Culture Without Context

The Newsletter of the Illicit Antiquities Research Centre

Issue 20, Spring 2007

The Illicit Antiquities Research Centre is a project of the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.

Editorial

I have been asked several times recently about the genesis of the government's Illicit Trade Advisory Panel, whose report in December 2000 is generally considered responsible for the United Kingdom's accession to the 1970 UNESCO Convention. For once, it is a question I can answer with some degree of authority. In April 2000, the IARC was working with Maurice Davies of the Museums Association towards a final draft of *Stealing History*, a report commissioned by the Museums Association and ICOM-UK to recommend guidelines for museums policy towards the trade in cultural and natural materials. At a reception, Maurice met Madeleine Holt, who was at the time arts correspondent on the BBC2 television current affairs programme Newsnight. Madeleine was interested in covering our work on Newsnight, and the three of us met to discuss a possible piece. It was screened on 12 April. First there was a short documentary report on the illicit trade, including interviews with Maurice and myself, and highlighting what were likely to be the recommendations of *Stealing History*. Then there was a debate chaired by Jeremy Paxman, with Colin Renfrew in the studio and the then Minister for Arts Alan Howarth on a live television link. After a few minutes discussion, Alan Howarth announced his intention to set up an expert advisory panel to consider the problems involved and invited Colin Renfrew to be a member. Colin Renfrew accepted and ITAP was born. It was formally convened on 24 May 2000 under the chairmanship of Norman Palmer.

The saga of the Schøyen incantation bowls continues. I reported in the last issue that in 2004 University College London (UCL) convened a committee of enquiry to investigate the provenance of 654 Aramaic incantation bowls belonging to Martin Schøyen that had been deposited at UCL for study. The committee submitted its report in 2006. The original UCL announcement stated UCL's intention to publish the report's conclusions, but this has not happened. Furthermore, UCL has recently informed several people (myself included) that the report is a confidential document and that UCL is not able to enter into discussions about its subject matter. No explanation has been offered as to why UCL appears to have changed its mind over publication.

On 9 March 2007 the Schøyen Collection announced that it was to commence legal proceedings against UCL for the return of the bowls. These legal proceedings have now concluded. On 26 June 2007 the Schøyen Collection and UCL issued a joint press release announcing that 'UCL has no basis for concluding that title is vested other than in the Schøyen Collection', and that UCL has now returned the bowls and 'agreed to pay a sum in respect of its possession of them'. Presumably payment was part of the settlement, although it is not specifically stated. Perhaps non-publication of the report was another part? It seems strange though. If there is nothing in the report to incriminate Martin Schøyen, and presumably there isn't or UCL would not have returned the bowls, there should be no problem with its publication

It is also strange that UCL has agreed to 'pay a sum' to Schøyen in respect of possession when Schøyen himself had deposited them at UCL for study. Schøyen stands to make quite a profit from academic collaboration. Incantation bowls with translated texts are offered for sale with prices anything up to ten-times those asked for bowls without translations. The study and translation of Schøyen's bowls at UCL will have increased their monetary value quite substantially. And then UCL paid more on top. Nice business.

This is the last issue of *Culture Without Context*. After 10 successful years, the McDonald Institute has decided that it will not support the Illicit Antiquities Research Centre past 30 September 2007, and so the Centre will close on that date.

Artefacts in the closet: displaying cultural objects that are victims of illicit trafficking

Pontus Forslund

The region of Sipán is known to museum workers worldwide as the provenance of the infamous Moche objects that were looted and illegally traded in the late eighties. Some artefacts have been returned to Peru, but there are many more still to be found in private collections and in western museums. Although the looting of Sipán escalated in the late eighties, it had been endemic for many years before that, so that the majority of these artefacts have lost their historical context. This tradition of plundering and illegal trade has distributed the Sipán objects all over the world. One is on display at the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg, Sweden.

The Museum of World Culture is a fairly new museum, a product of the Social-Democratic government's active cultural policies, that opened its doors to the public in December 2004. The museum owes its foundation to Gothenburg's Ethnographic Museum, a traditional museum of its time and once a part of Gothenburg Museum, which possessed rich collections of objects mainly from South America. The institution was firmly established as a leader in its geographical field during the early decades of the twentieth century by the museum director, the professor and Baron Erland Nordenskiöld. By the early 1990s, however, the museum was suffering and in need of reform to meet the standards required of a modern museum with a global perspective and a mission to encourage social inclusion and dialogue. So, the Museum of World Culture was established and Gothenburg's Ethnographic Museum ceased to exist, with the ownership of the collections of the Ethnographic Museum being transferred from the municipality of Gothenburg to the state of Sweden.

Exhibitions at the Museum of World Culture seek to contradict popular images of the exotic and create awareness of current, pressing global issues like HIV/AIDS and trafficking. The latter issue is the theme of the newly opened exhibition named simply 'Trafficking'. The exhibition deals mainly with the trafficking of people for cheap labour or sexual exploitation, but there is also a section that deals with the trafficking of cultural objects and the museum's own part in it. The objects displayed in this section are as stated in its introductory text: classic examples of the ambiguous relationships between museum ethics, collecting, and laws for the protection of cultural objects. All the objects in the exhibition have their provenance in Latin America, which is the museum's traditional area of interest. This section of the Trafficking exhibition has a vivid sense of ideological urgency about it. The museum has inherited some ethical and legal baggage from the old Gothenburg Ethnographic, and this exhibition has provided an ideal opportunity to tackle some of the issues that such a legacy brings.

So, for example, probably like many other exhibitions on historic Peru, it displays an artefact from the Sipán region dating back to the Chimú period (Fig. 1). The artefact might be a piece of chain mail, but then again it might not be, and the accompanying label doesn't say anything about its original purpose. The label does say, however, that it was smuggled out of Peru in 1972 and sold to the museum. The seller/donor has been kept anonymous and the protection of his or her identity is probably due to fact that the export of cultural objects was illegal in Peru, which could jeopardize the dealer's activities in the country, although the acquisition was perfectly legal in Sweden. The questionable acquisition of the object (it had been bought by the donor in Peru from tomb robbers) has resulted in a weak informational context that raises questions about its authenticity and cultural meaning. The then director of the museum tried frantically and retrospectively to gather information about the artefact, but without any real success. It was exhibited in 1973, and now again in 2006, but in a context totally different to that intended by the seller and the museum curator responsible for its acquisition

Another glass case features some classic Nazca *huaco* vessels, with charming animal aesthetics, purchased by the museum in 1932 from a Swedish diplomat. Again the country of origin is Peru, but in this case more can be said of its acquisition and the dubious ethics of Gothenburg. Maybe this fact is not obvious from the labels in

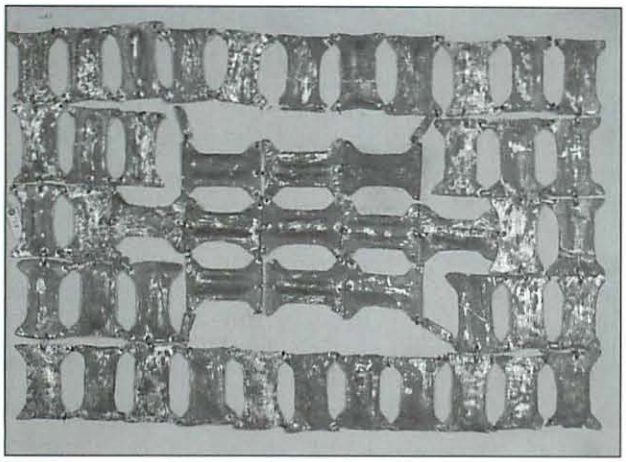


Figure 1. *Sipán object.*

the glass case, but a museum educator wishing to make tours and programmes a bit more informative has something to reveal. It must be common for museums around the world to have connections with diplomats at their country's embassies and consulates abroad. Often these foreign-based personnel are found to be prominent donors of objects to museums, which is the case here. But why diplomats? Why do we find these people to be donors and sellers of cultural objects? Museum directors and diplomats might be found together in high society, smoking cigars and sharing their interests in art, history and culture. Maybe there is a connection there. Perhaps too the difficult logistics of transport should not be underestimated. There are many examples, and the 1932 collection from Peru is one, where cultural objects have been smuggled through diplomatic channels.

The Swedish Consul General in Lima, who was himself interested in the material culture of Peru's heritage, had contacts among *huaqueros*, grave robbers, who could provide him with artefacts suitable for the Gothenburg Museum. The problem was of course that the export of such goods was against Peruvian law. The solution was a method still current today. It was easy to use the diplomatic bag, and in this case ship the cultural cargo as the personal belongings of a Swedish envoy, who enjoyed diplomatic immunity, and declare it at the museum once it had arrived in Gothenburg. A seemingly elaborate scheme, but probably standard practice. The label states that the Consul General wished to remain anonymous, although a search in the museum's archives quickly reveals his identity. He was wise to ask for anonymity considering his profession, and although his name will not be exposed here, it is interesting to find it inscribed with gold letters on a marble plaque listing donors at the former home of the Ethnographic Museum, now the Gothenburg City Museum. Some get thrown in jail for smuggling, others get their name inscribed in gold on marble for public esteem at an institution of cultural heritage. His 1932 collection was exhibited in the same year and now in 2006, again in a context totally different to that intended by the donor and the acquiring museum curator.

The pattern is recognized again in another glass case filled with objects from a 1975 collection sold to the museum by a Swedish diplomat and government official, known after a television investigation as the 'looting ambassador'.

The exhibition has omitted the names of sellers and donors because its purpose is to focus on the trafficking phenomenon, highlighting the unclear relations that exist between ethics, laws and collecting. Finger-pointing and the condemnation of individuals are thought likely to shift attention away from the wider picture of western attitudes towards the trade of cultural objects. Maintaining focus by omitting names does create curiosity as to reason, and a conspiracy-theorist might suspect a discreet cover-up. Perhaps the names aren't important, and could be counterproductive to the exhibition's aims, but the fact that many collections have been bought and sold illegally and immorally by Swedish government officials cannot and should not be ignored as they are perfect examples of methods and attitudes that might still be current today.

In relation to the main part of the Trafficking exhibition, dealing with the modern human slave trade, the section on illicit artefacts feels like a pale parenthesis — its urgency fails in comparison to the human misery on display in the rest of the gallery. But somewhere, somehow, this kind of trafficking is also important, and the resources must be found to stop it. The artefact section of the exhibition does, however, provide a perfect resource for educators wishing to inform the public about tomb robbing, museum ethics, artefact values, preventative laws, collecting, and global inequalities in wealth and power, and to discuss the issues involved. The Museum of World Culture, like almost every other museum of its kind, has many more artefacts in the closet. Its intention in raising these issues is honourable, but should not be praised too highly. Other exhibitions in the

museum also include some questionable acquisitions where information to the visitor is denied due to carelessness or budgetary constraints. Like the borrowed royal Benin bronze head, from the Ethnographic Museum in Stockholm, that stands anonymous like a Swedish Consul General in a glass case with no information available to the visitor unless revealed by an educator. There are numerous themes that could be discussed through this object: African kingdoms, British aggression, museum ethics, and repatriation. They are, however, other stories, but unlike the Swedish Consul General, the Benin bronze probably did not ask for its anonymity. It is an artefact on display with its context still left in the closet.

Pontus Forslund
Museum of World Culture
Gothenburg
Sweden

Archaeologists, collectors, museums and John Boardman

Neil Brodie

John Boardman has recently offered us his views on the antiquities trade (Boardman 2006). The issue, as he sees it, is clear: a small clique of 'politically-correct' and 'philistine' archaeologists and legislators imbued with a 'fanaticism of disgust' have embarked on a 'witch-hunt' against a broader constituency of collectors and museums. The 'restrictive practices' of this clique produce a 'censorship of scholarship' that is 'unrealistic', 'unjust and dangerous'. Meanwhile, in the 'real world', motivated by a 'spirit of discovery' and a 'zeal for antiquity', the collectors and museums 'save for scholarship and public enjoyment' antiquities that would otherwise be lost or destroyed, and 'blessed with perception and scholarly expertise' they 'share knowledge and information' derived from their study of them.

Boardman's dichotomy is poorly drawn as most museums these days would line up alongside his politically-correct clique of archaeologists, while some archaeologists (including Boardman) would throw in their lot with the collectors. What is striking about his paper though, as the above-mentioned quotes show, is that he couches his argument in such emotive language. Sometimes, the accusations he makes are not worthy of a scholar of his standing; his claim, for example, that the actions of archaeologists concerned to stop plunder are 'matched most obviously by the wilder reaches of the Animal Rights movements', extremists known for their violent crimes against persons and property, is absurd and no substitute for reasoned argument. Unfortunately, and perhaps not surprisingly, behind the rhetoric, there is very little of substance and much that is factually incorrect.

Boardman repeats the usually unfounded assertion that most unprovenanced artefacts appearing on the market have not in fact been looted, but are 'chance finds'. Unusually, however, to substantiate his claim, he provides examples drawn from his own personal experience. He describes how in the 1950s while on a walking tour of Boeotia he was shown a sack full of Classical figurines by a farmer who had found them on his fields. The implication for the reader is that in Greece collectable antiquities are regularly found by chance and in some quantity. But archaeological research shows that this is not necessarily so. Over the past 30 years, the methodology of field survey has been developed and refined as a technique of diachronic settlement analysis. Large tracts of land are walked systematically by teams of archaeologists, the locations of any artefact concentrations are noted and any significant artefacts are recovered for study and publication. Any saleable artefact would almost certainly be recovered for study, publication and curation. The results of many surveys conducted in Greece have now been published. Objects of scholarly significance have been discovered, and despite Boardman's claim to the contrary, no one has ever claimed otherwise. But scholarly significance and monetary value are not always the same thing, and the fact remains that systematic surveys have not recovered the large quantities of saleable artefacts that Boardman's anecdote would predict. Of course, it is always possible that the very reason that such surveys have not

Figure 1. *Display of excavated artefacts in the Athens Metro.*

recovered such material is that it had previously been collected by farmers and sold. If this is the case, it might introduce a severe recovery bias into survey methodology and distort any historical conclusions drawn from survey data — one of Gill and Chippindale's 'intellectual consequences' — though Boardman does not elaborate on this possibility.

Boardman goes on to say, however, that most 'chance finds' are probably thrown up by construction projects cutting through archaeological sites, citing his own observations in Athens and Chios. The market, he thinks, acts beneficially in such circumstances by rescuing artefacts that would otherwise be lost. Maybe so, but it is hardly an ideal solution. A better strategy is to ensure that damage caused to archaeological heritage by building is minimized by appropriate proactive intervention. PPG-16 was introduced in UK with such a purpose in view, and is generally considered a success (Wainwright 2000, 926). Similar rules are now in place in Greece, and the construction of the Athens Metro provides an excellent example of their utility. Sites encountered during tunnelling were excavated and reconstructions of the excavations together with associated finds are now imaginatively displayed in the relevant Metro stations of central Athens, where they are available for viewing free-of-charge by passers-by (Figs. 1 & 2) (Parlama & Stampolidis 2000). A better strategy surely for the archaeological heritage of Athens than site destruction followed by the 'rescue' of collectable artefacts by foreign collectors, a better strategy at least for those members of the public who spend more time on the Athens Metro than in the homes of collectors.

Boardman accuses archaeologists who oppose the illicit trade of 'censorship of original scholarship' and writes that he was 'brought up to believe that censorship is worse than theft'. He is referring to the policy of some journals to refuse first publication of unprovenanced artefacts. But things are not always what they appear. Some information about the provenance of so-called unprovenanced artefacts must always be known, sometimes, as the case of the Judas Gospel has shown, a lot is known and will be published when it is profitable to do so. Most times, however, provenance-related information is never released into the public domain, which is why artefacts continue to labour under the epithet 'unprovenanced'. Dealers argue that they keep provenance secret so as to protect client confidentiality or to hide the identity of a source. Sceptics argue it is to facilitate illicit trade. Either way, commercial practice is restricting the amount of provenance-related information being made available for academic research.

It is this restriction of information that constrains academic freedom, not the publication policies of academic journals, and it does so in two ways. First, it obstructs the ability of academics to research either the antiquities trade or contemporary antiquities collecting. Boardman might be surprised to learn that the trade has become a legitimate area of enquiry for criminologists, sociologists and lawyers, who all find their academic freedom seriously curtailed by the heavy veil of commercial secrecy. But there is also a second, more insidious effect. Freedom might be defined as the capacity for informed choice, and academic freedom can only be said to exist when scholars are able to choose a course of research confident in their knowledge of its contexts and possible consequences. Clearly, for unprovenanced artefacts, such an informed choice is not possible. Boardman deplores the effects of non-publication on scholarship, without really knowing what material damage is caused by the trade. He has little to say about criminal involvement in the trade, and the social harm it causes, other than to suggest that it might be less

important than censorship. Again, presumably, he just doesn't know. Yet until the social and criminal relations of the antiquities trade and the material damage it causes have been properly ascertained by verifiable research, which at the moment is not possible, as much because of the intransigence of collectors and some sympathetic academics and museum curators as it is because of the obstruction of dealers, scholars can only choose to study unprovenanced artefacts in complete disregard of any possible consequences. The choice cannot be said to be a free one, in the sense of a knowledgeable one, and it certainly cannot be justified by an appeal to academic freedom.

Figure 2. *Model stratigraphy in the Athens Metro.*

To illustrate what he sees to be the regressive attitude of archaeologists towards unprovenanced antiquities, Boardman uses the example of the Iron Age Gundestrup cauldron, discovered in a Jutland bog in 1891, though thought to have been manufactured somewhere in eastern Europe. He argues that if a similar object was to appear on the market today then no journal would publish it and no museum would acquire it. Again though, this is not necessarily correct. There is an emerging consensus that unprovenanced objects (including those seized by law enforcement agencies) should be donated to the most appropriate museum or public collection ('repository of last resort' or 'safe haven'), where they will then be available for legitimate study and publication. This solution has been adopted by British museums with regard to artefacts of UK origin (DCMS 2005, 17). Of course, collectors or dealers might choose not to donate objects to such collections, but that regrettable behaviour can hardly be blamed on archaeologists.

Boardman has this to say about the Illicit Antiquities Research Centre (IARC):

> It might seem far more appropriate for an institute in Cambridge, largely dependent upon public money, to spend its time investigating misdemeanours committed in the name of scholarship, than to conduct a witch-hunt of collectors and to bully museums in what seems an almost paranoid attack on people and objects (p. 36).

This statement is, quite simply, wrong in every respect. First, the IARC has never received a penny of public money. Second, concerning scholarly misdemeanours, presumably he does not mean scholarly collusion with the illicit trade but is referring to the problem of unpublished excavations discussed earlier in his paper. He is right, unpublished excavations are a problem, and so are excavated sites that are inadequately cared for, but, again, his criticism misses the target. Since 2001, with exactly this problem in mind, the IARC has been working with British and Greek colleagues towards conserving the Bronze Age site of Phylakopi on the Greek Cycladic island of Melos and publishing new material and information from the nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century excavations that were conducted there. Perhaps Boardman is doing something similar? Finally — bullying museums? The IARC has close and productive relationships with the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the Museums Association (MA), and with keepers and curators in the British Museum. The IARC's report *Stealing History* into museum acquisition practices was an initiative of the Museums Association (MA) and ICOM-UK, not of the IARC, and it was researched and written with their full support and participation. It is hard to see how any of this might constitute 'bullying'.

For Boardman, the antiquities world is not a perfect one, but ameliorating practices and institutions have evolved over the centuries so that now it is as good it can get, and he criticizes those who think it could get better. But the Panglossian logic of Boardman's paper is shot through with inaccuracies and infelicities. One wonders what his reaction would be if called upon to peer review a paper of similar standard in his own specialist

area of Classical art. It is hard to imagine that he would recommend publication.

References

Boardman, J., 2006. Archaeologists, collectors and museums, in *Who Owns Objects? The Ethics and Politics of Collecting Cultural Artefacts*, eds. E. Robson, L. Treadwell & C. Gosden. Oxford: Oxbow, 33–46.

DCMS, 2005. *Combating Illicit Trade: Due Diligence Guidelines for Museums, Libraries and Archives on Collecting and Borrowing Cultural Material*. London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Parlama, L. & N.Ch. Stampolidis (eds.), 2000. *The City Beneath the City: Finds From Excavations for the Metropolitan Railway of Athens*. Athens: Greek Ministry of Culture/N.P. Goulandris Foundation.

Wainwright, G.W., 2000. Time please. *Antiquity* 74, 909–43.

Neil Brodie
McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research
Downing Street
Cambridge
CB2 3ER

In the News

Jenny Doole

USA

- A boulder inscribed with ancient Native American petroglyphs was found to have been stolen from federal land near Yuma in May. Judging from tracks left, the thieves had dragged the 500 pound boulder to a vehicle (see 'Boulder covered with petroglyphs stolen near Yuma', J. Gilbert, 2 May 2007, Yuma Sun; and 'Petroglyph boulder stolen', 1 May 2007, US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management).

- Two thieves stole a collection of Native American arrowheads from a display in the McQuarrie Memorial Museum, Utah, during a midday raid in May (see 'Arrowheads stolen from S. Utah museum', B. Winslow, 24 May 2007, *Deseret Morning News*). They signed into the museum with assumed names, grabbed the framed displays, hid them under a cloth and walked out through a basement door in front of unaware museum staff.

Israel

Attorneys for the defence in the trial of Israeli collector Oded Golan have presented the court with photographs dating from 1976 showing the controversial 'James ossuary' (see 'In the News', *CWC*, Issue 12, 2003, 14; 'In the News', *CWC*, Issue 13, 2003, 13; and 'In the News', *CWC*, Issue 16, 2005) on a shelf in Golan's home in 1976. In an enlargement, the whole of the contentious inscription can be seen. If accepted this evidence would place the antiquity in Golan's possession before the 1978 Antiquities Law brought archaeological material into state ownership and would scupper prosecution allegations that Golan forged the inscription after the beginning of 2000 (see 'Collector accused of forging 'James ossuary' say old photos prove authenticity', A. Barkat, 9 February 2007, *Haaretz*)

Greece

- June saw the return to Greece of a 1.3 metre marble torso of a young man which had been stolen from Gortyn, Crete 16 years ago. The statue was discovered in the possession of a dealer in Basel, Switzerland following a tip-off to Interpol. The Swiss-based antiquities dealer was persuaded to voluntarily drop all claims to the piece (see 'Swiss hand back stolen statue from Crete', 14 June 2007, Swissinfo; and 'Greece recovers stolen ancient statue from Switzerland', 14 June 2007, *International Herald Tribune*).

- 1338 undeclared antiquities, including

statues and vases and 12 coins, were discovered at a house in Corinth (see 'Ancient clay artefacts…', V. Psomasana, 3 July 2007, *Kathimerini*).

- Greece is planning fresh measure to curb illicit trade in antiquities and faking. Legislation to be introduced in July will ensure closer collaboration between archaeologists and law enforcement, and create a special division within the Culture Ministry charged with tracing stolen items abroad, allowing phone taps for suspects and prison terms for fakers (see 'Greece plans crackdown on antiques trafficking', 9 July 2007, *Khaleej Times*).

Albania

In May, Albania put in an official request for the return from Greece of two headless statues of Artemis and Apollo stolen from the archaeological sites of Phoenice and Butrint, which were confiscated from a Greek and an Albanian arrested in Greece in 1997. The two, who tried to sell the objects in Athens, have since served a prison sentence for their offence (see 'Albania wants its stolen antiquities back', 24 May 2007, IOL).

Spain

February 2007: In the largest operation of its kind in Spain, 200 police officers arrested 52 people, accused of looting 300,000 artefacts, including coins, sculptures and mosaics, from 31 Roman and Islamic sites in Andalusia, mainly in the province of Seville. The objects were confiscated from 68 flats and are said to have been taken at night with the aid of metal detectors, excavation reports and manuals and, in some cases, the help of site guards. The pieces were to be sold to foreign collectors. Small items were sent through the post, large objects were sent to Faro, Portugal and shipped to Belgium with an Italian collector acting as intermediary. The smuggling ring was discovered during an investigation into underwater looters working in the Bay of Cadiz (see 'Raids net 300,000 artefacts', D. Fuchs, 8 February 2007, *The Observer*).

South America

- More than 400 Incan and pre-Columbian artefacts were handed back to the Peruvian government by the US authorities in June. Worth millions of dollars they included a cape made from macaw and parrot feathers, gold and silver jewellery, a clay vessel believed to be more than 3000 years old, and — of immense historical importance — two *quipus*. Ugo Bagnato, an Italian arrested two years ago, pled guilty to the sale and receipt of stolen goods and is now due to be deported after having served 17 months in federal prison. He had been selling the items, some for as much as $2000, from the back of his van and initially claimed to have inherited them long ago from a Venezuelan acquaintance (see 'US hands back artefacts to Peru', W. Grant, 14 June 2007, BBC News; 'US returns stolen pre-Columbian artefacts to Peru', 13 June 2007, Reuters; and 'US returns more than 400 pre-Columbian relics to Peru', P Whoriskey, 14 June 2007, *Washington Post*).

- With the help of UNESCO and ICOM (International Council of Museums), Peru's Institute of Culture (INC) is creating an inventory of national heritage objects, which it hopes will become a reference for authorities attempting to identify stolen antiquities. Peru will thus be the first country in Latin America to create a cultural heritage inventory. Elsewhere in the world, Afghanistan and Iraq have already done so ('Peru's cultural institute mulls inventory to protect national heritage', 17 January 2007, *Living Peru*).

Italy

- After receiving information about the discovery of an ancient Greek temple during construction work in the southern Italian town of Crotone in Calabria, police investigations recovered more than 50 artefacts, including columns and mosaics, which had been excavated from the site. Some had been dumped and some were being used as decorative features in a new hotel. Two individuals were identified for possible prosecution on grounds of failing to alert authorities to the find and damaging the site, and illegal possession of archaeological artefacts, but were not arrested. Workers had been preparing to cement the site over when police swooped. Archaeologists are now working on excavations in order to understand the site better (see 'Italian construction crew investigated after ancient artefacts looted', 15 June 2007, Associated Press).

- Italian 'tombarolo', Pietro Casasanta, told the Associated Press ('Modern-day 'tomb raiders' feel the heat', A. David, 6 July 2007) that times have changed. He said:
  - that in the past he used to work the countryside outside Rome, openly during the day with mechanical diggers, posing as a construction worker;
  - that there used to be massive amounts of money going round, and very lax surveillance;
  - that now, increased monitoring of archaeological sites by authorities, international investigations and increasingly strict ethical guidelines for museums and pressure on dealers, have changed the market;
  - that now there are no young recruits and it is more difficult for tombaroli to sell items.

- *January 2007:* Police in Rome discovered a cache of 12 ancient marble relief panels depicting gladiators, probably stolen from a Roman tomb. Prosecutors said the discovery was the result of a three-year investigation into a group of tomb robbers, and that they believed the tomb may have been located in the nearby settlement of Lucus Feroniae (see 'Roman reliefs rescued from tomb raiders', A. David, 24 January 2007, Associated Press).

- In March, Italian police recovered around 300 ancient artefacts, including vases, jars and cups, and thousands of fragments, believed to have been illegally excavated in central Italy. Six people were under investigation in connection with the find (see 'Italy recovers hundreds of artefacts', 22 March 2007, *Boston Globe*).

- Police in Sicily made 35 arrests and placed 77 people under investigation in a swoop on smugglers, tomb raiders and collectors in January 2007. One of those arrested was Sicilian tomb raider Orazio Pellegrino who was allegedly in contact with dealers and collectors in other countries. During the international operation, stolen ancient coins and amphorae were found in an antiques shop in Barcelona, Spain and in the home of a private collector in Zurich, Switzerland. Many of the stolen goods had been bought by the Gorny and Mosch auction house in Munich, and the Lennox Gallery in London (see 'Italian police arrest tomb raiders, artefact collectors', 31 January 2007, Deutsche Presse-Agentur)

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Experts warn that since the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia gained independence 16 years ago, its rich archaeological heritage has become increasingly vulnerable to looters using sophisticated equipment. Few sites are said to remain undamaged by treasure hunters, both local and foreign, and there is little to stop them as the government can only afford

to employ one official to tackle the problem. Irena Kolistrkoska, head of the archaeological association of Macedonia, say that Iron Age, Greek, Thracian, Roman and Byzantine sites are under threat, and that Macedonian bronzes are very much in demand on the art market, with even the smallest selling for at least $1350. Pasko Kuzman, director of the National Directorate for Protection of Cultural Heritage, estimated that during illegal excavations at the site of Isar-Marvinci, 2500 artefacts were stolen. Fifteen local men have been arrested for illegal excavation and trade in artefacts (see 'Rogue diggers helping themselves to Macedonia's ancient treasure', 19 April 2007, Associated Press).

India

- India is stepping up its efforts to protect the country's cultural heritage and proactively secure the return of artefacts illegally removed and smuggled abroad. Deputy Consul General A.R. Ghanashyam said that India has forged a closer relationship with US immigrations and customs, that strategies are being discussed to protect vulnerable items in remote villages (some of which have never been documented), that customs officials are starting to use new technology to monitor export shipments, and that increased penalties for smuggling are being considered as an amendment to the 1972 Antiquities and Art Treasures Act. He said that villagers who previously would never have plundered their heritage now see the monetary value on the global market.

  ICE special agent James McAndrew added that India is one of a group of countries, including Thailand and Peru, who have noticed the success of Italy, Greece and Egypt in recovering stolen cultural heritage and are adopting a more proactive approach (see 'India, others, step up antiquities scrutiny', B. Hope, 20 April 2007, *New York Sun*).

- According to *Earth Times* ('32 heritage idols and artefacts go missing', 6 May 2007), data from the Ministry of Culture in India indicate that 32 protected works of art have been stolen since 2004, probably to be smuggled abroad and probably, it is believed, with official connivance. They include a Shivling from Bumzuva Cave, Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir; a Jain image of Alathur from Tamil Nadu; and an Anant Shesh idol from the Laxman temple in Chhattisgarh. In Madhya Pradesh, 14 objects including 11 sandstone sculptures and one stone sculpture were stolen; from Rajasthan 10 artefacts, including seven sculptures. Of the 38 missing objects, authorities have recovered six.

  17 of 18 idols stolen from the Patna museum (see 'In the News', CWC, Issue 19, 2006) but not included in the above list have been recovered.

Nigeria

Two German archaeologists told reporters of the 'deplorable state' that Nok culture sites have been reduced to by looting (see 'Artefact thieves ravage Nok culture', 15 April 2007, The Tide). They said:

- custodians at the museum in Nok village had sold artefacts to feed their families;
- the museum was not up to standard, being a table with bits of artefacts;
- looters trenches, sometimes the size of football pitches, have made the sites look like battlefields.

Director General of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Dr Joseph Eboreime, argued that the government was adopting a community-based, bottom-up approach to encourage local communities to preserve their heritage, as well as developing laws and increasing official contacts. He said there was already a 'silent effort' being made to recover material from museums abroad which would have implications for security at home.

Iran

- Iran lost a High Court battle in London to recover a collection of items they claimed had been looted from Jiroft which were for sale at the Bakarat Gallery (also see 'In the News', *CWC*, Issue 15, Autumn 2004; and 'In the News', *CWC*, Issue 19, 2006). The judge ruled that under Iranian law, Iran could not show it had obtained valid title to the objects (see Iran loses fight for ancient relics, 30 March 2007, *The Independent*).

Central America

- *April:* US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) returned to Mexico a carved figure from the state of Sinaloa which had been seized from a businessman entering the US at San Luis, Arizona in December 2006. Experts were unable to establish the exact age or origin of the figure because of the loss of context and provenance (see 'ICE returns plundered pre-Colombian stone carving to Mexico', 24 April 2007, ICE News Release).

- Archaeologist Lisa Lucero of New Mexico State University has described her team's efforts to understand the architectural development of the Maya ceremonial centre at Yalbac in Belize through analysis of exposed structures in the massive looters' trenches — some more than 30 yards long — that cut through the site. Nine trenches have been dug by thieves through the temple-pyramid itself, two since the project started in 2001 (see 'Archaeologists let looters do some of the work', 11 February 2007, *USA Today*).

- In a report for NPR radio (see 'Tomb raiders threaten Mayan city's history', J. Burnett, 5 July 2007, npr.org), archaeologist Dr David Freidel describes his efforts, alongside Guatemalan colleague Hector Escobedo, to protect the site of El Peru-Waka in the Peten from looters. Word of rich tombs at the site encourages looters, driven by poverty.

  The link between drug trafficking and antiquities smuggling was laid bare when in June 2006 police raided a house in the area and discovered a large amount of marijuana alongside 135 pieces of Mayan pottery.

  The report highlights the case of a carved stela from El Peru-Waka, now on display in the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, and thought to have been sawn off and stolen by a Mexican logger and transported from the area on mule. Kimbell director, Timothy Potts (now Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge) acknowledged that the exceptionally rich piece was 'likely looted from its original site in the 1960s, taken out of Guatemala and sold.' The Kimbell have agreed to pay for a replica to be erected on the site.

Pakistan

- Seven cases reporting 401 missing museum items have been registered by authorities in Pakistan since 1996 (see 'Pakistani museums plagued by theft', H. Farooq, 27 April 2007, Daily Times Pakistan). Further objects reported stolen include:
  - 71 Gandharan pieces stolen from the Taxila Archaeological Museum in 1965, of which only 11 items have been recovered;.
  - 40 gold and bronze coins, and 12 bronze statues stolen from the National Museum of Pakistan in Karachi in 1986, and never found;
  - 38 Indus seals and two tablets, stolen from the Archaeological Museum in Mohenjodaro in 2002.

  Around 1400 pieces of Gandharan, Indus, pre-Indus and Islamic art were seized at Karachi port in 2005 with a further 6 artefacts discovered by customs at Lahore in 2006, 619 artefacts at Karachi airport in 2006, and 17 found in France.

- In June 2007, Italy returned to Pakistan 96 ancient artefacts, including decorated bowls, vases, miniatures of zebus, coins, plates and musical instruments, dating from 3300 to 1800 BC. They were seized while on sale at a trade fair in Milan and had been smuggled as modern Thai art from southwestern Pakistan and southeastern Iran (see 'Italy returns ancient smuggled items to Pakistan', 25 June 2007, *Canoe news*).

- In January, the US returned to the Pakistani government a group of artefacts seized by US Customs agents when they passed through Newark, New Jersey in a crate labelled 'decorative items' in September 2005. An investigation revealed that there were misrepresentations in the shipping documentation which wrongly listed Dubai as country of origin, but US authorities will not release the name of the recipient (based at a private address in Flanders, Morris County) who abandoned the shipments. London-based dealer John Eskenazi said that one of the pieces, a statue of the 'Starving Buddha' was a bad fake, but Pakistani experts determined the piece to be genuine and expressed their hopes that information from the seizure may lead to further recoveries of stolen artefacts in the future (see 'Starving Buddha sculpture returned to Pakistan', M. Lufkin, 22 March 2007, *The Art Newspaper*; and 'Seeking the truth on a Buddha's trail', B. Donohue, 4 February 2007, *The Star-Ledger*).

Iraq

- According to an article published in the Lebanese newspaper *As Safir* (April 2007) Interpol in Beirut seized an object looted from the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad in 2003 from a house in the city. The ancient carved head was noticed on a TV programme as part of the interior design of the house.

- Two Iraqis and a Syrian were arrested in May trying to smuggle Iraqi antiquities worth Dh2 million into the United Arab Emirates through Khor Fakkan port (see 'Smugglers of Iraqi antiquities arrested', 28 May 2007, *Gulf News*).

- The Kufa Museum, close to the southern city of Karbala, is trying to recover hundreds of objects, including inscribed incantation bowls, pottery and coins, which were stolen following the 2003 Coalition invasion. The museum also suffered some looting during the 1991 Gulf War. It is lobbying the Iraqi authorities to ask the British government and police to seize artefacts belonging to the museum (see 'Ransacked provincial museum seeks lost treasures', S. al-Jaberi, 25 February 2007, *Azzaman*).

Sudan

12 people were arrested by Sudanese authorities for smuggling two entire mummies ('Sudan arrests 12 mummy smugglers', 16 June 2007, *Sudan Tribune*).

United Kingdom

- In May, HM Revenue and Customs officers returned to Turkey an important piece — a Roman ring made of iron and silver, containing a gemstone engraving of Lucius Verus, co-emperor with Marcus Aurelius, thought to have been taken from an archaeological dig at Ephesus. It was seized after it was taken to Derby museum for a valuation. No-one has been prosecuted for stealing the ring (see 'Roman ring handed back to Turkey', 22 May 2007, BBC News).

- English Heritage and the British Museum have commissioned Oxford Archaeology to produced a £100,000 report on the problem of illegal metal detecting, or 'nighthawking', in Britain (see 'Night metal detectors

'looting Britain", J. Copping, 7 July 2007, *Sunday Telegraph*).

- Nighthawkers dug 31 holes in one night into a Roman villa site under excavation by archaeologists (from Lindum Heritage and Bishop Grossetest University College Lincoln) just north of Lincoln. The archaeologists said the thieves were likely to have found little of monetary value, but have destroyed the integrity of the site. All metal has now been removed from the site (see 'Thieves damage Roman villa site', 10 July 2007, BBC News).

Bosnia

Archaeologist Snjezana Vasilj is celebrating winning a research grant to scientifically explore two Illyrian ships discovered under eight metres of water in a small lake in the marshland nature reserve of Hutovo Blato. The marshlands were the site of intense Greek and Roman occupation, but since the 1992–95 Bosnian war have seen more activity by thieves than by archaeologists, so the grant is cause for celebration (see 'Bosnian archaeologists 'dig in' to struggle with looters', 20 May 2007, *Middle East Times*).

Bulgaria

- Following an urgent request from Bulgarian prosecutors to UK authorities, the sale of a rare twelfth-century silver dish at Christie's London, was temporarily halted. Naiden Blagnev gave Bulgarian authorities a detailed description of his illegal excavation of the piece, along with another 12 silver dishes, near the town of Pazardjik in December 2000. He was miffed when, having seen the dish on the front page of a Bulgarian newspaper with an estimated price of $600,000–$1 million, he realized it was being sold for more than 60 times as much as he was paid for the whole treasure. Bulgaria claims that another nine dishes were part of the same set and bought jointly by two Athens museums — the Byzantine and Christian Museum and the Benaki. The Christie's sale went ahead, but the dish failed to find a buyer, possibly because of the controversy. London dealer Sam Fogg claimed he had consigned the item on behalf of another (unnamed) dealer and that there was evidence that it had been in circulation before 2000, although he declined to provide proof (see 'Bulgarian relics spark an international scuffle', 22 May 2007, *International Herald Tribune*).

- A Bulgarian parliamentary committee is working drafting a new cultural heritage law to protect the country's exceptionally rich heritage. Over the past 15 years around 10 draft bills have been sent to Parliament, none of which were approved. There are conflicts of opinion between specialists about whether to model legislation on the more or the less liberal laws that exist in different European countries (see 'Preserving our patrimony', E. Grancharova, 15 January 2007, *The Sofia Echo*).

Turkey

May 2007: Istanbul Anti-Fiscal Crimes teams carried out raids on antiques shops in the city and confiscated 366 illegally held Roman and Byzantine coins and artefacts. One shop-owner claimed to have purchased pieces from a Bulgarian woman, and said that he had been planning to hand them over to a museum (see 'Police raids turn up ancient coins, jewelery', 24 May 2007, *Today's Zaman*).

Cambodia

Timothy McDonald, a reporter for ABC network (see 'PM - Angkor Wat relic for sale on eBay', 17 May 2007, ABC online) challenged eBay on the auction of a piece of relief, advertised as from Angkor Wat. eBay spokesman Daniel Feiler said that the occasional illegal

item may slip through eBay monitoring procedures and that if the item was fake then the seller, based in Thailand, was likely to be caught.

Museum ethics

- Indiana Museum of Art Director Maxwell L. Anderson announced in May that the museum will no longer accept or buy artefacts which left their country of origin after 1970 unless there is proof that they were exported legally. In *The Art Newspaper* he stated 'It is our hope that the IMA's moratorium will encourage other major collecting institutions around the world to take a similar step, along with collectors and dealers. A universal moratorium would seriously impact on the clandestine trade in antiquities' (see 'Art museum limits its antiquities acquisitions', W. Smith, May 2007, *The Indianapolis Star*).

- In February 2007, following threats of an exhibition boycott by the Greek government, the Louvre withdrew a request to borrow a statue of Apollo the Lizard Slayer from Cleveland Museum. The provenance of the statue, said to be by Praxiteles, has been a source of controversy since its acquisition from Phoenix Ancient Art (see 'Editorial', *CWC*, Issue 15, 2004). Hicham Aboutaam of Phoenix Art said the Louvre's decision was unfortunate and claimed the Apollo has been proven to have been in circulation for over a century (see 'Do you know where that art has been?', R. Stodghill, 18 March, *New York Times*).

North Korea

On the night of 11 May 2007, golden Buddha statues and ancient pottery were stolen from the Haeju Museum, North Hwanghae. Border authorities were quickly alerted and were monitoring known smuggling routes to intercept the pieces.

Museum objects in North Korea have been vulnerable to theft and smuggling abroad in recent years, and some of those found to be involved have been executed.

In 2006 a group of 22 people were caught stealing 500 kg tombstones from royal tombs, for secret transport to China where they raise high prices. The tombstones were retrieved with the help of Chinese authorities, the Chinese dealers fined heavily. The North Korean ringleader, a national security agent, committed suicide (see 'Golden Buddha stolen from Haeju Museum, North Korea', K. J. Hyun, 16 May 2007, *The Daily NK*).

Yemen

According to a report on Independent Online ('Smugglers target ancient treasures of Yemen', 26 March 2007):

- Yemen's official Saba news agency said that in 2006 authorities prevented 1026 ancient artefacts being smuggled from the country via Sanaa airport and two border crossings.
- Illicit trade peaks at times of internal upheaval, such as the 1994 civil war, and the current on-off fighting between government forces and rebels in the northwestern province of Saada.
- Culture minister Khaled al-Ruweishan said:
  - some foreign embassies and cultural councils are involved in smuggling, as well as corrupt local officials;
  - the ministry had spent more than 100 million rials (half the mininstry's budget) buying back thousands of antiquities and manuscripts to prevent them being smuggled abroad;
  - that because efforts to protect antiquities he believes 90% of the material offered on the black market may be fake.
- Hisham Ali al-Thawr, head of the antiquities protection department at the General Antiquities Authority said:
  - that illegal excavation and smuggling is most prevalent and is a particular

problem in tribal regions, such as Al-Jawf, Marib and Shabwa where ancient sites are unprotected and the people ill-informed about the value of their heritage;
  - that pre-Islamic remains of the Maeen civilization in Al-Jawf have now been totally destroyed in the search for saleable artefacts;
  - that many smuggled antiquities have been recovered through official channels from countries such as Britain, Jordan, Oman and Saudi Arabia;
  - that a special unit set up in late 2003 to combat smuggling monitors every exit port and works closely with security forces to protect sites;
  - that around 3–4 pieces are seized at Sanaa airport every week;
  - that the special unit have helped in the prosecution of smugglers.
- Director of Sanaa's national museum, Abdul Aziz al-Jandari, blamed the upsurge in looting on poverty and ignorance.

Afghanistan

- According to *News International* ('Afghanistan's ancient treasures a worrying modern-day trade', 20 March 2007):
  - many Pakistanis are buying illicit Bactrian antiquities that are openly on sale in northern Afghanistan;
  - archaeologist Philippe Marquis says that around 70 per cent of the site of Tepe Zargaran was plundered in the 1990s;
  - two policemen in the ministry of culture were killed last summer by looters;
  - problems include high-level corruption, and rampant building development.

- More than 1000 items gathered for safekeeping at a private museum in Bubendorf, Switzerland for the last decade (see 'Editorial', *CWC*, Issue 8, 2001) were returned to Afghanistan in March (see 'Afghan art, artefacts returning to country', 16 March 2007, *Post Chronicle*).

- In February, ICOM (International Council of Museums), with the support of the US Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, launched a Red List of antiquities at risk in Afghanistan. The initiative follows their Red Lists Africa, Latin America and Iraq and is available from their WWW site at: http://icom.museum/redlist/afghanistan/en/index.html (also see 'Treasure troves and lack of supervision turn Afghanistan into looter's paradise', 2 February 2007, *International Herald Tribune*).

Algeria

El Moudjahid ('Smuggling headache for Algerian authorities', 11 February 2007, The Media Line) reports that:

- 250 ancient artefacts were confiscated from tourists visiting the Sahara region in January, according to Reuters. The objects were seized at Tamarasset Airport.

- Three people were arrested in January with a reported 98 items, stolen from the Djebrine Museum in Tassili National Park.

China

Police in X'ian, Shaanxi Province arrested two local farmers who lived among the ruins of Chang'an City (Western Han Dynasty 206 BC–AD 24) after receiving reports of thefts from the site. Huang Wei, director of the administration's relics protection department said that more than 100 holes were found which were

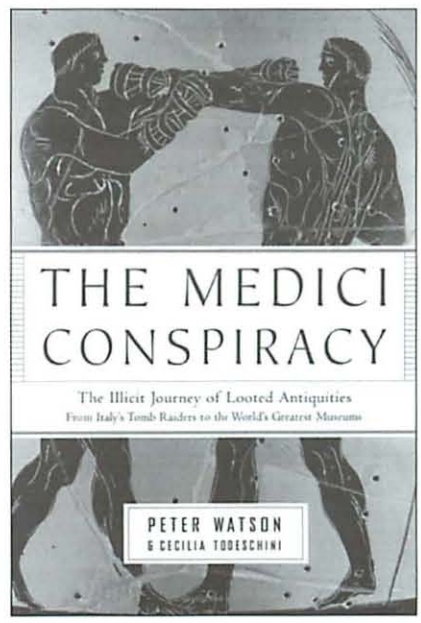
then backfilled by bulldozer. The farmers were accused of stealing tile-ends, which are rare, protected by the State and can be sold for up to 500 yuan ($62) — the equivalent of a month's wages (see 'Ruin raiders target ancient relics in Shaanxi', 28 February 2007, *People's Daily*).

Sources

The Art Newspaper
As Safir
Associated Press
Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC online)
Azzaman.com
BBC News
Boston Globe
Canoe news
The Daily North Korean
Daily Times, Pakistan
Deseret Morning News
Deutsche Presse-Agentur
Earth Times
gulfnews.com
Haaretz
Independent Online
Indystar.com
International Herald Tribune
Kathimerini
Khaleej Times online
Living Peru
The Media Line
Middle East Times
The New York Sun
New York Times
The News International
npr radio
The Observer
People's Daily online
Post Chronicle
The Sofia Echo
The Star-Ledger, New Jersey
Sudan Tribune
Sunday Telegraph
Swiss Info
The Tide online
Today's Zaman
US Immigration and Customs Enforcement
USA Today
The Washington Post
Yuma Sun

Book review:
***The Medici Conspiracy. The Illicit Journey of Looted Antiquities from Italy's Tomb Raiders to the World's Greatest Museums* by Peter Watson & Cecilia Todeschini**
(2006, New York, Public Affairs,
ISBN-10: 1-58648-402-8)

VINNIE NØRSKOV



A large clay pot once used for mixing wine and water in ancient Athens at drinking parties and later reused as funeral equipment for a wealthy Etruscan has become the symbol of the rise and fall of the modern trade in antiquities. Bought by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1972 for the neat price of $1 million, it initiated the boom in the antiquities trade of the 1970s and 1980s that culminated in the auction sale of the Hunt Collection in 1993. In 2006 the Metropolitan Museum announced the return of the vase to Italy. But actually, we do not know where the vase comes from. Some archaeologists still believe the vase to be a modern forgery, produced for a demanding market willing to pay enormous amounts of money for aesthetically pleasing objects without any documentation or security about their authenticity. Its modern history has become just as interesting and important as its ancient one. In fact, we will never be able to reconstruct what really happened to the vase, in ancient or in modern times. As Watson's book shows, there are several versions of the modern story and no hard evidence at all — only the

memories of those involved and these memories are quite different.

The *Medici Conspiracy* is the exciting documentation of the many years' investigations by the Italian Carabinieri that led to the fall of some of the major players in the late-twentieth-century illicit antiquities trade. It raises questions about the credibility of the antiquities trade itself. That being said, from a museum perspective, it also raises questions about the role of the press and the media more generally in combating the illicit antiquities trade. In Denmark, the book has made an important contribution to recent research conducted by two Danish newspapers, and I shall come back to this issue at the end of this review.

The book begins with the acquisition of the Euphronios krater in New York, and throughout the book this story is revisited and rewritten in light of new evidence. This new evidence is the result of a series of events, many of them accidental, that occurred during the 1990s. The first was the robbery of the Melfi vases in January 1994, recovered later the same year from the Munich villa of the Italian dealer Antonio Savoca. Continuing the investigation, the Carabinieri found a so-called organigram drawn by Pasquale Camera, a suspect who was accidentally killed in a car crash the same year. This organigram has been key to understanding the workings of the Italian antiquities trade. On top of the organigram as contact to museums and dealers is one name, Robert (Bob) Hecht, underlined, and below his name a network of other names of people involved in the trade, but clearly defining Hecht's two main sources, Gianfranco Becchina and Giacomo Medici.

The second event was the surfacing of a sarcophagus in one of Sotheby's auction catalogues in 1995, stolen from the church of San Saba on the Aventine and recognized from the Carabinieri Art Squad's list of stolen artworks. Sotheby's was forced to identify the consigner, the Swiss company Editions Services, whose administrator revealed that the company's owner was Giacomo Medici. Medici's warehouse in the Geneva Freeport was raided by the Swiss police in September 1995. The three rooms contained a large number of antiquities and documents. The analysis of this material has revealed the inner workings of the international antiquities trade over the preceding 25 years.

The third event was the discovery of the diary of Robert Hecht. During the Carabinieri investigations some of the suspects mentioned a *memoria* by Robert Hecht, one of them explaining that Hecht seems to have written down his personal history of antiquities dealing. During a raid by the French police in February 2001 on the apartment of Hecht's ex-wife in Paris, the diary was found (chapters 11 & 12). The content of the diary is being used as evidence in the ongoing trial of Hecht and the former curator of antiquities of the J.Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, Marion True. And it confirms the close relations between Hecht and Medici.

The evidence from the warehouse

Two important sets of evidence were discovered in Medici's warehouse: documentation of sales to galleries and museums in the form of invoices and letters, and thousands of photographs of artefacts. Importantly, some individual objects are illustrated by a series of photographs, showing: 1) the object covered with earth; 2) the object cleaned and restored with visible restorations; and lastly 3) the final restoration of the object. Thus the same object is documented from excavation to sale, and some are even photographed in their new home, the acquiring museum. Analysis of the photographs has revealed the acquisition history of a number of objects in European and American museums and caused some of the recent returns by American collections, for instance by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.[1] The associated documentation does not reveal whether the buyers saw all of the photographs, but as they are important evidence of authenticity, I would guess they did. However, if this evidence is turned around, such a series of photographs could also be used to authenticate a fake, an aspect Watson does not consider.

The combined analysis of the documentation found in the warehouse and the objects still there, together with some (sic) cooperation of Sotheby's, revealed how Medici would send batches of material to Sotheby's, though sometimes objects did not sell because of high reserve prices (chapter 10). After objects had been offered two, three or four times without selling, Medici bought some of them himself. This is not allowed according to Sotheby's rules, but using intermediaries it was no problem at all for Medici. Considering the close cooperation between Medici and a number of other antiquities dealers, it is not surprising that this practice was

used. Watson considers some reasons for it and offers several very interesting suggestions: the fact that the object has been sold at auction gives it a good pedigree, and buying back objects that would not otherwise sell because they are over-priced sets a market precedent for future sales. But what is also of importance is that many of these pieces are what the antiquities market would categorize as 'unimportant' objects: common, minor, not very expensive objects. Medici would never send expensive material to Sotheby's, but it is difficult not to see his use of auction sales as a means to manipulate the price structure of the market more generally. And this was not the only time Medici used intermediaries. It was more the rule than the exception, and the use of triangulations involving intermediaries to hide the identity of a seller seems to have been a common occurence in the antiquities trade during the last 30 years. Watson is able to demonstrate how intermediaries were used when selling to museums in order to make the provenance more digestible.

The Euphronios krater again — the new evidence?

The diary of Hecht contains two versions of the Euphronios krater story. The so-called 'true' version connects the krater to Medici, who sold it to Hecht for 1.5 million Swiss francs in December 1971. Felicity Nicholson at Sotheby's then estimated the vase to be worth only $200,000 dollars, so Hecht began a search for a museum buyer, starting in Copenhagen, where the museum curator in charge, Mogens Gjødesen (identified in Hecht's diary as M Gyp; p. 170) tried to raise the money but failed. Hecht then turned to Dietrich von Bothmer, first going to New York with photographs, and subsequently showing the vase to three representatives of the Metropolitan in Zürich in June 1972, where it was being restored (not in July 1971 as stated on page 176). In the middle of August, the Metropolitan's director Thomas Hoving offered Hecht $1 million for the vase, a price he accepted. Shortly afterwards Hecht brought the vase to New York, presenting Hoving with an invoice stating that the krater came from Dikran Sarrafian, a Lebanese dealer. The diary's second version of the Euphronios acquisition is interpreted as Hecht's 'official' version of the story, giving a more prominent role to the background story of Dikran Sarrafian.

If we believe the 'true' version, the krater surfaced with Giacomo Medici. During a raid on Giacomo Medici's house at Santa Marinella, north of Rome, in 2002, the Italian police found another set of photographs, this time appearing to contain several photos of the Euphronios krater. In fact, the photographs turned out to show three different kraters, two of which were modern forgeries. One was actually seen in the villa, only half the size of the krater in New York (p. 200–202). Thus copies were made — but were these copies of an ancient original or of a modern forgery?

Watson mentions that five previously unknown vases by Euphronios appeared between 1970 and 1990 — three craters (one in Munich, the one in the Metropolitan, and one in the possession of Shelby White who bought it at the Hunt sale in 1990) and two cups (one bought by the Getty Museum in 1983 and returned to Italy in 1999,[2] the second decorated with the same subject as the Metropolitan krater, the death of Sarpedon, also offered at the Hunt sale. It was bought by Giacomo Medici and found in his warehouse during the raid and accidentally broken by the police) (p. 130).[3] Watson suggests that the vases may have been discovered at a sanctuary dedicated to Hercules found in Cerveteri in 1993, because many of the vases show Heracles (p. 202). This thesis is, however, not very convincing. First of all, because most studies trying to link images on Greek vases with the cult of the sanctuary in which they have been found have not produced convincing results. Secondly, though many of the vases are broken, there are enough fragments to allow a fairly complete reconstruction, particularly for the Metropolitan's krater. Complete vases are very rarely found in sanctuaries and several complete vases by one painter have as far as I know never been found. This kind of material is found in tombs, not in sanctuaries.

Fragments of time

Another aspect dealt with by Watson is the often ignored trade in ceramic fragments (chapter 15). Watson identifies the unusual acquisition habit of the Getty in acquiring many fragments, mostly in order to reassemble them into entire vases. During a ten-year period, the Getty acquired at least 1061 fragments, 119 of them donated by Dietrich von Bothmer. Anyone who has visited von Bothmer in his office in the Metropolitan has most prob-

ably seen his private collection of fragments. And the Getty is just one of the many institutions to which von Bothmer has donated fragments – often because they fitted incomplete vases already in collections. Another example of this type of acquisition, occurring by exchange between the Villa Giulia Museum in Rome and the Metropolitan, is described by Daniela Rizzo (p. 222).[4] The trade in fragments is one of the important features of the 'invisible' market — as Watson rightly points out, they do not appear for sale at auctions or in the galleries. They are very often used as 'extra' goods in transactions — as gifts from dealers.

Watson thinks that fragments are not especially important in a scholarly or academic way, but even if he is right in pointing out that most scholarly books favour illustrations of entire vases over those of fragments, the latter are important when vase painting is considered aesthetically. It has often been emphasized that for connoisseurs of vase painting the fragment helps to focus concentration on the drawing, free from the distractions of shape.[5] However, in stressing the commercial value of fragments, Watson is making a very important point. The value of attribution is quite obvious: buying an unattributed fragment for *c.* $400, attributing it to the Berlin Painter, and then donating it to a museum might provide a tax reduction of $2500. Historically, attribution has been closely linked to the market for vases. The first scholars to promote this line of research were those who made a living out of dealing, like for instance Paul Hartwig (1859–1919) who published the first volume on Attic red-figure cups in 1893, based primarily on his own collection.[6] What is much more alarming about the trade in fragments, however, is the evidence of fresh breaks. Clearly, vases are sometimes broken because it is easier to transport a bunch of pottery sherds in an old plastic bag from an Italian supermarket than a fine, whole vase which must be carefully packed in order not to damage it. And it seems that at times the fragments are offered in small groups intermittently over a period of time in order to increase prices. Watson, however, suggests other reasons: it is cheaper for a museum to purchase a vase as fragments than to purchase it whole (p. 229); and more seriously, museums can 'test the water' by acquiring fragments over a prolonged period of time, as the country of origin will not be so aware of accumulating fragments as to claim them back, and by the time the vase is complete it might then be considered too late to register a claim. In any event, the trade in fragments is one of the ways the trade shows its real face: dealers are not interesting in saving the past, they are only interested in earning money.

The Danish connection

Since the publication of the book, the Danish media have shown an increased interest in the subject. Denmark has been one of the really slow countries when it comes to ratifying the international conventions, both the 1970 UNESCO Convention and the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention. The 1970 Convention was ratified by Denmark in 2003, but the Danish case shows how ratification can be worthless if it is not implemented by law. In summer 2006 two journalists together with a Swedish colleague visited the Danish auction houses. They showed pictures of antiquities from Afghanistan and China and asked whether the auction houses would be willing to sell them, as in Sweden this would not be possible because they had been smuggled. All the auction houses answered that they had no problems with handling a sale, and because Denmark did not introduce any import restrictions when ratifying the 1970 Convention, it would not be illegal.[7] The auction house story was followed up by articles on Danish museums acquiring objects without legitimate provenance. One was the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek that had bought a number of objects through Robert Hecht and is mentioned several times in his memoir as *the Copenhagen Museum*. The other was the David Collection, a private museum for Islamic Art. The main case has been an Etruscan chariot bought by the Glyptotek in 1970. This is mentioned by Watson as a set of Etruscan silver chariot fixtures Hecht bought from Medici at $63,000 and sold to Mogens Gjødesen (identified by Watson as Giddesen) for $240,000 (p. 168). In the new exhibition of the Etruscan collection that opened in summer 2006 the chariot is displayed as a new restoration made in close cooperation with Italian archaeologists from the University of Rome, who in 1972 had excavated the tomb in the Sabine village of Eretum where the chariot had been found. Thus the origin of the finds in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek had been known for years and the find complex has been published, joining the objects in Copenhagen with

the objects today exhibited in the archaeological museum in Sabina.[8] The Italian investigator in the Medici case contacted the Danish Ministry of Justice (not the museum!) in 2003 for information about the acquisition of the chariot. Unfortunately, the request was mistranslated by the Ministry which read it as a request for return, and because of the expired limitation period dismissed it. In December 2006 the Ministry made an official apology to the Italians.[9]

In the end, the interest of the media in the subject has had two consequences in Denmark: first, the Ministry of Culture has announced that Denmark will ratify the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention in order to stem the illicit trade in antiquities in Denmark; second, the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek has given up talking to the media because it felt that the journalists had not given the museum a fair hearing. The case illustrates the schismatic role that the media may play in combating the illicit trade. On the one hand, their interest is important in order to raise political awareness. On the other, they tend to present a simple story of good guys and bad guys, and the museums very often turn out to be the bad guys.

Notes

1. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts have published a list of the 13 objects the museum returned to Italy in 2006 on their home page, see http://www.mfa.org/collections/index.asp?key=2656 (viewed 11 April 2007).
2. *Archaeology* 52, 3 May/June 1999. P. Watson, 1999, Euphronios kylix update, *Culture without Context* no. 5, 4.
3. The Metropolitan Museum tried to acquire this vase at the Hunt auction, but Dietrich von Bothmer told me during my research on the collecting of Greek vases that Medici bought it, see Nørskov 2002, p. 330.
4. See also V. Nørskov, 2002, *Greek Vases in New Contexts*, Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 152 & 299.
5. Nørskov 2002, 299.
6. Nørskov 2002, 96–100. P. Hartwig, 1893, *Die griechischen Meisterschalen der Blütezeit des strengen rot-figurigen Stiles*, Berlin.
7. Dagbladet Information 16 June 2006, 22–5.
8. See the internet publication with the new 3-D reconstruction of the chariot: http://www.principisabini.it. J. Christiansen, 2006, Antikken i krise. Skal kulturarven reddes eller røves? Glyptotekets Antiksamlung og fremtidens erhvervelser, *Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek i tiden*, 198-202.
9. *Politiken* 12 December 2006, 3 (culture).

VINNIE NØRSKOV
Antikmuseet
Aarhus University
Aarhus
Denmark

Book review:
***Art and Archaeology of Afghanistan: its Fall and Survival* (Handbook of Oriental Studies 14) edited by Juliette van Krieken-Pieters**
(2006, Leiden: Brill, ISBN-10: 90-04-15182-6)

NEIL BRODIE

Here's an interesting statistic: on pages 59–60 of this book Christian Manhart of UNESCO reckons that since 2002 governments and foundations worldwide have donated something in the region of $13 million towards the conservation and recuperation of Afghanistan's cultural heritage. The largest governmental donations have been from Japan (just over $3 million) and Italy (about $1.7 million). Why is the statistic so interesting? Because it makes for an interesting comparison with another statistic: in 1999 Pakistani police seized a shipment of 25,000 Afghan/Pakistani antiquities at Peshawar airport, estimated to be worth $20 million on the open market (Levy & Scott-Clark 1999). A single shipment. $20 million. The value of the Peshawar seizure is clearly an estimate, perhaps it would be more accurate to say it was worth something in the region of $10–20 million, but the point is that the monetary value of a single shipment of illicit antiquities might possibly outweigh the value of all international aid so far offered to Afghanistan for heritage conservation. Clearly, some people are making a lot of money out of Afghanistan's cultural heritage, but not much is going back to Afghanistan.

These statistics offer an insight into the damage that has been caused to Afghanistan's cultural heritage by three decades of outside political interference and cultural indifference. The chapters in this book investigate the reality behind the statistics, but the picture that emerges is no more comforting. Overviews by Warwick Ball (chapter 2), Nancy Hatch Dupree (chapter 5) and Nadia Tarzi (chapter 9) describe in detail the present state of Afghanistan's cultural heritage and the problems it faces. Chapter 10 shifts focus when

David Thomas and Alison Gascoigne attempt a quantitative assessment of the damage caused to one single site by illegal digging. They present the results of a survey conducted in the vicinity of the Minaret of Jam where they discovered that robber holes account for 11 per cent of the surface of the surveyed area. Sometimes the losses have been mitigated by previous scholarship. In chapter 8 Kosaku Maeda describes and interprets the mural paintings in the area of the Bamiyan Buddhas that were recorded in the 1960s, but destroyed when the Buddhas were blown up in 2001.

There are, however, some bright spots, including restoration work at Baghe Babur and the mausoleum of Timur Shah in Kabul described by Jolyon Leslie in chapter 11. The reconstruction and reconstitution of the Kabul Museum is discussed in chapter 4 by Carla Grissman. In 1989, the Museum's exhibition material was secretly evacuated into safe storage at the Central Bank and the Presidential Palace. In later years, it came to be believed, falsely, though was widely reported, that this material had been stolen. In 1993, the Museum building was badly damaged during fighting and its contents looted. What remained of the collections in 1996 was transferred to the Kabul Hotel. In 1998, work commenced repairing the Museum, with UNESCO support, and in 2000 the building was reopened, only for the situation to deteriorate again in March 2001 when, under the orders of the Taliban Mullah Omar, many pieces remaining in the Museum were vandalized or destroyed. After the eviction of the Taliban from Kabul in 2001 work started again repairing the Museum building and assessing the damage. By 2003 the Museum was working and the material moved out in 1989 and thought lost was revealed and found to be largely intact. Plate 1a of the book shows the broken and shell-damaged façade of the Museum as it looked in 1996, and the transformation in the Museum's fortunes by 2005 is obvious from the equivalent view of the newly repaired and decorated façade presented in plate 1b.

The work of the Society for the Preservation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (SPACH) since its foundation in 1993, operating in what were often hostile conditions, has clearly been central to the recovery effort, and it is appropriate that accounts of its activities are provided by members in chapter 1 by Brendan Cassar and Ana Rodríguez García and chapter 13 by Juliette van Krieken-Pieters. SPACH's controversial decision in 1994 to purchase pieces known to have been stolen from the Kabul Museum with a view to placing such material into safe storage until conditions were favourable for its return to Kabul forms the backdrop for an important discussion about 'safe havens', which might prove to be, for non-Afghan specialists at least, the most significant feature of the book.

Juliette van Krieken-Pieters describes a safe haven as a 'place of safe deposit for endangered cultural objects' (p. 214). Kurt Siehr identifies four circumstances when safe havens might be necessary: (i) for protection of material during wartime, either within or outside the affected country; (ii) similarly for protection from natural disasters; (iii) for the storage of stolen or illegally-exported material that has been recovered outside its country of origin, until such time as it can be returned; and (iv) for the storage of stolen or illegally-exported material that has been recovered outside its country of origin, when the country of origin is unknown. Siehr emphasizes that material deposited in a safe haven outside the country of origin is on loan, it must be stored safely according to accepted international standards and be returned when conditions permit. Unfortunately, Siehr is less clear about who should decide when conditions permit, and what should happen to recovered material for which there is no definite country of origin (his circumstance (iv)).

The obvious and most appropriate international judicial authority would seem to be UNESCO, but Lyndel Prott's discussion of the UNESCO position in relation to material illegally-exported from Afghanistan highlights some of the difficulties involved. UNESCO is bound by international law, and beyond that cannot take action which contravenes its own conventions and normative standards, which means it could not support SPACH's purchase of stolen material. In 2001, however, UNESCO did decide to support the Swiss Afghanistan Museum-in-Exile, on condition that the material stored there would 'not be used for commercial purposes', and that UNESCO would decide when it was safe for material to be returned to Afghanistan. Thus, in the case of Afghanistan at least, UNESCO was willing to arbitrate the return.

Van Krieken welcomes this decision by UNESCO and its policy as outlined in a 2001 statement, but asks some critical questions. She points to an ambiguity in the wording of the statement when it asserts that 'UNESCO supports non-profit organizations working to take cultural objects into safe custody. It will not itself purchase objects that are being illicitly-trafficked'. Van Krieken questions whether this might mean that UNESCO is prepared to support non-profit organizations, such as SPACH, that are purchasing material. That being so, she feels that UNESCO should be clearer about just what exactly can be purchased, and reiterates the SPACH position that only material known to have been stolen from museums should be bought. Prott answers firmly that UNESCO does not endorse the purchase of material with dubious provenance.

Van Krieken also argues strongly that the collections of the Kabul Museum should have been moved into safe storage abroad, either before or after the outbreak of hostilities (Siehr's circumstance (i)). Prott provides some historical examples of cultural objects being taken into safe storage abroad during times of war, but again highlights the problems facing UNESCO in Afghanistan. Once the Taliban had seized power the juridical government had very little authority 'on-the-ground' within Afghanistan and so it would have been difficult to arrange safe transport. She also points out that in both Afghanistan and Iraq museum staff kept significant parts of the collections of the respective national museums safe by moving them into secret domestic storage, and suggests it to be a good precautionary measure. Some authors clearly have misgivings that the argument of safe haven might be abused by some institutions or individuals as a justification for acquiring stolen or illegally exported material. Prott refers to a Bodhisattva in the Metropolitan Museum which UNESCO believes to have been originally stolen from Jalalabad Museum. The Metropolitan's position is that it is keeping the piece safe, but has not communicated with UNESCO about plans for its return to Afghanistan. Similarly, in chapter 14, Atle Omland criticizes the Schøyen Collection's claim to have 'rescued' Buddhist manuscripts from the Taliban.

Museums that refuse to acquire unprovenanced artefacts and professional organizations and individuals that refuse to study them for fear of supporting the market and stimulating looting are sometimes criticized for wilfully ignoring valuable historical documents, which, it is said, will simply disappear from view. The concept of the safe haven shows this criticism to be unfounded. Unprovenanced material thought to be stolen or illegally-exported from its country of origin can be held in safe storage abroad until such time as it is returned to its country of origin (Siehr's circumstance (iii)). Permission to study the material while it is in storage or after its return can be obtained from the legitimate authorities. The American Schools of Oriental Research have recently advocated this solution for the large numbers of previously unknown cuneiform tablets that are currently appearing on the market. But while this solution might work for material with a known country of origin, the situation as regards material with no known country of origin (Siehr's circumstance (iv)) is still in need of some clarification.

Reference

Levy, A, & C. Scott-Clark, 1999. Looters take millions in Afghan treasures. *Sunday Times*, 11 July.

Neil Brodie
McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research
Downing Street
Cambridge
CB2 3ER

Address for correspondence:
CWC Editorial Board, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Downing St, Cambridge, UK, CB2 3ER.
http://www.mcdonald.cam.ac.uk/IARC/home.htm

Correspondence relating to all aspects of the legal and illegal trade in antiquities is welcome; we will make an effort to print reasonable, non-libellous letters. No unsigned letters will be printed, but names will be withheld upon request.

Printed by BluePrint, Coldhams Road, Cambridge, UK, CB1 3EW.
Tel: +44 (0)1223 472400