciated by looking at the object itself once it was behind glass in a display case. What was most inspiring about the process was the possibility of using this technology to photograph an object such as the bag, with a highly decorated, engraved surface, in a way that replicated aerial photography but on a microscopic scale. It would even be possible to restage the movement of the sun across the sky in order to create artificial shadow sites and generate new 'micro-topographies' that would bring the surface of the object to life.

This brought me back to Chris Marker's iconic film *La Jetée*, a work that has greatly influenced my use of the still moving image, in particular the moment towards the end of the film, when the protagonist is finally propelled into the future. The film runs through a very short sequence of three stills, which dissolve one into the other (a movement I used when editing *Shadow Sites II*). The first two images look like cellular structures under the microscope, as if we are inside his body as it travels through time and space, until it reaches the third image

which looks like a satellite image of a vast city. The voice-over suggests that what we are seeing is Paris in the future, a megalopolis built on a massive grid system.

La Jetée is set in a post-apocalyptic moment, a time in the near future after the civilized world has been all but destroyed. The Courtauld bag was itself made in the wake of great unrest and violence in the Islamic World, following waves of attack by Mongol forces, which began with the sacking of Baghdad in 1258 and ended with what became known as the Golden Age of Islam. It is thought that the Courtauld bag was made some time between 1300 and 1330. The fact that such fine metalwork continued to be made in the workshops of Mosul after the city was conquered in 1262, points to a narrative which the curators of the exhibition have suggested runs counter to the popular image of Mongol armies destroying everything in their wake.

Although there is no doubt the levels of violence were extreme, those with special skills or talents were often spared, and it could be argued that the Courtauld bag represents a kind of hybrid object, born out of great destruction while displaying characteristics from both its 'parent' cultures and iconography. The combination of highly skilled traditional Islamic metalwork, juxtaposed with a decorative ground inspired by Chinese textiles, showing scenes of hunting and banqueting which includes characters from the Mongol court, all point to the object itself as the bearer of a narrative that reflects the complex and difficult geopolitical circumstances surrounding its own birth.

CBF: *Can you say a bit about the tray you are also interested in, which is in the V&A metalwork collection?*

JAA: Yes, as luck would have it I did a talk at the V&A soon after I had first seen the Courtauld bag, and I showed some of the research material I've already talked about in relation to aerial photography and conflict. After the talk I was approached by the curator Tim Stanley, who works at the museum. He told me about a tray in the collection that had been donated by a retiring museum guard many years before, and which he came across by chance while browsing in the extraordinary museum stores. Just like the Courtauld bag, the tray is made from highly decorated engraved brass and illustrates events on Armistice Day, 1918, in the Iraqi town of al-Hindiyyah. The town is shown, from a bird's eye view, on either bank of the River Euphrates, which cuts horizontally across the centre of the tray. Amongst the crush of bodies depicted, including highly stylized Arab men and women and British soldiers in uniform, is the execution by hanging of

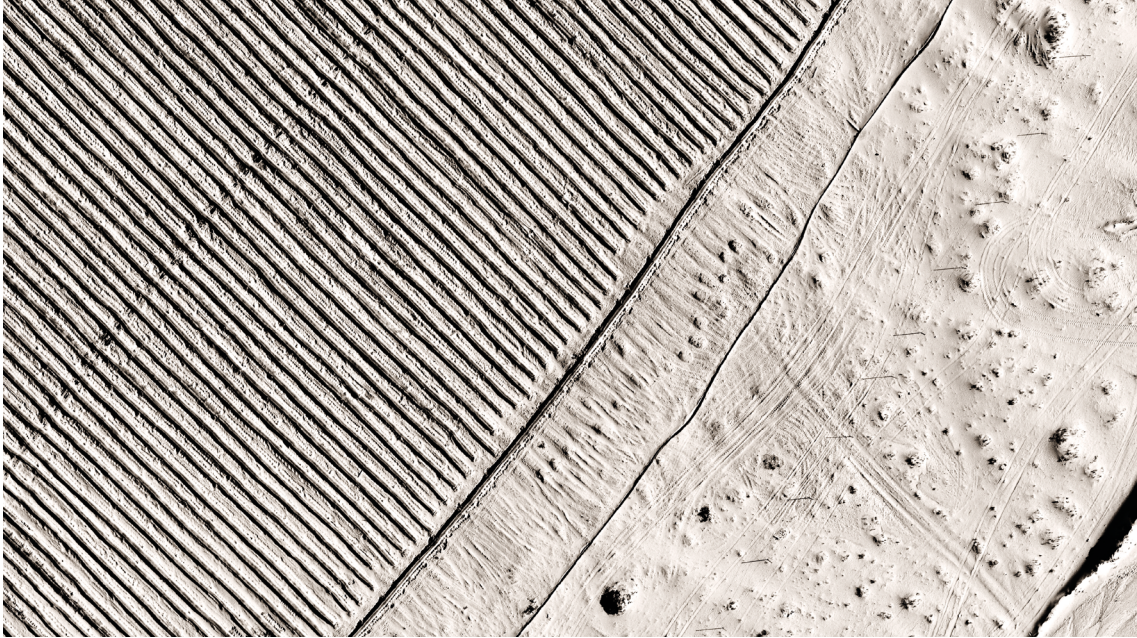


Fig. 5 Jananne Al-Ani, still from *Shadow Sites II*, 2011, single channel digital video. Photography Adrian Warren. Courtesy the artist and Abraaj Capital Art Prize.

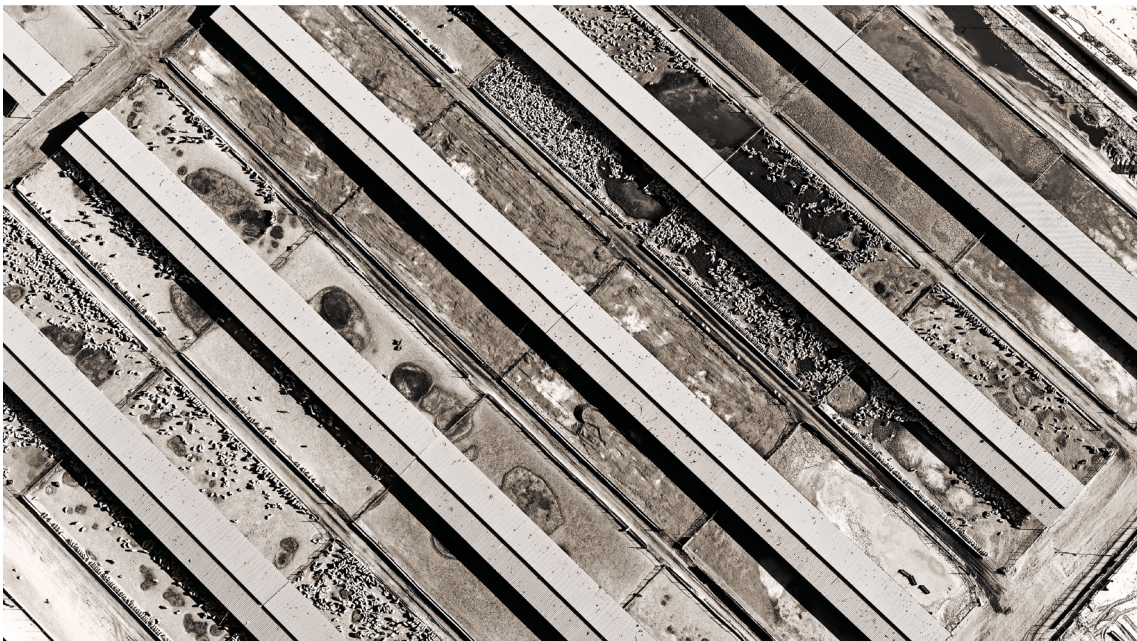


Fig. 6 Jananne Al-Ani, still from *Shadow Sites II*, 2011, single channel digital video. Photography Adrian Warren. Courtesy the artist and Abraaj Capital Art Prize.

a man named as Sadiq Efendi, apparently for the murder of a British army major. There are also two RAF biplanes flying over the scene. There's an inscription on the tray in crudely written Arabic describing the events illustrated.

CBF: *Do you think the tray was a piece of propaganda?*

JAA: Well there's no information about who made it or why, but I do think it's propagandist in the sense that it's like a folkloric history painting or a photograph documenting a particular historic event. It has a hybrid quality about it, like the Courtauld bag, which makes its function hard to pin down. Perhaps it was made for local consumption as a celebration of the Arab revolt and the death of a British army major, or maybe it was made with the British market in mind and it is celebrating the defeat of the Germans and the crushing of the Arab rebellion. Personally I think the latter is most likely, because I don't think the quality of the calligraphic element would have impressed most Arabic readers!

So, as with the Courtauld bag, this object is made at a time of great violence and change. The production of the bag marks the collision between the Mongol and Islamic empires, and the tray, which is made at the close of World War I, illustrates the dying days of the Ottoman Empire and the start of European rule in the Middle East. Born of the same material and made in the same place, but separated by 600 years, both the bag and the tray provide an extraordinary snapshot of the moment of their own production.

CBF: *The other day, I met a curator from the Musée du Quai Branly, who is preparing an exhibition on the manipulation of objects that have a life beyond their form. That notion of function seems to finally have some interest in conservation, doesn't it?*

JAA: But these are not ordinary objects with obvious practical functions. In fact, for them to have survived in such good condition suggests that they were never in fact put to practical use. What's really interesting for me as an artist, is how the curators of these collections are inviting others to engage with the objects in their care, because they are genuinely interested in generating new thinking around their function and value. And by that I don't mean monetary value. Although the Courtauld bag is priceless, the V&A tray is more of a curio yet despite that, I think Tim Stanley recognizes that it has the potential to tell us something important about the situation in the Middle East today.

CBF: *I know you are planning to make a series of new films using these objects as your starting point. Will you be looking at any other objects in addition to the bag and the tray?*

JAA: Yes, I've begun to look for other 'time travelling' objects that originate in the Middle East but have found their way into important western collections. So, just like the protagonist in *La Jetée*, they have arrived among us unexpectedly and we need to try to understand what they are trying to tell us about the time they have come from, and how it might affect our future.

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POLITICAL DESTRUCTIONS AND THE LONG 19th-CENTURY: CASES FROM THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION TO PRE-WW I EUROPE

Arianna Arisi Rota

The article presents the cases analyzed in the n. 1/2018 of the Italian academic journal of Contemporary History *Memoria e Ricerca*, devoted to *Iconoclasm in the Long 19th-Century*, a joint project by Arianna Arisi Rota and Emmanuel Fureix. Destruction of political symbols is outlined from American and French revolutionary time (Bellion, Mazeau), passing through French Restoration (Fureix) and Italian 1848 re-legitimizing violence (Arisi Rota), up to 1909 Barcelona anticlerical fires (Acciai) and suffragette Mary Richardson's attack on an art masterpiece in 1914 London (Aboudrar). Scholarly revised and refreshed approach to iconoclastic gestures and their political meaning during 19th-century regime-changes is also examined, as well as current days rushed reactions to the controversial memory represented by statues and monuments, often ending up in simple removal with no effort of contextualization. Yet, respect for the history of objects and for their 'biography' should promote a new reading of the material heritage from the past: as a promising case of re-contextualization of a debated monument from the Fascist time, the Bolzano Piazza del Tribunale example is finally considered.

INTRODUCTION: THE POWER OF ABSENCE

On August 15-16, 2017, after the turmoil which had taken place in Charlottesville, Virginia, targeting General Robert Lee's statue, Baltimore mayor Catherine Pugh thought it safer to remove the city's Confederate monuments and displace them far from public eye, in an undisclosed location. The overnight removal had as its targets several statues: the Confederate Women's monument, dating back to 1917, which used to stay in Bishop Square Park, was among them **[Fig. 1]**.

Asked to comment the empty pedestals, mayor Pugh declared: "I do not



Fig. 1 Baltimore *Confederate Women* monument overnight removal, August 15-16, 2017

(→ <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/08/16/baltimore-confederate-monuments-removed-241689>, last access: October 20, 2018).

know why they [the statues] where put there – I wasn't here at the time". Same decision was taken in Austin, Texas, and in other cities of the States, as more recently, in December 2017, in Memphis, Tennessee, where General Forrest's statue was removed overnight as well. The city, which was going to celebrate its bicentenary this year, had previously sold the parks hosting the statues to a private entity, thus skirting the Tennessee Heritage Protection Act, passed in 2013 and amended in 2016, which prohibits the removal, relocation or re-naming of a memorial that is on public property. As a kind of 'punishment', the Tennessee State Legislature (Republican led) cut \$ 250.000 from the budget for the bicentennial celebrations. On its turn, Memphis municipality reacted with a grassroots campaign on the GoFundMe platform to raise the equivalent amount of money.

The tug of war on statues is still going on in our days as part of the current debate on divided and conflicting memories disputing about the symbolic value of monuments which, according to some, no longer represent the identity of the communities hosting them.¹ Even leaving aside the meaning of overnight

¹ For a brief outline of this debate within the frame of public history engagement up to the time of the Turin international symposium (2018): → monumentshistory.wordpress.com/2017/10/30/the-torubles-of-purpose-and-implementations-of-monuments/. See also the program of the conference at the New York College Art

removals with trucks and flatbeds as a possible kind of ‘safe and quiet’ iconoclasm, we are undoubtedly facing a time when present-day sensibility about attacks to archaeological sites and artistic heritage is often sided by rushed/easy solutions for existing monuments whose story, I would say whose *biography*, is little known or not cared about at all. The risk of de-contextualization is thus affecting even measures justified as meant to ‘protect’ monuments while monuments are being ‘flattened’ or ‘adjusted’ to present time social mood. As an unintended outcome of such municipal decisions, citizens are more often disoriented and confused than happy with the sudden absence marked by empty pedestals: the power of absence, in a way, is clearly underestimated by policy-makers who do not dare to face longer and culturally more challenging projects for adding new and up-to-date semantics to statues and other symbols of the history of the community.

Even more interesting, the powerful *imagerie* of iconoclasm which has re-emerged via the media in many ways in our 21st century has gone together with a renewed historical sensibility about the need for a refreshed interdisciplinary approach to iconoclasm – especially if matched with categories as revolution and regime change.² The visual turn which took place in the early 1990s has expanded the interest of Early and Late Modern Age historiography in the iconoclastic gesture meant as political gesture into action, either spontaneous or planned, performing violence and political emotions as rage, revenge, urgency for moral compensation. Scholarly investigation on iconoclasm has recently been challenged by the need to reach the deep reasons for the iconoclastic gestures: yet iconoclasts’ voices are often lost, or altered. In spite of scarce sources, effort is to be made in order to analyse the rituals and performances whose actors are the new political players on the 19th-century expanded public arena: on that stage, political symbols come under attack or, even more, while being attacked, they are charged with new political meaning. The iconoclastic gesture is therefore materially and morally dismantling and disruptive as it calls for the urgency affecting the revolutionary change, for that powerful acceleration in time per-

Association, February 23, 2018: → conference2018.collegeart.org/?s=teachable+monuments/.

² For an updated bibliographical survey see Fureix, *Iconoclasme et révolutions*, 2014; Idem, “L’iconoclastia, un’azione situata”, *Memoria e Ricerca* 57 (1/2018), pp. 3-7; Arisi Rota, “‘Get it done’. Riflessioni tra iconoclastia e ‘iconoclash’”, *Memoria e Ricerca* 57 (1/2018), pp. 7-10.

ception masterfully outlined by Lynn Hunt.³

In order to replace the iconoclastic gesture in its proper visual context, to catch its original meaning and to work on the double sided action of destroying while regenerating (and of destroying to re-legitimate), the so-called ‘Long 19th century’ – i.e. the 19th century rooted in the late 18th century revolutions and expanded up to the eve of World War I – has proved a fruitful laboratory for both historians and art historians. The project for a monographic issue of the Italian academic journal of Contemporary History *Memoria e Ricerca* was conceived a couple of years ago by Emmanuel Fureix, from the University of Paris-Est Créteil, and myself: it has produced the year 2018 number 1 issue⁴ based on a multidisciplinary approach which can be appreciated within the frame of the symposium *Statues also Die* concept. Even more, the successful dialogue between political and cultural historians and Ancient History scholars has promoted a second step in the laboratory offered by *Memoria e Ricerca*, whose issue 2018 has recently introduced a new survey, *Intersections*, hosting contributions by experts of Egyptian and Ancient Near East civilization as Christian Greco, Clelia Mora and Carlo Lippolis.⁵

In the following pages I am going to offer the reader the cases selected by the co-authors of the project *Memoria e Ricerca* 2018 number 1 issue as an overview on possible research assets, in order to contribute from a different time perspective to the discussion opened by the international symposium.

1. THE AMERICAN STAGE: GEORGE III' STATUE UNDER ATTACK

In American history the passage from colonial time to independence was marked by iconoclastic performances: probably the most famous one inspired William Walcutt's 1857 painting belonging to the Lafayette College Art Collection [Fig. 2]: the July 9, 1776 attack to Joseph Wilton's George III statue in Bowling Green, New York City. The event and its reenactment has been recently in-

³ Hunt, “L'iconoclasme et le temps en révolution”, in: E. Fureix (ed.), *Iconoclasme et révolutions*, 2014 pp. 50-55.

⁴ → <https://www.rivisteweb.it/issn/1127-0195>.

⁵ In the *Intersections/Intersezioni* survey the revised texts of their papers for the Ravenna workshop *Tutti giù per terra! Violenze politiche ed iconoclastia dall'antichità ad oggi* (Ravenna, Biblioteca Oriani, May 11, 2018) are published.



Fig. 2 William Walcutt, *Pulling Down the Statue of George III at Bowling Green, 1857* (Courtesy of Lafayette College Art Collection, Easton, PA).

vestigated by historian of art Wendy Bellion as a powerful recharge of meaning of the public space on the base of early modern age rituals.⁶ The joyful atmosphere, almost a Carnival like, enacting a kind of ‘upside-down world’ is represented clearly in the painting. What we are missing, is the backstage of the performance, nurtured with popular excitement leading to the open space gesture:

Earlier that day, the Declaration of Independence was read aloud to the troops at a public ground [...]; impassioned by the Declaration’s indictment of the British King, the crowd surged from south [...]. Armed with ladders, ropes, and axes, they scaled the pedestal, pulled down the horse and rider, and beheaded the figure of the king. Soldiers transported most of the lead to the adjacent state of Connecticut, where it was melted down and recreated as bullets for use of the American Army; loyalists in one tow, however, concealed several fragments underground, where they remained hidden for decades.⁷

⁶ Bellion, “Iconoclasm in America: From Ritual to Reenactment”, *Memoria e Ricerca* 57 (1/2018), pp. 11-24.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

Bellion underlines that the road taken by the crowd to reach Bowling Green was the same taken a decade earlier by the Stamp Act protestors: “viewed within this geospatial continuum, the iconoclastic actions of 1776 appear to emerge out of the processual landscape of 1765”.⁸ Even more, continuity is to be set between the destruction ritual and British early modern rituals of symbolic regicide:

*the figure was assailed in a manner that suggested the desecration of a real human body: one man pounced upon the trunk of the king, scratching at its skin to remove flakes of gilt; others dragged the limbs though the streets, as if punishing a common criminal- The crowd also decapitated the royal figure, evoking the fate of the seventeenth-century Stuart monarch Charles I. Some wanted to impale the head upon a stake; instead, it was shipped back to London as a proof that the rebels meant business and was concealed beneath the sofa of an English aristocrat.*⁹

The surviving of fragments and the reenactment of the destruction performance in 1909 during the Hudson Fulton Celebration parade tell us that indeed “the statue of King George never really went away”.¹⁰ Even more, the concept of ‘historical reenacting’ seems very interesting in the light of the *Statues Also Dies* collective brainstorming, as Christopher Bachhuber’s pointed out in his contribution when stressing the dimension of “emergency heritage” and of historical reenactment performed on selected targets as a better definition for vandalism.

In 1976, on occasion of the bicentennial celebrations of Independence, New Yorkers in lower Manhattan witnessed a ‘symbolic beheading’ of George III meant as a founding ritual for the Nation. Again, the new Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia, opened in April 2017, offers the visitors a three-dimensional scene of the iconoclasm, with the monument reproduction falling down pulled by the crowd and then standing again on its pedestal, ready for a new iconoclasm. A “perpetual iconoclasm”, Wendy Bellion has called it, has been successfully turned into an amusing and interactive Museum display.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

2. FRENCH REVOLUTION: VANDALISM, ICONOCLASM AND HERITAGE PROTECTION

If we move to the French revolutionary scenario and, following Guillaume Mazeau's inspiring recent work,¹¹ we focus on the 1793-1795 years in Paris, we meet with the will to demolish, but also to build, to restore, to recycle and transform. Of course during the 1792-1793 turning point with the fall of the Monarchy and the rise of the Republic in search for legitimization, all symbols of royalty came under attack: as one deputy of the Convention warned on August 10, 1792, the people was going to pull down all statues in public squares. Such action accomplished by unskilled hands could produce huge damages: hence, the proposal to appoint teachers and architects as supervisors of this and other operations dealing with the reshaping of urban space.

The hardening of the policy against the many surviving material evidences of the monarchy and nobility (besides statues: coats of arms, iconic symbols as the fleurs-de-lis and others covering public buildings and private mansions) did not produce a *tabula rasa* effect. In fact, and this is more important to the *Statues Also Die* project, the awareness for the artistic heritage embodied by these hand-works led to what Mazeau calls "an economics of the visible":¹² Paris municipality, while enforcing the Law on symbols, meant also to wisely manage the transition and the reashaping of public space – conceived as a new 'political landscape' – reducing the risk of what the abbé Grégorire as early as 1794 would label as "revolutionary vandalism" (that is, indiscriminate and undifferentiated destruction). Such an awareness was inspiring the Minister of the Interior when, some ten days before the beheading of Louis XVIII, he said "let's be careful so that the destruction of the (monarchic) symbols will not devastate the shrine of art".¹³

The concept of national artistic heritage was thus born and a special Temporary Commission for the Arts was created in order to differentiate monuments to be preserved from symbols which were to be effaced or at least disguised. Therefore, a selective destruction was carried on.

The perimeter of Art meant as Public Good, or, even better, the invention of

¹¹ Mazeau, "L'amministrazione del visibile. Il divieto d'esporre segni non repubblicani nella Parigi rivoluzionaria (1793-1794)", *Memoria e Ricerca* 57 (1/2018), pp. 25-44.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 27.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

Civic Heritage¹⁴ led to a kind of urban heritage policy that produced a reshaping of the city meant as a proper “environment”¹⁵ for the shared values of the new Republic, but also for new economic interests in search for a wider, less monumentalized public space.

As a mirror-like story, the 1815-1816 phase deeply investigated by Emmanuel Fureix on the base of archive papers,¹⁶ tells us the story of a new iconoclastic wave, the Restoration one, targeting public but also private icons of the revolutionary and Napoleonic period¹⁷ and legitimating the search of private houses for surviving revolutionary symbols and objects. As a result, in some departments a kind of White Terror produced an indiscriminate iconoclasm without rules, often nurtured with local *élites*’ reprisal and frustrated ambitions.¹⁸ As a parallel complementary ritual, public ceremonies of destruction of the sized symbols followed the pattern of exorcising *autodafé* performed here and there on the national territory between Winter and Spring 1816.

3. ITALIAN 1848 REVOLUTION: TARGETED SYMBOLS AND RE-LEGITIMIZATION OF URBAN SPACE

Destruction produced by the urgency of delegitimizing the enemy within and its fallen regime finds a very interesting scenario in the 1848 revolution in the Italian peninsula. A disaggregated geopolitical space, military and politically controlled by the Austrian Empire, the Italian territories under Austrian rule were influenced by Vienna March 6 revolution – following on its turn the Paris events of late February – with a kind of domino effect which produced insurgency in Venice on March 17, and in Milan on March 18. As soon as rumors of the Vienna events spread along the peninsula, with the twist and amplification effect such news were used to, the capital towns of the Italian provinces of Austria rose up

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 42.

¹⁶ Fureix, “Iconoclastia e Restaurazione. Epurare il passato, scongiurare la guerra civile (Francia, 1814-1830)”, *Memoria e Ricerca* 57 (1/2018), pp. 45-60.

¹⁷ As to iconic symbols of the Napoleonic political drama see the seminal work of Hazareesingh, *The Legend of Napoleon*, 2004, and its chapter on seditious objects.

¹⁸ Fureix, “Iconoclastia e Restaurazione”, *Memoria e Ricerca* 57 (1/2018), p. 53.



Fig. 3 Coraggio dimostrato dai Veneziani pella libertà, e prime vittime del 18 marzo 1848, from the lithographic album *Rivoluzione veneta 1848 e 1849*, Venezia, M. Fontana, 1849 ca., belonging to Pasquale Revoltella's Library and reproduced in *Arte e nazione. Dagli Induno a Fattori nelle collezioni del Museo Revoltella*, Trieste 2015, p. 32 (Courtesy of Museo Revoltella Collections).

and in Venice a Republican government was created.

The popular print reproduced in image [Fig. 3] is extremely helpful in documenting the socially mixed actors of the revolutionary outbreak: not a lower class mob at all, it was rather a middle-class crowd (most men wearing top hats and *bourgeois* tailcoats) the one which was engaged on March 18, 1848 in St. Mark square against the Austrian troops, but which was also busy in detaching stones from the pavement and crashing them down out of despise and hatred but also in order to get small stones to be used as weapons.¹⁹ We may presume Austrian symbols were carved on the stones, since more than statues, that destruction wave which spontaneously took place in the lagoon town was targeting coats of arms and public buildings signs, most of them showing the hated two-headed eagle. On March 22, when people in town came to know that the Austrian Com-

¹⁹ The print was an illustration for the instant book *Rivoluzione veneta 1848 e 1849*, Venezia 1849 ca. I wish to thank the Museo Revoltella, Trieste, for the kind permission to reproduce the image taken from this book belonging to the library of Baron Pasquale Revoltella and published in the exhibition catalogue *Arte e nazione*, 2015, p. 32.

mander of the Arsenal had been killed and that the Arsenal was safely under the control of the new Navy commanders, in the *calli* and *campielli* ordinary people celebrated the new city government by detaching, crushing under their feet and throwing in the canals symbols of the foreign rule. Such performance acted as public and ostentatious contempt which, at the same time, was successfully founding and legitimating a new power: the Republican one.

What is even more interesting, along the peninsula the news of the Vienna revolution provoked attacks to the Austrian diplomatic missions where not diplomats themselves, but rather signs and flags were targeted, pulled down and destroyed in a public celebration of what people believed as the end of the Austrian Empire. This domino effect took place in Florence, Leghorn, Rome and Naples. In Rome the Austrian legation located in Palazzo Venezia was attacked and its symbols dragged around the surrounding main streets and squares, then burnt at evening in Piazza del Popolo in a carnival like joyful atmosphere as the one in Bowling Green, July 1776. A middle-class crowd, not a *populace* mob, was witnessed by diplomats, all of them amazed by that ritual and by the geographical extension of the attack targeting Austria and the symbols of its power and presence in the peninsula.²⁰

The failure of 1848 revolution in Italy and the new Restoration, a hard one especially in the Austrian provinces which fell *de facto* under Marshal Radetzky's military regime, made the 1850s a very challenging decade for the patriotic environment. Open air dissent being unthinkable almost everywhere, underground conspiracy reorganized its network and targets, while a kind of silent boycotting dissent took place thanks to liberal élites.²¹ In that time, patriotic feelings and messages were often committed to works of art (statue and paintings, as well as popular prints) which disguised national ambitions and hope. This is the case of an important painting by Domenico Morelli, a Neapolitan artist close to the patriotic milieu of his town [Fig. 4]. *Gli Iconoclasti*, *The Iconoclasts* is the title of the masterpiece dating 1855 (representing monk Lazzaro, caught while painting holy images in a crypt, condemned to have his hand cut) which was exhibited in Naples and appreciated by the patriotic environment aware of the allusion to the fight for civic freedom and defense of art masterpieces. The green-white-red

²⁰ Arisi Rota, "‘Così brutale insulto’. Gesti iconoclasti nella penisola italiana tra 1848 e Seconda Restaurazione", *Memoria e Ricerca* 57 (1/2018), pp. 61-76.

²¹ Arisi Rota, "Milano e il patriottismo alternativo nel post-1848: prove di boicottaggio urbano e di iconoclastia", *Storia urbana* 154 (1/2017), pp. 11-29.



Fig. 4 Domenico Morelli, *Gli iconoclasti*, 1855 (Courtesy of Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali - Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte. Ministero per i Beni e le attività culturali e del turismo - Fototeca del Polo Museale della Campania).

colors meaning of the garments of two personages in the scene (such colors alluding to Italian national colors) was caught by a special visitor of the exhibition, king Ferdinand of Bourbon, who, using vernacular, immediately warned Morelli to avoid such hot and ‘engaged’ subjects for his future works.

4. SPAIN 1909: ANTICLERICAL ICONOCLASM?

The relation between iconoclasm and religion focused in Domenico Morelli's painting takes us to the early 20th century case of attack not to statues as such, but to churches: the *semana trágica* which took place in Barcelona in July 1909 is the challenging topic investigated by Enrico Acciai, for the special issue of *Memoria e Ricerca*, and based on contemporary sources and testimonies of the tragic events which set the Spanish town on fire.²²

Originated by popular opposition to the military escalation in Spanish Morocco, the urban turmoil was prepared by a strike, announced for July 26, and from the industrial suburbs it spread to the central districts, targeting, since July 27, churches and buildings related to the Church, such as monasteries and convents. Iconoclasm mixed then with anticlericalism and popular violence targeted also objects and holy images taken out from churches and exhibited or mocked during Carnival like processions. At the end of the week, some 80 religious buildings and monuments had been destroyed but only three priests had been killed: violence was meant against places and material evidence of the religious authority, not against the people representing and serving it. A popular protest against war in Morocco had thus, out of hatred, turned in a spontaneous, fierce attack against the Catholic Church. The context of the iconoclast fury of 1909 is to be known in order to understand Spanish 20th-century waves of anticlericalism, as the one which would arise in Summer 1936.

5. LONDON 1914: PHYSICAL VS. MORAL BEAUTY AND ART VULNERABILITY

The last case I would like to propose deals with a very interesting pattern of destruction, that not of a statue but of a bi-dimensional female figure, icon of naked beauty: Velázquez's *Venus au miroir*, or *Rockeby Venus*, exhibited in London National Gallery. The painting was the protagonist of an attack by a militant suffragette, Mary Richardson, on March 10, 1914, when she slashed seven times

²² Acciai, "Una città in fiamme. Furia iconoclasta nella Barcellona del 1909", *Memoria e Ricerca* 57 (1/2018), pp. 77-94.

the painted body in its back and neck. The case has been recently revisited by historian of art Bruno Nassim Aboudrar, and I am going to stress some key passages from his text.²³

According to Mary Richardson's own versions of the story, she had targeted the painting in order to destroy an icon of male chauvinist worship, as well as a "financially valuable object". Her rebellion was justified on the basis of the dualism physical beauty vs. moral beauty, being moral beauty the one embodied by women's right movement leader Emmeline Pankhurst, at that time in prison. The destruction of the iconic painting was therefore meant by Richardson as a compensation for Pankhurst's destruction in jail.

While the emotional echo of the iconoclastic gesture was not a lasting one for the public opinion of the time, its impact on the art world was important since it implied the big question of art vulnerability focused by the Turin symposium itself. The restoration of the painting, aiming at cancelling all evidence of the attack, as well as the silence policy adopted by the National Gallery and by the catalogue of the 2015 exhibition in Paris at the Grand Palais, document the will to place the object *outside* from its own history, the iconoclastic attack being naturally part of it.

Of course, fear of imitators of Mary Richardson's gesture is understandable. Yet, a deeper and more sophisticated analysis, as the one developed by Dario Gamboni in his *The Destruction of Art. Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution*,²⁴ supports the theory of an evolution, a transformation implied by the iconoclastic gesture on the object-victim: such a transformation belongs to the story of the object and it is not to be denied or censored. Time and events affecting the work of art belong to the life of the objects, no matter if advanced restoration technologies can perfectly intervene and 'repair' damages.

This case taken from the intersection between history of social protest and history of art faces us with the dilemma of restoration/conservation and with the potentiality of destruction displayed by Museums activities meant to preserve while destroying and dismembering masterpieces from the past. As Christian Greco has clearly put it in his introductory essay to the catalogue of the *Stat-*

²³ Aboudrar, "Mary Richardson allo specchio. Interpretazioni di un gesto iconoclasta", *Memoria e Ricerca* 57 (1/2018), pp. 95-112.

²⁴ Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art*, 1997.

ues *Also Die* exhibition, the *dissecta membra* issue is a good evidence of how past conservation policies have sometimes contributed to dislocation and ‘scattering’ of objects, better than to their preservation.²⁵

CONCLUSIONS

The selected cases here presented offer just a quick overview on iconoclastic gestures and experiences along the run of the contemporary age, from its late 18th-century roots in the Atlantic Revolutions up to the violent eve of what would burst out as World War I. Many other cases could have been selected and analyzed.

Yet, all cases show the common value of the iconoclastic gestures and rituals as powerful performances of legitimization and de-legitimization, imbued with deep political value. Re-generation, protest, politicization, conquest and reshaping of public/urban space are key dimensions which offer evidence of the political charge committed to the attack to statues, buildings, symbols, signs, paintings, especially in time of regime change or transition.

The visual turn which has affected Contemporary History scholarly investigation is responsible for a deeper insight in the story of strategies of destruction as well as of protection of the artistic heritage and of the identity and memory heritage of single communities throughout time. The need to approach objects from a biographical perspective is imperative: we must insert them in their time experience (the time when they were conceived, created and located) and avoid anachronistic interpretation affected by current social and cultural mood.

In short, the urgency for contextualization (also as far as the quarrel about Fascist monuments is concerned) is imperative: the artistic and memory heritage is to be protected from destruction but also from brutal de-contextualization. Removal is not a solution. Probably a wiser and fruitful intervention according to the evolution in collective memory and community belonging is the one achieved in Bolzano, Italy. The boundary town, which under the Fascist regime underwent a drastic italianization process, hosts a huge Monument to Victory in perfect Fascist style, accomplished in 1926-1928 by architect Mario Piacentini to

²⁵ Greco, “Il museo e la sua natura”, in: C. Ciccopiedi (ed.), *Anche le statue muoiono*, 2018, pp. 21-26.

celebrate the victory of Italy in World War I on the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, but also a monumental front gate to the Offices of the Financial Courts, dominating Piazza del Tribunale. In 2011 a public contest was launched for a project meant to re-interpret the location according to the updated public sensibility. The selected project (out of 486 participants) charged with new meaning the huge 36 meters long bas-relief created by Hans Piffrader for the main entrance, rhetorically celebrating “The triumph of Fascism”, by installing on it a display of led-lights reproducing one Hannah Arendt’s sentence, pronounced during a 1964 broadcast interview: “Nobody has the right to obey”.²⁶ In November 2017 the inauguration of the display took place with a sober public ceremony.

In such a case, the no longer bearable evidence of the historical passages suffered by the town and its territory has been successfully re-read and re-offered to public eyes in the mood of an up-to-date sensibility about the outcomes of 20th-century totalitarian regimes. The Bolzano case seems to me a good example of how public intervention on a monument can successfully match the respect for its history and ‘biography’ with the respect for the evolution of public memory and collective historical awareness.

²⁶ → www.bassorilievomonumentale-bolzano.com/it/i-temi/arendt.html

and → www.bassorilievomonumentale-bolzano.com/it/i-temi/2017-installazione.html.

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DELIBERATING DESTRUCTION TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPES IN THE KONYA PLAIN, TURKEY

Christoph Bachhuber

There are two seemingly irreconcilable approaches to the targeted damage of archaeological landscapes. One is upheld by quantitative archaeological survey methodologies and stewardship discourses that prioritize the preservation of archaeological landscapes. The other prioritizes the self-determination of people who inhabit archaeological landscapes and is informed by (qualitative) ethnographic methodologies. This paper uses the context of a geographically extensive regional survey in south-central Turkey to address different patterns of archaeological site damage in the study area. Assessments of inhabited archaeological landscapes need to combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies and should fully account for their respective ethical positions. These varied data and analyses can be integrated towards the implementation of ethical and sustainable research and heritage initiatives in long-term commitments to archaeological fieldwork.

Around 1980 a dynamite charge was set into a hieroglyphic-inscribed rock monument at Kızıldağ in the Konya Plain in central Turkey [Fig. 1]. The monument was commissioned by a king called Hartapu who ruled a territory in the Konya Plain during the Iron Age.¹ The blast tore into one inscribed block scattering fragments of two separate hieroglyphic inscriptions down the hillside.² To date there is no local record of this event and the motivations to blow up the monument are not obvious.

¹ The date of the monument continues to be disputed, ranging from the 12th century BCE based on paleographic considerations (see Hawkins, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions*, 2000) to the 9th century BCE based on the visual representation of the king (see Fig. 1), which shows many 'Assyrianizing' features that appear to be contemporary with this later dating (see Eringhaus, *Das Ende, das ein Anfang war*, 2014).

² Hawkins, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions*, 2000.

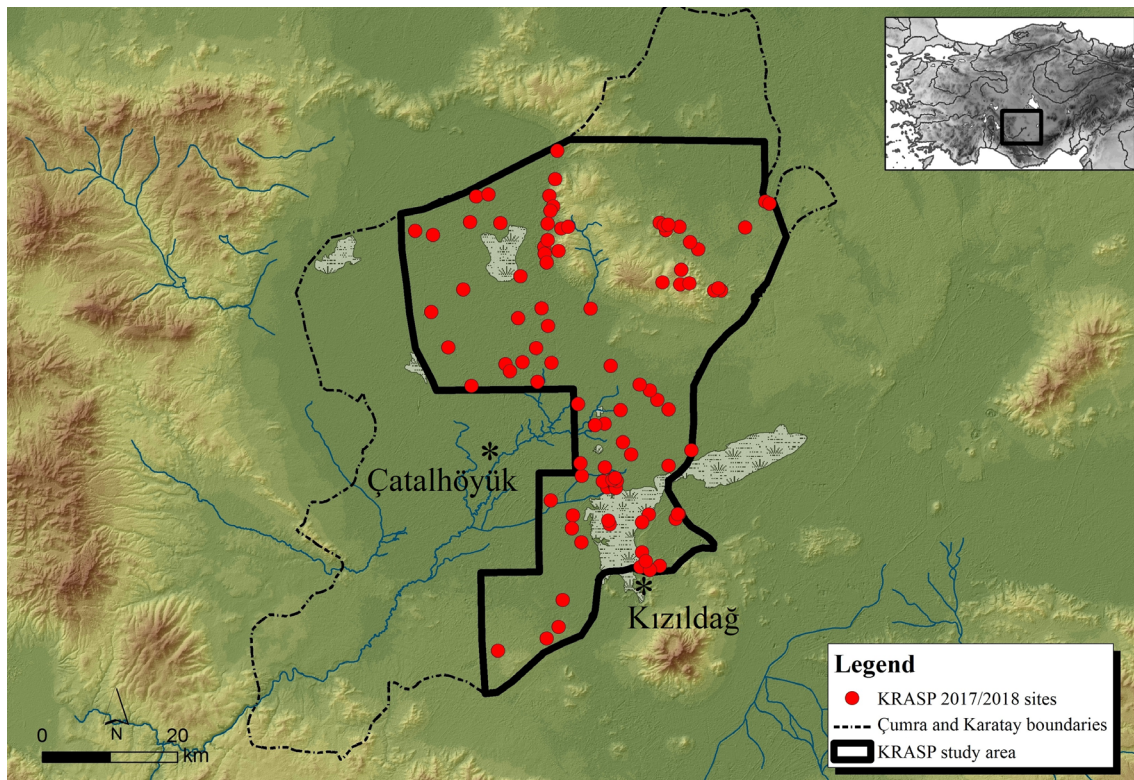


Fig. 1 Map of the Konya Plain showing the KRASP survey area in the 2017 and 2018 field seasons and sites mentioned in the text.

The image of King Hartapu in **Fig. 2** is known locally as ‘*çolak papaz*’ – the one-armed priest. In local folk legend the image of the priest is associated with the Late Antique/Byzantine churches and monasteries that are so prominent in this region. While the image has been locally interpreted as a prevalent Greek/Christian inhabitant of the Konya Plain³ there are reasons to doubt iconoclastic motivations behind its destruction. The image of King Hartapu (or the one-armed priest) was not damaged by the blast and has not been otherwise defaced. Rather the dynamite charge appears to have been set to dislodge a large stone block, exposing one side of the block that is carved with the image of the king.

Also, a similar destruction has occurred more recently. In 2009 Roman reliefs carved into a cliff face at the site of Adamkayalar near Mersin about 100 km of southeast of Konya were partially damaged in a dynamite blast. When a Mersin University archaeologist was interviewed about the destruction of the Adam-

³ For local historical memory of the Greek/Christian *Rum*, see Shankland, “Villagers and the Distant Past”, in: I. Hodder (ed.), *Towards Reflexive Method in Archaeology*, 2000.



Fig. 2 Drawing reproduction of an image of King Hartapu carved into the Kızıldağ rock monument (modified from Hawkins, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions*, 2000).

kayalar reliefs by the Turkish media he was quoted as saying: “The situation we experienced here is not different from the destruction of historical artifacts in Afghanistan”,⁴ referring to the Bamiyan Buddhas that were blown up by Mullah Omar in 2001.

The motivations to destroy the Bamiyan and Adamkayalar monuments nevertheless appear different. Mullah Omar broadcast the explosive images to the world in a televised production. At Adamkayalar, the men who set the dynamite charge were allegedly treasure hunters who had targeted an archaeological feature in the landscape to prospect for a hidden cache of gold. The difference is between a public and ideologically motivated spectacle in the context of Islamic

⁴ → <https://www.cyark.org/news/dynamite-damages-ancient-reliefs-in-turkey> (last accessed October 2020).

extremism,⁵ and a clandestine activity at Adamkayalar which fits into a much larger pattern of sanctioned and unsanctioned treasure hunting in Turkey today (see below).⁶

The direct comparison between the Bamiyan Buddhas and the Adamkayalar reliefs reveals what Bernbeck has described as a “*furor decontextualis*” in responses to the targeted destruction of archaeological landscapes in the Middle East.⁷ The quoted Mersin archaeologist disregarded the historical and social dimensions of the dynamite blasts at both Bamiyan and Adamkayalar, failing ultimately to explain how and why such violence was enacted in the first place. For Bernbeck, attempts to understand the iconoclasm of Mullah Omar in Afghanistan, or ISIL/Daesh in Syria and Iraq, or the motivations to blow up the Adamkayalar and Kızıldağ monuments, should not be understood as a justification for such activities. Rather, when academic responses become normative they become by definition less critical, less analytical, and less academic. This contribution aims to contextualize related activities in the Konya Plain as part of a long-term research commitment to this region.

The editors of this volume (titled *Statues also die*) have encouraged a comparison between the fates of archaeological statues in the Middle East with the fates of African statues from ethnographic collections that feature in the 1953 documentary film by the same title (*Les statues meurent aussi*). For the makers of the 1953 documentary African statues experienced death when they were re-contextualized in European collections. Their vitality was drained when they were displayed in museums as witnesses to a primitive past. But for the makers of the documentary and other commentators on the film⁸ the spiritual death of an African statue can be paradoxically reviving when the same object in the same ethnographic collection features in the contemporary art of Africa today. The spiritual vitality of the object has been replaced by a discursive vitality in the post-colonial present.

By making the comparison between the death of ethnographic and ancient statues it is worth considering the ontological status of archaeological objects

⁵ For ISIL/Daesh see Harmanşah, “ISIS, heritage, and the spectacles of destruction”, *Near Eastern Archaeology* 78.3 (2015a).

⁶ For analysis of sanctioned treasure hunting in Turkey see: → <https://www.saratprojesi.com/en/resources/sarats-features/licensed-treasure-hunting-in-turkey-where-how-why> (last accessed October 2020).

⁷ Bernbeck, “Heritage Politics”, in: R. Boytner et al. (eds.), *Controlling the Past, Owning the Future*, 2010.

⁸ See de Groof, “Statues Also Die”, *Image and Narrative* 11.1 (2010).

more broadly. Over 99% of the material remains of the archaeological past have been lost to oblivion and will remain lost to oblivion. A human will not gaze upon those objects again. Yet a small percentage of the material remains of the past have been salvaged from oblivion through sanctioned excavation or un-sanctioned digging or by erosional and other taphonomic processes. Archaeological objects that were potentially consigned to oblivion (and death) have been made present, or have become “reactivated” in human experience.⁹

From this perspective I question whether ancient statues can be killed by perpetrators of ideological and political violence. The performative act of killing statues at Mosul in Iraq or at Bamiyan in Afghanistan paradoxically revived them in a global discourse. They have achieved a kind of immortality and will die only when they have become erased from local, national, and global memory. The notion of killing an archaeological statue risks becoming normative when the ancient life of the object is reified, and the trauma of its ‘death’ masks the recent historical or contemporary past of the same object.

In this paper I expand the notion of damage/destruction to encompass large pattern impacts on archaeological landscapes in the Konya Plain in central Turkey. Rather than focusing on individual and dramatic events, I use the context of a geographically extensive regional survey (in the Konya Plain) to address pervasive ‘looting’ and ‘spoliation’ in the study area. On the one hand, KRASP [Fig. 1], like many other survey projects before it, has been recording targeted damage to archaeological landscapes [Fig. 3]. But these quantitative data fall short of explaining why such destruction occurs and otherwise fail to contextualize destructive patterns or occurrences. What is more problematic, such survey projects risk becoming little more than surveillance on the people who inhabit the same archaeological landscapes without necessarily offering countermeasures towards a sustainable strategy.

One of the largest challenges facing field archaeologists and heritage researchers and professionals is reconciling two divergent ethics: one towards the stewardship of the fragments of the archaeological past, and the other concerned with the self-determination of local communities to use the material remains of the past in ways that benefit them.¹⁰ Methodologically, the former ethic is up-

⁹ Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos, “What Is Archaeological Ethnography?”, *Public Archaeology* 8.2-3 (2009).

¹⁰ Barker, “Looting, the Antiquities Trade”, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 47 (2018).

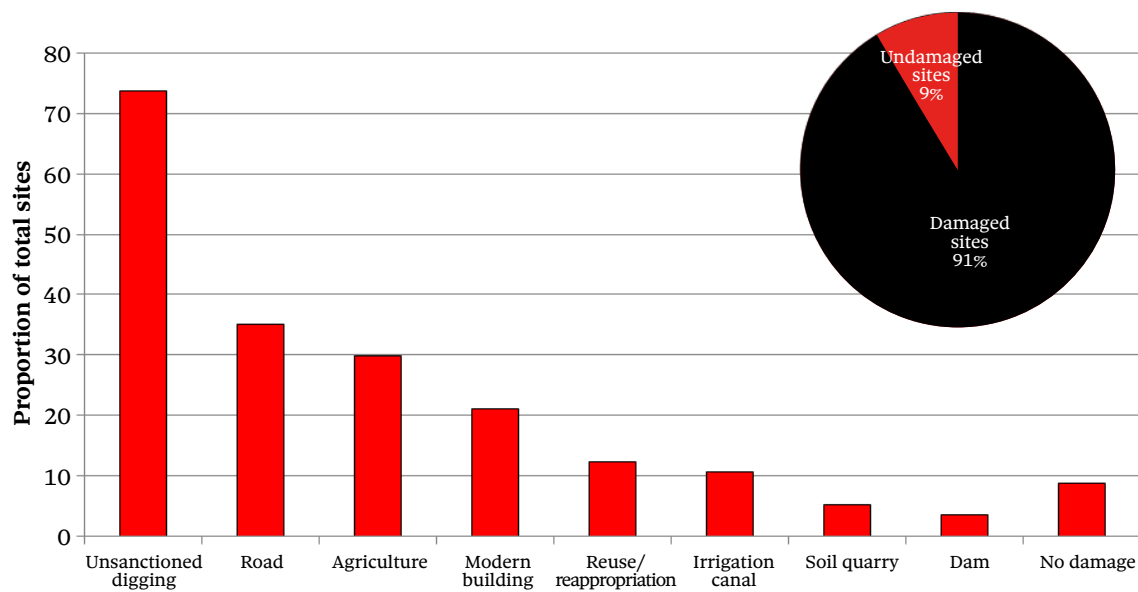


Fig. 3 Graph showing frequency of damage to archaeological sites in the KRASP study area.

held by the quantitative survey approaches of archaeologists. The latter ethic problematizes the concepts of ‘looting’ or ‘spoliation’ (see below) by prioritizing local value systems, experiences and needs. This qualitative approach is based in ethnographic methodologies which appear, on the surface, to be irreconcilable with the quantitative approaches of stewardship above.

Little effort has been made to integrate the two approaches under one research agenda. In this paper I introduce some of the attempts of the Konya Regional Archaeological Survey Project (KRASP) to begin such a dialogue. It is hoped that by combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies and fully accounting for their respective ethical positions, these varied data and analyses can be integrated towards the implementation of ethical and sustainable research and heritage development in KRASP’s long term commitment to the Konya Plain.

QUANTIFYING A ‘CRISIS’: ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEYS OF MODERNITY

Decades of political instability, infrastructural development and urban sprawl have accelerated the rate of damage to archaeological landscapes in the Middle East. The acceleration has given rise to a ‘crisis discipline’ among archaeologists

and heritage professionals in this region. The crisis is underpinned by the concept of an archaeological record: an entity that is studied, curated, and indeed created by the same archaeologists and heritage professionals.¹¹ The archaeological record is in crisis due to the impact of warfare, looting, and other forms of destruction related to the territorial advances of extremist religious groups, reclamation of marginal landscapes through industrial farming, and urban sprawl.

Methodologically, archaeologists have responded to the crisis as ‘stewards’ of the archaeological record, for example by mobilizing aerial and satellite-based surveillance technologies to monitor such destructive activities¹² and to ideally avert them in the future through cooperation with law enforcement and other governmental agencies and NGO’s. On the ground approaches include emergency preservation measures at at-risk archaeological sites,¹³ the crowd sourcing of video footage of destruction to archaeological or cultural heritage, in particular in war zones¹⁴ and the development of training programmes for archaeologists and heritage officials in impacted areas.¹⁵

Since 2016 the Konya Regional Archaeological Survey Project (KRASP) has been recording a wide range of modern/contemporary activities that damage or otherwise impact the archaeological landscapes in the Konya Plain [Fig. 3]. All archaeological sites experience damage as the result of one of two taphonomic processes. Schiffer originally made a distinction between *n*-transforms (natural, normally erosional) and *c*-transforms (cultural). *C*-transforms can be identified in any period of human re-habitation or re-use when the material remains of the past have been altered by re-habitation or re-use.¹⁶

¹¹ Wylie, “The Promises and Perils of Stewardship”, in: L. Meskell and P. Pells (eds.), *Embedding Ethics*, 2005.

¹² For example Casana and Panahipour, “Satellite-based Monitoring of Looting”, *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies* 2.3 (2014); Brodie and Contreras, “The Economics of the Looted Archaeological Site”, in: P.K. Lazrus and A.W. Barker (eds.), *All the King’s Horses*, 2012; Fradley and Sheldrick, “Satellite Imagery and Heritage Damage in Egypt”, *Antiquity* 97. 357 (2016); Parcak et al., “Satellite Evidence of Archaeological Site Looting in Egypt”, *Antiquity* 97. 357 (2016).

¹³ Al Quntar et al., “Responding to a Cultural Heritage Crisis”, *Near Eastern Archaeology* 78.3 (2015).

¹⁴ Danti, “Ground-based Observations of Cultural Heritage Incidents”, *Near Eastern Archaeology* 78.3 (2015).

¹⁵ See for British Museum ‘Iraq Scheme’: → <https://www.britishmuseum.org/our-work/international/iraq-scheme> (last accessed October 2020); for ‘Safeguarding Archaeological Assets in Turkey’ project see → <https://saratprojesi.com/en> (last accessed June 2019). For training in the methodologies of the Endangered Archaeology of the Middle East and North Africa project see: Hobson, “EAMENA Training in the Use of Satellite Remote Sensing and Digital Technologies in Heritage Management: Libya and Tunisia Workshops 2017–2019”, *Libyan Studies* 50: 63–71 (2019).

¹⁶ Schiffer, *Formation Processes*, 1987.

At what point a *c*-transform is seen to be damaging an archaeological landscape, rather than being constituted in an archaeological landscape, depends on an arbitrary definition of the ‘archaeological record’. For example, a range of activity in the Konya Plain during the Late Ottoman period damaged much earlier mounded settlements in the KRASP survey area, including nitrate mining (for munitions) and large-scale irrigation works. The impacts of these activities form part of the historical landscape of the Konya Plain. Yet by excluding the Ottoman mining and irrigation projects from the archaeological record, KRASP risks reinforcing pervasive biases in the field archaeology of the Middle East, including the perceived secondary status of Ottoman (and more broadly Islamic) pasts.¹⁷

The large-scale irrigation works beginning in the late Ottoman period in the early 20th century transformed a marginal landscape in the Konya Plain into one of the most agriculturally productive regions in the Middle East. After a century of resettlement and cultivation the resultant *c*-transforms observed in mounded settlements include the vertical cuts of roads and irrigation canals, horizontal damage from ploughing/tilling, the submersion of mounded settlements in the reservoirs of irrigation dams, and the re-settlement of long-abandoned archaeological sites.

Other forms of more targeted damage have followed in the wake of the re-settlement and re-use of this landscape. The graph in **Fig. 3** shows that more archaeological sites in the KRASP survey area were impacted by unsanctioned digging than any other activity. KRASP has recorded evidence for digging activities that range from single shovel pits to massive trenches dug by mechanized excavators. The reuse (or ‘spoliation’) of mostly Roman and Late Antique architectural and funerary elements is also pervasive in the villages of our study area (**Fig. 3** and **Fig. 2**, see further below).

All these activities constitute the cumulative effect of a century of cultivation and resettlement on the archaeological landscapes of the Konya Plain.¹⁸ They have radically transformed the landscape into a “modern one”, in line with the destructive agency that has been identified in most modernizing projects.¹⁹ Im-

¹⁷ Baram and Carroll, “The Future of the Ottoman Past”, in: U. Baram and L. Carroll (eds.), *A Historical Archaeology of the Ottoman Empire*, 2002.

¹⁸ For a comparable study see Cunliffe, “Archaeological Site Damage”, *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies* 2.3 (2014).

¹⁹ González-Ruibal, “Time to Destroy”, *Current Anthropology* 49.2 (2008).



Fig. 4 Showing graffiti on a tumulus that had been damaged by unsanctioned digging. The graffiti reads: "Turgay Işık" (name) and "deli coban" ("crazy shepherd"), with the date 02/10/2011, presumably the day the tumulus was dug by Turgay Işık (photo by M. Massa, with permission).



Fig. 5 Re-used ancient architectural element in the wall of a modern farm building (photo by author).

pacts are the result of agricultural and infrastructural development and targeted interventions in the form of re-used ancient architectural elements, unsanctioned digging, and explosive demolition. All these data have been compiled using conventional archaeological survey methodologies, including field-walking and the assessment of aerial (satellite) imagery. The data are quantifiable (e.g. in the graph of **Fig. 3**), archaeological, and uphold the conceptualization of a ‘crisis’ in relation to the archaeological heritage of the Konya Plain.

TOWARDS A QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF INHABITED ARCHAEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPES

The quantitative approaches above make a clear ontological and chronological distinction between the material remains from the ancient past (to be safe-guarded) and the activities of the present (to be monitored). This contribution develops an alternative conception of an archaeological landscape by introducing multiple perspectives, Foucauldian knowledge/power discourses, and the relational ontology of artifacts. It blurs the distinction between an ancient past and the (modern) present by emphasising the durational qualities of ‘ancient’ things.²⁰ For Harrison the methodologies of regional archaeological survey can become “a creative engagement with the present and the spaces in which the past intervenes”.²¹

Clearly ethnography has a role in understanding how people today inhabit archaeological landscapes. Relevant methodologies were pioneered in Hodder’s excavation at Çatalhöyük.²² Arguably the greatest success of the Çatalhöyük ethnographies²³ relates to the way they informed later outreach initiatives towards developing sustainable archaeological heritage strategies. The qualitative data were used in attempts to break down barriers between the exclusionary activity

²⁰ Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos, “What is Archaeological Ethnography?”, *Public Archaeology* 8.2-3 (2009).

²¹ Harrison, “Scratching the Surface”, in: A. González-Ruibal (ed.), *Reclaiming Archaeology*, 2013.

²² See **Fig. 1** for the location of Çatalhöyük in relation to the study area of the 2017 and 2018 KRASP field seasons.

²³ See Bartu, “Where is Çatalhöyük?”, in: I. Hodder (ed.), *Towards Reflexive Method in Archaeology: the Example at Çatalhöyük*, 2000; Shankland, “Villagers and the Distant Past”, in: I. Hodder (ed.), *Towards Reflexive Method in Archaeology*, 2000.

of archaeological research and the interests of local and visiting publics.²⁴

This research was less successful at analysing the historical asymmetries that are inherent in legacy archaeological sites like Çatalhöyük, and the political economic impact of archaeological practice at such sites today.²⁵ Similarly, it is worth considering the analytical value of recording local perceptions and stories about an archaeological landscape with a long excavation history such as at Çatalhöyük (beginning in the 1960's). Çatalhöyük (the site) has been dominated by the authoritative discourses and activities of scientific archaeology for over half a century. Some have been critical of the use of ethnographic analytics at a site like Çatalhöyük because ethnography in such a context risks becoming little more than a 'rendering as folk tales' of local experiences and perspectives,²⁶ which are implicitly or explicitly juxtaposed with the scientific and national/global heritage discourses of the site.

Despite the global prominence of Catalhoyuk as an archaeological endeavour, the majority of the archaeological landscapes of the Konya Plain remain outside the purview of scientific discourses/activities and national/global heritage. These 'marginal landscapes' are more open to alternative (non-scientific or non-authoritative) uses and interpretations. The following discussion develops from KRASP's study of the same landscapes in the Konya Plain from 2017 to the present [Fig. 1].²⁷ Short of providing an ethnographic account (relevant fieldwork is scheduled to begin under the aegis of KRASP in 2021), I summarize some of the experiences and preliminary observations of KRASP from the first fieldwork seasons.

Two patterns of targeted damage have emerged in the archaeological landscapes of the Konya Plain: the widespread re-use of ancient architectural elements ('spoliation', see Figs. 3, 5), and the even more pervasive evidence for 'looting' of archaeological sites (see Figs. 3, 4). Kinney has defined a spoliated object as 'a survivor of violence',²⁸ adhering to the original Latinate term for plunder or booty in a time of war. Similarly, looting is rooted in the Hindi term

²⁴ See Atalay, "We Don't Talk About Çatalhöyük, We Live it", *World Archaeology* 42 (2010); Tringham 2012.

²⁵ For contradictions in the Çatalhöyük mission see Berbneck "The Political Dimension of Archaeological Practices", in: D. Potts (ed.), *A Companion*, 2011.

²⁶ Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos, "What is Archaeological Ethnography?", *Public Archaeology* 8.2-3 (2009).

²⁷ See for preliminary results Massa et al., "The Konya Regional Archaeological Survey Project", *Anatolica* 45 (2019).

²⁸ Kinney, "Introduction", in: R. Brilliant and D. Kinney (eds.), *Reuse Value*, 2011.

lut meaning ‘to rob’ and was originally synonymous with appropriating *spolia* in war.²⁹ Today looting is often associated with activities in the wake of natural disasters, civil unrest, and warfare. I start from the position that both terms can be shown to be problematic in assessments of the archaeological landscapes of the Konya Plain.

Spolia/spoliation is a gloss on a range of behaviour in this region. For example, the re-use of mostly Roman and Late Antique architectural and funerary elements can seem very prosaic when ancient architectural elements feature in construction projects in the walls of houses or gardens [Fig. 5], or when sarcophagi are re-used as watering troughs in farms and villages. The re-use can also be more ideologically significant through appropriations in cemetery contexts in particular. In one cemetery KRASP recorded different architectural and sculptural elements from at least one Late Antique church used as grave stones. In another cemetery, an architectural element from a Late Antique church (with Greek-inscriptions and cruciform iconography) was being used as part of a *musalla taşı*: the table for displaying the deceased before burial.

A new vocabulary is needed and new analytical categories which recontextualizes such objects in the recent and contemporary pasts. This shift in perspective, first and foremost, might include replacing the term ‘spoliation’ which implies an act of violence against donor contexts (i.e. a Late Antique church) with a more neutral term like ‘appropriation’.³⁰ For all appropriated objects a qualitative assessment might begin by asking whether they represent recycling as a ready-made resource or a more programmatic display of history. Similarly, distinctions can be made between prosaic-seeming reuse, and the reuse of elements in more ideologically significant contexts like cemeteries. A qualitative assessment can address how and why and with what implications ancient architectural and funerary elements have become immanent in local landscapes, forming part of the ‘stratified materiality of places’³¹ or the materialization of local histories, memories and events.

Conversely when ‘looted’ objects become unearthed they tend not to remain in local landscapes. Looting (in any form or in any context) is a type of theft, which is often characterized by unauthorized entry, misappropriation of prop-

²⁹ Green, “Looting, Law, and Lawlessness”, *Tulane Law Review* 81.4 (2007).

³⁰ See Kinney, “Introduction”, in: R. Brilliant and D. Kinney (eds.), *Reuse Value*, 2011.

³¹ Harmanşah, *Place, Memory, and Healing*, 2015b.

erty, and often concerted action. Looting can be distinguished from other forms of theft in the lack of normal security provision often brought on by emergency circumstances like natural disasters, civic unrest, or warfare.³² In archaeological landscapes, where looting has been defined as the “illicit, unrecorded and unpublished excavation of ancient sites to provide antiquities for commercial profit”³³ there is rarely any security provision.

The most widely publicized occurrences of unsanctioned digging resemble more conventional forms of looting. For example, there is a clear correlation between profound socio-political instability in the Middle East and the increased frequency of unsanctioned digging following in the wake of the US-led foreign invasion of Iraq, regime change, and during the territorial advances of ISIS/Daesh.³⁴ Unsanctioned digging has also been shown to be linked with criminal networks and other forms of trafficking of drugs, weapons, and people,³⁵ including terrorist financing.³⁶

Yet, global surveys have shown unsanctioned digging to be pervasive,³⁷ and often decoupled from other forms of criminal activity and/or socio-political instability. In Turkey, where limited “treasure hunting” is permitted under license,³⁸ folk tales of lost/hidden treasures commonly feature in local accounts of rural landscapes.³⁹ The recent legal recognition of treasure hunting clubs in Turkey has also widely legitimized related activities.⁴⁰ A future ethnography in the Konya Plain, framed within a wider study of inhabited archaeological landscapes, will need to address the following issues since conventional articulations around looting fails to account for the nuances of destruction in the region.

³² Green, “Looting, Law, and Lawlessness”, *Tulane Law Review* 81.4 (2007).

³³ Renfrew, *Loot, Legitimacy and Ownership*, 2000.

³⁴ For overview see Barker, “Looting, the Antiquities Trade”, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 47 (2018).

³⁵ Calvani, “Frequency and Figures of Organized Crime”, in: S. Manacorda (ed.), *Organized Crime in Art and Antiquities* 2009.

³⁶ For ISIS/Daesh see Keller, “Documenting ISIL’s Antiquities Trafficking”, → <https://2009-2017.state.gov/e/eb/rls/rm/2015/247610.htm> (last accessed October 2020).

³⁷ Proulx, “Archaeological Site Looting in ‘Glocal’ Perspective”, *American Journal of Archaeology* 117.1 (2013).

³⁸ For Statute 2863, Chapter 3, Article 24 of the Cultural and Natural Heritage Protection Act published in 1984 see → http://www.unodc.org/res/cld/document/tur/law-1983_html/turkey-Law_on_the_Conservation_of_Cultural_and_Natural_Property.pdf (last accessed June 2019).

³⁹ → <https://www.saratprojesi.com/en/resources/sarats-features/licensed-treasure-hunting-in-turkey-where-how-why> (last accessed June 2019).

⁴⁰ → <https://www.saratprojesi.com/en/resources/sarats-features/licensed-treasure-hunting-in-turkey-where-how-why>.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF UNSANCTIONED DIGGING

There are various stakeholders in the archaeological heritage of the Konya Plain. Each of these stakeholders ascribes a specific value to ancient objects, sites, and landscapes, whether socio-cultural (symbolic, spiritual, aesthetic and educational), economic, or some combination of the two.⁴¹ In the Konya Plain, unsanctioned digging involves local stakeholders but to what extent such activity reflects purely economic values remains to be seen (see below).

The presumption is that artifacts unearthed in unsanctioned excavations are sold locally, whether (illegally) to a dealer in Konya or (legally) to the Konya Regional Museum. The illegal purchase by a dealer begins a long and complex journey for that object which begins in Konya and continues indefinitely through national and international markets. The object provides potential economic benefit to stakeholders at every stage of the commodity chain: during archaeological appraisal, through demand by the collector, and in public appearances including in auction houses.⁴² If the object is bought by the Konya Regional Museum it ceases to circulate as a commodity but continues to yield potential economic benefit. For example, by strengthening the museum's collections and displays the object might help attract further visitor income or public and private subsidies.⁴³

The economic benefit of unsanctioned digging to people living in the Konya Plain remains to be seen. Ethnographic accounts have highlighted structural inequalities that encourage economically marginal people to seek alternative forms of income through 'subsistence digging'.⁴⁴ For Hollowell the condemnation of subsistence digging as "looting" criminalizes communities that are already marginalized, in particular through national laws legislated to punish the theft of national heritage. The ethnographies of Hollowell and others⁴⁵ challenge dominant conceptions of heritage, including its commodification. These accounts privilege the self-determination of local communities over both the

⁴¹ Brodie, "Archaeological Looting and Economic Justice", in: P.M. Messenger and G.S. Smith (eds.), *Cultural Heritage Management*, 2010.

⁴² Kersel, "The Value of a Looted Object", in: R. Skeates et al. (eds.), 2012.

⁴³ Brodie, "Archaeological Looting and Economic Justice", in: P.M. Messenger and G.S. Smith (eds.), *Cultural Heritage Management*, 2010.

⁴⁴ Hollowell, "The Moral Arguments of Subsistence Digging", in: C. Scarre and G. Scarre (eds.), *The Ethics of Archaeology*, 2006.

⁴⁵ See several papers in F. Field et al. (eds.), *Challenging the Dichotomy*, 2016.

hegemonic interests of nation-states and the self-serving stewardship discourses of archaeologists. And yet, doubts have also been raised vis-à-vis the sustainability of subsistence digging as a solution to economic deprivation, in particular because the people involved in digging normally receive only a small percentage of the international market price for an artifact.⁴⁶

At this preliminary stage (i.e. prior to ethnographic fieldwork), KRASP does not have the socio-economic or qualitative data on rural communities in the Konya Plain to distinguish subsistence digging from other motivations to dig. It is clearly possible that unsanctioned digging might provide an extra source of income for seasonal farmers in the Konya Plain. It is also possible that the relative tolerance of treasure hunting within Turkish legal frameworks has lowered the risks involved in unsanctioned digging. Hence, the lowered risks might have encouraged some people to pursue the activity as a hobby rather than as a means of subsistence, with the potential for profit adding incentive.

UN-ECONOMIC VALUES ASSOCIATED WITH UNSANCTIONED DIGGING

The values that uphold unsanctioned digging are as diverse as the people who engage in it. For those who pursue unsanctioned digging as a hobby, their motivation often resembles that of a professional archaeologist. Digging and collecting can enhance an individual's connection to the past of a place.⁴⁷ The past that is often experienced by hobbyists is not dissimilar from official archaeological/historical narratives, but with local and idiosyncratic variations.⁴⁸ Hobbyists also perceive artifacts as belonging to a distant past and worthy of reverence and preservation. The formation and legal recognition of treasure hunting societies and clubs in Turkey points towards the communal aspects of this activity,⁴⁹ with

⁴⁶ See Brodie and Contreras, "The Economics of the Looted Archaeological Site of Bab edh-Dhra", in: P.K. Lazrus and A.W. Barker (eds.), *All the King's Horses*, 2012.

⁴⁷ In Greece see Antoniadou, "Looting Unveiled, Archaeology Revealed", in: A. Simandiraki-Grimshaw and E. Stefanou (eds.), *From Archaeology to Archaeologies*, 2012; and Hart and Chilton, "Digging and Destruction", *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 21.4 (2014).

⁴⁸ See Antoniadou, "Looting Unveiled, Archaeology Revealed", in: A. Simandiraki-Grimshaw and E. Stefanou (eds.), *From Archaeology to Archaeologies*, 2012

⁴⁹ In New England Hart and Chilton, "Digging and Destruction", *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 21.4 (2014).

all the attendant social, emotional and psychological benefits of belongingness. Similarities between hobbyists and professional archaeologists has led to a great deal of mistrust and tension between the two.⁵⁰

Several ethnographic accounts of unsanctioned digging have identified strong ancestral associations with the material remains of the past. Some descendant communities living on or near ‘collector sites’⁵¹ believe objects were left by ancestors to help in times of need.⁵² Here subsistence digging is upheld by a traditional moral framework. And yet, such relationships with the material remains of the past appear to be mostly in the minority of ethnographic accounts. In the Middle East, for example, where the (pre-Islamic) archaeological past often appears disconnected from local pasts,⁵³ ethnographies of unsanctioned digging have revealed little symbolic association with collector sites.⁵⁴ In Israel and Palestine, unsanctioned digging has become associated with ‘negative heritage’.⁵⁵ For (Palestinian) people digging up an (Israeli) past, “looting sites and selling the artifacts bolsters a sense of self-determination, providing some (largely symbolic) measure of control over the situation”.⁵⁶

From one informal conversation KRASP has learned about the involvement of a local imam. One of his pastoral responsibilities includes providing spiritual protection to people involved in unsanctioned digging against potentially malevolent entities (*djin*) that emanate from disturbed Christian and pagan grave sites in particular. The involvement of the imam suggests a moral framework for the activity and resonates with accounts from the Çatalhöyük ethnographies. In villages close to Çatalhöyük there appears to be a strong correlation between real or perceived grave sites and the religious life of these communities.⁵⁷ Attri-

⁵⁰ In Turkey see: → <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-treasure-hunters-form-association-archaeologists-irked-135180> (last accessed October 2020).

⁵¹ Hart and Chilton, “Digging and Destruction”, *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 21.4 (2014).

⁵² Hollowell, “The Moral Arguments of Subsistence Digging”, in: C. Scarre and G. Scarre (eds.), *The Ethics of Archaeology*, 2006.

⁵³ Jacobs and Porter, “Excavating Turath”, in: L. Mortensen and J. Hollowell (eds.), *Ethnographies and Archaeologies*, 2009; for Turkey see Luke and Roosevelt, “Memory and Meaning in Bin Tepe”, in: O. Henry and U. Kelp (eds.) *Tumulus as Sema*, 2016.

⁵⁴ See for Bronze Age burials Politis, “Dealing with the Dealers and Tomb Robbers”, in: N. Brodie and K.W. Tubb (eds.), *Illicit Antiquities*, 2002.

⁵⁵ Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground*, 2001; Kersel, “Transcending borders”, *Archaeologies* 3.2 (2007), pp.81-98.

⁵⁶ Kersel, “The Value of a Looted Object”, in: R. Skeates et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Public Archaeology*, 2012.

⁵⁷ Shankland, “Villagers and the Distant Past”, in: I. Hodder (ed.), *Towards Reflexive Method in Archaeology*, 2000.

butions of supernatural agency to human remains has led to “recourse to Islamic means to ward off unwished consequences when a grave is disturbed”, whether the grave is understood to be Islamic or not.⁵⁸

The graffiti in **Fig. 4** also shows how unsanctioned digging relates to the appropriation of a landscape in the Konya Plain. It is indeed striking that the act has been claimed (and timed/dated) so specifically with the graffiti on the damaged tumulus. It would seem the ‘crazy shepherd’ is posing a direct challenge to the authoritative heritage discourses that would condemn both the digging and the graffiti.

DISCUSSION: TOWARDS RECONCILING DIVERGENT ETHICS AND APPROACHES

Based on comparisons with the Adamkayalar reliefs, it is probable that the Kızıldağ monument was partially blown up whilst prospecting for treasure. The strong correlation between the dynamite blast and unsanctioned digging leads to two seemingly contradictory academic positions: one which prioritizes the preservation of archaeological landscapes and places the blame for their destruction on the commodification of the archaeological past; the other which prioritizes the self-determination of the people who inhabit the same landscapes in an attempt to understand how these activities relate to the political economy and social and moral frameworks of these communities. Most of the data generated in the former approach are quantitative and derive from conventional archaeological survey methodologies. Data represented in the graph in **[Fig. 1]** represents a wide range of activities that leave physical and quantifiable traces on archaeological landscapes. But the ethics of stewardship can also inform qualitative assessments of unsanctioned digging in particular.⁵⁹

An ethnography of unsanctioned digging is perhaps the most challenging of all archaeological subjects for two primary reasons. People involved in this ac-

⁵⁸ Shankland, “Villagers and the Distant Past”, in: I. Hodder (ed.), *Towards Reflexive Method in Archaeology*, 2000.

⁵⁹ See Kersel “Transcending Borders”, *Archaeologies* 3.2 (2007); Kersel, “Walking a Fine Line”, in: M. Sorensen and J. Carman (eds.), *Heritage Studies*, 2010; Kersel, “The Value of a Looted Object”, in: R. Skeates et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Public Archaeology*, 2012.

tivity are often unwilling to be interviewed due to the illegal nature of activities they undertake.⁶⁰ To be sure any study would need to be undertaken without judgement and with an unusually large investment in developing relationships of trust over the long term. Similarly, such a study would need to acknowledge the potentially disruptive aspects of stewardship discourses and activities. The ethical repositioning of such a project reveals the second major difficulty. An approach that is seen to lack judgement on unsanctioned digging does not align with national/global heritage and traditional academic agendas, or the very power structures that control the (national) permitting process and the allocation of research funding.⁶¹

Yet it should no longer be acceptable for large-scale fieldwork projects in Turkey to be implemented without an original commitment of resources and expertise towards issues of archaeological heritage, and ultimately sustainability. Such a commitment should include a full account of the local modality of archaeology in the Konya Plain, including local interpretations and experiences of archaeological landscapes and crucially, local needs. In the long-term, grass roots collaboration between academics and local people will require compromises on both the ethics of stewardship and the ethics of human rights that uphold the self-determination of local communities.

An ethnographic study of unsanctioned digging which examines the political-economic and social contexts of this particular engagement with the past will help identify a range of heritage stakeholders in the Konya Plain. Dialogues will need to begin with all stakeholders (not just those involved in unsanctioned digging) which bring to the fore local needs or expectations for the future of archaeological research and heritage development in the Konya Plain. In short, do local stakeholders see a future in collaboration with KRASP? Or, if given the choice, would they choose to disengage with archaeologists and archaeology all together? If collaboration is indeed desirable, the baseline incentives should be social and economic;⁶² social in the potential of an archaeological landscape to generate local interest and pride, and necessarily to become part of a 'self-defined identity framework' within local publics and politics; economic in the po-

⁶⁰ See Proulx, "Archaeological Site Looting in 'Glocal' Perspective", *American Journal of Archaeology* 117.1 (2013).

⁶¹ McAnany and Rowe, "Re-visiting the Field", *Journal of Field Archaeology* 40.5 (2015).

⁶² Crooke, "The Politics of Community Heritage", *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16 (2010).

tential of an archaeological landscape to produce financial returns in the context of continued archaeological fieldwork⁶³ and heritage tourism. If such incentivizing by KRASP is potentially self-serving and interventionist, then it also represents a pragmatic academic response that balances the (stewardship) ethics of archaeological preservation with the ethical responsibilities of archaeologists towards the people who inhabit archaeological landscapes.⁶⁴

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⁶³ For economics of sanctioned excavations see Brodie, "Archaeological Looting and Economic Justice", in: P.M. Messenger and G.S. Smith (eds.), *Cultural Heritage Management*, 2010.

⁶⁴ Little, "Public Benefits of Public Archaeology", in: R. Skeates et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Public Archaeology*, DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199237821.013.0021.

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“LOST IN ASTONISHMENT”: PALMYRA IN THE EYES OF THE WEST

Maria Teresa Grassi († 2020)

The first successful western expedition to Palmyra was organized at the end of the 17th century by English merchants living in Aleppo; it was successful not only for the safe journey, thanks to the protection of “Assine, King of the Arabs”,¹ but also for the consequent report published in 1695 in *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* by William Halifax, Chaplain to the Factory at Aleppo, as well as for the magnificent panoramic view of the ruins and the subsequent painting made by Gerard Hofstede van Essen, a Dutch artist member of the expedition who rendered the “amazing sight of a multitude of Marble Pillars”.

They were astonished by the probably in part unforeseen ruins:

*[...] you have the Prospect of such Magnificent Ruines, that if it be Lawful to frame a Conjecture of the Original Beauty of the place, by what is still remaining, I question somewhat whether any City in the World could have challenged Precedence of this in its Glory.*²

They saw and reported some Greek inscriptions and they also transcribed the then unknown Palmyrene alphabet. In addition, they had a stroke of luck in finding a remarkable inscription reused in the Sanctuary of Bel, recording the foundation of the family tomb by Septimius Odainat, Zenobia’s husband.³ The legendary queen was already well known in the 17th century, as witnessed by some dramas, such as Calderon de la Barca’s *La Gran Cenobia*, or paintings, for example the one by Genovesino recently (2017) displayed in the exhibition de-

¹ Halifax, “A Relation of a Voyage from Aleppo to Palmyra in Syria”, *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 19 (1695-1697), p. 86.

² Halifax, “A Relation of a Voyage from Aleppo to Palmyra in Syria”, *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 19 (1695-1697), p. 91.

³ Yon, *Inscriptions*, 2012, nr. 545, pp. 410-411; Halifax, “A Relation of a Voyage from Aleppo to Palmyra in Syria”, *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 19 (1695-1697), p. 88.



Fig. 1 Palmyra, Valley of Tombs (→ <http://www.manar-al-athar.ox.ac.uk>).

voted to the painter in Cremona.⁴

Dr. Halifax's impressions of the site are of great interest, and he also reported the first news about the destruction of funerary Palmyrene reliefs in the Valley of Tombs **[Fig. 1]**:

But as great a Curiosity as any were their Sepulchers, being Square Towers, four or five Stories high, and standing on both sides of a hollow-way, towards the North part of the City. They stretch out in length the space of a Mile, and perhaps formerly might extend a great way further. At our first view of them, as we entred the place, we could not conjecture what they were; some thought them the Steeples of ruined Churches, and were in hopes we should have found some footsteps of Christianity here. Others took them to have been Bastions, and part of the Old Fortification [...]. But when we came a day or two after,

⁴ Frangi, Guazzoni and Tanzi (eds.), *Genovesino*, 2017, pp. 154-157.

*more curiously to enquire into them, we quickly found their use. They were all of the same Form, but of different Splendour and Greatness, according to the Circumstances of their Founders. [...] They are two Square Towers [...] beautified too with very lively Carvings and Paintings, and Figures both of Men and Women, as far as Breast and Shoulders; but miserably defaced and broken.*⁵

It was only in the following century that a proper scientific expedition, according to the standards of that time, was arranged by Robert Wood, James Dawkins and John Bouverie (dead before reaching Palmyra). They recruited Giovanni Battista Borra, a renowned architect born in Dogliani (Cuneo), mathematics and drawing teacher at the Royal Academy in Turin. They carefully prepared the voyage:

Two gentlemen, whose curiosity had carried them more than once to the continent, particularly to Italy, thought, that a voyage, properly conducted, to the most remarkable places of antiquity, on the coast of the Mediterranean, might produce amusement and improvement to themselves, as well as some advantage to the public. [...] It was agreed, that a fourth person in Italy, whose abilities as an architect and draftsman we were acquainted with, would be absolutely necessary. We accordingly wrote to him, and fixed him for the voyage. The drawings he made, have convinced all those who have seen them, that we could not have employed anybody more fit for our purpose.

Rome was appointed for our place of rendezvous, where having passed the winter together, we were to proceed to Naples, and there to embark in the spring on board a ship hired for us in London, and fitted out with everything we could think might be useful. [...]

We passed the winter together at Rome, and employed most of that time in refreshing our memories with regard to the ancient history and geography of the countries we proposed to see.

We met our ship at Naples in the spring. She brought from London a library, consisting chiefly of all the Greek historians and poets, some books of antiquities, and the best voyage writers, what mathematical instruments we

⁵ Halifax, "A Relation of a Voyage from Aleppo to Palmyra in Syria", *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 19 (1695-1697), pp. 105-107.

*thought necessary, and such things as might be proper presents for the Turkish Grandees, or others, to whom, in the course of our voyage, we should be obliged to address ourselves.*⁶

On 14 March 1751 they arrived in Palmyra, where they stayed for two weeks. In Hamilton’s famous painting (1758), now at the National Galleries of Scotland in Edinburgh, Dawkins and Wood are discovering the ruins of Palmyra dressed in roman togas, while Borra, dressed as a Turkish, is sketching the ruins.

Robert Wood’s book⁷ let western audiences admire detailed drawings of the main monuments of the site, and thus the aim of the author, namely to “rescue from oblivion the magnificence of Palmyra”, was fully achieved. The book enjoyed an enormous success and was translated into French, reaching even Catherine the Great’s court in St. Petersburg.

The members of the expedition got astonished and excited to the sight of the ruins. They too arrived through the Valley of Tombs:

*In this vale, to our right and left, were several square towers of a considerable height, which upon a nearer approach we found were the sepulchres of the ancient Palmyrenes. We had scarce passed these venerable monuments, when the hills opening discovered to us, all at once, the greatest quantity of ruins we had ever seen, all of white marble, and beyond them towards the Euphrates a flat waste, as far as the eye could reach, without any object which shewed either life or motion. It is scarce possible to imagine anything more striking than this view: So great a number of Corinthian pillars, mixed with so little wall or solid building, afforded a most romantic variety of prospect.*⁸

They worked hard, particularly the architect Borra, sketching monumental townscapes and recording measurements and details of the architecture and of the decoration.

The new classical language discovered – the Palmyrene variant of the classi-

⁶ *The Publisher to the Reader*, in: Wood, *The ruins of Palmyra*, 1753.

⁷ Wood, *The ruins of Palmyra*, 1753.

⁸ Wood, *The ruins of Palmyra*, 1753, p. 35.



Fig. 2 Palmyra, Temple of Bel, southern adyton (→ <http://www.manar-al-athar.ox.ac.uk>).

cal language known at the time in the West – became a source of inspiration for British neoclassical painters and architects. There are many examples of *Palmyra ceilings* in England, the most famous of which is the Drawing Room ceiling at Osterley Park House, by Robert Adam, inspired by ceiling inside the southern adyton of the temple of Bel, shown as plate 19 in Wood’s book [Fig. 2].⁹

Directly inspired by Palmyrene tombs’ decoration is also the ceiling of the *Sala delle Storie di Diana* in Racconigi castle, where architect Borra worked after returning from England.¹⁰

Several scholars followed in Wood, Dawkins and Borra’s footsteps: I will mention the French artist and architect Louis-François Cassas, who stayed for a month in Palmyra between May and June 1785. His *Voyage pittoresque de la Syrie, de la Phœnicie, de la Palestine, et de la Basse Egypte*, published in 1799, includes

⁹ Browning, *Palmyra*, 1979, pp. 92-94.

¹⁰ Dardanello, “Da Palmira a Racconigi”, in: G. Dardanello (ed.), *Giovanni Battista Borra*, 2013, pp. 129-132.

some drawings created on the site. We once again feel in his words the fascination at the sight of Palmyra:

*Tout à coup les montagnes se séparent et on découvre entièrement les magnifiques ruines de cette célèbre ville. Rien de plus imposant que cette première vue : on est saisi d'étonnement et d'admiration par la quantité innombrable des colonnes, des galeries, des restes de temples, d'arcs de triomphe, des édifices immenses par leur étendue et le Temple du Soleil au milieu qui s'élève et domine le désert qui ressemble à une vaste mer.*¹¹

Beyond views, plans, sections and architectural details, Palmyra acted also as monumental backdrop for picturesque indigenous Bedouins and caravans. Cassas himself recast the ruins of Palmyra in some imaginary and romantic views, as in the watercolor at the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Tours, in which the Tower Tomb of Elahbel is located near the Great Colonnaded Street and the Monumental Arch (*Vue de Palmyre* 1821).¹² One can admire the beautiful landscape of the Valley of the Tombs also in other orientalist works [Fig. 3].¹³

In the 19th century a growing number of travelers reached Palmyra, although not for scientific purpose. Lady Hester Stanhope, an eccentric English noblewoman, arranged a spectacular visit to Palmyra in 1813, celebrating herself as Zenobia reborn.¹⁴ Charles Lewis Meryon, medical attendant of the expedition, published in London a report of lady Stanhope's travels. He wrote about Palmyra:

As far as my memory served me, I found the engravings of Wood and Dawkins faithful; and I began to consider how it happened that, correct as to delineation, they conveyed an idea of the remains of Palmyra so much more favourable than the reality.
[...] Situate [...] at the foot of lofty mountains, whose height renders all the works of art diminutive, its columns, if seen at the distance of a few hundred

¹¹ Gilet, “La traversée du désert de Syrie”, in: A. Gilet and U. Westföhl (eds.), *Louis-François Cassas*, 1994, p. 148.

¹² Gilet, “La traversée du désert de Syrie”, in: A. Gilet and U. Westföhl (eds.), *Louis-François Cassas*, 1994, nr. 88, pp. 156-158. See also: → <http://archeologie.culture.fr/palmyre/fr/temple-bel-zenobie>.

¹³ For example, Hilaire, *Passage de deux grandes caravanes à Palmyre, par la Vallée des Mausolées* (1790), Private Collection, in: J. Charles-Gaffiot et al. (eds.), *Moi, Zénobie*, 2001, p. 324; pl. 42, p. 200.

¹⁴ Browning, *Palmyra*, 1979, pp. 66-71.



Fig. 3 Palmyra, Tower Tomb of Elahbel (→ <http://www.manar-al-athar.ox.ac.uk>).

yard, dwindle to the size of tapers. Indistinct from the neighbouring mountains, they are still more so from the colour of the stone of which they are made: for it is of a yellow ochrish appearance, and the face of the surrounding soil is precisely of the same hue. Tints must be opposed to set each other off; so that, for want of this contrast, these celebrated ruins, so conspicuous on paper, are scarcely visible where they stand.

[...] Yet, when we reflect on the vastness of the materials which have been collected, as it were, in the midst of a desert, we are lost in astonishment.

[...] Fragments of pillars and their entablatures strew the ground, and are so numerous that we might imagine all the inhabitants to have lived in palaces.¹⁵

Carlo Vidua, visiting Palmyra in October 1820, expressed a similar judgment:

Nondimeno ella sarebbe sempre da stimare una delle più belle ruine, e de' più bei resti della grandezza antica, né fuor di Tebe in Egitto saprei dove trovar si potrebbero ancora in piccolo spazio ristrette 371 colonne intiere in piedi, che tante ancor ne contai, e i sepolcri stessi, per la loro singolarità, e il tempio del Sole per la sua grandezza sarebbero degni d'ammirazione, in qualunque luogo fossero posti; ma quanto più crescer dee l'ammirazione allorché si vede sorgere sì magnifico spettacolo a capo di lungo viaggio nel deserto, in mezzo ad immense solitudini d'arena, dove a mala pena si trova una goccia d'acqua da bere, o un luogo per riposarsi?¹⁶

Nineteenth century travelogues don't add anything to the knowledge of the site. However, it is worthwhile to mention two Royal Navy captains, James Mangles and Charles Leonard Irby, who tore Palmyra to shreds in one of the most popular guide books of the time, *Travels in Egypt and Nubia, Syria and Asia Minor during the years 1817 and 1818*, London 1828:

not a single column, pediment, architrave, portal or frieze worthy of admiration [...] we judged Palmyra to be hardly worthy of the time, expense, anxiety and the fatiguing journey [...] we suspect that it was the difficulties of getting to

¹⁵ Meryon, *Memoirs*, 1845, vol. II, pp. 133-134.

¹⁶ Vidua, *Relazioni*, 2011, pp. 186-187. I thank prof. Fabrizio Pennacchietti for advising me on this work.

*Tadmor and the fact that few travellers have been there, that has given rise to the great renown of the ruins.*¹⁷

The 20th century began with research conducted on the site by the German Mission, between 1902 and 1917, then published in 1932:¹⁸ under the direction of Theodor Wiegand, the Mission produced a detailed map of the site, and accurate descriptions, plans, measurements, drawings and photographs of all monuments (they adopted the numbering of tombs still in use). They created "the framework in which all subsequent investigations have taken place".¹⁹

The French Mandate of Syria (1920-1946) marked the beginning of a new era for Palmyra, aiming at the enhancement of the archaeological site. Under the direction of Henri Seyrig, excavations, researches and restoration of main monuments started, including the temple of Bel and the Monumental Arch. A new town, Tadmor, was established next to the archaeological site, and people were evacuated from the Sanctuary of Bel, where they had lived for centuries.²⁰

The times they are a-changin' and Michael Rostovtzeff, visiting Palmyra in the 1930s, bore witness to it:

Quite recently the unchecked robbery of the ruins of Palmyra, carried out by tourists and merchants alike, has come to an end, and now the era of archaeological expeditions and explorations, aiming at a more or less thorough record of the antiquities existing above ground, is equally reaching a close. Thanks to the French Academy of Inscriptions, to the Syrian government, and to the administrators of the French Syrian mandate, the hour has at last struck for subterranean excavations to be made and, more important still, for the thorough protection and restoration of the ruins. This has happened only just in time, for since the introduction of motor-cars the despoiling of Palmyra had made giant strides. In a few decades scarcely a column or an arch would have been left standing on the site; they would have fallen, as have hundreds of those

¹⁷ Browning, *Palmyra*, 1979, pp. 72-73.

¹⁸ Wiegand (ed.), *Palmyra*, 1932.

¹⁹ Browning, *Palmyra*, 1979, p. 73.

²⁰ Grassi, "Un secolo di archeologia a Palmira", in: M. Bellomo (ed.), *Studi di storiografia*, 2018, pp. 137-139.



Fig. 4 Palmyra, view from Qalaat Shirkuh (→ <http://www.manar-al-athar.ox.ac.uk>).

*which Loos and Wood saw still standing in their places, laid low as much by the hand of time as by any other agency.*²¹

Rostovtzeff too could not resist the fascination of the sight of Palmyra **[Fig. 4]**:

The ruins of Palmyra and Petra are undoubtedly among the most romantic relics of the ancient world; nowhere are there ruins which can compare with them; there is an exotic savour about them which we find nowhere else. [...] I had read many descriptions of this city before my first visit and had looked upon them as purple patches of romantic writings. Yet I must admit that I felt the spell of that same romantic enchantment which all previous travellers have experienced when, after a long day's journey across the desert, the outlines of her tomb-tower-mausoleums first became visible against the horizon, then slowly detached themselves from the smoke-like film of wind-blown sand, until

²¹ Rostovtzeff, *Caravan Cities*, 1932, p. 123.

*at last the columns and arches stood clear-cut before me against the grey-gold background of the desert.*²²

Since then, scientific work continued and increased, thanks to Syrian and foreign archaeologists: no other archaeological site, or very few, could boast of having missions from Russia, Germany, France, Denmark, Poland, Switzerland, Japan, Austria, Italy, Norway and USA.²³

Restoration work continued too, during the second half of the past century, particularly by Syrian archaeologists. Khaled al-As'ad, chief of Antiquities and Museums in Palmyra from 1963 to 2003, played a leading role in developing and enhancing the archaeological site and consequently the tourism and the economy of the region.

Khaled al-As'ad avait le sens de la responsabilité de l'archéologue et ses fouilles ont toujours été suivies de restaurations. Ce sont ces restaurations efficaces, discrètes et intelligentes qui, en fait, ont donné leur visage actuel aux ruines.
*[...] On peut dire que, par son travail incessant, c'est en grande partie lui qui a donné à Palmyre cet aspect que le monde entier a aimé.*²⁴

The new millennium began with a new project for mapping the site with advanced technology: a century after the Wiegand expedition, once again a German Mission published a new plan as well as a new numbering.²⁵

Several new research projects on the field were launched in the new millennium, aimed to increase knowledge of the city: the Syrian-Swiss mission engaged in exploring the mosque near the Tetrapylon,²⁶ while the Syrian-Italian mission in excavating the Peristyle Building close to the south city wall.²⁷

Other new projects, involving Syrian, Swiss, Italian and Norwegian archaeol-

²² Rostovzeff, *Caravan Cities*, 1932, p. 120.

²³ A detailed list in Delplace, *Palmyre*, 2017, pp. 46-47. See also Gawlikowski and Majcherek (eds.), *Fifty Years*, 2013; Grassi, "Un secolo di archeologia a Palmira", in: M. Bellomo (ed.), *Studi di storiografia*, 2018.

²⁴ Lerich, "Khaled Al Asa'ad", in: *Anniversaire du 40e jour*, 2015, p. 10.

²⁵ Schnädelbach, *Topographia*, 2010.

²⁶ Genequand, "De Rome à l'Islam", in: M. Gawlikowski and G. Majcherek (eds.), *Fifty Years*, 2013.

²⁷ Grassi and al'Asad, "Pal.M.A.I.S.", in: M. Gawlikowski and G. Majcherek (eds.), *Fifty Years*, 2013. See also:

→ <http://users.unimi.it/progettopalmyra/index.html>.



Fig. 5 Palmyra, Monumental Arch (Archivio Pal.M.A.I.S., Università degli Studi di Milano).

ogists, studied the hinterland and its transformations from prehistoric times to Islamic period.²⁸

Main archaeological missions of the 12th century – namely Polish, French, Austrian, Japanese – continued working on the site with important results.²⁹

Field work was unfortunately interrupted by the Syrian war, that broke out in 2011. Since then, Palmyra has often conquered the front page of all the media not for archaeological discoveries or research outcomes, but for the brutal murder of Khaled al-As’ad, for the destruction of the site’s main monuments, as well as for the damage at the Palmyra Museum.

What does the future hold for Palmyra?

A lively debate concerns the reconstruction of destroyed monuments; a lively

²⁸ Grassi, “Un secolo di archeologia a Palmira”, in: M. Bellomo (ed.), *Studi di storiografia*, 2018, p. 146. For the Syrian-Norwegian research project: → <https://org.uib.no/palmyrena/>.

²⁹ Gawlikowski and Majcherek (eds.), *Fifty Years*, 2013; Gawlikowski, Seigne, Schmidt-Colinet, Saito, in: K. Saito and T. Sugiyama (eds.), *Saving the Syrian Cultural Heritage*, 2018.

debate not only restricted to scholars, but which also touches and interests a wider audience, as proved by the attention paid to the possibility to rebuild with 3D-technology and to exhibit reconstructed parts of Palmyrene monuments (the Monumental Arch and the Temple of Bel) [Fig. 5].³⁰

To rebuild or not to rebuild? It is impossible, at the present time, to analyze the matter,³¹ but I would like to highlight that, once again, though unfortunately, Palmyra caught the attention of the West.

On the technological side it is worth mentioning another effect of the war.

Many websites and online databases have been started or updated since the destruction, in order to share and spread knowledge of Palmyra by uploading documents and photos previously unknown. I will mention just few examples of those: the *Tiresias database* by the Swiss University of Lausanne, presenting photos of Swiss research in the temple of Baalshamin, directed by Paul Collart in the Fifties of the past century;³² *Manar Al-Athar*, a free multimedia resource for the study of the Middle East, based at the University of Oxford;³³ last but not least, the website of the French Ministry of Culture³⁴ and the online exhibition by the Getty Research Institute of Los Angeles.³⁵

The *Palmyra Portrait Project* was launched in 2012 by another long-standing Palmyrene mission, the Danish one, and is aimed at the creation of a database containing all Palmyrene portraits in the world.³⁶

Notwithstanding all these praiseworthy efforts, now we can see Palmyra's monuments the way they were before the war only through the web. In addition to well-known pictures from the 19th and 20th centuries, also the earliest photos of Palmyra are published for the first time: taken by Louis Vignes in 1864 and belonging to the archives of the Getty Research Institute of Los Angeles, they are now available online.³⁷

Even if only through the web, looking at these old faded photos we are, once again, lost in astonishment.

³⁰ Grassi, "Palmira", in: *Salvaguare la memoria*, 2018, pp. 93-94.

³¹ An up-to-date discussion, by the scholars who have worked in Palmyra: *Toward the Future of Palmyra*, in: K. Saito and T. Sugiyama (eds.), *Saving the Syrian Cultural Heritage*, 2018, pp. 54-101.

³² *Tiresias* online.

³³ *Manar-Al-Athar* online.

³⁴ *Il y a 2000 ans Palmyre* online.

³⁵ *The Legacy of Ancient Palmyra* online.

³⁶ Kropp and Raja, *Syria 91* (2014); *Palmyra Portrait Project* online.

³⁷ *The Legacy of Ancient Palmyra* online.

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ANCHE LE STATUE RIVIVONO - STATUES CAN ALSO COME BACK TO LIFE*

Hourig Sourouzian

Statues die, it's true, but they also come back to life, in many ways, and in certain cases their traces remain beyond all destruction. In the frame of this conference dedicated to them, I am pleased to present an overview of the reassembled statues which I had the chance to realise before and during my work in the temple of Amenhotep III at Kôm el-Hettan.

It all started with a monumental sculpture in indurated limestone, badly broken in numerous pieces which were dispersed and stored in six different places, without any known common origin. The sculpture derives from Karnak where it once stood in the northern hall between the IV and the V pylons of the great temple of Amun-Re, which was built earlier by the Thoutmoside rulers. It was later toppled, perhaps by a heavy earthquake, and quarried away. Fortunately, the stone robbers had attacked the back slab to obtain limestone, so parts of the statues and throne were retained.

The sculpture measuring 4,15 mt high, was dedicated by Horemheb at the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty, and represents the god Amun-Re and the goddess Mut seated on a large throne. The scattered remains of this sculpture have been found during 130 years of excavation. First, the female head was found by Auguste Mariette in 1873, and sent to Cairo where it was put on display in the newly founded Museum of Egyptian Antiquities in Boulaq. A few other fragments including her double crown and the left half of her chest were discovered ten years later by Maspero and joined the female head in the Museum **[Fig. 1]**.

*I wish to thank Christian Greco and the organizers of this conference for the invitation to participate to this great event, which gives me the opportunity to talk about my work on reviving statues.



Fig. 1 Head of the goddess Mut as displayed separately in the Egyptian Museum until 1999 (©Egyptian Museum Cairo/American Research Centre in Egypt/Sourouzian).



Fig. 2 Head of the god Amun and pieces of the body and the throne stored in the basement (©Egyptian Museum Cairo/American Research Centre in Egypt/Sourouzian).

In 1903, several large pieces were found by George Legrain, among them the head of the god Amun, as well as pieces from the throne and the statue base inscribed with the names of Amun-Re Lord of Karnak, Mut Lady of Asheru, and Horemheb. The pieces were sent to the Egyptian Museum, waiting to be reassembled. In 1915, these pieces were transferred to the storerooms of the basement, and so the project of this monumental sculpture was temporarily abandoned and eventually forgotten [Fig. 2].

During more than a century of excavations at Karnak, other fragments had been unearthed and kept in storerooms in Cairo and Karnak without having been identified as belonging to this sculpture. Following my extensive research in the Egyptian Museum, the pieces were grouped, documented and cleaned, before being mounted on a metallic armature, which proved to be very advantageous, as it facilitates the addition of new pieces any time they can be found [Fig. 3].

Now the reassembled statue represents Amun-Rê and Mut seated side by side, the goddess embracing the god with her left arm [Fig. 4].¹

A great monument of Egyptian art has not only been identified and rescued from loss and oblivion, but a masterpiece of Egyptian art from the reign of Horemheb has been rediscovered, conserved and put on display.

Ten years after the official inauguration of this dyad in the Egyptian Museum in 1999, new fragments were found during a survey in Karnak and we were able to add them to the monumental dyad in 2010.²

Simultaneously, I was pleased to bring from Karnak several granodiorite pieces newly discovered by the Centre Franco-Egyptien d'Etude des Temples de Karnak, which joined another group statue in granodiorite, the lower part of which was on display in the museum. Again almost 100 years had passed between the discovery of that first piece and the joining of the new ones. The sculpture again represents Amun and Mut enthroned with a smaller statue of king Sethy I standing between them. The reassembly was completed with the

¹ Sourouzian, "Monumental Statue Group Conservation Project at the Egyptian Museum, Cairo", *Newsletter ARCE* 178, Winter 1999, pp. 2-3, ill. cover and p. 3; Id., "Deux groupes statuaire thébains réassemblés au Musée du Caire", *BSFE* 144 (1999), pp. 6-26, figs. 1-15; Id., "Amun and Mut, Eine Doppelstatue aus der Zeit des Haremhab (1320-1306 v. Chr.). Die Restaurierung einer monumentalen Statuengruppe im Ägyptischen Museum Kairo", *Antike Welt, Zeitschrift für Archäologie und Kulturgeschichte*, 6 (1999), pp. 595-597, fig. 1-5; Id., "Reconstructing a Dyad of the Post-Amarna Period: The Statue of Mut and Amun from Karnak", in: R. Danforth (ed.), *Preserving Egypt's Cultural Heritage: The Conservation Work of the American Research Center in Egypt*, San Antonio-Cairo 2010, pp. 49-54.

² This project was made possible thanks to the American Research Center in Egypt.



Fig. 3 The reconstruction of the dyad of Amun and Mut in the Egyptian Museum in 1999 (©Egyptian Museum Cairo/American Research Centre in Egypt/Sourouzian).



Fig. 4 The dyad reconstructed (©Egyptian Museum Cairo/American Research Centre in Egypt/Sourouzian).

face of the god which I had identified in the Louvre Museum. A cast was kindly made on our request on behalf of the Cairo Museum, and the group was successfully reconstructed [Fig. 5]. It now measures 75 cm high, 45 cm wide and 56 cm deep.³

In the same museum a statue join was gladly realised with a head on display, as yet unidentified, and a lower part kept in the basement storeroom bearing the names of Ramesses II. The reconstructed statue in granodiorite with a zone of red on its upper part, now represents Ramesses II seated on a throne, wearing the nemes headdress which is surmounted by the double crown. His costume

³ On this and the preceding reconstruction see: Sourouzian, "Deux groupes statuariers thébains réassemblés au Musée du Caire", *BSFE* 144 (1999), pp. 6-26, figs. 1-15.



Fig. 5 The reassembled group statue of Amun, Mut and Sethy I, with a copy of the face of Amun from the Louvre Museum in 2000 (Egyptian Museum Cairo).

is the pleated royal shendjyt-kilt. Unfortunately, both pieces are without known provenance. However, they add a new portrait of a very young king to the repertoire of the hundreds of statues of Ramesses II.

Since then, this statue has been moved to the Luxor Museum for Ancient Egyptian Art, to represent the young sovereign in Thebes [Fig. 6].⁴

Also in this period, a piece of the base of a statue of Sethy II was brought from Karnak to join the sandstone colossal standard bearer statue in the Cairo Egyptian Museum.⁵ While back in Karnak, dispersed pieces of a seated statue of Ramesses II in granodiorite could be reassembled and is now on display in the open air museum of the great temple [Figs. 7a-b].⁶ The statue, today headless, shows the king wearing a pleated ceremonial kilt. His throne is decorated on its two sides with the sema-taouy, symbolising the reunification of the Two Lands, with personifications of the Nile gods of Upper and Lower Egypt, binding the heraldic plants of the Two Lands.

During this period, having had the opportunity to participate to the works of the mission of the Swiss Institute for Architectural Research, I was pleased to contribute to the reassembly of monumental statuary in the Temple of Merenptah, where statues of Amenhotep III had been reused in the second court. They include colossal group statues representing the king with deities, as well as monumental statues of jackals and sphinxes.⁷

An amazing join which I proposed between a granodiorite bust of Ramesses II kept in the private Ohtake Museum in Tokyo, and a lower part with the throne of the seated king in Luxor which is currently on display in the court of the temple

⁴ Sourouzian, "Raccords Ramessides", *MDAIK* 54 (1998), pp. 279-292, figs. 1-3, pls. 40-47. In this paper I also proposed to complete another statue of a famous bust of Ramesses II with a lower part, but as much of the body is missing, the reconstruction remains on paper, and the statue will have to wait for the discovery of new pieces to be reassembled.

⁵ On these joins and new displays see: Sourouzian, "Conservation of Statuary", in: *Egyptology At The Dawn Of The 21st Century, The Proceedings of the 8th International Congress of Egyptologists*, Vol. 3, Cairo 2003, pp. 406-413, figs. 1-3.

⁶ Sourouzian, "Une statue de Ramsès II reconstituée au musée de plein air de Karnak", *Les Cahiers de Karnak* 16 (2017), pp. 393-405.

⁷ See the reports of this mission directed by Jaritz: Jaritz, Dominicus, Niederberger, Sourouzian, Stadler, "Der Totentempel des Merenptah in Qurna, 3. Grabungsbericht (9. und 10. Kampagne)", *MDAIK* 55, 1999, pp. 53-59, pl. 10-13. My publication on these reconstructed statues will soon be in print in the forthcoming volume of the series *Beiträge zur Ägyptischen Bauforschung und Altertumskunde*, by the Swiss Institute.



Fig. 6 Head and torso of Ramesses II joined after a long separation in 2000 (©Egyptian Museum Cairo/ Sourouzian).



Figs. 7a-b Reassembly of dispersed parts of a statue of Ramesses II now placed in the open air museum at Karnak (© CFEETK/Antoine Chéné).



Figs. 8a-b Proposition to join a statue of Ramesses II between a bust in Tokyo and a lower part in Thebes (© Ohtake Museum/ Sourouzian).



Fig. 9a Head of Amenhotep III brought from the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria.



Figs. 9b-c The head joined to the group statue from a storeroom in Karnak-North in 20017 (© Luxor Museum for Ancient Egyptian Art/A. Chéné/ Sourouzian).

of Sethy I, must remain on paper until an exchange can be done, even if with casts [Figs. 8a-b].⁸

However, another joint was successfully realised on a statue group representing Amenhotep III crowned by Amun-Re. This headless group was stored in a temple magazine at Karnak-North. Having identified the royal head in the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria, I was authorized by the director to complete the group of the king crowned by Amun in the Luxor Museum for Ancient Egyptian Art [Figs. 9a-c]. Amenhotep III kneeling, clad in a short jubilee cloak, hands crossed against his chest and holding the two scepters, is crowned by the supreme god Amun-Re enthroned. The god places the fingers of his right hand on the khepresh crown of the king, also called blue crown. The head, the hands and the legs of the god had been destroyed during the reign of Akhnaton, son and successor of Amenhotep III, and restored under the succeeding reigns. The divine head remains to be discovered. This join was the fruit of a cooperation with the Luxor Museum by the team of The Colossi of Memnon and Amenhotep III Temple Conservation Project which I have directed for twenty years.

It is obviously the wish to see dismantled and dispersed monuments reassembled again, that was one of the reasons for deciding to work in the temple of Amenhotep III at Thebes.⁹ Hence, it is a great pleasure to present the numerous statue revivals which were realised at the temple since the beginning of our work twenty years ago by the dedicated team of The Colossi of Memnon and Amenhotep III Temple Conservation Project [Fig. 10].

The temple of Amenhotep III, known as “Temple of Millions of Years”, was built during the first half of the 14th century BCE under the reign of Amenhotep III and was the largest of all funerary temples and the most richly equipped. It was however heavily damaged by earthquakes, floods and plundering, and its ruins lay for centuries covered by the Nile alluvia and of today’s abundantly irrigated fields.

⁸ Sourouzian, “A Statue Join Between Tokyo and Thebes”, *Egyptian Archaeology* 22, Spring 2003, pp. 10-11, with one plate; Id., “Raccords de statues d’Aménophis III (suite)”, *Bulletin de l’Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale* 107, 2007, pp. 213-242.

⁹ Encouraged by the SCA, the German Archaeological Institute and a grant from the World Monuments Fund, later to be augmented by the Association des Amis des Colosses de Memnon Memnon Verein, and occasional grants from the American Research Centre in Egypt, Siemens Kunststiftung, Mercedes Benz Egypt, Stephanie and Bernhard Buchner, Horus Egyptology Society, Chesterfield Association for the Study of Egypt, and friends of the site.



Fig. 10 The Temple of Millions of Years of Amenhotep III at Thebes, late 1990s – early 2000s (© Theban Mapping Project).

The Colossi of Memnon and Amenhotep III Temple Conservation Project works under the auspices of the Ministry of Antiquities of Egypt and the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo. Our aim is mainly to conserve the last remains of this once prestigious temple, the largest of all temples of its type, which was toppled by an earthquake in 1200 BCE, then used as quarry for the surrounding temples before finally being abandoned.

A reconstructed view shows the main temple called the Mansion of Millions of Years, with its large courts preceded by pylons with pairs of colossal statues of the king seated at their gates, leading to a large peristyle court which gave access through a hypostyle hall to the sanctuaries destined to receive the procession of the Theban major deities Amun-Re, Mut, and Khonsu during the Beautiful Festival of the Valley. The sanctuaries were flanked in the north by an open sun-court dedicated to the cult of the sun-god Re, and in the south to the funerary cult of the king. In the vast precinct, enclosed by a huge mud brick wall stretching

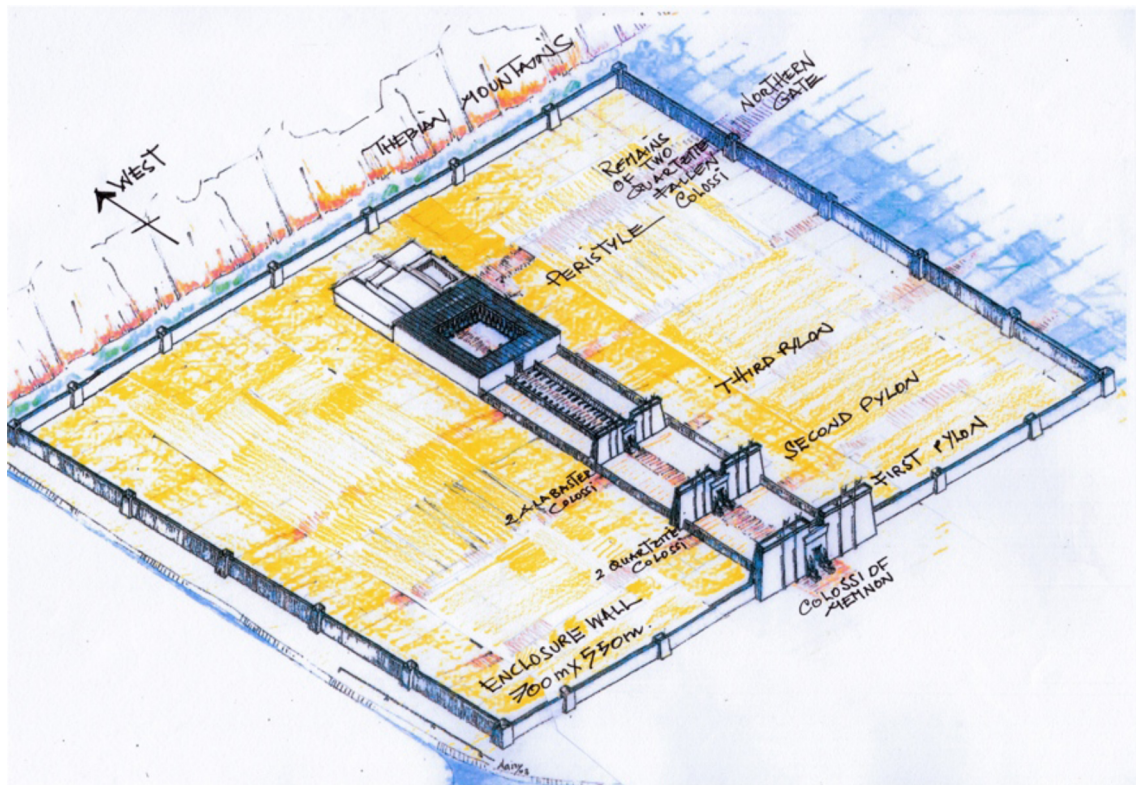


Fig. 11 Reconstruction of the main temple of millions of years within the vast enclosure, by Nairy Hampikian (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).

over 750 mt North-South and 550 mt East-West, one should imagine, based on structures preserved in other temples and on texts, sanctuaries for secondary cults, processional ways relating to them, magazines, treasuries, priests lodgings, administrative buildings, pools, gardens, etc. [Fig. 11].

Of all this ensemble, very little has remained, and the aim of our project is to document and conserve these last remains, find their foundations and discover related pieces through archaeological investigations. Our aim is eventually to put the reassembled monuments back in their original places in the temple. Hence, site protection and site management takes a great part of this project.

Over the past twenty years, many of the monuments on the site have been reassembled and mounted in their original place. Many of them are colossal statues representing the king Amenhotep III sculpted in different materials.

A second major aim of the project is social, and recruits young assistants from the villages surrounding the site, training them in documentation, conservation and restoration, which also helps them to support their families. An average of

thirty specialists and about 300 specialised workmen per season form the team dedicated to this great work.

Before this project began, one could only see at the entrance of the site the Colossi of Amenhotep III represented seated at the gate of what was once the first pylon marking the entrance to the vast temple precinct. These were the only remaining monuments standing on site in the Roman Period, when the upper part of the Northern colossus was toppled by a more recent earthquake in 27 CE. The Greco-Roman visitors assimilated this colossus to Memnon, son of the goddess Eos, fallen at the gates of Troy killed by Achilles. Its upper part was reconstructed with courses of large blocks, presumably under the reign of Septimius Severus and so, in modern times, both colossi are called Memnon **[Fig. 12]**.¹⁰

These colossi were hewn in the quartzite quarries of Gebel el-Ahmar near ancient Heliopolis, in the heart of modern Cairo, and represent Amenhotep III seated in the classical attitude, hands flat on the knees, wearing the nemes headdress with the double crown (today missing except for a piece remaining on the top of the head of the south colossus) and the pleated royal shendjyt kilt. On both sides of his legs stand the statues of the Great Royal Consort Tiye and Royal Mother Mutemuya. The sides of the throne are decorated with the sema-tawy scene with two personifications of the Nile god Hapy, symbolizing the unification of the Two Lands.

Over the years, these monuments were cleaned and subjected to diverse observations and studies, as well as surveys of their structure, condition of cracks, and remains of polychromy. During archaeological surveys around the pedestals of these colossi, we have discovered the front part of the left foot of the Northern Colossus, which we put back at its place. Moreover, large pieces of the right arm of the Southern Memnon Colossus have been recovered and documented, 3D scanned and grouped on the ground in a trial reassembly.

If previously visitors could only see these Colossi on the site and not realise the existence of the remains of a vast temple beyond them, they now have a pair of new colossi to observe some 100 mt behind them which were raised by our

¹⁰ Stadelmann, "The Colossi of Memnon and the Earthquakes at Thebes", in: *Egyptian Curses 1. Proceedings of the Egyptological Day Held at the National Research Council of Italy (CNR)*, Rome, 3rd December 2012, in the International Conference "Reading Catastrophes", edited by G. Capriotti Vitozzi, *AHMES* (Archaeological Heritage and Multidisciplinary Egyptological Studies) 1, Isma, Roma 2014, pp. 5-22.



Fig. 12 The colossi of Amenhotep III known as the Colossi of Memnon, at the entrance of the devastated temple, before the beginning of our work (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).



Fig. 13 The Colossi of Memnon now, and in the background, the new pair of colossal statues raised at the Second Pylon (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).

project in the past seasons. Similar to the Memnon Colossi and worked in the same material i.e. quartzite, they are slightly smaller in size [Fig. 13].¹¹

Both were discovered fallen on their right side, severely damaged and broken into several parts. The northern colossus was a formless mass of quartzite which had lain there for centuries, whilst the southern one was unknown and was revealed during our archaeological investigations [Figs. 14-15]. After consolidation of its foundation, the body of the northern colossus was first lifted with the help of air bags [Fig. 16]. Gradually, its right knee, right arm, chest and finally the head could be added with the help of huge wooden scaffolds and winches, and the colossus stood once again in its original position, facing east, some 3200 years after its collapse, with queen Tiye on its right side seeing the light again after more than three millennia under the ground [Fig. 17]. Conservation works on this monument has continued over the years and has involved cleaning the surfaces, desalinating, fighting against the birds' droppings, and most importantly of all, finding joining parts and putting them back onto the statue or its base.

Likewise, the southern companion was also treated since its discovery in 2003, and now it stands, half preserved, waiting for new pieces to be found [Figs. 18-19]. The face of the northern colossus is missing and we hope to find it sometime during future investigations. However, while the bust of the southern colossus is missing, we have discovered pieces of its face including the beard [Figs. 20a-b].

Separated by 100 mt through a second court, the Third Pylon was also preceded by a pair of seated royal colossi, this time in alabaster or what is commonly called travertine. Fallen in the same South-South-East direction and half submerged in water, these alabaster colossi are unique in their size and workmanship. The numerous parts of these monuments have been gradually uncovered, lifted onto solid ground and cleaned, until they can be raised again in

¹¹ For work on these two colossi see the following reports: Sourouzian, Stadelmann et al., "Three Seasons Of Work at the Temple of Amenhotep III at Kom El Hettan, Part II: Investigations at the Second Pylon and Work on the Royal Colossi", *ASAE* 80 (2006), pp. 367-399; Sourouzian et al., "Fifth Report on Excavation and Conservation Work at Kôm el-Hettan from 9th to 12th Seasons (2007-2010) by The Colossi Of Memnon And Amenhotep III Temple Conservation Project", *ASAE* 85 (2011), pp. 273-552; Sourouzian, Stadelmann, "Ein Koloss aus Quarzit steht wieder", *Antike Welt* 1 (2013), pp. 59-61; Sourouzian, Mora Ruedas et al., "Conservation Work at the Temple of Amenhotep III at Thebes, The Colossi of Memnon and Amenhotep III Temple Conservation Project, CTT-Conservation of Theban Temples and Tombs", in: *Symposium Proceedings* 2016, pp. 28-39.



Fig. 14 The northern colossus of Amenhotep III fallen at the gate of the Second Pylon, viewed in 2000 before investigations began (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).



Fig. 15 The northern colossus uncovered in 2003 (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).



Fig. 16 The lower part of the north colossus and the statue of Queen Tiye being raised with air bags in 2004 (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).



Fig. 17 The north colossus of the Second Pylon lifted and completed with the head in 2014 (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).



Fig. 18 Lifting the southern colossus at the Second Pylon (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).



Fig. 19 The new pair of colossi of Amenhotep III now raised at the gate of the Second Pylon (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).



Figs. 20a-b Pieces of the face and the long beard of the southern colossus during documentation work (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).

their original places when their foundations will be investigated, isolated from ground water and consolidated. These monuments are of great importance not only because they are the only preserved colossal statues in this material, but they have the specificity of being partly completed by alabaster pieces sculpted separately and slotted into the body through a system of tenons and grooves. Moreover, the portrait of the king on one of these statues is a masterpiece of monumental sculpture, and the queen standing at his right side shows one of the most striking portraits of a queen in this material, with her extremely well sculpted features and traces of painting on her face and her coiffure [Figs. 21-23].¹²

Further west, in the Peristyle Court, the reassembly and mounting of the colossal royal statues in their original places has been carried out since the be-

¹² Sourouzian, Stadelmann, "Ein Koloss aus Alabaster: neue Forschungen im Totentempel Amenophis' III. in Theben", *Antike Welt* 6 (2011), pp. 64-68; Sourouzian, "The Trail of the Sphinxes: From the Nile to the Neva", *Egyptian Archaeology* 51 (2017), pp. 18-21.



Fig. 21 Discovery of the northern alabaster colossus of Amenhotep III fallen at the Third Pylon (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).



Fig. 22 The head of the alabaster colossus (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).



Fig. 23 The statue of the queen accompanying the southern alabaster colossus at the Third Pylon (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).

ginning of our project. In a completely ruined portico of columns we recovered hundreds of pieces of fragmented statues and bases, belonging to an ensemble of colossal statues of Amenhotep III in quartzite and red granite which once stood around the court. Many of these have been lifted, with one in red granite now reassembled and standing again in the court, while others are in the process being joined and re-erected [Figs. 24, 25a-b, 26a-b]. Of the quartzite statues, many have been progressively placed around the court, with one of them being completed with the replica of a head from the British Museum (EA 6) [Figs. 27a-c].¹³

One quartzite head, belonging to a very badly fragmented and damaged statue, was discovered on site during earlier investigations by our predecessors in 1964, and after being photographed at that time and published, there were no records of the head for almost 30 years.¹⁴ During our documentation and reassembly works we put together a group of pieces which were badly damaged by fire. A trial assembly of the pieces resulted in a head that could be identified as the supposedly lost head by the hole in the crown and the characteristic incurved furrow at the corners of the mouth. However, the eyes which had been present in the previous publication were missing. After meticulous research in storerooms and museums, we recovered one eye from an official storeroom of the SCA, and another from a collection abroad and finally reconstructed the head. As it is now too fragile to be put on display on the site, this head has now been put on display in the Luxor Museum of Ancient Egyptian Art, vis-à-vis the head of a companion statue in red granite found earlier by the Antiquities Service. We were happy to add the original beard to this head which had been found at the same time and kept in a storeroom [Figs. 28a-d].

Beside the royal statues, we also have brought back to life more than 250 statues of the lion-headed goddess Sekhmet, which are being documented, cleaned, desalinated, reassembled and studied. They await the end of the site manage-

¹³ On the reconstructed statues see: Sourouzian, Stadelmann, "Kolossalkopf Amenophis' III: ein Meisterwerk gefunden in seinem Totentempel in Theben", *Antike Welt* 1 (2011), pp. 72-76; Sourouzian, "La statuaire du temple d'Amenhotep III à Thèbes", in: D. Valbelle and J.-M. Yoyotte (eds.), *Statues égyptiennes et kouchites démembrées et reconstituées: hommage à Charles Bonnet*, 2011, pp. 71-92; and see above, note 12.

¹⁴ See our preliminary reports in ASAE 87, 2014, pp. 183-226.



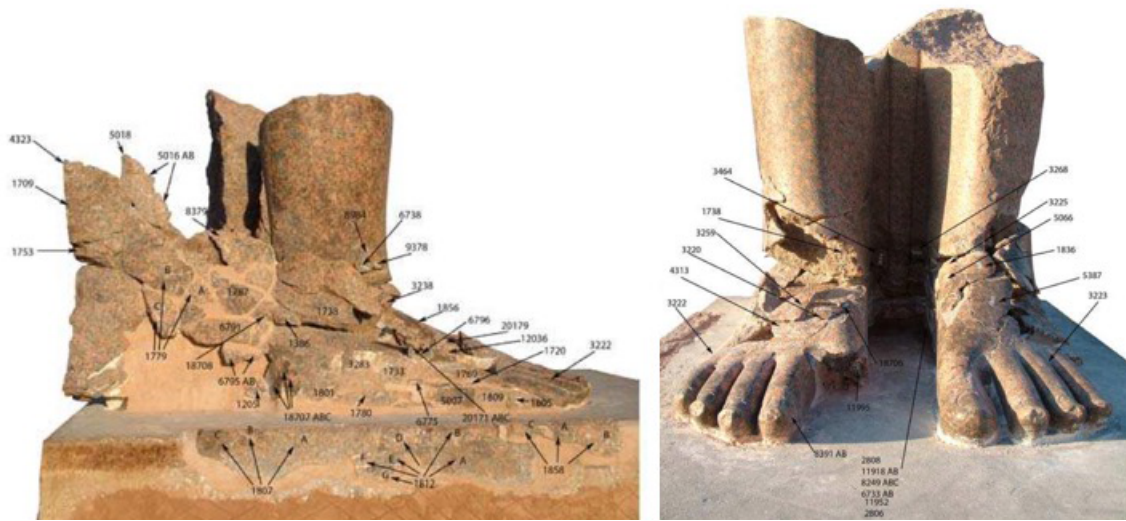
Fig. 24 One of the standing red granite royal statues as found in the SE corner of the Peristyle Court in 2006. (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).



Fig. 25a The red granite colossus now lifted in its original position (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).



Fig. 25b Inauguration of the colossus by the Minister of Antiquities, Khaled el-Enany, in 2017 (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).



Figs. 26a-b Feet of a fragmented colossus placed on a plinth (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).



Fig. 27a Survey of the ruined west portico of the Peristyle Court and documentation of the pieces of royal quartzite statues at the beginning of the project (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).



Figs. 27b-c Statues placed back in the west portico (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).



Figs. 28a-d A quartzite head reassembled, completed with the eyes and restored, inaugurated in the Luxor Museum of Ancient Egyptian Art by the Minister of Antiquities, Mamdouh Eldamaty, in 2016 (© Memnon/ Amenhotep III Project).



Fig. 29 Discovery and conservation of statues of the lion-headed goddess Sekhmet, with the aim to place them back in the temple as part of the future site management project (© Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).

ment project when they will be brought back and displayed around the great peristyle court, where a monumental statue of the hippopotamus goddess has already been installed **[Fig. 29].¹⁵**

Finally, two colossal statues of the striding king were lying broken and scattered in the fields for centuries until we received permission to treat them in 2013 in cooperation with the Ministry of Antiquities. Our team was able to lift the eastern one in March 2014, and the western one in December of the same year. Erected at the Northern Gate of the temple enclosure, these colossi represent the king striding, wearing the white crown of Upper Egypt and the pleated shendyt kilt. After site protection and installation of informative panels, these colossi were handed to the antiquities authorities in 2016 **[Figs. 30-31].¹⁶**

15 See the reports in the ASAE quoted in the preceding notes. A vast documentation project is planned in cooperation with Alessia Amenta, Betsy Bryan and Christian Greco for a Sekhmet data base, or virtual Sekhmet Museum, starting with the collection of the temple of Amenhotep III at Kôm el-Hettan, the temple of Mut, the collections of the Vatican and the Museo Egizio. This project has already started with a first international conference on Sekhmet in Luxor 2017, and the forthcoming one in the Vatican is in preparation.

16 See the preceding notes and: Abdel Maksoud, Hampikian, Stadelmann, "Neues aus dem 'Tempel der



Fig. 30 One of the royal standing colossi found fallen at the North Gate, during excavation and documentation in 2013 (© Ministry of Antiquities/Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).



Fig. 31 The pair of the standing colossi of Amenhotep III raised in 2014 at the North Gate of the temple Precinct (© Ministry of Antiquities/Memnon/Amenhotep III Project).

All these pieces were destined to stay buried, be exposed under the threat of vandalism and theft or fated to remain on the shelves of some remote store-room. However, they have all been reassembled to represent once again the royal or divine entity that they were created to embody. Hence, we believe that statues can also come back to life, and we appeal to all of us dealing with dispersed fragments to persevere in reassembling them.¹⁷

We also wish to pay a very admiring and respectful homage to the great sculptors of Ancient Egypt.

Millionen von Jahren' des Amenophis III.", *Antike Welt* 4 (2014), pp. 48-52; Sourouzian, Karrar et al., "Die Wiedererrichtung der großen Statuen", *Antike Welt* 2 (2015), pp. 79-82; Stadelmann, Sourouzian, "Quatre nouveaux colosses d'Amenhotep III à Thèbes", *CRAIBL* 2015, pp. 539-558, figs. 1-18; Sourouzian, "A New Portrait of Amenhotep III at Thebes", *Egyptian Archaeology* 46 (2015), pp. 20-22.

¹⁷ I wish to thank the Egyptian authorities and the Ministry of Antiquities for kind permission to work in this extraordinary temple. I warmly thank all members of the team of the Memnon/Amenhotep III Project for their dedication and their wonderful work. I also thank Hayley Ruth Goddard for her careful reading and editing of this manuscript.

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THE BIRTH, FALL, AND RENAISSANCE OF THE IRAQ MUSEUM IN BAGHDAD: POLITICS AND PROPAGANDA VS. ARCHAEOLOGY AND ENHANCEMENT IN MODERN IRAQ

Carlo Lippolis

“Antiques are the most precious relics the Iraqis possess”

Saddam Hussayn (Sumer, 1979)

Several episodes in the history of Iraq – especially the sack of its museums and the recent destruction of antiquities – have confirmed the place of archaeology in the nation’s cultural and political discourse.

The Iraqi case illustrates how archaeology and history can be used for political purposes by both outsiders and insiders: archaeology contributed to the initial European interest in the region, then to the British delineation of the modern country, and finally to Iraqis’ affirmation of the nation’s sovereignty, independence, and identity.

We therefore would like to briefly retrace, in this paper, the history of the National Museum of Iraq (today also named Iraq Museum) in Baghdad while underlining the importance of archeology in the formation of the Iraqi state, before introducing some of the more recent projects carried out for the requalification and reopening of this important museum.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIRTH OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRAQ

Following Bernhardsson’s lucid analysis, we may outline three main stages of “archaeology and politics” in Iraq:¹

¹ Bernhardsson, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past*, 2005, pp. 10-18.

The international stage extended from the middle nineteenth century until the 1920s was characterized by Western domination. Iraqis played only a small role and nearly all major excavations by Westerners were conducted at pre-Islamic sites (Babylon, Khorsabad, Nimrud, Nineveh, Nippur, Telloh etc...): these sites attracted interest because of their relation to the Bible. Islamic sites and antiquities were neglected because they were considered neither valuable in themselves nor relevant for the reconstruction of “western” ancient history. The only important expedition at an Islamic site were the German excavations at Samarra, carried out by E. Herzfeld (1911-13).

In this very first stage archaeology was not perceived to be a neutral science – as fortunately it is today (after, maybe, a too long delay) – but an integral part of the imperialist/colonialist enterprise.

We may, for example, consider how the main European illustrated newspapers (in the late 19th and early 20th century) reported any archaeological discovery. They featured images that illustrated the principal – and more symbolic – phases of the retrieval process: the discovery, transportation, and display of objects.

The discovery of objects was illustrated with images of the actual excavation, usually portrayed as occurring in a landscape that had lost its former greatness – an “empty space” now populated by an “unenlightened” population.

The transportation of objects was another popular subject for illustrations. The removal of massive stones from the excavation site and their transportation to Europe by ships was proof of the technological progress of Europeans.

Finally, illustrations depicted objects on display in the “civilized” world, in a western museum or a university where they could be appreciated by enlightened (European) visitors.

The message conveyed by these illustrations was that the Western world was responsible for the discovery, preservation, and display (in Europe or America) of these historical treasures for the benefit of all of humanity.

While the colonial aspect of these enterprises is undeniable, at the same time it must be recognized that these discoveries were the basis of the methodological development of archeology as a scientific discipline. It is therefore always necessary to distinguish between archaeology as a developing science and archaeology as a tool for advancing a political agenda or creating propaganda.



Fig. 1 Baghdad, the Iraq Museum in the 1930s (SBAH archives).

The second stage of archaeology in Iraq was a transitional one that spanned the interwar years (from the end of the 1920s to the 1940s). The British and the Iraqis quarreled over the ownership of antiquities, and the first signs of a “national” archaeology of Iraq began to appear. During this stage archaeology remained in “Western” hands, but the Iraqis showed some signs of resistance and opposition, as indicated by the stance taken by Sati’ al-Husri, Minister of Education during the 1920s and Director of the Antiquities in the 1930s.

When Iraq became independent from Britain in 1932, the new government passed a restrictive law affirming that all antiquities in the country – both above and below the ground – were the property of Iraq. Historical artifacts took on a “national” significance and became tools used by the state to fashion a new national identity.

It was during this stage that the birth of the Iraq Museum occurred. A national museum organizes and displays its collections in order to construct a simplified interpretation of the history and culture of a country and its people. Such a museum has great potential to foster the state-building process, especially in a recently established nation (such as Iraq in the 1920s) that contains numerous ethnic and religious groups.

However, the National Museum of Iraq [Fig. 1] was not founded by the Iraqis themselves. Rather, its creation was the work of non-Iraqis, particularly British

people, in a period characterized by Western domination in archaeology. And the establishment of a museum in Iraq was seen as a natural development of the British Mandate and of the colonial politics in the country, with an important pedagogical role. Even though the museum was founded in a foreign country, it helped to maintain the 19th-century notion that Europe was the center of civilization.

So, initially, the Iraq Museum was not conceived to enshrine a “metanarrative” concerning Iraqi history and the new nation, rather to be a storehouse for artifacts and a permanent record of foreign archaeological expeditions in the country.²

The Iraq Museum was distinguished from Western museums by the fact that it only contained items discovered in the country (and not “war trophies” or other items brought from abroad). In other words, it was not conceived as a “universal collection” like European museums,³ but as a warehouse for domestic artifacts, even though these artifacts were discovered and initially studied by foreigners. Even today, this is a main feature of the Iraq Museum: it is a museum of the national history of a single country.

When the Iraq Museum opened in 1923 it was small enough to fit into a single room of the Quslah Saray (the Ottoman administrative complex), but by 1926 Gertrude M.L. Bell⁴ had found a more appropriate building, in the northern part of Baghdad, that was able to house the increasing quantities of antiquities coming from the many new excavations carried out in the '20s.

By this point the museum held between 3,000 and 4,000 objects, all of which illustrated the pre-Islamic past of the country, as the museum’s collection was curated by Westerners who chose to include artifacts coming from the recent (foreign) excavations, with the aim of depicting a common pre-Islamic past shared by all the peoples of Iraq.

In fact, during the first decade of the Iraq Museum, Islamic history was poorly represented: the Omayyad and Abbasid caliphates and the Islamic period in general were practically absent. It was not until 1936 that the Museum acquired its first Islamic antiquities, when a small proportion of the finds from the German

² Bernhardsson, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past*, 2005, p. 151.

³ Despite the fact that G. Bell herself, in a letter to her stepmother (march 3, 1926), proudly wrote: “It will be a real museum like the British Museum only a little smaller”.

⁴ Gertrude Bell Archive → <http://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk>.

excavation at the important site of Samarra were returned to Iraq.

Because the collections did not do justice to the Islamic past, the Iraq Museum was initially excluded from Iraqi political and cultural life. And, unlike their neighbors, the Iraqi people initially did not recognize themselves in pre-Islamic history: the government, which had adopted a pan-Arab identity, did not show any interest in the ancient peoples of Mesopotamia.

In the following years, however, the Museum acquired new collections and published a short guide to its holdings, and the number of visitors soon increased.

As already Bernhardsson had observed,⁵ in Iraq, the question of how to build a “modern present” based on the past has been answered by two competing and apparently diametrically opposed models: the Iraqist model stresses the ancient and pre-Islamic civilizations that developed in the country, while the Pan-Arab model is less comfortable with the pre-Islamic past. Things would have changed after the Second World War with the third stage.

The third stage in the development of archaeology in Iraq was marked by the struggle for control of the nation’s historical artifacts, which was in effect a symbolic battle against Western cultural and political expansion in the Middle East. After the Second World War, archaeology was no longer a site of imperialist and anti-imperialist contention. In this stage, Iraq gained full control of its archaeology and participated in international collaborations as an equal.

The Museum continued to grow and in the 1940s a new building was commissioned. A German architect designed an *art deco* structure that followed the plan of traditional Iraqi houses. The new museum would be built in Salihiya, on the west bank of the river. Soon afterward, replicas of an Assyrian gate (one of the city gate of Khorsabad [Fig. 2]) and of the statue of the “Lion of Babylon” were erected at two corners of the grounds of the new museum (today, they are still in place). Yet the construction of the Museum itself would continue until the end of the 1960s.⁶

In the meantime, the vibrant archaeological scene in Iraq and the importance of the Museum in the Iraqi cultural and political life inspired one of the greatest

⁵ Bernhardsson, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past*, 2005, pp. 5-8.

⁶ The new museum, in those premises that still today host the collections, the Archaeological Library and the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq, was inaugurated and opened to the public in 1966.

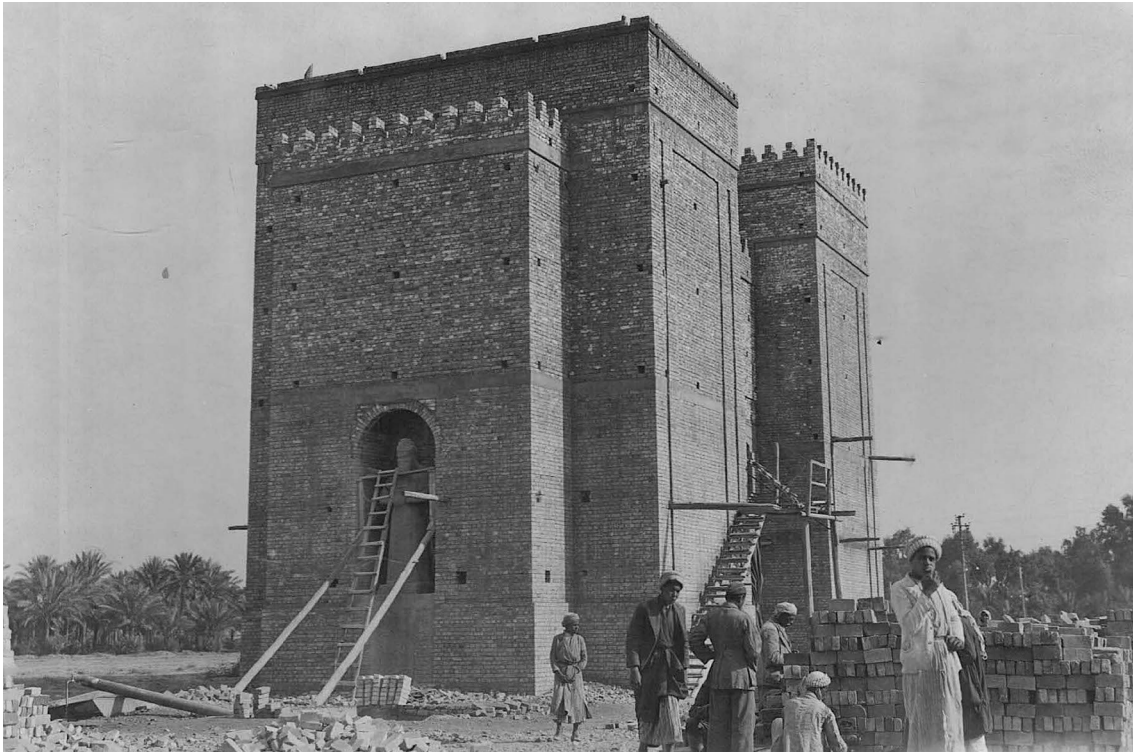


Fig. 2 Baghdad, reconstruction of assyrian city gate (Khorsabad) at the entrance of the Iraq Museum (1940s: SBAH archives).

architects of any period to propose the construction of an innovative and futuristic museum. In 1957 the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright included in his project for a “Greater Baghdad” the design of an elongated Iraq Museum – a magnificent utopian project that will never be realized.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND PROPAGANDA

Between the late 1950s and 1960s and, in particular, under Saddam Hussayn’s leadership, a rising “cultural nationalism” gave priority to pre-Islamic history (of course without neglecting Islamic history), stressing Iraq’s leadership role in the Arab world (and its hegemony in the Gulf). The government associated itself with archaeology **[Fig. 3]**, with the aim of promoting nationalism under a strong centralized state. At the same time, the Iraq Museum of Baghdad, following the reorganization of its staff and that of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq, became the favored venue for the expression of the propaganda and ideology of the regime.



Fig. 3 Babylon, ceiling of a room of the Saddam Hussein's Palace (2012: photo by the author).

In the 1980s the museum doubled in size, as a new annex was built that maintained the original design of courtyard and porticoes surrounded by exhibition rooms. The government also promoted archaeological culture by organizing seminars and group tours of archaeological sites and museums. At the same time, as Baram stressed, the co-optation of Iraq's contemporary artists in the 1980s and 1990s succeeded in filling Baghdad with monuments and sculptures inspired by scenes and symbols of the Iraqi past that the ruling regime considered essential for the education of the nation.⁷

Saddam Hussayn also implemented museum projects in various regions of the country. This marked the fulfillment of a program that was planned in the 1940s and 1950s (see, for example, the Mosul Museum) but never realized. The new local museums were usually conceived as small-scale structures, but their chief purpose was not to illustrate the cultural specificity or the main historical period of the region they represented.⁸ Rather, each of these museums was con-

⁷ Baram, *Culture, History and Ideology in the Formation of Ba'thist Iraq, 1968-89*, 1991, p. 81.

⁸ Fales, *Saccheggio in Mesopotamia*, 2006, p. 165.

ceived as an Iraq Museum in miniature, whose purpose was to depict the entire path of Mesopotamian history. In Babylon, for example, three museums as such were envisioned (respectively dedicated to Hammurabi, Nebuchadnezzar, and Alexander the Great), but only one was constructed. Paradoxically, at the new Babylon museum only a few original objects were on view; almost all the pieces were casts or maquettes or “replicas”. In a nation with a strong centralized government such as Iraq was, “culture” too was centralized: almost all of the genuine artifacts remained in the Baghdad Museum. In any case, these reproductions were sufficient for the educational and propaedeutic role that the regional museums had to fulfill.

This “promotion” (i.e. instrumentalisation) of archaeology and history during the last decades of the 20th century is the prelude to the episodes of 1991 and 2003, when archaeological sites and museums were targeted by the general populace. These “raising” and plundering were not caused only by the monetary value of the objects (even if for the 2003 sack the economic aspect is to be kept in mind, considering the desperate conditions of a population under embargo for over a decade), and surely not by a new anti-imperialist or anti-western reaction.⁹ Rather, these episodes were a reaction to the previous governmental policy and propaganda.

THE SACK AND THE REQUALIFICATION WORKS IN THE IRAQ MUSEUM OF BAGHDAD (2003-2017)

In 2003, before its sack, the museum housed more than 200.000 inventoried objects: a figure that well illustrates its importance. As the meaningful artifacts of Mesopotamian culture are preserved in the Iraq Museum, it is easy to understand the need and the cultural and social importance of an intervention.

This is not the place to talk further about the looting of the Iraq Museum, which was also the first media event that marked as well the birth of a sort of “voyeurism” on the destruction of the Near Eastern cultural heritage. I rather would like to use this second part of my paper to quickly illustrate the Italian re-qualification works we carried out immediately after the looting.

⁹ Fales, *Saccheggio in Mesopotamia*, p. 76.

The project of the rearrangement of part of the Iraq Museum – together with the laboratories, looted and irreparably damaged and a series of training courses for restorers – have been planned since 2003 by the Italian Ministries of Heritage and Culture and of Foreign Affairs and the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq, together with the Centro Scavi di Torino (CRAST)¹⁰ and Monumenta Orientalia (MO).

The first work phase of the project foresaw the reorganization of the galleries around the main courtyard where unmovable objects are exhibited. Given the difficulty of staying for long time in Baghdad at that time, the choice was to entrust the work to a local enterprise, coordinating the project from Italy and planning regular inspections in Iraq (several times a year). Aware of the difficulties in dealing with such a complex museological project, we decided to focus on simplicity and feasibility of the interventions. The decision to maintain the existing exhibition facilities, simply enhancing them and making them more functional and up to date, resulted to be correct and effective.

Since the beginning, we paid attention also to the Islamic section of the Museum. Indeed, the first interventions were planned exactly in the Islamic gallery, a single large room with pieces going from the Abbasid to the Ottoman period. The space was divided into main chronological sections thanks to partition walls that now help the visitor to have a better fruition and to distinguish the different historical phases.

Close and connected to this gallery, recently a new wing of the museum has been created and finally inaugurated in 2017. This new wing has been internally shaped to reproduce the historical Mirjaniya's *musalla* of Baghdad (demolished in the 1950s) and its original decoration, already stored in the Iraq Museum, is now correctly displayed on its walls.¹¹

Substantial interventions were carried in the Great Assyrian hall, which displayed the great reliefs from the palace of Sargon II at Khorsabad (8th century BCE). These monumental slabs in relief (each one around 3-4 tons) were originally lined up and exposed without any connection with the architecture of the

¹⁰ CRAST has been continuously working in Iraq since 1964, both with excavation or restoration projects and training at the Italian-Iraqi Cultural Center for Archaeological Sciences and Restoration in Baghdad. For info about CRAST and the ongoing projects see: → www.centroscavitorino.it.

¹¹ The Mirjaniya project was carried out by arch. R. Parapetti (Monumenta Orientalia) and executed by the local enterprise of Eng. Ala' Anbaki.

hall. They stood detached from the walls, limiting the effect that originally they had inside a royal palace. So after their restoration and cleaning, the reliefs were displayed, trying to recall more their original location. Due to the fact that they were unamovable (they are cemented in the floor), we decided to “move” the hall around them, creating lateral walls to narrow the hall and giving the effect of a unique elongated room (as in the Assyrian palaces). Similarly, above the two monumental human-headed bulls – the divine guardians of the main entrances of the Assyrian palaces – an arched covering has been recreated, following the ancient architectural model.

This way, for those entering the gallery today, the impression is that of a large royal throne hall, with the sculptured decoration along its walls.¹² Moreover, the new lighting system enhances the relief of the sculptured figures and the details of these masterpieces [Fig. 4].

Since 2012, a new project concerning the setting up of a second large gallery at the ground floor (the so-called Middle Assyrian Gallery) started.

For this second intervention, we took more care about the aspects related to the presentation of the objects (adequate supports, lightened showcases, opaque glasses fixed to the windows to shade the too much intense light from the outside...) and to the content of the communication [Fig. 5]. The most delicate operation was the moving of two human-headed bulls from the Ashurnasirpal's II North-Western palace in Nimrud (9th century BCE), each one weighing more than 4,5 tons, previously almost not visible for the visitors. This operation was delicate, since one of the two colossi had been reassembled by various fragments (several decades ago). In addition, the weight of the giants could damage to the floor of the museum itself and therefore we had to study the most suitable path to move these monumental sculptures for about 150 meters inside the museum.

Today the two sculptures are placed at the center of the second Assyrian gallery, mainly displaying materials from Nimrud, with a light metal superstructure that reproduces the arch of the original entrance to the throne room of the Ashurnasirpal's palace.

In front of them are placed the two “small” *lamassu* which originally flanked

¹² We have to mention that the sequence in which the sculptured slabs are displayed in the room, is not completely philologically correct: the slabs, placed in the '50s, have been lined up without taking into consideration their original disposal along the walls of the huge palace of Khorsabad.



Fig. 4 Baghdad, the Great Assyrian Gallery in the Iraq Museum after the requalification works (2013: archive of Centro Scavi Torino).



Fig. 5 Baghdad, the Middle Assyrian Gallery in the Iraq Museum after the requalification works (2014: archive of Centro Scavi Torino).

the entrance to the temple of Ishtar at Nimrud and that were excavated by Iraqi archaeologists in 2000-2001. These two hybrid creatures now protect the entrance to a space surrounded by showcases displaying the objects from Iraqi, English and Italian excavations at Nimrud.

One of the main problems of the Iraq Museum, today, is not to be yet fully equipped with an adequate educational apparatus (panels, tags, brochures...) that can even briefly explain what is exhibited in the rooms.

Besides, it should be noted – as already observed by the former director of the Museum Donny George – that the Iraqi educational system foresees the teaching of the ancient (mesopotamian) history, but is not particularly effective in primary and secondary school students.¹³ The communication between the museum and its young visitors – who, during the scholastic path, are able to acquire only a few concepts related to the oldest history of the country – can be therefore complicated.

For this reason, in this last project we also took care about the communication. For example, a lightened timeline (4 mt long) has been fixed at the beginning of the room, illustrating the ancient chronology and history of Mesopotamia, with references to the main objects exposed in the relevant gallery. Educational panels, both in English and Arabic, on the history of the museum and of the research and on the main historical and artistic developments of Mesopotamia have been specifically designed for this hall, both for adult visitors and for children – as in the case of the dresser/drawners [Fig. 6]. Further on, a series of comics with stories that have children as main characters and that are set on the archaeological excavation or in the museum, have been recently planned in the frame of an European project (named EDUU: *Education and Cultural Heritage Enhancement for Social Cohesion in Iraq*) involving the Universities of Bologna (as the leading institution), Torino, Baghdad, Kufa and Qadissiyah and, of course, the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq (together with some local museums) as partner.

In February 2015, a few days after the destruction of the Mosul's museum by Da'esh, the Iraq Museum in Baghdad was officially reopened to the public. It was a strong signal affirming the importance of history and the need to protect the

¹³ George, "The Looting of the Iraq National Museum", in: P.G. Stone and J.F. Bajjaly (eds.) *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq*, 2008, p. 106.



Fig. 6 Baghdad, Iraq Museum: drawer with coloured didactic panels in one of new galleries of the museum (archive of Centro Scavi Torino).



Fig. 7 Young visitors at the Iraq Museum of Baghdad, after its reopening in 2015 (photo by the author).

common cultural heritage of mankind, against the senseless barbaric destruction of the Past. Entire school classes are now visiting again the Iraq Museum of Baghdad (one of the first to reopen in the city and, in general, in the whole country), after around 25 years of closing [Fig. 7]: the new generation could again appreciate and understand their own history and their own past, getting awareness of their past heritage and – we hope – perceive the need to preserve it and transmit it to the future generations.

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NATION BUILDING, UNIVERSAL HISTORY AND THE ANTIQUITIES MARKET: FROM ANCIENT EGYPT TO THE 21ST CENTURY ARABIAN GULF

Karen Exell

INTRODUCTION: STORIES OF HUMANITY

Museums as signifiers of the modern nation privilege material culture as a validation of national and cultural identity. The art and antiquity markets provide a ready resource for new nations to rapidly acquire an art historical past, or to establish ownership of other countries' pasts, reflecting an acquisition process in existence for some centuries in the western world – for example in the creation of collections of ancient Egyptian antiquities by museums such as the British Museum and the Musée du Louvre. These museums operate within the assumption that such antiquities form part of mankind's heritage and a traditional universal historical narrative that begins with Ancient Egypt and travels via the Ancient Greeks to Europe; the antiquities, according to the proponents of this narrative, unproblematically belong in the universal museums in the West.

According to Nasser Rabat, Aga Khan Professor and the Director of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT, the Louvre Abu Dhabi (LAD), in the United Arab Emirates, represents the next logical step in the evolution of the idea of universal history determined by imperial power that emerged with the Napoleonic occupation of Egypt in 1798–1801. The monumental *Description de l'Égypte* (23 volumes on all aspects of Egypt, ancient and modern) which resulted from Napoleon's Egyptian mission launched a European fascination with ancient Egypt that remains in circulation today, as well as a range of disciplinary developments including geography, history, archaeology, egyptology, museology, and the arts.¹ These disciplinary developments have shaped the production

¹ Rabat, "France's Oriental Dream: The Louvre Abu Dhabi", *Artforum* 19 January (2019).

of world history and the idea of the universal from a European perspective, also articulated in the museum collections created through 19th century European colonialism. LAD opened to the public on 11th November 2017, in a building designed by the French architect, Jean Nouvel, part of a thirty-year intergovernmental branding and training agreement between Abu Dhabi and France operated through Agence-France-Muséums, for a fee of 1.3 billion dollars for the Louvre name, art loans, special exhibitions and management advice. At its opening in November 2017, LAD revealed its interpretation of the universal as the stories of human creativity that transcend individual cultures or civilizations, times or places, articulated through an exhibition of around 600 art objects organized thematically, chronologically and cross-culturally.

THE UNIVERSAL MUSEUM

The problematic nature of the universal museum concept was debated following the 2002 *Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums* signed by around thirty of the largest museums in the western world, including the British Museum, the Louvre and the Guggenheim. These museums claim to speak on behalf of one world using the rhetoric of ‘world culture’, silencing any conflicts. The *Declaration* was declared a transparent defense against repatriation claims by the Chair of the ICOM Ethics Committee,² with its argument that a museum in the western world was the ideal context to view art and artifacts, rather than in the country of origin, and that such museums had in fact contributed to the artifacts’ cultural value. Critics have also pointed out the selectivity of the ‘universal’ narratives that these museums choose to represent, suggesting that their universality is actually based on their wealth.³ If wealth is the driving force behind the production and representation of ‘world history’ and the construction of universal museums, then the Arabian Gulf is their natural 21st century home. A comparable, if less violent, acquisitions process to that of the great 18th and 19th century European museums is underway in the young nations of the Arabian Gulf, evident in museums such as LAD, and the Museum of Islamic

² Lewis, “The Universal Museums: A Special Case?”, *ICOM News* 57/1 (2004), p. 3.

³ Exell, *Modernity and the Museum in the Arabian Peninsula*, 2016, pp. 93-94.



Fig. 1 Jacques-Louis David, *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* (1800-1801), Louvre Abu Dhabi (loan from the Musée national du Château de Malmaison, M.M.49.7.1).

Art (opened in Doha, Qatar, in 2008) with their extraordinary collections of Islamic and Western art and antiquities.

LAD has always defined itself as a universal museum. In 2013 in the catalogue of the teaser exhibition, *Birth of a Museum*, Mubarak Hamad Al Muhairi, Director General, Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority, stated:

*Our universal museum will celebrate and advance intercultural dialogue so profoundly needed in the modern world and will be a place where people can connect with each other through the universal languages of arts.*⁴

LAD's cultural and epistemological lineage is described in Holland Cotter's review of the opening for *The New York Times*, where he references the painting, *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* by Jacques-Louis David [Fig. 1]:

⁴ Al Muhairi, "A Bridge to the World", in: L. Des Cars (ed.), *Louvre Abu Dhabi: Birth of a Museum*, 2013, pp. 14-15.

In an “Arab world” museum, the presence here of a hagiographic image of Napoleon, colonialist invader of Islamic North Africa and pilferer of non-Western art, is ripe with political irony. Yet nothing is made of this. Only further on, in a section of late-19th- and early-20th-century works grouped under the label “Modern Orientalism,” is the impact of colonialism on art acknowledged. And there it is given a positive spin. In short, the Louvre Abu Dhabi fails where most, if not all, encyclopedic art museums do: in truth-telling.⁵

As universal art museums become established in the Arabian Peninsula, the relationship of universal history to historical and contemporary reality, or ‘truth’, comes under scrutiny, and turns this same scrutiny towards universal museums in the West – as Cotter asks, what claims to truth-telling do they actually have?

ACQUIRING HISTORY

Reviewing the western appropriation of the material culture of others, we might ask, why was this material cultural so avidly collected and displayed, and why and how has this ancient culture become so entwined with aspects of western contemporary identity? The British Museum’s ancient Egyptian collections serve as a good example. During the early 19th century, pre-dating the establishment of Egyptology as an academic subject the Egyptian objects that arrived as war booty taken from the French following Napoleon’s campaign in Egypt, or purchases of private collections, were evaluated for their aesthetic merit, and displayed in picturesque arrangements, or, for the smaller pieces, crowded into cases like 16th-century cabinets of curiosity. The Egyptian material was regarded as an afterthought to the Greek and Roman collections which, in historical thought at the time, marked the beginning of civilisation – the Greek and Roman material had already been appropriated by an elite educational system requiring extensive background knowledge, but the Egyptian material was available to all, separate from Western culture, and easily accessible, a perception that has

⁵ Cotter, “Louvre Abu Dhabi, an Arabic-Galactic Wonder, Revises Art History”, *The New York Times* 28 November (2017).

lasted until today.⁶ With 19th century colonialism, spectacular discoveries such as the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922, and extensive media coverage inspiring waves of Egyptomania, ancient Egypt has been repeatedly reimagined and appropriated – both conceptually and in reality. Requests for the repatriation of iconic objects such as the Rosetta Stone or the bust of Nefertiti may be rebuffed as if the Egyptians are being presumptuous,⁷ or arguments are made that there is as little connection between modern nation states and their ancient cultures as between the western museums now housing them and the ancient cultures, so ownership is moot. James Cuno, Director of the Art Institute of Chicago, is the champion of this position, arguing for example:

*[National governments] impose a national claim of distinction on culture, and they seek an ancient pedigree for that culture. They want to claim primacy as much as purity: ancient origins and uninterrupted identity. But this is only politics. Modern Egypt's claim of descent from pharaonic Egypt, or the People's Republic of China from the ancient Qin, or Iraq from Mesopotamia, or Italy from ancient Rome is nationalist fantasy based on the accident of geography and enforced by sovereignty.*⁸

Returning to the Arabian Gulf, the development of a more globalized regional cultural sector as part of the rapid nation-building process over the last twenty years has resulted in a museums sector that is enmeshed within the global art and antiquities market, an efficient mechanism to support the long-established pattern of wealth- and politically-influenced movement of works of art. This differs markedly from the contemporary ethical stance of the cultural sector in many European countries, where the art and antiquities market, which facilitates acquisition into private collections and arguably can encourage cross-border illegal antiquities trading, is often regarded as antithetical to the role of museums in protecting and preserving works for the public good, accessible in the public domain. In the Arabian Gulf, these markets are a source of works to fast-track the development of both public and private collections, and while care is

⁶ Moser, *Wondrous Curiosities*, 2006.

⁷ Milmo, "The Big Question: What is the Rosetta Stone and Should Britain Return It to Egypt?", *The Independent* 9 December (2009).

⁸ Cuno (ed.), *Whose Culture? The Promise of Museums and the Debate over Antiquities*, 2009, p. 2.

taken to avoid issues of illegal provenance, there is no similar level of aversion to association with, or utilization of, these markets.

Given Europe's deeply politicized histories of heritage appropriation there should be little surprise when great artworks shift from West to East, to the emerging economies of the Arabian Gulf, given all that the works represent in terms of cultural prestige. Many of the great collectors of today are now located in the Arabian Gulf, making strategic use of the available tools – the museums, the art market – to create new global art collections and cultural centres. Reporting on the opening of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, Cotter noted that, “[w]orks that qualify as recognizable ‘classics’ to a Western viewer feel surreally exotic in this multicultural environment”,⁹ while *The Telegraph Newspaper* (UK) quoted Jean-Francois Charnier, Scientific Director of Agence-France-Muséums, as saying, “after a prologue of masterpieces from multiple periods of time, an enigma prompts visitors to reflect on the meaning of universality”. *The Telegraph* goes on to observe that the Louvre Abu Dhabi is “unconstrained by the complex cultural histories of the museums of the West, and its location – between Europe, Asia and Africa – could be seen as that of an outsider observer”,¹⁰ which is a challenging argument to maintain for a museum produced by the Louvre, and indicative of an assumption that the Arabian Gulf is not part of the ‘universal’ histories it is representing. The panoptican eye and assemblage of Western culture is shifting its centre Eastwards retaining largely unchanged its taxonomies, hierarchies and aesthetic systems, even if these are exoticized in the new context; the universal museum is embraced for what it symbolizes of established ideals, and in pursuit of cultural capital and political expediency.

⁹ Cotter, “Louvre Abu Dhabi, an Arabic-Galactic Wonder, Revises Art History”, *The New York Times* 28 November (2017).

¹⁰ Trend, “Louvre Abu Dhabi: First Look Inside the £1 Billion Art Museum in the Desert”, *The Telegraph* 11 November (2017).

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FINAL REMARKS

Elena Calandra

The days of the Symposium have undoubtedly marked a turning point for the topic of risk to cultural heritage, but are also the sign of a new way of working, more and more successful, consisting not only of a single event, but of a chain of events for a diversified public: in this case, we had not only the exhibitions and the international Symposium, which is not frequent but can happen, but an exhibition spread over several locations, which therefore topographically involves an entire city participating in it; the dissemination of the event has been systematically carried out to the point that it has itself become part of the event. And, in the frame of the Symposium, we were spectators of the screening of the wonderful, impressive documentary by Tim Slade, *The destruction of memory* – I hope that the film will be screened in all schools and universities. We are far from the static, immobile logic of the exhibition/conference formula, being oriented towards the future, the happening as a scientific form.

We have heard of various experiences, which provide a historical and critical framework allowing us to imagine strategies. History and knowledge are fundamental, but now strategies are needed, since we are at a decisive moment in epistemological reflection about destruction. Indeed, the topic of the Symposium represents one of the most disquieting challenges in our restless times: a stream of studies which, unfortunately, doesn't cease to exist, since war, conflicts, and guerrilla warfare continue, and their consequences are pillage, looting, destructions.

The starting point, inescapable, is that every part of the world is potentially at risk for war, terrorism and natural disasters. Actually, in Italy a number of antiquities were discovered in war events – it is amazing how barbaric violence sometimes has become a source of knowledge. The most famous example for archaeology is possibly the Palestrina Sanctuary, not far from Rome, bombed in 1944 and studied and documented by Giorgio Gullini, who was to be involved fifty years later in a 3D reconstruction of the Baghdad museum.¹ Another fa-

¹ Merz, *Il Santuario della Fortuna in Palestrina. Vedute ed interpretazioni attraverso i secoli*, Palestrina 2016; for

mous case is probably Pompei, for example the Schola Armaturarum, discovered in 1916, restored and rebuilt, damaged by bombings in 1943 and recently offered to visitors.² The wonderful grotto in the Tiberius Villa in Sperlonga, in its turn, was a weapons storage place and offered hospitality to displaced persons during the Second World War – these are just a few among examples in Italy.

Since the war, heritage in Italy has continued to be ravaged: it is enough to remember the damages to San Giorgio in Velabro in Rome and to the Accademia dei Georgofili in Florence in 1993, when monuments were victims of criminal attacks.

The debate on this issue is “hot” in Italy: in 2017, the symposium *Risk*, organized by ICCROM and Terzo Pilastro Association, focused on three topics: analysis of current situation regarding the documentation of the conservation and management of sites; methods and problems in the management of the documentation and reconstructions of both public and private sites: norms, professions and companies, and technologies in the documentation and management and development policies (between local development and international cooperation).³

Even the Central Institute for Archaeology, in its short life (since October 2016), has dedicated two meetings to the topic, for the “Discourses on the method”, to shed light on good practices in war theaters, such as Cyrene, or in critical situations, as at Jerusalem. At Cyrene, the University “G. d’Annunzio” of Chieti-Pescara (Prof. Oliva Menozzi), in collaboration with the Universities of Roma Tre, Florence, and Urbino, and in collaboration with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, has started implementing integrated remote sensing monitoring protocols. Thanks to a continuous collaboration with the Department of Antiquities of Libya and colleagues of other missions, the international team was able to monitor and safeguard different contexts and recover ancient works of art from the illicit market.⁴ At Jerusalem, the University of Molise (Prof. Fulvia Ciliberto), starting in 2009, with the co-financing of the Ministry of

Baghdad, → <http://www.virtualmuseumiraq.cnr.it/noflash.htm>, and Lippolis, de Martino, Parapetti and Capri, *L'Iraq Museum di Baghdad. Gli interventi italiani per la riqualificazione di un patrimonio dell'umanità*, 2016.

² About bombing Garcia y Garcia, *Danni di guerra a Pompei. Una dolorosa vicenda quasi dimenticata. Con numerose notizie sul “Museo Pompeiano” distrutto nel 1943*, Studi della Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompei, 2006; Papi, *Pietre dello scandalo*, 2017, pp. 43-52; about the reopening of the Schola Armaturarum

→ <http://pompeisites.org/comunicati/la-schola-armaturarum-torna-visitabile-al-pubblico/>.

³ → <https://www.iccrom.org/it/node/522>.

⁴ → http://www.ic_archeo.beniculturali.it/it/154/eventi/220/discorsi-sul-metodo_-la-necropoli-di-cirene-remote-sensing-e-monitoraggio-per-la-salvaguardia-di-un-patrimonio-a-rischio.

Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, contributed to the creation of the new Terra Sancta Museum, recently inaugurated: it is the first to be dedicated to the roots of Christianity and the preservation of the Holy Places, with the aim of enhancing the artistic and cultural heritage of the Holy Land, to spread a message of peace, to encourage the meeting between the different cultures and religions of the area and support the development of local communities.⁵

The continued discussion is a sign of the times: in May 2018, the Norwegian Institute of Rome promoted the conference “Cultural Heritage, a Tool in Conflict and a Victim of War”, while in Udine the workshop “The Destruction of the Cultural Heritage of Humanity” was held; an episode of a famous current events program in Italy, “Petrolio”, was dedicated to the theme of the theft and recycling of works of art, on June 6, 2018.

The debate at the moment is very rich. We are talking about destructions more and more: and this the first point I would like to highlight, since this Symposium seems to be an ideal, and also practical, point of departure.

The Salvatore Settis’ keynote lecture has provided us with an overview of the use and misuse of images, of iconoclasm and the powerful statement made by images. Settis has pointed out relationships and the contrast between iconoclasm and iconophilia, with a third category, a battle against images through images.

The themes of the conference are four, while the artists play a parallel role.

The first topic is entitled *Sul territorio: case studies*. Carlo Bertelli and Adriana Acutis examine two case studies, both supported by a foundation: the 200 restored masterpieces on view at Venaria Reale and the approach of the Consulta di Torino show the final point of arrival of a sequence of running against time and/or of sudden destruction. On the one hand, it is superfluous to emphasize how foundations are a concrete hope for the future of culture, on the other it is worth underlining the ongoing struggle with time in order to save heritage: only collaboration and cooperation can be helpful, what is needed are constancy and shared protocols for counteracting risks and damages. The methods and technologies used, indeed, are applicable to different contexts and can also become examples of best practices for other contexts in Italy or in other countries.

It is also to put in the right consideration the overarching role of the Italian

5 → http://www.ic_archeo.beniculturali.it/it/154/eventi/208/discorsi-sul-metodo_-gerusalemme_-dietro-le-quinte-del-terra-sancta-museum_-la-sezione-archeologica.

concept of *tutela*,⁶ consolidated by a long tradition, both legal and practical. Indeed, the term is difficult to translate accurately into other languages, not only for the specific word, but for all the aspects it includes: conservation, preservation, rescue.

The second topic regards the power of images.

Marcello Barbanera's paper concerns the ancient origins of the debate about art as cultural property and the ancient idea of heritage (the modern one was born with the French revolution). About destructions, just as a suggestion: by destroying Persepolis, Alexander performs a cultural/anticultural operation, avenging the damage wrought by the Persians on the Athenian Acropolis through the same method – that of Persepolis is the conscious destruction of a city that was a cultural symbol, unlike the burning of Troy, which was the enemy and not the model, as was Persepolis.

The third subject are ancient and modern destructions, analyzed according to different levels of damage, in ancient and modern times, with different conditions of documentation: the exhibitions of Fondazione Aquileia (Antonio Zanardi Landi) contribute to spread the idea of wounded heritage to the public of museum visitors; Frederick Mario Fales outlines the exclusive and leading role of the ancient ruler in every war operation, Simonetta Graziani points out that breakdowns resulting from wars lead to new forms of civilization.

Arianna Arisi Rota presented the critical frame and a gallery of impressive cases of iconoclasm and political emotions in the “Long 19th century”, while Maria Teresa Grassi exposed the dramatic situation of Palmyra through the documentation of the monumental past. Christoph Bachhuber introduced the complex contrast of global versus local using the case study of Konya in Turkey, in an ethical context; Hourig Sourouzian provided us with a hope, with restorations and new discoveries in Egypt.

In the fourth section, about museums and the antiquity market, Carlo Lippolis illustrates the philological requalification project in Iraq after the sack in 2003.

At the same time, the loss of contexts often implies the very serious problem of the illicit market. Alice Stevenson introduces the important theme of ethics in purchases, throwing light on the distinction between ethics and legality; Karen Exell is working on the role of material culture and museums in the production

⁶ Decree 42/2004, 3.

of contemporary cultural identities in the Arabian Gulf.

In parallel to the Symposium, three exhibitions are developed (at Museo Egizio, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Musei Reali di Torino), putting together ancient evidence of destruction or damage and works of art created or oriented specifically for the moment: the concept seems to create a dialogue between past and present; the project idea is to display juxtaposition, but without mixing and confusing. The Alexander mosaic made with magnetes deconstructs the image recomposing it with another technique, the Morgantina treasure loses its precious material and acquires another one, papier maché, the bronze man at the entrance of Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo imitates mud with bronze, the showcases evoke a sudden destruction and an untreated wound – not yet. These are just moments for common reflection.⁷

The explanations provided by the artists were very helpful: the work of Jananne Al-Ani is the artistic transformation in art, or sublimation, of a normal and current archaeological practice: aerial views are among the best ways of knowing a landscape and hourly monitoring it. In her turn, Ali Cherri, also using performances, has showed the multiple facets of a (possible) resurrection, both of the Hiram sarcophagus from cement in the museum of Beirut, and/or of the artist, the performer, in front of the objects bearing witness to the past.

Concluding, I would like to offer some key points, for the moment and for the future, following the concept of the Symposium, which has put together historical reflection and future planning, and the results of the discussion that ensued.

Destruction is a point of departure, and there are multiple layers involved, material or otherwise. Many of us remember the pages of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini telling about a family visiting the Bamyān Buddha before its destruction: the ex post narration teaches that now tourism has to start again from the same families.

Cities, monuments, objects, and, generally speaking, contexts, suffer practically but not only practically: for archaeologists, the context is all, and often objects in museums are perceived as “out of context”, collection pieces; but the intended defunctionalization is also painful, for ideological reasons: a church transformed into a mosque or the reverse; but destruction can occur also as a

⁷ “Anche le statue muoiono. Conflitto e patrimonio tra antico e contemporaneo”, march 8 – september 9, 2018.

result of intentional oblivion and negligence. All these destructions involve the loss of cultural memory and of immaterial culture too,⁸ as the Tim Slade documentary teaches us: even those who destroy know the power of images and texts, mixing ignorance with awareness.

The best practice to contrast material destruction is to have philological documentation in advance, to use a good recording system, relying on inventories, photographs, 3D, etc., in order to produce a risk chart: the scholars involved in theaters of war, generally in this time of de-colonisation, have an ethical duty to teach and share know how, in order for those they teach to be able to document, dig, and restore. Sharing is a cultural weapon, whose aim is to disseminate expertise: the way is sensitizing the inhabitants (I don't like to use the term of "local population") to the value of their Cultural Heritage, toward an appropriation, or re-appropriation after colonialism, war and destructions – this is generally speaking one of the goals of public archaeology, applied to these situations. A magic formula, indeed, doesn't exist, but these measures seem to be the best solution.

After the destruction, the question is to reconstruct or not to reconstruct: may virtual archaeology help? Certainly, in some cases, to provide an afterlife that is difficult to obtain, but the concrete original evidence is far more effective, where and whenever possible.

At the same time, destruction is also the loss of contexts. As regards looting, international task forces are always at work, contrasting the illicit traffic. In Italy, the Comando Carabinieri per la Tutela del Patrimonio Culturale and the Service IV (Circolazione) at the General Directorate for Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape at the Ministry Culture, are working hard, but it is important to increasingly coopt scholars who dig or have digged. Fortunately, in the last decades ethics in purchasing have improved and the policies of a lot of museums in Europe and US have changed, insofar as they are refraining from acquiring works of art of dubious origin.

In this scenario, the role of archaeological sites and museums in the war theaters is firstly that of "fortresses" for the culture. While in Europe a museum or a site is considered succesful primarily if it has a large number of visitors, the

⁸ Lastly Irvin-Erickson, *Raphaël Lemkin and the Concept of Genocide*, 2017; and "Iconoclastia nel lungo Ottocento", in: A.A. Rota and E. Fureix (eds.), *Memoria e Ricerca* 57 (2018/1).

mission of a site or of a museum in a critical place looks like the best system to preserve culture and memory for the country itself: contemporary art, better if the works are by artists coming from the same areas, can be a medium for a new tourism, both for inhabitants and for foreign tourists.

The last challenge, in a new political frame, is to encourage the rebirth of international tourism as a financial resource. On the one hand, places where we were habitually present as scholars today are theaters of war, like Syria; on the other, the vision of places belonging to collective memory and now become empty, like the pyramids of Giza, obliges us to reflect on how much there is to be reconquered – the isolation of the pyramids or in general of archaeological areas is a defeat for culture.

MΣ MUSEO
EGIZIO



FRANCO
COSIMO
PANINI