SMARTHISTORY OF ART XIV- AT-RISK CULTURAL HERITAGE EDUCATION SERIES (ARCHES)



Smarthistory

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14: At-risk Cultural Heritage Education Series (ARCHES)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Licensing

17.1: A beginner's guide

17.1.1: ARCHES, an introduction

17.1.2: What is cultural heritage?

17.1.3: Cultural heritage “in crisis”

17.1.4: Blow it up- cultural heritage and film

17.2: Whose art? Museums and repatriation

17.2.1: Repatriating artworks

17.2.2: From tomb to museum- the story of the Sarpedon Krater

17.2.3: The many meanings of the Sarpedon Krater

17.2.4: Who owns the Parthenon sculptures?

17.2.5: Plunder, war, Napoleon and the Horses of San Marco

17.2.6: Paikea at the American Museum of Natural History

17.2.7: Nazi looting- Egon Schiele’s Portrait of Wally

17.2.8: Seizure of Looted Antiquities Illuminates What Museums Want Hidden

17.2.9: Looting, collecting, and exhibiting- the Bubon bronzes

17.2.10: Napoleon’s appropriation of Italian cultural treasures

17.2.11: Napoleon’s booty—Perugino’s (gorgeous) Decemviri Altarpiece

17.3: Ruins, reconstruction, and renewal

17.3.1: Destruction, Memory, and Monuments- The Many Lives of the Parthenon

17.3.2: Views of past and present- the Forum Romanum and archaeological context

17.3.3: The Roman Forum- Part 1, Ruins in modern imagination

17.3.4: The Roman Forum- Part 2, Ruins in modern imagination (The Renaissance and after)

17.3.5: The Roman Forum- Part 3, Ruins in modern imagination

17.3.6: Rome’s layered history — the Castel Sant’Angelo

17.3.7: Looted and revered- The Rosetta Stone

17.3.8: Ruin as abattoir, the Colosseum

17.3.9: Before the fire- Notre Dame, Paris

17.3.10: Reconstructing a masterpiece — Mantegna’s St. James Led to his Execution

17.4: Place and identity

17.4.1: Palmyra- the modern destruction of an ancient city

17.4.2: Ancient Babylon- excavations, restorations and modern tourism

17.4.3: Venice’s San Marco, a mosaic of spiritual treasure

17.4.4: The Renaissance Synagogues of Venice

17.4.5: Unearthing the Aztec past, the destruction of the Templo Mayor

17.4.6: Bayt Farhi, a Jewish house in Damascus

17.4.7: Unearthing New York's history of slavery
17.4.8: Seneca Village- the lost history of African Americans in New York
17.4.9: Ceremonial belt (Kwakwaka'wakw)
17.4.10: Voyage to the moai of Rapa Nui (Easter Island)
17.4.11: The Gwoździec synagogue- the lost art of painted wooden synagogues

17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm

17.5.1: Erased from memory- the Severan Tondo
17.5.2: Rewriting history- damnatio memoriae in ancient Rome
17.5.3: Byzantine Iconoclasm and the Triumph of Orthodoxy
17.5.4: Making and Mutilating Manuscripts of the Shahnama
17.5.5: Folio from a Shahnama, The Bier of Iskandar (Alexander the Great)
17.5.6: The Court of Gayumars
17.5.7: Iconoclasm in the Netherlands in the Sixteenth Century
17.5.8: Submerged, burned, and scattered- celebrating the destruction of objects in South Asia
17.5.9: "Creative iconoclasm"- a tale of two monasteries
17.5.10: Erasing Art- Rauschenberg's Erased de Kooning drawing
17.5.11: Destruction as Preservation- Ai Weiwei's Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn

17.6: Destruction, looting, and trafficking

17.6.1: Mesa Verde and the preservation of Ancestral Puebloan heritage
17.6.2: A market for looted antiquities
17.6.3: Save culture – end trafficking
17.6.4: Trafficking the past
17.6.5: We will need Monuments Men for as long as ancient sites remain battlefields
17.6.6: What the bulldozers left behind- reclaiming Sicán's past
17.6.7: Lost History- the terracotta sculpture of Djenné-Djenno
17.6.8: The Looting of Cambodian Antiquities
17.6.9: Sotheby's Returns Looted 10th Century Statue to Cambodia
17.6.10: The Scourge of Looting- Trafficking Antiquities from Temple to Museum
17.6.11: How a famous Greek bronze ended up in the Vatican
17.6.12: Fact and fiction- The explosion of Reims Cathedral during World War I

17.7: Documenting and protecting cultural heritage

17.7.1: Diarna- documenting the places of a vanishing Jewish history
17.7.2: A Landmark Decision- Penn Station, Grand Central, and the architectural heritage of NYC
17.7.3: Frameworks for cultural heritage protection- from ancient writing to modern law
17.7.4: A race against time- manuscripts and digital preservation
17.7.5: Provenance and the Antiquities Market
17.7.6: A Renaissance masterpiece nearly lost in war- Piero della Francesca, The Resurrection
17.7.7: Saving Torcello, an ancient church in the Venetian Lagoon

17.8: The role of archaeology

17.8.1: What is archaeology- understanding the archaeological record

17.8.2: Underwater archaeology and the Antikythera Shipwreck

17.8.3: Saved by shipwreck, The Antikythera Youth

17.8.4: The rediscovery of Pompeii and the other cities of Vesuvius

17.8.5: The importance of the archaeological findspot- The Lullingstone Busts

17.8.6: When there is no archaeological record- Portrait Bust of a Flavian Woman (Fonseca bust)

17.8.7: Conservation vs. restoration- the Palace at Knossos (Crete)

17.9: Cultural heritage endangered round the world

17.9.1: Saving Venice

17.9.2: Cultural heritage at risk- Mali

17.9.3: Cultural heritage at risk- Peru

17.9.4: Cultural heritage at risk- Turkey

17.9.5: Cultural heritage at risk- Syria

17.9.6: Cultural heritage at risk- Cambodia

17.9.7: Cultural heritage at risk- United States

17.9.8: The unintended consequences of UNESCO world heritage listing

17.10: What you can do now

17.10.1: What can be done to protect cultural heritage?

17.10.2: Organizations and agencies that work to protect cultural heritage

17.11: ARCHES advisors

17.12: ARCHES Backstories Additional endangered objects and sites

17.12.1: Temple of Portunus, Rome

17.12.2: Nasca Geoglyphs

17.12.3: Warka Vase

17.12.4: Cuneiform Tablets

17.12.5: Rock-Art Sites of Tadrart Acacus (Libya)

17.12.6: Benin plaque- Equestrian Oba and Attendants

17.12.7: Lamassu from the citadel of Sargon II

17.12.8: Capitoline Brutus

17.12.9: Thutmose, Model Bust of Queen Nefertiti

17.12.10: Otto Wagner, Postal Savings Bank

17.12.11: Bamiyan Buddhas

17.12.12: Aztec feathered headdress

17.12.13: Great Mosque of Djenné (Djenné peoples)

17.12.14: Mogao caves at Dunhuang

17.12.15: Machu Picchu

17.12.16: The Paracas Textile

17.12.17: Leonardo, Last Supper

17.12.18: The Taj Mahal
17.12.19: Saint Trophime, Arles
17.12.20: The Great Pyramids of Giza

Index

Glossary

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17.1: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

17.1.1: ARCHES, an introduction
17.1.2: What is cultural heritage?
17.1.3: Cultural heritage “in crisis”
17.1.4: Blow it up- cultural heritage and film

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17.1.1: ARCHES, an introduction

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER



Our cultural heritage defines our humanity. Cultural diversity, like biodiversity, plays a quantifiable and crucial part in the health of the human species. An attack on cultural heritage in one part of the world is an attack on us all—on all of humanity. But cultural diversity is under grave threat around the globe. This wanton vandalism and destruction is not collateral damage—it's a part of a ruthless wave of cultural and ethnic cleansing inseparable from the persecution of the communities that created these cultural gems. It's also part of a cycle of theft and profit that finances the activities of extremists and terrorists. Any loss of cultural heritage is a loss of our common memory. It imperils our ability to learn, to build experiences, and to apply the lessons of the past to the present and the future.

—Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, 12 April 2016

Smarthistory + ARCHES (At-risk Cultural Heritage Education Series)

At Smarthistory, we feel strongly that an informed public is essential to ongoing efforts to protect cultural heritage. ARCHES, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, offers a mini-course on endangered heritage around the globe. Taken together, these short videos and essays (see the left navigation for all the content) can serve as a stand-alone unit, however ARCHES was also designed to help instructors integrate the subject of endangered cultural heritage into their existing curriculum. For example, a course that touches on Renaissance Venice will find the video, **Saving Venice** useful. In addition to the essays and videos, we've added **20 "backstories"** to existing Smarthistory content. These offer information on how some frequently taught monuments are endangered (and in some cases, have been destroyed).



Figure 17.1.1.1: Temple of Bel, Palmyra, first and second centuries C.E. (photo: **ian.plumb**, CC BY 2.0), destroyed in 2015

Culture "in crisis"?

ARCHES begins with a provocative question, is culture in crisis? This question, **proposed by Dr. Stephennie Mulder and Dr. Debora Trein**, reminds us that the term "crisis," even in the wake of ISIS' destructive activities in the Middle East, suggests that the problem is urgent—but temporary—when in reality, using this word to define present circumstance may "provide new opportunities for heritage destruction processes that were already happening and will continue happening after the 'crisis' is over."

The continuous nature of the problem of endangered and destroyed cultural heritage, and the fact that it is not limited to far-away countries in political disarray, underscores the importance of educating students about historical examples (some ancient, and others as recent as **Pennsylvania Station**) and the **legal frameworks** that exist to protect important works and sites.

More than forty years ago, the art historian Albert Elsen connected the problem directly to the classroom,

In 1977, no more explosive issue confronts the art world than the protection of Art. Fair question is whether as teachers and scholars we are doing the best job of educating our students to be aware of, comprehend, and deal with the problems of art's protection....We teach our students the engineering and iconography of a Gothic cathedrals, but not why they should be preserved.[1]

Smarthistory created ARCHES to begin to remedy this problem. The question of endangered cultural heritage is inherently an interdisciplinary one. For this reason, ARCHES includes essays from **legal experts**, **archaeologists**, **art historians**, and **those working in not-for-profits** who fight to preserve irreplaceable remnants of human history.

Looting and the loss of the archeological record

The work of the archaeologist is often central to the protection of cultural heritage. The availability of dynamite and bulldozers in the modern era has enabled widespread looting and the subsequent loss of site context, and has created a class of orphaned objects that now pervade the art market. Looting of archaeological sites is a worldwide problem that often occurs in poor countries where local populations have few other resources and in rich nations such as the United States where, for example, a civil war site, the Petersburg National Battlefield, was recently looted.

What is lost in these cases is not simply prized objects that vanish into private collections, but also the valuable information that is destroyed when the site's sediments are disturbed and less salable materials destroyed. A **video on the archaeological record** examines just how much we can learn when a site is excavated with modern, scientific methods, and just how much knowledge of the human past is lost through looting (videos on a **Hellenistic Turkish bronze sculpture, an ancient Cambodian temple** and a site from the **Sicán culture in Peru** drive this point home).



Figure 17.1.1.2: Pedestal with feet fragments, Prasat Chen, Koh Ker, Cambodia, photo: © Simon Warrack, by permission, all rights reserved

An **essay on a popular archaeological site in Greece**, the Palace at Knossos, asks us to think about what happens to an archaeological site after the archaeologist's work is completed and whether we should restore sites for tourists and others. We could ask a similar question about monuments destroyed during war — for example the site of **Palmyra**, where ancient temples and gates were destroyed by jihadists in 2015. Should these be digitally reconstructed? What is lost when we seek to erase modern acts of destruction?

The role of scholars

Ancient works of art are not only repositories for cultural identity and vehicles for spiritual transcendence, they also carry monetary value that makes them a target for those who live in poverty, for the middlemen and dealers looking to make a profit, and for collectors who long for an important object. In recent decades this dynamic has, at times, pitted the archaeologist, art historian, or cultural heritage organization, against local populations.

In the ancient African city of Djenné, archaeologists unearthed **terracotta figures** (many covered with mysterious welts) that became highly valued by collectors. This in turn caused widespread looting of sites (during a period of famine affecting the region) and the appearance on the market of hundreds of unprovenanced objects. Archaeologists and art historians are engaged in a debate about whether to research and publish on these objects, work that may inadvertently increase their market value, and thereby encourage more looting and the inevitable loss of archaeological information.



Figure, terracotta, 13th century, Mali, Inland Niger Delta region, Djenné peoples, 25/4 x 29.9 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The role of museums

We are still living with the ramifications of centuries of colonial domination. Major museums, especially those in the West, hold treasures obtained through conquest, revolution, colonial occupation, and the advantages of great wealth. Further, art museums have traditionally emphasized the aesthetic qualities of the object, often presenting a prized object alone in an illuminated transparent box. This display strategy hides not only the object's original use — in a masquerade in West Africa, in a Buddhist temple, or on a church altar — but also has the effect of secularizing what was once held as sacred. This tension between the secular values of the encyclopedic museum (those museums with global collections often obtained through colonial ventures or through the donation of unprovenanced objects) which seeks to understand humanity across time and place, and the potentially more nationalistic sentiments of people who were colonized, is regularly played out in debates between archaeologists, museum directors, curators, and local populations. The most famous case-in-point are the **Parthenon sculptures**, which were taken from the Acropolis in Athens by a British nobleman in the early 19th century.

This is, however, a complex discussion. In some cases, the cultures that created the objects no longer exist; in other instances, efforts to link objects to traditions that do endure have been criticized as too far-reaching. Some also argue that the values of commonality—of a shared universal heritage—are more important than national claims especially if they are made by governments sullied by political agendas. Clearly, this is not a debate for those looking for a well-defined moral high ground. If, on the other hand, we are looking for a forum in which to examine how we define identity, and upon what we can base reciprocal cultural respect, then cultural heritage offers enormous advantages.



Figure 17.1.1.4: Euphronios, Sarpedon Krater, (signed by Euxitheos as potter and Euphronios as painter), c. 515 B.C.E., red-figure terracotta, 55.1 cm diameter (National Museum Cerite, Cerveteri, Italy)

The story of the **Euphronios Krater** is a case in point. The krater, a large ancient Greek punch bowl, was purchased by The Metropolitan Museum of Art and became one of their most celebrated objects, not only because of the pot's recordbreaking price, but because of its exceptional painting. The krater is now in a small regional museum in Italy, having been returned after it was discovered that the vase was likely looted from an ancient Etruscan tomb north of Rome. Questions linger about The Metropolitan's acquisition and its willingness to overlook gaps in the pot's provenance.

Art in times of war

Since antiquity, works of art have suffered during times of war. In the late 18th and early 19th century, as Napoleon conquered much of Europe, **his troops looted thousands of works of art** and shipped the most prized examples to Paris for Napoleon's museum (which would later become the Louvre Museum). Though many were returned, others remain in the collection of the Louvre to this day. Napoleon also suppressed churches and monasteries across the parts of Europe he conquered and as a result, works of art made to inspire religious devotion (altarpieces, reliquaries, etc.) entered the art market in vast numbers, and — due to the saturation of the market — many remained unsold, and were damaged over time in storerooms, or during transportation. Many of these works made their way into European and American museums. It's important to remember that there are often fascinating stories behind how works of art made their way to museums—stories not often revealed by a museum label.

The twentieth century too, saw a period of unprecedented upheaval for works of art during World War II. After decades of work by heirs and lawyers, **many works of art have been returned** to the (usually Jewish) families from which they were illegally confiscated by the Nazis, but thousands remain in museum storerooms. Just recently the Louvre opened **an exhibition of 100 works of art** looted by the Nazis in the hope that the rightful heirs might come forward (more than 1700 works remain in the Louvre that were confiscated by the Nazis, and many museums have offices devoted to researching the provenance of works of art, and returning confiscated works to the rightful owners).

The lasting damage to art during times of war can not be overestimated. Just a few years ago, thousands of manuscripts were smuggled out of Timbuktu during a period of civil war, and thanks to the hard work of the **Hill Museum and Manuscript Library** (and other libraries), they are being digitized so that future generations can learn from them.

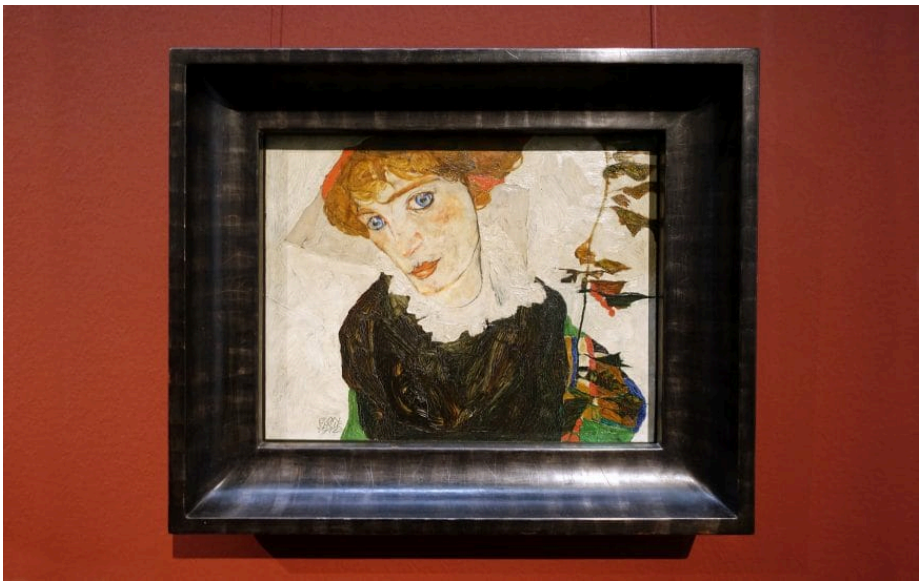


Figure 17.1.1.5: Egon Schiele, *Portrait of Wally Neuzil*, 1912, oil on panel, 32 × 39.8 cm (Leopold Museum, Vienna)

What we lose when we uproot works of art

The dislocation of works of art — whether due to colonial practices, looting, or wartime activities — raises the difficult question of where works of art belong. Do they belong in their place of origin, or do they belong in universal museums (like The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The British Museum, or the Louvre) where they can be seen in an international context by tens of millions of tourists and students?

We worry about how much is lost when work is removed from the places and people they were made for — not just lost knowledge about the work of art, but also, in many cases, the tremendous loss suffered by those whose art has made its way into Western museums (usually from indigenous source communities). The case of an image of **Paikea**, a Māori ancestor, that was acquired in 1908 by the American Museum of Natural History is a good example. Paikea was placed on a storage shelf until 2013 when a group of Paikea's descendants visited the museum to reconnect with this ancestor figure.

It is important to remember that for cultures throughout history and across the globe, images are not inanimate and powerless, rather they maintain an intimate connection to what they represent — whether that is an ancestor, an image of a deity, or a loved one. In the West, we would do well to remember the power and efficacy of images.

Conclusion

ARCHES was created to raise public awareness. We hope you will use and share these resources. We all need to do our part and to remember that it is not only well-known sites that are endangered, but also countless **lesser-known places** and objects that need our protection.

[1] Albert Elsen, "Bomb the Church? What we don't Tell our Students in Art 1," *Art Journal*, vol. 37, No. 1 (Autumn, 1977), pp. 28.

ARCHES was made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the human endeavour.



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Additional resources:

Cultural Property at Risk — Questions and Answers (UNESCO)

Antiquities Coalition

Central Registry for Looted Cultural Property 1933-1945 (Europe)

International Centre for Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

National Park Service: NAGPRA

SAFE: Saving Antiquities for Everyone

Trafficking Culture

UNESCO illicit trafficking of cultural property

UNESCO's list of world heritage in danger

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Thomas G. Weiss and Nina Connelly, *Cultural Cleansing and Mass Atrocities: Protecting Cultural Heritage in Armed Conflict Zones*

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17.1.2: What is cultural heritage?

by ELENA FRANCHI



Figure 17.1.2.1: Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, c. 1503-05, oil on panel 30-1/4 x 21 inches (Musée du Louvre)

We often hear about the importance of cultural heritage. But what is cultural heritage? And whose heritage is it? Whose national heritage, for example, does the *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci belong to? Is it French or Italian?

First of all, let's have a look at the meaning of the words. "Heritage" is a property, something that is inherited, passed down from previous generations. In the case of "cultural heritage," the heritage doesn't consist of money or property, but of culture, values and traditions. Cultural heritage implies a shared bond, our belonging to a community. It represents our history and our identity; our bond to the past, to our present, and the future.

Tangible and intangible cultural heritage

Cultural heritage often brings to mind artifacts (paintings, drawings, prints, mosaics, sculptures), historical monuments and buildings, as well as archaeological sites. But the concept of cultural heritage is even wider than that, and has gradually grown to include all evidence of human creativity and expression: photographs, documents, books and manuscripts, and instruments, etc. either as individual objects or as collections. Today, towns, underwater heritage, and the natural environment are also considered part of cultural heritage since communities identify themselves with the natural landscape.

Moreover, cultural heritage is not only limited to material objects that we can see and touch. It also consists of immaterial elements: traditions, oral history, performing arts, social practices, traditional craftsmanship, representations, rituals, knowledge and skills transmitted from generation to generation within a community.

Intangible heritage therefore includes a dizzying array of traditions, music and dances such as tango and flamenco, holy processions, carnivals, falconry, Viennese coffee house culture, the Azerbaijani carpet and its weaving traditions, Chinese shadow puppetry, the Mediterranean diet, Vedic Chanting, Kabuki theatre, the polyphonic singing of the Aka of Central Africa (to name a few examples).

The importance of protecting cultural heritage

But cultural heritage is not just a set of cultural objects or traditions from the past. It is also the result of a selection process: a process of memory and oblivion that characterizes every human society constantly engaged in choosing—for both cultural and

political reasons—what is worthy of being preserved for future generations and what is not.

All peoples make their contribution to the culture of the world. That's why it's important to respect and safeguard all cultural heritage, through national laws and international treaties. Illicit trafficking of artifacts and cultural objects, pillaging of archaeological sites, and destruction of historical buildings and monuments cause irreparable damage to the cultural heritage of a country. UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), founded in 1954, has adopted international conventions on the protection of cultural heritage, to foster intercultural understanding while stressing the importance of international cooperation.

The protection of cultural property is an old problem. One of the most frequently recurring issues in protecting cultural heritage is the difficult relationship between the interests of the individual and the community, the balance between private and public rights.

Ancient Romans established that a work of art could be considered part of the patrimony of the whole community, even if privately owned. For example, sculptures decorating the façade of a private building were recognized as having a common value and couldn't be removed, since they stood in a public site, where they could be seen by all citizens.

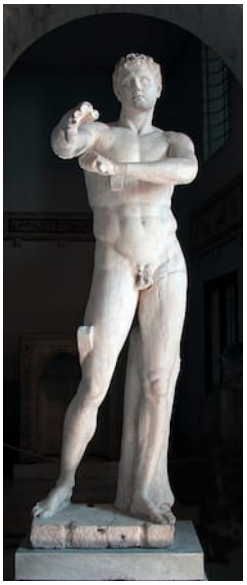


Figure 17.1.2.2: Lysippos of Sikyon, *Apoxyomenos (Scraper)*, Hellenistic or Roman copy after 4th c. Greek original, c. 390-306 B.C.E. (Museo Pio-Clementino, Vaticana)

In his *Naturalis Historia* the Roman author Pliny the Elder (23-79 C.E.) reported that the statesman and general Agrippa placed the *Apoxyomenos*, a masterpiece by the very famous Greek sculptor Lysippos, in front of his thermal baths. The statue represented an athlete scraping dust, sweat and oil from his body with a particular instrument called a "strigil." Emperor Tiberius deeply admired the sculpture and ordered it be removed from public view and placed in his private palace. The Roman people rose up and obliged him to return the *Apoxyomenos* to its previous location, where everyone could admire it.

Our right to enjoy the arts, and to participate in the cultural life of the community is included in the United Nation's 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

Whose cultural heritage?

The term "cultural heritage" typically conjures up the idea of a single society and the communication between its members. But cultural boundaries are not necessarily well-defined. Artists, writers, scientists, craftsmen and musicians learn from each other, even if they belong to different cultures, far removed in space or time. Just think about the influence of Japanese prints on Paul Gauguin's paintings; or of African masks on Pablo Picasso's works. Or you could also think of western architecture in Liberian homes in Africa. When the freed African-American slaves went back to their homeland, they built homes inspired by the neoclassical style of mansions on American plantations. American neoclassical style was in turn influenced by the Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio, who had been influenced by Roman and Greek architecture.

Let's take another example, that of the *Mona Lisa* painted in the early sixteenth century by Leonardo da Vinci, and displayed at the Musée du Louvre in Paris. From a modern point of view, whose national heritage does the *Mona Lisa* belong to?



Figure 17.1.2.3: People taking photos of the Mona Lisa, photo: **Heather Anne Campbell** (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Leonardo was a very famous Italian painter, that's why the *Mona Lisa* is obviously part of the Italian cultural heritage. When Leonardo went to France, to work at King Francis I's court, he probably brought the *Mona Lisa* with him. It seems that in 1518 King Francis I acquired the *Mona Lisa*, which therefore ended up in the royal collections: that's why it is obviously part of the French national heritage, too. This painting has been defined as the best known, the most visited, the most written about and the most parodied work of art in the world: as such, it belongs to the cultural heritage of all mankind.

Cultural heritage passed down to us from our parents must be preserved for the benefit of all. In an era of globalization, cultural heritage helps us to remember our cultural diversity, and its understanding develops mutual respect and renewed dialogue amongst different cultures.

Additional resources:

UNESCO

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



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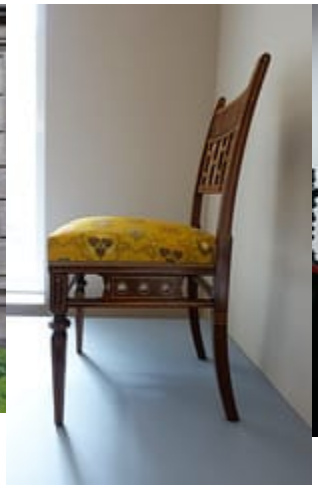


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17.1.3: Cultural heritage “in crisis”

by DR. STEPHENNIE MULDER and DR. DEBORA TREIN



Figure 17.1.3.1: Image from the **Victoria and Albert Museum**

Have you seen the phrase “Culture in Crisis?

In recent years, particularly since the rise of ISIS’ destructive activities in the Middle East, it’s become common to see articles in the news media as well as in academic journals on the theme of “cultural heritage in crisis.” You could say it’s a booming field.

But how true is it?

It’s certainly true that cultural heritage is in danger of destruction, looting, or illicit trafficking in many places around the world. It’s also true that new types of threats to cultural heritage have developed in the last few decades.

They include,

- the easier movement of goods across national borders via online marketplaces like eBay
- the spread of global banking
- the outbreak of war and other forms of political instability and poverty
- the widespread availability of heavy machinery and explosives

Some regions—most recently the heritage-rich areas of the Middle East—have certainly experienced a marked increase in illicit trafficking in the context of ongoing political upheavals and conflicts.

But usage of the term “crisis” to describe the destruction of cultural heritage around the world is perhaps a misleading one. “Crisis” is a term that indicates a problem that has an urgent, yet temporary quality. However, the loss and destruction of cultural heritage is not new in human history and is not restricted by the duration of political instability in faraway lands. Many regions of the world, **including the United States**, face a longstanding and ongoing struggle to protect heritage in the face of numerous challenges, regardless of political, social, or economic security. It may be worth considering that the idea of “crisis” deceptively frames the destruction of heritage as a product of temporary instabilities that cease to be a problem once conflicts are over. In reality, conditions of “crisis” only really provide new opportunities for heritage destruction processes that were already happening and will continue happening after the “crisis” is over.

Threats to cultural heritage: war

Let's take a closer look at these processes. Broadly speaking, there are two types of threats:

- *destruction* of heritage sites and objects caused by war, poverty, and development initiatives
- the *looting and trafficking* of objects that frequently arises out of those contexts

In wartime, destruction of heritage sites can be a result of *collateral* damage, for example, when a bomb targeting one location inadvertently hits another; or it can be the result of *intentional* damage, aimed to demoralize and insult the values and religious and cultural symbols of an enemy. It is often difficult to distinguish between collateral and intentional damage, and perpetrators may claim deliberate destruction was an accident in an attempt to avoid prosecution. In the Syria conflict, for example, you've probably heard about the destruction caused by ISIS. However, the majority of damage to cities and to heritage has in fact not been caused by ISIS, but by the Syrian government's campaign of relentless aerial bombardment, which has **destroyed up to 70%** of the fabric of the ancient city of Aleppo, a UNESCO World Heritage site.



Figure 17.1.3.2: Walter Hahn, Dresden: view of the destroyed inner city from the town hall tower with sculpture, 1945 (**CC BY-SA 3.0 DE**)

And though it's easy to demonize a regime in a country far away, it's important to remember that similar levels of destruction were caused by both the Axis powers and the Allies in World War II — for the Allies, most famously in Dresden, where a British and American aerial campaign in 1945 left more than 70% of the city in ruins. The neglect of the occupying U.S. forces in Iraq in 2003 famously led to the **looting of the National Museum of Iraq**, with thousands of objects lost, only half of which have returned, as well as the burning and destruction of Iraq's magnificent national library, including hundreds of priceless manuscripts dating back to the 16th century. Deliberate or neglectful destruction of heritage has long been a key strategy of war, and perpetrators are rarely prosecuted for it.

The long history of the destruction of heritage shows us that the elimination of culture has always been viewed as a powerful tool of domination and as a key strategy for eliminating the value humans accord to their lives. In recent years, the destruction of heritage — whether through war, commercial exploitation, and/or looting — has been defined by UNESCO as a form of cultural cleansing. In taking human lives, oppressors erase the existence of individual people: but in destroying culture, the memory and identity of entire peoples are erased. It is not surprising to note, therefore, that the destruction of heritage is often a precursor to genocide. This is because in denying people their past, perpetrators also deny them a future.

Threats to cultural heritage: development, climate change, tourism, and natural disasters

Nevertheless, wartime destruction of heritage is only a small fraction of the overall loss of cultural heritage around the world. Much more significant and long-lasting is destruction due to urban development, mineral and resource extraction, climate change, tourism, and even natural disasters. For example, the ancient Buddhist site of Mes Aynak in Afghanistan is now threatened by

Chinese mining interests, a situation made famous in **a recent documentary**. Similarly, the push to expand resource extraction on public lands in the United States is also causing widespread loss of heritage, as at the **Bears Ears National Monument**, which was controversially reduced by 85% in a decision signed by President Drumpf in December 2017.



Figure 17.1.3.3: The impact of mass tourism on the historic city of Venice (photo: Alessandro Giumelli/World Monuments Fund)

Although many heritage sites are preserved in order to encourage tourist revenue, **tourism** can also cause massive destruction because of the large numbers of people it can attract and also because transforming a site into a tourist-friendly locale often profoundly transforms its meaning for local people, who may find their connections to a place have been erased. Such is the case at Dubrovnik, a city that was reconstructed by an international consortium of donors after the Balkan war and which now finds itself managing a **Game of Thrones-inspired** tourist influx that threatens to leave little of the original city behind, a destruction that some residents have characterized as worse than that during wartime.

Looting

If destruction of heritage during wartime is akin to a relatively sudden death, looting is like a cancer that slowly erodes it. Looting is the theft of heritage items for sale on the antiquities market, most often to wealthy private buyers in the United States and Europe. As art history professor **Nathan Elkins** has shown, the consequences of purchasing even small items like coins can be devastating for our knowledge about the past. Once an object is removed from its original environment, it instantly loses much of its ability to convey information about how people once lived.



Figure 17.1.3.4: Pedestal with feet fragments, Prasat Chen, Koh Ker, photo: © Simon Warrack, by permission, all rights reserved

Archaeologists call the environment in which an object is found, its context. Context is the object and its relationship to all the other objects and material in an archaeological site. The relationships between these objects is what enables archaeologists to recreate the past (objects that have been looted, and thereby robbed of this context can be called "**ungrounded**"). As such, even the smallest objects, **such as ancient coins**, can provide powerful evidence about the lives of people in the past. While locals are often blamed for looting, it is important to point out that local looting is often subsistence looting — looting carried out to supplement meagre incomes — and that it is only profitable because it responds to demand in wealthy countries. The antiquities market is vast, and as the ***Wall Street Journal* reported** last year, it has consequences far beyond just loss of our knowledge about the past, since much like drug trafficking, its profits fuel terrorism, criminal enterprises, and many other forms of criminal activity.

What can be done?

In repositioning the discussion of the "current crisis" to a discussion of how we are in fact currently experiencing the latest iteration of a long-standing problem with global reach, we can avoid simplistic solutions that propose that squashing the "bad guys" — for example, ISIS — will solve the destruction and looting problem once and for all. Most importantly, it allows us to focus on the real driver of destruction: the demand in wealthy countries for heritage objects — a demand that ultimately fuels the entire antiquities trade — and the lax legislation that enables that trade to flourish. It also permits a conversation about related issues, for example the lack of public education about the antiquities trade, or problematic distinctions such as that between art — largely considered to be a private commodity subject to market demand, versus heritage — which is typically framed as "universal" and the patrimony of all.

Understanding that cultural heritage has been under threat for a very long time allows us to avoid short-term, crisis-based responses, and enables us to craft long-lasting, systemic solutions.

Additional resources:

Zainab Bahrani, "Desecrating history," *The Guardian*, April 9, 2008.

K. Kris Hirst, "Context is Everything – What Does Context Mean to Archaeologists?," ThoughtCo., March 8, 2017.

Georgi Kantchev, "Buyer Beware: Looted Antiquities Flood Online Sites Like Amazon, Facebook," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 1, 2017.

Trinidad Rico, "Heritage at Risk: The Authority and Autonomy of a Dominant Preservation Framework," in *Heritage Keywords: Rhetoric and Redescription in Cultural Heritage,* Kathryn Lafrenz Samuels and Trinidad Rico, editors, Boulder, University of Colorado Press, 2015, pages 147–162.

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17.1.4: Blow it up- cultural heritage and film

by A.O. SCOTT



Figure 17.1.4.11: Planet of the Apes, 1968, Franklin Schaffner director, starring Charlton Heston, Roddy McDowall, and Kim Hunter (20th Century Fox)

Empty-eyed in a desolate landscape

One of the most famous endings in cinema—one of those images you recognize immediately, even if you've never seen the whole movie—is the last shot of the original 1968 version of "Planet of the Apes." Charlton Heston, to his howling dismay, discovers what attentive viewers might have suspected all along. He didn't crash into a planet in some remote corner of the galaxy, where gorillas and chimpanzees rule over humans: he's been home the whole time, on a dystopian future earth. The proof is the sight of the **Statue of Liberty**, once a beacon of hope and now a ruin half-buried in the sand.

It's a horrifying tableau, arguably more powerful than anything else in the film, which is, all in all, an over-earnest, pulpy adaptation (directed by Franklin J. Schaffner), of Pierre Boulle's science-fiction bestseller. It doesn't stand up very well. The allegory is problematic, the ape masks are silly, and the movie survives as a camp artifact, except for that final moment. There is something undeniably horrifying about seeing the Lady in the Harbor standing empty-eyed in a desolate landscape, a feeling of dreadful sublimity that inverts the awe that might accompany seeing her in real life, say from the deck of a tourist ferry en route to Liberty Island.

The horror is cautionary, and also titillating, in the way that science fiction thrills us by inviting us to imagine the worst. Movies and their audiences revel in spectacles of destruction, routinely treating us to the obliteration of monuments, landmarks, cities, entire planets. We can enjoy the wreckage because we know it isn't real, while at the same time feeling a tremor of plausibility. What if it really happened?



Figure 17.1.4.2: Fire at Notre Dame de Paris, April 2019 (Photo: **Milliped**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

But of course it does really happen. The history of modern warfare—to say nothing of older annals of sacking and pillage—is testament to the vulnerability not only of human populations, but also of everything human beings have built, including cherished monuments, museums, and architectural masterpieces. Accidents and natural disasters also claim their share of the spoils. Recently, video of flames shooting from the roofs of **Notre Dame de Paris** and the National Museum of Brazil in São Paolo provoked a sickening sense of simultaneous incredulity and déjà vu. This is the kind of thing we're used to seeing in movies—the result of alien invasions, asteroid collisions, zombie apocalypses or diabolical super-villain conspiracies. The movies, in other words, is where we like to think this kind of disaster belongs. They prepare us for calamity even as we like to think they inoculate us.



Figure 17.1.4.3: National Museum of Brazil after the fire on September 2, 2018 (photo: **Lu Brito**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Emblems of vanity

Real-world landmarks are repositories of history, meaning and cultural and species identity. All of that is comprehended in the phrase "heritage site," which idealistically assumes a global consensus that may or may not exist. (If nothing else, the shelling of the **medieval** Croatian city of Dubrovnik by Serb forces during the Balkan Wars of the 1990s and the obliteration of the **Buddhas of Bamiyan**, Afghanistan by the Taliban in 2002 suggest that the values that protect such sites are as fragile as the sites themselves). They serve as symbols of what is unquantifiably threatened by disaster. They stand for civilization in the broadest

sense, as well as for the particular civilizations that produced them. Thus the Statue of Liberty in Planet of the Apes doesn't just represent the ideal of American democracy or the Republican legacy of France, but also a wider human ambition, an impulse to leave behind outsized tokens of our presence on the planet.



Figure 17.1.4.4: Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi (sculptor), Gustave Eiffel (interior structure), Richard Morris Hunt (base), Statue of Liberty, begun 1875, dedicated 1886, copper exterior, 151 feet 1 inch / 46 m high (statue), New York Harbor

Mocking this ambition is also a long-standing cultural habit. The durability of these massive structures of metal or stone means that they are likely to outlast the societies that erected them, and thus to survive as emblems of vanity, futility and insignificance. What Charlton Heston says when he sees the ruined Lady Liberty is "You finally, really did it. You maniacs! You blew it up!" I understand him to be addressing not the apes, but his fellow humans, whose self-destruction paved the way for their displacement by another species. And so an embodiment of noble possibility becomes a reminder of failure and disgrace.

The rebooted, 21st-century "Planet of the Apes" franchise retells the story from a decidedly more ape-friendly perspective. A decisive battle in the revolution against human domination takes place on the Golden Gate Bridge. The structure survives the mayhem, but the sight of its span over-run by angry, rebellious primates signifies its passage from a monument of our engineering ingenuity into an omen of our obsolescence. Like the Statue of Liberty in the earlier version, the survival of the bridge is an index of our destruction. This time, what is dramatized is exactly how we did blow it all up.



Figure 17.1.4.5: Planet of the Apes, 1968, Franklin Schaffner director, starring Charlton Heston, Roddy McDowall, and Kim Hunter (20th Century Fox)

This kind of imagery—the hollowed-out heritage site, evacuated of the human presence that had provided it with a function and a meaning—has recently become a staple of the zombie movie, arguably the most popular disaster subgenre of the 21st century so far. The final scene of "28 Weeks Later" (2007) shows a zombie bacchanal at the foot of the Eiffel Tower (in the earlier "28 Days Later," the infected flesh-eaters had rampaged through the landmarks of London). The non-zombie survivors in "Zombieland: Double Tap" (2019)—sequel to the popular, spoofy "Zombieland" (2009)—find temporary refuge in the White House and at Graceland. Their irreverent presence in those secular pilgrimage sites is funny and horrifying at the same time. Look how easy it is for the grand achievements of American democracy and American pop culture to become derelict, reduced to museums without patrons, tombs without mourners.

Fantasies of destruction

And look how easy it is to imagine not just the emptying out of those edifices, but also their physical obliteration. Since the beginning, cinema has devoted a portion of its innovative energy to refining the machinery of fantasy, and the rise of digital effects in the past 30 years or so has put fantasies of destruction at the fingertips of hacks and visionaries alike. It now takes relatively little effort to conjure a digital city in order to lay waste to it.



Figure 17.1.4.6: Cloverfield, 2008, Matt Reeves director, starring Mike Vogel, Jessica Lucas, and Lizzy Caplan (Paramount)

The destruction has become almost banal. The blockbusters of the 90s and early 2000s represent an orgy of destruction. The Golden Gate Bridge was destroyed in "X-Men," the White House in "Armageddon" and again in "2012," Big Ben in "V for Vendetta," the Statue of Liberty in "Cloverfield." This is a partial list, and what's striking is how trivial so many of those movies now seem. Even in the wake of the September 11 attacks—which people at the time said "was like something out of a movie"—the appetite for falling skyscrapers and glass-shattering fireballs did not abate. On the contrary, the ability of reality to emulate movie nightmares spurred the production of more such nightmares, as if their inoculating power required an ever higher dose.

In her essay "The Imagination of Disaster," first published in 1965, when science fiction movies were preoccupied with the prospect of nuclear annihilation, Susan Sontag wrote that "we live under continual threat of two equally fearful, but seemingly opposed, destinies: unremitting banality and inconceivable terror." That is still true, except that now it may no longer be possible to tell which is which. And that may be partly because, when it comes to the things we have built to celebrate our passage through history, we may dread their loss even as we take them for granted. We contemplate their destruction in order to work out—and also, somehow, to avoid thinking too hard about—a deeper ambivalence about ourselves.

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17.2: WHOSE ART? MUSEUMS AND REPATRIATION

17.2.1: Repatriating artworks
17.2.2: From tomb to museum- the story of the Sarpedon Krater
17.2.3: The many meanings of the Sarpedon Krater
17.2.4: Who owns the Parthenon sculptures?
17.2.5: Plunder, war, Napoleon and the Horses of San Marco
17.2.6: Paikea at the American Museum of Natural History
17.2.7: Nazi looting- Egon Schiele's Portrait of Wally
17.2.8: Seizure of Looted Antiquities Illuminates What Museums Want Hidden
17.2.9: Looting, collecting, and exhibiting- the Bubon bronzes
17.2.10: Napoleon's appropriation of Italian cultural treasures
17.2.11: Napoleon's booty—Perugino's (gorgeous) Decemviri Altarpiece

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17.2.1: Repatriating artworks

by DR. SENTA GERMAN

Repatriation is the return of stolen or looted cultural materials to their countries of origin. Although a belief that looting cultural heritage is wrong and stolen objects should be returned to their rightful owner dates to the **Roman Republic** (see **Cicero's Verrines**) it was not until the 1950s, when the stark truths of colonization and war crimes against humanity began to be exposed, that a broad desire for restitution emerged and laws and treaties to facilitate this increased in number. Repatriation claims are based on law but, more importantly, represent a fervent desire to right a wrong—a kind of restorative justice—which also requires an admission of guilt and capitulation. This is what makes repatriations difficult: nations and institutions seldom concede that they were wrong.

The debate and law



Figure 17.2.1.1: Bronze plaques from the **Kingdom of Benin** in the British Museum, many removed from Benin City during the Punitive Expedition of 1897 (photo: **adunt**, CC BY-NC 2.0)

The repatriation of art and cultural objects is a popular topic in the news and there is a familiar list of arguments on either side of the debate. The primary arguments for repatriation, most frequently deployed by countries and peoples who want their objects back, are:

- It is morally correct, and reflects basic property laws, that stolen or looted property should be returned to its rightful owner.
- Cultural objects belong together with the cultures that created them; these objects are a crucial part of contemporary cultural and political identity.
- To not return objects stolen under colonialist regimes is to perpetuate colonialist ideologies that perceived colonized peoples as inherently inferior (and often "primitive" in some way).
- Museums with international collections, often called universal or encyclopedic museums, are located in the Global North: France, England, Germany, the US, places which are expensive to visit and therefore not somewhere most of the world can go to see art. It is precisely a colonial legacy that allowed so many "universal" museums to acquire the range of objects in their collection.
- Even if objects were originally acquired legally, our attitudes about the ownership of cultural property have changed and collections should reflect these contemporary attitudes.

The arguments against repatriation, most frequently deployed by museums and collections which hold objects they don't want to lose, are:

- If all museums returned objects to their countries of origin, a lot of museums would be nearly empty.

- Source countries do not have adequate facilities or personnel (because of poverty and/or armed conflict) to receive repatriated materials so objects are safer where they are now.
- Universal museums enable a lot of art from a lot of different places to be seen by a lot of people easily. This reflects our modern globalist or cosmopolitan outlook.
- The ancient or historical kingdoms from which many objects originally came no longer exist or are spread across many contemporary national borders, such as those of the ancient Roman empire. Therefore, it's not clear to where exactly objects should be repatriated.
- Returning cultural objects which were obtained under colonial regimes to their countries of origin does not make up for the destruction of colonialism.
- Most objects in museums and collections, at the time of their acquisition, were legally obtained and therefore have no reason to be repatriated.



Figure 17.2.1.2: Relief of a protective deity from the Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, **Assyrian**, reign of Ashurnasirpal II, 883–859 B.C.E., gypsum, 221.7 x 176.3 cm (87 5/16 x 69 7/16 inches) excavated by Sir Henry Layard by the 1850s (**Museum of Fine Arts**, Boston)

The debate over repatriation engages powerful and personal sentiments of morality, nationhood, and identity, and few people can talk about it without raising their voice. Regardless of this passion, however, the issue, ultimately, is a legal one and the international **legal frameworks** developed in the 20th century are what bring about repatriations. The first, which recognized the damage of warfare to property, was the **1907 Hague Convention**, which forbade plundering of any kind during armed conflict, although it did not deal specifically with cultural property. The **1954 Hague Convention**, however, in the wake of the widespread **destruction of art during the Second World War**, sought to expressly protect cultural property during armed conflict. The **1970 UNESCO Convention** allowed for stolen objects to be seized if there was proof of ownership, followed by the **1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects**, which calls for the return of illegally excavated and exported cultural property. Without these conventions and treaties, there would be no legal obligation for the return of anything.

Claims of repatriations



Figure 17.2.1.3: The Koh-i-Noor in the front cross of Queen Mary's Crown (**Royal Collection Trust**)

The vast majority of repatriation cases derive from colonial or imperial subjugation. Throughout history, across the globe, powerful nations and empires have taken valuable objects, including cultural property, from those they have conquered and colonized. These objects of beauty and esteem number in the many millions and most will likely be lost to their former owners forever. However, the theft of a few especially valuable and/or important objects have proven unforgettable and the subject of frequent repatriation requests. Examples are, for instance: the **Koh-i-noor** diamond, seized by the British East India company in 1849 and currently part of the British crown jewels; the **Benin Bronzes**, looted from the capital of Benin (in modern Nigeria) by British soldiers in 1897 and now spread across several museums in Europe and America; the **Rosetta Stone**, seized by British troops from the French army in Egypt in 1801 and today one of the most popular exhibits in the British Museum in London. The **Parthenon Sculptures** are another example.

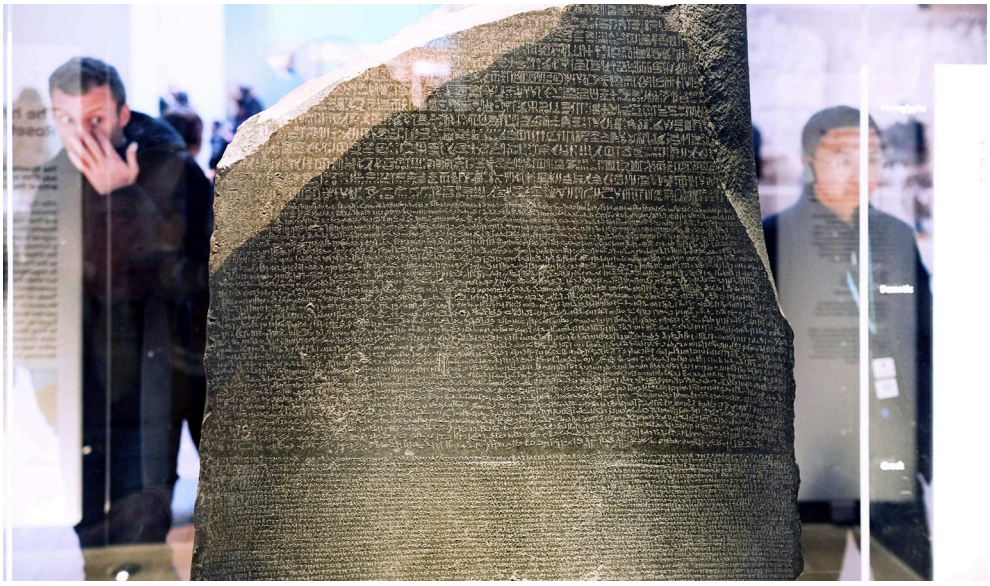


Figure 17.2.1.4: Visitors view the Rosetta Stone in the British Museum (photo: **Dr. Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Repatriation cases such as these have been approached, by and large, on a case-by-case basis, between the nations seeking return and the nations (and sometimes specific institutions), which hold these objects. More recently, however, as pressure for repatriations has increased, some former colonial powers are taking stock of their collections and moving towards large-scale repatriations. For instance, in 2017 France commissioned a report which recommended the repatriation of objects in French museums acquired during France's colonial occupation of parts of western Africa.



Figure 17.2.1.5: National Museum of World Cultures (**Tropenmuseum**, Amsterdam)

In 2019, the German government passed a resolution to lay the groundwork to establish conditions for the repatriation of human remains and objects from German public collections derived from colonial rule. In 2019, The Netherlands' National Museum of World Cultures **pledged** to proactively return all artifacts within its collection identified as stolen during the colonial era. These efforts, importantly, include sharing catalogues of holdings, a gesture of transparency which will greatly facilitate claims. However, as many point out, the stated intentions for large-scale repatriations are proving very, very slow to come to fruition and, moreover, several important museums (many in the United Kingdom) are conspicuous in their absence from the conversation.

Colonialist desires to collect beautiful objects from far flung, exotic sources are still with us and because of this, wealthy individuals and institutions continue to collect cultural objects, ancient and contemporary. To meet this demand, modern looters (people who illegally dig up and steal cultural property) feed an **underground market** of antiquities and ethnographic objects. Often this looting is in conjunction with war or armed political conflict.



Figure 17.2.1.6: Iraqi Col. Ali Sabah, commander of the Basra Emergency Battalion, displays ancient artifacts Iraqi Security Forces discovered Dec. 16, 2008, during two raids in northern Basra (photo: **U.S. Army by Multi-National Division South East PAO**, public domain)

Repatriation claims for objects involved in this illegal trade of cultural property are especially difficult as proof must be established of the illicit extraction of the objects and thieves seldom document their work, especially in war zones. Moreover, these types of repatriation requests symbolize fresh colonial wounds, illustrating that the collection practices of the wealthy and powerful continue and less powerful nations and people are still vulnerable.

The good news is that successful repatriations of recent looting have occurred and those who purchase from the illicit trade are increasingly discouraged from doing so. For instance, in 2011, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston **returned** a Roman sculpture of Herakles to Turkey from which it had been stolen. In 2018 The National Gallery of Australia **returned** to India a bronze statue of the god Shiva which had been looted from a Hindu temple in Tamil Nadu. In 2020 The Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C. returned nearly 11,500 looted objects to Iraq and Egypt, including approximately 5,000 papyri fragments and 6,500 clay tablets.

Another type of repatriation request is for the return of cultural objects and burial remains stolen from Indigenous populations by European invaders, largely in North and South America, Australia, Oceania, and **New Zealand**. What distinguishes these claims is the enduring living memory, among contemporary tribal communities, of specific objects and sites which were looted and desecrated and the acute spiritual need for their return and restoration. Indeed, these fragments of living culture can only be fully understood, properly used, and rightly treasured by their native owners.

In an attempt to address these sorts of repatriation requests, two legislated responses, the **Native American Graves and Protection Repatriation Act** (in the US,) and the **Indigenous Repatriation Program** (in Australia) were enacted. Through these two programs, legal frameworks for repatriation were established and hundreds of thousands of objects and human remains have been returned to Indigenous communities where they again work as powerful actors in the creation of spiritual, community and personal meaning. A famous example is the return of The Ancient One (also called Kennewick Man) after five Pacific Northwest tribes argued that the human remains were an ancestor. Still, the successful repatriation occurred only after genetic testing done by Danish scientists proved the Indigenous peoples' claim, highlighting the ongoing colonialist legacies affecting cultural repatriation.



Figure 17.2.1.7: Moai Hoa Hakananai'a, taken from Orongo, Easter Island (Rapa Nui) in November 1868 by the crew of the British ship *HMS Topaze* and now in the British Museum (photo: **Markus Lütkemeyer**, CC BY 2.0)

The era of repatriations has finally come. The work is slow and uneven and there are countless objects yet to return home, but repatriations are now occurring at a rate never before seen. What examples such as the **Euphronios krater** show us about repatriation is that objects come back changed. Not only physically but, because of the way they have been used (often ideologically) in their meanings as well — and, they cannot be changed back. Even if they are exhibited in quiet and historically proscribed ways (as in the case of the **Euphronios krater**), their life experience has made them bigger, louder, emotional, and more political.

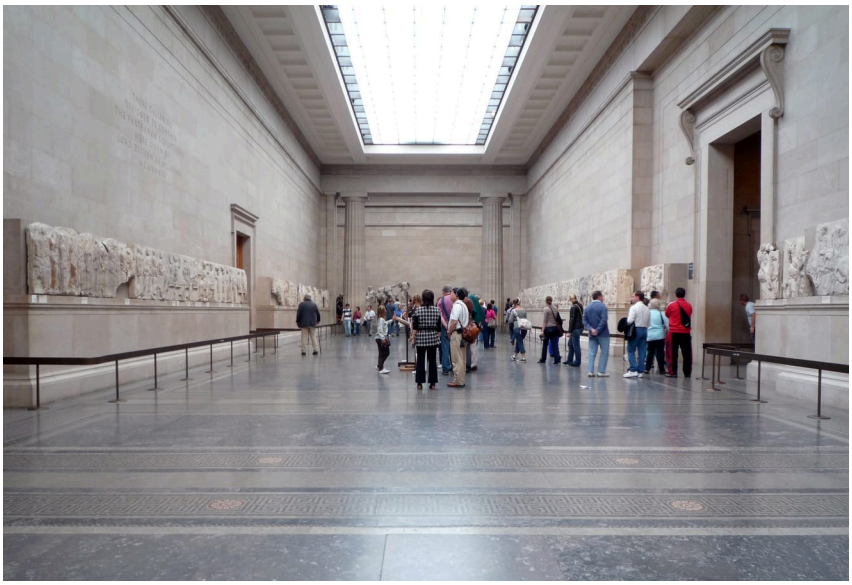


Figure 17.2.1.8: Duveen Room, British Museum, Phidias(?), Parthenon Frieze, c. 438-32 B.C.E., pentelic marble (420 linear feet of the 525 that complete the frieze are in the British Museum, photo: **Dr. Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

When, for instance, the Parthenon marbles return to Athens they will never again only be the sculptural decorations of **Athena's 5th century B.C.E. temple**. They have become so much more to Greeks, the English, generations of artists, historians, protectors of heritage, politicians, art law lawyers, and millions of visitors to the Acropolis and the British Museum. Through their dramatic biographies, we very much want to connect with, visit and understand repatriated objects and because of this they will not slip into obscurity in local museums, as is sometimes feared. The great power, the searing meaning that repatriated objects communicate, is that lost things can come home, that a wrong can be righted, and that we can all take part in that celebration and moral victory

Additional resources

Read more about how the seizure of looted antiquities often illuminates what museums want hidden

Read more about cultural heritage

Read about provenance and the antiquities market

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17.2.2: From tomb to museum- the story of the Sarpedon Krater

by DR. ERIN THOMPSON and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

YouTube Video

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Video 17.2.2.1: Euphronios, Sarpedon Krater, (signed by Euxitheos as potter and Euphronios as painter), c. 515 B.C.E., red-figure terracotta, 55.1 cm diameter (National Museum Cerite, Cerveteri, Italy)

Additional resources:

The Euphronios Krater on Trafficking Culture

Black- and red-figure painting techniques on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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17.2.3: The many meanings of the Sarpedon Krater

by DR. SENTA GERMAN



Figure 17.2.3.1: Euphronios Vase (or Sarpedon Krater), signed by Euxitheos as potter and Euphronios as painter, c. 515 B.C.E., red-figure terracotta, 55.1 cm diameter (National Museum Cerite, Cerveteri, Italy, photo: **Sailko**, CC BY 3.0)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art returns a pot to Italy

One of the most **notorious repatriations** is that of a 6th century B.C.E. ancient Greek pot, commonly referred to as the Sarpedon Krater or Euphronios vase. This pot was looted from an **Etruscan** tomb not far from Rome in 1971 and a year later illegally bought by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (MMA). The Italian government eventually requested the return of the pot, having collected evidence for its theft and illicit sale. In 2008, seeking to avoid a long and potentially damaging court battle, the MMA struck an **agreement** with the Italian government for its return. After it was exhibited at the National Etruscan Museum, the Villa Giulia, in Rome, in 2014 the vase was moved to The National Archaeological Museum of Cerveteri, nearby the Etruscan tomb from which it had been stolen 43 years before. Italy had achieved the impossible: forced the return of a stolen piece of its history from a wealthy and influential universal museum.



Figure 17.2.3.2: Tombs near Tumulo del Colonello, Necropolis of the Banditaccia, Cerveteri, Italy (photo: **Gwendolyn Stansbury**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

In the story of the repatriation of the Euphronios vase—this unequivocal win for the protection of heritage and redress of colonialist collection strategies—we have the opportunity to reflect on the various meanings and phenomena of repatriation: what gets lost, what gets gained, and how meanings shift.

With the Euphronios repatriation, the MMA gained an end to legal entanglements and perhaps some moral high ground for negotiating the return. Needless to say, however, it lost its very expensive and beautiful pot. But, what else was lost? Perhaps a bit of authority to write a certain type of history.

Museums are, among other things, in the business of codifying the history of art. Within institutions like the British Museum, the Vatican, and the MMA, the arrangements of their spectacular treasures have written the history of art for nearly three centuries. In this history, individual works are markers on a timeline: a painting, sculpture, or ancient pot. And this history has nearly always been presented as tidy, inevitable, and linear, with white Western men nearly always at the forefront of invention and innovation, as conquerors, kings, popes, explorers, pioneers, collectors, patrons, painters, and sculptors. In short, a white male imperialist history. Therefore, the great pieces of art in universal museums are not only valued for their beauty or cultural worth but also for their role in the establishment of a particular imperialist art historical knowledge. With the return of the Euphronios vase, the MMA has lost, in some measure, its authority to do this.

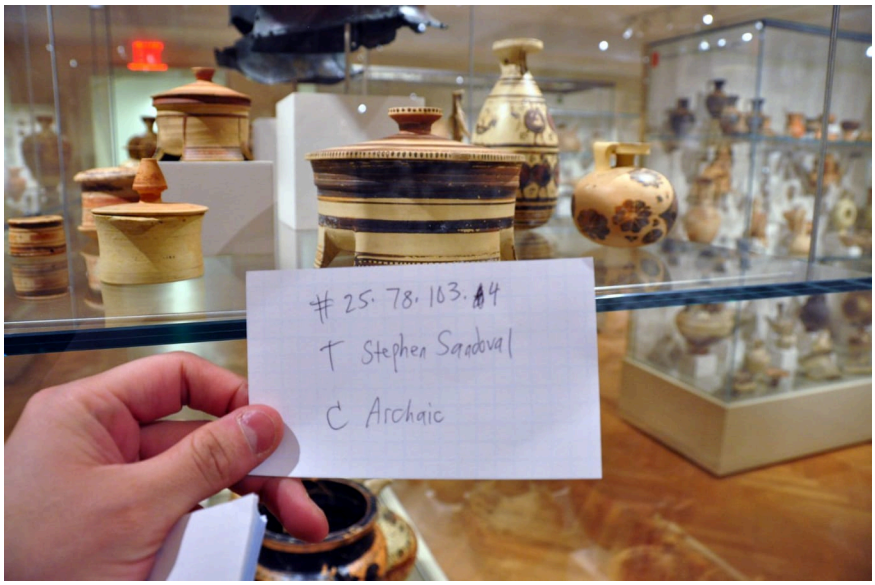


Figure 17.2.3.3: Taking note of art styles in the Greek and Roman galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (photo: **STEPHEN SANDOVAL**, CC BY 2.0)

As for Italy, what is gained by the return of the Euphronios vase is substantial. With the vase brought back to the region in Italy where it was buried in a tomb, The National Archaeological Museum of Cerveteri gains a star object, with which it can highlight first rate Greek vase painting and construct a more nuanced and contextual meaning of ancient **Etruscan burial and culture** in the region. And, of course, Italy has won a notorious repatriation fight against a formidable opponent, which gives hope to others with similar repatriation claims.



Figure 17.2.3.4: Euphronios Vase (or Sarpedon Krater), signed by Euxitheos as potter and Euphronios as painter, c. 515 B.C.E., c. 515 B.C.E., red-figure terracotta, 55.1 cm diameter (National Museum Cerite, Cerveteri, Italy, photo: **Sailko**, CC BY 3.0)

The social life of the Euphronios vase

And what about the vase itself? Although it sounds odd, thinking about the experience of the Euphronios vase reveals a lot. Anthropologists and art historians like to think about the social life of things, or the biography of objects. This approach ascribes the meaning of an object not through its maker or owner but rather by a study of its form, use, and trajectory—its life history. So, how has the form, use, and long travels of the Euphronios vase made its meaning?

The Euphronios vase began its life at about 515 B.C.E., born in the Keramikos, or potters' quarter, just outside the walls of ancient

Athens, made from Attic clay. The pot itself was formed by Euxitheos and painted by Euphronios, an innovative painter who would, in the modern era, come to be regarded as one of the most talented Greek pot painters. The Euphronios vase was not cheap; scholars surmise it would have cost approximately a week's wages in the 6th century B.C.E. The vase, in shape, is called a krater—a large wine serving bowl—intended to be the focal point and inspiration of discussion, at an all-male drinking party called a symposium.



Figure 17.2.3.5: Euphronios Vase (or Sarpedon Krater), signed by Euxitheos as potter and Euphronios as painter, c. 515 B.C.E., detail showing Hermes, c. 515 B.C.E., red-figure terracotta, 55.1 cm diameter (National Museum Cerite, Cerveteri, Italy, photo: **Sailko**, CC BY 3.0)

The pot has painted scenes on two sides, the most remarkable of which illustrates a moment from Homer's Iliad, recounting an episode in the Trojan War between the Achaeans (Greeks) against the city of Troy (which was also largely Greek). On the vase we see a slain warrior on the Trojan side, Sarpedon carried off the battlefield by the gods of sleep and night, to be returned to his homeland for proper burial. Sarpedon was killed by Patroclus, who is then killed by Hector (prince of Troy), an event which leads to his death at the hands of the famous warrior Achilles (but not before Hector prophesizes Achilles's death). An Athenian would have known the dark prophecy of the death of Sarpedon, and no doubt such an image would have inspired drinkers to reflect on a range of topics, such as the inevitability of death, the imperfect power of the gods, the fate of great warriors, and the primacy of burial rituals. The very material of the pot, the story it tells in its decoration, and the symposium for which it was made all reflect a deeply Hellenic identity. Despite this, the Euphronios vase eventually left its homeland forever.



Figure 17.2.3.6: Map showing the extent of Etruria in 750 B.C.E. (map: **NormanEinstein**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Indeed, it is unclear how long the pot remained in Greece but at some point, it traveled across the central Mediterranean Sea to Etruria (the land of the Etruscans, the central area of Italy, around Rome). Thousands of Athenian pots were sold to the Etruscans from the 8th to the 3rd century B.C.E. and thousands were placed in Etruscan tombs so we can safely assume that they were desired and valued by their buyers—although not much is known about how they were used. We assume that Etruscans used them in the ways the Greeks used them, wine cups for drinking, hydria for serving water, and kraters (like the Euphronios vase) to mix wine and water together, likely on a special occasion, given their value. However, there is evidence from **painted tombs** that Etruscan women participated in feasts in which Greek pots were used, which is different from Greek practice. How deeply the Etruscans understood the Greek identity is hard to know. How long the Euphronios vase was used by its Etruscan owner(s) is also hard to say.

The tomb in Cerveteri, in the Greppe Sant'Angelo necropolis, where the Euphronios vase was entombed, was huge, with many chambers, and used from the late 4th to 3rd century B.C.E. Because the tomb was looted and we have no associated finds to date nor the exact part of the tomb in which the pot was found, we cannot date its burial any better than the date of the tomb itself. But, this alone tells us that the Euphronios vase was used for at least a century before it was buried; sadly, we don't know if this use was mostly by Greeks or Etruscans because we don't know when it arrived in Italy. However, a precise repair, with metal rivets, was made sometime in antiquity, which can be seen on the less famous side of the vase, which shows young men readying for battle. This reveals to us some vigorous use and special care.



Figure 17.2.3.7: Detail showing repair, Euphronios Vase (or Sarpedon Krater), signed by Euxitheos as potter and Euphronios as painter, c. 515 B.C.E., c. 515 B.C.E., red-figure terracotta, 55.1 cm diameter (National Museum Cerite, Cerveteri, Italy, photo: **Sailko**, CC BY 3.0)

The looting of the tomb

In December of 1971, the tomb in Greppe Sant'Angelo was looted and the Euphronios vase was stolen. If the vase was again broken during its theft is not known but we do know that when it was illegally exported to Switzerland it was extensively repaired. It was then sold to the MMA, for $1 million, the greatest price the museum had ever paid for a work of art. The pot was conserved again by the MMA upon its arrival in New York (to which it travelled in its own first-class seat on a TWA flight from Zurich) and treated to a bespoke glass case, designed by staff from Tiffany's, at its unveiling. The pot's initial display at the MMA was a great media event. It was described as the finest Greek pot to survive from antiquity; the director of the museum at the time called it an ancient **Leonardo da Vinci**. The vase was immediately featured in books about ancient Greek art and general survey texts, picked out as a singular achievement in the narrative of Western art history. With the Euphronios vase's installation in the Greek and Roman galleries of the MMA its previous life as an object of Etruscan value was erased. The Euphronios vase became one of the many focal points of the museum's collection, arguing for a narrative that places the singular achievement of ancient Greek art at the foundation of Western visual heritage, where it became the wellspring of the **Renaissance** and **Enlightenment**, and an expression of Western imperialist inevitability and dominance.



Figure 17.2.3.8: The Metropolitan Museum of Art (photo: **Tony Hisgett**, CC BY 2.0)

In its New York home, the Euphronios vase was enjoyed by increasing numbers of visitors from the 1970s on to the first decade of the 21st century; the MMA had over 4.5 million visitors in 2007, the last year of its stay. In addition to these public viewers, the Euphronios vase hosted scores of academic and celebrity visitors, not to mention regular after-hours attention from conservators, lighting technicians, photographers, security consultants, exhibition designers, and curators, seeking to extract from it maximum historical and aesthetic content. The Euphronios vase lived in the MMA as a subject of near constant focus, awe, and inspiration.

The attention which the Euphronios vase enjoyed in its temporary New York residence can hardly compare with the emotional hero's welcome it received at its **homecoming** to Rome, in 2008. Its first unveiling occurred at the Presidential Palazzo del Quirinale, in a special exhibition together with other repatriated objects entitled *Nostoi*, which means "those who return home," also the title of a lost ancient Greek epic poem, about the return of the Greek heroes after the sack of Troy.

The *Nostoi* exhibit was widely covered by the international press, its reviews full of pathos and emotional satisfaction, also seen as an example of Italian political savvy on the part of the increasingly unstable government of president Romano Prodi. At the Palazzo del Quirinale, the Euphronios vase wasn't standing in for the superiority of Greek art or the foundations of Western heritage in an imperialist narrative; it spoke instead of the return of a precious object to its homeland after a long struggle far away, a triumphant warrior of a watershed battle in the growing cause for cultural heritage repatriation. Remember the vase was made in Greece, though it was found buried in an Etruscan tomb in central Italy.

The next move for the Euphronios vase was to the National Etruscan Museum at Rome in the Villa Giulia, where it was exhibited, for the first time, as a treasured piece of Etruscan culture. Its meaning now shifted yet again, to one centered around Etruscan appropriation of Greek sympotic practice, trade with the wider Mediterranean world, and burial customs. Visitors to the Villa Guilia came to learn about the pre-Roman history of Italy, to understand one of the earliest civilizations of the Italic peninsula (the Etruscans), a part of which was the trade in beautiful Greek vases. The Euphronios vase now told a story anchored in its own ancient Italic experience, not about the foundations of Western art and imperialism in a universal museum, not the catharsis of a long sought and hard-won repatriation, but the story of its past owners and users.



Figure 17.2.3.9: National Archaeological Museum of Cerveteri (photo: **Sailko**, CC BY 3.0)

Returning home

And, finally, in 2014, the Euphronios vase was installed in a museum very close to where it had been deposited in antiquity, The National Archaeological Museum of Cerveteri, a 15-minute drive from the Greppe Sant'Angelo necropolis (in what was once Etruria, the home of the Etruscans). It now sits among other grave goods and assemblages found in local Etruscan tombs, excavated by archaeologists who work to reveal and understand Etruscan culture. The Euphronios vase is now truly home, back in the region where in antiquity it had been cherished as an elite Greek import, regarded with wonder in lively social ceremony, and chosen to accompany its owner into the afterlife and eternity.



Figure 17.2.3.10: View of the Euphronios Vase (or Sarpedon Krater) in the National Archaeological Museum of Cerveteri (photo: **Sailko**, CC BY 3.0)

The Cerveteri museum is a quiet place, especially on the second floor where the Euphronios vase is exhibited, and it is easily missed by less intrepid museum visitors. And those visitors are a tiny fraction of those the pot has been accustomed to seeing: the Cerveteri museum welcomed some 12,500 visitors, in 2018. But, for those who climb the steps to find the Euphronios vase in the cool solitude of its new museum home, they will find not only a remarkable ancient object but a nearly impossible challenge: to believe that this is the pot which has traveled so far away and returned, suffered destruction and careful restoration twice, been the subject of so much violence, desire, admiration, and contention, whose meaning has been remade so many times: Attic Greek,

Etruscan, Greek again but in the service of a Western imperialist narrative, glorious booty returned to its Italian homeland, a poster child for repatriation battles, then Etruscan again, in a deeply local and contextual way. This quiet wonder can be contrasted with the continued high celebrity which the Euphronios vase enjoys on the global digital sphere. Indeed, because of its complex biography, it is among the most famous pots in the world.

Additional resources

Read about the Euphronios krater on Trafficking Culture

Elizabeth Marlowe, *Shaky Ground: Connoisseurship and the History of Roman Art* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013)

Nigel Spivey, *The Sarpedon Krater: The Life and Afterlife of a Greek Vase* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019)

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17.2.4: Who owns the Parthenon sculptures?

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

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Also watch SmartHistory's videos on **The Parthenon** and **it's sculptures**

Additional resources:

How the Parthenon lost its Marbles (National Geographic)

The British Museum on the Parthenon sculptures

The Acropolis Museum

William St Clair, Imperialism, Art & Restitution: The Parthenon and the Elgin Marbles

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17.2.5: Plunder, war, Napoleon and the Horses of San Marco

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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Video 17.2.5.1: Horses of San Marco (ancient Greek or Roman, likely Imperial Rome), 4th century B.C.E. to 4th century C.E., copper alloy, 235 x 250 cm each (Basilica of San Marco, Venice), an ARCHES video

Additional resources:

The Four Horses Rest Inside St. Mark's Basilica in Venice after Being Plundered from Constantinople in the 13th century (from ARCA, Association for Research into Crimes against art)

Patricia Mainardi, "Assuring the Empire of the Future: The 1798 Fête de la Liberté," *Art Journal*, vol. 48 (2014), pp. 155-163

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17.2.6: Paikea at the American Museum of Natural History

by DR. WAYNE NGATA

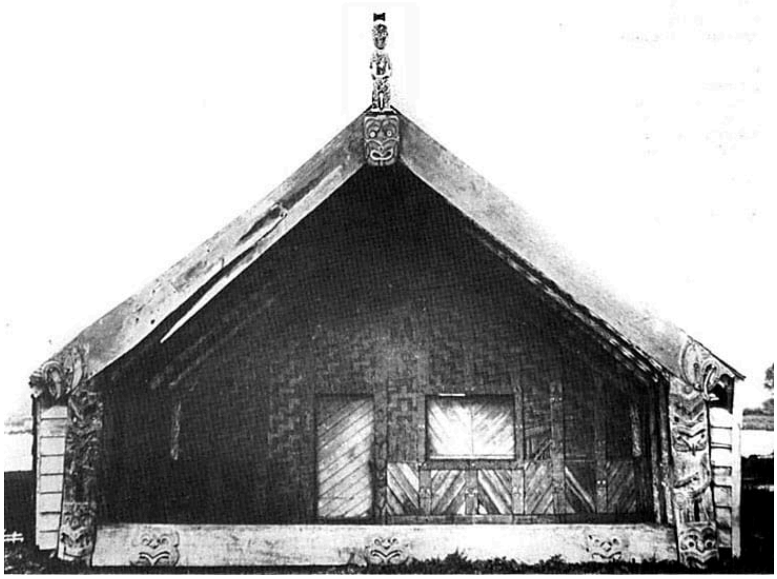


Figure 17.2.6.1: Photograph showing Paikea in its original location atop the Māori meeting house, Te Kani a Takirau, Uawa, Aotearoa (New Zealand)

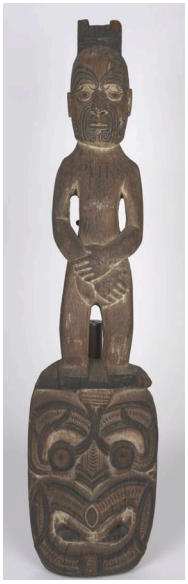


Figure 17.2.6.2: Paikea, 19th c., wood, pigment, 64x42x19cm, photo: Jennifer Steffey, courtesy **AMNH**

During the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, the trade in ethnic artifacts was rife, particularly where territories had been colonized by European powers. Thousands of artifacts of all descriptions from across the Pacific were traded legally and illegally, and many now reside in museums, private collections, and other institutions throughout the world—including an important sculpture of a Māori ancestor named Paikea (pronounced pie-kee-ah)

The Whale Rider

Paikea was an important ancestor of the Māori tribes in Uawa (Tolaga Bay) on the East Coast of the North Island of Aotearoa (New Zealand). He survived a marine disaster in the ancient Hawaiki homeland of the Māori in the Pacific Ocean, by invoking,

through incantation, the denizens of the deep sea to come to his rescue and take him ashore. Paikea eventually made landfall at Ahuahu (Mercury Island) in Aotearoa (New Zealand). After several excursions to the south-east, Paikea eventually made his way to the mouth of the Waiapu River on the East Coast, married Huturangi, and settled at Whangara. He is more popularly known throughout the world as “The Whale Rider,” from the movie of the same name.

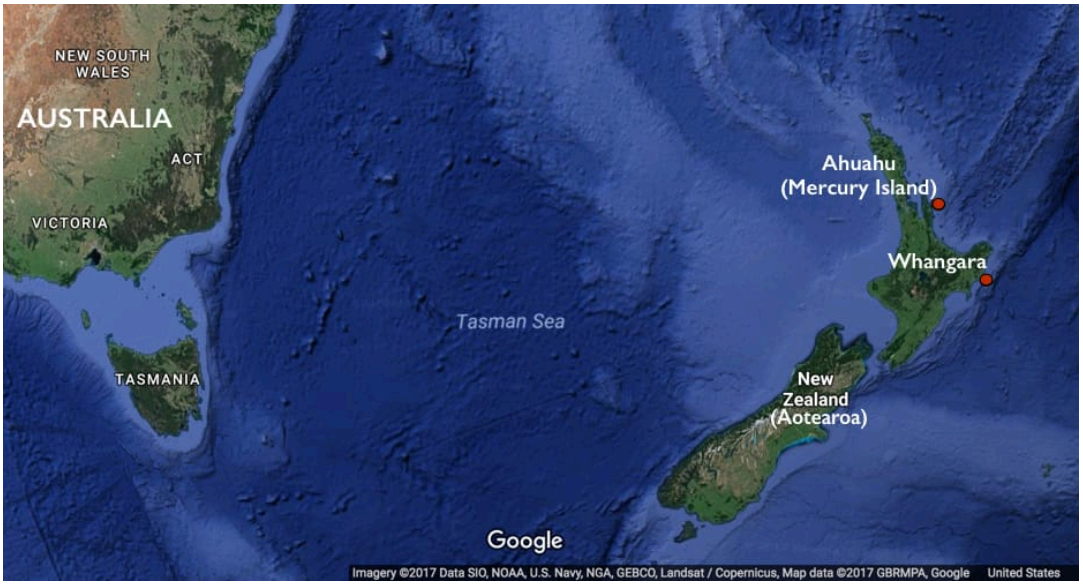


Figure 17.2.6.3

For his many descendants, Paikea is a key link to the ancient Hawaiki homeland, as well as to the marine stories and body of seafaring knowledge, and to the tribal settlements on the eastern seaboard of both islands of Aotearoa (New Zealand). He is honored through songs, genealogy, stories, dances, novels, film, and art.

A house and a dance

Paikea’s descedant, Te Kani a Takirau, was born 23 generations later, in about 1790. He was regarded throughout Māoridom as a leading *ariki*, a noble high-ranking person of his time. After Te Kani a Takirau’s death in 1856, a carved house was built by his people at Uawa, and named after him (see photograph at the top of the page). The carved figure on top was named Paikea, and notable orators composed a *haka* (posture dance) for this occasion:

Uia mai koia whakahuatia ake	If it is asked
Ko wai te whare nei e?	What is the name of this house?
Ko Te Kani	It is Te Kani
Ko wai te tekoteko kei runga?	Who is the figurehead on top?
Ko Paikea, ko Paikea	It is Paikea, it is Paikea
Whakakau Paikea	Paikea transformed
Whakakau he tipua	Into an amazing being
Whakakau he taniwha	Into an awesome being
Ka ū Paikea ki Ahuahu, pakia!	And Paikea did come ashore at Ahuahu!
Kei te whitia koe ko Kahutiaterangi	Do not mistake him for Kahutiaterangi
E ai tō ure ki te tamahine a Te Whironui	He cohabited with the daughter of Te Whironui
Nāna i noho Te Rototahe	And resided at Te Rototahe
Auē, auē he koruru koe, e koro e!	You are there sire as the figurehead!

Table 17.2.6.1



Figure 17.2.6.4: Performance at the American Museum of Natural History, June 1, 2017

Since that time, six generations of Paikea's descendants have performed this *haka*. For the past four generations it has also been performed as a *waiata ā-ringa*, an action song. In the last two generations it has developed into a novel—*The Whale Rider*, by Witi Ihimaera—which became the basis for the movie of the same name. This legacy now centers on another house: Whitireia at Whangara, on top of which Paikea sits on his whale. Children who are born into the legacy of Paikea "absorb" the *haka* and the *waiata ā-ringa* while growing up, performing it with peers, parents, and grandparents. It is a tribal marker, a rallying call, an expression of pride, and a reminder of our origins.



Figure 17.2.6.5: Documentary photograph of the Major-General Robley purchase, 1908 (Paikea is on the right), photo: Thomas Lunt, courtesy of the **American Museum of Natural History**

A century in storage

In 1908, the American Museum of Natural History acquired the Te Kani a Takirau Paikea from Major General Horatio Robley (British Army), a colonial collector of the time. Paikea was eventually placed on a storage shelf until 2013 when a small group of Paikea's descendants of Te Aitanga a Hauiti, the tribe of Uawa, **arranged a visit to the museum** for the purpose of reconnecting with this ancestor figure—part of a bigger plan to reconstruct the house Te Kani a Takirau, physically or digitally.



Figure 17.2.6.6: With Paikea at the American Museum of Natural History, 16 April 2013, photo: Dr. B. Lythberg (the author is standing second from the left wearing a dark shirt)

It was an emotional visit: a mix of tearful reunion, immense pride and melancholy reflection. Coincidentally, the visit occurred at the same time as the **Whales (Tohorā) exhibition** at the museum, which allowed us to share our Paikea stories with members of the public, museum professionals, students, and others.

A token of love

Our parting with Paikea at the end of the week was difficult and tearful. As is our tradition, we left a gift with him as a token of our love: a carved whale tooth pendant sourced originally from a bull sperm whale that beached at Mahia in northern Hawkes Bay, New Zealand in 1967, which we secured around his neck. In doing so, we unknowingly transgressed museum acquisition protocols as well as international laws regarding trade in ivory, although we had done what was *tika*, or right, in our view. This provided an embarrassing conundrum for the museum curators who had hosted us, and so later that year the whale tooth was returned to us in New Zealand.



Figure 17.2.6.7: Pendant carved by Lance Ngata from the tooth of a bull sperm whale that beached at Mahia in northern Hawkes Bay, New Zealand in 1967

In 2017, as part of filming a documentary series "**Artefact**" and with the support of Greenstone TV, the American Museum

of Natural History, and professional colleagues from Auckland University, we organized to return the whale tooth—legally this time—to Paikea, and make good our initial gift. Again, a small group of young people from Te Aitanga a Hauiti accompanied the whale tooth and once more the occasion, although shorter, was an emotional one. It was also an opportunity to consider repatriation again: both the process and the implications for the museum, and for Paikea's descendants and their communities as well. This is what we will deliberate on over the next few months as we reflect on our experiences with this icon of our history and symbol of the colonial artifact trade.

YouTube Video

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Video 17.2.6.1

Additional resources:

Paikea at the American Museum of Natural History

Billie Lythberg, Jenny Newell, and Wayne Ngata, "Houses of Stories: The whale rider at the American Museum of Natural History," *Museum and Society*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 195-220

Listen to a native speaker say "Maori"

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17.2.7: Nazi looting- Egon Schiele's Portrait of Wally

by DR. ERIN THOMPSON and DR. BETH HARRIS

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Video 17.2.7.1: Egon Schiele, *Portrait of Wally Neuzil*, 1912, oil on panel, 32 × 39.8 cm (Leopold Museum, Vienna) Speakers: Dr. Erin Thompson and Dr. Beth Harris

Additional resources:

"Two Schiele Drawings Ordered Returned to Heirs of Nazi Victim," *The New York Times*, April 6, 2018

This page titled 17.2.7: Nazi looting- Egon Schiele's Portrait of Wally is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Erin Thompson and Dr. Beth Harris, "Nazi looting: Egon Schiele's Portrait of Wally," in Smarthistory, September 6, 2017, accessed December 24, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/looting-schiele-wally/..

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17.2.8: Seizure of Looted Antiquities Illuminates What Museums Want Hidden

by DR. ELIZABETH MARLOWE

Over 20,000 precious art objects were seized in a raid at dawn — what can this tell us about beauty, theft, and the museum?

On July 4, 2018, Europol and the Italian Carabinieri's Division for the Protection of Cultural Heritage announced the culmination of "Operation Demetra." This criminal investigation, tracking a network of Sicilian archaeological looters and international traffickers, resulted in dawn raids on 40 houses in 4 countries and the arrest or detention of 23 people, and the seizure of some 20,000 plundered objects worth an estimated €40 million (approximately $46.6 million).

Art, photography, and unspoken messages



Figure 17.2.8.1: One of the looted works seized in Operation Demetra, probably a 1st century CE portrait of a member of the Roman imperial family, the Julio-Claudians (photo: **Europol**)

The Europol press release was accompanied by an uncaptioned photograph of a beautiful, naturalistic marble portrait head, presumably one of the works seized in the raids. The portrait depicts a young, beardless man wearing a veil over the back of his head. The figure has a protruding, dimpled chin, and very small ears, but there are few signs of individualization here.

On the basis of its similarity to other works, the portrait can be plausibly identified as a young man of the Roman imperial family from the early 1st century C.E. The sculptor was skilful at capturing in stone the appearance of soft, youthful skin as it stretches over cheekbones and puckers out at the corner of the mouth The nose and left cheek are damaged, but otherwise, the piece seems to be in extraordinarily fine condition. It would be a centerpiece in the ancient gallery of any museum in the world today.



Figure 17.2.8.2: Three museum photographs of a portrait of Caligula, said to have been found near Marino, Lago Albano. Purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1914 from Alfredo Barsanti, Rome (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

The head has much in common with other Roman imperial portraits, but the Europol photograph is unique. The depiction is not at all how we've become accustomed to seeing ancient sculpture presented. Museum and art market photography usually features pieces like this against a seamless muslin backdrop. The backdrop can be black or gray or, for a little spice, it can fade from black to gray or from dark gray to light. The neutral color, the absence of a horizon line and of any representational detail other than the single object itself, work together to situate the piece in an other-worldly realm, one far removed from any actual specific, physical location. The non-space of these official photographs complements the museum rhetoric of universality. This rhetoric is grounded in a philosophy of art that goes back to Immanuel Kant.

Museums and contexts



Figure 17.2.8.3: Bronze statue identified as Marcus Aurelius, likely one of a large number of bronzes that were looted from an archaeological site in southern Turkey called Bubon in the 1960s and sold to American collectors and museums in subsequent decades (**Cleveland Museum of Art**)

Implicitly in their architecture and explicitly in their labels, art museums frame their holdings as manifestations of creativity, genius, truth, and beauty — ostensibly universal and timeless human values. This makes the objects' installation in a museum, often far removed from the particular culture and setting for which they were created and where they may still hold very different meanings, seem unproblematic and even natural.

Sometimes the rhetoric of universality takes on a more literal and pragmatic meaning, as when self-proclaimed “universal museums” claim the right to own — and retain — objects from every corner of the globe, regardless of the dubious circumstances by which they may have acquired them. The two concepts of universality are, of course, mutually reinforcing; and the gray vacuum photographs of record are part and parcel of this ideological apparatus.



Figure 17.2.8.4: Portrait of Drusus purchased by the Cleveland Museum of Art in 2012. It was sold with provenance documents indicating an ownership history going back to the 19th century. These documents turned out to be false; the piece had in fact been stolen from a small museum near Naples in 1944. It was returned to Italy in 2017 (photo: **Daderot**, CC0)

The Europol press release photo is the antithesis of the gray vacuum images. It is teeming with details that anchor the ancient portrait in a very particular and very mundane realm. The most startling of these details are the two slippers partially visible along the lower edge on either side of the head. These must be the slippered feet of the photographer himself, as he stood over the marble head and aimed his camera at the floor.

The head is lying on what looks like a nice Persian carpet, but our photographer was apparently untroubled by the disarray surrounding it: a pen, whose metal clip catches the light in the image’s upper left corner; two pieces of battered wooden furniture; what appears to be an ornate but broken gilded plaster picture frame; and a blue crocheted blanket. It would not have taken much to push all this detritus out of the frame of the photograph, but our cameraman did not bother. He also apparently couldn’t be bothered, before snapping the picture, to turn off his TV, the blue glow of which illuminates the portrait’s proper right side.

These details not only root the image in a specific earthly setting; they also introduce a concept art world insiders usually take pains to hide from the general public: the inevitably messy *human agency* behind the removal and relocation of artworks or cultural objects from their original context to their end destination in a gallery display. Europol didn’t release any information about the photograph itself, and it is possible that it was taken by one of the investigators. The slippered feet, however, suggest a different actor, someone in possession of the looted head in his own home.

Erasing stories, erasing the past

We know from other cases of looted antiquities that middlemen often photographed their wares after receiving them from the *tombaroli* (grave-robbers) who dug them out of the ground. The photographs were used to shop the pieces around to potential buyers. Perhaps this photograph was meant to serve as the basis for negotiations over price between the middleman and the dealer whose role in this network was to smuggle the pieces out of Italy to Munich, where, the investigators claim, they were supplied with false provenance papers and sold at auction. No doubt this laundering entailed new photography as well.

Figure 17.2.8.5: Members of the Benin Punitive Expedition of 1897, with some of their loot (British Museum)

The Europol photograph is a stark reminder that many of those polished marble masterpieces on their spotlit museum pedestals were once merely raw goods on the floor of a crook’s cluttered living room. The alchemy is usually carefully hidden from view; museums do everything they can to keep our attention away from the men behind the curtain.

In its power to reveal more profound truths about museum objects, the Europol photograph recalls the famous image of those manspreading colonialists, the members of the British Punitive Expedition, seated atop their loot at Benin in 1897. That is the "before" image to be paired with the loot's "after" images, both in photographs of record and in the beautiful modernist grid in the new Sainsbury African Galleries of the British Museum.

The fact that these "before" photographs still have the power to shock years, and even decades, after debates about "decolonizing the museum" have become widespread, and the looting of antiquities is widely recognized as a scourge, reveals how thoroughly we've been conditioned by museum rhetoric of beauty and universality. The truth is that the route to the gallery is often ugly, built on crime, brute force, and lies. When we catch a glimpse of that reality, we must not look away.



Figure 17.2.8.6: Gallery devoted to the material from Benin, in the Sainsbury wing of the British Museum (photo: **Shadowgate**, CC BY 2.0)

This essay first appeared in **Hyperallergic** (used by permission).

Additional resources:

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Europol's post about Operation Demetra

Read more about Operation Demetra at Artnet

More information about Operation Demetra from ARCA

Read about a campaign to return looted Benin bronzes to Nigeria at Artnet

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17.2.9: Looting, collecting, and exhibiting- the Bubon bronzes

by DR. ELIZABETH MARLOWE and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

YouTube Video

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Video17.2.9.1: Bronze statue of a nude male figure, Greek or Roman, Hellenistic or Imperial, c. 200 B.C.E. – c. 200 C.E. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art). Speakers: Dr. Elizabeth Marlowe and Dr. Steven Zucker ARCHES: At Risk Cultural Heritage Education Series

Additional resources:

Bubon on Chasing Aphrodite

Bubon on Looting Matters

Smarthistory images for teaching and learning:



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17.2.10: Napoleon's appropriation of Italian cultural treasures

by **CYNTHIA PRIEUR**



Figure 17.2.10.1: Diagram showing where the different panels were distributed after the altarpiece was confiscated. Perugino, *San Pietro Polyptych*, for the Abbey of San Pietro, Perugia, 1496–1500.

Millions of people travel to Paris annually for the pleasure of visiting the Louvre Museum. Visitors are awestruck by the grandeur of the galleries and the wealth of the artistic treasures on display. For most museum-goers, the architectural decorations and the carefully curated works of art in the galleries create a unique ambience, one that gives the illusion that these works of art have always lived in these spaces. However, those who are interested in historical instances of looting are quick to point out that the Louvre Museum's collection contains a treasure-trove of stolen works of art. What is often omitted from modern museum guidebooks is the fact that some works of art in the Louvre's collection were confiscated locally, during the formative years of the French Revolution (1789-1793). A few years later, the French would begin to appropriate works of art on an international scale. Arguably, some of the most egregious instances of confiscation took place on the Italian peninsula. The Vatican was one of the main victims and its collections, as well as those of papal cities such as Perugia, were specifically targeted.

Art looting at home and abroad

The fascinating historical events that gave birth to the Louvre Museum's collection began when the French Revolutionary government nationalized the collections of the church, émigrés (who had fled the country), and the monarchy. The French government was then free to decide whether these collections would be sold, destroyed, or kept. A system was developed to select and preserve works of art and other cultural objects from these collections that were considered to be of artistic and cultural significance.

Nationalizing these collections fell short of the revolutionary government's ambitions however, and shortly after the **Louvre Museum** opened its doors to visitors in 1793, the government developed a plan to augment the national collection at the Louvre through art confiscations perpetrated abroad. At nearly all its territorial borders, France was facing wars with members of the First Coalition (1793-1797), which included Spain, Holland, Austria, Prussia, Great Britain, and Sardinia. The political reasons behind the establishment of the Coalition are complex, but the cornerstone of their plan was to quell the Revolution and to restore the monarchy (the French King had been executed by the revolutionaries in 1793). Despite the Coalition's efforts, the French army successfully pushed back their advances. In the territories that the French conquered, they took art, money, and parcels of land as compensation for the resources that were expended in fighting wars that the Coalition had provoked.



Figure 17.2.10.2: Map showing many (but not all) of the cities where the revolutionary forces under Napoleon confiscated art

At first these appropriations of works of art took the form of unorganized looting during the French army's early military campaigns. It was not until the campaign in Belgium (in 1794) that the French government officially sanctioned art confiscations and a coherent program of appropriation emerged.



Figure 17.2.10.2: This altarpiece by Rubens was taken from a church in Antwerp (just north of Brussels) to the Louvre and returned to Antwerp in 1815 after Napoleon's defeat. Peter Paul Rubens, *Elevation of the Cross*, from Saint Walpurgis, 1610, oil on wood, 15 feet 1-7/8 inches x 11 feet 1-1/2 inches (now in Antwerp Cathedral)

On January 29, 1794, a branch of the French government appointed a commission of expert scientists and artists to forage for important monuments of art and science in Belgium. The commissioners were sent with guidebooks and instructions to select and confiscate sculptures, paintings, scientific instruments, books, and other cultural treasures. They seized objects from museums, churches, palaces, and private collections. These objects were then shipped to Paris and sent to the recently established Louvre Museum. Belgium became a prototype for the systematized art spoliations that the French would carry out in other territories they occupied.

The Italian Campaign

The French system of art appropriation was further refined by on the Italian peninsula. The intention was to make Paris the new

artistic capital of Europe. In order to accomplish this monumental undertaking, Napoleon was supplied with a group of scientists and artists (as in the Low Countries), who were tasked with traveling with the French army to Italian states to research, select, and transport works of art to Paris.

In places such as Lombardy, the Veneto, and Emilia-Romagna, members of the commission were given unrestricted authority to select and requisition works of art just as they had in Belgium. Only in a few instances were cities treated mildly or spared art confiscations altogether (these were either in remote regions, which would have been difficult for the French army to reach, or Napoleon felt that their city officials would be an asset—this was the case with the king of Sardinia, who became an ally to the French).



Figure 17.2.10.4: This painting, *The Wedding at Cana*, by Paolo Veronese was created for a monastery in Venice in 1563. In 1797 the painting was confiscated, rolled up, and shipped to Paris. The painting remains in the Louvre today. (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

Territories that fought the French, such as Parma, Modena, and the **Republic of Venice**, were treated differently. When their city officials finally requested peace, Napoleon imposed a condition within the peace treaties that demanded the seizing of works of art from local churches, galleries, and princely art collections. These peace treaties were legally binding contracts and, thus, works of art transferred in this way were exempt from any potential requests for restitution. Historian John Merryman, who has studied the development of laws in the cultural heritage sector, noted that Napoleon's unprecedented move to stipulate the transfer of works of art through peace treaties created a loophole that legitimized these confiscations from a legal standpoint.

The task of carrying out the confiscations as they were laid out in the treaties fell to the members of the commission. They collected the works of art listed in the treaties and, more significantly, determined which objects should be taken if a list had not been provided. Cities like Parma and Modena were to relinquish twenty paintings under the terms of their armistices (agreements), although the number of objects stipulated in the treaties could be amended at the request of the commissioners if they found further works that merited seizure. In the case of the Papal territories (in Italy), Napoleon promised not to march on Rome if the representative of Pope Pius VI agreed to sign over 500 manuscripts and 100 works of art, including statues, busts, and paintings.



Figure 17.2.10.5: This painting was taken to the Louvre and returned in 1815 to the Vatican (not Perugia from where it was taken). Pietro Perugino, *Resurrection of Christ*, 1499–1500, tempera gouache on wood (Vatican Museums)

The Pillaging of Perugia

A few Italian cities faced particularly egregious instances of pillaging. This was the case on March 3, 1797, in the Papal city of Perugia. Jacques-Pierre Tinet, a member of the commission, was sent to the city in search of works of art, books, manuscripts, scientific instruments, and other cultural objects. He did not restrict himself to seizing the ***Oddi altarpiece*** by Raphael, the ***Coronation of the Virgin*** by Giulio Romano and Giovan Penni, and the *Resurrection of Christ* by Pietro Perugino, which had been ceded through the Treaty of Bologna (1796) as reiterated in the Treaty of Tolentino (1797). Instead, Tinet visited churches, monasteries, convents, and city buildings, plundering everything he deemed to be of value.

Despite the fervent protests of the Perugians, and their efforts to conceal works of art, Tinet took an estimated thirty-one paintings, primarily by **Raphael**, Giulio Romano, Guido Reni, Federico Barocci, and Perugino. Although pillaging was often reserved as a punitive measure in cities that revolted against the French, that was not the case in Perugia, and the reasons for Tinet's brazen pillaging remain unclear.

Also puzzling is the fact that over two-thirds of the paintings taken from Perugia were painted by the artist Perugino or students from his workshop. The reasons behind the appropriation of Perugino's paintings are a mystery, as his work was not in vogue in France during the eighteenth century. According to the seventeenth-century French art critics Roger de Piles and André Félibien, Perugino's major contribution was the role he played in shaping Raphael, his famous pupil, whose work was highly regarded by the French. The museum officials at the Louvre actively sought to include paintings by Raphael in their collection. The art historian Cristina Galassi has even suggested that Perugino's paintings were seized because the commissioners had difficulty locating some of Raphael's paintings. She argues that Perugino's paintings were used as proxy for the work of his pupil.

Of the Perugino paintings taken from Perugia, at least three were altarpieces, which the French dismantled, crated, and then shipped to Paris. They included the San Pietro altarpiece (see top of page), the ***Sant'Agostino* altarpiece**, which was a collaboration with Giovan Battista Caporali, and the central panel from the **Decemviri altarpiece**, which was taken from the Palazzo dei Priori.



Figure 17.2.10.6: Hubert Robert, *Project for the Transformation of the Grande Galerie, Musée du Louvre*, c. 1796, oil on canvas, 115 x 145 cm (Louvre)

On arriving in Paris, the paintings were uncrated, inspected, and displayed in the Grande Galerie of the Louvre Museum. Visitors were encouraged to come and admire the recent spoils of the victorious French army. A few of Perugino's paintings, such as the *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints* (the central panel of the *Decemviri* altarpiece), were displayed in didactic panels alongside paintings by Raphael, including *The Coronation of the Virgin*, *The Transfiguration*, and the ***Belle Jardinière***. The purpose of exhibiting the works of the master and the pupil side-by-side was to showcase Raphael's early development under Perugino's instruction and his later maturation as an artist.



Figure 17.2.10.7: Perugino, *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints* (*Decemviri* altarpiece), 1495–96, tempera on wood, 193 x 165 cm (Vatican Museums but here photographed on view in the Palazzo dei Priori in Perugia; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Shortly after Napoleon was defeated at the Battle of Waterloo (1815), the pope and the central Italian princes sent Antonio Canova, the famous sculptor, to request the restitution of Italy's treasures from the newly reinstated monarch, King Louis XVIII. The task was fraught with difficulties since the Italians lacked an army to press their claims. However, after some deliberation and the help of allies, Canova was successful in repatriating a group of significant cultural objects, including Perugino's *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints*—one of the two panels of the Decemviri altarpiece.

The French placed a condition on the return of the works of art—henceforth they had to be housed in a gallery made accessible to the public. The pope capitulated, and some of the objects were returned to Rome, where they were installed at the Vatican

Museum. This was a point of contention, particularly for the city officials of Perugia, who expected that the works of art pillaged from their city, particularly Perugino's *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints*, would be returned to their original home.



Figure 17.2.10.8: The two panels of the *Decemviri* altarpiece recently reunited in the National Museum of Umbria, Perugia. Perugino, *Madonna and Child with Saints Laurence, Louis of Toulouse, Ercolanus, and Constance*, 1495–96, tempera on wood, 193 x 165 cm (Vatican Museums; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-SA 2.0)

It was not until October 11, 2019 that *The Lamentation of Christ* and *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints*, paintings which formed part of the *Decemviri* altarpiece, were finally reunited and installed in the Priori Chapel in Perugia for a special exhibition. This offered scholars a chance to study and enjoy the altarpiece, for a short time, in the location for which it was originally commissioned. The pinnacle, the central panel, the frame, and the moulding were reassembled for this exhibition, which was organized by the Vatican Museum and the National Gallery of Umbria and titled "The Magic of the Decemviri Altarpiece, Recreated in Perugia."

While the recent reunion of the Decemviri altarpiece in Perugia may have sparked hope that the work would permanently be returned to its home in the Priory Chapel, officials at the Vatican Museum have not remarked on whether they will consider the option of restitution. Thus, the pieces of the *Decemviri* altarpiece seem fated to remain separate, not unlike the two other Perugino altarpieces, which were dismantled and taken from Perugia by the French in 1797. The paintings from the *San Pietro* altarpiece (top of page) and the ***Sant'Agostino* altarpiece** were dispersed among French regional museums in the early nineteenth century, where they have since remained.

Today, the fine arts museums in Nantes, Lyon, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Grenoble, and Rouen, display the disassembled altarpieces of *San Pietro* and *San'Agostino*. Indeed, it is unlikely that the many visitors who have enjoyed the splendid paintings of Pietro Perugino in French museums know that they were looted from Perugia.

The French government provided justifications for the art confiscations in Italy in the eighteenth century that are still used by museum officials today to argue for the retention of confiscated works of art such as Perugino's paintings. Sadly, the lasting effects of these appropriations can still be observed today in some churches and public buildings of Perugia, which remain bereft of the treasures that had once adorned them.

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17.2.11: Napoleon’s booty—Perugino’s (gorgeous) Decemviri Altarpiece

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

YouTube Video

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Video 17.2.11.1: A conversation with Dr. Steven Zucker and Dr. Beth Harris in front of Perugino, *Madonna and Child with Sts Laurence, Louis of Toulouse, Ercolanus and Constance (Decemviri Altarpiece)*, 1495–96, tempera on wood, 193 x 165 cm (Vatican Museums)

This page titled 17.2.11: Napoleon’s booty—Perugino’s (gorgeous) Decemviri Altarpiece is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Diagram showing where the different panels were distributed after the altarpiece was confiscated. Perugino, San Pietro Polyptych, for the Abbey of San Pietro, Perugia, 1496–1500..

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17.3: RUINS, RECONSTRUCTION, AND RENEWAL

17.3.1: Destruction, Memory, and Monuments- The Many Lives of the Parthenon
17.3.2: Views of past and present- the Forum Romanum and archaeological context
17.3.3: The Roman Forum- Part 1, Ruins in modern imagination
17.3.4: The Roman Forum- Part 2, Ruins in modern imagination (The Renaissance and after)
17.3.5: The Roman Forum- Part 3, Ruins in modern imagination
17.3.6: Rome's layered history — the Castel Sant'Angelo
17.3.7: Looted and revered- The Rosetta Stone
17.3.8: Ruin as abattoir, the Colosseum
17.3.9: Before the fire- Notre Dame, Paris
17.3.10: Reconstructing a masterpiece — Mantegna's St. James Led to his Execution

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17.3.1: Destruction, Memory, and Monuments- The Many Lives of the Parthenon

by DR. RACHEL KOUSSER



Figure 17.3.1.1: The Acropolis of Athens viewed from the Hill of the Muses (photo: **Carole Raddato**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

The **Parthenon**, as it appears today on the summit of the Acropolis, seems like a timeless monument—one that has been seamlessly transmitted from its moment of creation, some two and a half millennia ago, to the present. But this is not the case. In reality, the Parthenon has had instead a rich and complex series of lives that have significantly affected both what is left, and how we understand what remains.



Figure 17.3.1.2: Iktinos and Kallikrates, Parthenon, Acropolis, Athens, 447–432 B.C.E. (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

It is illuminating to examine the Parthenon's ancient lives: its genesis in the aftermath of the Persian sack of the Acropolis in 490 B.C.E.; its accretions in the Hellenistic and Roman eras; and its transformation as the Roman empire became Christian. Why was the building created, and how was it understood by its first viewers? How did its meanings change over time? And why did it

remain so important, even in Late Antiquity, that it was converted from a polytheist temple into a Christian church?

Investigating the many lives of the Parthenon has much to tell us about how we perceive (and misperceive) this famous ancient monument. It is also relevant to broader debates about monuments and cultural heritage. In recent years, there have been repeated calls to tear down or remove contested monuments, for instance, statues of Confederate generals in the southern United States. While these calls have been condemned by some as ahistorical, the experience of the Parthenon offers a different perspective. What it suggests is that monuments, while seemingly permanent, are in fact regularly altered; their natural condition is one of adaptation, transformation, and even destruction.



Figure 17.3.1.3: When Persians sacked Athens, they destroyed or damaged many sculptures, including the now-famous Calf-Bearer (today in the Acropolis Museum). Athenians buried many of these sculptures in a pit, which were not uncovered until the 19th century. Unknown photographer, *The Calf-Bearer and the Kritios Boy Shortly After Exhumation on the Acropolis*, 1865, albumen silver print from glass negative, 27.7 × 21.8 cm (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

The Genesis of the Parthenon, 480–432 BCE



Figure 17.3.1.4: The Moschophoros or *Calf-bearer*, c. 570 B.C.E., marble 165 m high (Museum of the Acropolis of Athens; photo: **Marsysas**, CC BY-SA 2.5)

The Parthenon we see today was not created *ex novo*. Instead, it was the final monument in a series, with perhaps as many as three Archaic predecessors. The penultimate work in this series was a marble building, almost identical in scale and on the same

site as the later Parthenon, initiated in the aftermath of the First Persian War.

In the war in 492–490 B.C.E., Athens played a central role in the defeat of the Persians. Thus it is not surprising that ten years later when the Persians returned to Greece, they made for Athens; nor that, when they took the city, they sacked it with particular fervor. In the sack, they paid special attention to the Acropolis, Athens's citadel. The Persians not only looted the rich sanctuaries at the summit, but also burned buildings, overturned statues, and smashed pots.

When the Athenians returned to the ruins of their city, they faced the question of what to do with their desecrated sanctuaries. They had to consider not only how to commemorate the destruction they had suffered, but also how to celebrate, through the rebuilding, their eventual victory in the Persian Wars.



Figure 17.3.1.5: Remains of materials from the temples destroyed during the Persian sack of the Acropolis, such as column-drums (shown here) and a triglyph-metope frieze, were incorporated into the North Wall (photo: **Gary Todd**)

The Athenians found no immediate solution to their challenge. Instead, for the next thirty years they experimented with a range of strategies to come to terms with their history. They left the temples themselves in ruins, despite the fact that the Acropolis continued to be a working sanctuary. They did, however, rebuild the walls of the citadel, incorporating within them some fire-damaged materials from the destroyed temples. They also created a new, more level surface on the Acropolis through terracing; in this fill, they buried all the sculptures damaged in the Persian sack. These actions, most likely initiated in the immediate aftermath of the destruction, were the only major interventions on the Acropolis for over thirty years.

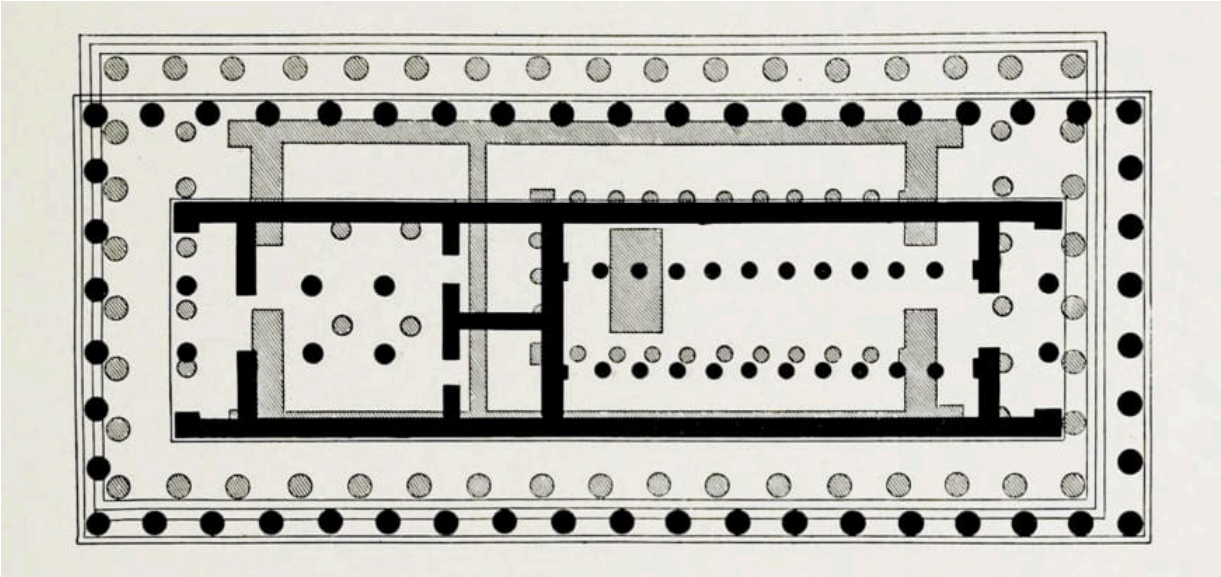


Figure 17.3.1.6: Plan of the Older Parthenon (in black) superimposed on that of the Parthenon (in gray). Plan by Maxime Collignon

In the mid-fifth century B.C.E., the Athenians decided, finally, to rebuild. On the site of the great marble temple burned by the Persians, they constructed a new one: the Parthenon we know today. They set it on the footprint of the earlier building, with only a few alterations; they also re-used in its construction every block from the Older Parthenon that had not been damaged by fire. In their recycling of materials, the Athenians saved time and expense, perhaps as much as one-quarter of the cost of construction.



Figure 17.3.1.7: The Older Parthenon foundation is located below the newer construction (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

At the same time, their re-use had advantages beyond the purely pragmatic. As they rebuilt on the footprint of the damaged temple and re-used its blocks, the Athenians could imagine that the Older Parthenon was reborn—larger and more impressive, but still intimately connected to the earlier sanctuary.



Figure 17.3.1.8: Battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs, Parthenon Metopes, south flank, marble, c. 440 B.C.E., Classical Period (British Museum, London; photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

While the architecture of the Parthenon referenced the past through re-use, the sculptures on the building did so more allusively, re-telling the history of the Persian Wars through myth. This re-telling is clearest on the metopes that decorated the exterior of the temple. These metopes had myths, for instance, the contest between men and centaurs, that recast the Persian Wars as a battle between good and evil, civilization and barbarism**.**

The metopes did not, however, depict this battle as one of effortless victory. Instead, they showed the forces of civilization challenged and sometimes overcome: men wounded, struggling, even crushed by the barbaric centaurs. In this way, the Parthenon sculptures allowed the Athenians to acknowledge both their initial defeat and their eventual victory in the Persian Wars, distancing and selectively transforming history through myth.

Thus even in what might commonly be understood as the moment of genesis for the Parthenon, we can see the beginning of its many lives, its shifting significance over time. Left in ruins from 480 to 447 B.C.E., it was a monument directly implicated in the devastating sack of the Acropolis at the onset of the Second Persian War. As the Parthenon was rebuilt over the course of the following fifteen years, it became one that celebrated the successful conclusion to that war, even while acknowledging its suffering. This transformation in meaning presaged others to come, more nuanced and then more radical.

Hellenistic and Roman Adaptations

By the Hellenistic era if not before, the Parthenon had taken on a canonical status, appearing as an authoritative monument in a manner familiar to us today. It was not, however, untouchable. Instead, precisely because of its authoritative status, it was adapted, particularly by those who sought to present themselves as the inheritors of Athens' mantle.

The Parthenon was altered by a series of aspiring monarchs, both Hellenistic and Roman. Their goal was to pull the monument, anchored in the canonical past, toward the contemporary. They did so above all by equating later victories with Athens' now-legendary struggles against the Persians.

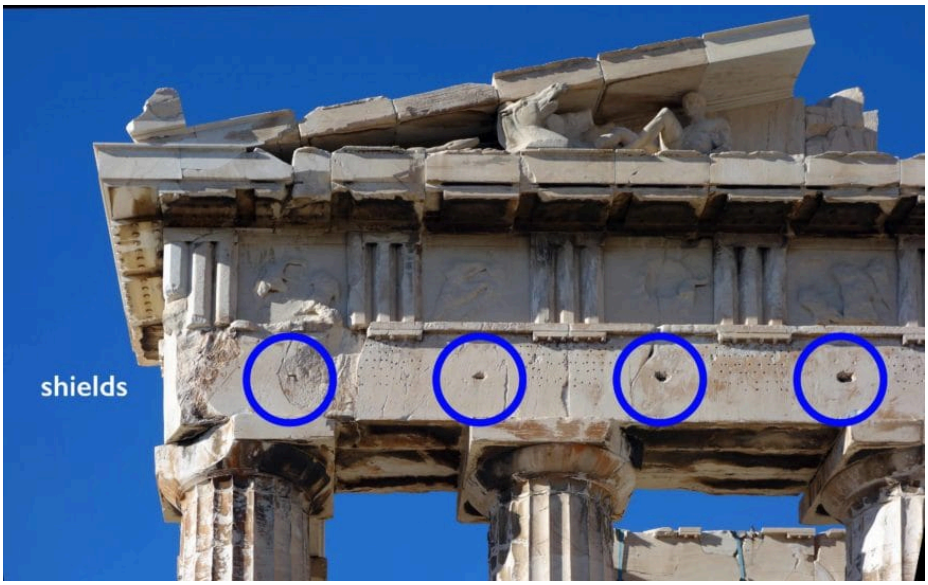


Figure 17.3.1.9: We can still see traces of the Persian shields from Alexander the Great that were at one point below the metopes. The blue circles indicate roughly were they would have been located (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The first of these aspiring monarchs was the Macedonian king Alexander the Great. As he sought to conquer the Achaemenid Empire—alleging, as one *casus belli*, the Persian destruction of Greek sanctuaries one hundred and fifty years earlier—Alexander made good propagandistic use of the Parthenon. After his first major victory over the Persians in 334 B.C.E., the Macedonian king sent to Athens three hundred suits of armor and weapons taken from his enemies. Likely with Alexander's encouragement, the Athenians used them to adorn the Parthenon. There are still faint traces of the shields, once prominently placed just below the metopes on the temple's exterior. Melted down long ago due to their valuable metal content, the shields must have been a highly visible memento of Alexander's victory—and also of Athens' subordination to his rule.



Figure 17.3.1.10: Wounded Gaul, from the Small Pergamene Votive Offering, Roman copy of the 2nd century C.E.. from a Greek original of the 2nd century B.C.E. (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples)

Some two centuries later, another Hellenistic monarch set up a larger and more artistically ambitious dedication on the Acropolis. Erected just to the south of the Parthenon, the monument celebrated the Pergamene kings' victory over the Gauls in 241 B.C.E. It also suggested that this recent success was equivalent to earlier mythological and historical victories, with monumental sculptures that juxtaposed Gallic battles with those of gods and giants, men and Amazons, and Greeks and Persians. Like the shield dedication of Alexander, the Pergamene monument made good use of its placement on the Acropolis. The dedication highlighted connections between the powerful new monarchs of the Hellenistic era and the revered city-state of Athens, paying homage to Athens' history while appropriating it for new purposes.

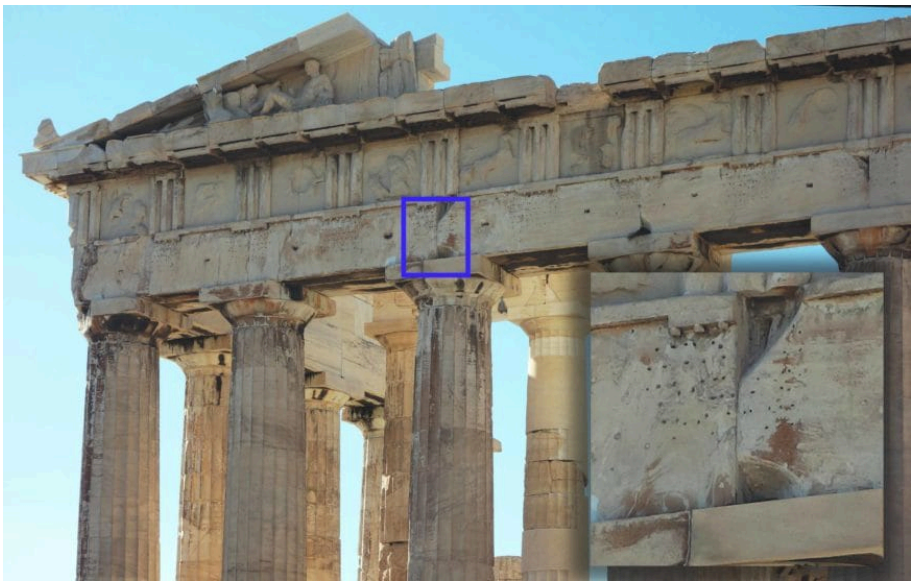


Figure 17.3.1.11: Holes for bronze letters of an inscription honoring the Roman emperor Nero on the east façade of the Parthenon, created and then removed in the 60s C.E. (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

A final royal intervention to the Parthenon came in the time of the Roman emperor Nero. This was an inscription on the east facade of the Parthenon, created with large bronze letters in between Alexander's previously dedicated shields. The inscription recorded Athen's vote in honor of the Roman ruler, and was likely put up in the early 60s C.E.; it was subsequently taken down following Nero's assassination in 68. The inscription honored Nero by connecting him to Athens and to Alexander the Great, a model for the young philhellenic emperor. Its removal offered a different message. It was a deliberate and very public erasure of the controversial ruler from the historical record. In this, Nero's inscription (and its removal) was perhaps the most striking rewriting of the Parthenon's history—at least until Christian times.

Reviewing the Hellenistic and Roman adaptations of the Parthenon, it is easy to see them purely as desecrations: appropriations of a religious monument for political and propagandistic purposes. And the speedy removal of Nero's inscription does support this reading, at least for the visually aggressive strategies of the Roman emperor. At the same time, the changes of the Hellenistic and Roman eras are also testimony to the continued vitality of the sanctuary. Due to the prestige of the Parthenon, formidable monarchs sought to stake their visual claims to power on what was by now a very old monument, over four centuries old by the time of Nero. By altering the temple and updating its meanings, they kept it young.



Figure 17.3.1.12: Marble closure slab with relief cross, from the pulpit of the Christian Parthenon, 5th–6th century (Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens (photo: **George E. Koronaios**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Early Christian Transformations

In ancient times, the most radical and absolute transformation of the Parthenon came as the Roman empire became Christian. At that point, the temple of Athena Parthenos was turned into an Early Christian church dedicated to the *Theotokos* (Mother of God). As with the rebuilding of the Parthenon in the mid-fifth century B.C.E., the decision to put a Christian church on the site of Athena's temple was not just pragmatic but programmatic.

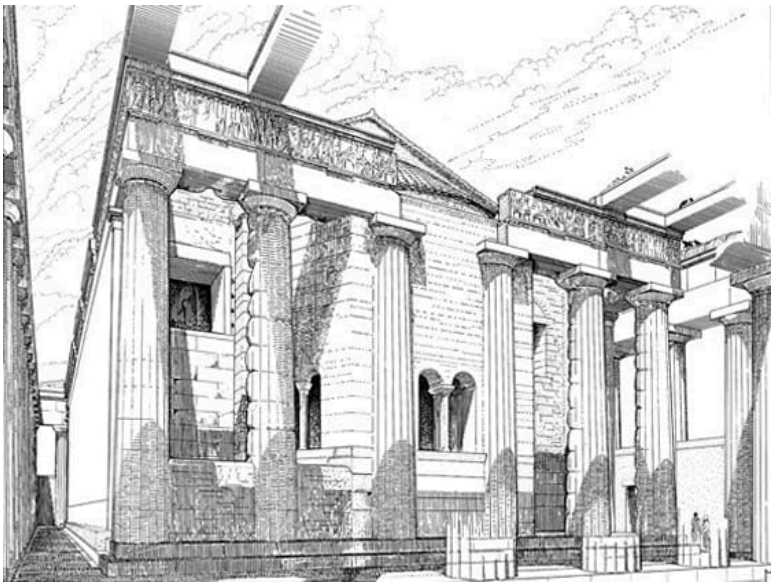


Figure 17.3.1.13: Reconstruction drawing of the church inside the Parthenon by M. Korres from Panayotis Tournikiotis, *The Parthenon and Its Impact in Modern Times* (New York, 1996)

By transforming the polytheist sanctuary into a space of Christian worship, it provided a clear example of the victory of Christianity over traditional religion. At the same time, it also effectively removed, through re-use, an important and long-enduring center of polytheist cult. This removal through re-use was a characteristic strategy used by the Christians throughout the Roman Empire, from Turkey to Egypt to the German frontier. In all these places, it formed part of the often violent, yet imperially sanctioned, transition from polytheism to Christianity.

The Christian transformation of the Parthenon involved considerable adaptation of its architecture. The Christians needed a large interior space for congregation, unlike the polytheists, whose most important ceremonies took place at a separate altar, outdoors. To repurpose the building, the Christians renovated the inner cella of the Parthenon. They detached it from its exterior colonnade, added an apse that broke through the columns at the east end, and removed from the interior the statue of Athena Parthenos that had been the *raison d'étre* of the polytheist temple.



Figure 17.3.1.14: Metope from the east side of the Parthenon showing the battle of men and Amazons, heavily cut down by early Christians (photo: **Gary Todd**)



Figure 17.3.1.15: An illustration showing the location of the pediment, metopes and frieze on the Parthenon.

Other sculptures from the Parthenon suffered likewise from the Christians' attentions. Most of the metopes—the lowest down and most visible of the Parthenon's sculptures—were cut away, rendering them difficult to interpret or to use as a focus of polytheist cult. Only the south metopes with the centaurs were spared, perhaps because they overlooked the edge of the Acropolis and were thus hard to see. By contrast, the frieze (hidden between the exterior and interior colonnades) was left almost entirely intact, as were the high-up pediments. The differentiated treatment of the various sculptures on the Parthenon suggests negotiation between traditionalists and the more fervent of the contemporary Christians. Polytheists perhaps sacrificed the relatively small-scale and blatantly mythological metopes to keep the larger, better quality sculptures elsewhere on the monument. Examining the frieze, about one hundred sixty meters long and almost perfectly preserved, it seems like the polytheists got a good deal.



Figure 17.3.1.16: 19th-century photographs show the Frankish tower and Ottoman dome (not visible here) that was once part of the Acropolis. Normand Alfred Nicolas, *The northwest side of the Acropolis and the surrounding area*, 1851, photograph (Benaki Museum, Athens)

Conclusions

Within and beyond the ancient world, the Parthenon had many lives. Rather than ignoring them, it is useful to acknowledge these lives as contributions to the building's extraordinary continuing vitality. At the same time, one might note that the biography of the Parthenon (though accessible to specialists) has been decidedly effaced by the way it is presented now. When contrasting its present-day state with the first photographs taken in the mid-nineteenth century, we can see how much has been intentionally removed: a Frankish tower by the entrance to the Acropolis, an Ottoman dome, mundane habitations.



Figure 17.3.1.17: Iktinos and Kallikrates, Parthenon, Acropolis, Athens, 447—432 B.C.E. (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

In its current iteration, the Acropolis has been returned to something resembling its pristine Classical condition, with no reconstructed monuments dating later than the end of the 5th century B.C.E. This feels like a loss: a retardataire effort to reinstate a selective, approved version of the past and to erase the traces of a more difficult and complex history. As such it stands as an example, and perhaps also a warning, for our current historical moment.

Additional resources

Jeffrey Hurwit, *The Athenian Acropolis: History, mythology, and archaeology from the Neolithic era to the present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

Rachel Kousser, “Destruction and memory on the Athenian Acropolis,” *Art Bulletin* 91, no. 3 (2009): pp. 263–82

R. R. Smith, “Defacing the gods at Aphrodisias.” In *Historical and Religious Memory in the Ancient World*, edited by R. R. R. Smith and B. Dignas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 202), pp. 282–326

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17.3.2: Views of past and present- the Forum Romanum and archaeological context

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

Views of Rome have long fired human imagination, eliciting reactions that lead to contemplation and argue for conservation.



Figure 17.3.2.1: Apollodorus of Damascus, Basilica Ulpia, dedicated 112 C.E., Rome

Views of Rome

The Roman emperor Constantius II (the second son of Constantine the Great) visited Rome for the only time in his life in the year 357 C.E. His visit to the city included a tour of the usual monuments and sites, but the majesty of the Basilica Ulpia still standing in the forum built by the emperor Trajan arrested his attention, causing him to declare that the monument was so grand that it would be impossible to imitate it (Ammianus Marcellinus ***Rerum Gestarum* 16.15**). From a certain point of view, any visitor to Rome can share the experience and reaction of Constantius II.

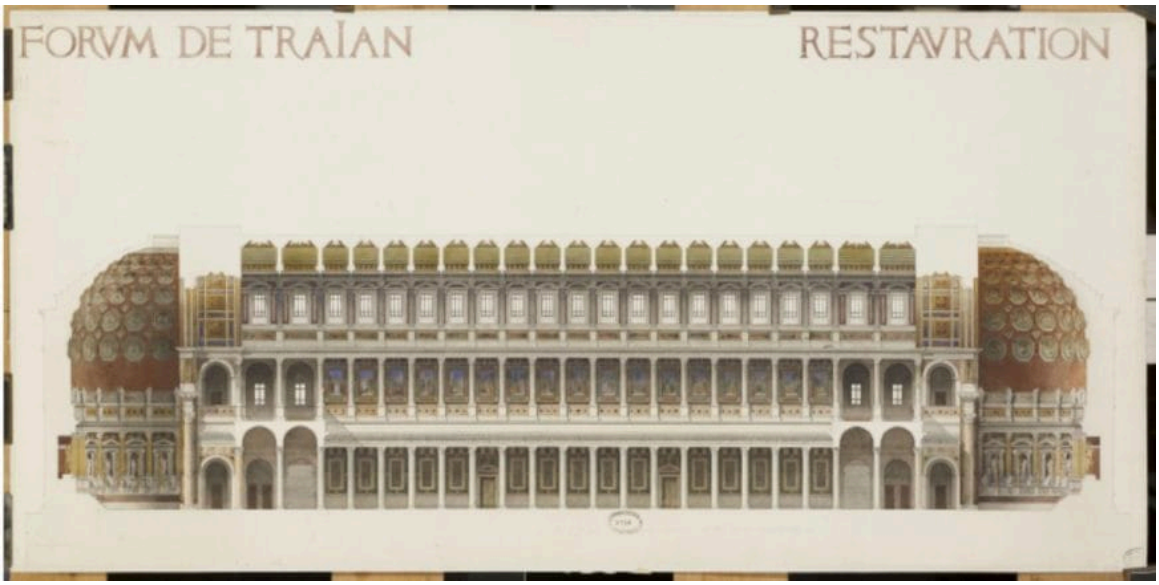


Figure 17.3.2.2: Reconstruction of the Basilica Ulpia, Julien Guadet, “Memoire de la restauration du Forum de. Trajan,” manuscript No. 207 dated 1867, Ecole des Beaux-Arts,. Paris 21-23

The city’s monuments (and their ruins) are cues for memory, discourse, and discovery. Their rediscovery and subsequent interpretation in modern times play a key role in our understanding of the past and influence the role that the past plays in the present. For these reasons, among others, it is crucial that we think critically about fragmented past landscapes and that any reading of fragments is contextualized, nuanced, and transparent in its motives. The physical presence of fragments raises the question of whether or not the past is knowable. Tangible ruins and artifacts suggest that it is, but whose story are we telling when we analyze and interpret these remains? If we consider a quintessentially famous and evocative archaeological landscape like the Forum Romanum (Roman Forum) in Rome we have an opportunity to examine a fragmented past landscape and also to explore the question of what role archaeology plays in understanding and interpreting the past.



Figure 17.3.2.3: Detail, Giovanni Paolo Panini, *The Archaeologist*, 1749, oil on canvas, 123 x 91 cm (National Academy of San Luca, Rome)

From heart of empire to pasturage for cows

The story of the Forum as an important node of cultural significance was central to ancient Roman ideation about their city and even themselves. Romans could define themselves in relation to the places where they believed key past events had occurred. The fact that this tradition provided the backdrop for the Forum’s activities works to heighten the efficacy and the value of constructing collective identity and memory. In ways both practical and symbolic the cramped space sandwiched between the Capitoline and

Palatine hills was the heart of the Roman populace.



Figure 17.3.2.4: View of the Roman Forum, with the Arch of Septimius Severus, left, and the Column of Phocas at center (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

The Forum witnessed many of the city's key events. It began as a central point of convergence in the landscape for sacred and civic business and, over time, became a sort of monumentalized and petrified museum of the offices of state and the promotion of state ideology. With the decline of the western Roman empire in the 3rd and 4th centuries C.E., the relevance and importance of the forum square receded. Its structures fell into disuse, were stripped of usable building materials, and repurposed for other uses.

The last purposefully erected monument of the forum is the so-called Column of Phocas, a cannibalized column (it was originally made for another monument). It was erected on August 1st of 608 C.E. in honor of the Eastern Roman Emperor Phocas. Its inscription (*CIL* **VI, 01200**) speaks of eternal glory and lasting recognition for the emperor (a statement on monumentality that had long echoed in Latin literature, for instance, Horace ***Odes* 3.30**). It is not insignificant that in a much diminished city of Rome it was nonetheless worthwhile to create a new monument (even if using repurposed materials) in the once thriving sacred and civic center of the city.



Figure 17.3.2.5: Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Modern Rome—Campo Vaccino*, 1839, oil on canvas, 91.8 x 122.6 cm (The J. Paul Getty Museum)

A ninth century guide for Christian pilgrims in Rome (known as the Einsiedeln Itinerary) notes that the forum had decayed from its former glory. It is likely that, as a landscape of disuse and re-use, the forum had by that time morphed into a form that perhaps would be scarcely recognizable today. The central square came to be used as grazing land, earning it the nickname “Campo Vaccino” or “cow field” by the Middle Ages.

This broken landscape of abandoned and discarded structures and monuments evoked the past and provoked the fancy and imaginations of viewers. It appealed particularly to artists who were keen to craft a romantic vision of the broken pieces of the past set amid the contemporary world. This romantic movement produced a genre of art in various media in the eighteenth century that is often referred to as *vedute* or “views”.



Figure 17.3.2.6: Giovanni Paolo Panini, *Modern Rome*, 1757, oil on canvas, 172.1 x 233 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Painters the likes of Giovanni Paolo Panini produced *vedute* of ancient and contemporary Rome alike, often enlivening his canvases with contemporary human figures and their activities. In these “views” one can appreciate the creation of an assemblage, one that juxtaposes ancient elements with contemporary elements and human figures. The work of Panini and his contemporaries creates a romantic view of the past without being concerned overly with objectivity.

In the same century the artist and engraver Giovanni Battista Piranesi was also active. Piranesi’s approach to the ruins of Rome alters the course of the field, not only in terms of artistic representation but also in terms of how we approach the ruins of past civilizations. One part of his oeuvre focuses on renderings of the ruins of Rome set amidst contemporary activity. The fragments of the past are very much the focus—their massive and monumental scale cannot help but capture the viewer’s attention. Despite the expert draughting of Piranesi, the ruins—being incomplete—remain a topic worthy of inquiry, as something of them is unknown.



Figure 17.3.2.7: Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vaccino, from the capitol, with the Arch of Septimus Severus in the foreground left, Temple of Vespasian right, and the Colosseum in the distance (Veduta di Campo Vaccino)*, c. 1775, etching (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The work of Panini, Piranesi, and others in the eighteenth century shows us that views of Rome are not just flights of fancy or imagination, but rather they are connected to memory. Piranesi was influenced in his early years by mentors interested in the revival of the ancient city as well as by others (namely Giambattista Nolli), who aimed to record the ancient remains in fine-grained detail. Piranesi, then, brings an expertise born from the school of the Renaissance architect **Andrea Palladio** that is combined with an enthusiasm for Rome as the *locus classicus* of "old meets new." The curation of views of the ancient remains not only reinforced shared memories of a past time but, also reinforced memory in contemporary terms.

Depicting ruins as fragile yet once powerful monuments might suggest that lessons derived from the past might help one to avoid the collapse and decay that is of course inevitable. These depictions of Rome's past, encoded with memory, are important to the artistic culture of the eighteenth century and foreshadow what the nineteenth century will bring.

A disciplinary revolution

The nineteenth century witnesses a number of changes that in some cases move the conversation away from subjective romanticism and toward a more methodological approach to science and natural science. The discipline of archaeology emerges from this movement and, as with any new undertaking, the discipline needed to sort itself out in order to embrace a set of practices and norms. Antiquarians abounded but archaeologists were relatively new, even though early pioneers like Flavio Biondo (15th century) likely numbers among the first archaeologists.

The nineteenth century was a momentous time for archaeology at Rome. The archaeologist Carlo Fea began an excavation in the Roman Forum to clear the area around the third century C.E. triumphal arch of the emperor **Septimius Severus**. Fea's work ushers in a new era of what would become archaeological practice in the valley of the forum, as well as at other sites of the ancient city. Interest grew in decluttering or isolating the ancient moments. As the methods of archaeology developed, more scientific rigor could be observed.

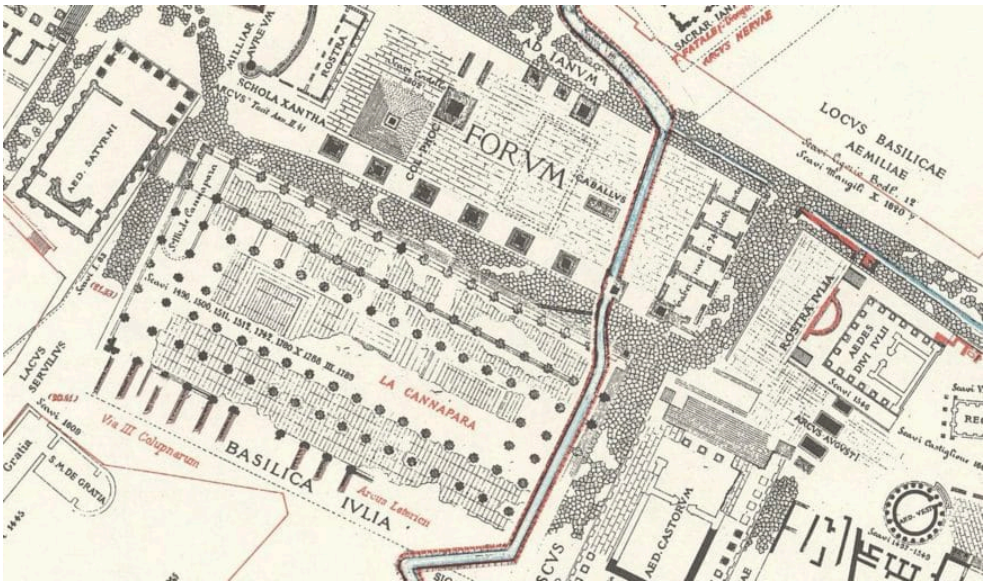


Figure 17.3.2.8: Detail, Rudolfo Lanciani, Sheet 29: *Forma Urbis Romae*, 1901 (1990 reprint)

The Roman topographer Rodolfo Lanciani was a disciplined and active excavator at Rome. His magnum opus was the *Forma Urbis Romae* (1893–1901), a map at a scale of 1:1000 of the city of Rome, noting both ancient and modern features. It evoked earlier maps of Rome (for example the 1748 map produced by G. Nolli), but also reached back to the **Severan marble plan** of the third century C.E. in representing in detail the city and its monuments. One might see Lanciani's *Forma Urbis* as a development that grew from the same tradition in which artists like Panini and Piranesi had worked—one could appreciate views of Rome, and, in so doing, gain a command of the sites and the memories linked to them.



Figure 17.3.2.9: Giacomo Boni in the Roman Forum in front of the Arch of Titus, Rome, Italy, from *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, Year XXXIV, No 7, February 17, 1907

At the turn of the twentieth century the excavations of Giacomo Boni in the Roman Forum were transformational, not only because they represented an enormous methodological advance for the time but also because they set the tone for archaeology in the forum thereafter. Boni's stratigraphic excavations sampled previously unexplored layers of the city's past and exposed the Roman Forum not just as a cow pasture with a few random columns protruding from the ground but as a complex cultural and chronological laboratory.

Some of the trends established in Boni's time continued in the period of Italian Fascism (1922–1943) when archaeology showed a clear bias for the late Roman republican period and the principate of the emperor Augustus (31 B.C.E–14 C.E.). It was hoped that these earlier periods of perceived cultural, legal, and moral greatness would be examples that a modern Italian state could

emulate. For this reason those archaeological strata were privileged, while others that were deemed unworthy were haphazardly destroyed in order to reach the preferred time period. In many ways these disciplinary choices were unfortunate and they do not find a place in twenty-first century archaeological practice. Nonetheless they shaped the landscape of the Forum valley that confronts us still day—one that is incomplete, at times chronologically incongruous, and evocative of an obviously complex past.

Contextual landscapes and fragments

Today the Roman Forum is part of a protected archaeological park that includes the Palatine Hill and the Colosseum. It is a site of significant popular interest and is visited by millions of tourists annually (7.6 million in 2018). It is also the site of ongoing archaeological research and conservation. The Forum is a challenging site to understand, both in terms of its chronological breadth and in terms of the processes of its formation (including archaeological excavation) that have shaped it.

The Forum should make us think about the goals of archaeology and the **importance of archaeological context**. One of the alluring things about the Forum is that it is fragmentary and incomplete. Latin authors were wont to mock the futile vanity of the potentates who sought to achieve immortality through the construction of monuments since those same monuments would inevitably decay. Their critique touches on a point that is central to a consideration of a fragmentary landscape like the Roman Forum, namely that the development of the space over time represents not just multiple time periods and historical actors but also multiple conversations between the space and the viewer.

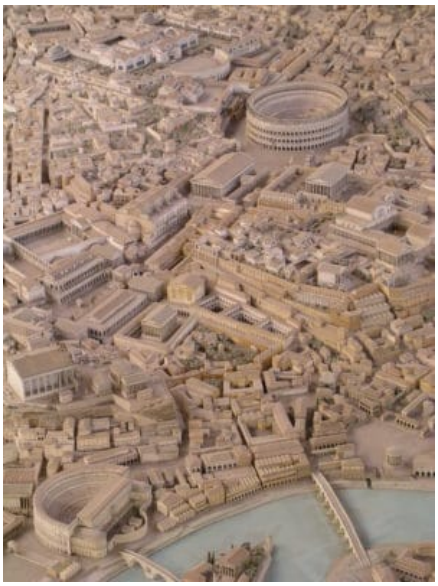


Figure 17.3.2.10: **Model of ancient Rome** in 1:250 by Italo Gismondi

The discipline of archaeology, in some respects, seeks to reassemble the past and it can only do this via contextual information. This means that the **archaeological record** needs to be preserved to the extent possible and then be interpreted in a rigorous and objective fashion. The impetus to reassemble what is broken informs our practice in many ways. It certainly influenced Lanciani's plan of the city of Rome and Italo Gismondi's model of the same. Scholars in the later twentieth and twenty-first centuries have similar motives, whether architect's reconstruction drawings (see Gorski and Packer 2015), or a new archaeological atlas of the city inspired by Lanciani (see Carandini et al. 2012) or even 3D virtual renderings as in the case of the "**Rome Reborn**" project.

Our conversation with the Forum Romanum continues. In early 2020 there was a great deal of excitement about a re-discovery in the area of Giacomo Boni's early twentieth century excavations. The site, perhaps connected with the cult of Rome's traditional founder Romulus, provided an opportunity for a conversation that was both new and old at the same time.

Our views of the fragmented landscapes of the past are vital to our understanding not only of the humans who went before us but also, importantly, ourselves.

Additional Resources

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ArcheoSitarProject – SISTEMA INFORMATIVO TERRITORIALE ARCHEOLOGICO DI ROMA

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17.3.3: The Roman Forum- Part 1, Ruins in modern imagination

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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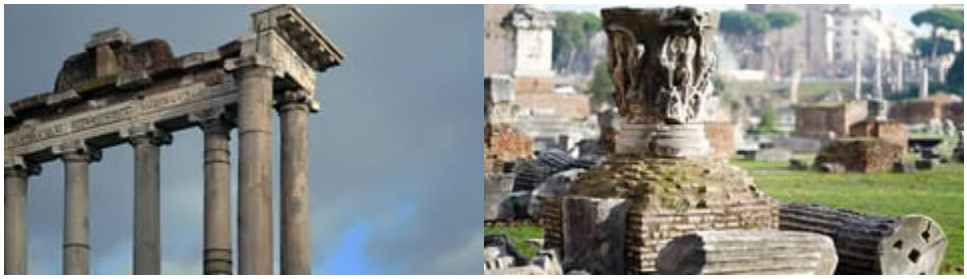
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17.3.4: The Roman Forum- Part 2, Ruins in modern imagination (The Renaissance and after)

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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17.3.5: The Roman Forum- Part 3, Ruins in modern imagination

by STEVEN ZUCKER

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Video 17.3.5.1: Ruins in Modern Imagination: The Roman Forum (part 3, Enlightenment to World War II), an ARCHES video speakers: Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker

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17.3.6: Rome’s layered history — the Castel Sant’Angelo

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

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Video 17.3.6.1: A conversation with Dr. Steven Zucker and Dr. Beth Harris at the Castel Sant’Angelo (Mausoleum of Hadrian), 139 C.E., Rome

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17.3.7: Looted and revered- The Rosetta Stone

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Video 17.3.7.1: A conversation with Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker in front of the Rosetta Stone, Egypt, Ptolemaic Period, 196 B.C.E., granodiorite, 112.3 x 28.4 x 75.7 cm (The British Museum)

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17.3.8: Ruin as abattoir, the Colosseum

by STEVEN ZUCKER

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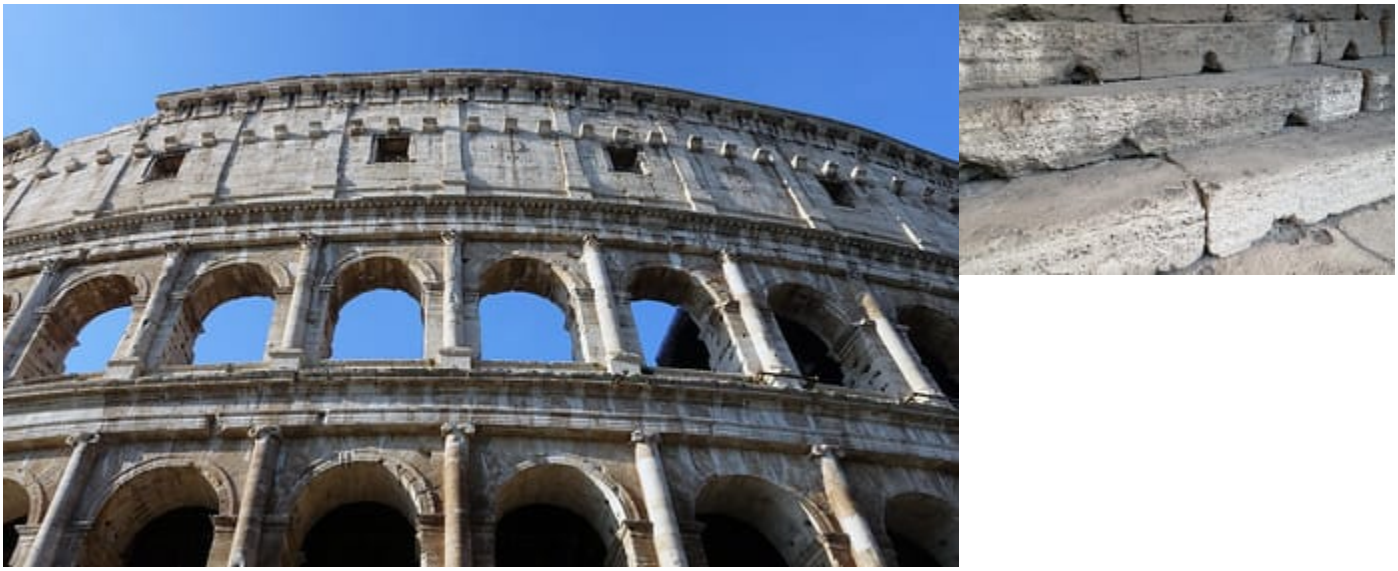
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17.3.9: Before the fire- Notre Dame, Paris

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

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Video 17.3.9.1



Figure 17.3.9.1: April 2019 fire at Notre Dame de Paris (Photo: **Milliped**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

The fire

The blaze that engulfed the Cathedral of Notre Dame on the small Island known as the Île de la Cité in Paris in April 2019 was a terrible tragedy. Though it may not give us much comfort to learn that the total or partial destruction of churches by fire was a fairly common occurrence in medieval Europe, it does provide some perspective. For example, a fire destroyed most of Chartres Cathedral in 1020 (and again in 1194), in the city of Reims, the cathedral was badly damaged in a fire in 1210, and at Beauvais, the cathedral was rebuilt after a fire in the 1180s. The list goes on and on.

During the medieval periods of the Romanesque and the Gothic (c. 1000-1400), church fires were less frequent than they had been previously due to the development of stone vaulting (which began to replace the timber ceilings commonly found in European churches). But even a stone vault, as we saw at Notre Dame in Paris, is itself protected by a timber roof (sometimes rising more than 50 feet above the stone vaulting and pitched to prevent the accumulation of rain and snow), and this is what caught fire.



Figure 17.3.9.2: Île de la Cité, Paris

Art historian **Caroline Brazelius**, who has worked on the building for years said, “between the vaults and the roof, there is a forest of timber” — old, dry, porous, and highly flammable timber. Still, photographs of the interior show at least some of the stone vaulting survived the recent fire. The builders of Notre Dame used Parisian limestone, but, as Brazelius notes “when it’s exposed to fire, stone is damaged. It doesn’t actually burn….It becomes friable. It chips, and it’s no longer structurally sound.”

Built, modified, rebuilt, and restored

Churches are often an amalgamation of architectural styles, the result of building campaigns and modifications undertaken at different times, some due to fire, some due to the desire for what a new style represents, and some due to (often inaccurate) restoration efforts. And on a single site, churches were often built and rebuilt—and this is the case with Notre Dame in Paris. Before the Gothic-style church was built, a Carolingian church occupied the site (it was destroyed during the 9th century Viking invasions), and before that, a 6th century Merovingian Church stood on the site.



Figure 17.3.9.3: Léonard Gaultier, View of Paris, 1607, engraving (**Bibliothèque nationale de France**)

If we go back further, to the pre-Christian era, Julius Caesar’s armies famously conquered much of what we call France today (Roman Paris dates back to 52 B.C.E.). Archaeological evidence suggests that a pagan temple and then a Christian basilica were built on this site. The ancient Romans also built a palace for the emperor on the Île de la Cité, and after the Roman empire

collapsed, Clovis I, King of the Franks (who converted to Christianity) established his palace there as well. The Île de la Cité would remain the location of a royal residence until the 14th century. As one historian has noted, “Notre Dame…was not only a religious but also a royal monument that displayed the might of the church and the monarchy, each enhancing the power of the other.” [1]

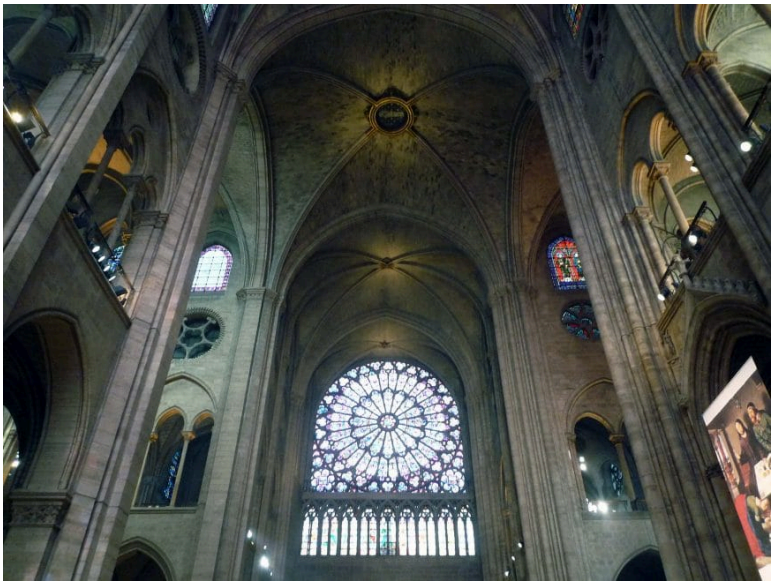


Figure 17.3.9.4: Crossing, Notre Dame de Paris, c. 1163-1250 (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

The Gothic Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris took nearly 100 years to complete (c. 1163-1250) and modifications, restorations, and renovations continued for centuries after. The early Gothic style employed at the beginning of the campaign became outdated and the later Gothic style, the Rayonnant, became fashionable and can be seen in the transepts. The crossing spire that the world watched fall while engulfed in flames was a reproduction created during a 19th-century restoration campaign.

In the following centuries, the church (and its sculptural decoration) survived multiple episodes of intentional destruction: during the Protestant Reformation (due to Protestant objection to religious imagery), and during the revolutions of 1789 and 1830 (because of the church’s close association with the monarchy). It remained in a neglected state until Victor Hugo’s novel, *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1831) revived popular interest the building.



Figure 17.3.9.5: View of Notre Dame de Paris, c. 1163-1250 (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

As of this writing, just a few days after the April 15th blaze, evaluation of the damage caused by the fire is only just beginning, but a reported one billion dollars has been already been raised to support the reconstruction of Notre Dame de Paris.

1. Avner Ben-Amos, “Monuments and Memory in French Nationalism.” *History and Memory*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1993, pp. 50–81.

Additional resources

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Avner Ben-Amos, “Monuments and Memory in French Nationalism,” *History and Memory*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1993), pp. 50–81.

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17.3.10: Reconstructing a masterpiece — Mantegna's St. James Led to his Execution

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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Video 17.3.10.1: Mantegna, *St. James Led to his Execution* and the Ovetari Chapel cycle frescoes, 1447–58, Church of the Eremitani (Padua, Italy) reconstructed with photographs, original fragments, and inpainting after American bombs hit the church on March 11, 1944, an ARCHES video
A conversation with Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker in the Ovetari Chapel

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17.4: PLACE AND IDENTITY

17.4.1: Palmyra- the modern destruction of an ancient city
17.4.2: Ancient Babylon- excavations, restorations and modern tourism
17.4.3: Venice's San Marco, a mosaic of spiritual treasure
17.4.4: The Renaissance Synagogues of Venice
17.4.5: Unearthing the Aztec past, the destruction of the Templo Mayor
17.4.6: Bayt Farhi, a Jewish house in Damascus
17.4.7: Unearthing New York's history of slavery
17.4.8: Seneca Village- the lost history of African Americans in New York
17.4.9: Ceremonial belt (Kwakwaka'wakw)
17.4.10: Voyage to the moai of Rapa Nui (Easter Island)
17.4.11: The Gwoździec synagogue- the lost art of painted wooden synagogues

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17.4.1: Palmyra- the modern destruction of an ancient city

by DR. SALAM AL KUNTAR and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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Video 17.4.1.1: Grand colonnade, Palmyra, photo: **Colleen Morgan**, CC BY 2.0



Figure 17.4.1.1: Palmyrene Empire at its greatest extent in 271 C.E., CC BY-SA 4.0 (**source**)

City of Palms

Built around an oasis in the Syrian desert, Tadmur or Palmyra, “city of palms,” was one of the most important trade and cultural centers of the ancient world. Palmyra had a distinctive local culture that was incorporated into the Roman Empire in the first century C.E. More than two centuries later, the city gained independence from Rome and under its famous Queen Zenobia established the Palmyrene empire which annexed much of the eastern part of the Roman Empire.



Figure 17.4.1.2: Palmyrene Empire at its greatest extent in 271 C.E., CC BY-SA 4.0 (**source**)

Palmyra stands at the crossroads of civilizations—along the silk routes where merchants traveled between Europe and Asia.

The art and architecture of the city is a perfect portrait of the fertile crescent with its amazing blend of cultures and traditions. A dynamic culture and a land of inherent pluralism owing to its Mesopotamian, Levantine, Semitic, Greco- Roman, Persian, and Islamic heritage.

Palmyra was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980 and has a particular place in the Syrian historic consciousness. Syrians take pride in the once-great merchant city that influenced and ultimately defied the power of Rome.

Palmyra's grand colonnade (above) is a 1,100m long Roman period street that connects a **temple to the god Bel** with the area known as the Camp of Diocletian. Other archaeological remains in the ancient city of Palmyra include an agora, theatre (below), urban quarters, and other temples that comprise what is generally considered by scholars to be the finest example of surviving Roman architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean.



Figure 17.4.1.3: The Fakhr-al-Din al-Ma'ani Castle with a view of Palmyra, photo: **Wurzelgnohm** (public domain)

Also within the archaeological zone of Palmyra stands the Fakhr-al-Din al-Ma'ani Castle. This heavy fortification dates to the 13th century and offers a spectacular view of the site.

Tombs

The affluent residents of ancient Palmyra built elaborate tombs outside the city walls, adorned with portraits of citizens. Bust sculptures of wealthy patrons from Palmyra, dating to the 1st and 2nd centuries C.E., demonstrate the complexity and richness of Palmyrene identity. These busts combine Roman sculptural elements and local stylistic elements. Some of these portraits were accompanied by inscriptions in the Palmyrene dialect of Aramaic.

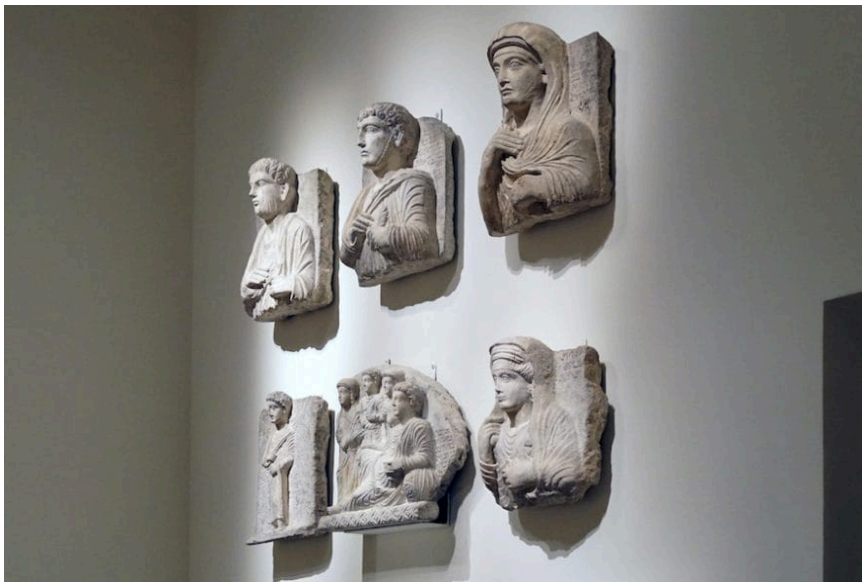


Figure 17.4.1.4: Funerary reliefs, c. 150-200 C.E., Palmyra, photo: Steven Zucker (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The Syrian civil war

Both the modern town and ancient city of Palmyra were caught in the crossfire of the Syrian civil war beginning in early 2013. Then in 2014, military forces from the regime of Bashar al-Assad (president of Syria) fortified the site, further damaging the ruins.

In 2015, ISIS overran Palmyra, and committed barbaric and monstrous assaults on the people, cultural monuments, and artifacts of the city. The destruction of Palmyra's magnificent monuments provoked an international outcry and prompted media attention.



Figure 17.4.1.5: Khaled Asaad, archaeologist and former Director of Antiquities in Palmyra

ISIS began by executing Khaled Al-Ass'ad, the former Director of Antiquities at Palmyra, a devoted and outstanding archeologist who loved Palmyra like no one else. Following this horrific execution, ISIS began to destroy many of the most famous ruins—the **Bel** and **Baalshamin temples**, the tower tombs, the monumental arch and standing columns in addition to plundering the Palmyra Museum and destroying a large number of sculptures and artifacts left there.

In March 2016, the Assad forces (backed by the Russian military) recaptured Palmyra and immediately started building a Russian military base within the World Heritage Site. ISIS recaptured Palmyra in early December 2016 and destroyed the tetrapylon and damaged the theater. The Assad regime forces managed to take Palmyra back in March 2017.



Figure 17.4.1.6: Palmyra theater proscenium, 2nd century C.E. (photo: **Bernard Gagnon**, CC BY-SA 3.0), before destruction by ISIS in 2015

Looting and propaganda in Palmyra

The ancient site also witnessed extensive looting and many Palmyrene artifacts appeared on the antiquities market or were captured by Lebanese and Turkish customs officials. Looting started in the fall of 2011, when the Assad regime lost control of the town. Then, during the ISIS occupation, the so-called Diwan al Rikaz office was established which gave digging permits in exchange for paying a tax. The permit was for non-figurative objects only (presumably objects with human figures were to be destroyed by ISIS fighters). However, the looters are believed to have handed over only unsellable figurative objects to the Diwan al Rikaz, hiding from ISIS artifacts in good condition that could be sold to dealers.

Throughout these episodes where control shifted between the forces of the Assad regime and ISIS, Palmyra, its monuments, and artifacts were used to reinforce the appalling political propaganda being disseminated. In late 2015, ISIS used the ancient theater to stage dramatic executions for circulation on social media. Soon after, the Russian military staged a musical concert at the same theater to promote an image of a civilized Russian savior, only to leave ISIS to capture the city nine months later with little fighting. Syrian cultural heritage, including that of Palmyra, should play a reconciling and unifying role in post-conflict Syria. Syrian cultural heritage should not be used in the political or sectarian agenda of the groups fighting in the Syrian conflict.



Figure 17.4.1.7: Triumphal arch, Palmyra, destroyed by ISIS in 2015 (**photo**, CC BY-SA 2.5)

Restoring Palmyra

In May 2016, when ISIS was first driven from Palmyra, there were numerous calls, led by UNESCO, to begin the work of restoring the ancient city despite the fragile security conditions. Millions of Syrians are still suffering from the consequences of the bloody war. Among them are the people of Palmyra, who continue to experience grave risks, including detention by the Assad government, and the destruction of their homes and heritage.

When the day for the reconstruction of Palmyra comes—after the conflict is over—it will require a period of reflection about what should be reconstructed, how it should be rebuilt, and how the recent events of the war and occupation by ISIS should be memorialized—if at all. This discussion must be undertaken by Syrians on all sides of the conflict, and not decided for Syria by international organizations.



Figure 17.4.1.8: Model of the trimphal arch at Palmyra (built to 1/3 scale), created by the Institute for Digital Archaeology, Oxford University (photo © **Stephen Richards**, CC-BY-SA 2.0)

The question of 3D models

A new development in the documentation of heritage sites has been the application of new technologies to create 3D online libraries of the world's important cultural heritage sites and a number of projects have recently worked to create a 3D models of Palmyra's lost monuments. The Institute for Digital Archaeology at the University of Oxford has created a 3D model of the destroyed triumphal arch using structure-from-motion photogrammetry.

The 3-D printed arch was displayed in London, New York, and other cities, prompting a debate about the purpose of such reconstructions and their display—especially given that the reproduction failed to capture the authenticity of the original structure and that the project revealed a disconnection with the Syrian people and the inhabitants of Palmyra, who have lived alongside these monuments for many generations.

Additional resources:

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Should we 3D print a new Palmyra?, *The Conversation*, March 31, 2016.

About the Silk Road (from UNESCO)

Institute for Digital Archaeology, Oxford University and the Triumphal Arch at Palmyra

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17.4.2: Ancient Babylon- excavations, restorations and modern tourism

by LISA ACKERMAN and DR. BETH HARRIS

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Video 17.4.2.1: This video was produced in cooperation with the World Monuments Fund. A conversation with Lisa Ackerman and Beth Harris.

Additional resources:

New York Times on how the World Monuments Fund and CyArk are using laser technology to digitally preserve monuments in the Near East (December 29, 2015)

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17.4.3: Venice's San Marco, a mosaic of spiritual treasure

by DR. ELIZABETH RODINI and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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Video 17.4.3.1: The Porta Sant'Alipio Mosaic, c. 1270-75, Basilica San Marco, Venice, an ARCHES video speakers: Dr. Elizabeth Rodini, Andrew Heiskell Arts Director at American Academy in Rome and Dr. Steven Zucker

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17.4.4: The Renaissance Synagogues of Venice

by DR. DAVID LANDAU, DR. MARCELLA ANSALDI and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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Video 17.4.4.1: German Synagogue (founded 1528), the Italian Synagogue (founded 1575), the Canton Synagogue (1532), and the Jewish Museum, Venice, This is an ARCHES video with Dr. David Landau, Dr. Marcella Ansaldi, Director of the Jewish Museum of Venice, and Dr. Steven Zucker

The 16th century synagogues of Venice need your support. Donations to the the Jewish Community of Venice can be made here: **jvenice.org/en/donations**. Or you can email the American Friends of the Jewish Community of Venice here: info@afjcv.org

Additional resources

Museo Ebraico di Venezia

Comunità Ebraica Ghetto di Venezia

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17.4.5: Unearthing the Aztec past, the destruction of the Templo Mayor

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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Video 17.4.5.1: Unearthing the Aztec past, the destruction of the Templo Mayor (Mexico City) . Speakers: Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank and Dr. Steven Zucker



Figure 17.4.5.1: The Coyolxauhqui Stone, c. 1500. volcanic stone, found: Templo Mayor, Tenochtitlan (Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico City) (photo: **Thelmadatter**, public domain)

In 1978, electrical workers in Mexico City came across a remarkable discovery. While digging near the main plaza, they found a finely carved stone monolith that displayed a dismembered and decapitated woman. Immediately, they knew they found something special. Shortly thereafter, archaeologists realized that the monolith displayed the Mexica (Aztec)[1] goddess Coyolxauhqui, or Bells-Her-Cheeks, the sister of the Mexica's patron god, Huitzilopochtli (Hummingbird-Left), who killed his sister when she attempted to kill their mother. This monolith led to the discovery of the Templo Mayor, the main Mexica temple located in the sacred precinct of the former Mexica capital, known as Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City).



Figure 17.4.5.2: View of the Templo Mayor excavations today in the center of what is now Mexico City (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

The Templo Mayor



Figure 17.4.5.3: Map of Lake Texcoco, with Tenochtitlan (at left) Valley of Mexico, c. 1519 (created by **Yavidaxiu**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The city of Tenochtitlan was established in 1325 on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco (much of which has since been filled in to accommodate Mexico City which now exists on this site), and with the city's foundation the original structure of the Templo Mayor was built. Between 1325 and 1519, the Templo Mayor was expanded, enlarged, and reconstructed during seven main building phases, which likely corresponded with different rulers, or tlatoani ("speaker"), taking office. Sometimes new construction was the result of environmental problems, such as flooding.

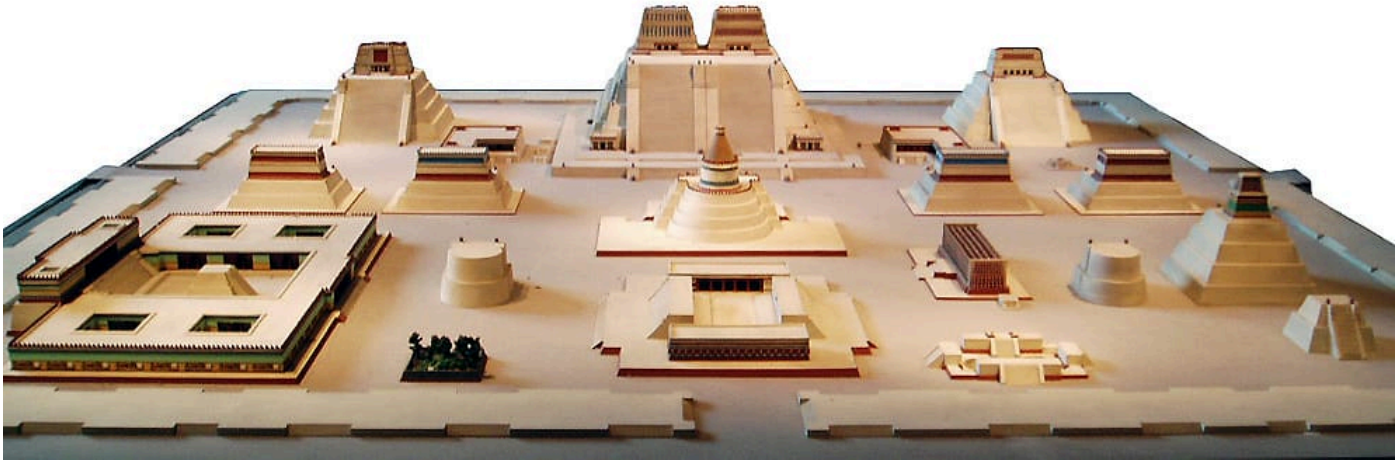


Figure Extra close brace or missing open brace : Model of the sacred precinct in Tenochtitlan (National Anthropological Museum, Mexico City) (photo (edited), **Steve Cadman**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

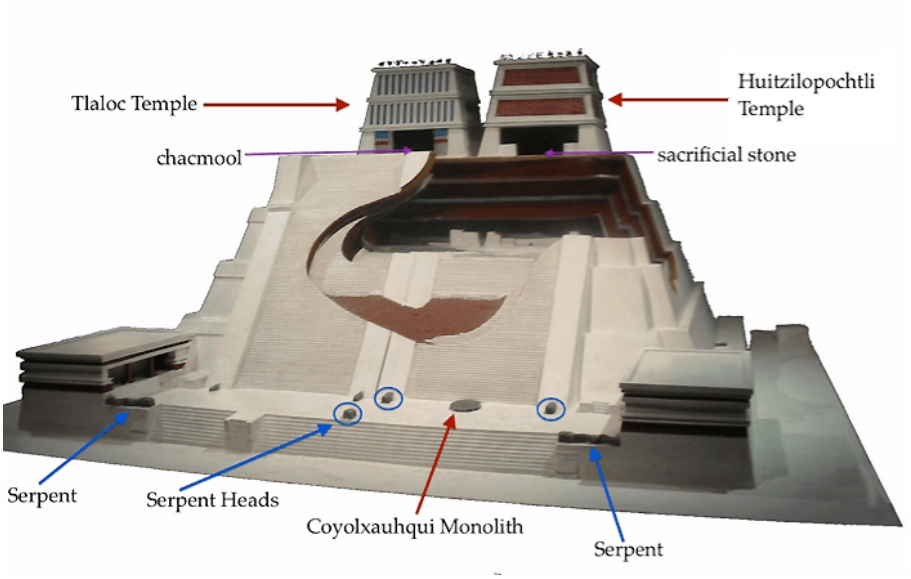


Figure 17.4.5.5: Templo Mayor (reconstruction), Tenochtitlan, 1375–1520 C.E.

Located in the sacred precinct at the heart of the city, the Templo Mayor was positioned at the center of the Mexica capital and thus the entire empire. The capital was also divided into four main quadrants, with the Templo Mayor at the center. This design reflects the Mexica cosmos, which was believed to be composed of four parts structured around the navel of the universe, or the *axis mundi*.

The Templo Mayor was approximately ninety feet high and covered in stucco. Two grand staircases accessed twin temples, which were dedicated to the deities Tlaloc and Huitzilopochti. Tlaloc was the deity of water and rain and was associated with agricultural fertility. Huitzilopochtli was the patron deity of the Mexica, and he was associated with warfare, fire, and the Sun.



Figure 17.4.5.6: Standard bearers (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

Paired together on the Templo Mayor, the two deities symbolized the Mexica concept of atl-tlachinolli, or burnt water, which connoted warfare—the primary way in which the Mexica acquired their power and wealth.

The Huitzilopochtli Temple

In the center of the Huitzilopochtli temple was a sacrificial stone. Near the top, standard-bearer figures decorated the stairs. They likely held paper banners and feathers. Serpent balustrades adorn the base of the temple of Huitzilopochtli, and two undulating serpents flank the stairs that led to the base of the Templo Mayor as well.



Figure 17.4.5.7: Snake balustrade and undulating serpent (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

But by far the most famous object decorating the Huiztilopochtli temple is the *Coyolxauhqui monolith*, found at the base of the stairs. Originally painted and carved in low relief, the *Coyolxauhqui monolith* is approximately eleven feet in diameter and displays the female deity Coyolxauhqui, or Bells-on-her-face. Golden bells decorate her cheeks, feathers and balls of down adorn her hair, and she wears elaborate earrings, fanciful sandals and bracelets, and a serpent belt with a skull attached at the back. Monster faces are found at her joints, connecting her to other female deities—some of whom are associated with trouble and chaos. Otherwise, Coyolxauhqui is shown naked, with sagging breasts and a stretched belly to indicate that she was a mother. For the Mexica, nakedness was considered a form of humiliation and also defeat. She is also decapitated and dismembered. Her head and limbs are separated from her torso and are organized in a pinwheel shape. Pieces of bone stick out from her limbs.



Figure 17.4.5.8: The Coyolxauhqui Stone (detail), c. 1500. volcanic stone, found: Templo Mayor, Tenochtitlan (Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City) (photo: Thelmadatter, public domain)

The monolith relates to an important myth: the birth of the Mexica patron deity, Huitzilopochtli. Apparently, Huitzilopochtli's mother, Coatlicue (Snakes-her-skirt), became pregnant one day from a piece of down that entered her skirt. Her daughter, Coyolxauhqui, became angry when she heard that her mother was pregnant, and together with her 400 brothers (called the Centzonhuitznahua) attacked their mother. At the moment of attack, Huitzilopochtli emerged, fully clothed and armed, to defend his mother on the mountain called Coatepec (Snake Mountain). Eventually, Huitzilopochtli defeated his sister, then beheaded her and threw her body down the mountain, at which point her body broke apart.



Figure 17.4.5.9: Coyolxauhqui stone reconstruction with possible original colors (photo: **miguelão**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

The monolith portrays the moment in the myth after Huitzilopochtli vanquished Coyolxauhqui and threw her body down the mountain. By placing this sculpture at the base of Huiztilopochtli's temple, the Mexica effectively transformed the temple into Coatepec. Many of the temple's decorations and sculptural program also support this identification. The snake balustrades and serpent heads identify the temple as a snake mountain, or Coatepec. It is possible that the standard-bearer figures recovered at the Templo Mayor symbolized Huitzilopochtli's 400 brothers.

Ritual performances that occurred at the Templo Mayor also support the idea that the temple symbolically represented Coatepec. For instance, the ritual of *Panquetzaliztli* (banner raising) celebrated Huitzilopochtli's triumph over Coyolxauhqui and his 400 brothers. People offered gifts to the deity, danced and ate tamales. During the ritual, war captives who had been painted blue

were killed on the sacrificial stone and then their bodies were rolled down the staircase to fall atop the *Coyolxauhqui monolith* to reenact the myth associated with Coatepec. For the enemies of the Mexica and those people the Mexica ruled over, this ritual was a powerful reminder to submit to Mexica authority. Clearly, the decorations and rituals associated with the Templo Mayor connoted the power of the Mexica empire and their patron deity, Huitzilopochtli.

The Tlaloc Temple

At the top center of the Tlaloc temple is a sculpture of a male figure on his back painted in blue and red. The figure holds a vessel on his abdomen likely to receive offerings. This type of sculpture is called a *chacmool*, and is older than the Mexica. It was associated with the rain god, in this case Tlaloc.



Figure 17.4.5.10: Chacmool on Tlaloc temple platform (photo (edited): **Adriel A. Macedo Arroyo**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

At the base of the Tlaloc side of the temple, on the same axis as the chacmool, are stone sculptures of two frogs with their heads arched upwards. This is known as the Altar of the Frogs. The croaking of frogs was thought to herald the coming of the rainy season, and so they are connected to Tlaloc.



Figure 17.4.5.11: Altar of the Frogs (photo: Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank)

While Huiztilopochtli's temple symbolized Coatepec, Tlaloc's temple was likely intended to symbolize the Mountain of Sustenance,

or Tonacatepetl. This fertile mountain produced high amounts of rain, thereby allowing crops to grow.

Offerings at the Templo Mayor

Over a hundred ritual caches or deposits containing thousands of objects have been found associated with the Templo Mayor. Some offerings contained items related to water, like coral, shells, crocodile skeletons, and vessels depicting Tlaloc. Other deposits related to warfare and sacrifice, containing items like human skull masks with obsidian blade tongues and noses and sacrificial knives. Many of these offerings contain objects from faraway places—likely places from which the Mexica collected tribute. Some offerings demonstrate the Mexica's awareness of the historical and cultural traditions in Mesoamerica. For instance, they buried an Olmec mask made of jadeite, as well as others from Teotihuacan (a city northeast of modern-day Mexico City known for its huge monuments and dating roughly from the 1st century until the 7th century C.E.). The Olmec mask was made over a thousand years prior to the Mexica, and its burial in Templo Mayor suggests that the Mexica found it precious and perhaps historically significant.



Figure 17.4.5.12: Olmec-style mask, c. 1470, jadeite, offering 20, hornblende, 10.2 x 8.6 x 3.1 cm

The Templo Mayor today

After the Spanish Conquest in 1521, the Templo Mayor was destroyed, and what did survive remained buried. The stones were reused to build structures like the Cathedral in the newly founded capital of the Viceroyalty of New Spain (1521-1821). If you visit the Templo Mayor today, you can walk through the excavated site on platforms. The Templo Mayor museum contains those objects found at the site, including the recent discovery of the largest Mexica monolith showing the deity Tlaltecuhtli.

1. The Aztec referred to themselves as Mexica

Additional resources:

Virtual Tour of the Templo Mayor museum (in Spanish)

The Templo Mayor and its Symbolism (Guggenheim Museum)

Templo Mayor on the Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Aztec World, ed. By Elizabeth Baquedano and Gary M. Feinman (New York: Abrams in association with the Field Museum, 2008).

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17.4.6: Bayt Farhi, a Jewish house in Damascus

by **DR. ELIZABETH MACAULAY** and **DR. STEVEN ZUCKER**

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Bayt Farhi, a Sephardic palace in Ottoman Damascus, begun c. 1780 an ARCHES video; speakers: Dr. Elizabeth Macaulay and Dr. Steven Zucker

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17.4.7: Unearthing New York’s history of slavery

by DR. RENÉE ATER and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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Video 17.4.7.1: Rodney Leon, African Burial Ground National Monument, 2006, New York City, an ARCHES video, speakers Dr. Renée Ater and Dr. Steven Zucker

Additional resources

African Burial Ground National Monument, National Park Service

Rodney Leon Architects

Establishment of the African Burial Ground National Monument, Federal Register

Research findings, Cobb Laboratory, Howard University

Mapping the African American Past, Columbia University

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17.4.8: Seneca Village- the lost history of African Americans in New York

by DR. DIANA DIZEREGA WALL and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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Video 17.4.8.1: A conversation between Dr. Diana Wall and Dr. Steven Zucker in Central Park about Seneca Village. If you are a descendant of a Seneca Village resident, or know someone who is, please contact the Seneca Village Project at: diana.diz.wall[at]gmail.com. A Smarthistory ARCHES video

Additional resources:

The Seneca Village Project (Columbia University)

Seneca Village Site (from the Central Park Conservancy)

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17.4.9: Ceremonial belt (Kwakwaka'wakw)

by DR. AARON GLASS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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Video 17.4.9.1: Ceremonial belt (Kwakwaka'wakw), late 19th century, wood, cotton, paint, and iron (Field Museum, Chicago), an ARCHES video. Special thanks to Aaron Glass, the Bard Graduate Center, the U'mista Cultural Centre, and Corrine Hunt

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17.4.10: Voyage to the moai of Rapa Nui (Easter Island)

Voyage to the moai of Rapa Nui (Easter Island)

by DR. WAYNE NGATA and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Easter Island is world famous, but local people are only now reasserting control over their history.

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Video 17.4.10.1: Moai of Rapa Nui (Easter Island), Waka Tapu, and the reclaiming of cultural heritage

Additional resources:

New York Times feature on Easter Island's struggle with rising sea levels

UNESCO webpage for Rapa Nui National Park

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17.4.11: The Gwoździec synagogue- the lost art of painted wooden synagogues

by **DR. ARIEL FEIN**

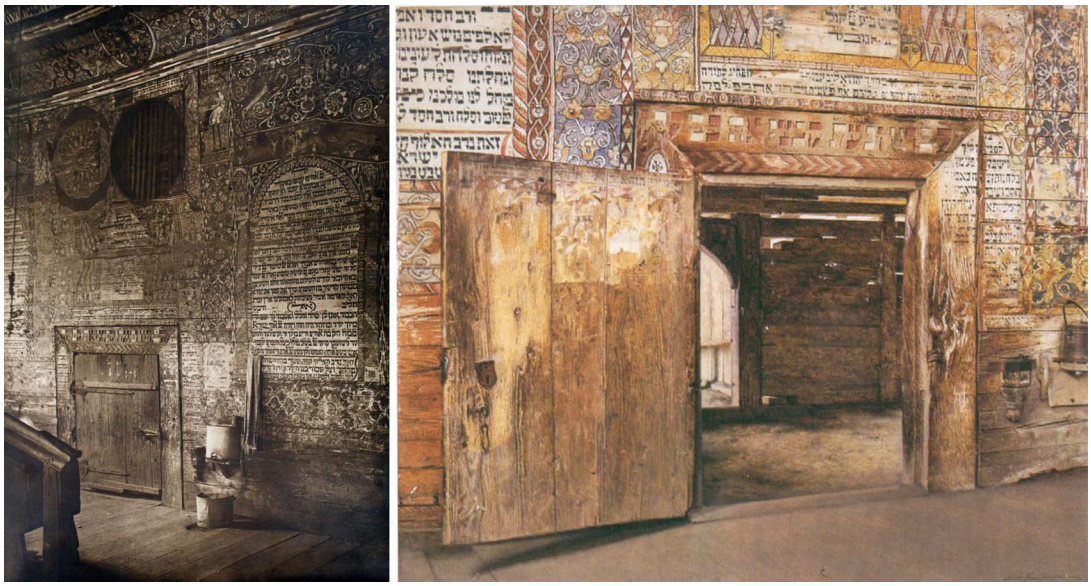


Figure 17.4.11.1: Left: Western wall and door, Gwoździec synagogue, mid-17th century, Ukraine. Photographer: Alois Breyer, 1910–13 (**The Center for Jewish Art**); right: Isidor Kaufmann, *Portal of the Rabbi*, 1898, oil on canvas (**Magyar Nemzeti Galeria, Budapest**)

In the late 1890s, Viennese Jewish painter, Isidor Kaufmann traveled throughout the territory of modern-day Ukraine to research and document wooden synagogues and their richly painted interiors. Among the many communities and synagogues that he visited, he lingered in the Gwoździec synagogue, which he later painted upon returning to his Vienna studio. During World War I, the Gwoździec synagogue was damaged, and, along with nearly all of the two-hundred (known) painted wooden synagogues across Eastern Europe, was ultimately destroyed by the Nazis during World War II. Isidor Kaufmann's painting, and documentation produced before 1939 by architects, art historians, and ethnographers, constitute the only surviving testimonies of the synagogue's remarkable architecture and the dense and colorful wall paintings that adorned its interior. With their devastating destruction, this documentation of the Gwoździec synagogue provides a glimpse of this unique tradition of painted synagogues popularized among 17th- and 18th-century Ashkenazi Jewish communities.



Figure 17.4.11.2: Map of Gwoździec in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569–1795)



Figure 17.4.11.3: Map of Gwoździec with modern borders

Gwoździec and the "golden age" of the *shtetl*

Today, the town of Gwoździec is located in southern Ukraine. However, in the 1640s, when the Jewish community built their synagogue, Gwoździec was part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (a federation of the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania). At that time, as one of the largest states in Europe, Jews were invited to help settle the region, bringing a successful trading and craft economy with them. In Gwoździec and in towns across the Commonwealth, from modern-day Ukraine-Jews built more than two hundred richly painted wooden synagogues, each a centerpiece in its community.



Figure 17.4.11.4: Gwoździec Synagogue, mid-17th century, Ukraine. Photographed by Alois Breyer, 1910–13. (The Center for Jewish Art)

Gwoździec is often described as a *shtetl,* which means “small town” in Yiddish. This term may conjure up images from the play and film *Fiddler on the Roof*. We imagine Tevye the milkman, his family, and his neighbors, living in poverty and suffering from persecution, pogroms, and displacement. While this is in fact an appropriate description of many 19th- and early 20th-century Eastern European Jewish communities, it obscures a more prosperous and relatively stable period of Jewish life in Eastern Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. In the 1640s, when the Jewish community of Gwoździec built their synagogue, they were an affluent community, able to afford the highest standards of construction and craftsmanship. Despite the devastation of the Jewish community during the Chmielnicki massacres in 1648, by 1731, when the congregation remodeled their synagogue, they were once again a prosperous and thriving community. The synagogue’s architecture and the paintings on its walls and ceiling testify to this period of Jewish wealth and stability in the region.



Figure 17.4.11.5: Left: Manor house, Ożarów, Poland, 17th century (Morgoth, CCO 1.0); right: Church of St. Michael in Uzhok, Ukraine, 1745. Photograph, 1919 (Library of Congress)

Jewish architecture and painting in a regional style

Jewish law does not define a single style for synagogue architecture. As a result synagogues around the world have adopted local styles and adapted them to suit Jewish worship. The Gwoździec synagogue, and hundreds of other wooden synagogues across the region, reflect this adaptation of local Polish-Ukrainian architectural styles. Built with squat, stacked-log walls, surmounted

by a mountainous multi-tiered roof, and ornamental decorative woodwork, the synagogue resembled local wooden architecture, including manor houses of the nobility and nearby churches. Despite these similarities, the Jewish community distinguished their synagogue from other town buildings through its massive tiered, sloping roof, which would have dominated the landscape of the town. Although local laws restricted Jews from building their synagogues higher than the steeple (tower) of the church, they did not delimit the height of the synagogue in relation to the church's rooftop. As a result, wooden synagogues often towered over the rooftops of nearby churches and government buildings. In their massive scale and dramatic roofs, they created a sense of weightiness and immobility, marking the hope for a permanent dwelling for the Jewish community.

The architecture of the Gwoździec Synagogue

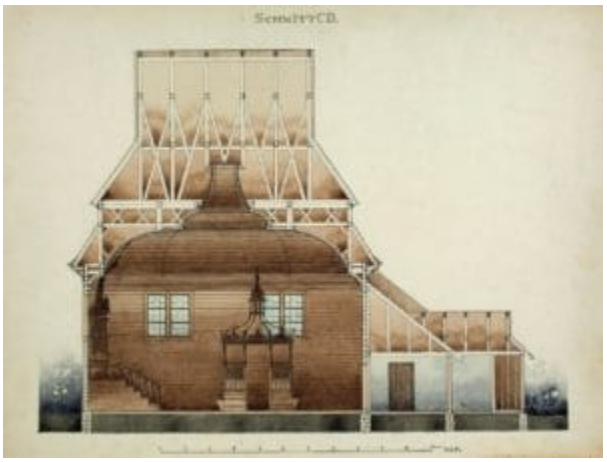


Figure 17.4.11.6: Longitudinal section drawing, Gwoździec Synagogue, mid-17th century, Ukraine (The Center for Jewish Art)

When the synagogue was first built in the 1640s, it was constructed as a single large hall with a barrel-vaulted ceiling. However, in the 1720s, the congregation modified the existing ceiling by cutting a hole in its center to introduce a complex, and undulating dome structure with both concave and convex forms, creating a towering cupola to crown their space of worship. This dramatic ceiling created an interior space reminiscent of contemporaneous tents, whose symbolic meaning will be discussed below, which was promptly imitated in synagogue constructions throughout the region.

On its interior, the synagogue featured two characteristic elements of Jewish religious architecture—a *bema* (a raised platform from which the Torah is read during services), and a Torah ark, which encloses and protects the Torah when it is not in use. In the Gwoździec sanctuary, as in other Ashkenazi congregations, the bema is centrally located. The highly ornamental Torah ark, an elaborate architectural element of massive size and ornamentation, dominated the eastern wall, indicating the direction of Jerusalem.



Figure 17.4.11.7: Left: Wall decoration with painted prayers, Gwoździec synagogue, mid-17th century, Ukraine. Photographed by Alois Breyer, 1910–13 (The Center for Jewish Art); right: reconstruction of Gwoździec synagogue ceiling, 2013, Handshouse Studio (Pudelek CC BY-SA 4.0)

Moreover, on its interior, the synagogue was covered from floor to ceiling in colorful imagery. The lower walls included texts of Hebrew prayers derived from the Jewish liturgy, including some of the most commonly recited prayers of the weekday and Shabbat worship services, bounded by floral and geometric patterns. In their large font and placement at eye-level, they provided a legible text to aid worshippers during prayer services and also functioned symbolically to envelop the synagogue and its congregation in perpetual prayer. In contrast, the upper portion of the walls and ceiling featured animal imagery, the twelve signs of the zodiac, and additional Hebrew texts, including the signatures of the artists—Isaac son of Rabbi Judah Leib ha-Cohen and Israel son of Mordechai from Yarychiv (a town in modern-day southern Ukraine)

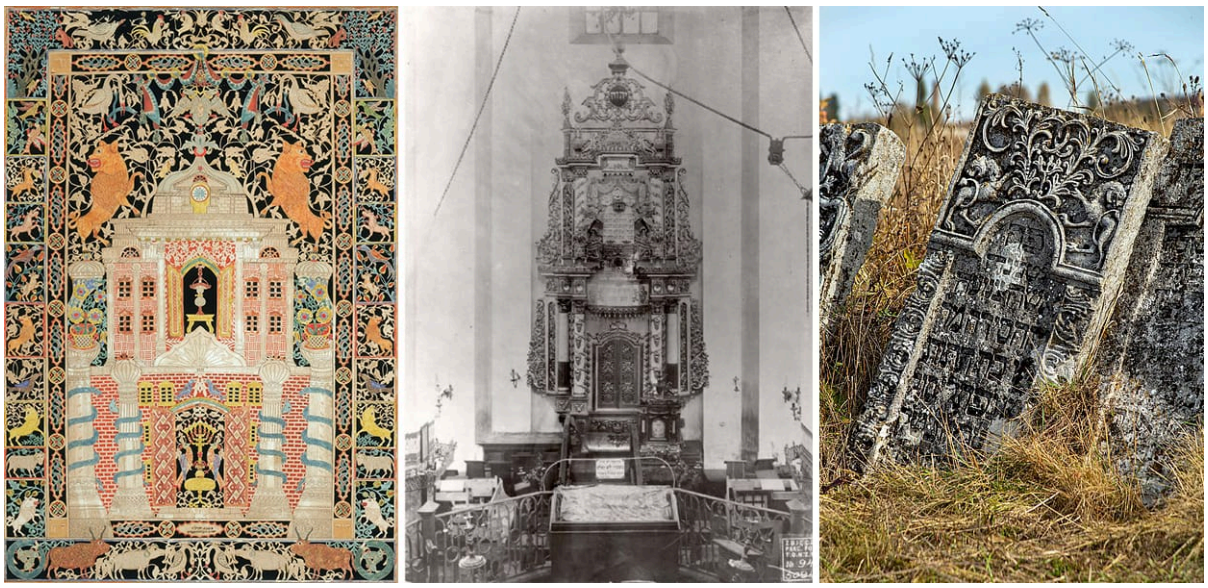


Figure 17.4.11.8: Left: Israel Dov Rosenbaum, *Mizrach,* 1877, Pdkamen, Ukraine, paper cut (Jewish Museum); middle: Torah ark, Dubno synagogue, 1814, renovated 1878, western Ukraine (Yad Vashem Photo Collection); right: tombstone in Jewish cemetery, Sataniv, Ukraine (Roman Starchenko, CC BY-SA 4.0)

The abundant animal imagery in Gwoździec, and throughout the Eastern European painted synagogues, prompted renewed attention to a long-standing debate among rabbinic leaders about the presence of figural imagery within a Jewish house of worship. Animal figures appeared to challenge the second commandment prohibition against the creation and worship of “graven images.” Some rabbis expressed concern that the presence of such motifs could both be a distraction from devotion as well as be mistaken for idolatry (the worship of images).

The division of images within the synagogue, with animal imagery limited to the upper registers where congregants were less likely to be looking, may have partially circumvented this problem. However, the ubiquity of such images throughout all periods of Jewish artistic production, and in particular in 17th- and 18th-century Eastern European Jewish religious art—wall paintings, papercuts, Torah arks, tombstones, and ritual objects—suggests that animal, floral, and geometric motifs were ultimately deemed permissible.



Figure 17.4.11.9: Left: painted interior of the Church of St. George, Drohobych, Ukraine, 1659–60 (Bo&Ko, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0); right: Polish folk motifs, wall paintings, parish church, Debno, Poland, 17th century (magro_kr, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)



Figure 17.4.11.10: Worms Mahzor, Germany, 1272 (Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem)

As with the synagogue's architecture, the wall paintings likewise find counterparts in the painted interiors of nearby churches.

At the same time, many of the painted images—including animal and architectural motifs—draw upon a Jewish visual vocabulary already present in medieval Hebrew illuminated manuscripts from Germanic lands, such as the decoration of the Worms Mahzor, a 13th-century Hebrew manuscript completed in the German city of Würzburg.

Divine Mercy and the Tent of Heaven

The Jewish community interpreted the devastation of the 17th-century Chmielnicki massacre as a statement of divine punishment. Although the community recovered rapidly from this period of upheaval, their attitudes shifted and became more penitential,

one heavily informed by Jewish mystical traditions, as they yearned for a messianic future, with the arrival of a Jewish messiah ushering in an era of global peace and harmony.



Figure 17.4.11.11: Left: Details of deer and eagle with a hare in its talons, Gwoździec synagogue ceiling, mid-17th century, Ukraine. Photographed by Alois Breyer, 1910–13 (**The Center for Jewish Art**); right: top of carved Torah ark on Eastern wall of Gwoździec synagogue ceiling, mid-17th century, Ukraine. Photographed by Alois Breyer, 1910–13 (**The Center for Jewish Art**)

This cultural and religious upheaval imbued the wall paintings with additional meaning. For example, the motif of the deer, appears in a medallion with its head turned, gazing backwards. In the *Zohar,* a Jewish mystical text, the deer is described as constantly running and looking back, just as God, driven away by the Israelites' sins, looks back upon them with compassion and mercy. Such an image might have resonated with the community, hoping to be forgiven for their sins. Likewise, the image of an eagle as a predator with a small animal in its beak, appears throughout the synagogue's painted decoration. In the aftermath of the Chmielnicki massacres, many Jewish chronicles refer to an eagle bearing exiles on its wings. It's possible that the repetition of eagles throughout the ceiling paintings refers to the community's collective memory of the massacre and their salvation under God. On the northern wall of the ceiling, for example, eagles with hares in their mouth flank a central image of a unicorn battling a lion. Perhaps the hares, and other prey, may also express the community's desire for justice against their oppressors. In addition to this predatory imagery, crowned double-headed eagles also appear in two of the corners of the ceiling as well as surmounting the Torah ark. By using the form of the double-headed eagle, royal emblems of the Habsburg and Russian Empires, signifying the King's absolute power, the artists transformed the motif into one symbolizing God's absolute, heavenly rule, guided by both justice and mercy.



Figure 17.4.11.12: Ottoman tent, seized by King Jan III Sobieski after the siege of Vienna in 1683 (Wawel Royal Castle)

The Gwoździec synagogue's remodeled ceiling closely resembled the form of the most recognizable tent for 18th-century Jews in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth—Ottoman royal tents. After Polish King Jan III Sobieski lent support against the 1683 Turkish siege of Vienna, he returned with Ottoman tents, which became a national symbol of Polish culture.



Figure 17.4.11.13: Left: Details of stitch and rope motif, Gwoździec synagogue ceiling, mid-17th century, Ukraine. Photographed by Alois Breyer, 1910–13 (The Center for Jewish Art); right: detail of arabesque motif, reconstruction of Gwoździec synagogue ceiling, 2013, Handshouse Studio (Pudelek CC BY-SA 4.0)

Looking to this familiar tent structure, the Jewish community not only imitated its form, but also its ornament, including stitch motifs painted on the ceiling where one might expect pieces of cloth to be sewn together, as well as patterns resembling ropes used to raise a tent, and arabesque motifs common in Ottoman carpets and tents circulating within the Commonwealth.

For its congregation, the painted dome of the Gwoździec synagogue symbolized the biblical tent of worship, part of the *mishkan*, or the ancient Jewish tabernacle, believed to have been the earthly dwelling place of God. By evoking the tabernacle, the Jewish community of Gwoździec visually transformed their synagogue into a divine space.

Destruction, memory, and preservation



Figure 17.4.11.14: German soldiers observe burning wooden synagogue in Lithuania during World War II, 1941 (Das Bundesarchiv)

Tragically, like the Gwoździec synagogue, almost all of the Eastern European painted wooden synagogues were destroyed by the Nazis in World War II. The vibrant tradition of Eastern European synagogue painting can thus only be glimpsed through late 19th- and early 20th-century documentation.

Fortunately, the Gwoździec synagogue and other painted wooden synagogues across the former territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth attracted the attention of several ethnographers and artists, including Isidor Kaufmann as previously mentioned, but also Alois Breyer and Szymon Zajcyzk, among others. Breyer, a Roman Catholic student of architecture, produced more than 200 photographs and architectural renderings of synagogues throughout the territories of modern-day Poland and Lithuania, which constitute the most comprehensive collection documenting eastern European synagogues to this day.

Breyer's watercolor study of the northern section of the Gwoździec synagogue ceiling, along with Isidor Kaufmann's painting, provide the only records of the ceiling's original colors. In the interwar period (1919–39), Jewish photographer and art historian Zajcyzk oversaw a professional survey sponsored by the Polish state to document Eastern European wooden synagogues, producing thousands of plans, drawings, and photographs, including photographs and plans of Gwoździec. Zajcyzk himself was murdered by the Nazis in 1944, but thanks to his efforts to hide his archive during the war, many of the documents survived.



Figure 17.4.11.15:Installation of the reconstructed Gwoździec synagogue ceiling and bema in the POLIN Museum of the History of the Polish Jews, 2013, Handshouse Studio (Pudelek CC BY-SA 4.0)

Using the extensive pre-1939 documentation, in 2011–13, Handshouse Studio, a non-profit educational organization, constructed an almost full-scale recreation of the Gwoździec synagogue ceiling, roof, and bema using period materials, tools, and techniques. It is currently displayed as the centerpiece of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, Poland. Not only does the installation preserve the memory of the lost synagogue and its 18th-century congregation, but in the process of its creation, involving over three hundred participants in educational and hands-on workshops across Poland, it created a new experience in the thousand-year history of Polish-Ukrainian Jewry.

Additional resources

Jewish history 1750 to WWII

Writing a History of Synagogue Architecture

Center for Jewish Art's **Catalogue of Wall Paintings in Central and East European Synagogues**

Handshouse studio, **Gwoździec Synagogue Reconstruction**

Batsheva Goldman-Ida, "Early Modern Synagogues in Central and Eastern Europe," *Jewish Religious Architecture: From Biblical Israel to Modern Judaism,* edited by Steven Fine (Leiden: Brill, 2019), pp. 184–207.

Thomas Hubka, *Resplendent Synagogue: Architecture and Worship in an Eighteenth-Century Polish Community* (New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 2003).

Maria Piechotka, *Heaven's Gates: Wooden Synagogues in the Territories of the Former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Kurpski i S-ka, 2004).

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17.5: THE MANY FORMS OF ICONOCLASM

17.5.1: Erased from memory- the Severan Tondo
17.5.2: Rewriting history- damnatio memoriae in ancient Rome
17.5.3: Byzantine Iconoclasm and the Triumph of Orthodoxy
17.5.4: Making and Mutilating Manuscripts of the Shahnama
17.5.5: Folio from a Shahnama, The Bier of Iskandar (Alexander the Great)
17.5.6: The Court of Gayumars
17.5.7: Iconoclasm in the Netherlands in the Sixteenth Century
17.5.8: Submerged, burned, and scattered- celebrating the destruction of objects in South Asia
17.5.9: “Creative iconoclasm”- a tale of two monasteries
17.5.10: Erasing Art- Rauschenberg’s Erased de Kooning drawing
17.5.11: Destruction as Preservation- Ai Weiwei’s Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn

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17.5.1: Erased from memory- the Severan Tondo

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

YouTube Video

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

View this YouTube Video online

Video 17.5.1.1: A conversation with Dr. Steven Zucker and Dr. Beth Harris in front of *The Severan Tondo*, c. 200 C.E., 30.5 cm, tempera on wood (Altes Museum, Staatliche Museen, Berlin)

Additional resources:

More on Damnatio Memoriae

Klaus Forschen, The portraits of Roman emperors and their families," in *The Emperor and Rome: Space, Representation, and Ritual*, edited by Björn C. Ewald and Carlos F. Noreña (Cambridge University Press, 2010)

Eric R. Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation : Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture* (Brill 2004)

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17.5.2: Rewriting history- damnatio memoriae in ancient Rome

by DR. FRANCESCA TRONCHIN

If the Roman government condemned a ruler, his portraits often died with him.



Figure 17.5.2.1: Detail of Geta (face removed) and Caracalla from the Severan Tondo, c. 200 C.E., tempera on wood, 30.5 cm diameter (Altes Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, photo: **Carole Raddato**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

We know that Roman emperors were often **raised to the status of gods** after their deaths. However, just as many were given the opposite treatment—officially erased from memory.

Condemning memory

Damnatio memoriae is a term we use to describe a Roman phenomenon in which the government condemned the memory of a person who was seen as a tyrant, traitor, or other sort of enemy to the state. The images of such condemned figures would be destroyed, their names erased from inscriptions, and if the doomed person were an emperor or other government official, even his laws could be rescinded. Coins bearing the image of an emperor who had his memory damned would be recalled or cancelled. In some cases, the residence of the condemned could be razed or otherwise destroyed. [1]

This was more than a form of casual, politically-motivated vandalism, carried out by disgruntled individuals, since the condemnation required approval of the Senate and the effects of the official denunciation could be seen far from Rome. There are many examples of *damnatio memoriae* throughout the history of the Roman Republic and Empire. As many as 26 emperors through the reign of **Constantine** had their memories condemned; conversely, about 25 emperors were deified after their deaths. The damning of memory phenomenon, however, is not unique to the Roman world. Egyptian pharaohs **Hatshepsut** and **Akhenaten** likewise had many of their their images, monuments, and inscriptions destroyed by political opponents or religious purists. [2]

Did it work?



Figure 17.5.2.2: Portrait of Emperor Caligula, 37-41 C.E., marble, 28 cm high (Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, photo: **Dr. Francesca Tronchin**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Instances of *damnatio memoriae* were not always completely successful in wiping out the memory of an individual. Among the emperors who suffered *damnatio memoriae* are some of the best-known figures from Roman history, including **Gaius** (a.k.a. Caligula) and Nero. The notoriety of these men comes to us not only from texts written during their lifetimes and later, but also from images which survived the immediate violence of the *damnatio memoriae* and then centuries of neglect.

For instance, one marble portrait preserves not only the image of Caligula, but also traces of paint, informing us of the existence of this condemned emperor as well as the polychromy of ancient sculpture. In antiquity, these types of images were considered very powerful and closely linked with the identity of the person they represented.



Figure 17.5.2.3: Two portrait heads of Emperor Caligula, created 37-41 C.E., marble, both detached from the sculpted bodies after his death. Left: 43 x 21.5 x 25 cm (**The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles**); right: 33 x 21 x 23.5 cm (**Yale University Art Gallery**)



Figure 17.5.2.4: Portrait statue of Caligula, recarved as Claudius, from the Basilica at Velleia, first half of the 1st century C.E., marble, 221 cm high (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Parma, photo: **Sailko**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Small heads, big reputations

Caligula was the first emperor to have his images purposefully destroyed after his death. It is impossible to know how many portraits in bronze or other precious metals were melted down, but a number of marble portraits show traces of being re-cut or simply dismantled and disposed of. Workshop procedures for official imperial portraits dictated that many full-length statues in stone were to be created in two pieces. So heads of Caligula, like those now in the Getty Villa and the Yale University Art Gallery (above), could be fairly easily detached from the bodies and tossed aside and a portrait head of the new emperor would swiftly replace the offending one.

A full-length, one-piece statue of a *pontifex maximus* (chief state priest, a title held by the emperor) from Velleia, however, apparently underwent a kind of sculptural recycling. The face of Caligula's successor Claudius appears rather small in comparison to the head and the rest of the body—suggesting to some scholars that it was cut down from a portrait of Caligula.

Cancelleria Reliefs: Nerva replaces Domitian

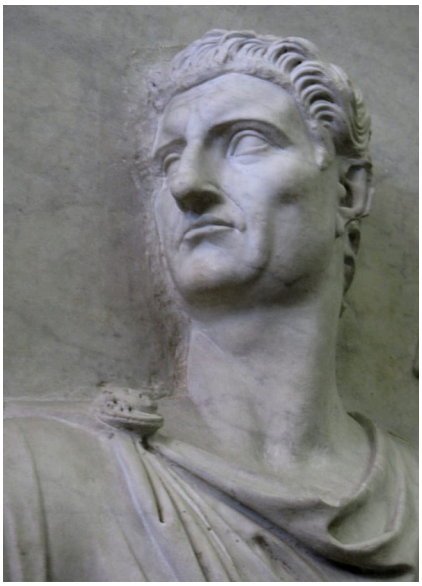


Figure 17.5.2.5: Domitian recut into Nerva, detail of a felief from the Palazzo della Cancelleria, 81-96 C.E., marble (Museo Gregoriano Profano, Vatican Museums, photo: **Erin Taylor**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

A similar re-cutting is evident on a set of reliefs found in Rome and now housed in the Vatican Museums (below). The so-called Cancelleria Reliefs show mythological and allegorical figures celebrating members of the Flavian dynasty for their military successes.

In one, Domitian departs from Rome on a military campaign, ushered out of the city by Victoria, Mars, and Minerva, as well as personifications of the Senate and the Roman people. Yet the head atop the stately tunic-clad body of the emperor is not that of Domitian. Instead it is Nerva, who succeeded Domitian after his assassination and subsequent *damnatio memoriae*. As in the Claudius *pontifex maximus* statue from Velleia, Nerva's face is far too small for the relief and even appears comical when compared to the divinities surrounding him.[3] Apparently the sculpture was recarved.



Figure 17.5.2.6: Relief from the Palazzo della Cancelleria, 81-96 C.E., marble (Museo Gregoriano Profano, Vatican Museums, photo: **Egisto Sani**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0). Domitian/Nerva can be seen fourth from the left.

Slightly more elegant solutions for *damnatio memoriae* could be executed in metal statuary. The face of a bronze equestrian portrait of Domitian (below) was sawed off and replaced with that of his successor, Nerva. The result is much less jarring than on the Cancelleria relief, as the bronze "mask" was made to the same scale as the rest of the statue and the join is mostly unnoticeable.



Figure 17.5.2.7: Equestrian statue of Nerva (formerly Domitian), from the Sanctuary of Augustales, Miseno, bronze (Museo Arceologico dei Campi Flegrei, Bacoli, photo: **Erin Taylor**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Caracalla removes the image of Geta



Figure 17.5.2.8: Relief showing Septimius Severus and Julia Domna with a caduceus, Arch of the Argentarii, Rome, completed 204 C.E. (photo: Panairjdde, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Perhaps the most striking and widespread examples of *damnatio memoriae* come from the reign of **Caracalla**, a member of the Severan Dynasty who ruled from 211-217 C.E. He was initially co-emperor with his younger brother Geta, but after months of squabbling between the sibling rulers, Caracalla had Geta assassinated. This death was quickly followed by a *damnatio memoriae*, one in which it became a capital offense to even speak the name of the younger co-emperor.

In Rome, Geta's image was eliminated from reliefs on the Arch of the Argentarii. No attempt at an elegant recarving was made as in the Cancelleria Reliefs; in a panel showing Septimius Severus and Julia Domna (the parents of Caracalla and Geta) sacrificing at an altar, a caduceus floats over an empty space where Geta must have stood.[4] Even images of Geta's wife and father-in-law were carved out of the Arch of the Argentarii panels, as they too had suffered a *damnatio memoriae*. The names of all the condemned individuals were erased from the arch and replaced with new inscriptions honoring Caracalla.



Figure 17.5.2.9: Severan Tondo, c. 200 C.E., tempera on wood, 30.5 cm diameter (Altes Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, photo: **Carole Raddato**, CC BY-SA 2.0). This circular painting is exceptional for its materials, state of preservation, and insight into Roman painting beyond frescoes and other murals.

Erasing memory across time and space

A painted panel found in Egypt demonstrates the very long reach of Roman vengeance when enacting a *damnatio memoriae*. The panel shows the Severan family: Julia Domna wears heavy pearl earrings and necklaces; Septimius's hair and beard are tinged with gray; and highlights in the eyes of all the figures add a lifelike quality. Caracalla's boyish face—painted when he was merely heir to the throne—peers out to the viewer's left. Next to him is a circular erasure in the paint where Geta once appeared. This deletion is dramatic when considering the procedures of *damnatio memoriae*. Someone in the province of Egypt, far from the center of the Empire, was charged with erasing the image of a child—a child who grew up to be co-emperor, only to be killed by his own brother. The tyranny of Caracalla and the thoroughness of *damnatio memoriae* meant that practically no image of the emperor's enemies, no matter how small or out-of-date, would escape destruction.

Damnatio memoriae continued in the Roman world through the fourth century C.E., as seen in disfigured portraits of Constantine's rival Maxentius. With Christianity made official in the Roman world, vandalism of imperial portraits continued, but with more of a religious bent than a political one. The fact that Roman portraits were removed, damaged, or destroyed because of dramatic changes in the subjects' reputations is unmistakable evidence that such images are more than just "pictures." A portrait can carry meaning over decades and centuries—whether it is of a Roman emperor, a Communist leader like Joseph Stalin, a dictator like Saddam Hussein, or Confederate generals in the United States.

Notes:

1. Nero's *Domus Aurea* (Golden House) in downtown Rome was eventually filled in and built over by his successors in the Flavian Dynasty, but it was not a systematic destruction. In fact, there is evidence Vespasian lived in the controversial villa before he and his sons turned the land from Nero's private estate back over to the public.
2. Hatshepsut's successor, Thutmose III, ordered her images, cartouches, and monuments destroyed as she was seen as a usurper to his throne. Akhenaten, who brought monotheism briefly to Egypt, suffered a sort of *damnatio memoriae* by those who enthusiastically returned to polytheism after his death.
3. In a *coup de grâce* for the Cancelleria Reliefs, they seem to have never been displayed, instead discarded in a Republican-period cemetery after Nerva died just fifteen months into his reign. The Flavian Dynasty was over and it would have been too challenging to re-recarve the portrait of Nerva into Trajan.
4. It appears that Julia Domna's left arm was carved in the space where Geta's body once was; in the original format, she was probably holding the caduceus.

Additional Resources:

Essay on Roman portrait sculpture from the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Sarah Bond, "Erasing the Face of History," *The New York Times*, May 14, 2011

S. Bundrick and E. Varner, *From Caligula to Constantine: Tyranny & Transformation in Roman Portraiture* (Michael C. Carlos Museum, 2001).

Harriet I. Flower, *The Art of Forgetting: Disgrace & Oblivion in Roman Political Culture* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

Eric Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture* (E.J. Brill, 2004).

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17.5.3: Byzantine Iconoclasm and the Triumph of Orthodoxy

by **DR. EVAN FREEMAN**

The “Iconoclastic Controversy” over religious images was a defining moment in the history of the Eastern Roman “Byzantine” Empire. Centered in Byzantium’s capital of Constantinople (modern Istanbul) from the 700s–843, imperial and Church authorities debated whether religious images should be used in Christian worship or banned. Who were the players and what was this Controversy all about?

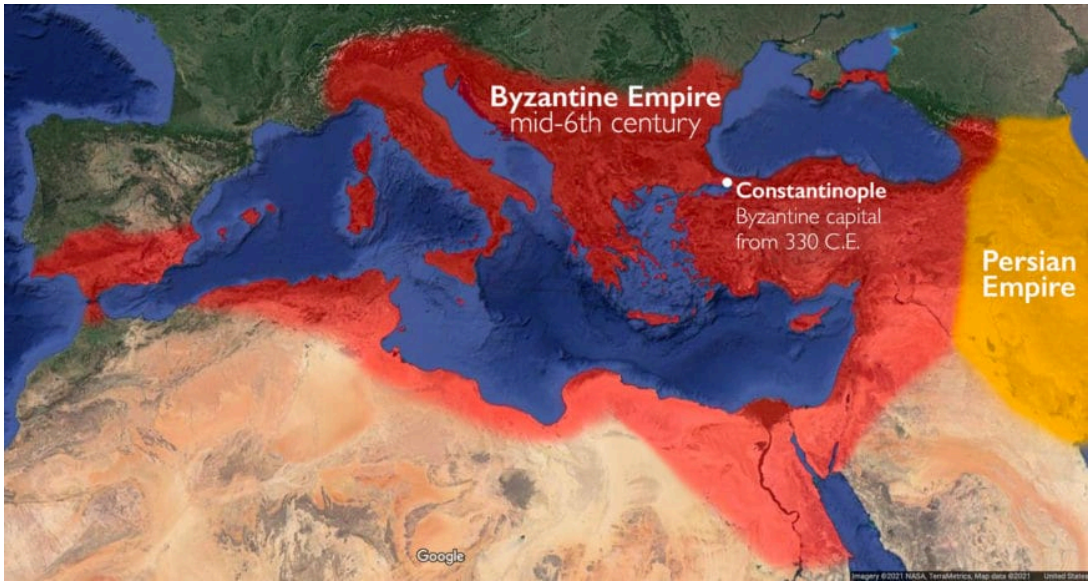


Figure 17.5.3.1: Approximate boundaries of the Byzantine Empire at its greatest extent in the mid-6th century (underlying map © Google)

Key Terms



Figure 17.5.3.2: Icon of Christ, late 14th century, Thessaloniki (Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki)

Icons (Greek for “images”) refers to the religious images of Byzantium, made from a variety of media, which depict holy figures and events.

Iconoclasm refers to any destruction of images, including the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy of the eighth and ninth centuries, although the Byzantines themselves did not use this term.

Iconomachy (Greek for "image struggle") was the term the Byzantines used to describe the Iconoclastic Controversy.

Iconoclasts (Greek for "breakers of images") refers to those who opposed icons.

Iconophiles (Greek for "lovers of images"), also known as "iconodules" (Greek for "servants of images"), refers to those who supported the use of religious images.

What was the big deal?

Debating for over a century whether religious images should or should not be allowed may puzzle us today. But in Byzantium, religious images were bound up in religious belief and practice. In a society with no concept of separation of church and state, religious orthodoxy (right belief) was believed to impact not only the salvation of individual souls, but also the fate of the entire Empire. Viewed from this perspective, it is possible to understand how debates over images could entangle both Church leaders and emperors.

The arguments

The iconophiles and iconoclasts developed sophisticated theological and philosophical arguments to argue for and against religious images. Here is a quick summary of some of their main points:

The iconoclasts noted that the Bible often prohibited images, notably in the Second Commandment (one of the Ten Commandments appearing in the Hebrew Bible):

> **You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them....*(Exodus 20:4–5, NRSV)***

The iconophiles countered that while the Bible prohibited images in some passages, God also *mandated* the creation of images in other instances, for example God commanded that cherubim should adorn the Ark of the Covenant: "You shall make two cherubim of gold; you shall make them of hammered work, at the two ends of the mercy seat." (Exodus 25:18, NRSV).

The iconoclasts argued that God was invisible and infinite, and therefore beyond human ability to depict in images. Since Jesus was both human and divine, the iconoclasts argued that artists could not depict him in images. The iconophiles agreed that God could not be represented in images but argued that when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born as a human being with a physical body, he allowed himself to be seen and depicted. Since some icons were believed to date to the time of Christ, icons were understood to offer a kind of proof that the Son of God entered the world as a human being, died on the cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven—all for the salvation of humankind.

The iconoclasts also objected to practices of honoring icons with candles and incense, and by bowing before and kissing them, in which worshippers seemed to worship created matter (the icon itself) rather than the creator. But the iconophiles asserted that when Christians honored images of Christ and the saints like this, they did not worship the artwork as such, but honored the holy person represented in the image.

Timeline of events

Early centuries

Sporadic evidence of Christians creating religious images and honoring them with candles and garlands emerges from as early as the second century C.E. Church leaders often condemned such images and devotional practices, which seemed too similar to the pagan religions that Christians rejected.

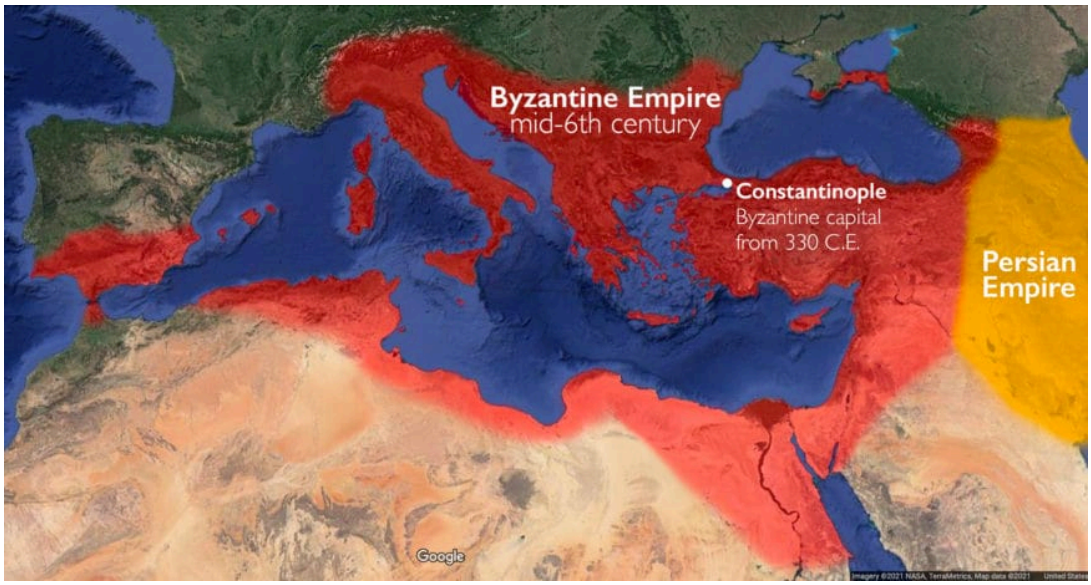


Figure 17.5.3.3: Approximate boundaries of the Byzantine Empire at its greatest extent in the mid-6th century (underlying map © Google)

The seventh century

The Byzantine Empire faced invasions from Persians and Arabs in the seventh century, resulting in significant loss of territory. Trade decreased and the empire experienced an economic downturn. Byzantine anxieties over images likely emerge, at least in part, as a result of these devastating events (which may have been perceived as signs of God's displeasure with icons).

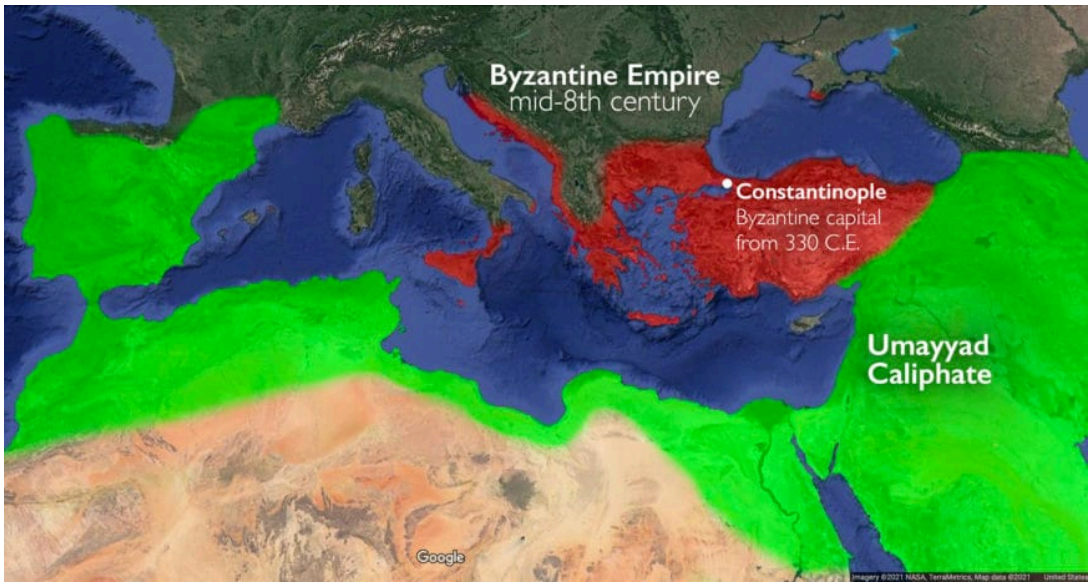


Figure 17.5.3.4: Approximate boundaries of the Byzantine Empire in the mid-eighth century (underlying map © Google)

Through the centuries, icons became increasingly widespread in Byzantium. By the late seventh century, the Church began to legislate on images. Church leaders at the Quinisext Council (also known as the Council of Trullo) held in Constantinople in 691–692 prohibited the depiction of crosses on floors where they could be walked on, which was understood as disrespectful. They also mandated that Christ be depicted as a human rather than symbolically as a lamb in order to affirm Christ's incarnation and saving works. Around this same time, emperor Justinian II incorporated icons of Christ onto his coins. These events suggest the growing importance of religious images in the Byzantine Empire at this time.



Figure 17.5.3.5: Solidus of Justinian II showing Christ on one side (left) and the emperor on the other side (right), 692–95, Constantinople, gold, 4.43 g, 2cm (photo: Yale University Art Gallery, CC0)

The first phase of Iconoclasm: 720s–787

Historical texts suggest the struggle over images began in the 720s. According to traditional accounts, Iconoclasm was prompted by emperor Leo III removing an icon of Christ from the Chalke Gate of the imperial palace in Constantinople in 726 or 730, sparking a widespread destruction of images and a persecution of those who defended images. But more recently, scholars have noted a lack of evidence supporting this traditional narrative, and believe that iconophiles probably exaggerated the offenses of the iconoclasts for rhetorical effect after the Controversy.

Historical evidence firmly identifies Leo's son, emperor Constantine V, as an iconoclast. Constantine publicly argued against icons and convened a Church council that rejected religious images at the palace in the Constantinople suburb of Hieria in 754. Probably as a result of this council, iconoclasts replaced images of saints with crosses in the *sekreton* (audience hall) between the patriarchal palace and Constantinople's great cathedral, Hagia Sophia, in the 760s (discussed further below).

787 Iconophile Council of Nicaea II

In 787, the empress Irene convened a pro-image Church council, which negated the Iconoclast council held in Hieria in 754 and affirmed the use of religious images. The council drew on the pro-image writings of a Syrian monk, Saint John of Damascus, who lived c. 675–749.

The second phase of Iconoclasm: 815–843

Emperor Leo V, who reigned from 813–820, banned images once again in 815, beginning what is often referred to as a second phase of Byzantine Iconoclasm. Leo V's ban on images followed significant Byzantine military losses to the Bulgars in Macedonia and Thrace, which Leo may have viewed as a sign of God's displeasure with icons. Theodore, abbot of the Stoudios Monastery in Constantinople, wrote in defense of icons during this time. Evidence suggests this second phase of Iconoclasm was more mild than the first.



Figure 17.5.3.6: Icon of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, c. 1400, Constantinople, tempera on wood, 39 x 31 x 5.3 cm (The British Museum)

The Triumph of Orthodoxy

The iconoclastic emperor Theophilos died in 842. His son, Michael III, was too young to rule alone, so empress Theodora (Michael III's mother), and the eunuch Theoktistos (an official), ruled as regents until Michael III came of age. Later sources describe Theodora as a secret iconophile during her husband's iconoclastic reign, although there is a lack of evidence to support this. For reasons not entirely clear, Theodora and Theoktistos installed the iconophile patriarch Methodios I and once again affirmed religious images in 843, definitively ending Byzantine Iconoclasm.

Imperial and Church leaders marked this restoration of images with a triumphant procession through the city of Constantinople, culminating with a celebration of the Divine Liturgy in Hagia Sophia. The Church acclaimed the restoration of images as the "Triumph of Orthodoxy," which continues to be commemorated annually on the first Sunday of Lent in the Eastern Orthodox Church to this day.

Iconoclasm and the Triumph of Orthodoxy in Byzantine Mosaics

The Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy was not merely an intellectual debate, but was also an inflection point in the history of Byzantine art itself. Let us consider the examples of three Byzantine churches, whose mosaics offer visual evidence of the Iconoclastic Controversy and subsequent Triumph of Orthodoxy: Hagia Eirene in Constantinople (Istanbul), the Dormition in Nicaea (İznik, Turkey), and Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (Istanbul).



Figure 17.5.3.7: Hagia Eirene, begun 532, rebuilt following an earthquake in 740, Constantinople (Istanbul) (photo: Alexxx1979, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Hagia Eirene in Constantinople



Figure 17.5.3.8: Hagia Eirene, begun 532, rebuilt following an earthquake in 740, Constantinople (Istanbul) (photo: Gryffindor, CC0)

The emperor Justinian constructed the church of **Hagia Eirene** in Constantinople (Istanbul) in the sixth century, but the church's dome was not well supported, and the building was badly damaged by an earthquake in 740. Emperor Constantine V, who reigned from 741–775, **rebuilt** Hagia Eirene in the mid to late 750s.

Constantine V—who, as an iconoclast, opposed pictorial depictions of Christ and the saints—is credited with decorating the apse of the church with a cross, which the iconoclasts found acceptable. The cross mosaic makes liberal use of costly materials, such as gold and silver. The skilled artists who created the mosaic bent the arms of the cross downward to compensate for the curve of the dome so that the crossarm would appear straight to viewers standing on the floor of the church.



Figure 17.5.3.9: Apse mosaic with cross, Hagia Eirene, rebuilt after 740, Constantinople (Istanbul) (photo: **byzantologist**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Clearly, while the iconoclasts opposed certain types of religious imagery, they did not reject art entirely, and were sometimes important patrons of art and architecture, as was Constantine V. There is also evidence that emperor Theophilos—who reigned during the second phase of Iconoclasm—expanded and lavishly decorated the imperial palace and other spaces.

The church of the Dormition in Nicaea

Iconoclastic activity can be directly observed in the mosaics of the church of the **Dormition** (or *Koimesis*) at Nicaea (İznik, Turkey). Although the church does not survive today, photographs from 1912 clearly show seams, or sutures, where parts of the mosaics were removed and replaced during the Byzantine era.

Although the precise history of the mosaics at Nicaea is difficult to reconstruct, the 1912 photographs clearly indicate three distinct phases of creation and subsequent restorations during and after the Iconoclastic era.



Figure 17.5.3.10: 1912 photograph shows multiple phases in the apse mosaic at the church of the Dormition (now destroyed), Nicaea (İznik, Turkey) (photo: N. K. Kluge)



Figure 17.5.3.11:

Phase 1 (yellow) The original mosaics predate Iconoclasm and were probably created in the late seventh or early eighth century. They pictured the Virgin and Child standing on a jeweled footstool in the apse. An inscription refers to the church's founder, whose name was Hyakinthos.

Phase 2 (red) Sometime during the Iconoclastic Controversy of the eighth and ninth centuries, the image of the Virgin and Child was removed and replaced with a plain cross like the one in Hagia Eirene in Constantinople, whose **outlines** can still be partially observed in the 1912 photograph.

Phase 3 (purple) Sometime after the Triumph of Orthodoxy in 843, the cross was replaced with another image of the Virgin and Child.

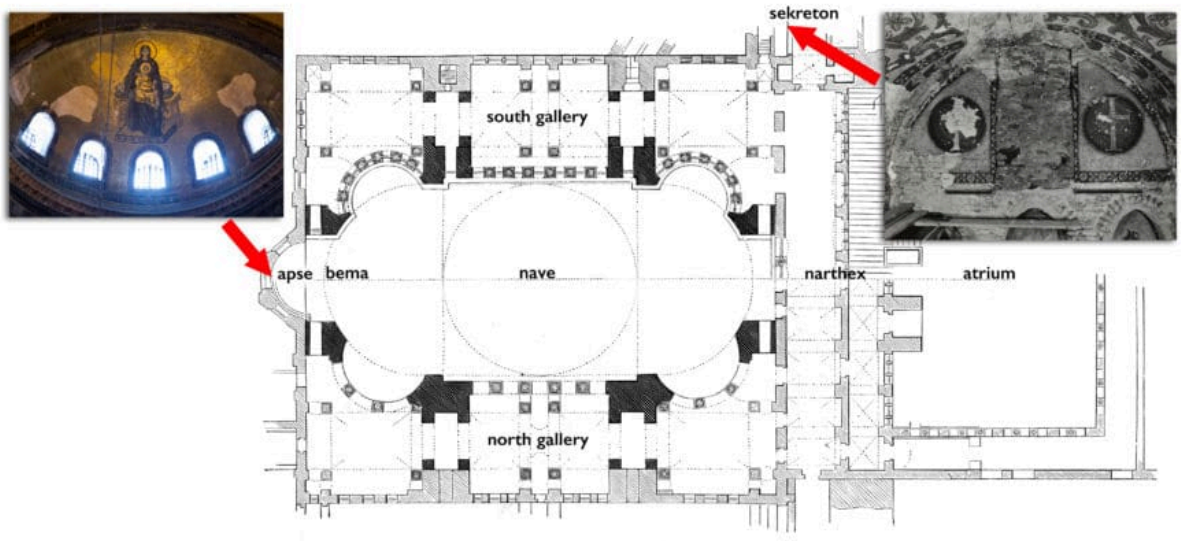


Figure 17.5.3.12: Plan of Hagia Sophia showing apse mosaic and *sekreton* mosaics

Hagia Sophia in Constantinople

Iconoclasm in the *sekreton*

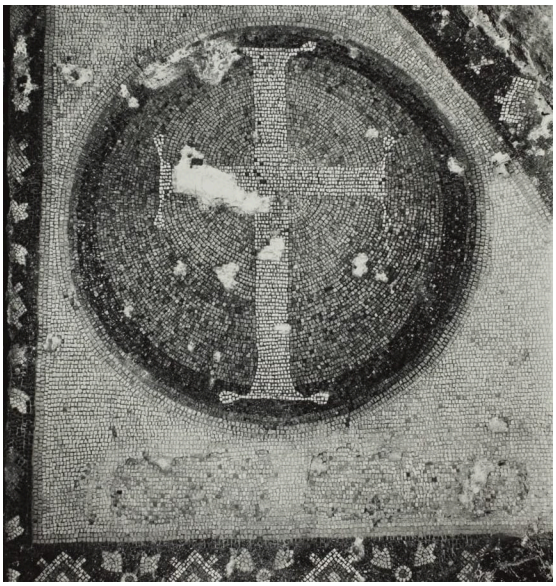


Figure 17.5.3.13: Mosaics in the small *sekreton*, Hagia Sophia, Constantinople (Istanbul) (photo: © Dumbarton Oaks)

The only surviving evidence of destruction of images in the Byzantine capital survives at Hagia Sophia, in audience halls (*sekreta*) that connected the southwestern corner of the church at the gallery level with the patriarchal palace. Primary sources speak of patriarch Niketas—the highest-ranking Church official in Constantinople—removing mosaics of Christ and the saints from the small *sekreton* sometime between 766–769.

And as at the church of the Dormition in Nicaea, scars are visible in the mosaics in the small *sekreton*. Roundels with crosses, which survive today, likely once contained portraits of saints, which patriarch Niketas is said to have removed. Beneath the roundels, the ghostly remnants of erased inscriptions indicate where the missing saints' names once appeared.



Figure 17.5.3.14: Mosaics in the small *sekreton*, Hagia Sophia, Constantinople (Istanbul) (photo: © Dumbarton Oaks)

Apse mosaic and the Triumph of Orthodoxy

Following the Triumph of Orthodoxy, the Byzantines installed a new mosaic of the Virgin and Child in the apse of Constantinople's

Hagia Sophia. The image was accompanied by an inscription (now partially destroyed), which framed the image as a response to Iconoclasm: "The images which the imposters [i.e. the iconoclasts] had cast down here pious emperors have again set up." Yet unlike at Nicaea, there is no evidence of the apse's previous decoration or of any interventions by iconoclasts. So while the inscription implies that iconoclasts removed a figural image from this position, this ninth-century Virgin and Child mosaic installed after the Triumph of Orthodoxy may be the first such figural image to occupy this position in Hagia Sophia.



Figure 17.5.3.15: Apse mosaic depicting the Virgin and Child, dedicated 867, Hagia Sophia, Constantinople (Istanbul) (photo: **byzantologist**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

In 867, patriarch Photios, the highest-ranking Church official in Constantinople, preached a homily in Hagia Sophia on the dedication of the new mosaic. Photios condemned the iconoclasts for "Stripping the Church, Christ's bride, of her own ornaments [i.e. images], and wantonly inflicting bitter wounds on her, wherewith her face was scarred. . . ." He went on to speak of the restoration of images:

> **[The Church] now regains the ancient dignity of her comeliness. . . . If one called this day the beginning and day of Orthodoxy . . . one would not be far wrong.*Photios, Homily 17, 3***

The mosaic in Hagia Sophia and the homily by Photios both illustrate how the iconophiles—the victors of the Iconoclastic Controversy—framed their victory as a triumph of religious orthodoxy, perhaps exaggerating the offenses of the iconoclasts along the way for rhetorical effect.

Additional resources

Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

Leslie Brubaker, *Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2012).

Robin Cormack and Ernest J. W. Hawkins, "The Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul: The Rooms above the Southwest Vestibule and Ramp," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 31 (1977): 175–251.

Paul A. Underwood, "The Evidence of Restorations in the Sanctuary Mosaics of the Church of the Dormition at Nicaea," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 13 (1959): 235–243.

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17.5.4: Making and Mutilating Manuscripts of the Shahnama

by DR. SHEILA BLAIR



Figure 17.5.4.1: "**The Bier of Iskandar (Alexander the Great),**" folio from the Great Mongol *Shahnama* (Il-Khanid dynasty, Tabriz, Iran), c. 1330, ink, opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 57.6 x 39.7 cm (Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, purchase — Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1938.3; photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Illustrated manuscripts are one of the glories of Persian art, especially those made during the heyday of production from the fourteenth century to the sixteenth century. The most popular text was the *Shahnama*, or Book of Kings. This 50,000-couplet poem recounts the history of Iran from the creation of the world to the coming of the Arabs in the seventh century through the reigns of fifty successive monarchs. Rulers and their courtiers often commissioned splendid copies of the *Shahnama* to link themselves to the heroes of the past, whether the "Alexander of the Age" or "The Lord of the World."

Today some of the most important manuscripts are sadly dismembered. Reconstructing the history of two of these splendid manuscripts—from creation to mutilation—shows how they have been used (and misused) over the centuries as political propaganda, loot, and even fodder in the international art market.

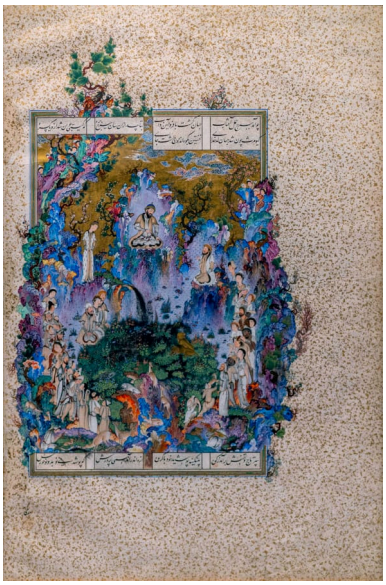


Figure 17.5.4.2: Sultan Muhammad, “The Court of Kayumars,” 47 x 32 cm, opaque watercolor, ink, gold, silver on paper, folio 20v, *Shahnama* of Shah Tahmasp I (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The Great Mongol *Shahnama* and the Tahmasp *Shahnama*

These two illustrated pages (above) come from the most ambitious manuscripts known: the Great Mongol *Shahnama*, made for the Mongol court in northwest Iran around 1330, and the Tahmasp *Shahnama*, made two centuries later in the same region for the Safavid shah Tahmasp (and perhaps inspired by the earlier one).



Figure 17.5.4.3: Sultan Muhammad, “The Lord of the World” shown as part of “The Court of Kayumars,” 47 x 32 cm, opaque watercolor, ink, gold, silver on paper, folio 20v, *Shahnama* of Shah Tahmasp I (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Large books with hundreds of illustrations

Both of these manuscripts are very large books. The 759 folios, or leaves, in the Tahmasp *Shahnama* measure 32 x 47 cm (12½ x 18 ½ inches) with a whopping 258 illustrations, many of them nearly full size and sometimes spilling into the gold-sprinkled margins. The Great Mongol *Shahnama* was even larger: it had around 300 folios with some 200 illustrations, most about half or two-thirds the area of the written surface.[1] Both projects must have taken a decade to complete, even with a workshop of

papermakers, calligraphers, painters, illuminators, binders, and other craftsmen.



Figure 17.5.4.4: Photograph taken by Antoin Sevruguin in Tehran showing the illustration of "Bahram Gur Hunting with Azada," within the bound Great Mongol *Shahnama*, 1880–1910 (**Freer Gallery of Art**, FSA.A.04, Item FSA A.4 2.12.GN.40.07)

Both manuscripts became part of the royal library, a necessary accoutrement of a cultured prince from the fourteenth century onwards in Persia and elsewhere. The Great Mongol *Shahnama* seems to have stayed there until the nineteenth century when the manuscript, perhaps unfinished or damaged, was repaired: some of the faces in the paintings were retouched with pink cheeks and heavy eyebrows typical of the nineteenth-century Qajar style, the folios were numbered and remargined on imported Russian paper dated 1832, and the original two volumes were conflated into one. A photograph taken in Tehran at the end of the nineteenth century by the Armenian photographer Antoine Sevruguin shows the bound volume open to one of the illustrated pages.



Figure 17.5.4.5: Painting of "Bahram Gur Hunting with Azada" from the Great Mongol *Shahnama*. By 1931, Georges Demotte had sold this folio from the Great Mongol *Shahnama* to Edward W. Forbes, director of the Fogg Museum at Harvard University (**Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum**, Gift of Edward W. Forbes, 1957.193)

The Tahmasp *Shahnama* is given to an Ottoman sultan

The Tahmasp *Shahnama* had a different trajectory. It remained prized at Tahmasp's court for a few years, as the court librarian Dust Muhammad extolled its painting of "**The Court of Kayumars**" in an album preface written in 1544, and two illustrated folios

were replaced for unknown reasons. But then in 1566 Tahmasp, who had apparently tired of painting and dispersed his royal workshop, decided to give the manuscript to the Ottoman sultan Selim II to mark his succession. Tahmasp sent the *Shahnama* at the head of a long camel train along with a Qurʾan manuscript attributed to the hand of Prophet's son-in-law ʿAli ibn Abi Talib, books chosen to emphasize the shah's royal and religious pedigree and show up his rival as a mere parvenu.



Figure 17.5.4.6: Nakkaş Osman, "Presentation of Gifts by the Safavid Ambassador, Shahquili, to Sultan Selim II at Edirne in 1568," from Seyyid Lokman, Sehname-i Selim Han. Istanbul, Topkapi Palace Library A3595, fol. 53b-54a (Topkapi Palace Museum Library)

The Ottomans got the message, and their reception of the embassy and its gifts was just as orchestrated. They produced their own richly illustrated dynastic histories, including one with a painting showing the enthroned Selim loftily accepting the gifts from groveling ambassadors as a form of entitled tribute rather than an exchange between equals.

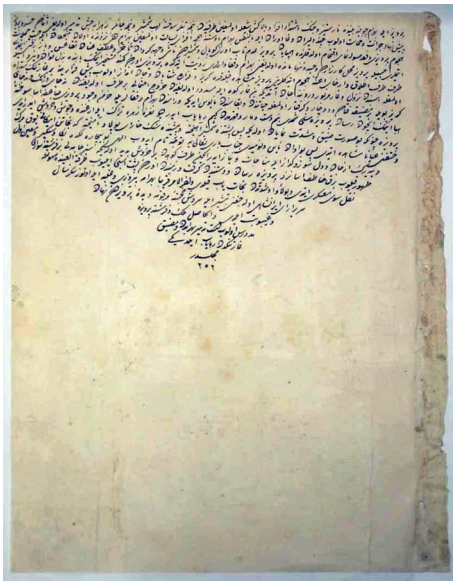


Figure 17.5.4.7: Commentaries by Mehmed ʿArif Efendi, added on a separate sheet and pasted into the Tahmasp *Shahnama* (opposite the painting of "The Angel Surush rescues Khusraw Parviz," attributed to Muzaffar ʻAli), from the *Shahnama* of Shah Tahmasp I (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran, c. 1530–35, opaque watercolor, ink, silver, and gold on paper, 34.3 cm high (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art** 1970.301.73)

The Ottomans sequestered the Tahmasp *Shahnama* in their royal library. It may have been examined occasionally, as details of the Safavid paintings are occasionally repeated in Ottoman manuscripts, but the lack of fingerprints, smudges, creases, and other marks show that few people consulted the volume. One exception was Mehmed ʿArif Efendi, keeper of guns at the court treasury, who added synoptic commentaries about the paintings in Ottoman Turkish in 1800–01. Written on polished sheets that were glued into the manuscript opposite the illustrated pages, these synopses suggest that readers at the Ottoman court, which

by this point used Ottoman Turkish, merely flipped through the Persian text, looking only at the paintings.



Figure 17.5.4.8: By 1931, Georges Demotte had sold this folio from the Great Mongol *Shahnama*, photographed bound in the manuscript in Tehran in the nineteenth century, to Edward W. Forbes, director of the Fogg Museum at Harvard University. Folio from the Great Mongol *Shahnama* with "Bahram Gur Hunting with Azada," c. 1335 (Il-Khanid dynasty, Tabriz, Iran), ink, opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 49.3 x 40.2 cm (**Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum**, Gift of Edward W. Forbes, 1957.193)

Cutting up the Great Mongol *Shahnama*

The situation for these and many other illustrated manuscripts changed dramatically at the turn of the twentieth century with political upheavals in the Islamic lands and the growing power of Europe and the art market there. Impoverished courtiers apparently filched manuscripts from royal libraries and sold them to European and American dealers and collectors who had developed a taste for richly illustrated texts. The Tahmasp *Shahnama* was the first of the two manuscripts to go. By 1903 it had moved, perhaps via Iran, to Paris where it entered the collection of Baron Edmund de Rothschild.

The Great Mongol *Shahnama* left a few years later, and by 1910 it was in the hands of the Belgian collector Georges Demotte. Unable to sell the whole manuscript, perhaps because of the looming threat of war in Europe, Demotte decided to cut it up and hawk the folios separately to collectors who could display them framed, hanging on the wall. Demotte was faced with a problem, however, as some folios had paintings on both sides.

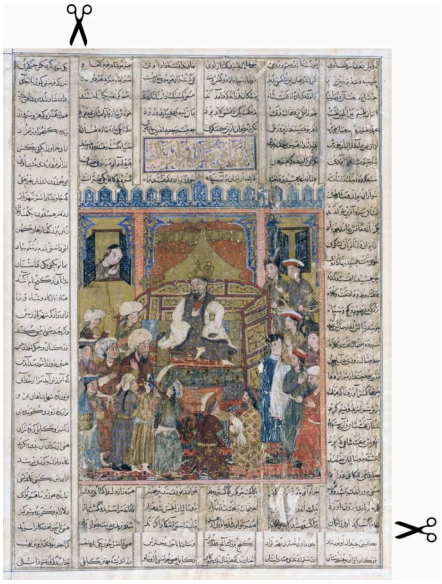


Figure 17.5.4.9: A page from the Great Mongol *Shahnama* that has been abraded while being split from the original reverse side of the folio. It is now pasted into a page with text from another part of the epic (scissor icons indicate the edges of the top sheet of paper). It was purchased from Demotte, Inc in 1923. "Zahhak Enthroned," from the Great Mongol *Shahnama*, c. 1330–40 (Il-Khanid dynasty, Tabriz, Iran), ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper, 24.3 x 19.7 cm (Freer Gallery of Art, F1923.5)

To maximize his profits, he had the two sides of the folio pulled apart and then remounted the pages separately (such as "Zahhak enthroned" and "Faridun mourning his son") or had the detached paintings pasted onto other folios (such as "Faridun goes to Iraj's palace and mourns").



Figure 17.5.4.10: These two paintings were originally on different sides of the same folio. To maximize his profits, Demotte pulled the folio apart and in doing so damaged the pages. The page on the left, much abraded but intact, is now pasted to a back side with unrelated text about Kay Khusraw's war. The painting shown on the right has no original text around it and is now pasted onto a folio with irrelevant text about Siyavush. Left: "Faridun mourns the coffin of his son Iraj," from the Great Mongol *Shahnama*, c. 1330–40 (Il-Khanid dynasty, Tabriz, Iran), ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper, 59.5 x 40 cm (**Sackler Gallery of Art** S1986.101); right: "Faridun goes to Iraj's palace and mourns," from the Great Mongol *Shahnama*, c. 1330–40 (Il-Khanid dynasty, Tabriz, Iran), ink, opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 59.3 x 40.1 cm (**Sackler Gallery of Art** S1986.100).

In doing so, he damaged some of the pages. Many of them are abraded because of the paper sheets that were temporarily glued on to help separate the two sides of the folio. In a few cases, parts of the folio, including the painted area, were damaged. Some entire pages or folios may have been destroyed. All together, Demotte is known to have sold 58 illustrated folios and a handful of text folios that were attached to them so that collectors could frame a double-page spread to resemble an open book. The

rest of this magnificent manuscript, with some of the most emotional scenes ever produced in Persian painting, is missing, likely destroyed.

The dispersal of the Tahmasp *Shahnama*

The Tahmasp *Shahnama* again followed a different course. Two years after the death of Baron Rothschild's son Maurice in 1957, the manuscript, intact with all of its 258 paintings, was sold to the American magnate and bibliophile Arthur A. Houghton, Jr. who commissioned the American scholars Martin Dickson and Stuart Cary Welch to prepare a lavish monograph that reproduced all 258 illustrated pages at full size. To make the plates for publication, the volume had to be unbound, a step that presaged its dispersal.



Figure 17.5.4.11: One of the original 76 folios from the Tahmasp *Shahnama* that Houghton donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1970. Folio 708b showing "The Angel Surush rescues Khusraw Parviz," from the *Shahnama* of Shah Tahmasp I (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran,, c. 1530–35, attributed to Muzaffar 'Ali, ink, opaque watercolor, silver, and gold on paper, 47.3 x 31.4 cm (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art** 1970.301.73)

Small groups of paintings, now framed in silk mats, were exhibited starting in 1962 at the bibliophilic Grolier Club in New York, of which Houghton was president. At this time the international art market was heating up, and works of Middle Eastern, particularly Persian, art were in high demand. Empress Farah of Iran was a major collector, and texts like the *Shahnama* that reflect the glories of Iranian kingship were particularly popular in this imperial era. Houghton, who was in the midst of divorcing his third wife and marrying his fourth, began to auction off his rare books. In 1970 when The Metropolitan Museum of Art celebrated its centennial, Houghton, then chairman of the board, donated 76 illustrated folios from the Tahmasp *Shahnama* to it. He needed to establish a tax basis for his donation, and beginning in 1976, individual folios appeared for sale on the market. The first seven comprised works by all the major painters that Dickson and Welch assigned to the manuscript, thereby establishing a unit price for works by different hands.

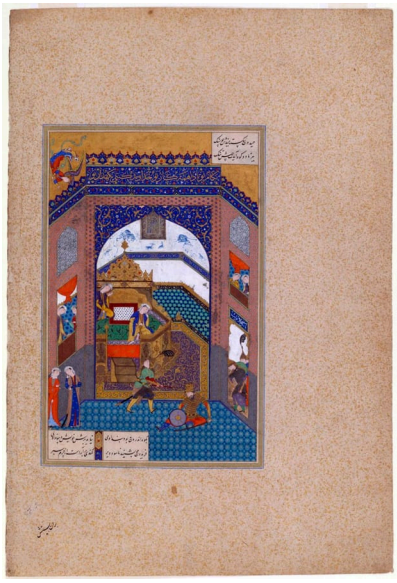


Figure 17.5.4.12: Folio from the Tahmasp *Shahnama* that was sold in 1977 to the British Rail Pension Fund and then resold at auction in 1996 to the Freer Gallery of Art. "Faridun strikes down Zahhak," from the *Shahnama* of Shah Tahmasp I (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran, c. 1525, ink opaque watercolor, and gold on paper, 27.2 x 17.4 cm (**Freer Gallery of Art** F1996.2)

More sales followed, some to connoisseurs like Prince Saddrudin Aga Khan who acquired what is regarded as the finest painting in the manuscript, "The Court of Kayumars," but others (such as "Faridun strikes down Zahhak") went to investors such as the British Rail Pension Fund.

The manuscript's peregrinations did not end there. Following the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the art market changed and uproar over the manuscript's crass dismemberment increased. After Houghton's death in 1990, his son decided to sell intact the carcass of the manuscript, including its binding and 118 remaining paintings. Complex negotiations through the London dealer Oliver Hoare led to an arrangement in 1994 with the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran to trade the manuscript's remains for a 1953 Willem de Kooning painting, *Woman III*, a large oil of a standing nude purchased by Empress Farah but considered distasteful in the Islamic Republic. In a scene worthy of a Graham Greene thriller, the trade-off took place one rainy night on the tarmac of Vienna airport. The manuscript, disbound and deprived of its finest paintings, returned to its homeland where it was feted as a national treasure.

Reconstructing the manuscripts today

It is impossible to undo the damage suffered in dismembering these manuscripts, but scholars have pursued several strategies to help us appreciate some of their original glories. Each approach brings different benefits, but also entails certain limitations. Exhibitions of disbursed folios allows viewers to compare folios side by side, especially important in the case of the Great Mongol *Shahnama* in which the individual paintings differ so widely. But some museums are prohibited from lending, and few would risk sending all of their folios from one manuscript at a single go.

Another approach is to produce a handsome monograph with full-size color illustrations of all the folios, as Sheila Canby did with the **Tahmasp** *Shahnama* to celebrate the poem's millennium in 2010. The book showcases the wonders of the images, but privileges paintings over poetry and downplays the manuscript as the integral work of art. Calligraphers, heirs to two centuries of tradition in transcribing this text, wanted to have the lines describing the action frame the painting. To do so, they manipulated the layout.

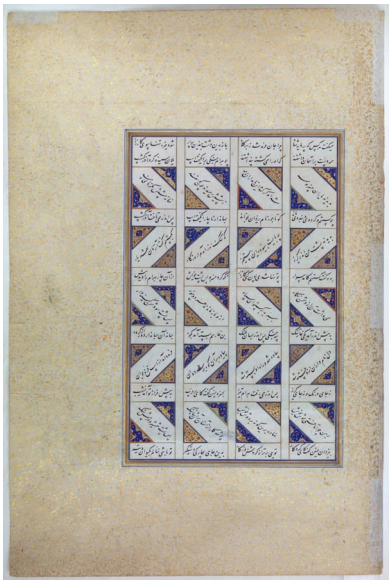


Figure 17.5.4.13: Folio 708a, front side of the folio with "The Angel Surush rescues Khusraw Parviz" shown above. The calligrapher needed to stretch out the text and wrote some of the lines on the diagonal so that the appropriate verses fell around the painting on the back side of the folio (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art** 1970.301.73)

In the case of the "The Angel Surush rescues Khusraw Parviz," for example, the calligrapher wrote some of the lines on the front side of the folio diagonally so that the page contains only 12 lines of text instead of the standard 22, and the couplets describing the angel's descent fall next to the painting on the reverse. The diagonal layout signals to readers that an illustration is approaching and heightens their anticipation in turning the page.

A digital reconstruction of the manuscript would allow the reader to sense the rhythm while flipping the pages, but such an enterprise is exceedingly difficult given that this manuscript is divided between two major institutions in the U.S. and Iran, with additional folios scattered among dozens of public institutions and private collectors, with some still changing ownership. Furthermore, books in the Islamic lands were never meant to be seen flat, as the bindings allow them to be opened only 110 degrees. Instead, books were read three-quarters open while supported on a cradle or stand. So images of a two-page spread flat on a computer screen directly in front of viewers are distorted and do not convey the original aspect of reading the book. Nevertheless, all of these approaches help us to visually reconstruct these glorious illustrated books, in the words of the Safavid chronicler Dust Muhammad, the likes of which the celestial spheres have never seen.

Notes:

1. For the Great Mongol *Shahnama*, we cannot say exactly how large the folios were since it was remargined, but the written area is more than twice that of the Tahmasp *Shahnama* (1160 vs 486 sq. cm.) The larger area of writing in the Great Mongol *Shahnama* allowed for more columns (six vs. four) and more lines (31 vs. 22) per page.

Additional resources

The Court of the Gayumars (Kayumars), Smarthistory video

Folio from a *Shahnama*, The Bier of Iskandar (Alexander the Great), Smarthistory video

Read more about "Bahram Gur in a Peasant's House," a folio from the so-called *Second Small Shahnama*

Read more about "Bahram Gur Fights the Karg (Horned Wolf)," from the Great Mongol *Shahnama*

How a page is split, short video from The Morgan Library and Museum

Sheila Blair, "Reading a Painting: Sultan-Muhammad's *The Court of Gayumars*," in *The Empires of the Near East and India: Source Studies of the Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal Literate Communities*, ed. Hani Khafipour (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019): 525–38.

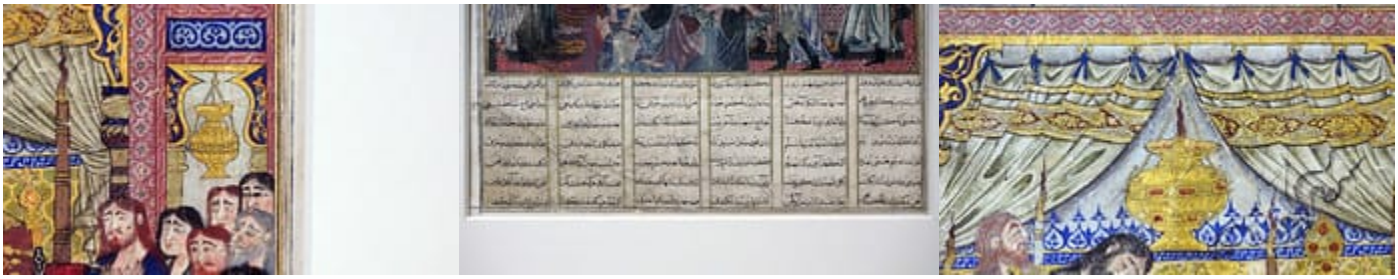
Sheila R. Canby, *The* Shahnama *of Shah Tahmasp: the Persian Book of Kings* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014).

Martin B. Dickson and Stuart Cary Welch, *The Houghton Shahnama* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

Oleg Grabar and Sheila Blair, *Epic Images and Contemporary History: The Illustrations of the Great Mongol Shah-Nama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

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Click on image to enlarge (External link)

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17.5.5: Folio from a Shahnama, The Bier of Iskandar (Alexander the Great)

by DR. MASSUMEH FARHAD, FREER GALLERY OF ART and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

YouTube Video

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

View this YouTube Video online

Video 17.5.5.1: The Bier of Iskandar (Alexander the Great), folio from the Great Mongol Shahnama (Il-Khanid dynasty, Tabriz, Iran), c. 1330, ink, opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 57.6 x 39.7 cm (Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, purchase — Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1938.3). Speakers: Dr. Massumeh Farhad, Chief Curator and The Ebrahimi Family Curator of Persian, Arab, and Turkish Art, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution and Dr. Steven Zucker.

Additional resources:

This folio at the Freer Gallery of Art

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



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17.5.6: The Court of Gayumars

by DR. NANCY DEMERDASH, DR. FILIZ ÇAKIR PHILLIP, CURATOR, AGA KHAN MUSEUM and DR. MICHAEL CHAGNON, CURATOR, AGA KHAN MUSEUM

YouTube Video

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Video 17.5.6.1: Sultan Muhammad (attributed), *The Court of Kayumars* (Safavid: Tabiz, Iran), c. 1524–1525, from the Shah Tahmasp Shahnameh, c. 1524–35, opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper, 45 x 30 cm (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto) speaker: Dr. Michael Chagnon, Curator, Aga Khan Museum and Dr. Steven Zucker

YouTube Video

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

View this YouTube Video online

Video 17.5.6.2: Sultan Muhammad (attributed), *The Court of Kayumars* (Safavid: Tabiz, Iran), c. 1524–1525, from the Shah Tahmasp Shahnameh, c. 1524–35, opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper, 45 x 30 cm (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto) speakers: Dr. Filiz Çakir Phillip, Curator, Aga Khan Museum and Dr. Steven Zucker



Figure 17.5.6.1: Whole page left, and detail, right: Sultan Muhammad, *The Court of Gayumars*, c.1522, 47 x 32 cm, opaque watercolor, ink, gold, silver on paper, folio 20v, *Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp I* (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto)

The Shahnama

This sumptuous page, The Court of Gayumars (also spelled Kayumars— see top of page, details below and large image **here**), comes from an illuminated manuscript of the Shahnama (Book of Kings)—an epic poem describing the history of kingship in Persia (what is now Iran). Because of its blending of painting styles from both Tabriz and Herat (see map below), its luminous pigments, fine detail, and complex imagery, this copy of the Shahnama stands out in the history of the artistic production in Central Asia.

The Shahnama was written by Abu al-Qāsim Ferdowsi around the year 1000 and is a masterful example of Persian poetry. The epic chronicles kings and heroes who pre-date the introduction of Islam to Persia as well as the human experiences of love, suffering, and death. The epic has been copied countless times—often with elaborate illustrations (see another example **here**).

Safavid patronage

This particular manuscript of the Shahnama was begun during the first years of the 16th century for the first Safavid dynastic ruler, Shah Ismail I, but was completed under the direction of his son, Shah Tahmasp I in the northern Persian city of Tabriz (see map below). The Safavid dynastic rulers claimed to descend from Sufi shaikhs—mystical leaders from Ardabīl, in northwestern Iran. The name "Safavid" stems from one particular ancestral Sufi, named Shaykh Safi al-Din (literally translated as "purity of the religion"). Over a two-hundred-year span starting in 1501, the Safavids controlled large parts of what is today Iran and Azerbaijan (see map below). The Safavids actively commissioned the building of public architectural complexes such as mosques (image below), and they were patrons of the arts of the book. In fact, manuscript illumination was central to Safavid royal patronage of the arts.

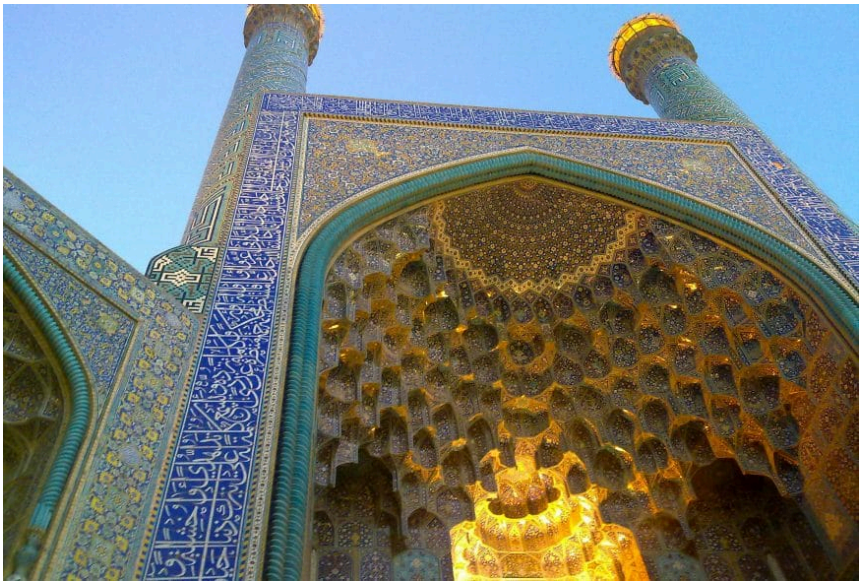


Figure 17.5.6.2: The Imam Mosque (formerly Masjed-e Shah) was built for a later Safavid ruler during the 17th century, Isfahan, Iran. photo: **Ladsgroup**, GNU Free Documentation License

Depicting figures

It is often assumed that images that include human and animal figures, as seen in the detail below, are forbidden in Islam. Recent scholarship, however, highlights that throughout the history of Islam, there have been periods in which iconoclastic tendencies waxed and waned.[1] That is to say, at specific moments and places, the representation of human or animal figures was tolerated to varying degrees.



Figure 17.5.6.3: Detail, Sultan Muhammad, The Court of Gayumars, c. 1522, 47 x 32 cm, opaque watercolor, ink, gold, silver on paper, folio 20v, *Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp I* (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto)

There is a long figural tradition in Persia—even after the introduction of Islam—that is perhaps most evident in book illustration. It is also important to note that, unlike the neighboring Ottoman Empire to the west who were Sunni and in some ways more orthodox, the Safavids subscribed to the Shi'i sect of Islam.



Figure 17.5.6.4

Two centers of culture

Although it is widely recognized that the conventions of what is sometimes termed "classical"[2] Persianate painting had become established by the fourteenth century, it is in the reign of Shah Tahmasp I that we see the most dramatic advancements in illumination and the arts of the book more generally.[3] His patronage of this specific art form is in part due to his own painting studies in Herat (in the western region of present-day Afghanistan) and Tabriz (in the northwestern region of present-day Iran), under Bihzad and Sultan Muhammad, respectively.[4] Both cities were major centers for the production of manuscript illuminations. While the entire manuscript of the *Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp I* consists of approximately 759 illustrated folios and 258 miniatures all produced over the span of several years,[5] this particular miniature is attributed to the workshop of Sultan Muhammad, according to Dust Muhammad, an artist and historian from this period.[6] In 1568, this lavish Shahnameh was given

as a gift by Shah Tahmasp I to the Ottoman Sultan, Selim II.[7]



Figure 17.5.6.5: *Nasta'liq* (detail), Sultan Muhammad, The Court of Gayumars, c. 1522, 47 x 32 cm, opaque watercolor, ink, gold, silver on paper, folio 20v, *Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp I* (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto)

King of the world

There are several interpretive issues to keep in mind when analyzing Persianate paintings. As with many of the workshops of early modern West Asia, producing a page such as the Court of Gayumars often entailed the contributions of many artists. It is also important to remember that a miniature painting from an illuminated manuscript should not be thought of in isolation. The individual pages that we today find in museums, libraries, and private collections must be understood as but one sheet of a larger book—with its own history, conditions of production, and dispersement. To make matters even more complex, the relationship of text to image is rarely straightforward in Persianate manuscripts. Text and image, within these illuminations, do not always mirror each other.[8] Nevertheless, the framed calligraphic *nasta'liq* (hanging)—the Persian text at the top and bottom of the frame (image above) can be roughly translated as follows:

When the sun reached the lamb constellation,[9] when the world became glorious,
When the sun shined from the lamb constellation to rejuvenate the living beings entirely,
It was then when Gayumars became the King of the World.
He first built his residence in the mountains.
His prosperity and his palace rose from the mountains, and he and his people wore leopard pelts.
Cultivation began from him, and the garments and food were ample and fresh.[10]

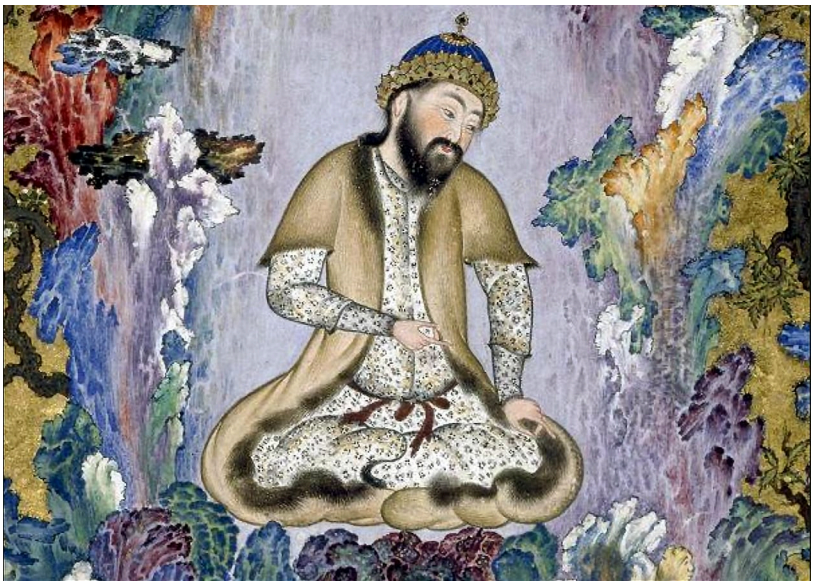


Figure 17.5.6.6: King Gayumars (detail), Sultan Muhammad, The Court of Gayumars, c. 1522, 47 x 32 cm, opaque watercolor, ink, gold, silver on paper, folio 20v, *Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp I* (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto).

Dense with detail

In this folio (page), we can see some parallels between the content of the calligraphic text and the painting itself. Seated in a cross-legged position, as if levitating within this richly vegetal and mountainous landscape, King Gayumars rises above his courtiers, who are gathered around at the base of the painting. According to legend, King Gayumars was the first king of Persia, and he ruled at a time when people clothed themselves exclusively in leopard pelts, as both the text and the represented subjects' speckled garments indicate.



Figure 17.5.6.7: King Gayumars, Siyamak, and Hushang (detail), Sultan Muhammad, The Court of Gayumars, c. 1522, 47 x 32 cm, opaque watercolor, ink, gold, silver on paper, folio 20v, *Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp I* (Safavid), Tabriz, Iran (Aga Khan Museum, Toronto)

Perched on cliffs beside the King are his son, Siyamak (left, standing), and grandson Hushang (right, seated).[11] Onlookers can be seen to surreptitiously peer out from the scraggly, blossoming branches onto King Gayumars from the upper left and right. The miniature's spatial composition is organized on a vertical axis with the mountain behind the king in the distance, and the garden below in the foreground. Nevertheless, there are multiple points of perspective, and perhaps even multiple moments in time—rendering a scene dense with details meant to absorb and enchant the viewer.



Figure 17.5.6.8: Sutra Box with Dragons amid Clouds, c. 1403-24 (Yongle period, Ming dynasty), 14 x 12.7 x 40.6 cm, red lacquer with incised decoration inlaid with gold; damascened brass lock and key (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

One might see stylistic similarities between the swirling blue-gray clouds floating overhead with pictorial representations in Chinese art (image above); this is no coincidence. Persianate artists under the Safavids regularly incorporated visual motifs and techniques derived from Chinese sources.[12] While the intense pigments of the rocky terrain seem to fade into the lush and verdant animal-laden garden below, a gold sky canopies the scene from above. This piece—in all its density color, detail, and sheer exuberance—is a testament to the longstanding cultural reverence for Ferdowsi's epic tale and the unparalleled craftsmanship of both Sultan Muhammad and Shah Tahmasp's workshops.

Notes

1. See Christiane Gruber, "Between Logos (Kalima) and Light (Nūr): Representations of the Prophet Muhammad in Islamic Painting," *Muqarnas* 16 (2009), pp. 229-260; Finbarr B. Flood, "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum," *The Art Bulletin* 84, 4 (December 2002), pp. 641-659; Christiane Gruber, "The Koran Does Not Forbid Images of the Prophet," ***Newsweek*** (January 9, 2015).

2. For a helpful analysis of the historiographic ascription of the term 'classical' to Persian painting and the cultural hierarchy that was established largely by scholar-collectors in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Christiane Gruber, "Questioning the 'Classical' in Persian Painting: Models and Problems of Definition," in the *Journal of Art Historiography* 6 (June 2012), pp. 1-25.

3. David J. Roxburgh, "Micrographia: Toward a Visual Logic of Persianate Painting," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 43 (Spring 2003), pp. 12-30.

4. Sheila Canby affirms Stuart Cary Welch's estimate that it took Sultan Muhammad and his workshop three years to complete the Court of Gayumars illustration. Sheila Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art, 1501-1722* (New York: Abrams, 2000), p. 51.

5. David J. Roxburgh, "On the Brink of Tragedy: The Court of Gayumars from Shah Tahmasp's Shahnama ('Book of Kings'), Sultan Muhammad," in Christopher Dell, ed., *What Makes a Masterpiece: Artists, Writers and Curators on the World's Greatest Works of Art* (London; New York: Thames & Hudson, 2010), pp. 182-185; 182. The text was subsequently possessed by Baron Edmund de Rothschild and then sold to Arthur A. Houghton Jr, who in turn sold pages of the book individually.

6. Roxburgh, "Micrographia: Toward a Visual Logic of Persianate Painting," p. 19. "In the Persianate painting, however, image follows after word in a linear sequence; the text introduces and follows after the image, but it is not actually read when the image is being viewed...In the Persian book the act of seeing is initiated by a process of remembering the narrative just told. Moreover, that text does not prepare the viewer for what will be seen in the painting."

7. This expression denotes the beginning of spring.

8. I am grateful to Dr. Alireza Fatemi for generously providing this translation.

9. Roxburgh, “On the Brink of Tragedy,” p. 182.

Additional resources:

The Court of Gayumars at the Aga Khan Museum

Large image here (click for full-size)

Biography of the poet Abu al-Qāsim Ferdowsi, Encyclopaedia Iranica

The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp, Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Art of the Safavids before 1600, Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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17.5.7: Iconoclasm in the Netherlands in the Sixteenth Century

by DR. SASKIA BERANEK



Figure 17.5.7.1: Pieter Jansz. Saenredam, *Interior of Saint Bavo, Haarlem*, 1631, oil on panel, 82.9 x 110.5 cm (Philadelphia Museum of Art)

Different church interiors — Calvinist (Protestant) and Catholic

In paintings by seventeenth-century Dutch artist **Pieter Saenredam**, the interiors of Calvinist churches often appear as blank, sterile spaces with white walls, clear glass windows, and a notable lack of decoration. We know from his meticulous preparatory drawings that Saenredam was a precise artist, and although he sometimes did make changes to the interiors he represented, they were by and large emblematic of what Dutch Calvinist sacred space was like. By contrast, Pieter Neefs's contemporary paintings of Flemish Catholic religious spaces — which contain a profusion of small altars and devotional artwork — reflect a distinctly different attitude about decoration, materiality, and piety. The difference between Calvinist and Catholic churches persists to this day.



Figure 17.5.7.2: Pieter Neefs, *Interior of a Gothic Church*, 1606, oil on copper, 38 x 56 cm

Breaking idols

Some of these differences can be attributed to two intertwined events of the sixteenth century that transformed the Low Countries (a lowland region in northern Europe that includes Belgium and the Netherlands): the prioritization of the written word in the theological reforms of the **Protestant Reformation** and the Iconoclasm (or *Beeldenstorm*) of 1566. The word "iconoclasm" refers to any deliberate destruction of images. Instances of iconoclasm can be found from the ancient world to contemporary events, such as the 2015 destruction of **Palmyra** in Syria by ISIS or the elimination of the **Bamiyan Buddhas** by the Taliban in 2001.



Figure 17.5.7.3: Workshop of Adam Dircksz, *Prayer nut with The Nativity and The Adoration of the Magi*, c. 1500 – 30, boxwood, silver, and gold, diameter 4.8cm (**Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam**)

Here, iconoclasm specifically refers to the events of 1566 in an area that we now know as Belgium and the Netherlands. Prior to 1566, most churches in this region would have been largely encrusted with ornament: guilds commissioned altarpieces for their chapels while private patrons donated memorial paintings, endowed tomb sites, and donated elaborate shrines or ritual vessels. Piety was made visible in the material culture of the church, paralleling a northern European explosion in personal devotional artwork in the form of manuscripts, woodcut prints, carved boxwood shrines and prayer beads, and small paintings.

Protestant change

The sixteenth century was a time of significant religious change. According to legend, in 1516, Luther nailed his 95 Theses to a church door in Wittenberg and criticized what he perceived as corrupt practices within the Catholic Church. Following Luther, numerous other Northern European reformers shifted away from the Catholic Church centered in Rome. Among other more systemic and doctrinal issues, the reformers also had complicated relationships with religious imagery.

Controversy over the nature of religious images was not new in the sixteenth century. The same tension had rocked the **Byzantine Empire** in the eighth and ninth centuries. Like the earlier Byzantine case, strict reformers believed images were inherently sinful.

The northern humanist Desiderius Erasmus noted that the physical veneration of an object made it an active agent and turned it into an idol, pushing the objects and images traditionally at the heart of northern European piety into the zone of the idolatrous. Therefore, to use an image as part of your prayers creates idols — the very sin explicitly condemned in the Second Commandment, which reads:

> **You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. *Exodus 20:3***



Figure 17.5.7.4: Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Portrait of Martin Luther as an Augustinian monk*, 1520 engraving, 14.4cm × 9.7cm (**Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam**)

Luther himself was not entirely anti-image, stating that if there was no sin in the heart, there was no risk in seeing images with your eyes. However, the faithful needed to remove the roots of sin in themselves; they needed to worship God and not a material object which takes the place of God. Luther later clarified that what the second commandment prohibited was images of God; images of saints or crucifixes were not condemned by him as they serve as memorials.

By 1566, the debate about the line between “an image of a religious figure or story that aided in devotional practice” and “an idolatrous object which took the place of God in the sinful heart of the viewer” had been heavily contested for close to fifty years. The precise nature of the debate varied widely based on location, and violence against images erupted at different times in different cities throughout Germany, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Belgium, and England.

The debate about the nature of images seems abstract and it is impossible to know to what extent the theological details were the motivations of any specific iconoclast. In the case of the *Beeldenstorm* of 1566, we can focus on a few factors to more closely examine one particular case and the intersection of tensions that led to violence. Studying the *Beeldenstorm* is complicated by the fact that it took many different forms depending on the local conditions and the range of responses to both religious and political circumstance.



Figure \({17{.}5{.}7{.}\eatSpaces{5\): European territories under the rule of the Philip II of Spain around 1580, with the Spanish Netherlands in light green (**public domain**)

Church, state, and other complex issues

Debates over religious imagery occurred at the same time as other complex disputes. Political tensions were running high. At the time, most of the land that now constitutes The Netherlands and Belgium was the Spanish Netherlands — an assortment of territories brought together through marriages and dynastic alliances and owing fealty to the King of Spain.

Through the abdication of the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain, Charles V, in 1556 and the ascension of Philip II to the throne of Spain, Netherlanders were becoming increasingly unhappy. The Spanish Crown supported an aggressive Catholic identity and agenda and vigorously pursued heretics (anyone not practicing Catholicism in line with the teachings of the Church in Rome).

The Spanish Inquisition existed specifically to root out those who were not Catholic enough. Though we tend to think of the Inquisition as something confined to the Iberian peninsula (Spain and Portugal), it also had a significant impact on Northern Europe. A branch of the Inquisition operated there which was overseen by Margaret of Parma (the illegitimate daughter of Philip II who had been appointed regent and reported to her father). In response to petitions filed by the local nobility, Margaret ended the Inquisition in 1564 in an attempt to broker peace and avoid outright rebellion. A group who came to be called the *Gueux* brought further petitions in 1566 to try to end ongoing persecution. The tensions surrounding religious persecution were made worse by several bad harvests, prolonged and widespread famine, particularly harsh winters, and new taxes.

“Hedge preachers” as rebellious leaders

Religious, political, and economic issues were closely intertwined. To a Flemish Protestant, the Spanish Catholic Crown represented religious and political oppression. This was made worse by the widening cultural and linguistic gap between the Spanish Crown and its Flemish subjects. These tensions were brought to a boil by *hagenprekers*, or “hedge preachers,” wandering figures who whipped up anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic sentiment in sermons held outdoors, and usually outside of city walls and therefore beyond easy jurisdiction.



Figure Extra close brace or missing open brace : Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Sermon of Saint John the Baptist*, 1566, 95 × 160.5 cm (**Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest**)

Several scholars have argued that Pieter Bruegel's painting, *The Sermon of Saint John the Baptist,* represents this biblical event as if it were happening in the current political climate. John the Baptist, here cast as a hedge preacher, almost disappears into the crowd; Jesus, who he is introducing, is even less noticeable. Typically for Bruegel, the crowd of people gathered to listen to the speaker are from all walks of life and dressed in contemporary Flemish clothing.



Figure 17.5.7.7: Detail, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Sermon of Saint John the Baptist*, 1566 (**Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest**)



Figure \({17{.}5{.}7{.}\eatSpaces{8} \endSpaces}\): Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Sermon of Saint John the Baptist*, 1566, detail (**Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest**)

One face stands out in the crowd because he unexpectedly faces the viewer: a man in a black hat having his palm read in the foreground. He would have been identifiable to contemporary viewers as dressed in a Spanish mode, and fortune telling would have been seen as corrupt and popish.

The Spaniard alone ignores the humble John the Baptist in favor of giving in to superstitious practices, while two monks in the front right look on with expressions that could be interpreted as jeers and skepticism. As a result, Bruegel's painting possibly functions simultaneously as a biblical scene and a contemporary political polemic, containing just enough ambiguity to not ruffle Inquisitorial feathers.

Iconoclastic riots

The hedge preachers were at least partially responsible for the ignition of the *Beeldenstorm*, the sudden outbreak of violence against religious images that began in the summer of 1566 and spread throughout the Low Countries. In response to their anti-Catholic preaching, violence began in West Flanders and radiated outward.

In some towns, it was outright mob violence: groups of people burst into churches, smashing windows and sculptures. In other cities, the destruction of religious images was systematic and either openly or covertly supported by the local government. In some cases, the iconoclasts and the local Catholic Church officials negotiated for the survival of certain artworks.



Figure 17.5.7.9: Altar retable of the Jan van Arkel chapel, Utrecht Cathedral (Domkerk). Found behind a false plaster wall during restoration activities in 1919. Dated 15th century, defaced during the Beeldenstorm (photo: **Sailko**, CC BY 3.0)

It was a fever that spread throughout the Low Countries, leaving few towns untouched by the sudden explosion of anti-image sentiment. According to Alistair Duke, the destruction of images functioned as a ritualistic act intended to prove to both Catholics and Protestants that the images were powerless. If images were indeed sacred conduits that connected the faithful to God, they would defend themselves; since it was possible to destroy them, they were therefore earthly vanity and merely distractions from truth.

To destroy the objects and ritually humiliate them was to reject the broader political and religious structures they represented, as well. Sculptures were torn down from their niches, windows were smashed, and altars and shrines were disassembled and burned.

When the sculptures were part of the fabric of the building and could not be easily removed, the heads of the figures were hacked off. Examples reflecting this kind of violence remain visible in churches throughout the Northern Low Countries inside previously Catholic, now Protestant churches.



Figure 17.5.7.10: Jan Luyken, *Beeldenstorm*, 1566, etching, 27cm × w 34.8cm (**Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam**)

Iconoclasm in 1566 was not just the result of doctrinal disagreement about the nature of religious imagery and the interpretation of biblical text. It was instead a response to intertwined issues of politics, religious oppression, and economic factors. It was one spark that helped ignite the flames of the Eighty Years War, a war that ultimately resulted in the split between the northern

Calvinist provinces of the Dutch Republic and the southern Catholic province that remained connected to Spain. As much as the violence of the *Beeldenstorm* itself may have been short-lived, the broader cultural and historical changes that cascaded as a result had permanent and far-reaching consequences.

Additional resources:

Read more about the *Beeldenstorm* in the *Low Countries Historical Review*

David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989).

Alistair Duke, “Calvinists and Papist Idolatry: the Mentality of the Image-breakers in 1566,” in *Dissident identities in the early modern Low Countries*, ed. Pollman and Spicer (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2009).

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17.5.8: Submerged, burned, and scattered- celebrating the destruction of objects in South Asia

by DR. CRISTIN MCKNIGHT SETHI



Figure \({17{.}5{.}8{.}\eatSpaces{1\): Ketaki Sheth, *Girl at Ganpati Immersion, Chowpatty*, 2002, gelatin silver print, 36.8 x 55.9 cm (National Museum of Asian Art, Washington DC)

A photograph by artist Ketaki Sheth depicts a little girl, wearing a lacy floral dress and standing upon the shoulders of a man, perhaps her father, to get a better view of the surrounding crowd that carries a large sculptural image of the Hindu god Ganesha. Sheth captures a moment of stillness during an otherwise boisterous and energetic occasion: the artist brings us above the crowd and into the clouds that backlight the richly adorned body of the elephant-headed deity—remover of obstacles and **son of Shiva** and **Parvati**—on his way toward a body of water for ritual immersion during the annual festival of Ganesha Chaturthi.

Impermanence and belief

The practice of ritually submerging, and thereby destroying, sculptural images of Ganesha during Ganesha Chaturthi represents one of several religious and cultural acts in South Asia which complicate ideas about the value and permanence of material objects. Makers involved in these practices produce objects and artistic depictions with the knowledge that the products of their creative labor are temporary and will be intentionally destroyed or deteriorate over time. In some cases these practices of ritual destruction resonate with ideas about the cyclical nature of time as described in concepts like ***samsara***. In other cases the destruction of an object is symbolic of the removal of evil and the restoration of good in the universe. In still other cases, we find beautifully wrought material objects whose impermanence is embedded in their form and function, much like disposable paper plates.

These examples challenge us to push against the preciousness of objects—an approach that we encounter so often in the study of art—and to rethink the way we value the permanence / impermanence of material things. This call to rethink our valuation of objects is also critical to the decolonizing of the discipline of art history; privileging objects of durable and precious materials over ephemeral works of art (such as things made from unfired clay, paper, or cotton fiber) is in many ways a legacy of British colonial rule on the subcontinent that sought to promote a Eurocentric view and valuation of objects and artistic practices.[1]

For the Ganesha images created in celebration of Ganesha Chaturthi, their destruction is a joyous celebration. Occurring in August or September of each year according to the Hindu lunar calendar, the ritual immersion of Ganesha marks the deity's birth and symbolic return to the earth. [2] According to legend, Ganesha was created from clay by the goddess Parvati and was given an elephant's head after his father, the god Shiva, inadvertently beheaded him. Ganesha Chaturthi celebrates the moment when

the deity received his elephant head, and his ritual immersion in water each year following ten days of rites is a significant event that bestows blessings on devotees.

Immersion as purification

It is not surprising that worshippers laboriously carry sacred sculptural images or *murtis* of Ganesha to local bodies of water for ritual immersion. Water is a symbolic purifier in South Asia and used in numerous religious and cultural practices connected with worshipping Hindu gods and goddesses as well as honoring holy figures, saints, and sacred architecture in **Buddhist**, **Christian**, Jain, **Muslim**, and Sikh beliefs. For the Hindu devotees participating in ritual immersion festivals like Ganesha Chaturthi, the water itself is sacred and ultimately connected to the holiest river in India, the Ganga.[3]



Figure Extra close brace or missing open brace : Ganesh Visarjan at Girgaum Chowpatty, c. 2007 (photo: **Chris**: CC BY 2.0)

Historically, artists made disposable or perishable *murtis* of the god from unfired clay or low-fired terracotta decorated with natural pigments. [4] These images would slowly dissolve in water and eventually be reincorporated into the ecosystem. However, over the last several decades increasingly larger Ganesha images made from synthetic paints, gypsum plaster (plaster of Paris), and plastic ornaments have become popular, and the heavy metals and toxins associated with these raw materials have leached into India's waterways, creating dangerous amounts of pollution. [5] Recently, the Government of India's Central Pollution Control Board established rules requiring that devotees use Ganesha *murtis* made from biodegradable materials (like terracotta) and have encouraged that ritual immersion practices occur in specially-designated water tanks.



Figure 17.5.8.3: Alpana patterns created for the festival of Sankranti. Tirupathi, Andhra Pradesh, India, 2020 (photo: Dr. Cristin McKnight Sethi, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

In addition to annual events like Ganesha Chaturthi, the making of temporary, perishable objects and artistic depictions appear on a daily basis in many parts of India through the creation of decorative floor paintings known by various names including *alpana*, *kollam*, and *rangoli*. [6] Typically made by female members of a household or community using rice flour, chalk, powdered pigments, or flowers, the symmetrical forms of these temporary paintings symbolize divine power. They are intended to sanctify a space, and have ancient origins in goddess worship. [7] For special festivals some women create particularly elaborate floor paintings that last for several months or even up to a year. There are many, however, who treat this practice as a daily ritual with the intention that the painting will be swept clean and remade each morning—the epitome of intangible cultural heritage. [8]





Figure 17.5.8.4: Left: *Rangoli* in chalk (photo: **ramya_aiyappan**, CC BY-NC 2.0) Right: *Rangoli* in chalk and flowers (photo: **McKay Savage**, CC BY 2.0)

Destroying the demon king

A particularly dramatic example of the ritual destruction of objects occurs with sculptural effigies of the demon king Ravana and his demon armies which are burned and physically torn apart during multi-day performances of the *Ramacharitamanas*, the Hindi version of the story of Rama which is especially popular throughout North India and famously performed in the city of Ramnagar. [9] This performance, known locally as *Ramlila*, narrates the story of Rama, an earthly form or *avatar* of the Hindu god Vishnu, who is the beloved king of the city of Ayodhya and husband to Sita, an avatar of the goddess Lakshmi. The *Ramacharitamanas*, similar to the Sanskrit ***Ramayana***, describes the adventures of Rama, his brother Lakshmana, and Sita during their fourteen-year exile from Ayodhya. The story culminates in a series of battles between Rama and the powerful demon king, Ravana, who has abducted Sita and held her captive at his palace in Lanka.

In the final days of the Ramlila performance, sculptural depictions of Ravana and other demons made from bamboo and paper are set ablaze to symbolize their mythological destruction. The most dramatic moment in the Ramlila performance occurs on Dussehra, an important Hindu festival celebrated throughout India, when participants destroy sculptural depictions of Ravana, sometimes 75-feet tall and filled with firecrackers, to mark Rama's victory over the demon king and the ultimate victory of good over evil.



Figure 17.5.8.5: Destruction of a Ravana sculpture during Dusshera at Ranthambore, Sawai Madhopur. Rajasthan, Oct 2019 (photo: **Kandukuru Nagarjun**, CC BY 2.0)

In other parts of India, Dusshera is celebrated as a way to mark the goddess Durga's victory over the buffalo demon Mahishasura, understood by devotees as a mythological act that restores ***dharma*** to the universe. Worshippers celebrate Dusshera by creating elaborate temporary altars or *pandals* for Durga, many of which are then submerged in water on Dusshera, marking the culmination of nine nights of celebration known as *Navratri*. The *pandals* made for the worship or ***puja*** of Durga are most famously created in Bengal where families, neighborhoods, community organizations, and businesses commission elaborate *pandals* that incorporate depictions of iconic architecture and motifs from popular culture. [10]



Figure 17.5.8.6: Durga puja pandal modeled after the Pantheon (photo: **Biswarup Ganguly**, CC BY 3.0)



Figure 17.5.8.7: Raghu Rai, *INDIA, Calcutta, Finally, Durga is brought to the Ganges for immersion*. Magnum Photos PAR156220 © Raghu Rai / Magnum Photos

A photograph by artist Raghu Rai depicts the ritual immersion of Durga during a Dusshera celebration in Kolkata. In Rai's image we see a larger-than-life *murti* of Durga being carried with bamboo poles to the Ganga by several human figures—a scene that parallels depictions of Ganesha Chaturthi. These human devotees work together to hoist the goddess into the river. We see Durga's many arms clearly holding the weapons she uses to vanquish Mahishasura and her lion mount or *vahana* with its mouth agape seated nearby. A nineteenth-century painting of a similar moment suggests earlier practices of this form of ritual immersion. While the focus in the painting is on the elaborately adorned *murti* of Durga and the human devotees who carry her *pandal* in procession, in the foreground of the scene appears loose brushstrokes that hint at water, perhaps a subtle indication of the immersion to come.



Figure 17.5.8.8: Durga Puja: a procession carrying an idol of Durga to honor her victory over evil, 19th century, in *A Collection of Indian costumes, types and occupations*, gouache on mica (**Wellcome Library**, CC BY 4.0)

Flowers and cups



Figure 17.5.8.9: Adornment (*alankara*) of Ganesha murti in a home shrine, Bangalore, 2004 (photo: Dr. Cristin McKnight Sethi, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The practice of ritually submerging or destroying images is not limited to depictions of gods, goddesses, or demons, but even applies to the floral garlands that adorn many sacred images. The practice of *alankara* or adorning a *murti* includes dressing the deity in strands of marigolds, roses, and jasmine flowers. Floral offerings are also used in worship at other religious sites in India including Sufi shrines, Sikh temples, and Christian churches. These flowers are most often tossed into water after their use in religious rites. Once blessed by the divine these floral offerings need to be disposed of in the holiest way possible, either scattered in a sacred river like the Ganga or immersed in a local body of water.



Figure 17.5.8.10: Discarded flowers, Varanasi (Banaras), India, 2011 (photo: **Eric Parker**, CC BY-NC 2.0)

With increased scrutiny over environmental repercussions of such ritual practices, entrepreneurs and designers have begun to collect these discarded flowers and upcycle them into new products. Textile artist Rupa Trivedi and her team at Adiv Pure Nature have created a way to reuse flowers discarded by the Siddhivinayak Hindu temple and the Haji Ali Sufi shrine in Mumbai to create contact-dyed garments and home textiles. In these textiles the temporary floral offerings are made more permanent by imprinting their natural pigments onto cotton and silk fibers. By using water throughout the mordanting and dyeing process, Trivedi maintains the sacred connection to water that is so pivotal to ritual immersion. While Trivedi's textiles give new life to floral offerings that would otherwise decompose into the earth, it is striking that textiles as a medium epitomize intangibility and impermanence:

textiles are objects that break apart through wear and tear, fade under excessive exposure to sunlight, and deteriorate when subjected to bacteria, fungus, or invasive insects.



Figure 17.5.8.11: Detail of fabric by **Adiv Pure Nature** dyed with upcycled marigold flowers

Perhaps the most pervasive example of the regular destruction of impermanent, temporary objects occurs through the culture of food. Ceramic artists all over South Asia produce small vessels from low-fired terracotta to be used for drinking spiced tea known as *masala chai* or yoghurt beverages known as *lassi*s which are sold at roadside stands and eateries. While many vendors of *chai* and *lassi* have taken to glass, paper, plastic, and styrofoam substitutes, there are still some who prefer to use traditional clay cups. The potters who make these hand-thrown vessels do so with the knowledge that these objects will have short lives: they will be thrown to the ground or crushed underfoot after the *chai* or *lassi* has been drunk.



Figure 17.5.8.12: A boy stands in a potter's yard, holding traditional clay cups (photo: **Meena Kadri**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Much of the value of these objects lies in their impermanence and the easy way they return to the earth. While some *chai* or *lassi* cups may enter into museum collections—quintessential repositories of permanent objects—their most potent cultural value and circulation is in their temporary use and ultimate demise. As such these vessels remind us that not all tangible cultural heritage is in need of preservation, and sometimes a community requires, even celebrates, the destruction of cultural objects.



Figure 17.5.8.13: Left: Masala chai in terracotta cups (photo: **Biswarup Ganguly**, CC BY 3.0); Right: Chai vendor, Kolkata (photo: **Nomad Tales**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Notes:

1. For an expanded discussion of colonial valuation of "fine arts" vs. "craft" within the context of unfired clay sculpture see Susan Bean, "The Unfired Clay Sculpture of Bengal in the Artscape of Modern South Asia," in Rebecca M. Brown and Deborah S. Hutton, eds., *A Companion to Asian Art and Architecture* (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2011), 604–628.
2. Ganesha Chaturthi occurs every year on the day of Ananta Caturdasi in the month of Bhadrapada (according to the Chandramana calendar).
3. For more on the sacred nature of the Ganga and its connection to other bodies of water in India, see Diana Eck, *India: A Sacred Geography* (New York: Random House, 2012), 131–188.
4. Clay has been a material of ritual importance on the subcontinent for millennia. See Bean, "The Unfired Clay Sculpture of Bengal," 609.
5. For further discussion of the environmental implications of ritual immersion of synthetic Ganesha images see Dinesh C. Sharma, "Idol immersion poses water pollution threat" in *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* (October 2014, Vol. 12, No. 8): 431; and M. Vikram Reddy and A. Vijay Kumar, "Effects of Ganesh-idol immersion on some water quality parameters of Hussainsagar Lake" in *Current Science*, Vol. 81, No. 11 (10 December 2001): 1412–1413.
6. There are comparable ornamental patterns made on the walls of homes. See for example, Asimakrishna Dasa, *Evening Blossoms: The Temple Tradition of Sanjhi in Vrndavana* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1996).
7. See for example, Stella Kramrisch, "The Art Ritual of Women," in *Unknown India* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1968); and Pupul Jayakar, *The Earthen Drum: An Introduction to the Ritual Arts of Rural India* (New Delhi: National Museum, 1980).
8. Tibetan Buddhist monks are famous for creating similar temporary paintings in the form of sand mandalas. For example, see **monks creating a mandala at the Rubin Museum**.
9. For more on the Ramlila of Ramnagar, see Richard Schechner and Linda Hess, "The Ramlila of Ramnagar" in *The Drama Review: TDR*, September 1977, Vol. 21, No. 3, Annual Performance Issue (September 1977): 51–82; and "**Ramnagar Ramlila: All about the 200-yr-old cultural extravaganza**."
10. For more on Durga Puja pandals and their makers see Bean, "The Unfired Clay Sculpture of Bengal in the Artscape of Modern South Asia," 604–628; Tapati Guha-Thakurta, "From Spectacle to 'Art'" in *ArtIndia* Vol 9, Issue 3 (Quarter 3, 2004): 34–56; Krishna Dutta, *Image-Makers of Kumortuli and the Durga Puja Festival*. New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2016; and Geir Heirestad, "The Durga Puja Business," in *Caste, Entrepreneurship and the Illusions of Tradition: Branding the Potters of Kolkata* (Anthem Press, 2017), 1–6.

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17.5.9: “Creative iconoclasm”- a tale of two monasteries

by CHRISTINE M. BOLLI



Figure 17.5.9.1: Monastery (chapter house, cloister, and refectory) of St. Bernard de Clairvaux, 1133–41, built in Sacramenia, Spain, and today in North Miami Beach, Florida

Conservation, restoration and ruination

Cultural heritage professionals often draw a clear distinction between conservation and restoration. The definition of conservation is closely linked with the idea of preservation—the idea is to salvage cultural artifacts so that they retain the histories that produced them.

Restoration, on the other hand, is seen as the act of replacing components that have fallen into disrepair; it can be seen as a destructive force, or as the salvation of an object from ruination. Even when restorations are done with the best intentions, and with a desire for authenticity, restoration work can alter the historical significance of building. This is especially problematic with medieval cathedrals and monasteries, which often contain an accretion of styles built up through the ages. When doing restoration, which style should be considered the “original”? Which, if any, should be removed? For some time, the Renaissance era was privileged over all others. But this began to change in the mid-nineteenth century, when medieval architecture once again began to be considered beautiful.



Figure 17.5.9.2: 50th Anniversary of the Venice Charter, 2014 Annual Report of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)

In 1964, a group of concerned conservationist professionals from various disciplines gathered from several countries to draw up guidelines in regard to responsible restoration. The document they produced, “Decisions and Resolutions: International Charter for the Conservation and Renovation of Monuments and Sites” is now referred to as The Venice Charter, and it set down rules that should be followed when restoring a historical site or monument.

In the Venice Charter, the principles of authenticity and retention of the historical context were paramount. It states that the process of restoration aims “...to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument.” This goal in turn should be based on “respect for original material and authentic documents. It must stop at the point where conjecture begins.” Following this premise, the Venice Charter declared that reconstructions or replacements of missing parts “must be distinguishable from the original so that restoration does not falsify the artistic or historic evidence.” The charter also held that all significant building contributions from any time period must be considered. The Venice Charter, now almost 55 years old, is still the go-to guide in regard to historic restoration.

Creative iconoclasm

In the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century, restoration often involved the idealized imaginings of the restorer and/or patron—something which British anthropologist Alfred Gell termed “creative iconoclasm.” Creative iconoclasm is essentially when a renovation deviates so far from the original intended form of a building that the building loses its previous meaning and takes on different meaning altogether. Hence, the use of the term iconoclasm (destruction of an image). More recently, art historian Meredith Cohen has written about the “creative interventions” done to medieval structures. They leave in their wake a whole new history, vastly different from what had been recognized for hundreds of years. Two Spanish monasteries purchased by William Randolph Hearst in the late 1920s are prime examples of these overlapping concepts.



Figure 17.5.9.3: William R. Hearst (**Library of Congress**, Harris & Ewing, photographer)

A tale of two monasteries

You may recognize the name William Randolph Hearst (the early twentieth-century newspaper baron and avid art collector), but you may not be aware of the curious case of two Spanish medieval monasteries that made their way to the United States at his behest—the monasteries of **Saint Bernard de Clairvaux** (originally in Sacramenia, Spain, and now partly in Florida), and **Santa María de Óvila** (originally in Guadalajara, Spain, and now partly in California). [1]

Both monasteries were purchased by Hearst and arduously removed from where they had stood in Spain for hundreds of years and relocated to the United States. Both were subsequently left to moulder in fragments—one on each coast of the United States. Decades later, they would be problematically restored, at great monetary and historical cost.

The Search begins — Saint Bernard de Clairvaux

In 1923 Hearst instructed Arthur Byne, architect, art historian, and antiques dealer, to seek out a historic limestone structure. This was a decade before the Spanish Civil War, but Spain had long been experiencing political unrest and climate issues. Over the centuries, medieval Spanish monasteries had suffered the stressors of age and a general lack of religious enthusiasm.

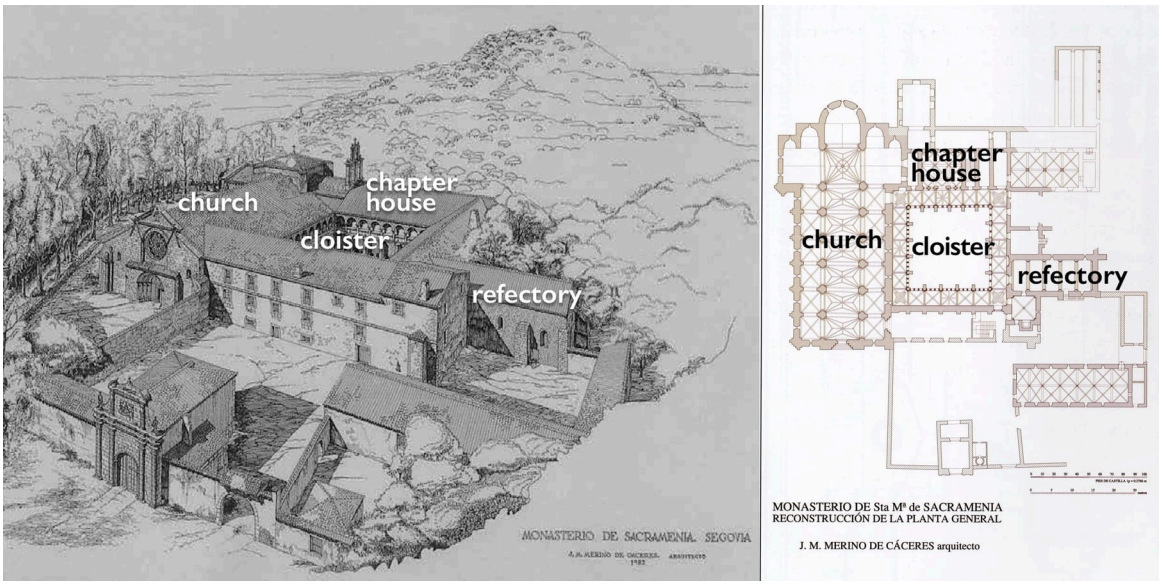


Figure 17.5.9.4: **Perspective drawing** and **plan** of the monastery of Saint Bernard de Clairvaux before the removal to the United States of the cloister, chapter house, and refectory (according to José Miguel Merino de Cáceres, architect, from 1982)



Figure 17.5.9.5: Church façade, Monastery of St. Bernard de Clairvaux, 1133–41, Sacramenia, Spain (before the 1923 removal of several monastic buildings and their reconstruction in North Miami Beach, Florida. The church is still in-situ.)

When Byne came upon the monastery at Sacramenia, it had already experienced a severe fire in the nineteenth century, and, though repaired afterward, the last monk left in 1866. The monastery is Cistercian (a Catholic religious order of monks and nuns), and Cistercian architecture is known for its fine ashlar masonry, harmonious proportions, and restraint in ornamentation. However, there were also regional variations. Parts of the Santa María de Óvila monastery had walls seven feet thick and small, slit windows to defend the complex from Muslim invaders (the Cistercian tendency to build in remote locations made them particularly vulnerable to attack).

In 1923 Byne declared in a letter to Hearst and his architect Julia Morgan, “The monastery is located in one of the most desolate corners of Spain. It is of Cistercian origin, though probably the only twelfth century cloister to be had in Europe today.” The term “to be had” in this quote underlines the sort of smash and grab policy that Hearst, Morgan, and Byne seem to have been abiding by. There was no pretense of buying the monastic buildings (the cloister, chapter house, and refectory) in order to save and preserve them (sometimes this is the motivation cited when a country appropriates the cultural heritage objects of another—one well-known example is the case of the **Elgin Marbles from the Parthenon**).

An offer amount of $35,000 for several components of the monastery was quickly extended by Byne on behalf of Hearst to the current owner, and just as quickly accepted. The idea was for these components to be adapted into part of Hearst’s ever-growing property in San Simeon (generally now known as Hearst Castle in California). The **monastery’s church** itself was not purchased and remains in-situ (in place), however, the thirteenth-century cloister (covered walkway), chapter house (meeting space) and other outbuildings were purchased by Hearst—and subsequently, slowly, removed.

Numerous letters from Byne to Morgan and Hearst reveal the politics involved in taking apart the cloister and other portions of the

monastery. Numerous bribes were offered to keep the removal from being stopped by the government. The project was frequently threatened by the Spanish minister of fine arts; the sale was, in fact, illegal and the press had gotten a hold of the story. Despite this, the minister did not make good on his threats, so the project carried on.

Medieval Spain comes to the United States—in pieces

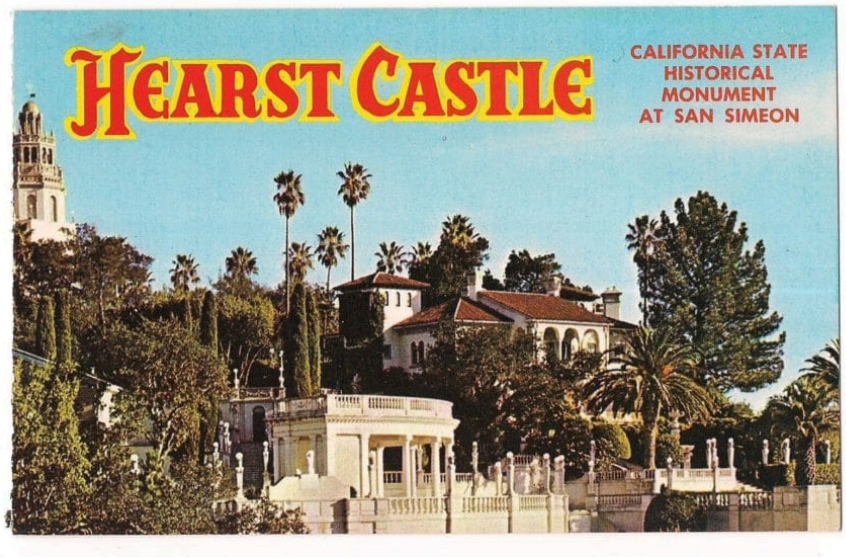


Figure 17.5.9.6: Hearst Castle postcard

Taking the buildings of the monastery apart would have been a time-consuming process under any circumstances. It was soon realized the timing would not allow the cloister to be incorporated into the fabric of Hearst Castle—but another solution was at hand—a plan was made to have the monastery's cloister function as a stand-alone museum.

Supervision of the dismantling of the monastery at Sacramenia was said to be meticulous—each block was carefully numbered, and extensive drawings made. It was a labor-intensive project that required significant problem solving along the way: weather, the logistics of moving the stones, and politics all came into play.

Eventually 11,000 crates would be shipped off to the United States. Unfortunately, the crates were not transported before an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease hit the Segovia area, causing the shipment to be quarantined upon its arrival on the east coast of the United States. The crates were opened in order to burn the potentially infectious hay with which the stones had been packed and in the process. Stones were heaved haphazardly into any crate that happened to be handy, spoiling the system of how the stones were to be put back into place.

By now, several years had passed since the purchase and Hearst's finances had taken a beating in the stock market crash of 1929 (not that this stopped him from collecting European art and antiques) and the materials that had once formed the monastic buildings at Sacramenia were placed on the back burner. Once out of quarantine, the crates and their stones were left to decay in one of Hearst's warehouses in Brooklyn, New York. The remains of the monastery lingered there for almost thirty more years.

In the 1940s, Raymond Moss and William Edgemon approached Hearst to purchase the Sacramenia remains, but he refused their offers. When he died, however, the estate was willing to sell to the pair who planned to use the stones to build a tourist attraction in Florida. The reconstruction of the Sacramenia stones was overseen by Allen Carswell (who also oversaw the rebuilding of the Cloisters Museum, a satellite of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan).



THE ROCKY MOUNT

SECTION B — SUNDAY TELEGRAM — SECTION B

SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 13, 1954

813-Year-Old Monastery Is Moved From Spain To Florida

Nineteen Months Needed To Assemble Old Edifice

They call it the biggest "jigsaw puzzle" the world has ever seen — or ever is likely to see again!

There were more than 35,000 pieces.

Each piece was a heavy stone that weighed anywhere from a hundred pounds to more than a ton.

It took nineteen months of tantalizing toil and cost almost $1,500,000 to fit them together.

But today, just north of Miami, ...

The quadrangular Cloister Walk stands again exactly as it was first built more than 800 years ago. Around these walks for centuries, monks paced while they murmured their endless prayers. Intricately carved capitals of the columns in the foreground were done by Moorish captives. No two are alike.

Marble statue of Christ stands on altar in Chapter House where once the novices took their instructions from the abbot of the Monastery. Four columns that divide principal bays in the vaulted ceiling represent the four Cardinal Virtues, wisdom, courage, temperance and justice.

Figure 17.5.9.7: The Rocky Mount Sunday Telegram (June 13, 1954)

It took nineteen months and a tremendous amount of money to finish the bulk of the project. Carswell had a crew of eight stonemasons working under him. The rebuilding was criticized for its clumsy stereometry (the science of cutting stone precisely, which the medieval mason did via simple tools and tremendous skill) and the use of concrete in the reconstruction (a material not used by medieval builders).

Moss and Edgemon never intended to recreate what had once been in Spain. They dubbed their tourist attraction the "Ancient Spanish Monastery," a misnomer still used in the present, and welcomed visitors to "Step back in time 800 years!" Sadly, for Moss and Edgemon, the tourist spot they had fought so hard to create did not entice visitors; bankrupt, they had to sell.



Figure 17.5.9.8: Cloister of the Monastery of St. Bernard de Clairvaux as rebuilt in North Miami Beach, Florida (photo: **Casingrid**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Today the transported parts of the Saint Bernard de Clairvaux monastery function as both an Episcopal Church and a tourist attraction—complete with a gift shop. People consider it a fascinating secret retreat outside Miami, "the perfect place to relax and enjoy the Miami sun with a European flair."

If at first you don't succeed...

Hearst, seeing the Sacramenia project as now a hopeless jigsaw puzzle (in fact *Time* magazine dubbed the situation "The Biggest

Jigsaw in History" in a 1953 issue), hit the pause button on monastery acquisitions for a couple of years. But Hearst decided what any tycoon might—even in the face of the Great Depression—it was time to buy another monastery. This go-round he had plans for it to grace a "cabin" he was building in the remote wilderness of northern California, near Mount Shasta, on the McCloud River: his Wyntoon Estate. Hearst was making plans to create something that would make his San Simeon estate pale in comparison. The intended use was similar to that of the Sacramenia monastery—the stones were to be used to create a museum to house Hearst's collection of medieval armor and other medieval objects, and Hearst had some other ideas as well.

Hearst contacted his associate Arthur Byne once again and put him back on the hunt. If Byne was a little warier this time around, who could blame him? He had seen how difficult the first endeavor was, and he was now dealing with a client who was cash poor. Hearst had not escaped the stock market crash unscathed but chose to ignore the fact.



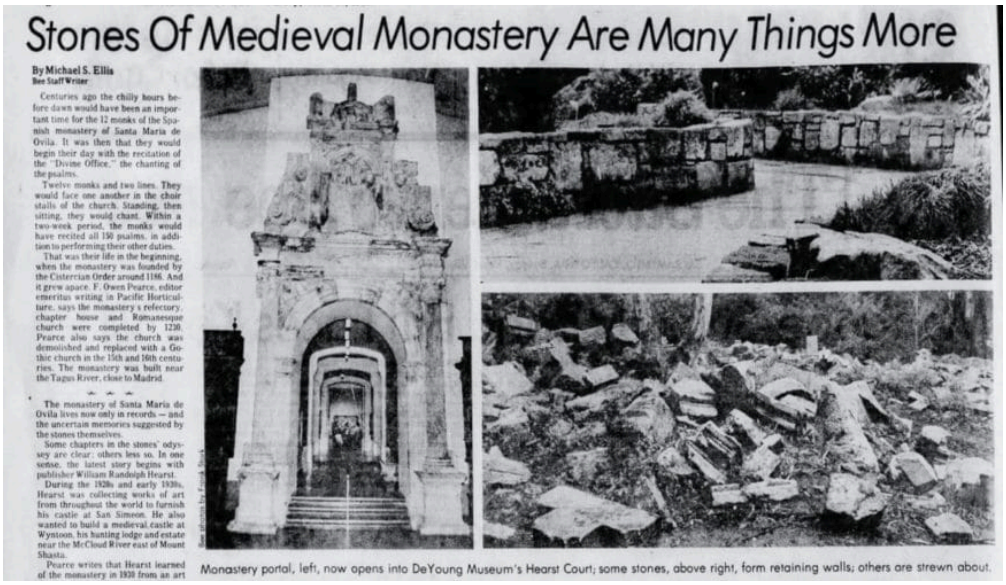
Figure 17.5.9.9

Nonetheless, Byne went on his mission and before long he found the ruins of the Santa María de Óvila Monastery in the Guadalajara province in Spain—another defunct Cistercian abbey in a remote locale. Though built later, this abbey was in a far worse condition than the monastery at Sacramenia. The Óvila abbey had suffered from the War of Spanish Succession and the Peninsular War. In the 1830s, the remaining four monks and one lay brother were ousted from the abbey when it lost the support of both the locals and the kingdom.

When Byne stumbled upon the monastery, it was owned by a farmer who used many of the buildings to house livestock; the chapter house was used for manure storage. But Byne saw potential, despite the dilapidation, manure, and overgrown vegetation. With Hearst's approval, he purchased the majority of the complex. The plan was to remove many of the same elements as at Saint Bernard de Clairvaux: cloister, chapter house, and refectory. But at Santa María de Óvila, the main chapel was also purchased. The vision for the chapel, when rebuilt at Wyntoon, was to have it contain a 150-foot-long swimming pool. There would be a lounge in one side chapel, and a ladies changing area in the other—and the *piece de resistance*, a diving board in the apse (traditionally, an apse is a semi-circular area at the east end of a church that contains the altar).

Again, a painful process began to remove the stones from where they had stood so long. Byne wrote Hearst nearly daily, imploring Hearst to pay his bills or Byne would need to quit. Grudgingly, a check would appear to keep the project going, but the money was gone almost as soon as it was deposited. More than one hundred workers had to be paid, extensive equipment needed to be paid off, and the factory producing the crates for the stones could barely keep up with the demand—especially without cash in hand.

The removal of the Santa María de Óvila was illegal, just as Sacramenia before it. The new Spanish government (the Second Spanish Republic) stepped in—literally. A group of soldiers arrived and told Byne the deal was off. However, Byne was able to convince them to let the dismantling continue. Lucky for Hearst, and with the new government already off to a shaky start, the Óvila monastery was forgotten for a time. But Byne knew the clock was ticking and carried out the dismantling as quickly as possible. A local doctor had been trying for several years to convince the government to preserve the monastery finally succeeded in his efforts and in June of 1931 and the monastery was declared a national monument. Alas, it was too late. By this point Óvila had been almost fully dismantled, and within a month the stones were sailing towards the California coast.



Stones Of Medieval Monastery Are Many Things More

By Michael S. Ellis
Bee Staff Writer

Centuries ago the chilly hours before dawn would have been an important time for the 12 monks of the Spanish monastery of Santa Maria de Ovila. It was then that they would begin their day with the recitation of the "Divine Office," the chanting of the psalms.

Twelve monks and two lines. They would face one another in the choir stalls of the church. Standing, then sitting, they would chant. Within a two-week period, the monks would have recited all 150 psalms, in addition to performing their other duties.

That was their life in the beginning, when the monastery was founded by the Cistercian Order around 1186. And it grew apace. F. Owen Pearce, editor emeritus writing in Pacific Horticulture, says the monastery's refectory, chapter house and Romanesque church were completed by 1220. Pearce also says the church was demolished and replaced with a Gothic church in the 15th and 16th centuries. The monastery was built near the Tagus River, close to Madrid.

* * *

The monastery of Santa Maria de Ovila lives now only in records — and the uncertain memories suggested by the stones themselves.

Some chapters in the stones' odyssey are clear; others less so. In one sense, the latest story begins with publisher William Randolph Hearst.

During the 1920s and early 1930s, Hearst was collecting works of art from throughout the world to furnish his castle at San Simeon. He also wanted to build a medieval castle at Wyntoon, his hunting lodge and estate near the McCloud River east of Mount Shasta.

Pearce writes that Hearst learned of the monastery in 1930 from an art

Monastery portal, left, now opens into DeYoung Museum's Hearst Court; some stones, above right, form retaining walls; others are strewn about.

Figure 17.5.9.10: The Sacramento Bee (March 23, 1980)

The stones arrived at the San Francisco Harbor later that same year. Hearst found himself once more with thousands of stones, this time on the West Coast and finally faced the fact that he was broke. Ludicrous pillaging of medieval structures takes its toll on the pocket book (these two monasteries were not the only medieval acquisitions he made). The initial estimate for the new Wyntoon estate rolled in at $50,000,000; Hearst's vision for an elaborate castle by the river was not going to happen. The dismantled monastery had arrived, but neither Hearst nor anyone else had any use for it. In this case, Hearst didn't even have his own warehouse to store the stones in. They sat instead in a costly rented storage space near Fisherman's wharf, taking up 28,000 square feet of space. Hearst now owned two dismantled monasteries on either coast that were both hopeless puzzles.

By 1940, Hearst was ready to give the stones away, and he had an interested party. By this time, the Spanish Civil War had occurred, and Francisco Franco was in power. Franco wanted the stones returned to Spain, but Hearst wasn't interested. After considering various possibilities, Hearst was convinced to give the stones to the city of San Francisco in return for a tax abatement and forgiveness on his large storage bill. There was a stipulation that the stones would be used to create a medieval museum in Golden Gate Park. World War II intervened and no less than five fires occurred where the stones were now being kept in the park. Almost half of the stones were severely damaged, making them unsound for any kind of large-scale building project. The original numbering system that had been applied in order to place the tones accurately had melted off. Interest in the project evaporated and no museum was built.



A model of the monastery chapter house, on display at the de Young Museum

The Spanish Acquisition

A battle royal over the stones of a medieval monastery, shipped here by William Randolph Hearst and now crumbling in Golden Gate Park

BY RICHARD EK

Delay always breeds danger, and to protract a great design is often to ruin it.
— Miguel de Cervantes, "Don Quixote"

Father Thomas X. Davis, abbot of the Trappist abbey of New Clairvaux in the Tehama County town of Vina, prays that Harry Parker, director of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, might come to recognize the error of delay.

Parker could help fulfill what has become, over 30 years, a passionate mission for Father Thomas: to bring to his abbey, located in the rural Sacramento Valley 130 miles northeast of San Francisco, the crumbling remnants of the medieval Monastery of Santa Maria de Ovila.

Disassembled in Spain and shipped to San Francisco in 1931 by newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst, the monastery stones have lain moldering in a eucalyptus grove behind the Japanese Tea Garden in Golden Gate Park since 1941, when Hearst gave them to the city and the M. H. de Young Museum because he could no longer afford to pay for their storage in a waterfront warehouse. But delay, neglect, misuse, erosion in the damp climate and a series of fires in the wooden crates that contain the stones have left only enough pieces intact to construct some of the entrance portal of the chapter house.

Father Thomas X. Davis with the stones he took north to Vina

Figure 17.5.9.11: The San Francisco Examiner (August 20, 1989)

A doorway from Óvila was reconstructed for an entrance at the de Young Museum in San Francisco (the doorway as part of the last additions to the Óvila monastery and dates from the Renaissance era). But the majority of the disassembled buildings, like those of its elder compatriot, was left in boxes to decay. Most of the stones were now kept in a warehouse at the de Young Museum; however, a good chunk remained in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. They were considered debris until some innovative gardeners used them in a variety of ornamental ways. A number of Óvila's stones remain there to this day.

The Sacred Stones Project

In the 1990s, Abbot Thomas of New Clairvaux Abbey in Northern California began to petition San Francisco for the sale of the stones. It took almost a decade and much patience, but Abbot Thomas did succeed in his goal. This was the beginning of the Sacred Stones project, which planned to use the Santa María de Óvila stones for a new chapter house at the abbey of New Clairvaux in Vina, California. By this time, vast technological advances made precision much easier in terms of stereometry. Parts of the reconstruction involved sawing the now extremely weathered stones with a stone saw, then chiseling in an attempt to use the old techniques and thus make the building more authentic. Also, a hydraulic mortar was used (Cistercians built with ashlar masonry, which requires no mortar, just compression and finely cut and fitted stones). A steel framework topped things off, leaving the current building twice as strong as it was in the Middle Ages, and earthquake ready.

The abbey in Vina, California hired a master stonemason and several other skilled masons. Vast amounts of time were spent researching the project, mainly by Margaret Burke, an art historian. Burke made the call that—of all the abbey components brought over—only the chapter house was capable of being rebuilt with any kind of verisimilitude.

The chapter house took over ten years to build and in the end the monks decided that, after all the effort, their creation should be a church not a chapter house (they wanted the public to be able to visit the building). New Clairvaux Abbey is proud of its new structure, and the Sacred Stones project as a whole. Certainly it is better than having the stones continue to decay in a warehouse. But the lack of cultural and architectural accuracy and the repurposing of the building should no longer qualify it as a reconstruction. This is, instead, an entirely different building. The attempt at a reconstruction was lost somewhere during the process to the point where it bears no semblance to any original at Santa María de Óvila, and has effectively stripped it of its previous historical value.



Figure 17.5.9.12: Chapter House of the Abbey of New Clairvaux, Vina, Northern California (photo: **Frank Schulenburg**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Those involved in the building of the chapter house/chapel at New Clairvaux in California choose to highlight and even exaggerate the Gothic features that might have been at Óvila and to play down the earlier Romanesque features. Romanesque architecture in the last 100 years has played the foil to Gothic which was described as the clunky, heavy, and gloomy older sister of the lighter, thinner, and delicate Gothic.

Hearst's motivations and conclusion

Hearst never lived to see either Spanish monastery rebuilt, but for Hearst it seems as though the process of taking ownership of these buildings was somehow enough. Hearst could have recreated a Spanish monastery on his property without going to the trouble of hauling two medieval Spanish abbeys piece-by-piece across the world. Clearly, there was more at work here than a simple longing to have a European cloister. The power to attain these objects in the first place seems to have been a large part of Hearst's obsessive collecting, rather than aesthetic enjoyment. Hearst uprooted Saint Bernard of Clairvaux and Santa María de Óvila, at the cost of negating parts of Spain's national heritage, in an attempt to create his own legacy. His narrow and myopic view destroyed what could have been passed on to posterity as a cultural legacy.

So what is at stake here? On one hand one could say that Florida has gained a lovely church and tourist attraction and California monks a shiny new chapter house/chapel. But what has been lost? The original identity of these churches and their history will eventually disappear entirely, and new history centered around the reconstructions will be created. Will people visit the chapter house in Vina, California under the impression they are seeing true work of Cistercian architecture? Will visitors go to the Sacramenia cloister in Florida and understand this was once a space where monks were meant to walk and meditate upon God? Already it is frequently mistaken to be a Spanish Mission from the seventeenth century. Will visitors understand that to take such objects from another country puts that country's cultural heritage in jeopardy, or just find the story of its creation interesting?



Figure 17.5.9.13: Church, Monastery of St. Bernard de Clairvaux, 1133–41 in Sacramenia, Spain

And what has Spain been left with? What remains at the original sites? As mentioned, the church was left in place at the Sacramenia site. It is larger than most Cistercian churches and has been restored. It is still on private land but is open to the public one day a week, but it keeps a low-profile and you will find no gift shop here. It is said to be an exemplar of Spanish Cistercian architecture of the golden age, when Saint Bernard came to lead the order.



Figure 17.5.9.14: The remaining Spanish ruins of Santa María de Óvila

Santa María de Óvila is also currently on private lands. The monastery was in a derelict state before the Hearst dismantling, but who knows what might be there today if it had been declared a national monument just a little bit sooner and restored at its original site. Now all that remains is a ruin and no visitors are welcomed. The oldest and most intact part of the monastery that remains is the wine cellar.

It would be nice to think that we are beyond acts such as Hearst's, but black-market deals occur behind closed doors frequently. Absconding with the majority of a monastic complex may be trickier, but war can still destroy large scale structures, as can social unrest. Indeed, it was Spain's political instability that in part allowed Hearst to come to take ownership of the Sacramenia and Óvila stones. Thus while we may see ourselves as more sensitive to other cultures and more global minded, a glance at history should show that things can change on the turn of a dime and then all bets are off.

Footnotes

1. Saint Bernard de Clairvaux was originally named Santa María la Real.

Additional resources

Richard L. Kagan, *The Spanish Craze: America's Fascination with the Hispanic World, 1779–1939* (University of Nebraska Press, 2019).

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17.5.10: Erasing Art- Rauschenberg's Erased de Kooning drawing

by DR. TOM FOLLAND



Figure 17.5.10.1: Robert Rauschenberg, *Erased de Kooning Drawing*, 1953, traces of drawing media on paper with label and gilded frame, 64.14 cm x 55.25 cm (© Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, **SFMOMA**)

That's right, the *Erased de Kooning Drawing* is... an erased drawing by **Willem de Kooning**. It is also a statement that the "erasing" artist, **Robert Rauschenberg**, made about the artistic culture of his time and about his own artistic practice.



Figure 17.5.10.2: Community meeting, Black Mountain College (photo: **Black Mountain College Museum**)

How It Happened

In the Fall of 1952, the young artist Robert Rauschenberg visited the New York studio of Willem de Kooning. Rauschenberg met de

Kooning and befriended him as a student at Black Mountain College in North Carolina. By 1952, de Kooning was a leading figure, along with Jackson Pollock, in Abstract Expressionism, one of the first modernist art movements in post-World-War II New York. Both de Kooning and Pollock had forged a radically new style of **abstract painting**, and de Kooning would become particularly well known for a painting series that dramatically distorted the female form. The so-named "de Kooning style," in fact, became a template for modernist painting for years to come.



Figure 17.5.10.3: Rauschenberg with Jasper Johns, John Cage, and others in Rauschenberg's or Johns's Pearl Street studio, New York, c.1955 (photo: Jerry Schatzberg)

But Rauschenberg was not interested in painting like de Kooning; his plan, as he told the elder artist, was to erase one of his drawings. And de Kooning agreed, after having chosen one that might prove difficult to undo, as it had been done in charcoal, oil paint, pencil, and crayon. Rauschenberg dutifully erased it over the ensuing weeks.

Fellow artist and Rauschenberg's longtime friend, Jasper Johns would later provide a gilded frame and mat, onto which was placed an inscription for the re-titled drawing: "*Erased de Kooning Drawing*, Robert Rauschenberg, 1953."

Cultural Context of Abstract Expressionism

Rauschenberg's erasure was at odds with the prevailing sensibility in art during the 1950s in America. Abstraction had emerged as the defining characteristic of Modernism. In fact, it became a kind of post-war call-to-arms, vigorously promoted by the influential art critic Clement Greenberg. Accordingly, all art, whether it be painting, sculpture, or photography, was to pursue a path that eliminated subject matter and narrative, whilst focusing instead upon the expressive qualities of the medium. This often took the form of highly gestural and non-representational mark-making. Since it was painting that best embodied this new approach, it was painting that reigned as the dominant artistic medium of the Post-World-War II years.



Figure 17.5.10.4: Jackson Pollock, *Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)*, 1950, enamel on canvas, 266.7 x 525.8 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Whether it was the overall effect of **Jackson Pollock**'s so-called "drip" paintings (in which paint had been flung or dripped across large canvases), or the stained pools of color in the work of **Helen Frankenthaler**, or even the distorted images in **de Kooning's *Women* series**, the unifying force was a will to abstraction. Pollock once famously remarked that if what he was painting veered too closely to resemblance, he would paint it out.

Even photography tried to mimic painting's abstract qualities. The documentary photographer Aaron Siskind had created portraits of rural America in the 1930s, but by the 1950s his photographs were reduced to black and white arrangements of form. Abstraction was seen by many artists as a liberating force, especially in the context of American realist painting of the preceding decades. Folkish American subjects and themes now seemed provincial compared to what had been achieved in Europe and particularly France since the early twentieth century.

Most significantly, abstraction embodied a specifically postwar American sense of individualism. Through the gestural and often theatrical or performative act of making marks upon the large, flat expanse of canvas, the artist was freed from the constraints of subject matter. In Abstract Expressionist painting, the subject matter, if there can be said to be one, was the artist himself. I use the gendered pronoun "himself" purposively here since it was male artists who were the celebrated authors of these muscular paintings, requiring large brushes and massive canvases. This is not to say that women did not produce powerful bodies of work in this period—indeed Lee Krasner, Janet Sobel, Buffie Johnson, Anne Ryan, Hedda Sterne, and others did just that.



Figure 17.5.10.5: Lee Krasner, *Untitled*, 1953, oil paint, gouache and paper, 57 x 76.2 cm (**National Gallery of Australia** © estate of Lee Krasner)

Erasing conformism: Rauschenberg's Neo-Dada

One of the Black Mountain Poets, Robert Duncan described the "bravura brushstroke" as evidence of "the power and movement of the arm itself" and of the "involvement of the painter in the act." [1] It is hard not to see in this statement evidence of the gender bias that reflected a prevalent idea according to which painting powerfully on large surfaces meant painting like a man.

In this regard, it is important to point out that Rauschenberg was gay, and like women and even artists of color, invariably deemed too far outside the extremely conformist culture of 1950s America to produce the requisite kind of art that was needed to prove America's place on the international stage. Metaphorically therefore, it could be argued that Rauschenberg was erasing not just a drawing, but this very idea of artistic, masculine authorship.



Figure 17.5.10.6: Example of Neo-Dada work by Robert Rauschenberg, *Almanac*, 1962, showing the artist's continuous use of erasure as a formal and conceptual tool (© Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, image: **Tate**)

Erased de Kooning Drawing thus had symbolic force. Though, as one can imagine, that force was mostly viewed by critics as negative. Rauschenberg's erasure was a destructive act, to be sure, one that seemed to harken back to a World-War-I movement called **Dada**, in which traditional ideas of art were challenged in often absurd ways. Rauschenberg's seeming nihilism would, in the later 1950s, be called "Neo-Dada," and he would be linked to **Marcel Duchamp** whose anti-art objects had resurfaced in New York during the 1950s. But Rauschenberg saw the erased drawing in very different terms and possibly as a follow up to a series of white paintings in which canvases were entirely painted white.

"It was nothing destructive.... I was trying to purge myself of my teaching...so I was doing monochrome no-image."

Robert Rauschenberg in conversation with Tanya Grosman, Interview, vol. VI, no. 5, 1976

Of course we must always weigh the proclamations of artists against the cultural climate in which they work. Rauschenberg's coy statement would not mark the first time an artist feigned indifference or ignorance of the larger meanings of their work. American artists had finally achieved what they believed to be a truly modern art that could rival Paris. It was also no coincidence that America had emerged as a superpower in the world at large. There was, as a result, a heroic sense about the whole affair; artists inadvertently became cultural cold warriors. Rauschenberg seemed cavalier about it all. In the words of one critic: "We have finally won, are we going to throw it all away?" [2]



Figure 17.5.10.7: Label (detail), Robert Rauschenberg, *Erased de Kooning Drawing*, 1953, traces of drawing media on paper with label and gilded frame, 64.14 cm x 55.25 cm (© Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, SFMOMA)

Notes:

[1] Robert Duncan, *Black Mountain Review*, 1956. The *Black Mountain Review* was a literary magazine associated with the community of poets and artists active at Black Mountain College, and seen by its founders as a way of continuing the legacy of the College after its closure.

[2] Leo Steinberg paraphrasing the art critic Robert Rosenberg. Interview by Tom Folland with Leo Steinberg, January 16, 2008, New York, New York.

Additional resources:

This drawing at SFMOMA

Rauschenberg discussing *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (short video)

This drawing on the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation website

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17.5.11: Destruction as Preservation- Ai Weiwei's Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn

by TIFFANY WAI-YING BERES

How can the destruction of an artifact also be an act of preservation? *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* (1995) by **Ai Weiwei** is a highly provocative work of art. This series of three black and white photographs portray the artist holding a 2,000-year-old Han dynasty urn that, frame by frame, he drops, it falls, and shatters. As much a work of photography as a work of **performance art**, in each still an unaffected Ai looks directly at the camera aware of his destructiveness. In fact, to capture the action on film (rather than digital photography, which lets you review the image immediately), the artist actually broke two ceramic vessels, just in case. This kind of blatant destruction of artifacts may seem highly irreverent, yet it also forces viewers to consider issues of transformation and destruction of the past.



Figure 17.5.11.1: Ai Weiwei, *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn*, 1995 (printed 2017), Three gelatin silver prints, 148 x 121 cm each (photo: © Ai Weiwei)

Ai Weiwei

Born in Beijing, China, in 1957, Ai Weiwei is an activist, filmmaker, curator and one of the world's most famous artists. Ai began his artistic career in New York City, where he lived from 1981 to 1993. When he returned to China in the mid-90s, a time of rapid modernization for his home country, he was shocked to discover that certain objects of **cultural patrimony** were not highly valued. Ai explains that when he came across these Han dynasty ceramic objects, they were just a dime a dozen: "I still have a photo of when I was in Xi'an. There was a farmer sleeping on top of these two urns waiting for someone to pay him a few hundred yuan. For him that was a few months' salary, but even then nobody wanted them." [1] Ai realized that during that period, most of his fellow countrymen were not nearly as interested in their country's historic art objects as he was. For this reason, Ai began collecting antiquities, particularly ancient vessels and furniture, and eventually began converting these objects into contemporary artworks. Whether he reworks a discarded four-hundred-year-old wooden stool into a standing sculpture or creates an installation from hundreds of salvaged blue and white ceramic shards, Ai is interested in giving these historical found objects a second life as contemporary art.



Figure 17.5.11.2: Shang Dynasty jade from the tomb of Fu Hao, 1300-1046 B.C.E., Anyang, China (photo: © National Museum of China, Beijing)

Historical legacy

This kind of repurposing of the past also relates to Chinese aesthetics and culture. In China, there is a long and rarified tradition of collecting ancient material remains and transforming them into new art. For millennia before the advent of modern scientific archeology, rulers and elites collected ancient materials and acted to preserve them or emulate them in new works, whether it was preserving important documents by recording them on durable surfaces like stone steles or incorporating ancient designs into bronze or ceramics. For example, Fu Hao's tomb in Anyang, a Shang dynasty (1600-1046 B.C.E.) royal burial tomb excavated in the 1980s, enabled scholars to push the history of antique collecting in China back to the thirteenth century B.C.E. The 775 **jade** carvings found in this tomb of a powerful Shang queen included both a collection of prehistoric jades as well a collection made in her era but modeled on earlier **Neolithic** prototypes. [2] This is an important revelation because it suggests that more than three thousand years ago, antique collections were already providing references and inspirations for making new works of art. This tradition of collecting and revitalizing antiquity has encouraged generations of Chinese artists and craftsmen to look to the past in making contemporary art.



Figure 17.5.11.3: Tomb of Fu Hao, late 13th century B.C.E., Shang dynasty, Anyang, China (photo: **Gary Todd**, CC0 1.0)



Figure 17.5.11.4: Ai Weiwei, *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* (second image), 1995 (photo: © Ai Weiwei)

Act of revitalization?

Ai Weiwei has chosen an unusual way of continuing this legacy of transforming the material past while at the same time expressing dissent against a country that sometimes obliterates its own cultural heritage: through direct confrontation. On the one hand we can view his work as a destruction of another artist's work; on the other, Ai's act can also be thought of as a kind of collaboration with an ancient artist over thousands of years—a revitalization. Once an ancient receptacle, the urn in *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* takes on new meaning as contemporary art. In Ai's work, the object is less a vessel than an emblem of Chinese history. For this performance, it seems that the object selection is almost immaterial—it might as well have been any ancient object. However, in recognition of Ai's own celebrity, the artist has transformed this urn into something of great significance just by selecting it to become the subject of his art, by including its name in the title, and, of course, by destroying it. The sensationalism of breaking something so old and rare is what modern audiences find so compelling. Here the nostalgia for what once was serves as a mirror, reminding us that China's past remains important and relevant today.

Destruction as preservation

The event that Ai Weiwei created and captured in these photographs is one of violence. Many feel that it is unethical to destroy an artifact under any circumstances—that such an act indicates a lack of value and respect. Indeed, law professor Joseph Sax calls such destruction a kind of "unqualified ownership" because it enables "the indulgence of private vice to obliterate public benefits." [3] Certainly, the destruction of art for ideological or egoistic reasons reflects badly on a collector of ancient objects. Yet was *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* a true obliteration? The Han dynasty urn still exists for the public but it has been transformed into the form of captured film stills. The loss of one object gives the new artwork its potency.



Figure 17.5.11.5: Ai Weiwei "According to What" exhibition, Art Gallery of Ontario, (photo: **Joseph Morris**, CC BY-ND 2.0)

Ai himself says that he considers the act of dropping the urn one of creation rather than destruction: "People always ask me: how could you drop it? I say it's a kind of love. At least there is a kind of attention to that piece [because of the photograph]." [4] From the artist's point of view, his act was one of preservation through transformation. Indeed, this triptych (set of three photographs) and the shadow of the vessel captured within it now receive unprecedented attention. These photographs are displayed in museums and public institutions around the world. The work is widely available online, and even the focus of academic essays like this one. Given Ai's own celebrity status and the significance of this artwork, *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* is also now far more valuable than the original ceramic object. In 2016, this limited edition work **sold for nearly 1 million dollars** at Sotheby's Auctions in London. [5]

Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn is one of many works by Ai Weiwei that focuses on heritage loss and the importance of the past. According to the artist, "the power [of my artwork] comes not from the act but from the audience's attention, the challenge to their values. The act is easy—every day we can drop something, but it is when we are forced to come face to face with this action and make a judgment … that is the interesting part." [6] Ultimately the work demands a judgment: was the provocation and the global attention Ai garnered for the urn worth the destruction of the urn itself? This set of photographs encourages its viewers to question value of antiquity in our modern world and whether it is worth preserving.

Notes:

1. Tiffany Wai-Ying Beres, "A Battlefield of Judgments: Ai Weiwei as Collector," *Orientations* 46, no. 7 (2015), pp. 87–92.
2. Wu Hung, ed., *Reinventing the Past: Archaism and Antiquarianism in Chinese Art and Visual Culture* (Chicago: Art Media Resources, 2010), pp. 16–39.
3. Joseph L Sax, "Collectors: Private Vices, Public Benefits," in *Playing Darts with a Rembrandt: Public and Private Rights in Cultural Treasures* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), p. 63.
4. Beres, p. 92.
5. Sotheby's Auction: **www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/lot.42.html/2016/contemporary-art-evening-auction-l16020**
6. Beres, p. 92.

Additional resources:

Ai Weiwei's website

The Art Assignment, "The Case for Ai Weiwei"

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17.6: DESTRUCTION, LOOTING, AND TRAFFICKING

17.6.1: Mesa Verde and the preservation of Ancestral Puebloan heritage
17.6.2: A market for looted antiquities
17.6.3: Save culture – end trafficking
17.6.4: Trafficking the past
17.6.5: We will need Monuments Men for as long as ancient sites remain battlefields
17.6.6: What the bulldozers left behind- reclaiming Sicán's past
17.6.7: Lost History- the terracotta sculpture of Djenné-Djenno
17.6.8: The Looting of Cambodian Antiquities
17.6.9: Sotheby's Returns Looted 10th Century Statue to Cambodia
17.6.10: The Scourge of Looting- Trafficking Antiquities from Temple to Museum
17.6.11: How a famous Greek bronze ended up in the Vatican
17.6.12: Fact and fiction- The explosion of Reims Cathedral during World War I

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17.6.1: Mesa Verde and the preservation of Ancestral Puebloan heritage

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK

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Wanted: stunning view

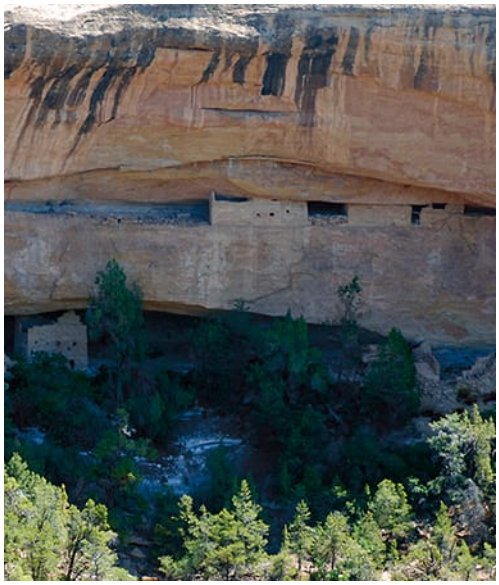


Figure 17.6.1.1: Cliff dwellings, Ancestral Puebloan, 450–1300 C.E., sandstone, Mesa Verde National Park, (photo: Steven Zucker, CC: BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Imagine living in a home built into the side of a cliff. The Ancestral Puebloan peoples (formerly known as the Anasazi) did just that in some of the most remarkable structures still in existence today. Beginning after 1000-1100 C.E., they built more than 600 structures (mostly residential but also for storage and ritual) into the cliff faces of the Four Corners region of the United States (the southwestern corner of Colorado, northwestern corner of New Mexico, northeastern corner of Arizona, and southeastern corner of Utah). The dwellings depicted here are located in what is today southwestern Colorado in the national park known as Mesa Verde ("verde" is Spanish for green and "mesa" literally means table in Spanish but here refers to the flat-topped mountains common in the southwest).

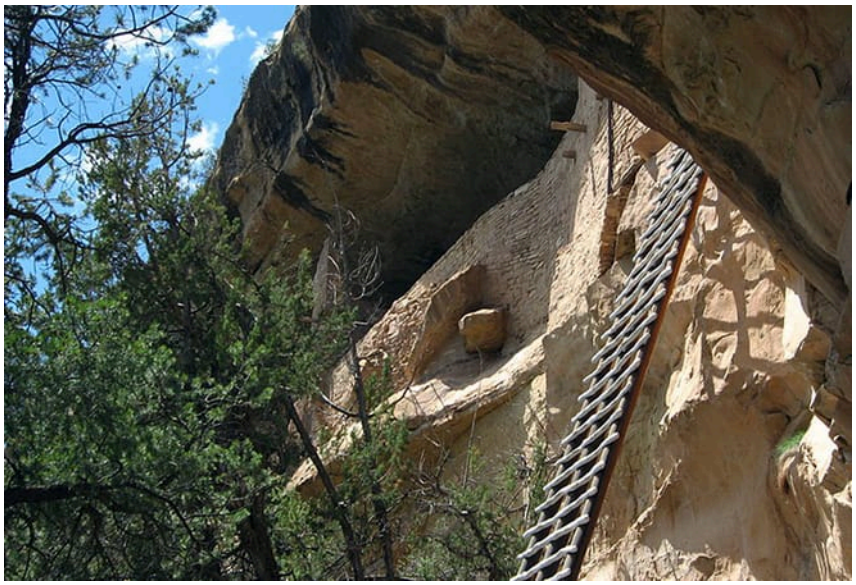


Figure 17.6.1.2: Ladder to Balcony House, Mesa Verde National Park (photo: **Ken Lund**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

The most famous residential sites date to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The Ancestral Puebloans accessed these dwellings with retractable ladders, and if you are sure footed and not afraid of heights, you can still visit some of these sites in the same way today.

To access Mesa Verde National Park, you drive up to the plateau along a winding road. People come from around the world to marvel at the natural beauty of the area as well as the archaeological remains, making it a popular tourist destination.

The twelfth- and thirteenth-century structures made of stone, mortar, and plaster remain the most intact. We often see traces of the people who constructed these buildings, such as hand or fingerprints in many of the mortar and plaster walls.



Figure 17.6.1.3: View of a canyon, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado (photo: **cfcheever**, CC: BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Ancestral Puebloans occupied the Mesa Verde region from about 450 C.E. to 1300 C.E. The inhabited region encompassed a far larger geographic area than is defined now by the national park, and included other residential sites like Hovenweep National Monument and Yellow Jacket Pueblo. Not everyone lived in cliff dwellings. Yellow Jacket Pueblo was also much larger than any site at Mesa Verde. It had 600–1200 rooms, and 700 people likely lived there (see link below). In contrast, only about 125 people lived in Cliff Palace (largest of the Mesa Verde sites), but the cliff dwellings are certainly among the best-preserved buildings from this time.



Figure 17.6.1.4: Cliff Palace, Ancestral Puebloan, 450–1300 C.E., sandstone, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado (photo: Steven Zucker, CC: BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Cliff palace

The largest of all the cliff dwellings, Cliff Palace, has about 150 rooms and more than twenty circular rooms. Due to its location, it was well protected from the elements. The buildings ranged from one to four stories, and some hit the natural stone "ceiling." To build these structures, people used stone and mud mortar, along with wooden beams adapted to the natural clefts in the cliff face. This building technique was a shift from earlier structures in the Mesa Verde area, which, prior to 1000 C.E., had been made primarily of adobe (bricks made of clay, sand and straw or sticks). These stone and mortar buildings, along with the decorative elements and objects found inside them, provide important insights into the lives of the Ancestral Puebloan people during the thirteenth century.



Figure 17.6.1.5: View of Cliff Palace structures, Mesa Verde (photo: **Paul Middleton, Shadow Dancer Images**, CC: BY-NC 2.0)

At sites like Cliff Palace, families lived in architectural units, organized around kivas (circular, subterranean rooms). A kiva typically had a wood-beamed roof held up by six engaged support columns made of masonry above a shelf-like banquette. Other typical features of a kiva include a firepit (or hearth), a ventilation shaft, a deflector (a low wall designed to prevent air drawn from the ventilation shaft from reaching the fire directly), and a *sipapu*, a small hole in the floor that is ceremonial in purpose. They developed from the pithouse, also a circular, subterranean room used as a living space.

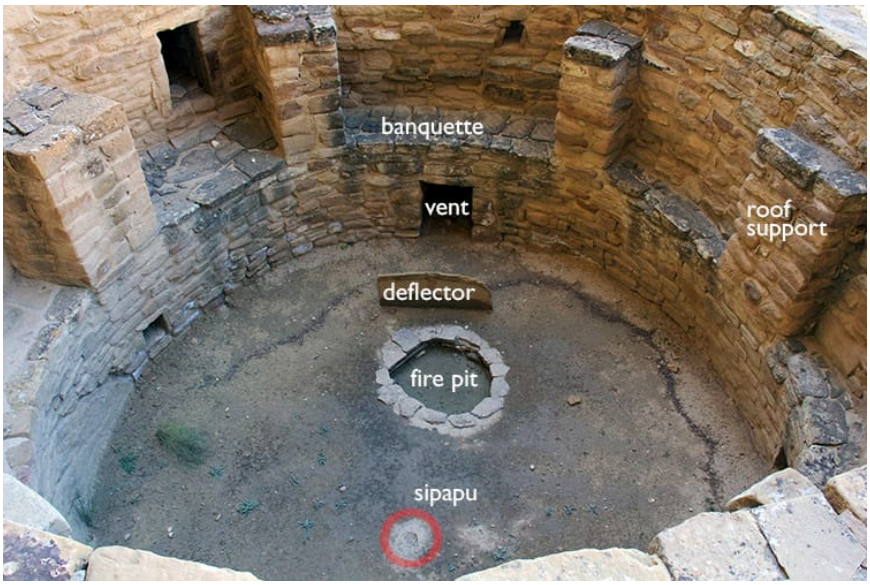


Figure 17.6.1.6: Kiva without a roof, Cliff Palace, Mesa Verde National Park (photo: **Adam Lederer**, CC: BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Kivas continue to be used for ceremonies today by Puebloan peoples though not those within Mesa Verde National Park. In the past, these circular spaces were likely both ceremonial and residential. If you visit Cliff Palace, you will see the kivas without their roofs (see above), but in the past they would have been covered, and the space around them would have functioned as a small plaza.

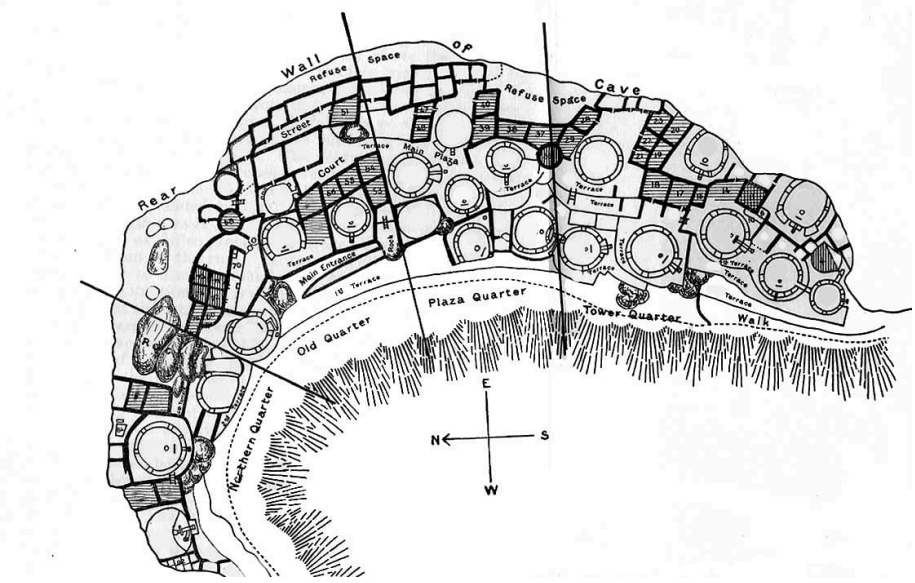


Figure 17.6.1.7: Cliff Palace plan with circular kivas, National Park Service

Connected rooms fanned out around these plazas, creating a housing unit. One room, typically facing onto the plaza, contained a hearth. Family members most likely gathered here. Other rooms located off the hearth were most likely storage rooms, with just enough of an opening to squeeze your arm through a hole to grab anything you might need. Cliff Palace also features some unusual structures, including a circular tower. Archaeologists are still uncertain as to the exact use of the tower.



Figure 17.6.1.8: Kiva at Spruce Tree House, Mesa Verde National Park (photo: **Doug Kerr**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Painted murals

The builders of these structures plastered and painted murals, although what remains today is fairly fragmentary. Some murals display geometric designs, while other murals represent animals and plants.



Figure 17.6.1.9: Mural 30, Cliff Palace, Mesa Verde National Park (photo: National Park Service)

For example, Mural 30, on the third floor of a rectangular "tower" (more accurately a room block) at Cliff Palace, is painted red against a white wall. The mural includes geometric shapes that are thought to portray the landscape. It is similar to murals inside of other cliff dwellings including Spruce Tree House and Balcony House. Scholars have suggested that the red band at the bottom symbolizes the earth while the lighter portion of the wall symbolizes the sky. The top of the red band, then, forms a kind of horizon line that separates the two. We recognize what look like triangular peaks, perhaps mountains on the horizon line. The rectangular element in the sky might relate to clouds, rain or to the sun and moon. The dotted lines might represent cracks in the earth.



Figure 17.6.1.10: Mugs found at Mesa Verde (photo: by the author, Mesa Verde Museum)

The creators of the murals used paint produced from clay, organic materials, and minerals. For instance, the red color came from hematite (a red ocher). Blue pigment could be turquoise or azurite, while black was often derived from charcoal. Along with the complex architecture and mural painting, the Ancestral Puebloan peoples produced black-on-white ceramics and turquoise and shell jewelry (goods were imported from afar including shell and other types of pottery). Many of these high-quality objects and their materials demonstrate the close relationship these people had to the landscape. Notice, for example, how the geometric designs on the mugs above appear similar to those in Mural 30 at Cliff Palace.

Why build here?

From 500–1300 C.E., Ancestral Puebloans who lived at Mesa Verde were sedentary farmers and cultivated beans, squash, and corn. Corn originally came from what is today Mexico at some point during the first millennium of the Common Era. Originally most farmers lived near their crops, but this shifted in the late 1100s when people began to live near sources of water, and often had to walk longer distances to their crops.

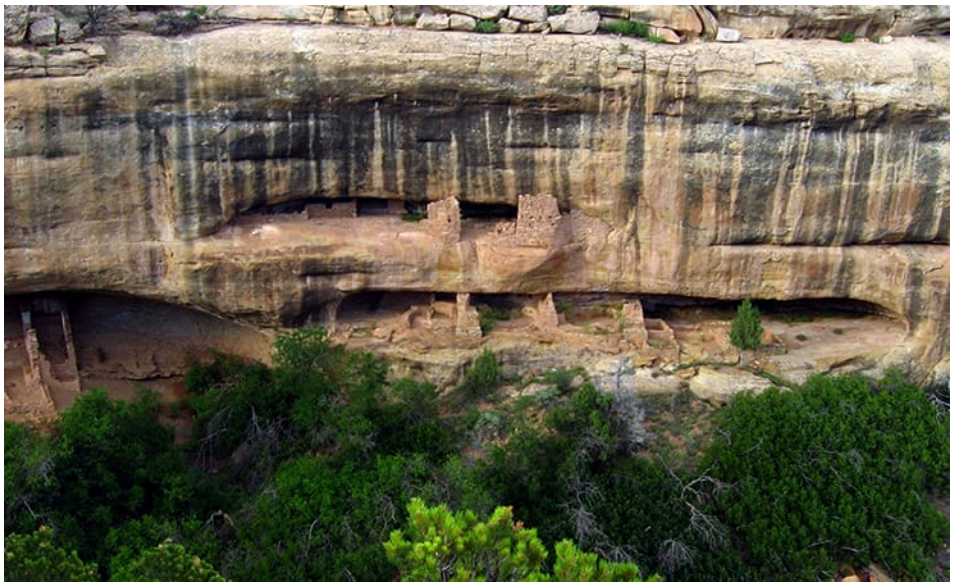


Figure 17.6.1.11: New Fire House, Masa Verde National Park (photo: **Ken Lund**, CC: BY-SA)

So why move up to the cliff alcoves at all, away from water and crops? Did the cliffs provide protection from invaders? Were they defensive or were there other issues at play? Did the rock ledges have a ceremonial or spiritual significance? They certainly

provide shade and protection from snow. Ultimately, we are left only with educated guesses—the exact reasons for building the cliff dwellings remain unknown to us.

Why were the cliffs abandoned?

The cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde were abandoned around 1300 C.E. After all the time and effort it took to build these beautiful dwellings, why did people leave the area? Cliff Palace was built in the twelfth century, why was it abandoned less than a hundred years later? These questions have not been answered conclusively, though it is likely that the migration from this area was due to either drought, lack of resources, violence or some combination of these. We know, for instance, that droughts occurred from 1276 to 1299. These dry periods likely caused a shortage of food and may have resulted in confrontations as resources became more scarce. The cliff dwellings remain, though, as compelling examples of how the Ancestral Puebloans literally carved their existence into the rocky landscape of today's southwestern United States.

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Additional resources:

Mesa Verde National Park site

Yellow Jacket Pueblo reconstruction

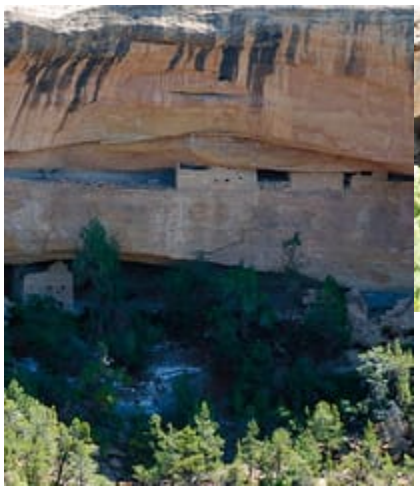
Janet Catherine Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art, 2 ed. Oxford History of Art series* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Elizabeth A. Newsome and Kelley Hays-Gilpin, "Spectatorship and Performance in Mural Painting, AD 1250–1500," *Religious Transformation in the Late Pre-Hispanic Pueblo World*, eds. Donna Glowacki and Scott Van Keuren, Amerind Studies in Archaeology (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2011).

David Grant Noble, ed., *The Mesa Verde World: Explorations in Ancestral Pueblo Archaeology* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 2006).

David W. Penney, *North American Indian Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004).

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17.6.2: A market for looted antiquities

by SIMON MACKENZIE



Figure 17.6.2.1: Detail, Phidias(?), Parthenon Frieze, c. 438-32 B.C.E., pentelic marble (420 linear feet of the 525 that complete the frieze are in the British Museum) (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA)

Several members of the cast of the film **The Monuments Men** made headlines for **expressing the view** that the British Museum should return the Elgin Marbles to Athens after their "very nice stay" of 200 years in London.

That reignited the debate around the ethics and intentions of **their removal from the Parthenon** in the early 19th century, as well as the controversy around what to do with them now. But whether or not the removal of the sculptures should be considered "pillage or protection", as **the Guardian put it**, we might take the opportunity to reflect on other more contemporary and unambiguous examples of international cultural heritage plunder.

Demands of the art market

The international art market that deals in ancient cultural objects casts a destructive shadow. Tombs are looted, statues broken from their pedestals, and facades chainsawed off temples, all to feed a booming economic demand among connoisseurs who prize the enjoyment of the artistic attributes of cultural objects, the thrill and investment value of collection, and the social status attributed to those associated with high culture.

The source countries for these collectible objects tend to be less economically developed than the market countries and so are usually not very well equipped to protect their heritage resources against plunder. London and New York are the two biggest centers for this trade in the world, and their active art markets have over the years exerted a strong demand for the archaeological riches underground in countries like Egypt, Greece and Turkey; or pieces of temple complexes like those found in South America and South East Asia.

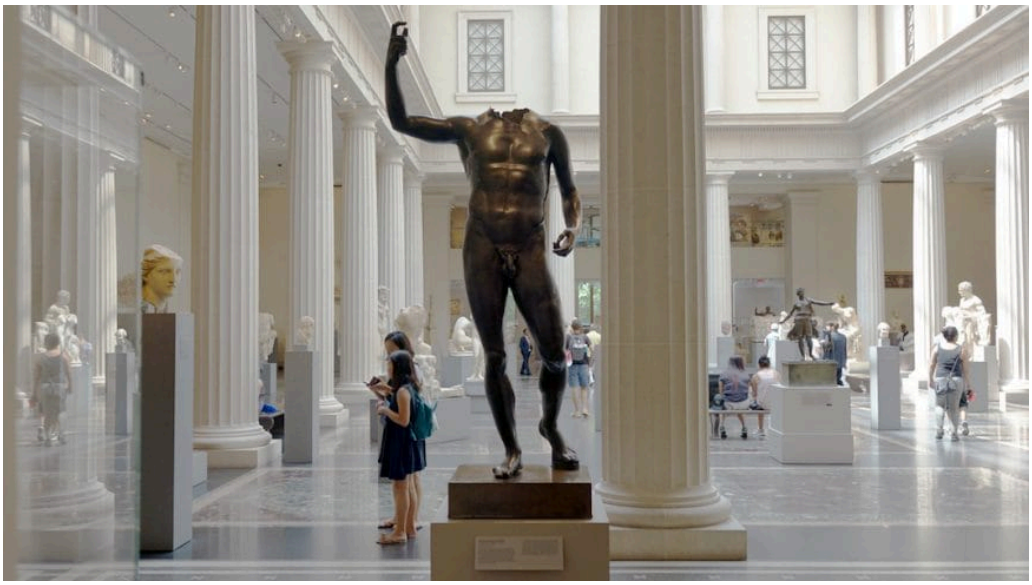


Figure 17.6.2.2: Bronze statue of a nude male figure, Greek or Roman, Hellenistic or Imperial, c. 200 B.C.E.—c. 200 C.E., bronze (on loan to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and possibly looted from the ancient site of Bubon in Turkey)

Estimates of the size of the illicit underworld of the international trade in art and antiquities are unreliable at present. Although figures as high as **US$6 billion** have been proposed, it is generally recognised that it is currently impossible to verify size estimates. Many looted antiquities are sold on the open market and their illicit origins will never be detected, let alone proved. And, as well as the public trade through auction houses and museum acquisitions which can be scrutinised to some extent, there is also a private trade between individuals, which is difficult to investigate.

Police statistics in most countries do not even have a separate category for art related thefts or seizures. They tend to lump them in with all other types of property theft. Looting in source countries happens at sites which are often remote, and in some cases undiscovered, and much looting activity is not detected or recorded by over-stretched local police forces.

All of these factors, and more, make it very difficult to know how much illicit market activity there really is. But **a growing body of research** has established considerable evidence to show that looting and trafficking is still a sizeable and serious issue, and one involving significant sums of money.

Cultural looting

There was a relatively uncontested free and open dealing in looted cultural objects in Britain and elsewhere running through the colonial era, supported by imperialist values, and this continued. Then, in the 1960s a sustained critique of these practices began to take hold.

Archaeologists who had experienced first-hand the looting of sites they had been working on began to reflect on the rapacious nature of the market in cultural resources. In particular, they argued that looters destroyed sites as they dug out tombs and other underground heritage, depriving researchers of the historical knowledge which the context of buried objects could give up.

Criticism of the international trade in looted antiquities mounted, and in 1970 UNESCO brought countries together under **an international convention** to protect the world's cultural heritage from exploitation by market forces. This date of 1970 has over time come to be accepted as the norm for acquisition of antiquities, particularly among museums subscribing to a collective ethical code.

They now have to look for a "provenance" (ownership history) dating back to at least that date. This is obviously therefore a rule intended to reduce demand for artifacts looted in recent decades, rather than to right any perceived wrongs of a more historical nature. But not all types of buyers in the market subscribe to the 1970 norm – and our research evidence suggests the "1970 rule" is not greatly influencing aggregate buying decisions in public market settings.

Repatriation

Major dealing and collecting institutions have been implicated in the trade in illicit cultural objects, as one would expect, given that traffickers have inserted looted artifacts into the legitimate trade, where they have most value. And as the understanding of the reach of this increases, so does the trend towards “repatriation” of objects to their source countries from the world’s encyclopedic museums.

For example, in 2013 the Metropolitan Museum in New York **returned two “Kneeling Attendants”** to the national museum in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, looted originally it seems from the temple complex at the ancient Khmer capital of **Koh Ker**, one of Cambodia’s great heritage sites.



Figure 17.6.2.3: Koh Ker National Park, Cambodia (photo: **Bruno Schoonbrodt**, CC BY-NC 2.0)

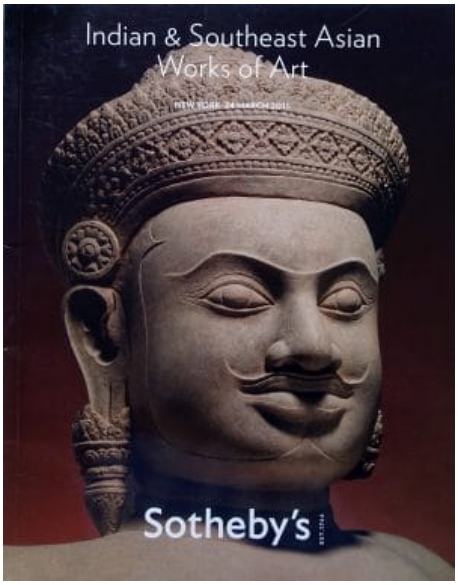


Figure 17.6.2.4

At the same time, another statue from Koh Ker has been the subject of litigation in the New York courts: **the Duryodhana**, offered for sale by Sotheby’s for an estimated $2m-$3m. The statue in New York was broken off at the ankles and its feet were discovered still attached to their pedestal in the Prasat Chen temple at Koh Ker.

The US Department of Justice alleged that it was torn from its base in the 1970s during **the civil war which led to Khmer Rouge power** – and from our fieldwork in Cambodia, we have first-hand accounts of similar looting activity from traffickers active at that

time. Subsequently, it was transported to London where it was sold to a Belgian collector through the auction house Spink. Late in 2013, Sotheby's and Cambodia concluded a settlement to the case, and the statue was returned.

The pressing question for the great museums of the world is what will happen to their repositories in a climate of greater attention to the ethics of acquisitions, present and past. This raises difficult value judgements around the wider issue of where ancient artifacts belong, the moral status of major museums in rich countries, and "who owns culture", as the titles of several books in the field put it.

For some people, this question may invite different responses when applied to cases like the Elgin Marbles on one hand, or fresh loot on the other. For so-called "cultural internationalists," the issue is the very moral legitimacy of countries declaring ownership of all cultural heritage. But the countries themselves would see the moral and legal elements of their title as being settled.

Market victim or complicit?

The extent to which museums, dealers, collectors and auction houses know about the illicit origins of objects they acquire – and whether they turn a blind eye or are genuinely duped by fraudulent sellers – is hotly contested. The New York dealer **Frederick Schultz**, for example, once president of the National Association of Dealers in Ancient, Oriental and Primitive Art, **was sentenced** in 2002 to nearly three years in jail and received a $50,000 fine for his part in receiving looted items from Egypt through a British smuggler named **Jonathan Tokeley-Parry**.

The smuggled objects had been **dipped in plastic** and painted to look like tourist souvenir items, thus evading Egyptian border control. The two dealers then fabricated provenance for the items in order to give them the appearance of having a legitimate ownership history, inventing a collector they called Thomas Alcock and attaching labels to the objects to suggest they were from his collection.

They even went so far as to artificially age the labels by dipping them in tea, to better support the illusion they were creating. The artifacts included a sculptural head of the 18th dynasty pharaoh Amenhotep III, subsequently to be sold by Schultz for $1.2 million.

And in 1997, journalist Peter Watson published the results of his five-year investigation **Sotheby's: the Inside Story**, which alleged complicity among some of the auction house's employees in knowingly receiving looted and trafficked artifacts.

Subsequently, **Sotheby's closed** the London arm of its antiquities sales department, never to re-open, in a move which was "**widely interpreted**" as a response to Watson's book, and which prompted Boston University archaeology professor and long-time commentator on illicit trade issues Ricardo Elia to note that "**London has been called the smuggling capital of the world**."

Against these scandalous examples of malpractice, trade representatives tend to argue that they exercise appropriate levels of "due diligence". Criminal offenses for dealing in illicit cultural objects like the **up-to-seven year prison sentence** created in the UK in 2003 often require the prosecution to prove a buyer's "knowledge or belief" of an object's tainted history, which has proved very difficult to do. The UK law remains virtually unused.

And so the current debate raised by George Clooney, Matt Damon and Bill Murray's thoughts on the repatriation of the Elgin Marbles is important, but for reasons which don't tend to make their way into press reports of the controversy. The discussion around antiquities which were taken from Greece over two centuries ago is part of the context of a more immediate issue of global crime. Looting and trafficking of cultural objects is not only a problem of the past.

by Simon Mackenzie, Professor of Criminology, Law and Society, ***University of Glasgow*** (CC BY-ND 4.0)

This article was originally published on **The Conversation**. Read the **original article**.

THE CONVERSATION

Save Culture – end trafficking

by UNESCO

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Video 17.6.2.1: Conflict situations and natural disasters increase the risk of theft and trafficking dramatically. Many instances of plunder, theft and trafficking of cultural objects go unseen or unsolved.

This video was produced by the UNESCO Beirut Office in the framework of the Emergency Safeguarding of the Syrian Cultural Heritage project, funded by the European Union and supported by the Flemish Government and the Government of Austria. Produced by Keeward, Illustration, Animation and Sound Design by Squarefish

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17.6.3: Save culture – end trafficking

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17.6.4: Trafficking the past

by DR. NEIL BRODIE

Islamic State

How an arrest in Iraq revealed Isis's $2bn jihadist network

Seizure of 160 computer flash sticks revealed the inside story of Isis, the band of militants that came from nowhere with nothing to having Syrian oil fields and control of Iraq's second city

Figure 17.6.4.1: "Conflict Antiquities: A Terrorist Financing Risk," **The Guardian**, June 15, 2014

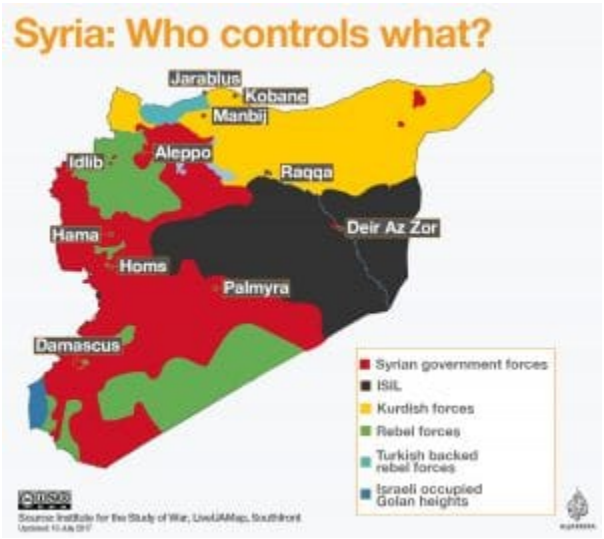


Figure 17.6.4.2: Map of government control in Syria

In June 2014 the *Guardian* newspaper ran **a story** claiming that the terrorist organization Daesh had made $36 million from antiquities sales in the al-Nabuk area of Syria, and that it obtained a major part of its funding from antiquities sales more generally.

Almost overnight, this story transformed the antiquities trade in the public imagination from being a crime against culture into a crime against humanity. If the headlines that followed over the following weeks and months were anything to go by, vast sums of money were being directed from the antiquities trade into the war chests of Daesh and other armed terrorist and insurgency groups. Something needed to be done. It was a compelling narrative, one that played out well with the media-malleable public, and it certainly hooked the attention of concerned policy-makers, but for many long-time experts in the field it just did not ring true.

Fantasy economics

In the first place, the idea that $36 million could be made over the period of a year or so actually *within Syria* was unprecedented, unbelievable even. Many studies had shown that the monetary value of antiquities close to their source is only a small and even a vanishingly small percentage of their value on the destination market in places like London and New York.

In 1972, for example, The Metropolitan Museum of Art paid antiquities dealer Robert Hecht one million dollars for a **Euphronios Attic red-figure krater**. The *tombaroli* who stole the krater from an ancient Etruscan tomb in Italy are believed to have received

the equivalent of $88,000 for their labors—only nine percent of its final price. Such markups are typical. So, if the story was to be believed, antiquities worth $36 million on the ground in Syria would be worth a staggering $360 million on the destination market, perhaps much more. It was fantasy economics. There was no evidence for that kind of market activity and the reality had to be something less spectacular.



Figure 17.6.4.3: Daesh receipts for payment of “war booty” tax (source: **U.S. Department of State**)

The *Guardian* figure was never corroborated, but a more accurate assessment was achieved when in May 2015 United States Special Forces **seized a book of receipts** during a raid on the Syrian headquarters of Abu Sayyaf, the head of Daesh’s antiquities division. These receipts suggested that Daesh might be making something like four million dollars a year from the antiquities trade. A large and worrying sum, but nothing like the figure first suggested, and one that would account for only about one percent of Daesh’s total income.

Antiquities trafficking is nothing new

Terrorists and insurgents profiting from antiquities trafficking was nothing new. What was new was the sensationalist reporting. In the 1990s, for example, it was well known that *mujahideen* and later Taliban groups inside Afghanistan were making money from the antiquities trade, but this never made the headlines.



Figure 17.6.4.4: More than Just Digging: Daesh Antiquities Trafficking an Institutionalized Process, infographic from **The Antiquities Coalition**

Before that, in the 1970s, combatant factions in the Cambodian civil war, including after 1990 the Khmer Rouge, had been likewise engaged. It is believed, for example, that the Khmer general Ta Mok, the so-called “Butcher of Cambodia,” had held a central organizing role in the Cambodian antiquities trade.

During the early 1980s, until his fall from favor in 1985, Bashar al-Assad’s uncle, Rifaat al-Assad, controlled the antiquities trade in Syria, and his counterpart in Iraq was perhaps Saddam Hussein’s brother-in-law Arshad Yashin, who is said to have organized much of the looting there. Violence was a growing accompaniment to the antiquities trade during this period. In late-1990s Iraq, guards were killed in gun battles while trying to protect sites. In 2005, while transporting arrested antiquities dealers, eight Iraqi customs officers were ambushed and shot dead. So while it might be an exaggeration to report the antiquities trade as a crime against humanity, it is a violent enterprise, and one that profits armed and criminal organizations alike.



Figure 17.6.4.5: Statue found during the raid on Abu Sayyef’s headquarters (source: **U.S. Department of State**)

Why did we fail to protect Syria’s cultural heritage?

The real surprise and indeed outrage of the Daesh involvement with the trade was that it was happening at all. The threats posed by antiquities trafficking to cultural heritage and more broadly to society at large had been known since at least the 1960s, when the international community had supported the drafting and subsequent adoption of the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. For the first time, the antiquities trade was recognized internationally as a harmful enterprise and one that needed to be controlled. Since then, there has been a proliferation of conventions, recommendations and actions aimed at combatting the trade and protecting cultural heritage. So why, 45 years later in 2015, was the antiquities trade devastating Syrian cultural heritage? Had the international policy response failed? What had gone wrong?

A rise in consumer demand

The answers to these questions are to be found in the nature of the policy response. The antiquities trade is fueled by consumer demand. Antiquities are bought by museums and private collectors in the rich acquiring countries of the destination market.



Figure 17.6.4.6: Antiquities found during the raid on Abu Sayyef's headquarters (source: **U.S. Department of State**)

Yet international policy has never quite come to grips with tackling demand and reducing the attractive pull of museums and collectors. Instead, its focus has been on protecting cultural heritage at source and reducing the flow of antiquities onto the destination market. Yet it is an impossible task to protect every cultural site in the world, particularly in poor countries unable to afford the required infrastructure, or in countries suffering from war or civil disturbance where public order has disintegrated. Only when collectors can be convinced to stop buying antiquities will thieves and traffickers stop selling them.

Museums in the spotlight

Back in the 1960s, when the **1970 UNESCO Convention** to prevent the illegal trafficking of cultural property was being drafted, museums were believed to be the mainspring of demand. And perhaps they were. There has been a concerted effort since then to develop ethical guidelines discouraging museums from acquiring trafficked antiquities. The work of the **International Council of Museums** (ICOM) has been particularly notable in this regard.



Figure 17.6.4.7: The Euphronios Krater at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2006 (photo: **Tim Pendemon**, CC BY 2.0)

Yet following investigations by Italian and Greek law enforcement authorities, the museums world was rocked during the 1990s by revelations that major US art museums had been actively acquiring stolen and trafficked antiquities. Museums such as the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles and The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York were forced to return important antiquities to Italy and Greece, including the Euphronios krater.

But the bad news didn't stop there. In the 2010s, police and customs officials in India and the United States broke up a major trafficking operation headed by New York-based dealer Subhash Kapoor. He was shown to have sold a large Chola bronze Shiva

Nataraja, which had been stolen from a temple in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu only two years earlier, to the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) for five million dollars. The NGA returned the Nataraja to India in 2014. Kapoor had sold other antiquities from the same temple thefts to Singapore's Asian Civilizations Museum and the Toledo Museum of Art. The case triggered an independent review of the problematic histories of 36 antiquities acquired by the NGA between 1968 and 2013.

Museums, clearly, are still an important component of demand. They act materially by making big money purchases and acquisitions, but also set a moral tone when they seem to make indiscriminate collecting socially acceptable.

Booming demand

Nevertheless, by the time of Kapoor's arrest, museums were not the only destination for trafficked antiquities. Antiquities were being touted as tangible assets for canny investors, and they had become trendy ornaments for interior-design makeovers. Antiquities from Middle Eastern countries were being marketed as "relics" from the "Holy Land," and the meditative worth of Buddhist antiquities similarly attracted more spiritual collectors. The rapid expansion of the internet as a means for trading antiquities created a market for smaller and less-valuable pieces that would previously not have been worth looting. Demand was booming like never before, and was largely out of control.

Successful indictments and convictions of offenders for antiquities trafficking were so rare as to be almost non-existent. Even when convictions did happen, sentencing was light and failed to pose any serious deterrence. In 2012, two U.S.-based dealers pled guilty to offenses related to antiquities trafficking. One was sentenced to six months' home confinement and one year's probation, the other was fined $1,000. Within a couple of years, they were both back in business.



Figure 17.6.4.8: Cuneiform tablet illegally imported by Hobby Lobby (source: **U.S. Attorney's Office**)

Missing evidence

Trafficked antiquities are routinely sold without documented evidence or even with fraudulent evidence of ownership history—so-called "unprovenanced" antiquities. The problems facing law enforcement authorities who must try to establish provenance were made abundantly clear in July 2017 when it was announced that Hobby Lobby had agreed to pay a $3 million forfeiture to the United States government and relinquish claims to and possession of 3,599 Iraqi antiquities bought in 2010 for 1.6 million dollars. Knowledgeable observers believed the antiquities to have been stolen from Iraq, and that someone should have faced a felony charge for the theft. But the evidence was not there. Theft could not be proved. Instead, Hobby Lobby was punished for customs violations.

Hobby Lobby is owned by the Green family, which in 2009 established the Green Collection of antiquities and other objects related to biblical history, and the **Green Scholars Initiative** of university academics to study them. As the 2017 forfeitures showed, much of the unprovenanced material being studied by the Green Scholars is likely to have been trafficked.

The Green scholars are not alone. A new academic industry has developed, comprised of university scholars studying suspect antiquities acquired by large private collections. Ancient manuscripts and other text-bearing antiquities, many of them from Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel, and Palestine, are particularly worthy of attention. Scholarship establishes the importance and authenticity, and thus monetary value of studied material—to the financial benefit of the collector. In 2007, for example, a U.S.-based private collector claimed a $900,000 tax deduction for a donation of 1,679 Iraqi cuneiform tablets to Cornell University. He had purchased the tablets sometime during the 1990s for $50,000. The mark-up in price must have been due to scholarly study over the intervening period that had established their importance—and their value.

How do we stop trafficking?

Antiquities trafficking damages cultural heritage worldwide, and the proceeds from trafficking fund organized crime and terrorist violence. No one has to buy unprovenanced antiquities. Antiquities collecting does not confer cultural sophistication and antiquities are not good investments. Antiquities trafficking will only stop when people stop buying them.

Additional resources:

Dr. Neil Brodie's blog, Market of Mass Destruction

Saving Antiquities for Everyone (SAFE)

Looting Matters blog

Trafficking Culture

Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa (EAMENA)

U.S. Department of State Cultural Heritage Center

U.S. Committee of the Blue Shield

UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger

The Antiquities Coalition

International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)

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17.6.5: We will need Monuments Men for as long as ancient sites remain battlefields

by EMMA CUNLIFFE



Figure 17.6.5.1: The ruins of the 11th century Great Umayyad Mosque, Aleppo, Syria (photo: **Fathi Nezam** from Tasnim News Agency, CC BY 4.0)

The destruction and looting of cultural heritage has been intertwined with conflict for thousands of years. To steal an enemies' treasures, defile their sacred places and burn their cities has been part of war throughout history. And sadly, in the **modern battlefields** of the ancient world, in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Egypt, and elsewhere, it continues to this day.

The Colosseum in Rome, for example, was built using spoils from the **sack of the Temple of Jerusalem** in AD 70. Many of the Louvre's collections were "acquired" by Napoleon while rampaging through Europe (albeit later returned). In fact, much of Napoleon's collection of war booty – acquired during his failed campaign in Egypt – was declared forfeit by the British victors and given to the British Museum under the Treaty of Capitulation of 1801. The **Rosetta Stone**, which famously enabled the deciphering of the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic script, was acquired through this treaty and is still on display there today.

Although antiquities gained widespread public interest throughout the 19th and early 20th century, it was not until the Second World War that the idea of preserving them in conflict finally took hold. As Hitler's armies advanced across Europe, he saw an opportunity to conquer not only the land and the people, but the cultures of defeated nations. Millions of artistic works and important cultural objects were seized and sent back to Germany, where Hitler took a personal interest in selecting the very best. His new **Führermuseum** was to be the most spectacular art museum ever built, culled from the cultural riches of the western world.

Those in command of the Allied forces were faced with a historical and cultural loss of unprecedented scale. Declaring his support for the protection of the past, the supreme Allied commander, Dwight Eisenhower, said:

> **Inevitably, in the path of our advance will be found historical monuments and cultural centres which symbolise to the world all that we are fighting to preserve. It is the responsibility of every commander to protect and respect these symbols wherever possible.**

Enter the Monuments Men

In 1943, the Allied forces approved the formation of a new unit: the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Commission (**MFAA**). For

the first time in history, armies went into the field with officers dedicated to protecting art and monuments during the conflict. It was going to be a tough job. Entire historic quarters in cities such as Warsaw were demolished in days and the artistic treasures of Europe were vanishing.

Just 345 men and women, with no dedicated resources, were tasked with protecting historic buildings, monuments, libraries and archives across the whole of Europe and North Africa. Most were museum staff, art historians, scholars and university professors, yet their success was incredible. They found and returned more than five million stolen objects and artworks and ensured the protection of numerous buildings, often using no more than their own ingenuity.

A part of their story is told in the new film, Monuments Men, based on author Robert Edsel's **book** of the same name, by the **Monuments Men Foundation**, and also in the book and ensuing film **The Rape of Europa**. In 1951, the MFAA was disbanded as politicians drafted the **1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict**, followed by the First Protocol in 1954 and the Second Protocol in 1999 (which extended and clarified the original tenets).

The convention protects places and objects "of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people" during conflict. It argues the heritage of all sides should be protected and that warring sides should not use it or its immediate surroundings, nor direct assaults against it. It also granted suitable authority and units for its protection. Crucially, it separates the principles of **military necessity from military convenience**. Unfortunately, it is not widely adhered to and many of the lessons learned by the MFAA have been forgotten.

The monumental battle today

The Monument Men of today are almost all volunteers. Some are local people, such as the **Syrian Association for Preserving Heritage and Ancient Landmarks**, who work in Aleppo (a UNESCO World Heritage city) to try and save its monuments and buildings. Individual organisations **monitor the situation**. Some countries have formed voluntary national **Committees of the Blue Shield**.

The Blue Shield network was suggested in the Hague Convention and is the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross. It is a group of non-governmental organisations working to protect monuments, sites, museums and archives during and after conflict and natural disasters. Members are drawn from universities, museums and heritage organisations, with advisors from the Red Cross, UNESCO, the military and others.



Figure 17.6.5.2: World Heritage site: The Basilica of St Simeon Stylites in Syria, the oldest surviving Byzantine church, dating back to the 5th century, now rumoured to be badly damaged by fighting (photo: **Bernard Gagnon**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Their objectives are to formulate and lead national and international responses to emergencies that threaten cultural property. They encourage respect for, and protection of, cultural heritage, providing training and advice. Despite the Hague Convention's mandates, often the only military personnel who engage with cultural heritage protection do so voluntarily.

Today, 126 countries have ratified the **Hague Convention**, although the necessary work is rarely funded and not all the tenets are enforced. The **UK has not ratified it**, despite the **destruction caused by the coalition** invasion of Iraq in 2003. In August 2013, chemical weapons were used in Syria and intervention was discussed. Had it happened, the British military is under no obligation to protect, or even consider, any of the thousands of significant sites throughout the country, many of which date back to the **earliest achievements of mankind**.

Protecting cultural property is about more than old books, buildings and fine paintings. Our cultural heritage stands as the symbol of everything humanity has achieved: our finest moments and even our worst atrocities. It is the physical reminder of our past and inspiration for our future. While not every site can be saved, its loss should be a matter of necessity and never convenience. As Eisenhower stated 70 years ago, to fight without even considering it is to sacrifice everything for which we are fighting.

by Emma Cunliffe, Postgraduate Associate, ***Durham University*** (CC BY-ND 4.0)

This article was originally published on **The Conversation**.

THE CONVERSATION

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17.6.6: What the bulldozers left behind- reclaiming Sicán's past

by DR. SARAHH SCHER and DR. BETH HARRIS

YouTube Video

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Video 17.6.6.1: Inverse-Face Beaker, 10th-11th century, Sicán (Lambayeque), Peru, gold, 20 x 18.1 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Key points:

- The Sicán culture was located on the north coast of Peru, and is sometimes referred to as Lambayeque.
- We have lost a significant amount of knowledge of Sicán culture due to systematic looting and grave-robbing. These looted objects were smuggled out of Peru and many find their way to private collections and museums in North America and Europe.
- This inverse-face beaker, made of hammered gold, shows a face in a position that would have been upside-down when it was used. This inversion may suggest the underworld, or contact with spirit forces.

Additional resources:

This work at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Donna Yates, Batán Grande on Trafficking Culture

Izumi Shimada, "Sicán Elite Tombs and Their Broader. Implications" (Institute of Archaeology, University College London, 1992)

Izumi Shimada, "Precious Metal Objects of the Middle Sicán," *Scientific American* (2005)

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17.6.7: Lost History- the terracotta sculpture of Djenné-Djenno

by DR. KRISTINA VAN DYKE and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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Video 17.6.7.1: Seated figure, 13th century, Mali, Inland Niger Delta (Djenné peoples), terracotta, 25.4 x 29.9cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art) Speakers: Dr. Kristina Van Dyke and Dr. Steven Zucker

Additional resources:

This work at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Djenné on Art and Life in Africa (University of Iowa)

Works from Djenné at the Yale University Art Gallery

The Spread of Islam in West Africa (Stanford University)

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17.6.8: The Looting of Cambodian Antiquities

by TESS DAVIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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Video 17.6.8.1: The looting of ancient Cambodian antiquities from Prasat Chen, the 10th century the Khmer capital at Koh Ker ARCHES: At Risk Cultural Heritage Education Series

Additional resources:

"Sotheby's Accused of Deceit in Sale of Khmer Statue" (*The New York Times*, November 13, 2012)

Rebuilding Koh Ker: A 3D Reconstruction Restores Context to a Looted Khmer Temple (from Chasing Aphrodite)

Cambodia Vs. Sotheby's In A Battle Over Antiquities (from NPR)

Return of six of the nine statues looted from Cambodia (UNESCO)

Red List of Cambodian Antiquities at Risk (ICOM)

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17.6.9: Sotheby's Returns Looted 10th Century Statue to Cambodia

by TESS DAVIS

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Video 17.6.9.1: Archaeologist and legal expert Tess Davis talks about Sotheby's attempt to auction an ancient Cambodian statue that had been looted by the Khmer Rouge in 1972; and the statue's eventual return home.

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17.6.10: The Scourge of Looting- Trafficking Antiquities from Temple to Museum

by TESS DAVIS

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Video 17.6.10.1: Archaeologist and legal expert Tess Davis talks about the illicit antiquities trade, and how the looting of archaeological sites in conflict zones goes to fund paramilitary groups and terrorist organizations.

To learn more about the Angkor period of Cambodia see our essay on **Angkor Wat.**

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17.6.11: How a famous Greek bronze ended up in the Vatican

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Taken from Greece, confiscated by an emperor and returned to the people.

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Video 17.6.11.1: Lysippos, Apoxyomenos, Roman marble copy after Greek bronze original dating to c. 300 B.C.E. (Vatican Museums, Rome, Italy)

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17.6.12: Fact and fiction- The explosion of Reims Cathedral during World War I

by CHRISTINE M. BOLLI



Figure 17.6.12.1: Shell bursting on the cathedral at Reims, from *Collier's New Photographic History of the World's War*, 1918

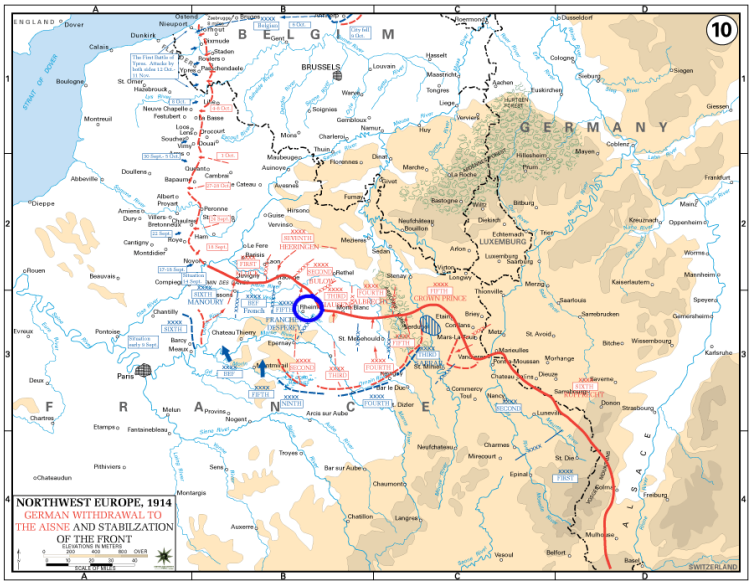


Figure 17.6.12.2: Map of the Western Front, 1914, with Reims circled in blue (map: **The History Department of the United States Military Academy**, CC0)

The facts...?

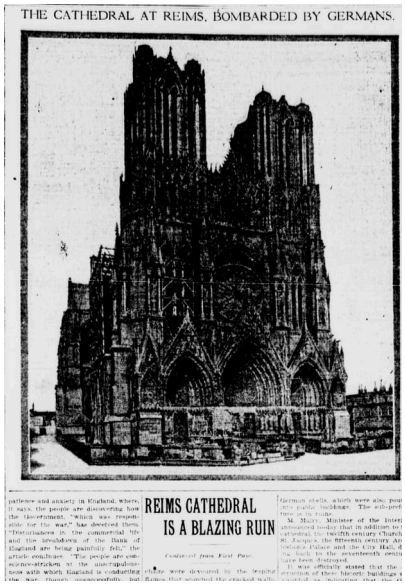
World War I officially started July 28, 1914. Originally it was believed that the "situation" would clear itself up by no later than Christmastime. Instead, it took over four long and grueling years, and resulted in more than 15 million deaths. Early on in the conflict, the German army moved into northeastern French territory. This was the beginning of the Western Front. The expeditious land grab by the Germans included the city of Reims. Reims had a well-established history, from its days as a bustling hub of the Roman Empire, to becoming a center of French culture in the early Middle Ages. Additionally, Reims was the "Coronation Capital,"

so to speak, the traditional location for the coronation of French kings. It was also home to a magnificent high Gothic cathedral, **Notre-Dame de Reims**. By early September, the French had forced the Germans to retreat and though the French regained the town, the Germans stayed close by for the entirety of the war.



Figure 17.6.12.3: View of Reims cathedral over the rooftops of the city in 2014 (photo: **Dr. Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The city of Reims saw significant destruction, and both civilian and military casualties. But no event ignited indignation as did the bombing of the much-venerated Notre-Dame de Reims. The cathedral was first hit by shell fire on September 19th, 1914. Wooden scaffolding that was in place for ongoing repairs caught fire, and contributed to the damage, as did several smaller fires that resulted from the attack. Though the cathedral would be struck again and again as the war continued, it was this initial shelling that sparked a firestorm of outrage, horror, and prodigious propaganda—surely here was damning proof that the Germans were indeed "barbarians," so lacking in culture themselves that they were compelled to destroy the beauty of another culture out of sheer spite and jealousy. The propaganda insisted that there was no reason to bomb the church since it had no strategic military value, and was a place of sanctuary. The French and their allies stressed that there was no justification to shell the cathedral especially given that was being used to house the wounded (mainly German soldiers callously left behind by their fleeing brothers-in-arms).


THE CATHEDRAL AT REIMS, BOMBARDED BY GERMANS.

REIMS CATHEDRAL
IS A BLAZING RUIN

Figure 17.6.12.4: "Reims Cathedral is a Blazing Ruin," *The Sun* (New York City), September 21, 1914 (**Library of Congress**)

War crimes

It was acknowledged, even at the time, that the Germans were committing more horrendous acts than the bombardment of Reims Cathedral. So why should a building create more outcry and indignation than the killing of innocent civilians, or other kinds of wartime savagery? Perhaps it was in part that the cathedral, literally meaning the seat of the bishop, could be seen as representing the French nation as a whole, its cruciform shape evoking a sacrificial body. Or, on a more practical note, it was a story that could be easily sensationalized and discussed *ad infinitum*—cultural war damage was far easier to get past the censors. In the words of Maurice Landrieux, a former priest at Reims but later the Bishop of Dijon "...but it was the most ignoble, because it was at once sacrilegious and stupid, and because it reveals, by its uselessness, the blackest depth of German misdoing." There was a pervasive belief that the Germans had come to France with the express intention of destroying the cathedral from the outset of the war.



Figure 17.6.12.5: "The great arches at Notre Dame: The wars of seven centuries had passed over Reims, and still all armies spared the beautiful cathedral. Is is now but a wonderful ruin." from *Collier's Photographic History of the European War*, by Francis J. Reynolds and C. W. Taylor, c. 1917

There are two sides to every story, and so it is here. The Germans did shell the cathedral—that is irrefutable. Their explanation as to why they did so was wildly at odds with the French account, and they claimed to be horrified just as deeply as the French, at the damage done to this architectural masterpiece.

The French story was that is that the Germans, before their hasty retreat, had covered the floors of the cathedral with straw, to make it more combustible and that they intentionally left their wounded knowing they would be brought into the church by the French to be tended. A Red Cross flag was raised, a further signal that the cathedral was off-limits as a military target. However, the Germans later claimed the cathedral was being used for military intelligence: a signal station, telephone equipment, and an observation post had been espied in one of the towers during a German fly-by—along with a large cache of weapons. If true, according to international law, the cathedral was a viable military target—a wolf wrapped in sheep's clothing.

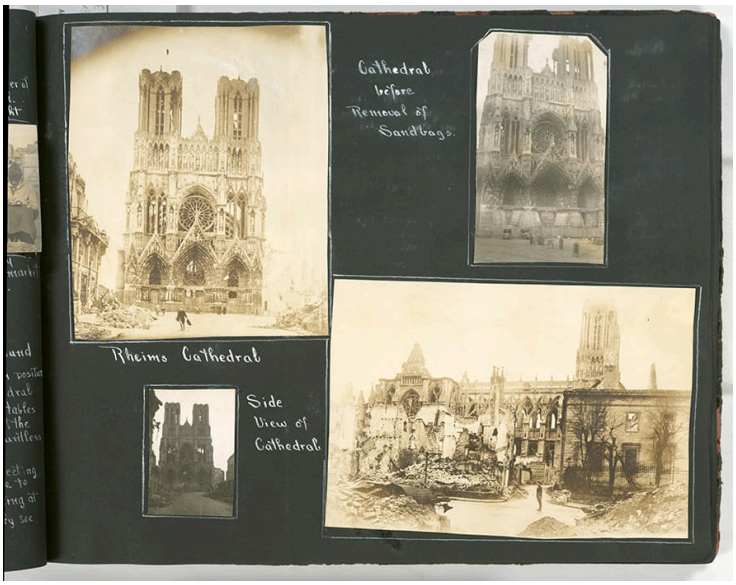


Figure 17.6.12.6: “Cathedral before removal of sandbags (upper right); Reims Cathedral; side view of cathedral” (**New York Public Library Digital Collections**)

The church was severely damaged—roofs had burned, statues melted, stonework was no longer viable, and more. Nonetheless, the structure was still essentially in good condition after the attack, all things considered. The local French authorities were actually taken to task by their own administrators for not doing a better job putting out the fire, which caused the majority of the damage. The Germans claimed it pained them to commit such an act, but the cunning French had left them no choice. These claims gained little traction.

The result was that—for the French—the German reputation for philosophical thought and general erudition, were suddenly erased—they were viewed once again as one of the “barbarian hordes” of the migration era. German art historians were quick to point out they had been one of the primogenitors of that discipline, and they highly appreciated art from around the globe. German art historians and professors were even dispatched to the front, joining various army units to help provide protection to valuable art on both sides, but to no avail. The mud would not unstick.



Figure 17.6.12.7: Harry R. Hopps, *Destroy this mad brute Enlist – U.S. Army*, 1918, color lithograph, 106 x 71 cm (**Library of Congress**)

Culture wars

Reims Cathedral continued to be used as propaganda for the whole of the war. Its burnt image was printed on posters and

postcards. German soldiers were depicted gun-wielding and slavering at the jaw to seeking to destroy the next great work of art they saw. Meanwhile, the Germans lampooned the French, accusing them of using their own great works of art for nefarious ends without compunction. One well-known cartoon read, “The cunning French have used Reims cathedral as a shooting platform—next they’ll be building trenches with the contents of the Louvre.”

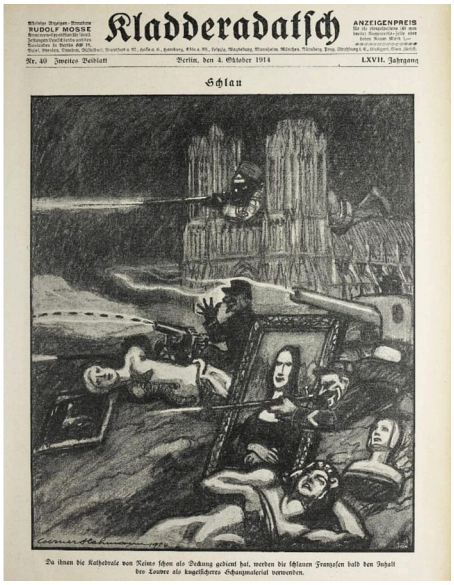


Figure 17.6.12.8: “The cunning French have used Reims cathedral as a shooting platform—next they’ll be building trenches with the contents of the Louvre,” Werner Hahmann, *Schlau (Sly)*, from **Kladderarsch**, no. 40 (cover, October 1914)

Beyond the trenches, the battle for cultural superiority was on. The French had the upper hand when it came to the events at Reims that fateful night. They could claim eyewitnesses, and they also photographed the cathedral in ways intended to most incite a viewer.

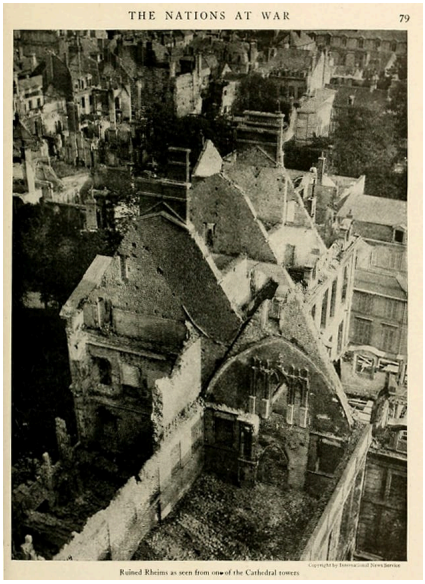


Figure 17.6.12.9: “Ruined Reims as seen from one of the Cathedral towers,” from *The Nations at War* by Willis John Abbot, 1917

The Germans did try hard though, despite their lack of handy visual evidence, to underscore that they had been the only country to carry out any form of art protection. *Kunstschutz* (the German term for the principle of preserving cultural heritage and artworks during armed conflict) was said to protect art on both sides of the war. It was even said to be endorsed by Kaiser Wilhelm II himself. The Germans emphasized that the bombing of the cathedral at Reims had not been part of a systematic effort, instead, it was one of the many sad byproducts of the war.



Figure 17.6.12.10: E. Lemielle, *Souvenez-vous! 1914. Rien d'Allemand!!! Des Allemands (Remember! 1914. Nothing German! Nothing from the Germans)*, 1919, color lithograph, 83 x 60 cm (**Library of Congress**)

Neither side held back, each was determined to show that while one was on the side of the angels, the other was ruthlessly attempting to profit by the destruction of art. Meanwhile, the Germans claimed that as they were the creators of the **Gothic** style, and so the cathedral was just as much part of their cultural heritage as it was France's, and they again attempted to remind the world of their integral role in the creation of art history. Again, this gained no traction with the French, nor with most nations.



Figure 17.6.12.11: "The cathedral of Notre Dame at Reims, after repeated bombardments," from *Collier's Photographic History of the European War*, by Francis J. Reynolds and C. W. Taylor (c. 1917)

By the end of the war Reims, which had been targeted multiple times, was the ruin the French had claimed after the initial attack. The continued attacks on the cathedral called into doubt the veracity of the Germans' initial account. After the first bombardment, it was certain that the cathedral was no longer being used for any military purpose—if it ever had been. Again, a cultural landmark of this kind could only become subject to brute force with good reason, so the continued bombing only furthered the French position of German brutality and outright vandalism. J.W. Garner, in his *International Law and the World War*, states, "Monuments of this stature are not only entitled to respect because of their sanctity but are especially protected because of the Law of Nations" (p. 445).

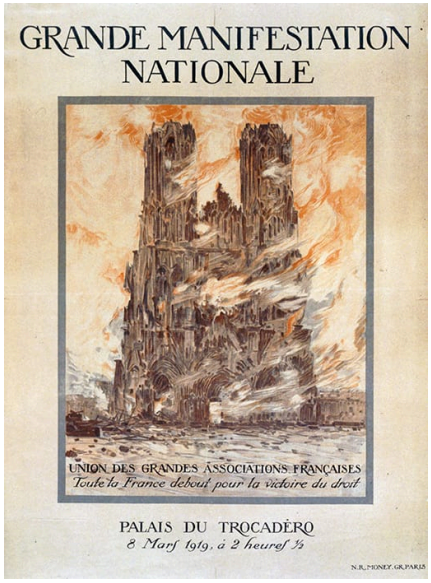


Figure 17.6.12.12: Grande Manifestation Nationale, 1919, color lithograph, 80 x 59 cm (**Library of Congress**)

Restoration on the cathedral began almost immediately after the end of the war, funded in part by the Rockefeller family. The cathedral reopened in 1938, though work continues to this day. Recently, the world looked on aghast when, in April of 2019, the iconic Notre-Dame de Paris burned. Even more recently, the lesser-known Cathedral of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in Nantes, another Gothic jewel, caught on fire. In these cases there appears to be no terrorism involved, only age and human error. Perhaps then, the. most important take-away from the bombing of Reims Cathedral is that blame is, to a degree, irrelevant, at least after the fact. The real lesson is that we must do better at preserving our cultural heritage the world over.

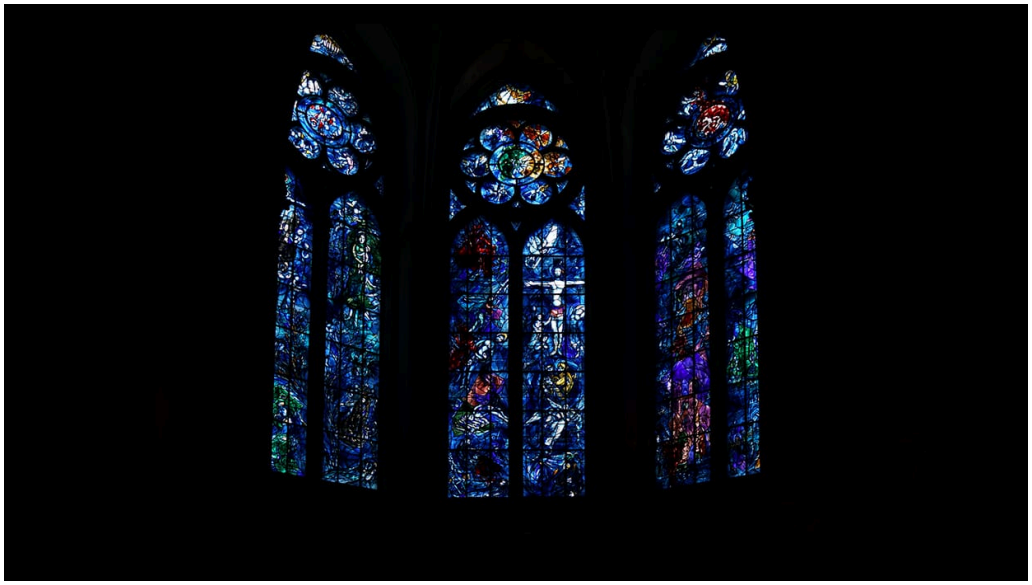


Figure \(\PageIndex{13\): Marc Chagall, stained glass windows replacing war-damaged ones, Reims Cathedral, 1967-1985 (photo: **Dr. Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Additional resources:

The official website of Notre-Dame de Reims

Explore Reims Cathedral at Mapping Gothic France

This page titled 17.6.12: Fact and fiction- The explosion of Reims Cathedral during World War I is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker, "How a famous Greek bronze ended up in the Vatican," in Smarthistory, June 16, 2020, accessed December 24, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/how-a-famous-greek-bronze-ended-up-in-the-vatican/..

- 14.6: Destruction, looting, and trafficking by Smarthistory is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

17.7: DOCUMENTING AND PROTECTING CULTURAL HERITAGE

17.7.1: Diarna- documenting the places of a vanishing Jewish history
17.7.2: A Landmark Decision- Penn Station, Grand Central, and the architectural heritage of NYC
17.7.3: Frameworks for cultural heritage protection- from ancient writing to modern law
17.7.4: A race against time- manuscripts and digital preservation
17.7.5: Provenance and the Antiquities Market
17.7.6: A Renaissance masterpiece nearly lost in war- Piero della Francesca, The Resurrection
17.7.7: Saving Torcello, an ancient church in the Venetian Lagoon

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17.7.1: Diarna- documenting the places of a vanishing Jewish history

by JASON GUBERMAN-PFEFFER and DR. BETH HARRIS

YouTube Video

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View this YouTube Video online

Video 17.7.1.1: A conversation with Jason Guberman-Pfeffer, Executive Director, Digital Heritage Mapping, Inc. and Coordinator, Diarna Geo-Museum and Beth Harris.

Additional resources:

Diarna

Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue (Jobar Synagogue) at Diarna

Syria accuses Israel of Stealing Artifacts from Damascus (The Times of Israel)

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17.7.2: A Landmark Decision- Penn Station, Grand Central, and the architectural heritage of NYC

A Landmark Decision: Penn Station, Grand Central, and the architectural heritage of NYC

by DR. MATTHEW A. POSTAL and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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Video 17.7.2.1: Dr. Matthew A. Postal and Dr. Steven Zucker discuss landmarks preservation in New York City while visiting: Charles Luckman Associates's Madison Square Garden and Pennsylvania Station, the former site of Charles McKim for McKim Mead, & White, Pennsylvania Station (New York City), 1910 and then visiting Reed & Stem, Warren & Wetmore's Grand Central Terminal, 1912

Additional resources:

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

Grand by Design: A History of Grand Central Terminal

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:

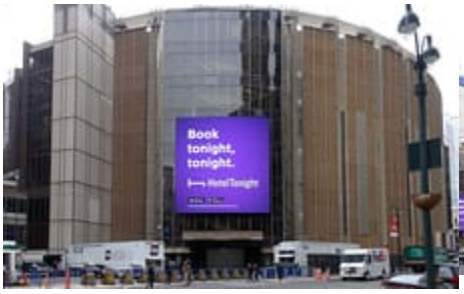


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17.7.3: Frameworks for cultural heritage protection- from ancient writing to modern law

by DR. PATTY GERSTENBLITH

Major threats to cultural heritage come in two forms: destruction during military conflict and the looting of sites and collections. Both in antiquity and in contemporary times, we see these destructive activities often going hand in hand, but we also see a consistent development toward recognition that such cultural remains should be protected.

Toward a recognition that cultural heritage should be protected

In the second century B.C.E., the ancient Roman author Polybius criticized the Roman plunder of Greek sanctuaries on Sicily. A century later, the Roman orator, Cicero, prosecuted the Roman governor of Sicily, Gaius Verres, for excessive looting of Sicilian cities. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius and the international legal theorist Emmerich de Vattel established principles stating that, as works of art were not useful to the military effort, they should be protected.



Figure 17.7.3.1: Greek Temple of Apollo, Syracuse, Sicily (photo: **Allie_Caulfield**, CC BY 2.0)

During the Napoleonic Wars of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the French looted artworks from throughout Europe as well as from Egypt and brought them to Paris, which was to be recreated as the “new Rome.” With the defeat of Napoleon, the British leaders (the Duke of Wellington and Viscount Castlereagh) not only declined to take these collections for Britain but decreed that the French should return those artworks taken from other European nations. Despite this, only about half of the works looted by Napoleon—and none of those taken from non-Europeans—were returned.



Figure 17.7.3.2: Phidias, East Pediment Sculpture for the Parthenon (a.k.a. the “Elgin Marbles”) (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

During this same time period, the British Lord Elgin, at that time ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, removed sculptures and architectural elements from the **Parthenon** and other structures in Athens and brought them to London, where they were later purchased by the British Museum.

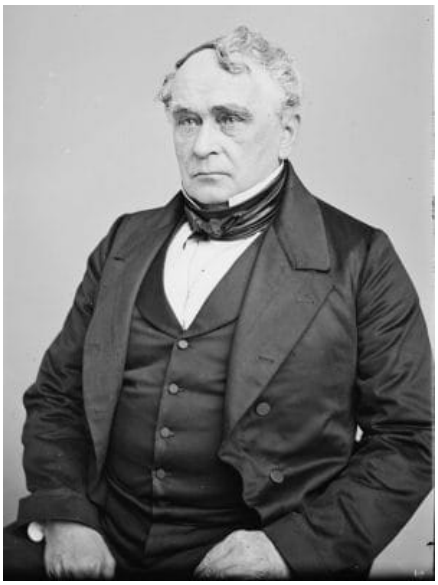


Figure 17.7.3.3: Francis Lieber, c. 1855-65 (**Brady-Handy Collection, Library of Congress**)

The Lieber Code

In 1863, during the American Civil War, the first military code of conduct was written at the request of President Abraham Lincoln by Francis Lieber, who had been present as a young soldier at the Battle of Waterloo. Lieber later studied the classics and then moved to the United States, where he became a professor of history. Known as the Lieber Code, it addressed the same two threats discussed above: destruction and looting. Lieber wrote that structures devoted to religion or education and museums of the fine arts and science should not be destroyed during armed conflict and "classical works of art, libraries, scientific collections or precious instruments…must be secured against all avoidable injury even when they are contained in fortified places whilst besieged or bombarded." He added that such objects shall not "be sold or given away…nor shall they ever be privately appropriated, or wantonly destroyed or injured."

First international conventions

The Hague Conventions and Regulations of 1899 and 1907 were the first international instruments to codify rules on the conduct of warfare. Influenced by the Lieber Code, they ingrained these same concepts of protection into international law. These two Hague Conventions were the governing instruments during both World Wars. While these Conventions did not prevent large-scale theft and destruction of cultural objects and structures—particularly during the Second World War—they served as the basis for prosecution and punishment of those who violated their principles.



Figure 17.7.3.4: Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFAA) Officer James Rorimer supervises U.S. soldiers recovering looted paintings from Neuschwanstein Castle in Germany during World War II, April-May, 1945 (**The National Archives**)

The Hague Convention after WWII

At the end of the Second World War, in response to the humanitarian and cultural devastation in Europe caused by the Nazis, the international community promulgated a series of international humanitarian conventions. Cultural property protection was now separated into its own distinct convention: the 1954 **Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property during Armed Conflict** and its **First Protocol**.

Article 1 of the Convention defines *cultural property* as

> ***movable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people, such as monuments of architecture, art or history, whether religious or secular; archaeological sites; groups of buildings which, as a whole, are of historical or artistic interest; works of art; manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological interest; as well as scientific collections and important collections of books or archives...; buildings whose main and effective purpose is to preserve or exhibit the movable cultural property...such as museums, large libraries and depositories of archives, and refuges intended to shelter, in the event of armed conflict, the movable cultural property....***

The two core principles of the Convention are safeguarding of and respect for cultural property.

The first obligation of Parties to the Convention is to "prepare in time of peace for the safeguarding of cultural property situated within their own territory" by taking whatever steps they consider appropriate to protect their cultural property from the foreseeable effects of warfare (Article 3).

The obligation of respect (Article 4) prohibits the use of cultural property for strategic or military purposes if doing so would expose the property to harm during warfare. In addition, States must not target cultural sites and monuments. However, this obligation is subject to a significant exception "in cases where military necessity imperatively requires such a waiver" (Article 4, para. 2). In other words, if attacking a cultural site or monument is necessary to achieve an imperative military goal, then military necessity supersedes, and the protections for cultural property of this article are lost. Unfortunately, the Convention does not define "military necessity," and some nations have criticized this exception since a fairly low level of necessity could result in destruction or damage to cultural sites and monuments.

Article 4 also imposes an obligation on a Party to the Convention "to prohibit, prevent and, if necessary, put a stop to any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation of, and any acts of vandalism directed against, cultural property" (Article 4, para. 3).

The First Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention also addresses the subject of movable cultural property. However, it does so only under very narrow circumstances of illegal removal of cultural objects from occupied territory and the voluntary deposit of cultural objects by one State in another State for the purpose of safekeeping.



Figure 17.7.3.5: 15th Session of the Assembly of State Parties of the International Criminal Court at the World Forum in The Hague, Netherlands (photo: **Eloïse Bollack, Coalition for the ICC**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Second Hague Protocol and the Rome Statute

The Second Protocol was adopted in 1999 to clarify some of the provisions of the Hague Convention. For example, it narrows the definition of military necessity and requires States to adopt criminal measures for those who intentionally violate the Convention's provisions. Other international legal instruments address the protection of cultural property, most particularly the **Rome Statute**

of the International Criminal Court, which classifies intentional destruction of cultural property as a war crime.

An increasing loss

In the post-Second World War period, the appetite of the international art market for works of art, including archaeological objects, grew along with the increase in wealth of the European and North American countries. At the same time, the increasing use of scientific methodologies (including stratigraphic retrieval and scientific analyses) meant that greater quantities of information could be recovered from the proper excavation of sites. As a result, looting caused an increasing loss to our knowledge and understanding of the past. Finally, with the end of colonialism in much of the world, particularly Africa and Asia, the new countries sought legal means to conserve at home what remained of their heritage, after so much had been lost to the colonial powers.

1970 UNESCO Convention

Sparked in particular by the work of Professor Clemency Coggins, who brought world attention to the destruction of Maya architectural and monumental sculptural remains in Central America, the world community under the leadership of UNESCO drafted the **1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property** to confront the illegal trade in art works, antiquities, and ethnographic objects. This Convention makes illicit the import, export, and transfer of cultural property contrary to its provisions. Some countries, such as Germany, Canada, and Australia, prohibit the import of any illegally exported cultural objects. Other countries, such as the United States and Switzerland, prohibit the import of illegally exported archaeological and ethnological materials, as long as there is an additional bilateral agreement in place between themselves and the country of origin.



Figure 17.7.3.6:: Temple of Bel, Palmyra, Syria, photographed in 2007; destroyed in 2015 (photo: **Erik Albers**, public domain)

New resolutions for modern warfare

Both the 2003 Gulf War and the civil war in Syria (2011-present) created opportunities for large-scale destruction and looting of archaeological sites. During the conflict in Syria, Daesh intentionally destroyed ancient structures at the sites of **Palmyra in Syria**, at Nineveh, Nimrud, and other Neo-Assyrian sites in Iraq, and objects in the Mosul Museum in Iraq. The looting of archaeological sites helped to fund the terrorism and military conflict of Daesh and possibly of the Assad regime in Syria.

In response, the United Nations Security Council enacted a series of Resolutions calling on all member States to prohibit the import of and trade in undocumented archaeological and other cultural materials from Iraq and Syria. These Resolutions have established a new standard for controlling the market for looted archaeological objects, at least within the context of armed conflict. These events have also brought the negative effects of looting and destruction of cultural heritage to the attention of the world community and encouraged countries to take further steps to prevent this destruction.

Additional Resources:

Summary of recent cultural heritage protections (UNESCO)

Kevin Chamberlain, *War and Cultural Heritage: A Commentary on the Hague Convention 1954 and its Two Protocols* (2nd ed., Builth Wells, UK: Institute of Art and Law, 2013).

C.C. Coggins, "Illicit Traffic of Pre-Columbian Antiquities," *Art Journal* 29 (1969), pp. 94-114.

Patty Gerstenblith, *Art, Cultural Heritage and the Law* (3rd ed., Cary, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2012).

Patty Gerstenblith, "The Destruction of Cultural Heritage: A Crime against Property or a Crime against People?," *John Marshall Review Intellectual Property Law* 15 (2016), pp. 336-93.

Patty Gerstenblith and C.R. Smith, "Looting and the Antiquities Market," *Oxford Bibliographies in Classics*, edited by Dee Clayman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

M.P. Kouroupas, "Preservation of Cultural Heritage: A Tool of International Public Diplomacy," in *Cultural Heritage Issues: The Legacy of Conquest, Colonization, and Commerce*, edited by James A.R. Nafziger and Ann M. Nicgorski (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2010), pp. 325-334.

K.E. Meyer, *The Plundered Past* (New York: Athenaeum, 1977).

M.M. Miles, *Art As Plunder: The Ancient Origins of the Debate about Cultural Property* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008).

P.J. O'Keefe, *Protecting Cultural Objects: Before and After 1970* (Builth Wells, UK: Institute of Art and Law 2017).

J.F. Witt, *Lincoln's Code: The Laws of War in American History* (New York: Free Press, 2012).

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17.7.4: A race against time- manuscripts and digital preservation

by FATHER COLUMBA STEWART, OSB and DR. BETH HARRIS

YouTube Video

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Video 17.7.4.1: A conversation with Father Columba Stewart, OSB, executive director of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (Collegeville, Minnesota) and Dr. Beth Harris

Additional resources:

"The Monk Who Saves Manuscripts From ISIS" (*The Atlantic*, February 23, 2017)

Hill Museum and Manuscript Library

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17.7.5: Provenance and the Antiquities Market

by SILVIA BELTRAMETTI, JSD

The increasing importance of provenance: three lawsuits

Three high profile lawsuits in the early 2000s had a strong impact on how the market for antiquities has valued provenance (the record of ownership of a work of art or an antique). The first case concerned the prosecution of New York antiquities dealer Frederick Schultz, who had been trafficking antiquities out of Egypt camouflaged as cheap souvenirs. The second one concerned the prosecution by the Italian federal government of Giacomo Medici, who supplied the world's most important museums with classical antiquities. The third one involved legal action against one of his regular clients — then J. Paul Getty museum curator Marion True — for purchasing material she knew was illegally excavated from dubious dealers (including Giacomo Medici). The combined effect of these three cases was to force collectors and sellers active in the antiquities market to reevaluate the importance of provenance.



Figure 17.7.5.1: Iraqi Col. Ali Sabah, commander of the Basra Emergency Battalion, displays ancient artifacts Iraqi Security Forces discovered Dec. 16, 2008, during two raids in northern Basra



Figure 17.7.5.2: Warka (Uruk) Vase, Uruk, Late Uruk period, c. 3500-3000 B.C.E., 105 cm high (National Museum of Iraq)

1970 UNESCO Convention

Even though the international community had sent a strong signal condemning the illicit trade in antiquities with the passing of the 1970 UNESCO Convention, this measure never truly impacted the market, because its principles could only be invoked by local courts if they were ratified into the national law of individual member states. For instance, the United States passed legislation covering the substance of the 1970 Convention with the passing of the Cultural Property Implementation Act of 1983, which enabled the negotiation of bilateral agreements with other UNESCO member states restricting the importation of undocumented antiquities coming from their territories. Currently, bilateral agreements with 23 countries are in place, including Italy (2001), Greece (2011), Egypt (2016), Syria (2016) and Iraq (2004).

The graph below, which tracks the mention of “looted antiquities” or synonyms in *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, show that it took several decades for the 1970 UNESCO Convention and illegal trade in antiquities to attract public notice. The first substantial spike coincided with a major political event: the 2003 Iraq invasion, when the U.S. army was criticized for the lack of training in the protection of cultural heritage. It was this lack of training (among other things), that ultimately enabled the looting of Iraqi archeological sites as well as the museum in Baghdad — causing the dispersion of thousands of objects, including widely studied works of cultural heritage such as the Sumerian **Warka Vase**.

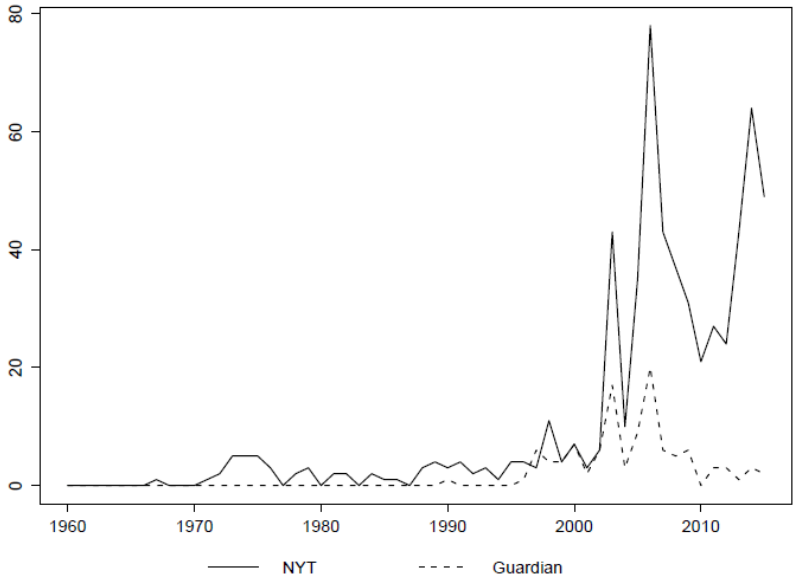


Figure 17.7.5.3: Graph I: Search result for "looted antiquities" (and synonyms) in the *New York Times* and the *Guardian* (1990-2015). From Silvia Beltrametti and James V. Marrone, "Market Responses to Court Rulings: Evidence from Antiquities Auctions," *The Journal of Law and Economics*, vol. 59, no. 4 (November 2016), pp. 913-944.

1. Frederick Schutz and the trafficking of Egyptian cultural property

2003 was the year Frederick Schultz, a New York gallery owner specializing in Egyptian antiquities, was prosecuted for the illicit trafficking of Egyptian cultural property. The courts held that a patrimony law passed in 1983 made Egypt the legal owner of antiquities found on its territory, and that by smuggling and reselling antiquities looted from its ground, Schultz was guilty of trading stolen property.

In many ways the court utilized the Schultz case to showcase that (notwithstanding the lack of preparedness with regards to the looting in Iraq), the U.S. took crimes against cultural heritage seriously — and the final sentence for Schultz was stiff: 33 months in prison and a $50,000 fine.

2. Giacomo Medici and the trafficking of classical antiquities

Meanwhile in Rome, prosecutors were gathering evidence to incriminate Giacomo Medici, a dealer based in Geneva who supplied most of the world's high-profile museums with classical antiquities coming from Italy. In 2004 the Tribunal in Rome convicted Medici to a 10-year imprisonment term and a EUR 10,0000,000 fine for trafficking thousands of looted objects.

3. Marion True and J. Paul Getty Museum



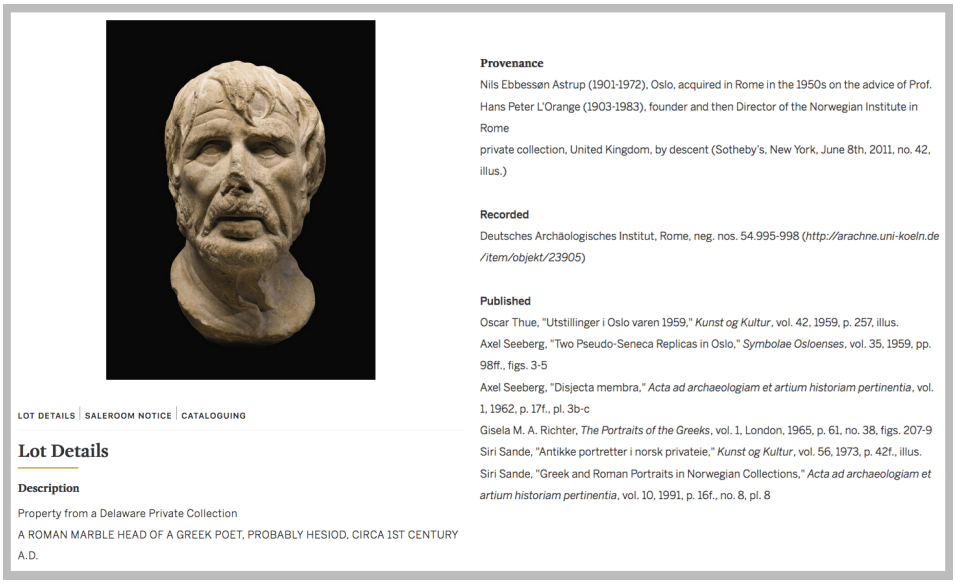
Figure 17.7.5.4: Statue of a Goddess (aka “Getty Aphrodite”), 425–400 B.C.E., limestone and marble

Evidence that surfaced during the investigation (which included Polaroid photographs outlining Medici’s possessions as well as precise ledgers describing their current locations and buyers), showed that one of his regular clients was Marion True, antiquities curator at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. True had purchased 42 pieces from him over the years, likely knowing that they were the product of illegal digs (or choosing to turn a blind eye towards that pssibility). She too, was prosecuted by the Italian government for conspiring to launder stolen antiquities, and even though the case was eventually abandoned, the evidence against her was significant enough that she lost her job. The Getty returned the pieces she had purchased from Medici and other dubious dealers, to Italy — including the statue of an Aphrodite that True had purchased for eighteen million dollars.

Overall these cases were incredibly important because they conveyed credible commitments that sanctions for trafficking looted antiquities would be enforced and signaled to market participants that they needed to pay attention to provenance. But what does that mean in practice? What type of provenance information makes an object legitimate within the antiquities market?

Auction houses and provenance considerations

Let’s look at this question from two angles: buyers and sellers. The evolution of the regulation in place at major auction houses is helpful in understanding the steps that such entities have put into place to avoid the risk of reputational harm associated with trading looted antiquities.



LOT DETAILS | SALEROOM NOTICE | CATALOGUING

Lot Details

Description

Property from a Delaware Private Collection

A ROMAN MARBLE HEAD OF A GREEK POET, PROBABLY HESIOD, CIRCA 1ST CENTURY A.D.

Provenance

Nils Ebbessøn Astrup (1901-1972), Oslo, acquired in Rome in the 1950s on the advice of Prof. Hans Peter L'Orange (1903-1983), founder and then Director of the Norwegian Institute in Rome

private collection, United Kingdom, by descent (Sotheby's, New York, June 8th, 2011, no. 42, illus.)

Recorded

Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome, neg. nos. 54.995-998 (*http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/objekt/23905*)

Published

Oscar Thue, "Utstillinger i Oslo varen 1959," *Kunst og Kultur*, vol. 42, 1959, p. 257, illus.

Axel Seeberg, "Two Pseudo-Seneca Replicas in Oslo," *Symbolae Osloenses*, vol. 35, 1959, pp. 98ff., figs. 3-5

Axel Seeberg, "Disjecta membra," *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia*, vol. 1, 1962, p. 17f., pl. 3b-c

Gisela M. A. Richter, *The Portraits of the Greeks*, vol. 1, London, 1965, p. 61, no. 38, figs. 207-9

Siri Sande, "Antikke portretter i norsk privateie," *Kunst og Kultur*, vol. 56, 1973, p. 42f., illus.

Siri Sande, "Greek and Roman Portraits in Norwegian Collections," *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia*, vol. 10, 1991, p. 16f., no. 8, pl. 8

Figure 17.7.5.5: Details for Lot 39, Sotheby's, Ancient Sculpture and Works of Art (3 December 2019)

Provenance considerations connected to the trade of classical material started surfacing in 1998 (note the small spike in graph 1) when journalist Peter Watson exposed internal practices at Sotheby's designed to back the trade of illegally exported antiquities. The auction house closed down its London branch as a result, and decided to only trade antiquities from its New York office. However, when the U.S. entered into a bilateral agreement with Italy in 2001, the due diligence efforts in connection with provenance documentation increased. Consignors who were hoping to sell antiquities through Sotheby's had to present documentation showing that the object was located outside its probable country of origin (Italy in the case of most classical pieces) before the bilateral agreement entered into force, in 2001. Later, as the market became aware of the Medici archive as well as documentation about looted pieces coming from the archives of other dealers (including Robert Symes and Gianfranco Becchina), auction houses had to take further measures to counter threats of illicit trade — because, if looted material previously recorded in one of those archives filtered through such checks, auction houses would get a call asking for the lot to be withdrawn (sometimes they still do).



Figure 17.7.5.6: Left: Image of an ancient Greek Amphora from the Becchina Archive (Courtesy of Dr. Christos Tsirogiannis); right: Polaroids seized in Giacomo Medici's warehouse

In 2006 Sotheby's hired Jane Levine, former FBI art crime expert, to run its compliance division and pay specific attention to issues connected to looting, and since then more stringent verification of provenance is being performed. If a claim is made that a specific piece was bought from a particular dealer, the latter will have to present proof (including receipts and other evidence verifying the truthfulness of such statements). As a result, the patterns of antiquities sold at major auction houses have undergone

significant changes in the past 20 years, which are noticeable from the graphs below: fewer pieces with better provenance are being sold.

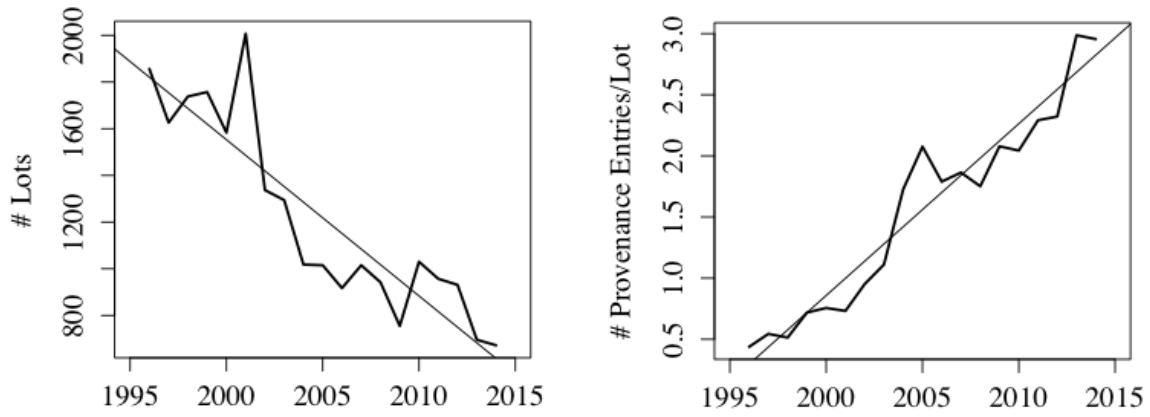


Figure 17.7.5.7: Left: showing the number of antiquities sold by Sotheby's and Christie's (combined) between 1995 and 2015; right: showing the amount of provenance information per lot between 1995 and 2015. Both from Silvia Beltrametti and James V. Marrone, "Market Responses to Court Rulings: Evidence from Antiquities Auctions," *The Journal of Law and Economics* 59, no. 4 (November 2016), pp. 913–944.

Buyers at these same auctions are valuing provenance more than they have ever done. In the Schultz case, the court made it clear that in order to be legally traded, an ancient object originally from Egypt had to have a verifiable provenance record showing that the piece had either been outside of Egypt since before 1983 or that it comes with an export permit, and indeed since 2003 the pieces sold at auction that meet that criteria have more than doubled. In connection with classical antiquities the situation is trickier because the classical world is spread across many territories that overlap with a number of modern nation states, all of which have different laws. Greece and Italy have had patrimony laws in place condemning the theft of their cultural heritage since the 19th century.

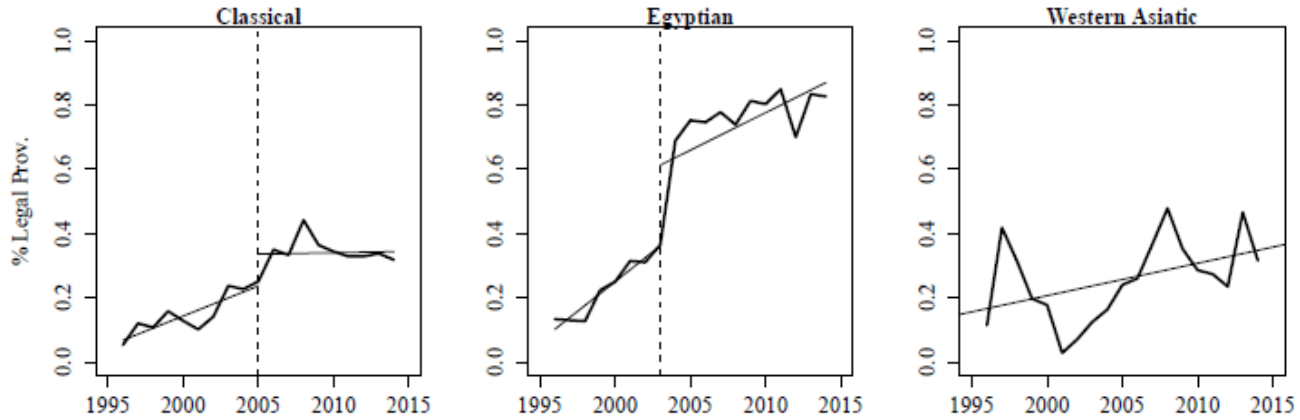


Figure 17.7.5.8: Showing the percentage of antiquities sold through Sotheby's and Christie's that meet the 1970 threshold and the 1983 threshold. From Silvia Beltrametti and James V. Marrone, "Market Responses to Court Rulings: Evidence from Antiquities Auctions," *The Journal of Law and Economics* 59, no. 4 (November 2016), pp. 913–944.

Because of the difficulty with allocating an ancient object to a modern country of origin, and verifying whether its provenance history meets thresholds set out by specific laws, institutional collectors such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the J. Paul Getty Museum have passed internal guidelines stating that they will generally not acquire an object in the absence of information proving that the piece was outside its country of origin before 1970 (or legally exported from its country of modern discovery after

1970). And again we can see a trend from the above graph verifying that since the Medici prosecution in 2005, more classical antiquities meeting the 1970 threshold are being sold. Table I further corroborates that those items sell for higher prices. The patterns are the same for Western Asiatic antiquities, a category used by auction houses to refer to ancient material coming from the Near East, even though there are no distinguishable linear trends.

		Classical	Egyptian	Western Asiatic
Lots Offered		12017	6559	4124
Legal Prov.	Total	22.6%	46.9%	23.5%
	Est. $< \$10,000$	19.5%	41.1%	23.1%
	$\$10,000 \leq$Est.$< \$100,000$	24.6%	57.4%	21.5%
	Est.$\geq \$100,000$	43.1%	70.7%	50.0%

Figure 17.7.5.9: Table I: Breaking down pricing for objects meeting the 1970 and 1983 thresholds respectively. From Silvia Beltrametti and James V. Marrone, "Market Responses to Court Rulings: Evidence from Antiquities Auctions," *The Journal of Law and Economics* 59, no. 4 (November 2016), pp. 913–944.

Where do we go from here?

Overall, provenance considerations have become very important in the antiquities context, and it is now unthinkable to purchase a piece of ancient art without performing the necessary due diligence. Museums have to abide by strict regulations and even private collectors are best advised to do so, if they are hoping to resell their collections down the line. Well-provenanced (that is, works that have a long history of ownership), high-quality pieces are few and far between, but they can still be found. Last December Sotheby's sold a Roman marble head that had been in a private collection in Norway since the 1950s for about $1.5 million. Another convenient avenue for cultural institutions to continue showing and studying antiquities is to enter into collaborations with museums in source countries and negotiate long-term loans in exchange for support with scholarship, conservation, and excavation efforts.

Additional resources:

Silvia Beltrametti, "Museum Strategies: Leasing Antiquities," *Colombia Journal of Law and the Arts*, vol. 36 no. 2 (2013), pp. 203-260

ARCA – Art Crime Blogspot

Market of Mass Destruction Blog

Looting Matters Blogspot

Chasing Aphrodite Blog

Trafficking Culture

Cultural Heritage Center, U.S. Department of State

1970 UNESCO Convention

Cultural Property Implementation Act of 1983

A NATION AT WAR: THE LOOTING; Experts' Pleas to Pentagon Didn't Save Museum (*NY Times)*

Giacomo Medici (from Trafficking Culture)

Excerpt: 'The Medici Conspiracy' (NPR)

Organigram (from Trafficking Culture)

Tempers Heat Up at Trial in Italy on Antiquities (*NY Times*)

Getty Aphrodite (from Trafficking Culture)

If You Steal It, the Art Vigilante Will Find You (*Bloomberg Businessweek)*

Fifteen years after looting, thousands of artefacts are still missing from Iraq's national museum

This page titled 17.7.5: Provenance and the Antiquities Market is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Silvia Beltrametti, JSD, "Provenance and the Antiquities Market," in Smarthistory, April 17, 2020, accessed December 24, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/provenance-antiquities/..

17.7.6: A Renaissance masterpiece nearly lost in war- Piero della Francesca, The Resurrection

By DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

YouTube Video

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Video 17.7.6.1: Piero della Francesca, *The Resurrection*, c. 1470 (fresco, 225 x 200 cm (Museo Civico, Sansepolcro, Italy)

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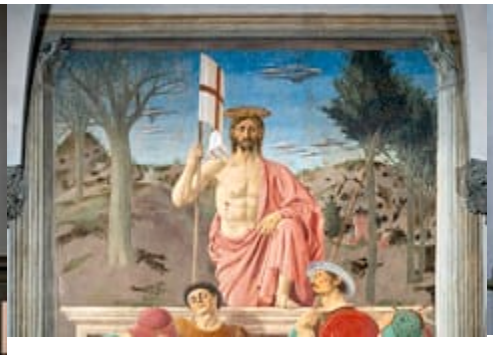


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17.7.7: Saving Torcello, an ancient church in the Venetian Lagoon

by MELISSA CONN, SAVE VENICE and DR. BETH HARRIS

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Video 17.7.7.1: Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello, founded 639, reconstructed 864 and 1008

This page titled 17.7.7: Saving Torcello, an ancient church in the Venetian Lagoon is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Melissa Conn, Save Venice and Dr. Beth Harris, "Saving Torcello, an ancient church in the Venetian Lagoon," in Smarthistory, May 7, 2020, accessed December 24, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/saving-torcello/..

- 14.7: Documenting and protecting cultural heritage by Smarthistory is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

17.8: THE ROLE OF ARCHAEOLOGY

17.8.1: What is archaeology- understanding the archaeological record
17.8.2: Underwater archaeology and the Antikythera Shipwreck
17.8.3: Saved by shipwreck, The Antikythera Youth
17.8.4: The rediscovery of Pompeii and the other cities of Vesuvius
17.8.5: The importance of the archaeological findspot- The Lullingstone Busts
17.8.6: When there is no archaeological record- Portrait Bust of a Flavian Woman (Fonseca bust)
17.8.7: Conservation vs. restoration- the Palace at Knossos (Crete)

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17.8.1: What is archaeology- understanding the archaeological record

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

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Video 17.8.1.1: Speakers: Dr. Jeffrey Becker and Dr. Beth Harris

Additional resources:

Archaeological Institute of America

Neil Brodie and Kathryn Walker Tubb, Illicit Antiquities: The Theft of Culture and the Extinction of Archaeology (Routledge, 2011)

N. Brodie, M.M. Kersel, C. Luke, and K.W. Tubb, eds., *Archaeology, Cultural Heritage, and the Antiquities Trade* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006)

Eric Cline, *Three Stones Make a Wall: The Story of Archaeology* (Princeton University Press, 2017)

This page titled 17.8.1: What is archaeology- understanding the archaeological record is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Jeffrey A. Becker and Dr. Beth Harris, "What is archaeology," in Smarthistory, November 25, 2017, accessed December 24, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/what-is-archaeology-understanding-the-archaeological-record/..

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17.8.2: Underwater archaeology and the Antikythera Shipwreck

by **DR. MICHAEL ANTHONY FOWLER**



Figure 17.8.2.2: *The Antikythera Youth*, 340–330 B.C.E., bronze, 1.96 m high (National Archaeological Museum, Athens; photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0))



Figure 17.8.2.2: Map indicating the location of Antikythera and the wreck off its northeast coast (source: Alison Mackey/Discover/NASA)

In 1900, sponge divers working off the northeast coast of the Greek island of Antikythera made one of the most important archaeological discoveries of the century. Dispersed along the seafloor, at a depth of 42–52 meters (about 137–171 feet), were the remains of wooden planking from the hull of an ancient freighter and an impressive array of objects that never made it to their intended destination. This discovery, which catalyzed the development of the discipline of underwater archaeology, was the first of a series of ancient shipwrecks to be identified in the Eastern Mediterranean over the course of the 20th century. Its historical significance cannot be overstated.



Figure 17.8.2.3: Left: the bathyscape photographed aboard the oceanographic vessel Calypso. Right: Albert Falco, Jacques-Yves Cousteau, and Lazaros Kolonas presenting bronze statuettes found in the 1976 salvage campaign. Below, footage from the 2019 expedition of the Return to Antikythera project (photo: Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports)

Most of the salvaged portions of the ship and its contents were recovered in two separate campaigns: the first by Greek and foreign divers in 1900–1901; and the second with the additional deployment of a vacuum pipe and bathyscape carried aboard Jacques-Yves Cousteau's research vessel *Calypso* in 1976. Expert examination of the finds has refined our knowledge about many aspects of the ancient Mediterranean world, from shipbuilding techniques and seaborne trade in art and other commodities to the state of scientific knowledge in the tumultuous final decades of the Hellenistic period (323–31 B.C.E.).

Despite these herculean efforts, an uncertain proportion of the wreck still lies at the bottom of the sea. In 2014, a third campaign of exploration was launched with the goal of using advanced technologies to map the site and to rescue additional artifacts from the depths.

YouTube Video

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Video of the 2019 *Return to Antikythera* expedition

This project (*Return to Antikythera*), in conjunction with the ongoing scientific investigation of the famous Antikythera Mechanism (see below), promises to enhance our understanding of this fleeting moment of ancient Mediterranean history—a moment that would be irretrievably lost were it not for an ill-fated storm.

The Mediterranean and long-distance trade

When we imagine the ancient sea, we should populate its waters with hundreds, even thousands, of oar- and sail-propelled vessels of different kinds and sizes, ranging from small fishing skiffs to large cargo ships, crisscrossing one another in route to one of the Mediterranean's innumerable ports and harbors. In addition to its coastline, which stretches over 46,000 km (28,000 miles) and three continents, the Mediterranean is dotted by thousands of islands and islets, some separated only by a few miles. Some sea travel was relatively short: a skip down the coast or perhaps darting from one island to another in the same cluster. Other voyages were more extended and thus riskier. As they were charting their course, ancient navigators drew upon their common knowledge

of sea currents, tidal flows, seasonal weather patterns, and underwater hazards. Then as today, boats would have taken similar routes to similar destinations. Communities living along these well-trafficked routes would have regularly observed the passage of ships, especially from spring to autumn (when the sea conditions were most favorable).



Figure 17.8.2.4: Gold earrings with inlaid semi-precious stones and pearls and pendant figures of Eros, 2nd–1st century B.C.E. (photo: Kostas Xenikakis/National Archaeological Museum, Athens)

Archaeologists around the globe have turned up evidence of long-distance trade in the form of materials and objects whose physical properties or stylistic features indicate a distant origin. Take, for example, two earrings found in the Antikythera Shipwreck. Although originating from two different pairs, they exhibit similar technical and decorative features that suggest a common cultural origin. Most notable are the small pendant figurines of Eros, the Greek god of love and sexual desire, shown playing a stringed instrument or supporting an opened folding mirror above the head. The adornment of the jewels with this god (and cosmetic elements like the mirror) correspond to Greek cultural ideas and attitudes about the role that bodily adornment plays in feminine beauty. Yet, these earrings could not have been made without access to raw materials: gold, pearls, garnets, and emeralds (or prase). These materials cannot be found in a single location in the Eastern Mediterranean and indeed some are scarce or absent in lands inhabited by Greeks. The jewelers who made these objects had to acquire materials from various, non-local sources. Indeed, the Hellenistic period saw an influx of (semi-)precious stones from points east. Archaeologists and art historians therefore pay equal attention to the materiality of objects, as it may also reveal (as with the earrings) trade across geographic and even cultural boundaries and thus enhance our appreciation of objects' significance or value.

In some contexts, such as **Mesopotamia** and **Egypt**, more granular documentation of trade in administrative archives or business letters and accounts have been preserved on clay tablets or papyri. But in most cases, the trade *process* itself leaves little direct trace in the archaeological record. When it does, it is usually thanks to a disaster that fixes a fleeting moment in time and space. Seafaring entailed many hazards to a ship's crew, cargo, and the merchant's bottom line: delays (such as inclement weather), piracy, and wrecks. In the case of the ship off the coast of Antikythera, it was likely caught in an intense storm that drove it aground. The seas in this area are notoriously temperamental.

Thousands of shipwrecks have thus far been identified, at varying depths, in the Mediterranean. Despite their elevated number, these wrecks represent but a small fraction of the ships that plied the seas over the millennia. Based on their associated finds, shipwrecks seem to have been most frequent between the 1st century B.C.E. and the 1st century C.E. This suggests that maritime trade also reached its peak in these centuries. It is to this period—and more specifically to 60–50 B.C.E.—that the Antikythera shipwreck belongs.

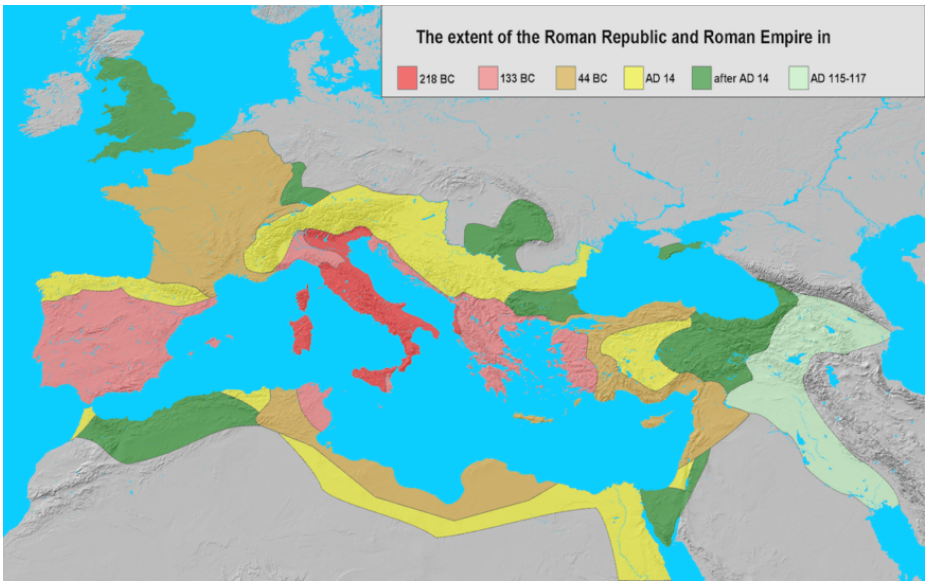


Figure 17.8.2.5: Schematic map showing the territorial expansion of Rome from the Middle Republic to the death of the Emperor Trajan (map: Varana, CC BY-SA 3.0)

A taste for Greek art

The first century B.C.E. was one of tumult and dramatic change. It saw the **Roman Republic** endure through a series of civil wars while leveraging its political, military, and commercial power to eclipse its remaining rivals in the Hellenistic East (especially the Pontic kingdom of Mithridates VI Eupator and Egypt under the famous Ptolemaic ruler Cleopatra VII Philopator) and ultimately establish imperial rule over them. Through exposure to the steady stream of loot into Rome as a result of military conquests, Roman elites had acquired a keen appetite for art and luxury goods produced in the Eastern Mediterranean, to be displayed or consumed in their villas as a mark of their status and cultural sophistication. This appetite drove the importation of all manner of items to Italy and the development of a market for reproductions or "historicizing" reinterpretations of well-known **Classical and Early Hellenistic** sculptural works or types.

Elites could purchase luxuries on the open market or charter their own shipments. The published letters of the Roman statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero reveal that this famous orator entrusted his friend Titus Pomponius Atticus to act as his agent in acquiring Greek artworks for one of his villas. [1] Cicero's correspondence with Atticus is roughly contemporary with the Antikythera shipwreck; it is possible that the ship that wrecked off Antikythera was a private charter of goods.

Among the identified shipwrecks from this era, most carry a homogeneous cargo of transport amphorae or other ceramic storage vessels that were valuable for what they contained: grain, oil, wine, perfumes and ointments, or condiments like fermented fish sauce. These more typical cargos testify to the existence of an extensive trade in staple and luxury foods and items of personal care. But a few exceptions, like the wreck off Antikythera, yielded additional artifacts of interest: works of art and the unparalleled Antikythera Mechanism—the world's oldest known analog computer.



Figure 17.8.2.6: Objects found in the Antikythera shipwreck. Left: fragment of the metal revetment from the side end of a couch headrest, 150–100 B.C.E. (photo: Giovanni Dall'Orto). Center: Assorted glass bowls, first half of the 1st century B.C.E. (photo: Kostas Xenikakis/National Archaeological Museum, Athens). Right: Assortment of intact and fragmentary transport amphorae from varying origins (Ephesus, Kos, and Rhodes), first half of the first century B.C.E. (photo: Kostas Xenikakis/National Archaeological Museum, Athens)

Objects from the Antikythera Shipwreck

Scholars have assigned the objects from the Antikythera Shipwreck to four general categories:



Figure 17.8.2.7: Marble sculpture (Herakles?) from the Antikythera Shipwreck (photo: Gary Todd, public domain)

1. Marble sculpture (Herakles?) from the Antikythera Shipwreck (photo: Gary Todd, public domain)

   Parts of the ship, which show that it was a large freighter constructed in the shell-first technique and that its wooden planks were lined with lead to insulate it from the water and wood-boring microorganisms; estimated carrying capacity: 300 tons!

2. Personal effects of crew members or passengers, which offer a precious glimpse into life on the seas; these included things like fishing gear, cooking pots and dishes (some with signs of use), forms of entertainment (a musical instrument and game pieces), jewelry, coinage, and even human bones belonging to at least four different individuals: two adult men, perhaps one adult woman, and an adult of uncertain sex.
3. Large- and small-format bronze and marble statues; these constituted the most significant proportion of the cargo in mass and number, and thus were probably the main attraction of the shipment
4. Other luxury or specialty items, such as the Antikythera Mechanism, bronze couches/beds, silver and glass vessels and

utensils, red-slipped dish ware, and organic foods and substances (which are implied by the presence of ceramic containers appropriate for their storage and transport)



Figure 17.8.2.8: Red-slipped hemispherical cup and red-slipped plate of the Eastern Sigillata A type. These and other red-slipped dishware from the wreck are dated generally to the 1st century B.C.E., but the presence of a thin orangish slip that is easily worn away and a horizontal darker red streak (from double-dipping the vessels into the slip) suggests that these vessels date to the third quarter of the 1st century and probably closer to 50 B.C.E., when red-slipped dishware reaches its greatest geographic distribution (National Archaeological Museum, Athens; photo: Kostas Xenikakis)

Many of the objects in the cargo have been traced back to production centers in the Hellenistic East (Syria, Alexandria, and perhaps Pergamon and Ephesus). While this might suggest that the boat made several stops before heading to its final destination, the goods were probably loaded all at once at a major commercial port like Pergamon, Ephesus, or Delos (where goods from all over converged). If the shipwreck indeed dates to after 69 B.C.E.—as suggested in particular by the red-slipped tableware (dated to as late as the mid-first century)—then Delos is a less attractive candidate. In spite of the tax-free status that Delos had enjoyed since 167 B.C.E., the island's standing diminished after its pillaging for a second time by pirates during the Third Mithridatic War (73–63 B.C.E.). The comparative scarcity of objects from the Roman West among the ship's contents is additional evidence that the voyage embarked from somewhere in the Eastern Mediterranean and was bound for an Italian port, probably Puteoli near the modern city of Naples. At the time of the shipwreck, Puteoli was the principal commercial port in Roman Italy, owing to its natural harbor that could accommodate great numbers of ships, including large freighters. Its proximity to the luxurious Campanian villas of the Roman elite only added to its convenience and appeal.



Figure 17.8.2.9: *Antikythera Youth*, 340–330 B.C.E., bronze, 1.96 m high (National Archaeological Museum, Athens; photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

An over-life-size bronze sculpture

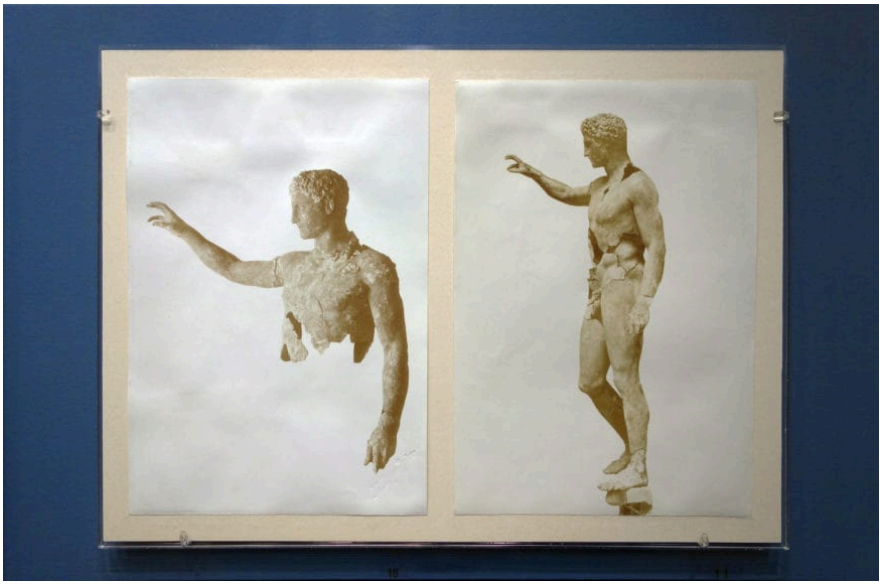


Figure 17.8.2.10: Antikythera Youth photos before restoration, 340–330 B.C.E., bronze, 1.96 m high (National Archaeological Museum, Athens; photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Easily the most iconic work of art to emerge from the wreck is a nearly complete, (now) restored bronze known as the ***Antikythera Youth***. This over-life-size sculpture was one of roughly four dozen bronze and Parian marble representations of gods, heroes, mortals, and horses that were uncovered in varying degrees of fragmentation and material degradation.

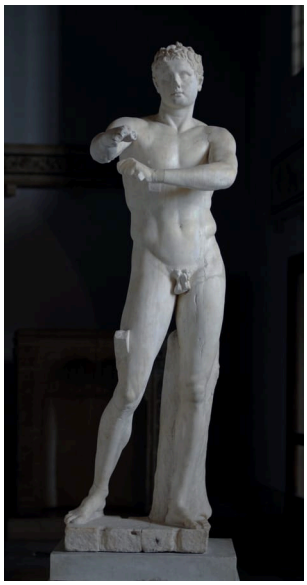


Figure 17.8.2.11: Lysippos, *Apoxyomenos* (Scraper), Roman copy after a bronze statue from c. 330 B.C.E., 6′ 9″ high (Vatican Museums; photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

While most of these sculptures are contemporary Late Hellenistic creations, the stylistic and technical features of the *Youth* suggest that it was an original work of the Late Classical period (340–330 B.C.E.). While the heavy musculature in the *Youth*'s torso and the manipulation of the *contrapposto* bodily scheme suggest a derivation from the style of the High Classical sculptor **Polycleitus**, the figure's proportionately smaller head and thinner legs, deeper set eyes, and more spatially dynamic pose correspond to trends observed in later fourth-century works (like those by Praxiteles, Scopas, and **Lysippos**). As was typical of large-scale Greek bronzes, the *Youth* was made of separately hollow-cast components that were soldered together and enhanced with additional embellishments (like inlaid eyes of glass or colored stones). As additional corroboration of the Late Classical dating, a scientific test of the chemical composition of the bronze determined that it consisted of an 86/14 alloy of copper and tin. No traces of lead–which is irregular in Greek bronzes prior to the Hellenistic period–were detected. The proposed date of 340–330 B.C.E. would make the *Antikythera Youth* the oldest known artifact from the cargo—a nearly three-hundred-year-old antique when it was loaded into the hull!

Scholars have never reached a consensus on the identity of this nude *Youth*. The objects that he once held would have served as iconographic attributes. The two most popular identifications are Paris presenting the Apple of Discord or Perseus clutching the severed head of Medusa. However, neither of these identifications are entirely convincing because other salient elements of their respective iconographies are absent: for example, Paris's Phrygian cap and Perseus' winged sandals and the helm of invisibility lent to him by Hades.



Figure 17.8.2.12: Antikythera machine, recovered fragments (National Archaeological Museum, Athens; photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The Antikythera Mechanism



Figure 17.8.2.13: Antikythera Mechanism, hypothetical digital reconstruction (photo: Tony Freeth)

Equally famous, on account of its technological and scientific sophistication and uniqueness, is the *Antikythera Mechanism*. Ongoing investigation of this fascinatingly complex object by the **Antikythera Mechanism Research Project** has yielded new insights that have transformed or nuanced our understanding of its origins and purpose. According to the current reconstruction, the Mechanism consisted of a wooden housing mounted with inscribed copper alloy plate displays on two opposite faces, the dials and indicators of which were moved by an intricate interior network of hand-powered metal gears and axles (using a crank or knob). The user could input a particular date in the calendrical year and the Mechanism would calculate and display synchronous astronomical information, like the positions of the sun and moon (or vice versa). While a later second-century B.C.E. construction date has often been favored, more recent examination of the Greek inscriptions on its face plates suggests that the Mechanism dates to no more than a few decades before the wreck. Whatever the dating, the Mechanism is an eloquent attestation of the state of Greek engineering, mathematics, and astronomical science in the Late Hellenistic era.

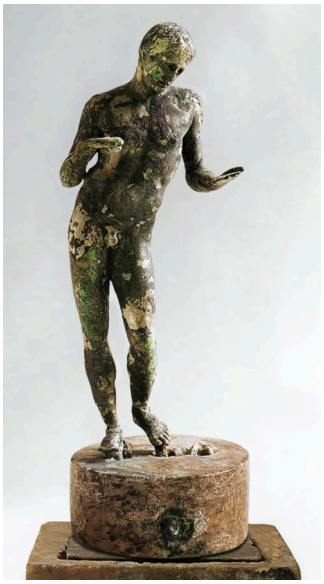


Figure 17.8.2.14: *Statuette of a Nude Youth*, late 2nd century B.C.E., found in the Antikythera Shipwreck (National Archaeological Museum, Athens; Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports; photo: Kostas Xenikakis)

A spinning statuette

A fitting coda to this brief exploration of the Antikythera Shipwreck is a bronze statuette of a young man that was found along with its nesting cylindrical plinth and cubic base. This classicizing nude male evidently could be made to spin by means of a crank installed in its base! Here we find the marriage of the sculptural art of the *Antikythera Youth* and the basic rotary mechanics of the *Antikythera Mechanism* (though here perhaps predating the latter!). Hellenistic- and Roman-era literature speaks of three-dimensional works of art that—much to the amazement of their audiences—appeared to move on their own. Famous examples of such *automata*—like the bizarre mechanical snail that the tyrant Demetrius of Phalerum had constructed for a religious procession in 309/308 B.C.E., or the diverse contraptions described in the treatises of the engineer Heron of Alexandria (*Pnuematica* and *Automatopoetica*)—do not survive. [2] Although the scale and technical complexity of the Antikythera statuette are much more modest, the work nevertheless reflects the Hellenistic flair for a peculiar form of illusionistic artifice that was enabled by advances in engineering and the mechanical sciences. Clearly, the Roman client(s) for whom this and the other objects were destined was/were well-versed in the prevailing tastes of their time.

Notes:

[1] *Letters to Atticus* 1.8.2 and 1.9.2

[2] For more on the mechanical snail, see Polybius's *Histories* 12.13.11

Additional resources

Antikythera Mechanism Research Project

Polyxeni Bouyia, "*Termini ante quos*: Bronze statuary from Late Hellenistic shipwrecks," *Bronzes grecs et romains: Études récentes sur la statuaire antique*, *Techne* 45 (2017), pp. 24–33.

Alexandra Christopoulou, Anastasia Gadolou, and Polyxeni Bouyia (eds.), Michael Anthony Fowler (trans.), *The Antikythera Shipwreck: The Technology of the Ship, the Cargo, the Mechanism* (Athens: Kapon Editions, 2012)

Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, ***Return to Antikythera***

Alexander Jones, *A Portable Cosmos: Revealing the Antikythera Mechanism, Scientific Wonder of the World* (Oxford: Oxford

University Press, 2017)

Nikolaos Kaltsas, Elena Vlachogianni, and Polyxeni Bouyia (eds.), *The Antikythera Shipwreck: The Ship, the Treasures, the Mechanism* (Athens: Kapon Editions, 2012)

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17.8.3: Saved by shipwreck, The Antikythera Youth

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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17.8.4: The rediscovery of Pompeii and the other cities of Vesuvius

by DR. FRANCESCA TRONCHIN



Figure 17.8.4.1: Forum of Pompeii, looking toward Mount Vesuvius (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)



Figure 17.8.4.2

The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 C.E. destroyed and largely buried the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum and other sites in southern Italy under ash and rock. The rediscovery of these sites in the modern era is as fascinating as the cities themselves and provides a window onto the history of both art history and archaeology.

Pompeii today

Today the site of Pompeii is open to tourists from all over the world. Major projects in survey, excavation, and preservation are supervised by Italian and American universities as well as ones from Britain, Sweden, and Japan. Currently, the major concern

at Pompeii is conservation—officials must deal with the intersection of increased tourism, the deterioration of buildings to a sometimes dangerous state, and shrinking funding for archaeological and art historical monuments. The 250-year-long story of the unearthing of Pompeii, Herculaneum, and the other sites destroyed by Vesuvius in 79 C.E. has always been one of shifting priorities and methodologies, yet always in recognition of the special status of this archaeological zone.

Hidden for centuries?

The popular understanding of the immediate aftermath of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius is that Pompeii, Herculaneum, and sites like Oplontis and Stabiae, lay buried under ash and volcanic material—completely sealed off from human intervention, undisturbed and hidden for centuries. Archaeological and geological evidence, however, indicates that there were rescue operations soon after the eruption (see, for example, the tunnels dug through the House of the Menander) and that some parts of these cities remained visible for some time (the forum colonnade at Pompeii was not completely covered). Throughout the Middle Ages, Pompeii was entirely deserted, yet locals referred to the area as *La Cività* ("the settlement"), perhaps informed by folk memory of the city's existence.



Figure 17.8.4.3: Sebastian Pether, *The Eruption of Vesuvius,* 1825, oil on wood panel (The Nelson Atkins Museum of Art). Vesuvius erupted again in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Though Pether travelled to Italy to paint the volcano, here he depicted the one eyewitness account of the eruption in 79 C.E. by Pliny the Younger.

Excavations begin

While Renaissance scholars must have been aware of Pompeii and its destruction through various ancient written sources, the first "archaeologist" in the area was apparently unimpressed with his discoveries. From 1594-1600, the architect Domenico Fontana worked on new constructions in the area and accidentally excavated a number of wall paintings, inscriptions, and architectural blocks while digging a canal. No one undertook follow-up explorations for nearly a century and a half, despite the general interest in antiquity and rudimentary archaeology at the time.



Figure 17.8.4.4: This bronze was probably the most celebrated sculpture discovered at Herculaneum and Pompeii in the eighteenth century. It was excavated in 1759 at the Villa of the Papyri in Herculaneum and kept in the royal palace at Portici. *Seated Mercury* (also known as *Hermes at Rest*), Roman copy of an ancient Greek bronze, 105 cm (Museo Nazionale, Naples, photo: **Marie-Lan Nguyen**, CC BY 2.5)

The eighteenth century saw the first large-scale excavations in this region, motivated by the desire to collect works of ancient art as much as by a scientific curiosity about the past. Further incidental discoveries in the early decades of the 1700s prompted Charles VII, King of Spain, Naples, and Sicily, to commission a survey of the area of Herculaneum.

Official excavation began in October 1738, under the supervision of Rocque Joaquin de Alcubierre, a military engineer who tunneled through the practically petrified volcanic material to find remains of Herculaneum more than 20 meters under the surface. This dangerous work (tunnel collapse and toxic gases were a constant threat), yielded wall paintings, life-size sculpture in both bronze and marble, and papyrus scrolls from the Villa of the Papyri. Many of these recovered works went to decorate the palace of the king. Archaeology was still in its infancy as a practical field of study at this time, and was often more about "treasure-hunting" than careful research or documentation.

A Swiss engineer, Karl Jakob Weber, took over the excavation of Herculaneum from de Alcubierre in 1750 and brought more cautious methods to the site. Weber's practices of recording the findspots of important objects in three dimensions and making detailed plans of architectural remains laid the foundations for the indispensable procedures of modern archaeology. De Alcubierre shifted his focus to Pompeii, which had just been (re)discovered in 1748. Among the early excavations there were the amphitheater and an inscription confirming the town's name: REI PUBLICAE POMPEIANORUM. With finds from Herculaneum and Pompeii increasing exponentially, King Charles inaugurated a Royal Academy in Naples in 1755, dedicated to mapping the sites and publishing significant discoveries.

The new fields of archaeology and art history and the building of a royal collection



Figure 17.8.4.5: Anton Raphael Mengs, *Johann Joachim Winckelmann*, c. 1777, oil on canvas, 63.5 x 49.2 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The field of art history was emerging concurrently with these early excavations and naturally sites like Pompeii and Herculaneum were of great interest to the man who coined the term "history of art"—the German scholar Johann Joachim Winckelmann. His reports on the finds from this area fanned the flames of European fervor for classical antiquity (ancient Greece and Rome), and Grand Tour travelers from Britain and elsewhere beat a path to Pompeii and Herculaneum in the late 18th century.

Although Winckelmann was most concerned with categorizing Greek and Roman sculpture, he was also keenly interested in the new field of archaeology: he knew enough of this science to criticize the secrecy and aggressive methods of de Alcubierre, an action that got Winckelmann effectively banned from Pompeii.

It was actually King Charles's desire (and that of his successor Ferdinand) for beautiful artifacts that closed much of the excavations off to outside scholars, with most of the important finds going directly into the private royal collection. The king also enacted laws forbidding the export of antiquities from the Kingdom of Naples. Even the publication of the monumental *Le antichità di Ercolano esposte (The antiquities of Herculaneum displayed,* 1757-92*)* was tightly controlled and the illustrated volumes were only selectively presented to other European monarchs by the king himself.

Preservation and access

With the arrival of Francesco la Vega as director of excavations in Pompeii in 1780, the conservation of buildings and artifacts became a priority. Francesco, and his brother Pietro after him, removed valuable artifacts to the new Naples Museum, where they joined other pieces from the royal collection. Francesco la Vega also embraced Weber's concerns for recording three-dimensional contexts, and it was under his leadership that the Triangular Forum, the Temple of Isis, and the theater district were uncovered. However, like many archaeologists at Pompeii, la Vega struggled with a significant conflict: a desire to preserve the rare ancient wall paintings in situ while maintaining the site as a singular opportunity for visiting an ancient Roman city whose walls and roofs still stood. Paintings and buildings were left open to both treasure-hungry visitors and the elements, resulting in both natural and man-made deterioration at Pompeii.



Figure 17.8.4.6: Temple of Isis, Pompeii (photo: **Amphipolis**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Perhaps no archaeologist had such a significant influence on the exploration of Pompeii as Giuseppe Fiorelli. He was superintendent of Pompeii for twelve years (1863-1875) during a supremely patriotic moment after the unification of Italy in 1860 when the country's archaeological heritage was a tremendous source of pride. Fiorelli did not meet his goal of uncovering the entire city—only about one third of the Pompeii was excavated—but he accomplished other important tasks and brought new techniques to the site.

Opening the site to visitors and the first entrance fee

Fiorelli systematically organized the site by dividing it into nine regions and providing a system of "addresses" for insulae (city blocks) and doorways. In a dramatic shift from the restrictive 18th-century approach to tourism in Pompeii, Fiorelli opened the site up to visitors from all over the world—and he also introduced the first entrance fee. His exhaustive reports on the excavations kept scholars apprised of developments on the site.

Fiorelli is best known for his use of plaster casting techniques which permitted a kind of preservation of otherwise ephemeral archaeological finds like wood and human remains. By pouring plaster into voids in the ash left by decomposed organic material, Fiorelli's casts gave form to things like wooden doors, window frames, furniture, and of course the victims of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. The casts of human remains—including adults and children, not to mention a pet dog—remind visitors to this day that the great gift of Pompeii's archaeology came at tremendous cost (as many as 2,000 people lost their lives).



Figure 17.8.4.7: Plaster cast of a body, Forum storage, Pompeii (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Archaeological investigation continues—as an international project

In the late 19th century, exploration of Pompeii and Herculaneum became a more international project. The British diplomat Sir William Hamilton had already published studies of volcanic activity and painted pottery from the region in the late 18th century. German scholars of the 1800s studied inscriptions (Theodor Mommsen), outlined the city plan (Heinrich Nissen), and created typologies of wall painting (Wolfgang Helbig). August Mau's thorough categorization of the Four Styles of Pompeian frescoes, published in 1882, remains the basis for **wall painting** studies today. The late 19th century also saw the excavation and restoration of two of Pompeii's most spectacular houses—the **House of the Vettii** and the House of the Silver Wedding.



Figure 17.8.4.8: House of the Vettii, Pompeii, Italy, Imperial Roman, c. second century B.C.E., rebuilt 62-79 C.E., cut stone and fresco (photo: **Peter Stewart**, CC BY-NC 2.0)

Pompeii in the 20th century: interruptions to archaeological work and bombing

The 20th century continued to be a very productive time at Pompeii for Italian archaeologists, even though work was interrupted

by world events. Vittorio Spinazzola (director, 1911-1923) opened a massive excavation campaign along the Via dell'Abbondanza. His work not only uncovered important residences like the House of Octavius Quartio, but also contributed to our understanding of upper floors of Pompeian buildings. Spinazzola's work was interrupted by the outbreak of World War I and he was forced to step down from his position by Italy's Fascist government. Amedeo Maiuri was the director of excavations from 1923-1962 and oversaw the discovery of the **Villa of Mysteries** and the House of the Menander.

Although work was stopped again at Pompeii during the Second World War, Maiuri succeeded in broadening the excavations to the extent seen today: about two-thirds to three-quarters of the city's final phase has been uncovered. Maiuri was also concerned with pre-Roman Pompeii, opening excavations below the most recent layer; he also undertook extensive restoration and conservation work.

A terrible moment for Pompeii occurred in 1943 when the Allies dropped more than 150 bombs on the site, believing Germans were hiding soldiers and munitions among the ruins. At least one bomb fell on the on-site museum, destroying some of the more interesting artifacts discovered by that time.

Nevertheless, thanks to the efforts of the many archaeologists and researchers who have worked to uncover the remains of Pompeii and Herculaneum over the last three centuries, today we can again walk the streets of these fascinating ancient Roman towns.

Additional resources:

The eruption story from The British Museum

Dr. Damian Robinson, "The Elite House and Commercial Life along the Via dell'Abbondanza"

Dr. John J. Dobbins, "Public Space and via dell'Abbondanza"

Archaeological Areas of Pompei, Herculaneum and Torre Annunziata (UNESCO)

Roman domestic architecture – the insulaRoman wall painting styles

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17.8.5: The importance of the archaeological findspot- The Lullingstone Busts

by DR. ELIZABETH MARLOWE and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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Video 17.8.5.1: Two marble portrait busts, 2nd century C.E., found during an excavation in 1949, Lullingstone Roman Villa, Kent (British Museum, on loan from Kent County Council). Speakers: Dr. Elizabeth Marlowe and Dr. Steven Zucker

Additional resources:

Lullingstone Roman Villa (from English Heritage)

G. W. Meates, The Lullingstone Roman Villa, *Archaeologia Cantiana*, vol. 63 (1950), pp. 1-49.

K. S. Painter, The Lullingstone Wall-Plaster: An Aspect of Christianity in Roman Britain, *The British Museum Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 3/4 (Spring, 1969), pp. 131-150.

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17.8.6: When there is no archaeological record- Portrait Bust of a Flavian Woman (Fonseca bust)

by DR. ELIZABETH MARLOWE and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

YouTube Video

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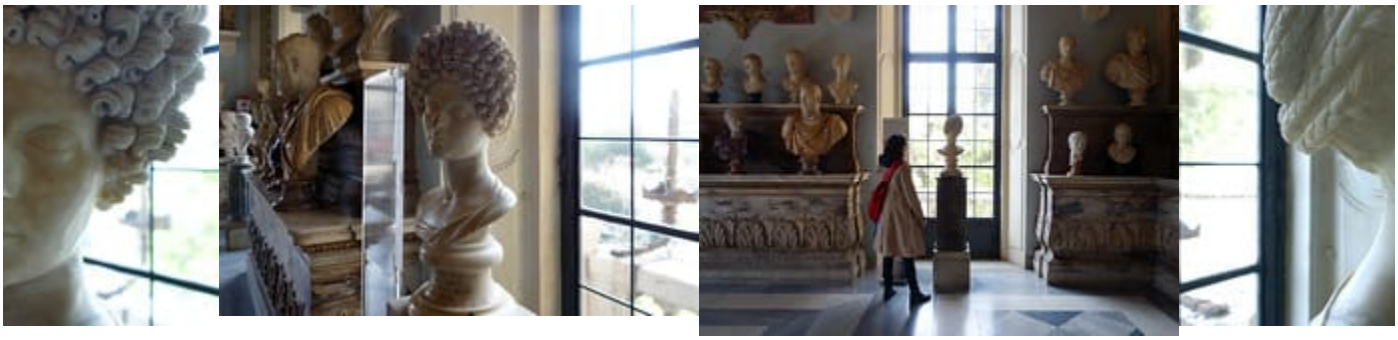
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Video 17.8.6.1: Portrait Bust of a Flavian Woman (Fonseca bust), early 2nd century C.E., marble, 63 inches high (Capitoline Museum, Rome). **Part 1 can be watched here**.

Additional resources:

Elizabeth Marlowe, *Shaky Ground: Context, Connoisseurship and the History of Roman Art* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013)

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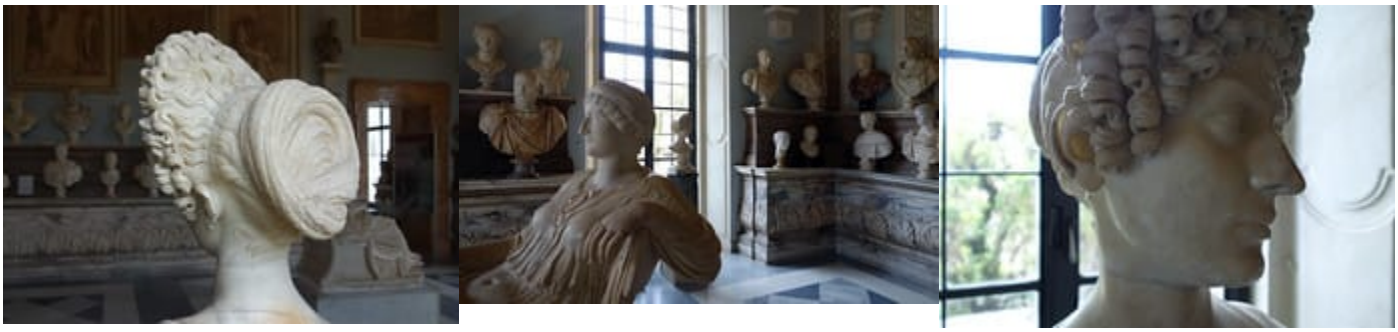
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17.8.7: Conservation vs. restoration- the Palace at Knossos (Crete)

by DR. SENTA GERMAN



Figure 17.8.7.1: The archaeological site at Knossos, with restored rooms in the background, Crete (photo: Jebulon, public domain)

Restoration versus conservation

What happens to an archaeological site after the archaeologist's work is completed? Should the site (or parts of it) be restored to what we believe (based on evidence) it once looked like? Or should the site be protected through conservation and left as is? A visit to an unrestored archaeological site can be uninspiring—even the most lavish ancient sites can appear to be piles of unorganized stones framed by broken columns and other fragments. And while modern conservation principles insist on the reversibility of any treatment (in case better treatments are discovered in the future), in the past, conservators didn't have the resources or science that is available today.



Figure 17.8.7.2: Sir Arthur Evans, 1911

Knossos

The archaeological site of Knossos (on the island of Crete) —traditionally called a palace—is the second most popular tourist attraction in all of Greece (after the Acropolis in Athens), hosting hundreds of thousands of tourists a year. But its primary attraction is not so much the authentic Bronze Age remains (which are more than three thousand years old) but rather the extensive early 20th century restorations installed by the site's excavator, Sir Arthur Evans, in the early twentieth century.

Archaeological restorations offer important information about the history of a site and Knossos doesn't disappoint—one can see the earliest throne room in Europe, walk through the monumental Northern entrance to the palace, marvel at colorful wall paintings and enjoy the elegance of a queen's apartments. All these spaces, however, are the result of extensive, contentious and, in some cases, damaging restoration. Knossos asks us to consider how we can preserve an archaeological site, while at the same time providing a valuable, educational experience for visitors that nonetheless remains true to the remains.

Considering Evans' reconstructions

The Evans restoration at Knossos are important for several reasons:

1. If Evans hadn't worked to preserve and restore so much of Knossos beginning in 1901, it would have undoubtedly been largely lost.
2. The restoration of the site undertaken by Evans, with its elegantly painted Throne Room (below) makes very real our historical understanding, originally revealed by Homer, of the power and prestige of the kings of Crete.
3. The beautiful, although sometimes inaccurate, restorations of architecture and wall paintings by Evans evoke the elegance and skill of Minoan architects and painters.

These are the undeniable benefits of Evans's restorations and among the aspects of a visit to Knossos that everyone values. It is the smooth corniced walls, bright paintings, and whole passages stepped with balustrades at Knossos that the post cards, camera snaps, and human memory preserve, and that has translated into important support for the site—intellectually, politically, and financially.



Figure 17.8.7.3: Throne Room, Knossos (photo: **Olaf Bausch**, CC BY 3.0)

At the same time, the Evans restorations are problematic. In some cases, what is restored does not accurately reflect what was found. Instead, a grander, and more complete, experience is presented. For example, when you visit Knossos, because of the way it is reconstructed, it is very easy to believe that all that was ever found there was a Late Bronze Age palace.



Figure 17.8.7.4: Throne Room excavations at Knossos, from the title page of a brochure appealing for support issued by the Cretan Exploration Fund (1900)

Evans's restoration of the Throne Room (and much else at the site) privileges the Late Bronze Age period of its history. The typical visitor likely won't grasp that the Throne Room dates to the *latest* phase of Knossos—the end of the 2nd millennium B.C.E., though the site was occupied nearly continuously from the Neolithic to the Roman era (from the 8th millennium B.C.E. to at least the 5th century C.E.).

The power of Evans's interpretation and reconstruction of the site as purely Minoan—the product of the indigenous culture of that island—is very much still with us despite the fact that much has changed about how art historians and archaeologists understand the different periods of construction at Knossos. Today, much of its final plan and form, which Evans reconstructed (including the Throne Room and most of the frescos), are understood as being of Mycenaean construction (not Minoan). Although this information is noted in texts mounted at the site, it is too often overlooked by visitors.



Figure 17.8.7.5: Contemporary view of Knossos looking southwest from the Monumental North Entrance (photo: **Theofanis Ampatzidis**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

What is archaeological restoration?

When archaeological remains are revealed through excavation, they are often delicate and cannot survive long unprotected. Some archaeologists backfill their trenches (refill the excavated holes with the material that was removed) to help preserve remains. In other instances, architecture, graves, or the impressions left from ephemeral building materials (such as wood) are sometimes left exposed, and when this happens some sort of conservation should occur. By definition, any sort of conservation is restoration when the modern materials are layered on the ancient and made to look harmonious in form, color and/or texture. As a result, restorations are sometimes nearly indistinguishable from authentic materials, and this is where things get tricky—such as the situation at Knossos.

Before making an archaeological restoration, three essential issues must be examined:

1. **What specific point in a site or monument's history will be the subject of the restoration?** Many (most!) archaeological sites reflect a long occupation or use, and within that timeframe things change, are repaired, or rebuilt. What era of the site will be privileged by the restoration—and in turn, which eras of the site's history will become harder to see and understand?
2. **How will future changes in the interpretation and knowledge about a site or monument be accommodated by restorations?** Archaeological interpretations of sites evolve all the time, often through new discoveries elsewhere. Restorations, in order to remain accurate, need to take into account potential new scholarship that can change the history or meaning of a site or monument.
3. **Lastly and most importantly, restorations must be non-destructive and reversible**. The first role of restoration is conservation. Therefore, the original remains must be entirely safe and not harmed in any way by restoration methods and materials. The reversibility of restorations not only has to do with the accommodation of changes in interpretation made above, but also with the need to leave the way open for less invasive, more gentle restoration methods in the future.

Restoration at Knossos

Aside from some gaps (for instance, during the First World War) Evans excavated at the site of Knossos each year from 1900 to 1930. Restoration of the architectural finds began almost immediately and can be divided into three phases, each characterized by the architect Evans hired to do the work. These three men, Theodore Fyfe, Christian Doll, and Piet De Jong, each had very different restoration philosophies.

Phase 1: Theodore Fyfe

From 1901 to 1904, a young architect by the name of Theodore Fyfe was charged with the restorations at Knossos. It is likely that Evans hired him because the winter of 1900/01 had damaged the newly exposed Throne Room—the most important space excavated during that first season at the site.

Fyfe's work at Knossos can be characterized by two things. First of all, he was devoted to the concept of minimal intervention. Second, when intervention was necessary, he made great efforts to use materials authentic to the Bronze Age structure (wood, limestone, rubble masonry) and even to use Bronze Age construction techniques, which he was able to glean from his onsite work. Clearly Fyfe was highly concerned about the truthfulness of his interventions and reconstructions; the only exception to this was his construction of modern-style pitched roofs to protect the Throne Room and the Shrine of the Double Axes.

Phase 2: Christian Doll

The second phase of restoration work at Knossos dates from 1905 to 1910, and was directed by Christian Doll. The first conservation work to which Doll had to attend to in 1905 was that of Fyfe's. Essentially, Fyfe's zeal to use authentic materials resulted in failure: he neglected in many cases to treat timbers before their use and he tended to use softwoods rather than hardwoods (all of which lead to rot). Also, rain was a destructive force in the winters, especially when it ran through newly exposed parts of the site. Doll's first and most important project was to stabilize and reconstruct the Grand Staircase to its original four story height. This was an extremely difficult job as the exact nature of the ancient design eluded both him and Fyfe, so a certain amount of improvisation was needed. And, because the weight of the structure was so great, Doll used iron girders (imported from England at great expense) covered in cement to make them look like ancient wooden beams.

Doll's approach to conservation was still anchored in preserving the excavated remains. However, Doll was no fan of the authentic materials used by Fyfe, as he saw how they had failed to preserve the many areas where they had been employed. Instead, Doll constructed structural systems based on techniques used in London at the time. Moreover, he employed contemporary architectural materials, such as the iron girders mentioned above, as well as concrete (the first use of this material at Knossos).

Phase 3: Piet De Jong



Figure 17.8.7.6: Piet de Jong, reconstruction of the "Dolphin Fresco," Queen's Megaron, Knossos (public domain)

The third phase of conservation work was executed over a longer period of time, from 1922 to 1952, by Piet De Jong. The vast majority of what Knossos looks like today, with large passages of reconstructed walls and rooms, is his work.

Three main elements characterize De Jong's work at Knossos. The most prominent was his use of iron reinforced concrete. In the twelve years between Doll's and De Jong's work, the use of reinforced concrete had grown in popularity because of its speedy construction, its relative cheapness, and its ability to be molded into nearly any shape. It was also thought to be nearly indestructible.

Another essential characteristic of De Jong's work at Knossos was his use of reinforced concrete to construct parts of the palace beyond what had been found—some passages were based on archaeological evidence, some were not (the bases of these reconstructions came from Evans himself).

De Jong often did not merely end walls at the height of their discovery but would either finish them off with a flat roof and cornice, often decorated with double white horns (what some contemporary wall paintings of Bronze Age houses looked like), or would leave the top edge of walls with irregular stones, evoking a picturesque, antique view. When a complete vision of ancient Knossos could not be reconstituted, a romantic one was built instead.



Figure 17.8.7.7: South Propylaeum, Knossos (photo: **Stegop**, CC BY-SA 4.0)

The reconstruction of the interior decoration of the throne room was executed during this period and similarly exhibits a combination of the truthful reflection of archaeological remains and Evans's creativity.

Lastly, an important characteristic of De Jong's restorations was the placement of reproductions of wall paintings around his newly built spaces. Some paintings were placed very close to their findspots and therefore aimed at a more authentic reconstruction, while other paintings were reconstructed at some distance from where they had been discovered.

The question remains: why did Evans encourage De Jong's radical approach to conservation, especially after two more conservative predecessors? Several reasons are at play, no doubt. The first, and possibly the most important, is the condition of Knossos after almost eight years of abandonment during the First World War. Aside from the wild overgrowth of weeds, there was much weather-related and other damage. However, the parts of the site that had been roofed (such as the Throne Room and the Shrine of the Double Axes) and sections that were more intact (such as the Grand Staircase), were in excellent shape and this no doubt convinced Evans of the importance of aggressive conservation work. Second, the iron-reinforced concrete which De Jong proposed to use was inexpensive and could be employed quickly. Third, Evans, in a masterful anticipation of the desires of future tourism, aimed to make a site that would vividly conjure the culture he had discovered, as much evocative and picturesque as historically accurate.

Conservation at Knossos after Evans

It is only fair to reflect upon the restorations of Knossos within their historical framework. The aims, methods, and materials used in restoration at the site over a period of some sixty years changed, reflecting a long list of crises, constraints, theories, and desires. Perhaps most significant, however, was Evans's overriding conviction that the conservation of Knossos was an obligation born out of its great antiquity and unique importance. He knew this from his own Edwardian education, British colonial outlook, and his twenty-four year directorship of the Ashmolean Museum at the University of Oxford. Evans was keenly aware of how intimately connected the teaching of Knossos's history was with how it was presented on site. He made Knossos into a museum and a showcase for the newly discovered Aegean Bronze Age chapter of ancient history and the earliest example of cultural tourism, today a mainstay of public historical education—not to mention local economies. Evans did it first at Knossos.

Conservation at Knossos has continued since De Jong's work, although with new challenges. The most recent conservation work on the site has been focused largely on repairing Evans's reconstructions. Despite a belief that reinforced concrete would last indefinitely, it has proven to be susceptible to the wet Cretan winters, crumbling and allowing for rust on the interior ironwork. In other areas the reinforced concrete proved to be structurally unsound.



Figure 17.8.7.8: Visitors to Knossos, 2016, photo: **Neil Howard**, CC BY-NC 2.0

In addition, the steady increase of tourist traffic since the 1950s has meant growing stress on both the original architecture of Knossos as well as its reconstructions. Sustained foot fall, increasing weight load as well as touching and sitting, is increasingly destructive. To combat this, the Greek Archaeological Service, under the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports, has closed off large sections of Knossos and generally restricted circulation on the site. In the 1990s it conducted extensive conservation of both ancient and modern structures as well as building new corrugated plastic roofing. At present the Service is working on a visitor management plan for the site and the Greek government has applied to UNESCO for World Heritage Status for Knossos as well as four other Minoan palatial sites which would afford much needed support for ongoing conservation efforts.

Additional resources:

Knossos at UNESCO

Minoan Crete from The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Helbrunn Timeline of Art History

Arthur Evans archive (Oxford University)

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17.9: CULTURAL HERITAGE ENDANGERED ROUND THE WORLD

17.9.1: Saving Venice
17.9.2: Cultural heritage at risk- Mali
17.9.3: Cultural heritage at risk- Peru
17.9.4: Cultural heritage at risk- Turkey
17.9.5: Cultural heritage at risk- Syria
17.9.6: Cultural heritage at risk- Cambodia
17.9.7: Cultural heritage at risk- United States
17.9.8: The unintended consequences of UNESCO world heritage listing

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17.9.1: Saving Venice

by LISA ACKERMAN and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

YouTube Video

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View this YouTube Video online

Video 17.9.1.1: A conversation about the issues facing Venice and efforts to save the historic city, with Lisa Ackerman, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, World Monuments Fund and Steven Zucker

Additional resources:

Venice (from the World Monuments Fund)

Marcello Rossi, "Will a Huge New Flood Barrier Save Venice?" *Wired Magazine*, April 5, 2018

As Tourists Crowd Out Locals, Venice Faces 'Endangered' List (from NPR)

Robert C. Davis, Garry R. Marvin, *Venice, the Tourist Maze: A Cultural Critique of the World's Most Touristed City* (University of California Press, 2004)

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17.9.2: Cultural heritage at risk- Mali

by SAFE (SAVING ANTIQUITIES FOR EVERYONE)

from our partner SAFE SAVING ANTIQUITIES FOR EVERYONE



Figure 17.9.2.1:Djingareyber Mosque, built 1327, Timbuktu, Mali. Two tombs at this mosque were attacked by Islamic extremists in 2012. (photo: **Johannes Zielcke**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Internal conflict has had a disastrous impact on Mali's rich archaeological heritage in recent years. In 2012, Tuareg and Islamic separatists took over northern Mali, destroying crucial works of Malian heritage (**AllAfrica**). The historic sites of Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal all experienced extensive damage.

According to **UNESCO**, "Fifteen of Timbuktu's mausoleums were destroyed, including nine that are part of the World Heritage sites. We estimate that about 4,200 manuscripts from the Ahmed Baba research centre were burned, and that another 300,000 in the Timbuktu region are vulnerable to illicit trafficking."

The devastating impact of conflict and civil strife on internal heritage is clear in this instance and further underlines the need to work together to help Mali protect its heritage.

What is at stake for Mali?

The numerous great civilizations of Mali have left behind a rich archaeological record spanning from the Neolithic period to the 18th century. The Niger River Valley hosted a crossroads for culture and commerce based around the trans-Saharan trade, which exchanged gold, ivory, salt, and slaves for products from the Mediterranean and Middle East. Cities such as Gao and Timbuktu rose as great centers of commerce and learning during the medieval period, boasting splendid mosques and Islamic architecture as well as the tomb complex of the emperor Askia Mohamed. Bamako became an important commercial center later in the 17th century. Settlement at Djenné-Jeno, an important trading center, covered more than 16 centuries. Occupation here has left behind an archaeological mound over five meters thick, which has provided valuable information on the emergence of trade and social complexity at this site.

Unfortunately these rich cultural resources have proven too great a temptation for looters. Mali has suffered from looting since early colonial officials collected artifacts as souvenirs, but the problem became truly serious starting in the 1970s when a series

of droughts drove poor farmers to seek other sources of income. These droughts happened to coincide with the discovery of terracotta figurines at Djenné (Sanogo, Sidibé 1995). Looting activity increased significantly after this point, so that now estimates place the number of sites looted in the Niger River Valley at between **80 and 90%**. The plundering varies from individuals collecting random artifacts exposed at the surface to the mass destruction of entire sites by groups of laborers digging holes and trenches. The archaeological mounds at Kané Boro, Hamma Djam, and Natamatao have all been ransacked by looters who destroyed the sites with trenches and shafts.

Meanwhile, the international antiquities market has taken a keen interest in objects from Mali. Zoomorphic statuettes in terracotta, beads, copper vessels and jewelry, and iron figurines are among some of the items sold regularly in auction houses, at dealer's galleries, and even online. Thanks to looting, the number of objects flooding the market is large, while our knowledge of Mali's ancient heritage remains extremely limited.

What Mali is doing to protect its cultural heritage

In response to the widespread damage caused by looting, the government of Mali took action to protect its cultural patrimony with a series of laws and decrees passed between 1985 and 1987. These statutes aim to protect and promote the cultural heritage of Mali, regulate excavations, and control the export and commercialization of cultural property. Included in these laws is a provision which states artifacts leaving the country must be accompanied by an export license from the Cultural Heritage Services at the National Museum in Bamako. Mali also ratified the 1970 UNESCO Convention in 1987, showing its support in regulating the traffic of illicit artifacts worldwide. In addition to this legislation, the government of Mali has striven to educate its officials and the general public, raising awareness of the looting problem.

Programs focused at the local level have utilized radio, television, meetings, traveling exhibitions, and even staged plays to get the message across and encourage involvement (Sidibé 2001). Cultural missions were established at Djenné, Bandiagara, and Timbuktu in 1993. In some areas, the success of these efforts has turned would-be looters into custodians of cultural heritage—villagers are founding museums and working to protect and preserve Mali's archaeological treasures in the Mopti region and near Djenné-Jeno (Sidibé, 2001). On a larger scale, the National Museum of Mali at Bamako has made outstanding efforts to protect cultural property and to advance an understanding of history—not just for Mali, but for Africa as a whole.

Just last year the museum was presented with the Prince Claus Fund Award for promoting cultural heritage and cultural exchange. The country also participated in workshops organized by the International Council of Museums (**ICOM**) in Arusha, Bamako, and Kinshasa. Museum professionals, law enforcement officers, customs officials, archaeologists, and other professionals all collaborated at these workshops in order to reach a better understanding between countries of import and export.

What other countries do to aid Mali's cause

Mali's internal efforts demonstrate that the country has taken positive action to protect its cultural patrimony, but unfortunately it is not enough to stem the tide of looting and the illicit trade. Although the country has taken great initiative in the battle against looting, as a developing nation, Mali has limited resources for the protection of archaeological sites and the policing of its borders (McIntosh, 1995). Even so, the nation dedicates an admirable portion of its meager budget towards these efforts. So long as there is an international demand for Malian artifacts, there will be a need for international cooperation to combat looting.

Thankfully, other countries are collaborating with Mali to show their commitment to preserving the world's cultural heritage. In 2005 Norway launched a UNESCO Funds-in-Trust project to aid the countries of Mali, Ethiopia, and Senegal. This project aims to preserve and document archaeological collections and archaeological sites, raise awareness of the looting crisis, and educate local officials and the public. ICOM, whose members include institutions from across the globe, has drafted a **"red list"** for Mali of categories of artifacts that are most affected by looting. ICOM appeals to museums, collectors, dealers, and auction houses not to buy these objects and provides information on the legislation protecting them. Preventive measures such as these attempt to decrease the overseas demand for stolen artifacts, and they are helpful and necessary. In January of 2007, **French customs officials seized more than 650 artifacts** from Mali being smuggled through the Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris. These objects were presumably on their way to the U.S., where they would be sold to dealers and private collectors. Such instances demonstrate the need for U.S. cooperation to combat the looting problem. Thankfully, the MoU between the United States and Mali was renewed in 2012.

How does Mali continue to share its culture without endangering its resources?

These endeavors show that restricting the illicit trade of artifacts does not prevent cultural exchange between nations. On the contrary, it has led to international collaboration and new efforts to educate and spread culture between nations. The traveling exhibition “Vallée du Niger” opened in Paris in 1993 and visited numerous African countries. In 2003, the Smithsonian Festival of Folklife put on an immense exposition of Mali’s culture featuring music, dancing, food, films, arts, and even the appearance of Amadou Toumani Toure, president of Mali. Numerous universities throughout the United States also boast study abroad programs in Mali, including Harvard, Michigan State, Drew University, and Antioch College. Examples such as these show that Mali’s cultural heritage can be part of the world’s cultural heritage through positive forms of exchange.

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17.9.3: Cultural heritage at risk- Peru

by SAFE (SAVING ANTIQUITIES FOR EVERYONE)

from our partner SAFE SAVING ANTIQUITIES FOR EVERYONE



Figure 17.9.3.1: Terraced hillsides at the Inka ruins of Pisac, Peru (photo: **Paulo JC Nogueira**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Peru's cultural heritage is extensive and diverse, including important sites and artifacts from the ancient civilizations of the Moche and Nazca. Although national and international legislation exists in order to protect the country's heritage, it is largely ineffectual due to the wide scope and the lack of sufficient funding to protect sites and enforce laws (as is often the case). The gravity of the current circumstances was evident in the aftermath of the Greenpeace protest of December 2014, where activists trespassed on the country's historical **Nazca lines** during a **publicity stunt** intended to send a message to the UN climate talks delegates in Lima.

In the wake of the Nazca lines scandal, Peru's Minister of Culture stated that "more than 1,000 of Peru's archaeological sites are at risk for lack of security and resources to guard the sites." According to the Minister, "It is impossible for the Ministry of Culture, with the resources it has, to keep guard of thousands of archaeological sites or 5,500 kilometers of the Nasca Lines."

Nevertheless, this is not the first time Peru's heritage has been damaged by avoidable circumstances. The world-renowned sites of Machu Picchu and Chan Chan have faced extensive damage due to their popularity as a tourist attraction. Moreover, "in 2000, an Incan solar clock was damaged during the **filming of a commercial**, while a quad bike left marks on a candelabra geoglyph in nearby Paracas in 2010." Likewise, in 2013 it was reported that heavy machinery had defaced a group of the Nazca lines and the Paris-Dakar rally damaged parts outside of the World Heritage area. Such distressing events point to the need for much greater cultural heritage protection and awareness.

Vandalism and invasion are not alone in threatening Peru's archaeological sites. Another great risk is the pervasive looting and illicit digging occurring throughout the country.

Between 2004 and 2006, illicit exports of over 5,000 cultural and natural objects were intercepted. Nevertheless, the number of clandestine excavations at archaeological sites has increased, as have thefts from churches and museums. Illicit trade in Peruvian cultural property causes irreparable damage to the country's heritage and identity, and constitutes a serious loss for the memory of mankind. (**ICOM**)

What is at stake for Peru?

Looking across the Peruvian desert, you can imagine it is a moonscape pocked with craters as far as the eye can see, except the holes are looted tombs. Royal tombs that once contained gold, silver, and copper ornaments have been stripped without any care for the cultural information their scientific excavation could reveal. Today you can find **authentic Chimu and Nazca pottery being sold on eBay**, dug up by rural peasants looking for objects like the ones in the Sotheby's catalogs.

Visitors from around the world flock to sites like Machu Picchu every year to witness firsthand the magnificence of the Incan civilization. Tourism is the third largest industry in Peru, and its cultural sites and museums are major attractions. The looting of archaeological sites and the removal of objects from Peru are negatively impacting tourism. Preserving archaeological ruins and returning artifacts for display in on-site museums is mutually beneficial to the local population and foreign visitors who share an interest in our global heritage.

Looters did not return to the place now because there was nothing left....In the last two decades of the twentieth century...more Andean historical heritage was lost than in the previous four centuries....

– Roger Atwood writes about the Andean site of Chilca, Peru, in *Stealing History*

Looting continues in Peru

Looting and illicit antiquities trafficking continues despite protective measures both in Peru and abroad. Thankfully, U.S. import restrictions have resulted in the confiscation and return of many artifacts to Peru, including 18th century religious artifacts stolen from churches and thousand-year-old human skulls torn from their graves. According to the International Council of Museums' Red List of Peruvian Antiquities at Risk, over **5,000 looted objects were seized between 2004 and 2006** thanks to the MOU.

In one of the largest busts of trafficked antiquities, U.S. Customs seized 412 pre-Columbian artifacts—including silver masks, Inca quipus, and effigy vessels—from an Italian art thief and returned them to Peru in 2007. Since 2010, U.S. Customs has intercepted and returned to Peru the above-mentioned pre-Columbian human skulls and 18th century manuscript, Inca pottery, Moche sculpture, and textiles. In 2011, a Moche gold bead in the shape of a monkey head in the Museum of New Mexico's Palace of the Governors was **returned to Peru after it was identified as having been illegally removed** from the royal tombs of Sipán.

What is Peru doing to protect its cultural heritage?

In 1990, extensive digging by tomb raiders prompted the government of Peru to request that the U.S. impose **emergency import restrictions** on certain Moche artifacts from Peru's northern coast. In 1997, the U.S. entered in to a bilateral agreement with Peru which placed import restrictions on pre-Columbian archaeological artifacts and Colonial ethnological materials from all areas of Peru and continued the 1990 emergency action import restrictions on archaeological material from the Sipán region. The **MOU was renewed** in 2002, 2007, and again on June 9, 2012.

In June, 2013, the **New York Times reported the Ministry of Culture's program** to block antiquities being smuggled out of the country, many of them bound for the U.S.

Incan artifacts that were scientifically excavated from Machu Picchu and temporarily curated in Yale's Peabody Museum with Peruvian governmental permission **are now being repatriated**. Facilities to properly store and publicly display these objects within Peru are expanding, and professional training of Peruvian archaeologists and heritage specialists continues to increase. The collection will be returned to the International Center for the Study of Machu Picchu and Inca Culture by the end of 2012, and the people of Peru and tourists who visit Cuzco and Machu Picchu will be able to view them in a new site museum.

The U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation has contributed to several museum conservation and analysis projects in Peru. Security and public access continues to improve in Peruvian museums, as do conservation and climate-controlled displays for fragile textiles and mummies.

Peru is committed to sharing its rich past with the world through cultural exchanges with a growing emphasis on exchanges between museums. Peruvian objects have been loaned for the purpose of international exhibition, including 253 rare Incan gold ornaments on loan from Peruvian museums **on display at the Pinacothèque de Paris museum in 2010**. To commemorate the 20th anniversary of bilateral relations between Peru and South Korea, 351 artifacts from nine museums in Peru were **exhibited**

in 2009 at the National Museum of Korea in Seoul.

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17.9.4: Cultural heritage at risk- Turkey

by SAFE (SAVING ANTIQUITIES FOR EVERYONE)

from our partner SAFE SAVING ANTIQUITIES FOR EVERYONE



Figure 17.9.4.1: Çatalhöyük after the first excavations by James Mellaart and his team (photo: **Omar Hoftun**, CC: BY-SA 3.0)

The modern state of Turkey is one of the most archeologically and culturally rich places in the world; scholars have published on over a hundred thousand sites across the country (Özdoğan 2013). It boasts 15 sites of cultural importance on **UNESCO's World Heritage list**, and has 60 additional sites under consideration. Despite the identification of and reporting on thousands of sites, only about 11,000 are officially registered with the Turkish government. Registration is critical to the preservation and protection of sites; without it, they can be destroyed during new building projects and land development.

The struggle to protect sites from modern building and development is the result of limited resources and personnel. With thousands of sites awaiting the attention of the government, employees of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism are fighting a never-ending battle. In addition to examining new sites and excavations, they must also maintain officially registered sites which are threatened by an explosion of tourism. Developing heritage management plans for these sites is critical, but time consuming as well.

While many of Turkey's own antiquities have been and continue to be looted today, it has become a highway for illicit antiquities coming from its turbulent neighbors, Syria and Iraq.

What is at stake for Turkey?

Turkey, located within the region of Anatolia, has been home to **many diverse modern, historical, and ancient cultures**, and its history captures the breadth of the modern human experience.

Caves and western coastal sites dating to the Paleolithic (~400,000–14,000 B.C.E.) and Mesolithic (~14,000–10,000 B.C.E.) periods contain evidence for the earliest human presence in Anatolia.

The Neolithic period (10,000–5,000 B.C.E.) is well represented and is known internationally for several important sites. **Catalhöyuk**, in southern Turkey, is the largest and best preserved Neolithic site. Reaching its peak around 7,000 B.C.E., the site

has evidence of plant and animal domestication and large permanent settlements. At the site of **Göbeklitepe**, in the southeast, archeologists uncovered a mountain-top sanctuary dating to around 9,000 B.C.E., making it the oldest identified religious structure in the world.

Across Turkey during the Chalcolithic (5,000–3,000 B.C.E.) and Bronze (3,000–1200 B.C.E.) Ages there is abundant evidence for the early development of metal processing, trade, and production. Increasing economic and social complexity led to a rise in urbanism and the development of massive centers, such as **Hattusha**, the Hittite capital. On the western coast, inhabitants during this time came into greater contact with other Mediterranean cultures, such as the Minoans of Crete and the Greeks. One of the most famous of these settlements is ancient **Troy**, which was famously under siege by the Greeks in Homer's *Iliad* and later looted by Heinrich Schliemann's nineteenth-century explorations of the site.

In later historic periods, many diverse cultures inhabited Anatolia and later the political state of Turkey influencing its landscape and the history of the states around it. Numerous societies, including the Urartians, Phrygians, Lydians, Persians, and Lycians, established or conquered other kingdoms in Anatolia and are known through both archaeological and textual sources. With the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great, Anatolia came under Greek influence ushering in the Hellenistic Period (4th–1st century B.C.E.). Later the Roman Empire (1st century B.C.E.–4th century C.E.) absorbed Anatolia, marking another cultural transformation and historic events that would lead to the founding of the Byzantine Empire (395–1453 C.E.) based in Constantinople, modern Istanbul. Medieval and modern successors to this rich history of Anatolia include various Turkomen tribes, the Seljuk Turks, the Ahlatshahs and Artuquids, and eventually the Ottomans.

Turkey's cultural heritage endangered

Understaffed/Underfunded

Turkey has many laws that protect its cultural heritage, however, the abundance of ancient materials has essentially overburdened government agencies, which often lack the resources and manpower to enforce the laws and preserve these sites.

Some of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's own policies inadvertently work against protecting sites. For example, even though a scholarly publication may be available for an excavated site, it is not enough for it to gain official registry with the government; instead, a member of the ministry must visit the site and re-document its findings (Özdoğan 2013). Employees are often overburdened already, and the time and resources for this type of documentation are highly limited.

Likewise, rescue excavations of sites threatened by modern development can only be conducted by museums and universities, who are also understaffed for this additional research, because contract archeology is not recognized by the government (Özdoğan 2013). This limitation can lead to hurried or only partial excavations of sites that may contain thousands of years of human occupation.

Modern Construction and Development

Turkey's past and present are constantly confronted with one another; negotiating the rights of its modern citizens while protecting the past is one of its greatest challenges today. Some recent examples of modern activities that threaten the integrity of archeological sites include farming and pasturing near archeological sites, flooding large areas of land after the building of dams in the east, and the construction of new roads and buildings. The latter are major problems within modern Istanbul, which is experiencing a population boom that strains the resources and infrastructure of the city.

In 2004, plans for a new metro and light rail system in Istanbul were initiated to alleviate some of the traffic in the city. Keeping in mind the rich archaeology underneath the city, the subway was to be drilled into the bedrock to avoid disturbing potential sites. The project was approved, but neglected to consider the need for ventilation shafts and stairs to reach the metro lines, the digging for which would likely uncover sites and features. Sites were inevitably uncovered and unforeseen rescue excavations led by the Istanbul Archaeology Museum took place across the city, temporarily delaying the metro project, for several years in some areas (Özdoğan 2013). Pressure from the public and government forced these excavations to be conducted at a more rapid rate than normal. While the excavations were successful, it is clear that modern infrastructure was more a pressing issue than the archeological sites beneath the city. Almost any building projects in Istanbul are likely to face similar challenges in the future.

The **Yedikule Gardens** have been a fixture in Istanbul since the Byzantine Era and continue to be used by local residents as urban vegetable gardens. A portion of the gardens are surrounded by massive city walls built under Theodosius II in the

5th century C.E. and are a protected UNESCO heritage site. In 2013, plans were underway to transform part of the gardens into an urban park with a decorative pool. Demolition of the area began without warning, destroying the vegetable gardens of local inhabitants, and deep digging near the ancient wall damaged its foundation and stability. Archeologists from the Istanbul Archaeology Museum intervened, arguing that this was a protected area, the project was unearthing and destroying Ottoman and Byzantine archeological materials, and the excavations should proceed under their guidance to ensure no further damage is done (White et al. 2015). Luckily, in a July 2015 court decision, development in and near the gardens was halted indefinitely.

Similarly, the garden associated with the 16th-century **Piyalepaşa mosque** was also under threat recently (as of August 2015). Plans to turn the space into a parking structure were halted temporarily and are under review. The garden was conceived by the original architect of the mosque and was regarded as essential to the intended use and experience of the space.

Tourism

While positive in many aspects, the increasing tourism across Turkey threatens the preservation of archeological sites. The growing number of visitors annually (at some sites numbering over a million a year) results in greater demand for lodging, food, and transportation near sites. Providing such services has inevitable impacts on archeological sites as well as the surrounding environment (Serin 2005). Offering lodging for tourists wishing to visit an archeological site requires building near the site. Often just a portion of a site is visible with much of it remaining unexcavated; without proper survey prior to new building, the unseen areas of sites can easily be damaged or completely destroyed.

Additionally, without proper heritage management plans the sites can be damaged by visitors walking on or around fragile areas compromising the integrity of structures. The lack of resources and personnel leave some sites completely unattended and unprotected from damaging behavior by visitors and may increase the possibility of looting by thieves.

Market demand for Turkish antiquities

The looting and sales of antiquities from Turkey is an ongoing problem as many sites are left unprotected or have not been fully excavated. Established networks of looters, smugglers, middlemen, and buyers transport antiquities out of the country. The destination for many of these antiquities is Switzerland where artifacts are housed, sometimes for several decades, before appearing on the market to buyers in Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The Syrian Conflict and the destruction by ISIS, currently devastating the archeological landscape in neighboring **Syria** and **Iraq,** are escalating **the transport of illicit antiquities through Turkey**. Civilians are left jobless and desperate to support their families, and the readily available archeological materials have become a primary source of income. Objects looted from these sites are often smuggled into Turkey and sold to Western buyers.

Ancient coins, cylinder seals, and cuneiform tables are highly prized from sites in Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. They are easy to conceal and transport and are a favorite amongst collectors. Additionally, pre-Islamic figurines are desirable as art pieces and are also relatively easy to transport.

What is Turkey doing to protect its cultural heritage?

Turkey has a long list of laws to protect archaeological sites and artifacts from destruction, looting, and illicit sales (**UNESCO Database of National Cultural Heritage Laws–Turkey**). Its most important, the Law on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Property, was enacted in 1983 as a form of blanket legislation, which declares that all antiquities found and not yet found within Turkey are property of the state; therefore, antiquities found within its borders are illegal to export. With this type of law, any object that is removed from its borders is considered stolen property; it does not, however, apply to antiquities discovered beyond its borders meaning illicit artifacts traveling through Turkey are not subject to these laws.

Turkey has used this type of blanket legislation to sue foreign museums for the return of items they believe to have been looted from sites within its borders. In the case of the Lydian Hoard, Turkey took legal action against the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to recover a collection of 363 artifacts, which they believed to have been looted from burial mounds in the Manisa and Uşak regions of Turkey in the 1960s. The assemblage, which included gold and silver vessels and jewelry, wall paintings, and a pair of marble sphinxes, was hidden from the public until about 25 years after they were acquired by the museum. Through comparison of other materials found in the burial mounds and interviews with the original looters, Turkey was able to prove that the objects were indeed stolen, and the Met subsequently returned them.

Çatalhöyük after the first excavations by James Mellaart and his team (photo: Omar hoftun, CC: BY-SA 3.0)Today, archeologists and scholars are working to develop heritage management plans for many sites across Turkey. Plans to protect world-famous sites, such as **Cappadocia**, are underway with support from the international community. Japan's Funds-in-Trust for the Preservation of World Cultural Heritage, in cooperation of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, is investing $1.2 million to protect the Rock Sites of Cappadocia. The project focuses on protecting 22 painted rock-hewn churches and making the area more sustainable for tourism while promoting international cooperation.

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17.9.5: Cultural heritage at risk- Syria

by SAFE (SAVING ANTIQUITIES FOR EVERYONE)

from our partner SAFE SAVING ANTIQUITIES FOR EVERYONE



Figure \(\PageIndex{1\): Palmyra, 2007 (photo: **James Gordon**, CC BY 2.0)

Syria, home to some of the oldest and culturally rich cities and archaeological sites in the world, is currently experiencing significant devastation. Damage has been reported at all of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Syria, and this is only the tip of the iceberg. Not only is direct shelling and military occupation a huge issue but additionally the breakdown in order often leads to widespread looting, as well as cases, as we have seen recently, of **iconoclasm**.

The situation has worsened since Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) jihadists, whose strict Salafi interpretation of Islam deems the veneration of tombs and non-Islamic vestiges to be idolatrous, seized swathes of Syria and Iraq in recent months, destroying sites and burning precious manuscripts and archives. (Al-Akhbar)

Legions of ancient sites in Syria have been destroyed, damaged, or looted throughout the enduring conflict according to **new satellite imagery**.

UNITAR found that 24 sites were completely destroyed, 189 severely or moderately damaged and a further 77 possibly damaged.

Moreover, shocking stories of ancient citadels taken over by military factions are reported frequently and further damage constantly. Widespread looting has been reported at sites throughout the country, most notably, at **Palmyra**. The current situation in Syria highlights the plight of cultural heritage in countries exposed to warfare and political instability.

Syria's cultural heritage endangered

Near eastern archaeology is arguably one of the most developed in the world. Longstanding research traditions have helped highlight the role of this area within major phases in the (pre)history of mankind. This has led to the development of archaeological and preservation/conservation projects through the collaboration of international and local teams. In Syria, almost every archaeological period is represented by a range of sites (more than 6,000 were recorded in 2010), each contributing in

their unique ways to our understanding of the past. Archaeologists have witnessed evidence of Lower Paleolithic, modern humans walking out of Africa, the development of early agriculture, irrigation systems, urbanism, and writing systems, in places such as ‘Umm el Tlel, Abu Hureyra, Hamoukar, Ebla, Palmyra and Damascus. The country also currently has 6 **UNESCO World Heritage sites**: Damascus (1979); Palmyra (1980); the ancient city of Bosra (1980); Aleppo (1986); the Crac des Chevaliers and Qal’at Salah El-Din (2006); and the ancient villages of Northern Syria (2011).

According to Bruce G. Trigger in his book ***A History of Archaeological Thought***, published in 2006, most Arab and Muslim countries have created complex bureaucratic systems in order to protect their cultural heritage. In Syria, the legislation regarding the antiquities defines issues such as ownership and compensation as well as the features which constitute an “antiquity” in the first place (i.e. any goods manufactured, produced, written, or drawn that are more than 200 years old as well as any other goods that would not fit this category but would have an important historical status). These objects cannot be owned by individuals and are the inalienable property of the State. The Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) provided an officious structure for the preservation and study of this material. However, there are some issues partly inherent to the nature of this kind of structure. The lack of security in some of the regional museums, the limited inventories, and, in general, the poor documentation of the collections lead to unsteady situations in times of trouble, which put the cultural heritage of these countries in great danger (as already seen in Lebanon in 1978 and 1982, or again, in Hama, Syria, in 1982).

Several associations/organizations (see **Appel à la préservation des musées syriens adressé aux institutions internationales et à la communauté internationale**) have been keeping track of the damage done to cultural heritage since the beginning of the unrest. They all emphasize the danger of underestimating the threat under which cultural heritage currently finds itself. The collective Patrimoine Syrien en Danger (PAS) comments in a letter, dated 07/07/2011 (document #9575/1) and addressed by ‘Adel Safar, to each of the different ministries. Here ‘Adel Safar mentions that the country’s heritage is at risk of looting from specialized and highly trained groups aiming at ancient documents and artifacts. The collective suggests that this letter was using the danger of looting to legitimate some of their military actions, thus instrumentalizing Syria’s patrimony.

More recently, the Institute for the Study of War has issued **regular situation reports** on military activities throughout Syria. Widespread conflict leading to sustained instability in the country has jeopardized the safety of its most precious cultural heritage sites.

Actual damages can be broken down into different categories and vary in degrees of degradation. These range from the simple graffiti on a Roman temple at El Dumaier to the destruction of Qalaat el Mudeeq. An extensive report found on the Global Heritage Network, provided by Emma Cunlife from Durham University on May 16th 2012, lists most of the destruction known to us. In addition to this report, most of the sources available to us come from the Facebook group **Patrimoine archéologique Syrien en danger** where Syrian individuals share articles and Youtube videos of the destruction of material heritage. Only some of the videos are shared, but they can be viewed **here**. Some of this information has also been directly confirmed by independent sources in Syria.

The devastating effects of looting in Syria

This category encompasses illegal excavations as well as antique thefts and more generally summarizes any harm done to cultural heritage for commerce purposes. Following ‘Adel Safar’s letter, some governmental forces seem to have moved parts of the Der’a, Alpe, Quneitra, Hama, and Homs museum collections either to Damascus and/or to some other unknown locations. In this situation, the risk represented by the limited nature of the documentation and inventories of these collections is already considerable.

The most famous case since the beginning of the unrest is the case of the Hama museum where, possibly among other artifacts, a golden Aramaic statuette was stolen. Interpol published a call for vigilance, and it has featured it on the **most wanted list** since December 2011.

Still in the Hama area, it has been reported that the Shaïzar citadel has also been looted.

At the Crac des Chevaliers, Bassam Jamous, General Director of the DGAM talks about armed groups penetrating the castle and starting illegal excavations. The same kind of illegal activities have also been witnessed in the provinces of Der’a,Hama and Homs.

PAS also addresses the possible pillaging of some pieces in the museum of Homs.

In **Tartous**, Mr. Marwan Hassan, Director of the Antiquities of the city mentions the confiscation of more than 1,300 objects (Classical and Islamic period) in an attempt to smuggle artifacts out of the country.

At Tell Hamukar in the Khabur Basin, some individuals witnessed what seemed to be an illegal excavation and episodes of looting. There is even a report of a house being built on the tell (PAS). Instances might also have been witnessed at Tell Ashari, Tell Afis, Khan Shiekhoun, and Tell Acharneh.

At the site of Afamya, in the city of Hama, some mosaics have been stolen.

At Palmyra, in addition to the presence of tanks in the area, there has been some evidence of looting and destruction in the Diocletian camp, and around the Bel temple. As of May 2015, ISIS forces have captured the ancient city of Palmyra.

At Apamée, one mosaic has disappeared as well as the chapiteau of the Decumanus column in the center of the city.

Finally, one needs to keep in mind the danger generated by the absence of authority and the unrest in areas surrounding several regional museums, including Ma'aret el-Nu'man, Ebla-Tell Mardikh, Qal'at Jabar, and Deir ez-Zor.

This category covers the damages done to Syria's patrimony through military or civil occupation of archaeological areas and the shelling of monuments.

Multiple religious buildings have been damaged. The mosques of Der'a, Bosra and Inkhil, and the mosque al-Tawhid have suffered severe shellings. The minarets of Qa'ab el-Ahbar (Homs) and Al-Tekkiyeh (Ariha) as well as the Khaled Ibn al-Walid mosque at Homs have been partially destroyed. In Aleppo, the PAS points out damage done to the tomb of the Sheikh Dahur al-Muhammad and Mosque Abou Der Al-Gefary. Some Christian sites have also undergone some damage. These include the Deir Mar Mousa al-Habashi (The Monastery of Saint Moses the Abyssinian), Our Lady of Seydanya and Mar Elias monasteries, and the Umm el-Zinnar cathedral at Homs, where bullet impacts have been noticed. Even though the religious dimension of some of this destruction should not be overlooked, it is important to draw upon the fragmentation of our sources and the different reasons underlying the destruction of these monuments.

Military occupation also led to the destruction of several archaeological sites through shelling or the modification of landscapes. The monuments of Homs have been particularly damaged. In addition to the mosques previously mentioned, the dome of the Hammam al-Basha, Bab Dreb, the Suq al-Hashish, and possibly other parts of the Suq have been heavily damaged. In Hamma, the el-Arba'en quarter has been partly destroyed by fire. At Tell Sheikh Hamad, an Assyrian temple collapsed as the **site was transformed into a battlefield**. In the same way, the sites of Apamea (and its citadel), Palmyra, Bosra, Salamyeh-Chmemis castle, Ebla-Tell Mardikh, and Tell A'zzaz were heavily damaged when trenches and tank shelters were dug. An equal situation was witnessed at the Acheulean site of Latamne. Furthermore, in northern Syria, and especially in the region of Idlib, the area of the Limestone massif and its "dead cities" has also been the center of major destruction. So far, damages have also been reported in the villages of Kafr Nubbel, Ain Larose, Al-Bara, and Deir Sunbel.

The civil occupation of archaeological areas has additionally led to the progressive destruction of monuments, mostly through the reuse of archaeological material in the construction of new houses, but also through active degradation. The latter is exemplified by the case of the Roman temple of El Dumaier where graffiti has been found on the wall. The same issue has been witnessed at Bosra where some walls now carry traces of paint. In the province of Der'a, civil occupation of the area led to the reuse of blocks from sites such as Tell 'Ashari, Tell Umm Hauran, Tafas, Da'al, Sahm el-Golan, and the ancient city of Matta'iya(PAS). Around Quneitra, the local government has allowed the construction of new buildings in protected patrimonial areas. This seems to also be the case at sites such as Tell'Ashara (Terka), Jabal Wastani, Sheikh Hamad, Sura, and Sheikh Hassan.

What is being done to protect Syria's heritage?

The unrest in Syria has lasted for more than a year now. Quickly after the first protests, the first damage to Syria's cultural heritage was witnessed: local people using ancient stones to build their houses, the military digging archaeological sites to protect their tanks, fights in Homs and Hama destroying the cities culture. It is still unclear in which context some of the damage is carried out. It is ultimately the responsibility of the Syrian government and the DGAM to protect its heritage against any kind of destruction. Several institutions have raised their concerns about the apparent disregard of the Syrian government to this destruction. Recent UNESCO talks in Bamako raised concerns about the situation in Syria and mentioned the possibility of sending a team of experts into sites such as the Krak des Chevaliers, Salah ed-Din Crusader castles, and Palmyra.

INTERPOL also sent a "call for vigilance on looting of ancient mosaics in Syria," aiming to recover a number a mosaics stolen from Afamya. This, therefore, suggests that the international pressure in Syria is increasing and will hopefully soon lead to a concrete effort made towards the protection of the Syrian patrimony and the common cultural heritage of humanity.

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17.9.6: Cultural heritage at risk- Cambodia

by SAFE (SAVING ANTIQUITIES FOR EVERYONE)

from our partner SAFE SAVING ANTIQUITIES FOR EVERYONE



Figure 17.9.6.1: Prasat Bram temple, Koh Ker, Cambodia (photo: **BluesyPete**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Cambodia contains within its modern borders innumerable archeological sites documenting more than 6,000 years of human habitation. Known sites cover the entire span of Southeast Asian history. They range from Paleolithic rock shelters, to open-air village sites that document the adoption of agriculture, bronze and iron metallurgy, to the formation of the earliest historic states which began to connect Cambodia to the world, and to the rise and fall of the Khmer empire that controlled much of mainland Southeast Asia from the 9th century to the early 15th century C.E.

This collective cultural heritage is seen as a source of national pride by most Khmer, especially when international collaborative projects can thoroughly excavate and document a site and share the findings with local communities and the world. In regards to the numerous examples of historic period monumental architecture that dot the countryside, those of the UNESCO World Heritage list such as **Angkor Archaeological Park** have become a great source of revenue thanks to mass tourism.

By the end of 2012, according to the **Tourism Cambodia**, Cambodia had received in excess of 3.5 million tourists, a figure that increased during each of the five years covered by the last MOU. Such tourism has proven to be a great source of economic revenue, but is also a primary factor fueling the looting of archeological sites to feed Cambodia's continuing illicit antiquities trade.

What is at stake for Cambodia?

Many archeological sites, especially prehistoric cemeteries, remain undiscovered or improperly documented and thus vulnerable. Many smaller temple sites dating to the time of Angkor Wat's construction (c. 12th century C.E.) and before also remain unexcavated, unmapped, and poorly known, although Cambodian governmental authorities such as **APSARA**, as well as established NGOs such as **Centre for Khmer Studies**, **Heritage Watch**, and the **Memot Centre**, have been doing their best to document and excavate or salvage as many sites as possible.

Despite these efforts, some historic period Khmer temple sites, especially smaller or more remote complexes (e.g. **Preah Khan**

Kampong Svay, **Koh Ker**), have suffered recent looting or remain at risk. The ornate sculpture and statuary sites, such as these, are part of an art historical corpus that collectively covers every stylistic phase of the Khmer Empire as well as the precursor states of **Funan and Chenla**. Losing them to further looting and trafficking would do irreparable harm to future research.

Late prehistoric burial mounds (Iron Age, c. 500 BC-500 C.E.) are discovered underneath village houses and gardens and looted before they can be recorded (e.g. Prohear in Prey Veng Province, and Phum Snay and Phum Sophy in Banteay Meanchey and Badtambang Provinces). Even Bronze Age to early Iron Age (c. mid-1st millennium B.C.) "circular earthwork" sites, such as **Memot** and Krek 52/62 (in the "Red Earth" region of Kampong Cham province), have fallen prey to unplanned development.

Although multimedia awareness campaigns administrated by internationally collaborative NGOs and increasing action by Cambodian archeological, museum, and governmental authorities continues, it remains a race against time to discover and document archeological sites before looting occurs. The fundamental issue remains: how to balance the needs of local communities for stable, licit incomes (to which archeological tourism can contribute) with the need to preserve intact sites, excavate them when possible, and share new discoveries with diverse stakeholders.

For more information on what categories of artifacts are looted from Cambodia's prehistoric and historic archeological sites, please consult the **ICOM "Red List."**

The U.S. market demand for antiquities

Looting in Cambodia is fueled by the high demand for Asian antiquities on the global market. According to **Sotheby's** website, 189 pieces of Cambodian origin have sold for more than $100,000 (U.S.) in the last few years. Some pieces can even fetch much higher prices. For example, during Sotheby's 2012 March sale of Indian and Southeast Asian Art in New York, a statue of the goddess Uma, carved from polished brown sandstone and dating to the Baphuon period c. 11th century C.E. **(lot 249)**, was sold for $530,000 (U.S.), while another Baphuon brown sandstone sculpture of Uma sold at **Christie's (lot 63)** on September 23rd, 2004 for $1,127,500 (U.S.).

Legal and public relations battles between the Cambodian government and Sotheby's auction house continue over the fate of a c. 10th century C.E. statue from remote Koh Ker. Many pieces present on the art market, especially prehistoric artifacts, do not have a clear provenience, first surfacing no earlier than the mid-1980's. According to **Davis (2011)**, approximately 80% of the 345 pieces of Cambodian origin that appeared at auction between 1988 and 1995 had no published provenience. Despite increasing scrutiny, auction houses both large and small tend to prefer "business as usual" if it is considered feasible or profitable.

What is Cambodia doing to protect its heritage?

Even though the Cambodian government has limited financial means to help protect its heritage, it is still making laudable efforts to safeguard major sites outside of the Angkorian complex. The **APSARA** authority and their international colleagues have been leading the effort to create a national database of all historic period monumental architecture sites, whether associated with Angkor or not. Furthermore, permission for all new archeological excavation or restoration projects must come from them.

Nevertheless, Cambodia has some legal means already in place that can help to stem the flow of antiquities when consistently applied. In 1996, Cambodia's **Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage** was enacted. This allows for a Cambodian artifact to be returned to the country if there is evidence proving that it was in Cambodia after 1996. Furthermore, Cambodia has ratified the 1970 **UNESCO "Convention on the means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property"** and the 1995 **"Unidroit Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects."** These conventions provide the principal means through which signatory states can cooperate in an effort combat the illicit trade in antiquities and thus diminish the loss of cultural heritage globally.

For ten years Cambodia and the United States have held a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding cultural property. When fully enforced in both Cambodia and the U.S., it permits only those artifacts with a valid export license from the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts to enter the United States. The MOU also facilitates the prosecution of offenders and provides a strong legal foundation for repatriation claims involving U.S. public and private institutions.

Thankfully, the MOU with the United States was amended and extended for an additional five years, effective September 19, 2013; however, this does not mean Cambodia's heritage is no longer at risk.

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17.9.7: Cultural heritage at risk- United States

by SAFE (SAVING ANTIQUITIES FOR EVERYONE)

from our partner SAFE SAVING ANTIQUITIES FOR EVERYONE

The United States experiences unique challenges with the looting of archaeological sites. Objects of cultural heritage, unless discovered on federal or tribal land, belong to the landowner. Federal lands are too vast to be closely monitored by the limited number of government officials. Therefore, the government's successful prosecution of looters and prohibition of the black market is very challenging.



Figure 17.9.7.1: Artifacts illegally excavated from a prehistoric Native American site on a Southern Illinois National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) were seized by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. (**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**)

Ongoing collaborations between museum staff, the public, academia, and archaeologists have slowed the rate of looting. Still, sobering statistics indicate that it remains a substantial problem. Over 90% of known American Indian archaeological sites have already been destroyed or negatively affected by looters, and this process is **ongoing**. Further work is critical to prevent any more irreparable damage to our past.

What is at stake for the United States?

United States archaeological sites contain artifacts that are in some cases more than 14,000 years old. These sites tell a fascinating story of human history on the continent, from the origins of agriculture (**Poverty Point, Louisiana**) to Native American diversification, innovation, conflict, and European contact. Critical research on these topics is ongoing.

The **Poverty Point** site shows evidence of early experimentation with fired clay pottery. The **Adena** and Hopewell sites (Ohio River Valley, c. 1000 BCE–500 C.E.) are associated with elaborate grave goods and soft pottery. **Cahokia Mounds** (c. 800 C.E.) is a Mississippian center containing the largest pyramid built north of Mexico. Numerous burials found on this site reflect the complex social hierarchies and community structures that were in existence in those chiefdoms. In the southwest, most communities in early prehistory were small and widely scattered, with different styles of dwellings, ceramics, and subsistence practices revolving around the farming of corn, beans, squash, cotton, and other wild or semi-cultivated foods. **Chaco Canyon** (c. 900 CE) is a region in northwest New Mexico that contains several of the best examples of the "Puebloan" cliff-dwellings. Settlements here had populations rivaling those of today's small towns.



Figure 17.9.7.7: Chaco Culture National Historic Park, New Mexico (photo: **Steven C. Price**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Thanks to heightened public awareness and state and federal funding, large complexes such as Cahokia and Chaco Canyon are being preserved. However, such preservation efforts are limited to a small number of sites. Because most prehistoric and historic Native Americans lived in small, dispersed communities, looters take advantage of the small, remote sites if protective measures are not in place. Additionally, archaeological sites are frequently damaged to clear lands for agricultural or development projects.

By 1988, around 90% of known sites in the Four Corners (Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico) had been looted or vandalized. Most federal lands have not been surveyed (The National Park Service has surveyed only 10% of its 5.29 million acres). The small number of staff at most federal sites makes it difficult to devote a significant amount of time to patrolling and securing archaeological sites.

United States cultural heritage endangered

Looting and vandalism of archaeological sites has persisted throughout recent history. Between 1980 and 1987, for example, the Navajo Reservation saw a dramatic increase in vandalism and looting of archaeological materials. Between 1996 and 2005, there was an annual average of 791 incidents reported, but on annual average **only 111 were solved or had the perpetrators prosecuted**. Many Native American archaeological and ethnographic objects are sold in Europe, Japan, and Saudi Arabia through auctions that **force Native Americans to participate in bidding to buy back their own cultural heritage**.

Vandalism of rock art is also a growing concern. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is searching for the culprits that **vandalized ancient Native American rock art located in the desert on the west side of Utah Lake**.

Civil War era materials are also being illegally excavated. Bottle diggers scour outhouses of old frontier towns, and, in some extreme cases, people have **robbed Civil War soldiers' graves to steal human remains**.

Market demand for U.S. antiquities

Native American artifacts, as well as contemporary artworks made by Native Americans, have been receiving more attention in the art and cultural property world. For example, the **Santa Fe Indian Market** has been growing in size and reputation; major museums like the **Peabody Essex Museum** and MFA Boston mounted Native American Art exhibitions or renovated galleries; **Sotheby's May 21 Arts of the American West auction** fetched a total of $2,963,943; and **Christie's 2011 Native American Art auction** reached a total sales volume of $1,116,187.

The international market has also turned its eye to Native American objects. In 2013, for example, French auction house Néret-Minet Tessier & Sarrou sold seventy artifacts for €930,000. Another known market price for Native American objects comes from the case of Pierre Servan-Schreiber, the Hopi tribe's French lawyer, **who bought a Hopi item for €13,000** from the EVE auctioneers in France with the intention of returning it to the tribe. The Annenberg Foundation also purchased twenty-four Native

American objects for $530,000.

Yet an increase in market demand also means a potential increase in the sales of suspiciously acquired artifacts. For example, in November 2013, **Skinner auction house pulled a Lakota object called "Sioux Beaded and Quilled hide Shirt"** right before the auction started because the object might have belonged to a Lakota leader named Little Thunder. His descendants in the Rosebud reservation in South Dakota questioned the legitimacy of its ownership. The shirt was estimated to sell for $150,000-250,000.

What is the U.S. doing to protect its cultural heritage?

Some scholars comment that the U.S. Congress has been reluctant to enact broad-based cultural property protection measures. Numerous federal legislations, however, do exist with regards to specific problems. (See Kaufman, R.S. *Art Law Handbook*. Gaithersburg: Aspen Law & Business, 2000, especially p. 394-395).

The Antiquities Act of 1906 (16 U.S.C. §§ 431-33m) authorizes the penalization of anyone who destroys or damages historic ruins on public lands, or excavates ruins, monuments, or antiquities on lands owned or controlled by the federal government. This was later supplemented by the **Archaeological Resources and Protection Act of 1979** (16 U.S.C. §§ 470aa-mm), which specifically protects archaeological resources on public or Indian land from sale, exchange, or transport without proper permission.

The **National Environmental Policy Act of 1969** (42 U.S.C. § 4321-70a) requires the government to use "all practicable means and measures" to preserve important historical and cultural sites.

The **Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act** of 1991 (NAGPRA) (25 U.S.C. §§ 3001-3013) further addresses specific Native American cultural property concerns. NAGPRA required museums receiving federal funds and other federal institutions to inventory any American Indian human remains, funerary objects, or sacred items. Descendants or related tribes hold the right to decide whether items should be returned to the tribe, reburied, or held in the collections long-term. Under NAGPRA, anyone who is found guilty of illegal trafficking of these items can be sentenced with judicial penalties. This legislation has helped to discourage the removal of objects and human remains.

Most significantly, in 1983, the U.S. signed into law the **Cultural Property Implementation Act (CPIA)**. This is an implementation of the 1970 UNESCO Convention in the context of the United States and its cultural property importation policies. Under this legislation, the U.S. can enter bilateral or multilateral agreements with other State Parties to the 1970 UNESCO Convention, or impose emergency import restrictions, provided that a State Party requests it.

The National Stolen Property Act (NSPA) has been relevant to the import restriction of suspicious items and criminal punishment of illegal importers. It provides that "[w]hosoever transports, transmits, or transfers in interstate or foreign commerce any goods, wares, merchandise . . . of the value of $5,000 ore more, knowing the same to have been stolen, converted or taken by fraud . . . shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than ten years or both."

The **National Historic Preservation Act** (16 U.S.C. §§ 470a to 470w-6) is one of the most systematic programs of historic preservation. It established various Historic Preservation Offices, which create inventories of archaeological and historic properties.

Some states, like Arkansas, have created their own programs to spread awareness of the issues to the general public. As of 2013, over 700 citizens belonged to the Arkansas archaeological Society, each having participated in the **Arkansas Archaeological Survey Training Program** in which members of the public learn excavation techniques and ethical issues in American archaeology. Other state branches of the National Park Service, such as the one in **South Dakota**, have implemented awareness and stewardship programs and telephone hotlines in an attempt to enlist citizens as site stewards.

Federal and state laws and programs are taking steps in the right direction toward public awareness and criminal prosecution of looters, but more work is needed to continue to document and protect what remains.

Other efforts to protect the United States' cultural heritage

The National Park Service provides information and education on looting prevention and historic site preservation. Its **archaeology Program page** is a goldmine of resources. It also runs **the National Center for Preservation Technology and**

Training (NCPTT), which advances the application of science and technology to historic preservation in the fields of archaeology, architecture, landscape architecture, and materials conservation.

SAFE has been working on **promoting public awareness** on the dangers of archaeological looting in the United States. **Various blog posts** by archaeologists provide insights into the current state of looting in the United States.

The **Archaeological Institute of America (AIA)** has implemented a **Site Preservation Program**, which focuses on grant giving, recognition, and public outreach. It has also been involved in shaping a better understanding of archaeological ethics among the public by, for example, **speaking out against treasure hunting TV shows** that might promote looting and destruction of archaeological sites.

Other professional archaeological organizations include the **Society for American Archaeology (SAA)**, which promotes **archaeological ethics** and participates in CPAC testimonies, and the **Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA)**, which promotes scholarly research and the dissemination of knowledge concerning historical archaeology.

United States' response to international cultural heritage problems

The United States has historically favored free imports of cultural property, acknowledging that exchanges enhance knowledge of the civilizations and enrich the cultural lives of all people. But import restrictions are sometimes legislated under certain political embargoes or limit the trade on stolen works of cultural property.

The Cultural Property Advisory Committee (CPAC) assists the U.S. and foreign governments in evaluating foreign countries' requests for bilateral agreements to establish import restrictions. CPAC consists of eleven members, who include individuals from the fields of archaeology, anthropology, ethnology, and museums.

A number of federal agencies contribute to the enforcement of the treaties, laws, and restrictions regarding cultural heritage, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)'s Art Crime Team, which coordinates with international law enforcement agencies like INTERPOL. See a more detailed discussion **here**.

In addition, the United States enters into bilateral agreements with several nations to prevent the importation of those nations' cultural heritage—a further explanation about which can be read **here**.

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17.9.8: The unintended consequences of UNESCO world heritage listing

by ***CHLOÉ MAUREL***



Figure 17.9.8.1: UNESCO-listed heritage site Machu Picchu attracts around 1,000 tourists a day (photo: **Rodrigo Argenton/Wikipedia**, **CC BY-NC)**

Chloé Maurel, ***Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS)***

The principle of **world heritage** promoted by UNESCO is of crucial importance at a time when tourism has become a global phenomenon, involving more than a billion people and generating an annual revenue of nearly **US$1245 billion** in 2014.

With the 1972 **Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage**, UNESCO created the list of sites thought to be of exceptional value. While listing does not automatically lead to funding for the protection of listed sites, and although **UNESCO is powerless** to stop them being destroyed or damaged (like the **Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan**, destroyed by the Taliban in 2001, or the **Temple of Baal** in Palmyra, Syria, demolished in 2015), **the list of world heritage sites** remains a key element of UNESCO's work, and what it is best known for by the general public.

UNESCO world heritage listing confers prestige. It is sought after by countries wishing to promote their historical and natural assets, and gives them a place on the world stage.

Tangible, intangible and documentary heritage

The list of world heritage sites now comprises more than 1,000 sites. Another, **the intangible cultural heritage list**, was created in 2003 to catalogue practices, traditions, dances, customs and know-how, rather than physical sites. In part, its purpose is to redress the obvious asymmetry in the first list, which contains an overwhelming majority of European sites, while Africa is drastically underrepresented. Moreover, listed sites in Africa are mostly "natural" heritage sites, while Europe has a surfeit of "cultural" sites, such a churches and castles, that are already highly valued and do not necessarily require further protection.

In 1995, UNESCO also created a register called **The Memory of the World**, listing significant and sometimes endangered or fragile artefacts of human documentary heritage, such as the **Bayeux tapestry**.

It would be easy to assume that these initiatives unite people in a common effort to protect shared cultural heritage. In fact, they often spark **power struggles** and rivalries, or even open conflict, demonstrating that the principle of heritage **can be appropriated** for financial, political or geopolitical ends.

The most striking example is the conflict between Japan and China following Japan's recent request to have **333 letters from second world war kamikaze pilots** included in The Memory of the Word registry. These goodbye letters, written by pilots to their families before their final attack, often reflect their pride in fighting for what was then a racist and imperialist regime, allied with Nazi Germany.

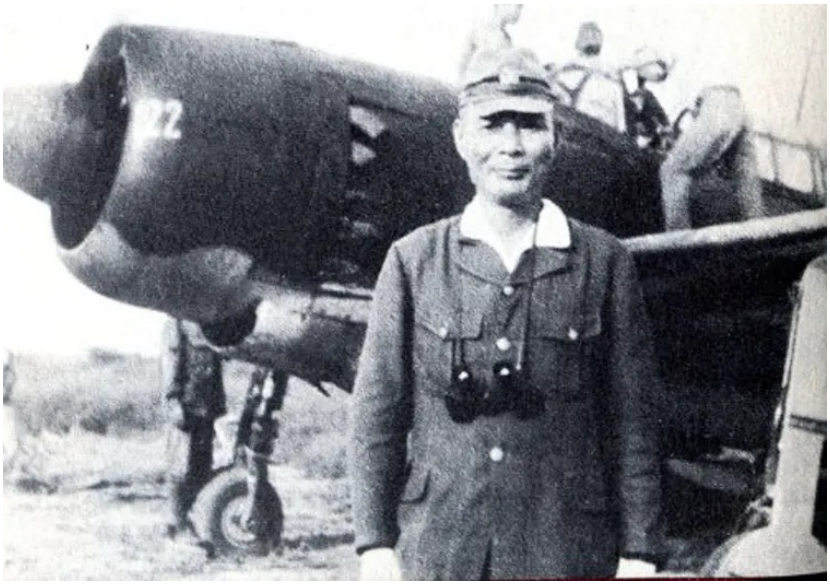


Figure \({17{.}9{.}8{.}\eatSpaces{2\): Japanese kamikaze pilot Ugaki Matome before his final mission

China objected and in turn asked for, and was granted, the inclusion of a **set of documents pertaining to the 1937 Nanjing massacre**, carried out by Japanese forces, which reportedly claimed 300,000 Chinese lives. This is a clear example of the listing being used as an extension of hostile relations between China and Japan, whose memories of the second world war are still a sensitive subject.

Mass tourism at listed sites

Several cases illustrate the problematic nature of UNESCO's heritage protection measures. Very often, the principle of world cultural heritage is diverted from its official purpose and used to promote tourism, or for political and economic reasons. In his study of UNESCO's heritage policies, anthropologist David Berliner speaks of the "Unescoization" of the small heritage listed city of **Luang Prabang in Laos**. He demonstrates that one of the contradictory consequences of UNESCO protection is intense tourism development.The development of tourism **has idealised traditions**, which are being staged, sometimes inaccurately in Luang Prabang. Historical events, such as those of the Vietnam War and the colonial era are completely neglected.



Figure Extra close brace or missing open brace : Luang Prabang in Laos has seen intense tourism development (photo: **Kolibri5/ pixabay, public domain)**

Heritage listing can also have adverse consequences, as has often been the case in Africa. Saskia Cousin and Jean-Luc Martineau studied how customs and traditions can be exploited following their appearance on the list of world heritage sites. In their study of **Nigeria's "Sacred Grove" in Osun-Osogbo**, they demonstrated that lobbying, combined with political and economic interests, played a central role in its 2005 listing.

In this particular instance, it was politically desirable to attribute historical depth to the new capital of the state of Osun, in order to compete with the rich past of its rival city, Ife.

The inclusion of the Sacred Grove of Osun-Osogbo on the World Heritage list is the result of nearly 15 years of efforts on the part of Osun state to give itself cultural and historical legitimacy.



Figure 17.9.8.4: The Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove in Nigeria was listed in 2005 (photo: **Alex Mazzetto, CC BY-SA 3.0)**

Negative outcomes for local populations

Prestigious as it is, the list of world heritage sites can also negatively affect sections of the local population. In Panama City, **the 1997 listing of the historic Casco Viejo neighbourhood** relegated its poorest inhabitants to the city limits. Meanwhile, the

central district became a tourist attraction.

At the time, the Casco Viejo was a run-down neighbourhood. It underwent a radical **transformation**, resulting in the brutal eviction of people from the poorer classes, whose windows were boarded in attempts to force them out while the surrounding neighbourhood was restored and gentrified.

It is now largely inhabited by rich foreigners who buy up the best colonial buildings to sell off in parcels. Tourism in Panama City has increased exponentially since the heritage listing, homogenising the urban landscape and exacerbating inequalities.



Figure 17.9.8.13: The Casco Viejo, once a poor area of Panama city, has been cleaned up, redeveloped and preserved to attract tourists (photo: **Pilar Berguido/flickr**, **CC BY-SA)**

These examples show how issues of heritage are closely linked to economic, social and political issues, and result in power disparities. Given the disproportionate role of officials and experts from Western countries in UNESCO's heritage work, the organisation could be accused of imposing a Western vision of heritage on countries in the Global South.

In spite of these imperfections, we should commend UNESCO on its efforts to preserve our world heritage. But the visible imbalance in the list of sites simply reflects the economic, social and cultural inequalities of the North-South divide. These must urgently be addressed.

Translated from the French by Alice Heathwood for **Fast for Word**.

by Chloé Maurel (CC BY-ND 4.0)

This article was originally published on **The Conversation**.

THE CONVERSATION

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17.10: WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

17.10.1: What can be done to protect cultural heritage?

17.10.2: Organizations and agencies that work to protect cultural heritage

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17.10.1: What can be done to protect cultural heritage?

by DR. STEPHENNIE MULDER



Figure 17.10.1.1: Deputy Director Abdoulaye Cisse shows a burnt manuscript at the Institut des Hautes Etudes et de Recherche Islamiques Ahmed Baba in Timbuktu, North of Mali. Thousands of manuscripts were destroyed by jihadists during the occupation, and many were hidden and saved at the Institute or by owners. Timbuktu, December 05, 2013 (photo: **MINUSMA/Marco Dormino**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0). The **Hill Museum and Manuscript Library** is working to digitally preserve the manuscripts that were not destroyed.

The current "crisis" in cultural heritage is **not a sudden development** but an ongoing, complex, global problem with many causes. While it may seem simple to catch and punish perpetrators for crimes related to antiquities trafficking and destruction, in fact a lack of public understanding of the problems associated with these crimes and limited heritage-related law enforcement capacity in many countries has meant that antiquities destruction and trafficking is less likely to be prosecuted than other criminal activities (despite clear links to terrorism, international crime, money laundering, and trafficking). But there are many things that can be done on the local level to support heritage workers and caretakers and protect heritage, and there are a number of organizations that are working hard to ensure that this occurs. There are many ways that you can help.

Demand is the driver for looting and destruction

Many people are surprised to learn that legislation to protect antiquities is relatively weak or, in some cases, non-existent. Working to support and strengthen heritage protection legislation both locally and nationally, particularly when heritage is threatened by urban development or resource extraction, is one key way that ordinary citizens can contribute. There are some signs that wartime destruction is now coming under closer legal scrutiny, but most trafficked objects don't come from wartime contexts.

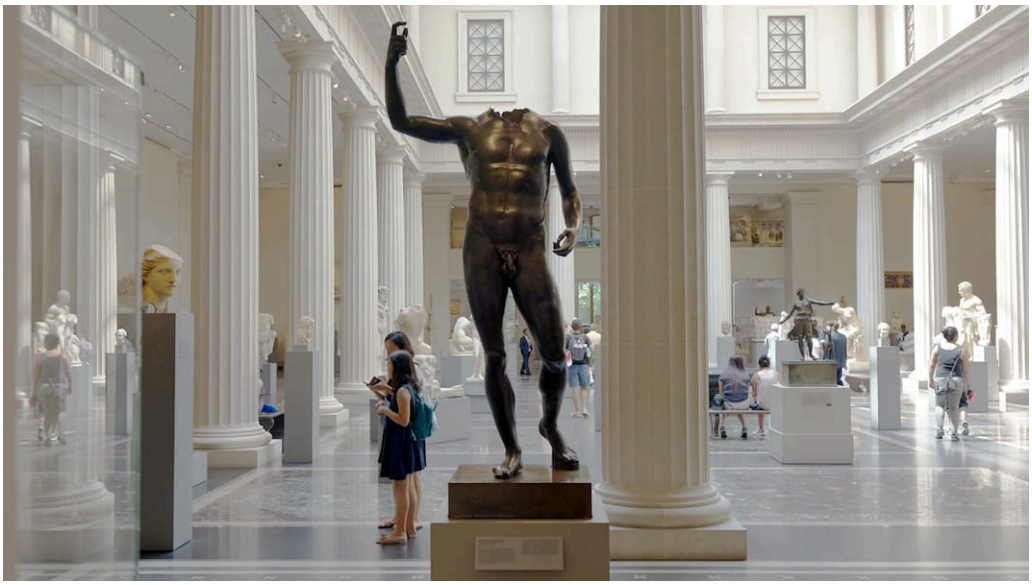


Figure 17.10.1.2 : **Bronze statue of a nude male figure**, Greek or Roman, Hellenistic or Imperial, c. 200 B.C.E. – c. 200 C.E. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art). This sculpture was likely **looted from a site in Turkey**.

One of the best ways for people to help save heritage is to remember that **demand is the driver** for looting and destruction. Governments can work to craft better legislation, prioritize better enforcement, greater funding, and vigorous prosecution for violators, but as long as there is a viable market for recently-looted antiquities, they will appear on the market. Unfortunately, the vast majority of objects sold online are **looted or fake**. It's important to remember that smaller items like **coins**, pots, beads, or small statuary are often easiest to traffic and easiest to sell without a record of provenance (or origin), or with a faked record of provenance. For an object to be legally sold, it cannot have been recently looted and must have been in a private collection for a certain amount of time. You can find a helpful checklist **here**.

Incorporate the consequences of the global antiquities trade into curriculum

Education is another key way to fight destruction and looting. Many ordinary people are unaware of the threat to cultural heritage and thus, are not aware that there is a problem at all. One of the most important ways to address the problem of the ongoing loss of global heritage is to incorporate education about the costs and consequences of global antiquities trade into school curricula and university syllabi or through local outreach in community organizations, libraries, churches, or other public settings. At the secondary school or university level, cultural heritage awareness can be integrated into existing curricula in fields like Anthropology, Archaeology, Art History, Ethics, History, International Affairs, Law, and Political Science. Journalists also play a key role in spreading knowledge and awareness of what we all lose when heritage is destroyed or trafficked. If you are not sure where to begin, **SAFE (Saving Antiquities for Everyone)** has a wealth of resources available on their website to get you started.

When thinking about education, one problem is that the framing of heritage as a "global" or "universal" concern, while useful in many contexts, also has a significant drawback in that it can be invoked to insulate owners from the claims of source cultures. Nevertheless, the idea of "universal" heritage is commonly used by groups like UNESCO and others, and it has played a key role in the crafting of important **international heritage protection legislation**. Indeed, the creation of what we might call "heritage consciousness" in the global community is without question an important achievement.

Universal and local value

Some observers have pointed out that the heritage often designated as "universal" in the popular consciousness—and thus to receive the most attention when destroyed—tends to be the heritage of the ancient Classical Mediterranean or heritage associated with curated museum contexts. Meanwhile, other forms of heritage—for example currently inhabited sites of local significance or actively venerated religious locales—remain forgotten and unprotected.



Figure 17.10.1.3

The different responses to the destruction of the statues in the Mosul museum by ISIS or the Temple of Bel in Palmyra in 2014 and 2015, where both events gained worldwide headlines, versus the destruction of **dozens of local mosques**, churches, **synagogues** and other holy sites in Iraq and Syria, which received only minimal media coverage, brings this comparison into stark relief. Another recent example of this unequal extension of the notion of "universal" heritage is the nearly non-existent media coverage of the destruction of heritage-rich **Yemen** by a U.S. and British-backed Saudi campaign. Most outsiders are unaware of the war in Yemen at all, let alone its devastating consequences for antiquities.

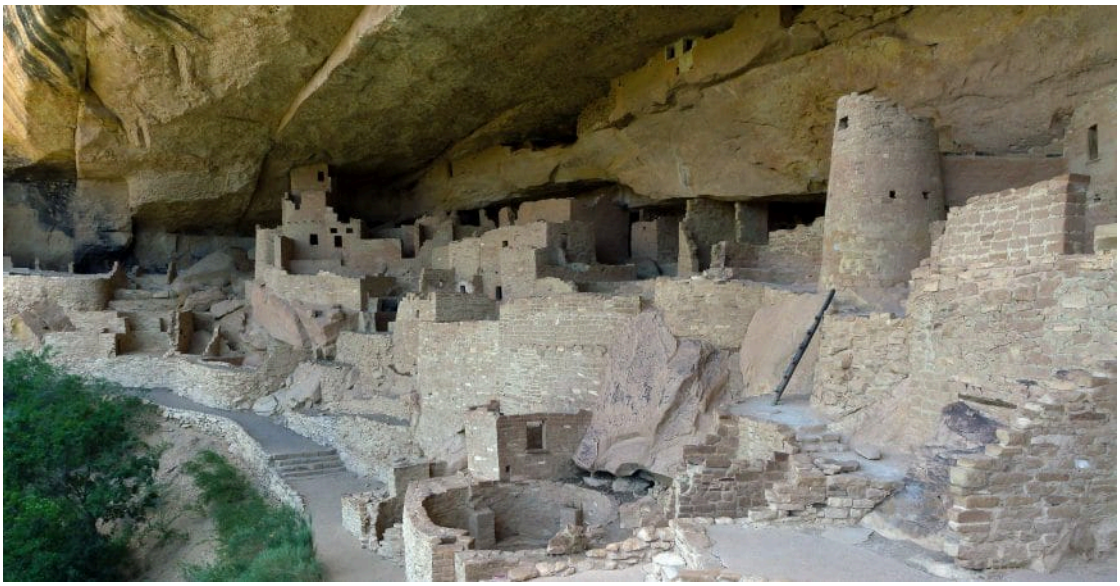


Figure 17.10.1.4 : Ancestral Puebloan remains and grave goods were recently reburied at **Mesa Verde National Park**, a result of NAGPRA, The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Cliff Palace, Ancestral Puebloan, 450–1300 C.E., sandstone, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado (photo: **yashima**, CC: BY-SA 2.0)

Some observers have pointed out that ISIS specifically made the analogy between their destruction of sites of "idol worshiping" (in the form of tombs and shrines), and museums and ancient sites—which it specifically called the heritage "idols" of the West. A similar argument was made by the Taliban in 2001, when they destroyed the **Bamiyan Buddhas** in Afghanistan, and by Islamist rebels in Mali, who, after destroying the tombs of Islamic Sufi saints in 2012, declared "There is no world heritage, it does not exist!" Such statements show that there are real limits to the notion of universal heritage and demonstrate that the idea of "universal heritage" can itself can be turned into a weapon.

Focus on the local

Furthermore, most looting and destruction occurs outside of wartime contexts and is focused on material that often has greater *local* significance than "universal" significance. It's important to recognize that if the goal of cultural heritage protection is to preserve the objects and places that give peoples' lives meaning and which connect them to their histories and heritage, protecting sites that are meaningful for local people is as critical as protecting famous, museum-worthy ancient sites.

While we should not abandon the idea of universal heritage altogether, a deeper emphasis on ongoing looting and destruction

that occurs outside of wartime contexts would be a step in the right direction (for example, during natural disasters or as a result of resource extraction, urban development, or simple poverty). An emphasis on the value of local heritage—supported and maintained by local people with international assistance—would be similarly beneficial. Fortunately there are organizations working to do just that.

There are a number of organizations that work to raise awareness and gather information to support cultural heritage protection on the local and the international level. Some, like **Eamena** and the **ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives**, work to track looting and gather information via satellite and other forms of reporting with an eye toward future prosecution. Others, such as **Heritage for Peace**, the **U.S. Committee of the Blue Shield**, or the **World Monuments Fund**, work with governments or other entities to alert them to dangers and to craft heritage protection legislation. And several organizations, including the **Penn Cultural Heritage Center** and the **Follow the Pots Project** work to support local people and educate locally and internationally to help support and preserve culture.

Additional Resources:

Neil Brodie, “It is no surprise that the looting continues,” Saving Antiquities for Everyone, August 6, 2013.

Sarah Zhang, What It’s Like to Evacuate a Museum in a Natural Disaster, *The Atlantic*, December 14, 2017.

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17.10.2: Organizations and agencies that work to protect cultural heritage

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER



Figure 17.10.2.5: Inverse-Face Beaker, 10th-11th century, Sicán (Lambayeque), Peru, gold, 20 x 18.1 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

What can I do to help preserve and protect cultural heritage?

When confronted with the latest news about the destruction of cultural heritage or the latest update about a trafficking case or a questionable auction, it is easy to feel helpless and to think that the task is insurmountable if the goal is to protect and preserve cultural heritage both for the present and for posterity. Armed with information, however, each individual can become a powerful advocate in promoting a safer environment for cultural heritage and cultural property.

In addition to staying informed through study, following this curriculum, for instance, there are other paths that one can take to make a difference where cultural heritage protection is concerned. One route is to uphold best practices when visiting sites and museums, endeavoring to leave heritage sites and museums in the best condition possible for the future. This includes not removing artifacts from sites or damaging any in situ remains or museum displays.

Another route is to refuse to participate in any activities related to illicit trafficking, including online resale sites and questionable art auctions. Yet another route is to become a vocal advocate, interfacing with both governmental and non-governmental agencies that work on the behalf of culture. One can also support some of these organizations through membership and participation in outreach programs offered by some groups.

The heritage of past cultures does have a future, but it falls to each of us to make sure it is a secure future.

Organizations and agencies that work to protect cultural heritage and advocate on behalf of cultural heritage issues:

U.S. Committee of the Blue Shield

“The United States Committee of the Blue Shield was formed in 2006, in response to heritage catastrophes around the world … Blue Shield (International) and its affiliated national committees work together as the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross,

providing an emergency response to cultural property at risk from armed conflict and natural disasters."

UNESCO World Heritage Centre

"The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. This is embodied in an international treaty called the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 1972."

ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives

"The ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives implements cultural property protection by: Documenting damage; Promoting global awareness; Planning emergency and post-war responses."

Archaeological Institute of America

"The AIA promotes archaeological inquiry and public understanding of the material record of the human past to foster an appreciation of diverse cultures and our shared humanity. The AIA supports archaeologists, their research and its dissemination, and the ethical practice of archaeology. The AIA educates people of all ages about the significance of archaeological discovery and advocates the preservation of the world's archaeological heritage."

Society for American Archaeology

"The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) is an international organization dedicated to the research, interpretation, and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas."

SAFE (Saving Antiquities For Everyone)

SAFE is a volunteer group devoted to raising awareness of the world's endangered cultural heritage.

Association for the Protection of Afghan Archaeology (APAA)

"APAA seeks to develop a broad awareness and appreciation for Afghanistan's archaeological heritage, for the purpose of preserving cultural treasures to enhance national cultural identity as well as for the educational and financial benefit of current and future generations."

United States Department of State, Bureau of Educational And Cultural Affairs — Cultural Heritage Center

"The ancient and historic monuments, objects, and archaeological sites of the world enrich and inform today's societies, and help connect us to our cultural origins. The Department's Cultural Heritage Center specializes in the protection and preservation of these irreplaceable resources, working on many fronts to safeguard the patrimony of other countries"

Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (FAIC)

"The Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (FAIC) supports conservation education, research, and outreach activities that increase understanding of our global cultural heritage."

National NAGPRA

Art Loss Register

"The World's Largest Database of Stolen Art"

Law Enforcement Agencies

Federal Bureau of Investigation Art Crime Team

"Art and cultural property crime—which includes theft, fraud, looting, and trafficking across state and international lines—is a looming criminal enterprise with estimated losses in the billions of dollars annually. To recover these precious pieces—and to bring these criminals to justice—the FBI has a dedicated Art Crime Team of 16 special agents, supported by DOJ trial attorneys for prosecutions. The Bureau also runs the National Stolen Art File, a computerized index of reported stolen art and cultural properties for the use of law enforcement agencies across the world."

Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (Italy)

"The Carabinieri Headquarters for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (Comando Carabinieri Tutela Patrimonio Culturale – TPC) was instituted in 1969, one year prior to the UNESCO Paris Convention in 1970, whereby all UNESCO member States were invited to institute specific services with a view to protecting the cultural heritage of the individual nations."

Sources for art crime, illegal antiquities trafficking, looting

ARCA – Association for Research into Crimes against Art

http://www.artcrimeresearch.org/ and **http://art-crime.blogspot.com/**
"The Association for Research into Crimes against Art (ARCA) is a research and outreach organization which works to promote the study and research of art crime and cultural heritage protection. The Association seeks to identify emerging and under-examined trends related to the study of art crime and to develop strategies to advocate for the responsible stewardship of our collective artistic and archaeological heritage."

International Council of Museums (ICOM) Red List

"The Red Lists classify the endangered categories of archaeological objects or works of art in the most vulnerable areas of the world, in order to prevent them being sold or illegally exported."

Looting Matters (David Gill)

"Discussion of the archaeological ethics surrounding the collecting of antiquities and archaeological material."

Trafficking Culture

"Trafficking Culture is a research consortium that produces evidence-based research into the contemporary global trade in looted cultural objects."

Curriculum materials for learning and teaching about heritage issues

Smarthistory ARCHES (at risk cultural heritage education series)

"The At Risk Cultural Heritage Education Series (ARCHES) is a new Smarthistory learning resource for the study of at-risk cultural heritage, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities."

Donna Yates, Antiquities Trafficking and Art Crime (University of Glasgow)

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17.11: ARCHES advisors

ARCHES advisors

by SMARTHISTORY

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17.12: ARCHES BACKSTORIES ADDITIONAL ENDANGERED OBJECTS AND SITES

17.12.1: Temple of Portunus, Rome

17.12.2: Nasca Geoglyphs

17.12.3: Warka Vase

17.12.4: Cuneiform Tablets

17.12.5: Rock-Art Sites of Tadrart Acacus (Libya)

17.12.6: Benin plaque- Equestrian Oba and Attendants

17.12.7: Lamassu from the citadel of Sargon II

17.12.8: Capitoline Brutus

17.12.9: Thutmose, Model Bust of Queen Nefertiti

17.12.10: Otto Wagner, Postal Savings Bank

17.12.11: Bamiyan Buddhas

17.12.12: Aztec feathered headdress

17.12.13: Great Mosque of Djenné (Djenné peoples)

17.12.14: Mogao caves at Dunhuang

17.12.15: Machu Picchu

17.12.16: The Paracas Textile

17.12.17: Leonardo, Last Supper

17.12.18: The Taj Mahal

17.12.19: Saint Trophime, Arles

17.12.20: The Great Pyramids of Giza

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17.12.1: Temple of Portunus, Rome

by DR. JEFFREY A. BECKER

This small temple is a rare surviving example from the Roman Republic. It is both innovative and traditional.

YouTube Video

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

View this YouTube Video online

Temple of Portunus (or Fortuna Virilis), c. 75 B.C.E. (Roman Republic), tufa, travertine, concrete (Forum Boarium, Rome)

The Temple of Portunus is a well preserved late second or early first century B.C.E. rectangular temple in Rome, Italy. Its dedication to the God Portunus—a divinity associated with livestock, keys, and harbors—is fitting given the building's topographical position near the ancient river harbor of the city of Rome.



Figure 17.12.1.1: Temple of Portunus (formerly known as Fortuna Virilis), travertine, tufa, and stucco, c. 120-80 B.C.E., Rome

The city of Rome during its Republican phase was characterized, in part, by monumental architectural dedications made by leading, elite citizens, often in connection with key political or military accomplishments. Temples were a particularly popular choice in this category given their visibility and their utility for public events both sacred and secular.

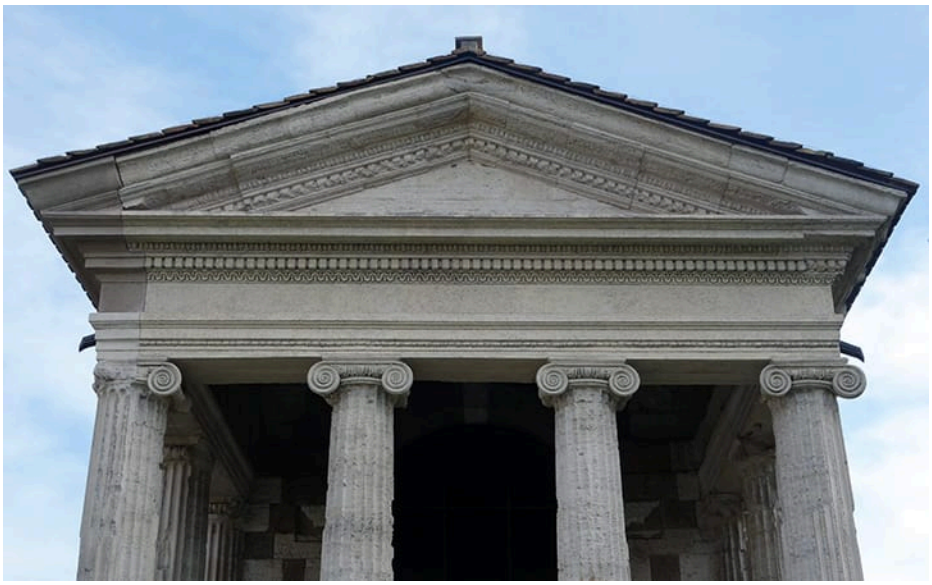


Figure 17.12.1.2: Temple of Portunus (formerly known as Fortuna Virilis), travertine, tufa, and stucco, c. 120-80 B.C.E., Rome

The Temple of Portunus is located adjacent to a circular temple of the Corinthian order, now attributed to Herakles Victor. The assignation of the Temple of Portunus has been debated by scholars, with some referring to the temple as belonging to Fortuna Virilis (an aspect of the God Fortuna). This is now a minority view. The festival in honor of Portunus (the Portunalia) was celebrated on 17 August.



Figure 17.12.1.3: Temple attributed to Herakles Victor, Forum Boarium, Rome, late 2nd century B.C.E.

The Temple's plan and construction

The temple has a rectangular footprint, measuring roughly 10.5 x 19 meters (36 x 62 Roman feet). Its plan may be referred to as pseudoperipteral, instead of a having a free-standing colonnade, or row of columns, on all four sides, the temple instead only has free-standing columns on its facade with engaged columns on its flanks and rear.

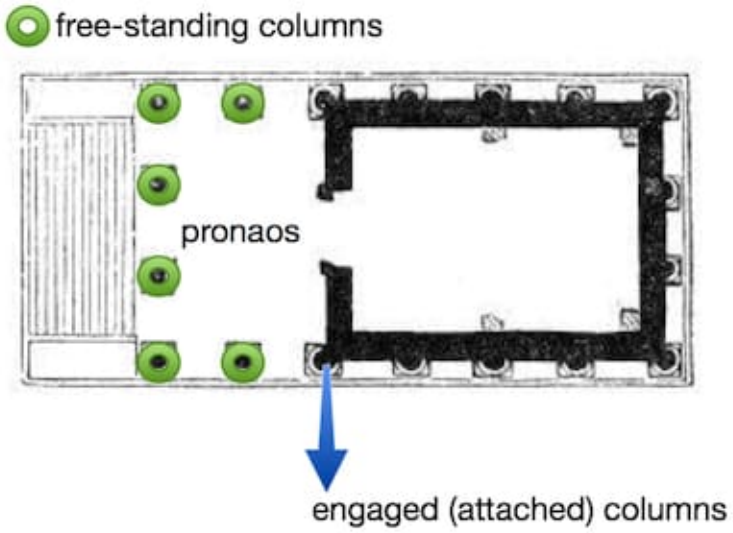


Figure 17.12.1.4: Plan, Temple of Portunus (Rome, c. 120-80 B.C.E.)

The pronoas (porch) of the temple supports an Ionic colonnade measuring four columns across by two columns deep, with the columns carved from travertine. The Ionic order can be most easily seen in the scroll-shaped capitals.There are five engaged columns on each side, and four across the back.

Overall the building has a composite structure, with both travertine and tufa being used for the superstructure (tufa is a type of stone consisting of consolidated volcanic ash, and travertine is a form of limestone). A stucco coating would have been applied to the tufa, giving it an appearance closer to that of the travertine.

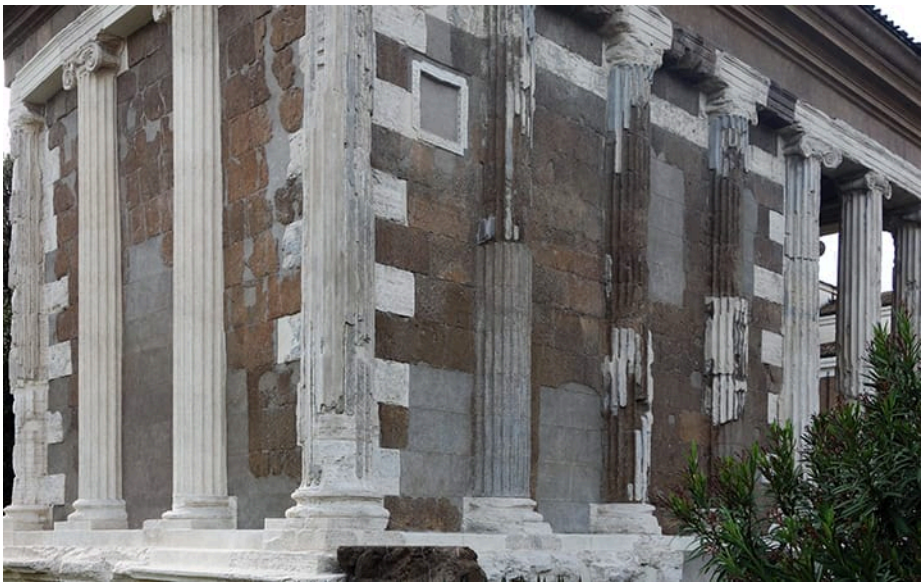


Figure 17.12.1.5: Engaged columns, Temple of Portunus (formerly known as Fortuna Virilis), travertine, tufa, and stucco, c. 120-80 B.C.E., Rome

The temple's design incorporates elements from several architectural traditions. From the Italic tradition it takes its high podium (one ascends stairs to enter the pronaos), and strong frontality. From Hellenistic architecture comes the Ionic order columns, the engaged pilasters and columns. The use of permanent building materials, stone (as opposed to the Italic custom of superstructures in wood, terracotta, and mudbrick), also reflects changing practices. The temple itself represents the changing realities and shifting cultural landscape of the Mediterranean world at the close of the first millennium B.C.E.

The temple of Portunus resides on the Forum Boarium, a public space that was the site of the primary harbor of Rome. While the temple of Portunus is a bit smaller than other temples in the Forum Boarium and the adjacent Forum Holitorium, it fits into a general typology of Late Republican temple building.



Figure 17.12.1.6: Temple of the Sibyl, Tivoli, c. 150-125 B.C.E. (photo: **LPLT**)

The temple of Portunus finds perhaps its closest contemporary parallel in the Temple of the Sibyl at Tibur (modern Tivoli) which dates c. 150-125 B.C.E. The temple type embodied by the Temple of Portunus may also be found in Iulio-Claudian temple buildings such as the Maison Carrée at Nîmes in southern France.

Preservation and current state



Figure 17.12.1.15: Andrea Palladio, Temple of Fortuna Virilis, engraving from *The Four Books of Architecture*, London, Isaac Ware, 1738

The Temple of Portunus is obviously in an excellent state of preservation. In 872 C.E. the ancient temple was re-dedicated as a Christian shrine sacred to Santa Maria Egyziaca (Saint Mary of Egypt), leading to the preservation of the structure. The architecture has inspired many artists and architects over the centuries, including Andrea Palladio who studied the structure in the sixteenth century.

Neo-Classical architects were inspired by the form of the Temple of Portunus and it led to the construction of the Temple of Harmony, a folly in Somerset, England, dating to 1767 (below).

The Temple of Portunus is important not only for its well preserved architecture and the inspiration that architecture has fostered, but also as a reminder of what the built landscape of Rome was once like – dotted with temples large and small that became foci of a great deal of activity in the life of the city. Those temples that survive are reminders of that vibrancy as well as of the

architectural traditions of the Romans themselves.



Figure 17.12.1.7: The Temple of Harmony, 1767, Halswell House, Somserset, England

Backstory

The Temple of Portunus was put on the **World Monuments Watch list** in 2006. Overseen by the World Monuments Fund, this list highlights "cultural heritage sites around the world that are at risk from the forces of nature or the impact of social, political, and economic change," providing them with "an opportunity to attract visibility, raise public awareness, foster local engagement in their protection, leverage new resources for conservation, advance innovation, and demonstrate effective solutions."

Together with the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma and grants from private funders, the World Monuments Fund sponsored a restoration of the Temple of Portunus beginning in 2000. The temple had been partially restored and conservation measures put in place in the 1920s, but the activities undertaken in the last two decades utilized the latest technologies to complete a full restoration of the interior and exterior of the building. This included the cleaning and conservation of the frescoes, replacement of the roof (incorporating ancient roof tiles), anti-seismic measures, and the cleaning and restoration of the pediment, columns, and exterior walls. The newly-restored temple opened to the public in 2014.

The Temple of Portunus is one of the best-preserved examples of Roman Republican architecture, and efforts like those of the World Monuments Fund are ensuring that it continues to survive intact.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Additional resources:

World Monuments Fund: Temple of Portunus

F. Coarelli, Il Foro Boario dalle origini alla fine della repubblica (Rome: Ed. Quasar, 1988).

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A. Ziółkowski, The temples of Mid-Republican Rome and their historical and topographical context (Rome: "L'Erma" di

Bretschneider, 1992).

Temple of Portunus, Soprintendenza Speciale per il Colosseo, il Museo Nazionale Romano e l'Area Archeologica di Roma

Video with photos of the restoration from the World Monuments Fund

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17.12.2: Nasca Geoglyphs

by **JAYNE YANTZ**



Figure 17.12.2.1: Hummingbird, Nasca Geoglyph, over 300 feet in length, formed approximately 2000 years ago (photo: **Diego Delso** , CC BY-SA 4.0)

Located in the desert on the South Coast of Peru, the Nasca Geoglyphs are among the world's largest drawings. Also referred to as the Nasca Lines, they are more accurately called geoglyphs, which are designs formed on the earth. Geoglyphs are usually constructed from strong natural material, such as stone, and are notably large in scale.

Imagine encountering such a drawing. The hummingbird measures over 300 feet in length, and is one of the most famous Nasca Geoglyphs. Among the other celebrated geoglyphs of mammals, birds and insects are a monkey, killer whale, spider, and condor. Various plants, geometric shapes (spirals, zigzag lines and trapezoids), abstract patterns, and intersecting lines fill the desert plain, known as the Pampa, an area covering approximately 200 square miles near the foothills of the Andes. The zoomorphic geoglyphs are the oldest and most esteemed. Each appears to have been made with a single continuous line.

Today it is believed that the geoglyphs were created by the Nasca people, whose culture flourished in Peru sometime between 1-700 C.E. They inhabited the river valleys of the Rio Grande de Nasca and the Ica Valley in the southern region of Peru, where they were able to farm, despite the desert environment—one of the driest regions in the world. The high Andes Mountains to the east prevent moisture from the Amazon from reaching the coast, so there is very little rainfall; water that does arrive, comes from mountain runoff.



Figure 17.12.2.2: Map showing the location of the Nasca geoglyphs, map © Google

The Nasca people are also famous for their polychrome pottery, which shares some of the same subjects that appear in the Nasca Geoglyphs. Remains of Nasca pottery left as offerings have been found in and near the geoglyphs, cementing the connection between the geoglyphs and the Nasca people. Because the quality of the ceramics produced in Nasca is very high, archaeologists deduce that specialists shaped and painted the pottery vessels. This suggests a society that, at its height, had a degree of wealth and a division of labor. However, the Nasca people had no writing. In cultures without writing, images often assume an increased level of importance. This may help explain why the Nasca came together to create vast images on the desert floor.



Figure 17.12.2.3: Double-Spout and Bridge Vessel, c. 100-700 C.E., Nasca, Peru, polychrome ceramic, 12.07 x 10.16 cm (Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

How were they made?

Since the Nasca geoglyphs are so large, it seems clear they were constructed by organized groups of people and that no single artist made them. The construction of the geoglyphs are thought to represent organized labor where a small group of individuals directed the design and creation of the lines, a process that may have strengthened the social unity of the community. Despite the impressive scale of the geoglyphs, these remarkable works did not require complex technology. Most geoglyphs were formed by removing weathered stones from the desert floor, stones that had developed a dark patina known as “desert varnish” on their surface. Once removed, the lighter stones below became visible, forming the famous Nasca Lines. The extracted darker stones

were placed at the edges of the lines, forming a border that accented the lighter lines within. Straight lines could be created by extending cords, one on each side of the line, between two wooden stakes (some of which have been recovered) that guided workers and allowed for the creation of sight lines.

For larger geometric shapes, such as trapezoids, borders were marked and then all the stones on the interior were removed and placed along edges or heaped in piles at the edges of the geoglyph. Broken pottery has been found mixed with the piles of stones. Spirals and animal shapes were made in a similar manner. Spirals, for example, would be formed by releasing slack in a cord as workers moved around in a circular path, moving further and further from the center where the spiraling line begins. For animal forms, such as monkeys, whales, or hummingbirds, portions of the figures might be made in the same manner as the spiral in the monkey's tail, or the image might be based on a gridded drawing or textile model that was enlarged on the desert floor where lines were staked out to create the figure.

When were they made?

The oldest of the Nasca Geoglyphs is more than 2000 years of old, but, as a group, the Nasca geoglyphs were created over several centuries, with some later lines or shapes intersecting or overlapping with previously created lines. This is just one of the unusual features of these geoglyphs. Even more curious, the drawings are best observed from the air, which is why they did not become widely known until the 1920s after the development of flight. Although it is possible to observe some of the lines from the adjacent Andean foothills or the modern mirador (viewing platform), the best way to see the lines today remains a flight in a small plane over the Pampa (lowlands). These amazing images are so large that they cannot be truly appreciated from the ground. This, of course, raises the question: for whom were the lines made? And, what was their purpose?



Figure 17.12.2.4: Monkey with Spiral Tail, Nasca Geoglyph, approximately 2000 years old (photo: **Diego Delso** , CC BY-SA 4.0)

What was their purpose and meaning?

Archaeologists are not certain of the purpose of the lines, or even of the audience for whom the lines were intended since they can only be seen clearly from the air (This is now particularly true of the older animal designs). Were they made to be seen by deities looking down from the heavens or from distant mountain tops? Perhaps the numerous theories that have been proposed will eventually be clarified as our understanding of the cultures of ancient Peru increases.

Celestial alignments?

Shortly after the geoglyphs were first investigated, researchers sought an astronomical interpretation, suggesting that the geoglyphs might be aligned with the heavens, and perhaps represented constellations or marked the solstices or planetary trajectories. While some geoglyphs seem connected to celestial events, such as marking the summer solstice (in December) when mountain waters flow to the coast, it is difficult to find celestial alignments for most of the geoglyphs. As far as we know, Andean

peoples did not form pictures by connecting the stars in the night sky as we do; rather they looked at the black spaces between stars and saw shapes that they converted into their own reverse “constellations.” It is important to note that these constellations do not seem to match the Nasca geoglyphs.

Deities or ceremonial walkways?

Many other reasonable theories have been proposed. Some scholars have suggested that the geoglyphs represent Nasca deities, or formed a calendar for farming, or represented ceremonial walkways. Because some of the lines do seem to direct people to Cahuachi, a Nasca religious center and pilgrimage destination, it seems possible that ancient Nasca people walked the lines. It is also possible that Nasca people ritually danced on the lines, perhaps in connection with shamanism and the use of hallucinogens. The geoglyphs, particularly the early animals which are clearly spaced apart from each other, may also have strengthened group identity and reinforced social interaction patterns as individual groups of people may each have tended or “owned” one of the geoglyphs,



Figure 17.12.2.5: Spider, Nasca Geoglyph, over 300 feet in length, formed approximately 2000 years ago (photo: **Diego Delso** , CC BY-SA 4.0)

A discredited theory proposed that the geoglyphs are the result of alien contact. While this is sensationalist and helped to secure the popular fame of the Nasca geoglyphs, there is no evidence to support this assertion. Archaeologists and scientists have rejected this proposal and it is important to recognize the implication of this theory is that the Nasca people needed the influence of aliens peoples to create their geoglyphs. We know that the technology to manufacture the geoglyphs was available to the Nasca people and that they had a social system that was fully capable of organizing and producing large geoglyphs. We also know that the designs are consistent with other art forms native to Nasca culture.

Farming, fertility, and water?

Among the most promising recent theories, archaeologists have begun to secure a link between the geoglyphs and farming, which sustained the Nasca people. Some geoglyphs may deal with fertility for crops; others may be associated with the water needed to raise the crops. In a desert, water is the most important commodity. In Andean mythology the mountains are revered as the home of the gods. It has been suggested that the lines were intended to be visible to the gods in the mountains. Some lines also seem to point in the direction of the mountains — the origin of fresh water for the desert South Coast of Peru. Snow pack melts high in the mountains and becomes runoff and a vital source of water for the coast. In fact, ancient underground water channels are sometimes marked on the surface by Nasca geoglyphs, particularly at the points of intersection. These have been dubbed “ray centers,” spots where lines converge. Offerings have been found at these points, including conch shells. The spirals on the desert floor, in the monkey’s tail, and as independent abstract designs, may refer to the spirals found in conch shells and thus may reference water. This same shape appears in Nasca *puquios* —*gradually* descending tunnels that tap ancient subterranean aquifers and water channels. Puquios have been described as wells, and formed part of this ancient irrigation system. Puquios, found in Nasca (and elsewhere in Peru), allowed people to reach water in times of drought. Geoglyphs other than spirals may also be directly associated with water.



Figure 17.12.2.6: Puquio, South Coast of Peru

Preservation

Because the Nasca Geoglyphs were made directly on the earth by rearranging stones on the desert floor, these giant images are actually quite vulnerable to damage. In time the lighter-colored stones exposed by the Nasca people may attain their own patina, making them less visible, but the designs face greater threats from vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Crossing the lines can damage their borders and make the images less distinct. Because of this, the Peruvian government has created a *mirador* (viewing platform) along the Pan American Highway where visitors can climb to view a few drawings without damaging the lines.

In the end, it is likely that the Nasca Geoglyphs served more than one purpose, and these purposes may have changed over the centuries, especially given that new lines often "erased" older ones by "drawing" over them. It does appear that many geoglyphs made reference to water and agricultural fertility, and were used to promote the welfare of the Nasca people. The geoglyphs were also a place where people gathered, perhaps for pilgrimage, perhaps to walk or dance on the lines in a ritual pattern. As a gathering place, the Nasca geoglyphs may additionally have turned the Pampa into a map of social divisions, where different families or clans tended different geoglyphs. Although we do not know exact details, we can surmise that the geoglyphs represent a community investment meant to serve this ancient people.

Backstory

In January, 2018, a semi truck traveling through Peru on the Pan-American highway veered off the road and plowed through the desert. The deep ruts that it made damaged several of the Nasca lines. Though the area is clearly marked as a protected zone, **according to the archeologist Johnny Isla** , co-director of the Nasca-Palpa Project, cases like this "occur daily." The driver, who authorities suspect may have been trying to avoid a toll, was charged with an "attack against cultural heritage."

Human interventions like this constitute the main threat to the Nasca-Palpa area, whose geoglyphs extend across almost 300 square miles. In 2014, **Greenpeace activists damaged the desert floor** around the famous hummingbird geoglyph as they lay out a large protest sign meant to be seen from the air. Their action was a protest against climate change during the United Nations summit in Lima, and was not intended to damage the site; the organization has since apologized. However, the marks made by the activists' footprints have been deemed possibly "irreparable" by Luis Jaime Castillo Butters, a professor of archeology and Peru's Vice Minister for Cultural Heritage. "A bad step, a heavy step ... marks the ground forever," **he said** . "There is no known technique to restore it the way it was."

The construction of the Pan-American highway has also increased the risks to the area, not only because of vehicles that can potentially veer off the road, but also because rains and mud can **wash off of the surface and damage the lines** .

Nasca-Palpa was designated as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1994. In contrast to many other at-risk heritage sites around the world, UNESCO states that

Even though there have been some impacts caused by natural and human factors, these have been minimal and the geoglyphs maintain their authenticity and express their high symbolic and historic value even today.

The most pressing need, **now being discussed by Isla and others** , is for better, 24-hour monitoring of the area — possibly using drone technology — so that human incursions on the site can be quickly addressed and avoided.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Additional resources:

Birds of the Andes on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

UNESCO World Heritage webpage for Nasca-Palpa

Anthony Aveni, *Between the Lines* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).

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"Líneas de Nasca: strengthen the vigilancia even de noche to avoid new daños," *Andina* , January 30, 2018

"Rains damage Peru's Nazca lines," *The Telegraph,* January 20, 2009

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17.12.3: Warka Vase

by DR. SENTA GERMAN

One of the most precious artifacts from Sumer, the Warka Vase was looted and almost lost forever.



Figure 17.12.3.1: Warka (Uruk) Vase, Uruk, Late Uruk period, c. 3500-3000 B.C.E., 105 cm high (National Museum of Iraq)

Picturing the ruler

So many important innovations and inventions emerged in the Ancient Near East during the Uruk period (c. 4000 to 3000 B.C.E. and named after the Sumerian city of Uruk). One of these was the use of art to illustrate the role of the ruler and his place in society. The *Warka Vase*, c. 3000 B.C.E., was discovered at Uruk (Warka is the modern name, Uruk the ancient name), and is probably the most famous example of this innovation. In its decoration we find an example of the cosmology of ancient Mesopotamia.



Figure 17.12.3.2: Ancient Near Eastern sites (with the borders of modern countries and modern capitals)

The vase, made of alabaster and standing over three feet high (just about a meter) and weighing some 600 pounds (about 270 kg), was discovered in 1934 by German excavators working at Uruk in a ritual deposit (a burial undertaken as part of a ritual) in the temple of Inanna, the goddess of love, fertility, and war and the main patron of the city of Uruk. It was one of a pair of vases found in the Inanna temple complex (but the only one on which the image was still legible) together with other valuable objects.

Given the significant size of the Warka Vase, where it was found, the precious material from which it is carved and the complexity of its relief decoration, it was clearly of monumental importance, something to be admired and valued. Though known since its excavation as the Warka "Vase," that term does little to express the sacredness of this object for the people who lived in Uruk five thousand years ago.



Figure 17.12.3.3: Bottom bands (detail), *Warka (Uruk) Vase*, Uruk, Late Uruk period, c. 3500-3000 B.C.E. (National Museum of Iraq), photo: **Hirmer Verlag**

The relief carvings on the exterior of the vase run around its circumference in four parallel bands (or registers, as art historians like to call them) and develop in complexity from the bottom to the top.

Beginning at the bottom, we see a pair of wavy lines from which grow neatly alternating plants that appear to be grain (probably barley) and reeds, the two most important agricultural harvests of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in southern Mesopotamia. There is a satisfying rhythm to this alternation, and one that is echoed in the rhythm of the rams and ewes (male and female sheep) that alternate in the band above this. The sheep march to the right in tight formation, as if being herded—the method of tending this important livestock in the agrarian economy of the Uruk period.

The band above the sheep is a blank and might have featured painted decoration that has since faded away. Above this blank band, a group of nine identical men march to the left. Each holds a vessel in front of his face, and which appear to contain the products of the Mesopotamian agricultural system: fruits, grains, wine, and mead. The men are all naked and muscular and, like the sheep beneath them, are closely and evenly grouped, creating a sense of rhythmic activity. Nude figures in Ancient Near Eastern art are meant to be understood as humble and low status, so we can assume that these men are servants or slaves (the band above, displays the slave owners).



Figure 17.12.3.4: Drawing, top register, *Warka (Uruk) Vase* (reconstructing some missing areas), by Jo Wood, after M. Roaf, from *Leaving No Stones Unturned: Essays on the Ancient Near East and Egypt in Honor of Donald P. Hansen* (Eisenbrauns, 2001), p. 17.

The top band of the vase is the largest, most complex, and least straightforward. It has suffered some damage but enough remains that the scene can be read. The center of the scene appears to depict a man and a woman who face each other. A smaller naked male stands between them holding a container of what looks like agricultural produce which he offers to the woman. The woman, identified as such by her robe and long hair, at one point had an elaborate crown on her head (this piece was broken off and repaired in antiquity).

Behind her are two reed bundles, symbols of the goddess Inanna, whom, it is assumed, the woman represents. The man she faces is nearly entirely broken off, and we are left with only the bottom of his long garment. However, men with similar robes are often found in contemporary seal stone engraving and based upon these, we can reconstruct him as a king with a long skirt, a beard and a head band. The tassels of his skirt are held by another smaller scaled man behind him, a steward or attendant to the king, who wears a short skirt.

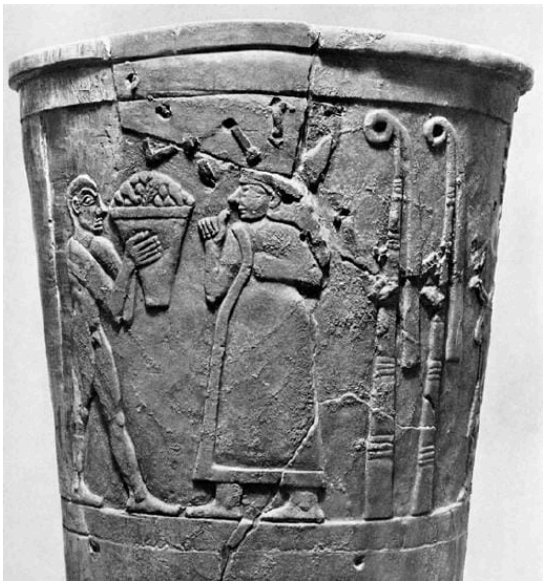


Figure 17.12.3.5: Top band (detail), *Warka (Uruk) Vase*, Uruk, Late Uruk period, c. 3500-3000 B.C.E. (National Museum of Iraq), photo: **Hirmer Verlag**

The rest of the scene is found behind the reed bundles at the back of Inanna. There we find two horned and bearded rams (one directly behind the other, so the fact that there are two can only be seen by looking at the hooves) carrying platforms on their backs on which statues stand. The statue on the left carries the cuneiform sign for EN, the Sumerian word for chief priest. The statue on the right stands before yet another Inanna reed bundle. Behind the rams is an array of tribute gifts including two large vases which look quite a lot like the *Warka Vase* itself.



Figure 17.12.3.6: Top band (detail), Relief-carved alabaster vessel called the Uruk Vase, Uruk, Late Uruk period, c. 3500-3000 B.C.E. (National Museum of Iraq), photo: **Hirmer Verlag**

What could this busy scene mean? The simplest way to interpret it is that a king (presumably of Uruk) is celebrating Inanna, the city's most important divine patron. A more detailed reading of the scene suggests a sacred marriage between the king, acting as the chief priest of the temple, and the goddess—each represented in person as well as in statues. Their union would guarantee for Uruk the agricultural abundance we see depicted behind the rams. The worship of Inanna by the king of Uruk dominates the decoration of the vase. The top illustrates how the cultic duties of the Mesopotamian king as chief priest of the goddess, put him in a position to be responsible for and proprietor of, the agricultural wealth of the city state.

Backstory

The *Warka Vase*, one of the most important objects in the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad, was stolen in April 2003 with thousands of other priceless ancient artifacts when the museum was looted in the immediate aftermath of the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. The *Warka Vase* was returned in June of that same year after an amnesty program was created to encourage the return of looted items. *The Guardian* reported that "The United States army ignored warnings from its own civilian advisers that could have stopped the looting of priceless artifacts in Baghdad...."



Figure 17.12.3.7: Broken-off foot of vase, tossed over, National Museum of Iraq, May 2003, photo: **Joanne Farchakh**

Even before the invasion, looting was a growing problem, due to economic uncertainty and widespread unemployment in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War. According to Dr. Neil Brodie, Senior Research Fellow on the Endangered Archaeology of the Middle East and North Africa project at the University of Oxford, "In the aftermath of that war…as the country descended into chaos, between 1991 and 1994 eleven regional museums were broken into and approximately 3,000 artifacts and 484 manuscripts were stolen…." The vast majority of these have not been returned. And, as Dr. Brodie notes, the most important question may be why no concerted international action was taken to block the sale of objects looted from archaeological sites and cultural institutions during wartime.

Read more about endangered cultural heritage in the Near East in Smarthistory's ARCHES (At Risk Cultural Heritage Education Series) section.

Additional resources:

Neil Brodie, "The market background to the April 2003 plunder of the Iraq National Museum," in P. Stone and J. Farchakh Bajjaly (eds), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008), pp. 41-54 (available online here).

Neil Brodie, "Iraq 1990–2004 and the London antiquities market," in N. Brodie, M. Kersel, C. Luke and K.W. Tubb (eds), *Archaeology, Cultural Heritage, and the Antiquities Trade* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), pp. 206–26 (available online here).

Neil Brodie, "Focus on Iraq: Spoils of War," *Archaeology* (from the Archaeological Institute of America), vol. 56, no. 4 (July/August 2003) (available online here).

On looting in Iraq from SAFE (Saving Antiquities for Everyone)

Documentation on this object in "Lost Treasures from Iraq" from the Oriental Institute in Chicago

Lauren Sandler, "The Thieves of Baghdad," *The Atlantic*, November 2004

On looting in Iraq from The Antiquities Coalition

Uruk: The First City on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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17.12.4: Cuneiform Tablets

by **UCLA LIBRARY**

These records tell us a great deal about the ancient world, with topics ranging from receipts to school assignments.

YouTube Video

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From the UCLA Library

Backstory

Cuneiform tablets are among the most plentiful types of ancient artifacts in the world: over half a million **are thought** to be held in museum collections, and thousands, or perhaps millions, more have yet to be excavated. These artifacts are a rich part of global heritage, allowing researchers to learn vital information about the societies that produced them. Such information is even more valuable when objects are properly excavated, with **documented** findspots that allow experts to analyze not just their content, but their physical and cultural context.

With the escalation of conflict in the Middle East, **opportunities for the looting and illegal sale** of objects like these have greatly increased. Private dealers, as well as militant groups like ISIS, are benefitting from the lack of security in countries like Iraq, where it is relatively easy to find and remove archaeologically-significant objects and sell them on the black market.

However, such sales are not possible without buyers to drive demand. A prominent example of this is the recent **case brought against** the Green family, the owners of the Oklahoma-based Hobby Lobby chain of retail stores. In 2010 and 2011, U.S. Customs and Border Control intercepted several packages addressed to the company. They were marked as "tile samples" and documented as coming from Turkey, but they actually contained over 5,500 cuneiform tablets and bricks, clay bullae**,** and cylinder seals thought to be from Iraq. The Green family—**noted collectors** of objects associated with the Biblical Middle East—had paid $1.6 million to a private dealer in exchange for the shipments. They agreed to forfeit the objects and pay a fine of $3 million to the Department of Justice.

The looting and illegal sale of important historical artifacts is detrimental to global cultural heritage for many reasons: it impedes research, divorces objects from their historical context, and robs at-risk communities of their rightful cultural property. The case of Hobby Lobby highlights the importance of policing such trafficking not just in the places where artifacts are found, but also in the places where they are collected and purchased.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Additional resources:

Alan Feuer, "Hobby Lobby Agrees to Forfeit 5,500 Artifacts Smuggled Out of Iraq," *The New York Times*, July 5, 2017

U.S. Attorney's Office, "United States Files Civil Action To Forfeit Thousands Of Ancient Iraqi Artifacts Imported By Hobby Lobby," July 5, 2017

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17.12.5: Rock-Art Sites of Tadrart Acacus (Libya)

by UNESCO

Images on rocks in the Sahara provide a glimpse into the development of humans in this now barren land.

YouTube Video

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View this YouTube Video online

Video 17.12.5.1: On the borders of Tassili N'Ajjer in Algeria, also a World Heritage site, this rocky massif has thousands of cave paintings in very different styles, dating from 12,000 B.C. to A.D. 100. They reflect marked changes in the fauna and flora, and also the different ways of life of the populations that succeeded one another in this region of the Sahara. Video from UNESCO

Backstory

The rock art sites of Tadrart Acacus have survived for 14,000 years in the desert of southern Libya, but they are now under serious threat. **Since 2009**, vandalism has been a continuous problem: graffiti has been spray-painted across the surface of many of the paintings, and people have carved their initials into the rocks. But despite **UNESCO's** and other organizations' calls for the government to intervene with restoration and security measures, efforts to protect this precious ancient site have been gravely hampered by armed conflict and political chaos.

Libya experienced a political revolution in 2011 with the ousting of Muammar Gaddafi, and since then the country has been in a state of civil war. **Savino di Lernia**, an archaeologist at Sapienza University of Rome who has worked extensively in the Tadrart Acacus mountains, explains how dangerous the area—formerly a tourist destination—has become:

> ***Today, the site is inaccessible: no commercial flight connects Tripoli and Ghat, a nearby town (a weekly military aircraft brings food, essential goods and first-aid equipment). The tarred road between Ghat and Ubari is broken up, and clashes between the Tebu and Tuareg tribes increasingly affect the area....Being a Saharan archaeologist today is a difficult job. Researchers fear being kidnapped or even killed.***

Yahya Saleh, a local tour guide, mourns the fact that local hunters now regularly scrawl their names across the art: "People do not know the value of this. There are supposed to be people to protect these areas...because if this issue persists, then they will be gone within two years."

The ongoing vandalism of the Tadrart Acacus sites is only one of the many overwhelming difficulties Libya faces with regard to cultural heritage protection. As **di Lernia notes**,

> ***Perhaps the greatest threat to Libya's diverse heritage is the trafficking of archaeological materials, for profit or to fund radical groups....No one has been able to fully assess the situation in Libya. Going to work among the black smoke of grenades, the men and women of the Libyan Department of Antiquities are doing their best. But museums are closed and the little activity left in the field is limited to the north.***

Until the fighting in Libya stops and archaeologists can again effectively cooperate with the government and international organizations to restore and protect sites like the rock art at Tadrart Acacus, Libya's rich trove of monuments and artifacts will continue to be endangered.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Additional resources:

Another UNESCO video, on rock art in Tassili n'Ajjer

UNESCO webpage for Tadrart Acacus

UNESCO report on the state of conservation at Tadrart Acacus

Ulf Leassig, "Vandals destroy prehistoric rock art in Libya's lawless Sahara," *Reuters*, June 3, 2014

Savino di Lernia, "Cultural heritage: Save Libyan archaeology," *Nature,* January 28, 2015

Report on Tadrart Acacus rock art from the AP Archive, January, 2018

This page titled 17.12.5: Rock-Art Sites of Tadrart Acacus (Libya) is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by UNESCO, "Rock-Art Sites of Tadrart Acacus (Libya)," in Smarthistory, December 31, 2015, accessed December 24, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/rock-art-sites-of-tadrart-acacus-libya/..

17.12.6: Benin plaque- Equestrian Oba and Attendants

by GREG STUART

Royal history rendered in brass



Figure 17.12.6.1: Plaque: *Equestrian Oba and Attendants*, Edo peoples (Benin Kingdom), 1550–1680, brass, 19 7/16 x 16 1/2 x 4 1/2″ / 49.5 x 41.9 x 11.4 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

This remarkable brass plaque, dated between 1550-1680, depicts an Oba (or king) and his attendants from the Benin Empire—a powerful kingdom located in present-day Nigeria. We know that the central figure is an Oba because of his distinctive coral beaded regalia. Also, attendants hold shields above his head, either to protect him from attack or possibly from the hot, tropical sun. This was a privilege only afforded to an Oba.

The figures around him range in size, not because of their actual height or distance from the Oba, but rather due to their level of importance within the court. This convention of sizing human figures based on status is known as “hierarchic scale” and is found in artwork from cultures around the world and across time. The Oba would have travelled with a large cohort of attendants, warriors, servants, diplomats, chieftains, and priests.

The plaque originally hung alongside many others on posts throughout the palace of the Oba. The order of their placement on these posts would have told the history of the royal lineage of Benin’s Obas, who traced their dynasty all the way back to Oranmiyan, whose son was the first Oba of Benin. However, the sequence of plaques is lost to us since they were long held in storage when found by westerners in the 19th century. You may notice that the Oba rides sidesaddle on horseback, which would seem to indicate a connection to Oba Esigie (who ruled c. 1504-1550), the first Oba to travel by horse. However, without knowing the original order of the plaques, we will never know for certain whether this was Esigie, or a later Oba who emulated his brash new mode of travel.

Artists working in brass were organized under Esigie. Today, artists working in brass in Benin are part of a brass workers guild, and it was likely that previous generations would have also worked collectively. These artists created plaques and other sculptures using what is known as the “lost wax casting technique,” in which, first, a more malleable wax version of the final brass work is made. It is then covered in clay and fired to harden the clay, removing the wax, which melts away in the process (hence the term, “lost wax”). Hot, molten liquid brass is then poured into the clay mold. As the brass cools, it hardens, and the clay is removed, revealing the finished plaque.

Crossing cultures: a record of trade



Figure 17.12.6.3: Plaque (detail): *Equestrian Oba and Attendants*, Edo peoples (Benin Kingdom), 1550–1680, brass, 19 7/16 x 16 1/2 x 4 1/2″ / 49.5 x 41.9 x 11.4 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Almost every detail in this work speaks to the Benin Kingdom's mutually beneficial trade with Portugal, which first made contact with Benin in the late 15th century. The Portuguese received items like peppers, cloth, and stone beads from Benin, while Benin received—among other items—the coral that makes up the beads worn by the Oba, and even the brass that makes up this plaque in the form of manillas, or armbands, worn by the Portuguese, which would have been melted down as the raw material for this plaque.



Figure 17.12.6.4: Manilla, Benin Kingdom, Nigeria, 17th century (?). Brass, 24 x 26 x 8 cm (Museum für Völkerkunde Wein, coll. A. Maschmann)



Figure 17.12.6.5: Rosette shape and figure (detail), plaque: *Equestrian Oba and Attendants*, Edo peoples (Benin Kingdom), 1550–1680, brass, 19 7/16 x 16 1/2 x 4 1/2″ / 49.5 x 41.9 x 11.4 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The rosette shapes that adorn the background of the plaque were possibly derived from Christian crosses brought by these European traders. Even the horse that the Oba rides was originally introduced to West Africa from across the sea. There is nothing quite like these plaques in all of Africa or Europe from this period, and some scholars speculate that they were created as a way of reconciling traditional African brass sculptural forms with the illustrated books and prints that may have been in the possession of European travelers.

Troubled Legacy

Trade began to decline with Portugal as the Portuguese empire waned in the 18th century. By the 19th century, Britain was seeking to make inroads with Benin as a new trading partner. However, this partnership was much less mutually beneficial and was marked with frequent tension. After increased aggression from both nations, the British launched the Punitive Expedition of 1897, seizing the Oba's palace, burning down the city around it, killing many, and looting the royal court's vast stores of art and treasure.



Figure 17.12.6.6: British soldiers sit surrounded by Benin works of art during the British Punitive Expedition of 1897 (documentary photograph by Sir Harry Holdsworth Rawson)

We know that this plaque was one of the artworks looted in the siege because Norman Burrows, a known trafficker in stolen Benin

objects, owned it briefly during this time. This act of looting perpetrated by the British was later condemned as a criminal and violent act of British imperialism and colonialism. As such, there are many who believe that objects such as this plaque should be returned to the people of Benin, who remain deeply connected to their history and cultural traditions. However, there are others who feel that these remarkable objects are part of the world's heritage, and thus should remain in museum collections around the world as testament to this artistically rich culture.

Backstory

A consortium of European museums called the "Benin Dialogue Group," formed in 2007, has been meeting with representatives from Nigeria to discuss issues around repatriation. Their hope is to establish a system of rotating loans of artworks to Benin City, though the security and guaranteed return of the objects is a point of ongoing discussion, set to continue at a conference in 2018. The consortium includes representatIves from the British Museum and Berlin's Humboldtforum, two of the institutions that hold the largest collections of objects from Benin. Other members of the group include museums in Cambridge, Vienna, Stockholm, Leiden, Leipzig and Dresden, Oxford, and Hamburg, and London. Museums in the United States and France, which also hold significant numbers of Benin artworks, have yet to become formally involved, though some, such as the Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac in Paris, have been approached directly with restitution claims from Nigeria.

The ongoing dialogue between museums and nations from which important objects, like those from Benin, were forcibly removed, highlights the complexities of the current, post-colonial world. Should formerly colonized areas be repaid for the damage inflicted on them by colonial powers? Who is responsible for doing so, and how? Who has the ethical right to the ownership, display, and preservation of these important pieces of cultural heritage? The formation of consortia like the Benin Dialogue Group is a significant first step towards resolving some of these thorny and pressing questions.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Additional resources:

Alice Apley, "African Lost-Wax Casting" on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

The Art of Africa: A Resource for Educators (publication by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, available online)

"Origins and Empire: The Benin, Owo, and Ijebu Kingdoms" on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Benin chronology on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Benin from the Dallas Museum of Art

Kate Ezra, *Royal Arts of Benin: The Perls Collection* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992).

Barbara Plankensteiner, (ed.). *Benin Kings and Rituals: Court Arts from Nigeria* (Ghent, Belgium: Snoeck Publishers, 2007).

"Looted Benin bronzes to be lent back to Nigeria," *The Art Newspaper,* October 16, 2017

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17.12.7: Lamassu from the citadel of Sargon II

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER *and* DR. BETH HARRIS

Winged, human-headed bulls served as guardians of the city and its palace—walking by, they almost seem to move.

YouTube Video

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These sculptures were excavated by P.-E. Botta in 1843-44.

Backstory

The lamassu in museums today (including the Louvre, shown in our video, as well the British Museum, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad, and others) came from various ancient Assyrian sites located in modern-day Iraq. They were moved to their current institutional homes by archaeologists who excavated these sites in the mid-19th century. However, many ancient Assyrian cities and palaces—and their gates, with intact lamassu figures and other sculptures—remain as important archaeological sites in their original locations in Iraq.

In 2015, a chilling video circulated online, showed people associated with ISIS destroying ancient artifacts in both the museum in Mosul, Iraq and at the nearby ancient archaeological site of ancient Nineveh. Their targets included the lamassu figures that stood at one of the many ceremonial gates to this important ancient Assyrian city. Scholars believe that this particular gate, which dates to the reign of Sennacherib around 700 B.C.E., was built to honor the god Nergal, an Assyrian god of war and plague who ruled over the underworld. Islamic State representatives claimed that these statues were "idols" that needed to be destroyed. The video features footage of men using jackhammers, drills, and sledgehammers to demolish the lamassu.

The Nergal gate is only one of many artifacts and sites that have been demolished or destroyed by ISIS over the past decade. Despite the existence of other examples in museums around the world, the permanent loss of these objects is a permanent loss to global cultural heritage and to the study of ancient Assyrian art and architecture.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Additional resources:

"Historians Pore Over ISIS Video of Smashed Statues for Clues to What's Been Lost," *The New York Times,* February 26, 2015.

"ISIS Destroys Mosul Museum Collection and Ancient Assyrian Statues," *Hyperallergic*, February 26, 2015.

"Isis fighters destroy ancient artefacts at Mosul museum," *The Guardian,* February 26, 2015.

"ISIS has turned the destruction of ancient artifacts into entertainment," *Los Angeles Times,* February 27, 2015.

P. G. Finch, "The Winged Bulls at the Nergal Gate of Nineveh," *Iraq*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Spring, 1948), pp. 9-18 (read for free online via JSTOR)

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17.12.8: Capitoline Brutus

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Once identified as the founder of the Roman Republic, debate over this figure's true identity rages on.

YouTube Video

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Video 17.12.8.1: *Capitoline Brutus*, 4th-3rd century B.C.E. bronze, 69 cm (Capitoline Museums, Rome)

Backstory

We know that the Capitoline Brutus was found somewhere in Rome during the sixteenth century, but there is no recorded findspot for this sculpture. In 1564 it was officially bequeathed to the city of Rome by Cardinal Rodolfo Pio da Carpi, an Italian scholar and collector who owned a large trove of ancient artifacts, but there is no known evidence of its original provenance.

In the sixteenth century, at the time of Pio da Carpi's bequest, this sculpture was already known among antiquarians as Lucius Junius Brutus (who founded the Roman Republic in the 6th century B.C.E.), and this belief continued through the centuries. The bust eventually became a touchstone of revolutionary sentiment: after Napoleon's invasion of northern Italy in the late 1790s, he staged a triumphal procession across Paris that conspicuously displayed his "art loot" from the campaign. "Rome is no more in Rome. It is now in Paris," was the chorus of a song that accompanied the march. For Napoleon, the cultural and political meanings associated with ancient Roman art—and particularly the Capitoline Brutus—were key to shoring up his image as the leader of the new capital of Europe. According to art historian Patricia Mainardi, the Brutus was "carried at the end of the march and ceremonially placed on a pedestal before the Altar of the Fatherland," with a plaque stating "Rome was first governed by kings: / Junius Brutus gave it liberty and the Republic."

The sculpture was returned to Rome in 1814-15, after Napoleon's defeat, but its interpretation as the portrait of Brutus lived on. As they did with the **Portrait Bust of a Flavian Woman**, art historians throughout the nineteenth century debated the identity of the sitter based on its resemblance to other portraits, such as those found on coins. (These objects selected for comparison are called "comparanda.") However, without a sure archeological findspot, we have no way of knowing who this sculpture actually represents. The mystery of the Capitoline Brutus demonstrates how myths about particular objects can grow into stories that become larger than the objects themselves—but these stories are not necessarily grounded in archeological facts.

There is still a need not only a need for proper archeological excavation and documentation of ancient objects, but also for properly-documented objects to be prioritized within the canon of the history of visual culture. Though the Capitoline Brutus is aesthetically pleasing and in good condition, the most we can do is guess about its original history. Other objects—**ones with recorded findspots**—can help us learn much more about the cultures and artists that produced them, even if they may be less overtly enticing to the eyes.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Additional resources:

This work at the Capitoline Museums

Peter Holliday, “Capitoline Brutus,” in *An Encyclopedia of the History of Classical Archaeology,* ed. Nancy Thomson de Grummond (New York: Routledge, 1997), n.p.

Patricia Mainardi, “Assuring the Empire of the Future: The 1798 Fête de la Liberté,” *Art Journal* vol. 48, no. 2 (Summer 1989), pages 155-163.

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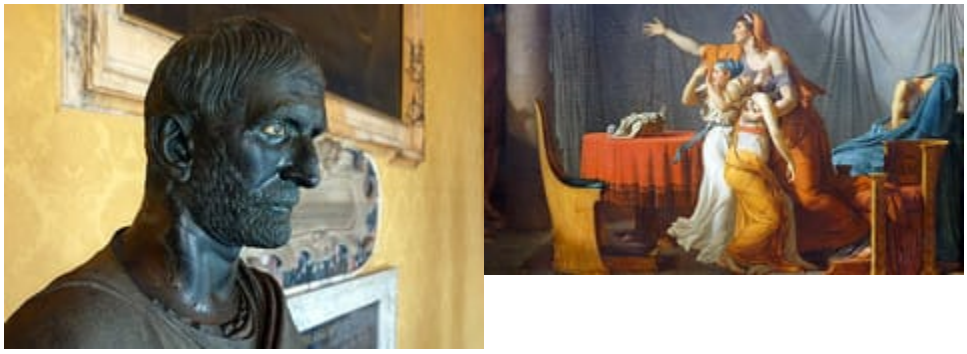


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17.12.9: Thutmose, Model Bust of Queen Nefertiti

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER *and* DR. BETH HARRIS

Found in an artist's studio, this stunning bust exemplifies a change in style, and may have been an early prototype.

YouTube Video

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Video 17.12.9.1: Thutmose, Model Bust of Queen Nefertiti, c. 1340 BCE, limestone and plaster, New Kingdom, 18th dynasty, Amarna Period (Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection/Neues Museum, Berlin)

Backstory

In 2009, the refurbished Neues Museum in Berlin celebrated its reopening, with the bust of Nefertiti prominently displayed as one of its main attractions. The celebration coincided with one of the Egyptian government's repeated pleas for the official return of the bust to Egypt. The museum has staunchly refused to give up the sculpture, asserting that the bust was acquired legally by the German archaeologist Ludwig Borchardt in 1912. Borchardt had excavated it along with several other objects from the studio of the ancient Egyptian sculptor Thutmose, and had brought his finds to Germany as part of an agreement with the Egyptian Antiquities Service. While there is no proof that Borchardt's dealings were explicitly illegal, as early as 1925, the Egyptian government began to take issue with Germany's possession of valuable antiquities. They began imposing sanctions, and the bust has been the source of tension between the two nations ever since.

This controversy relates to a general growing public awareness about the provenance—and politics—of antiquities held in European and American museums. In 2016, Nora al-Badri and Jan Nikolai Nelles, two artists from Germany, made a bold statement about these issues by staging an event they called "NefertitiHack." They secretly mapped the sculpture using a consumer-grade 3-D scanning device, and then released the data openly under a Creative Commons license. The artists' intention was "to inspire a critical reassessment of today's conditions and to overcome the colonial notion of possession in Germany," according to their website.

Many groups have advocated for using digitally-produced replicas either as stand-ins for objects that are returned to their places of origin, or vice versa—as ways of offering highly accurate replicas in place of the originals. The sharing of data between institutions and groups who lay claim to objects has also been suggested as a way to ease tensions over restitution. Nelles and al-Badri's project is a critical statement about the growing questions around repatriation and public access to objects via 3-D models and other data, as the Neues Museum does not allow photography or publicly share its own 3-D model of the bust.

Nora al-Badri, one of the artists behind NefertitiHack, stated:

"The head of Nefertiti represents all the other millions of stolen and looted artifacts all over the world currently happening, for example, in Syria, Iraq, and in Egypt...Archaeological artifacts as a cultural memory originate for the most part from the Global South; however, a vast number of important objects can be found in Western museums and private collections. We should face the fact that the colonial structures continue to exist today and still produce their inherent symbolic struggles."

Over a century after it was excavated, the bust of Nefertiti remains a flashpoint for institutions and the public, driving us to consider the ways in which objects and their data are acquired, displayed, and shared.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Additional resources:

Image of Nefertiti, photo: Philip Pikart (CC BY-SA 3.0)

NefertitiHack website

Artists' video of the scanning process in the Neues Museum

"Swiping a Priceless Antiquity ... With a Scanner and a 3-D Printer," *The New York Times,* March 1, 2016

"Artists Covertly Scan Bust of Nefertiti and Release the Data for Free Online," *Hyperallergic,* February 19, 2016

"Re-Examining Nefertiti's Likeness and Life," *ABC News,* December 8, 2012

"German foundation refuses to return Nefertiti bust," *Reuters,* January 24, 2011

"A 3,500-Year-Old Queen Causes a Rift Between Germany and Egypt," *The New York Times,* October 18, 2009

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17.12.10: Otto Wagner, Postal Savings Bank

10.11.2.02: Otto Wagner Postal Savings Bank

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17.12.11: Bamiyan Buddhas

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17.12.12: Aztec feathered headdress

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK and DR. BETH HARRIS

YouTube Video

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Video 17.12.12.1: Feathered headdress, Aztec, reproduction (National Anthropology Museum, Mexico City). Original: early 16th century, quetzal, cotinga, roseate spoonbill, piaya feathers, wood, fibers, amate paper, cotton, gold, and gilded brass, Aztec, Mexico, (World Museum, Vienna)

Backstory

This headdress is also called the *Penacho of Moctezuma II*. Moctezuma II's headdress was first mentioned in a European inventory in 1596, when it was acquired by Austrian Archduke Ferdinand II von Tyrol. It was listed there as "a Moorish hat." It was likely an object sent from Mesoamerica to Europe by Hernan Cortes, but it is unknown whether it actually belonged to Moctezuma II himself.

In the late nineteenth century, Austria established its first Museum of Natural HIstory, with geologist Ferdinand von Hochstetter as its director. While searching for objects to display in the new museum, von Hochstetter found the headdress in Ambras Castle, Archduke Ferdinand's former residence in Innsbruck, Austria. Since then, the headdress has been displayed in the ethnology museum in Vienna (now called the Weltmuseum Wien). In 2010, the Weltmuseum embarked on a restoration and research project on the headdress in conjunction with INAH (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico's National Institute of Anthropology and History).

Over the last century and a half, the headdress has become an important touchstone for Mexican national and indigenous identity, and many Mexicans think it should be returned. Representatives and activists from Mexico have continuously made requests for its repatriation, but despite **a deal almost struck in 2011**, the Austrian authorities have as yet refused to officially allow the loan or return of the headdress to Mexico, claiming that the trip across the Atlantic would be too risky for the fragile object. **As art historian Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll writes**,

The replica of the headdress in Mexico City, which is featured in the video above, was created and installed in 1940.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Additional resources:

"The Penacho of Moctezuma's Repatriation Battle," *Pulsamérica*, November 3, 2017

"Return of Aztec artifact may be model deal," *IOL*, January 19, 2011

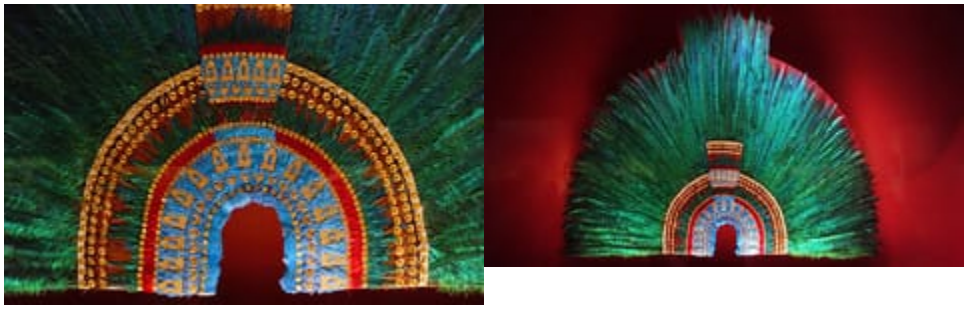
"The Fight to Bring Home the Headdress of an Aztec Emperor," *Atlas Obscura*, September 26, 2017

Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, "The Inbetweenness of the Vitrine: Three parerga of a feather headdress," in *The Inbetweenness of Things,* ed. Paul Basu (London: Bloomsbury, 2017

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17.12.13: Great Mosque of Djenné (Djenné peoples)

by DR. ELISA DAINESE



Figure 17.12.13.1: Great Mosque of Djenné, Mali, 1907 (photo: **Mark Abel**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

As one of the wonders of Africa, and one of the most unique religious buildings in the world, the Great Mosque of Djenné, in present-day Mali, is also the greatest achievement of Sudano-Sahelian architecture (Sudano-Sahelian refers to the Sudanian and Sahel grassland of West Africa). It is also the largest mud-built structure in the world. We experience its monumentality from afar as it dwarfs the city of Djenné. Imagine arriving at the towering mosque from the neighborhoods of low-rise adobe houses that comprise the city.

Djenné was founded between 800 and 1250 C.E., and it flourished as a great center of commerce, learning, and Islam, which had been practiced from the beginning of the 13th century. Soon thereafter, the Great Mosque became one of the most important buildings in town primarily because it became a political symbol for local residents and for colonial powers like the French who took control of Mali in 1892. Over the centuries, the Great Mosque has become the epicenter of the religious and cultural life of Mali, and the community of Djenné. It is also the site of a unique annual festival called the *Crepissage de la Grand Mosquée* (Plastering of the Great Mosque).



Figure 17.12.13.2: Great Mosque of Djenné, Mali, 1907 (photo: **herr_hartmann**, CC BY-NC 2.0)

The Great Mosque that we see today is its third reconstruction, completed in 1907. According to legend, the original Great Mosque was probably erected in the 13th century, when King Koi Konboro—Djenné's twenty-sixth ruler and its first Muslim sultan (king)—decided to use local materials and traditional design techniques to build a place of Muslim worship in town. King Konboro's successors and the town's rulers added two towers to the mosque and surrounded the main building with a wall. The mosque compound continued to expand over the centuries, and by the 16th century, popular accounts claimed half of Djenné's population could fit in the mosque's galleries.

The first Great Mosque and its reconstructions

Some of the earliest European writings on the first Great Mosque came from the French explorer René Caillié who wrote in detail about the structure in his travelogue *Journal d'un voyage a Temboctou et à Jenné* (*Journal of a Voyage to Timbuktu and Djenné*). Caillié traveled to Djenné in 1827, and he was the only European to see the monument before it fell into ruin. In his travelogue, he wrote that the building was already in bad repair from the lack of upkeep. In the Sahel—the transitional zone between the Sahara and the humid savannas to the south—adobe and mud buildings such as the Great Mosque require periodic and often annual re-plastering. If re-plastering does not occur, the exteriors of the structures melt in the rainy season. Based on Caillié's description, his visit likely coincided with a period when the mosque had not been re-plastered for several years, and multiple rainy seasons had probably washed away all the plaster and worn the mud-brick.



Figure 17.12.13.3: "The Old Mosque Restored," from Félix Dubois, Timbuctoo the Mysterious (London: William Heinemann, 1897), pp. 157.

A second mosque built between 1834 and 1836 replaced the original and damaged building described by Caillié. We can see evidence of this construction in drawings by the French journalist Felix Dubois. In 1896, three years after the French conquest of the city, Dubois published a plan of the mosque based on his survey of the ruins. The structure drawn by Dubois (above) was more compact than the one that is seen today. Based on the drawings, the second construction of the Great Mosque was more massive than the first and defined by its weightiness. It also featured a series of low minaret towers and equidistant pillar supports.

The present and third iteration of the Great Mosque was completed in 1907, and some scholars argue that the French constructed it during their period of occupation of the city starting in 1892. However, no colonial documents support this theory. New scholarship supports the idea that the mason's guild of Djenné built the current mosque with the help of forced laborers from villages of adjacent regions, brought in by French colonial authorities. To accompany and motivate workers, musicians were provided who played drums and flutes. Workers included masons who mixed tons of mud, sand, rice-husks, and water and formed the bricks that shape the current structure.

The Great Mosque today



Figure 17.12.13.4: Roof (detail), Great Mosque of Djenné, Mali, 1907 (photo: **un_photo**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)



Figure 17.12.13.5: Ostrich eggs circled in red (detail), Great Mosque of Djenné, Mali, 1907 (photo: **un_photo**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The Great Mosque that we see today is rectilinear in plan and is partly enclosed by an exterior wall. An earthen roof covers the building, which is supported by monumental pillars.
The roof has several holes covered by terra-cotta lids (above), which provide its interior spaces with fresh air even during the hottest days. The façade of the Great Mosque includes three minarets and a series of engaged columns that together create a rhythmic effect (below).

At the top of the pillars are conical extensions with ostrich eggs placed at the very top—symbol of fertility and purity in the Malian region. Timber beams throughout the exterior are both decorative and structural. These elements also function as scaffolding for the re-plastering of the mosque during the annual festival of the *Crepissage*. Compared to images and descriptions of the previous buildings, the present Great Mosque includes several innovations such as a special court reserved for women and a principal entrance with earthen pillars, that signal the graves of two local religious leaders.



Figure 17.12.13.6: Façade (detail), Great Mosque of Djenné, Mali, 1907 (photo: lhhais, CC BY-NC 2.0)

Re-plastering the Mosque

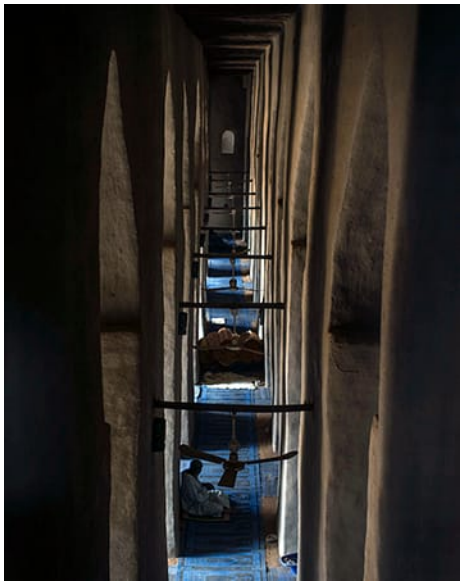


Figure 17.12.13.7: Interior view, Great Mosque of Djenné, Mali, 1907 (photo: **UN Mission in Mali**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

During the annual festival of the *Crepissage de la Grand Mosquée*, the entire city contributes to the re-plastering of the mosque's exterior by kneading into it a mud plaster made from a mixture of butter and fine clay from the alluvial soil of the nearby Niger and

Bani Rivers. The men of the community usually take up the task of mixing the construction material. As in the past, musicians entertain them during their labors, while women provide water for the mixture. Elders also contribute through their presence on site, by sitting on terrace walls and giving advice. Mixing work and play, young boys sing, run, and dash everywhere.

Over the years Djenné's inhabitants have withstood repeated attempts to change the character of their exceptional mosque and the nature of the annual festival. For instance, some have tried to suppress the playing of music during the *Crepissage*, and foreign Muslim investors have also offered to rebuild the mosque in concrete and tile its current sand floor. Djenné's community has unrelentingly striven to maintain its cultural heritage and the unique character of the Great Mosque. In 1988, the tenacious effort led to the designation of the site and the entire town of Djenné as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Backstory

The Great Mosque of Djenné is only one of many important monuments in the area known as the Djenné Circle, which also includes the archaeological sites of Djenné-Djeno, Hambarketolo, Tonomba and Kaniana. The region is known especially for its characteristic earthen architecture, which, as noted above, requires continuous upkeep by the local community.

Djenné's unique form of architecture also makes it particularly susceptible to environmental threats, especially flooding. The town is situated along a river, and in 2016, torrential rains led to massive floods that caused one historic 16th-century palace to collapse, and left the Great Mosque with significant cracks its pillars. Construction of new buildings on the archaeological sites and inadequate waste disposal infrastructure also present continual problems.

UNESCO and other agencies have supported the restoration of the riverbanks in Djenné to help prevent flooding, and the four archaeological sites have now gained official status as properties of the state, which shields them from urban development. However, the conservation situation in Djenné remains fragile. Since the civil war in Northern Mali in 2012, the government has had limited bandwidth to deal with all of the various measures necessary to successfully protect, maintain, and monitor these sites. UNESCO has also noted a lack of funding from outside partners, who, **according to the agency**, have shown greater interest in Timbuktu, where terrorists **vandalized** several historic mausoleums and a mosque in 2012.

The current state of Djenné highlights the complex network of factors that affect world heritage: armed conflict and civil unrest, environmental threats, urban development, and lack of cooperation between agencies can all undermine the fate of monuments like the Great Mosque. Such circumstances remind us of the importance and the difficulty of conservation efforts not just in

Djenné, but around the globe.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Additional Resources:

The website of the Great Mosque of Djenné

Katarina Höije, “The mud mosque of Mali” from Roads and Kingdoms (May 2018)

Old Towns of Djenné (from UNESCO)

UNESCO State of Conservation report for the Old Towns of Djenné

This page titled 17.12.13: Great Mosque of Djenné (Djenné peoples) is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Elisa Dainese, "Great Mosque of Djenné," in Smarthistory, August 9, 2015, accessed December 24, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/great-mosque-of-djenne/..

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17.12.14: Mogao caves at Dunhuang

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17.12.15: Machu Picchu

by **DR. SARAHH SCHER**



Figure 17.12.15.1: Machu Picchu, Peru, c. 1450–1540 (photo: Sarahh Scher, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

A royal estate

Machu Picchu is often described as “mysterious,” but in fact a great deal is known about its construction and purpose. It was built as a royal estate for the first Inka emperor, Pachacuti Inka Yupanqui, in the middle of the 15th century, on a mountain saddle overlooking the Urubamba River (in modern day Peru). The location was approximately three days’ walk from the Inka capital of Cusco, and nearly 3,000 feet lower in elevation (7,972 feet / 2,430 meters), with a pleasant climate. It was intended as a place where the Inka emperor and his family could host feasts, perform religious ceremonies, and administer the affairs of empire, while also establishing a claim to land that would be owned by his lineage after his death. The site was chosen and situated for its relationship to the Andean landscape, including sight lines to other mountain peaks, called *apus*, which have long been considered ancestral deities throughout the Andes. The site contains housing for elites, retainers, and maintenance staff, religious shrines, fountains, and terraces, as well as carved rock outcrops, a signature element of Inka art.

Architecture



Figure 17.12.15.2: Machu Picchu, Peru, c. 1450–1540, terraces can be seen to the left (photo: **Max Reiser**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The site features architecture, from houses to terraces, built by carefully fitting individual stones against each other. Terraces were a common element of highland agriculture long before the Inka. They increased the arable land surface and reduced erosion by creating walled steps down the sides of steep mountains. Each step could then be planted with crops. Terracing took advantage of the landscape and provided some sustenance for the emperor and his entourage during his visits, as well as producing ritually-important maize crops. Further provisions came from the rich lands at the foot of the mountain peak, which were also beholden to Pachacuti and his family.



Figure 17.12.15.3: Stone channel drain, Machu Picchu, Peru, c. 1450–1540 (photo: **Eduardo Zárate**, CC BY-ND 2.0)

Water management at the site was crucial, and throughout Machu Picchu a system of stone channels drains water from rainfall and from a spring near the site. Some of the water was chanelled to stone fountains. There are sixteen in all, descending in elevation through the site. The first in the series is placed outside the door of the emperor's compound. That fountain is constructed with walls that may have created a ritual bath for the emperor, connected to his duties as a sacred king who performed religious rituals.

The construction of the main buildings is typical of Inka elite architecture. The walls were built of stones that had been individually shaped to fit closely with one another, rather than being shaped into similar units. This was accomplished by a laborious process

of pecking at the stones with tools, gradually shaping them so that each stone was uniquely nested against those around it. Each stone had some sides that protruded slightly, and some with slight concave faces, socketing the stones so that they held together, but allowed for earthquake-damping movement in this seismically active region. Outward faces were then worked smooth, so that the walls resemble an intricate mosaic. Most structures were roofed with wood and thatch. Entryways were in the unique Inka shape of a trapezoid, rather than a rectangle. The trapezoid shape was also used for niches and windows in the walls of buildings. Buildings for people or activities of lower status were made using a rough construction technique that did not take the time to shape the stones.



Figure 17.12.15.4: Stone walls and trapezoid-shaped windows, Machu Picchu, Peru, c. 1450–1540 (photo: **Jill /Blue Moonbeam Studio**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Population and social dynamics

The emperor and his retinue would only reside at Machu Picchu for part of the year. Most of the people who lived there permanently were *yanaconas* (retainers) and *mitimaes* (colonists obligated to move to their location). Graves at Machu Picchu have yielded evidence that many of the *yanaconas* there were craftspeople, including metalsmiths, who came from all over the empire. The ability to command people across the empire and to oblige them to work for the Inka nobility was an expression of imperial power. The buildings of Machu Picchu clearly show the social divisions of the site, with most of the high-status residential buildings in a cluster to the northeast. The emperor himself lived in a separate compound at the southwest of the site, indicating his unique status as the ruler. The Observatory (below) was adjacent to the royal residence, emphasizing the relationship between the elites, religious ritual, and astronomical observation, including Pachacuti's claim as both a descendant of the sun (whom the Inka called *Inti*) and the sun himself.



Figure 17.12.15.5: The Observatory, seen from above, Machu Picchu, Peru, c. 1440–1540 (photo: Stephen Trever, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

One of the obligations of the royal family was performing rituals that sustained relationships with the supernatural forces that drove existence. The number of religious structures at Machu Picchu is high, indicating that Pachacuti and his lineage were heavily involved in the religious functioning of the empire, a task that underscored his right to rule.

Observatory

Also called the Temple of the Sun, this building's purpose is echoed in its unique shape. It is composed of two main parts: an upper curved stone enclosure with windows and niches placed in it, and a cave beneath this structure with masonry additions that hold more niches. Modifications of the windows in the Observatory's upper walls indicate that they were used to calculate the June solstice, as well as the first morning rise of the constellation Pleiades and other important constellations. The cave beneath the enclosure may refer to the place of the underworld in Inka myth, making the Observatory a building that embodied cosmological thought as much as it facilitated astronomical observation.

Intihuatana



Figure 17.12.15.6: Intihuatana, Machu Picchu, Peru, c. 1450–1540 (photo: Sarahh Scher, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The Intihuatana ("hitching post of the sun") is a carved boulder located in the ritual area of the site, to the west of the main

plaza. Carved boulders were a part of the Inka relationship with the earth, and expressions of belief in a landscape inhabited by supernatural forces. Carved boulders of this type are found throughout the heart of the Inka empire. The stone's name refers to the idea that it was used to track the passage of the sun throughout the year, part of the reckoning of time used to determine when religious events would take place and similar to the Observatory.

Backstory

Due to its status as an important piece of both global and Peruvian heritage, Machu Picchu has recently become the focus of international attention with regard to both the repatriation of artifacts from the site, and preservation of the existing structures against environmental and human impact.

Covered by jungle and known only to locals since the sixteenth century, Machu Picchu was uncovered by Hiram Bingham III, a professor of South American history at Yale University, in 1911. In addition to the structures at the site, he and his team excavated thousands of artifacts, including ceramics, tools, jewelry and human bones, which he brought back to Yale under an agreement with the Peruvian government at the time. The agreement stipulated that the artifacts could be studied at Yale, with the provision that they could be requested and returned to Peru at any time. Since then, most of the objects have been housed at Yale's Peabody Museum.

Despite Peru's repeated demands for the objects' return over the last century, **it took a U.S. federal court case and the intervention of Peru's president** to finally secure their repatriation in 2010. According to the **Peabody museum website**,

> **In a gesture of friendship and in recognition of the unique place that Machu Picchu has come to hold for the people of Cuzco and the Peruvian nation, Yale agreed to return to Peru materials excavated by Bingham at Machu Picchu in 1912. This was the basis of a diplomatic resolution of the dispute between Yale University and the Peruvian government. The agreement was formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Peru on November 23 2010, a second Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Cuzco (UNSAAC) on February 11, 2011, and the return from the Peabody Museum of materials from Machu Picchu in 2011 and 2012.**

The agreement has resulted in ongoing research cooperation between Yale and UNSAAC, and is an example of how repatriation efforts can lead to new and fruitful opportunities for cooperation.

The site of Machu Picchu itself is also now the focus of governmental efforts, as authorities attempt to cope with the great numbers of visitors and their impact on the site, in addition to environmental and agricultural factors that threaten the integrity of the landscape. According to the **UNESCO website**,

> **the Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu is among the greatest artistic, architectural and land use achievements anywhere and the most significant tangible legacy of the Inca civilization....The strongly increasing number of visitors to the Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu must be matched by an adequate management regulating access....The planning and organization of transportation and infrastructure construction, as well as the sanitary and safety conditions for both tourists and new residents attracted by tourism requires the creation of high quality and new long-term solutions, and is a significant ongoing concern.**

The government of Peru **recently instituted a ticketing system** that caps the number of visitors and requires them reserve and pay for daily time slots at the site. Still, UNESCO warns that

> **Since the time of inscription consistent concerns have been expressed about ecosystem degradation through logging, firewood and commercial plant collection, poor waste management, poaching, agricultural encroachment..., introduced species and water pollution ..., in addition from pressures derived from broader development in the region.... Continuous efforts are needed to comply with protected areas and other legislation and plans and prevent further degradation.**

Given the number of agencies involved in planning and protecting Machu Picchu, UNESCO states, achieving an adequate master plan for the site is an ongoing challenge. Machu Picchu is only one of many such world heritage sites around the world that are dealing with the threats brought by increased visitation, and it points to the tensions between the need for everyone to enjoy and benefit from the experience of seeing these magnificent sites, and the need to preserve them for future generations.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Additional resources:

Video from UNESCO on Machu Picchu

Historic sanctuary of Machu Picchu from UNESCO

Richard L. Burger and Lucy C. Salazar, *Machu Picchu: Unveiling the Mystery of the Incas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

Carolyn Dean, *A Culture of Stone: Inka Perspectives on Rock* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

Lucy C. Salazar, "Machu Picchu: Mysterious Royal Estate in the Cloud Forest," in *Machu Picchu : Unveiling the Mystery of the Incas*, edited by Richard L. Burger and Lucy C. Salazar (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

Lucy C. Salazar, "Machu Picchu's Silent Majority," in *Variations in the Expression of Inka Power : A Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks,* 18 and 19 October 1997, edited by Richard L. Burger, Craig Morris, Ramiro Matos Mendieta, Joanne Pillsbury and Jeffrey Quilter (Washington, D.C.; [Cambridge, Mass.]: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection ; Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2007).

Peru-Yale Partnership for the Future of Machu Picchu Artifacts from Yale News

Machu Picchu: The Agreement between Yale and Peru on the Peabody Museum website

"Finders Not Keepers: Yale Returns Artifacts To Peru" and "Yale Returns Machu Picchu Artifacts To Peru", NPR News, 2010 and 2011

"Will new limits on visiting Machu Picchu save Peru's most famous Inca citadel?" *The Telegraph*, June 21, 2017

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- 11.5: South America before c. 1500 by Smarthistory is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

17.12.16: The Paracas Textile

by **LOIS MARTIN**



Figure 17.12.16.1: Nasca, *Mantle* (“*The Paracas Textile*“), 100-300 C.E., cotton, camelid fiber, 58-1/4 x 24-1/2 inches / 148 x 62.2 cm, found south coast, Paracas, Peru (Brooklyn Museum)

Mummy bundles

One of the most extraordinary masterpieces of the pre-Columbian Americas is a nearly 2,000-year-old cloth from the South Coast of Peru, which has been in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum of Art since 1938.

Despite the textile’s small size (it measures about two by five feet), it contains a vast amount of information about the people who lived in ancient Peru; and despite its great age and delicacy, its colors are brilliant, and tiny details amazingly intact. This is due to the arid environment of southern Peru along the Pacific shore, where it is so dry that organic material buried in the sand remains well preserved for hundreds or even thousands of years.



Figure 17.12.16.2: Paracas National Reserve, Peru (photo: **ilker ender**, CC BY 2.0)



Figure 17.12.16.3: The Paracas peninsula, Peru

In the ancient cemeteries on the Paracas Peninsula, the dead were wrapped in layers of cloth and clothing into “mummy bundles.” The largest and richest mummy bundles contained hundreds of brightly embroidered textiles, feathered costumes, and fine jewelry, interspersed with food offerings, such as beans. Early reports claimed that this cloth came from the Paracas peninsula, so it was called “THE Paracas textile,” to mark its excellence and uniqueness. Currently, scholars have revised this provenance, and now attribute the cloth to the related, but slightly later Nasca culture.

Thread by thread

Recently, the Brooklyn Museum has posted high quality, close-up views of this masterpiece online, allowing viewers to scrutinize the textile, thread by thread. Such a detailed inspection has not been possible since the piece was first made. With simple tools, the early cultures of the Andean region of South America produced textiles of astonishing virtuosity. Some extremely fine pieces, like this one, are too delicate to have served any utilitarian purpose, and so are considered ceremonial.



Figure 17.12.16.4: Detail of border figure 61, Nasca, *Mantle* ("*The Paracas Textile*"), 100-300 C.E., cotton, camelid fiber, 58-1/4 x 24-1/2" / 148 x 62.2 cm, found south coast, Paracas, Peru (Brooklyn Museum)

Like some other very fine cloths, the Brooklyn textile is finished so carefully on both sides that it is almost impossible to distinguish which is the correct side. Although the central cloth and its framing dimensional border are created by different techniques, both display perfect reversibility—except for three border figures. These three—instead of being duplicated on the back (as if flipped in mirror image), like all the others—appear in back view on one side of the cloth, thereby designating a "front" and "back" to the textile.



Figure 17.12.16.5: Center detail, Nasca, *Mantle* ("*The Paracas Textile*"), 100-300 C.E., cotton, camelid fiber, 58-1/4 x 24-1/2 inches / 148 x 62.2 cm, found south coast, Paracas, Peru (Brooklyn Museum)

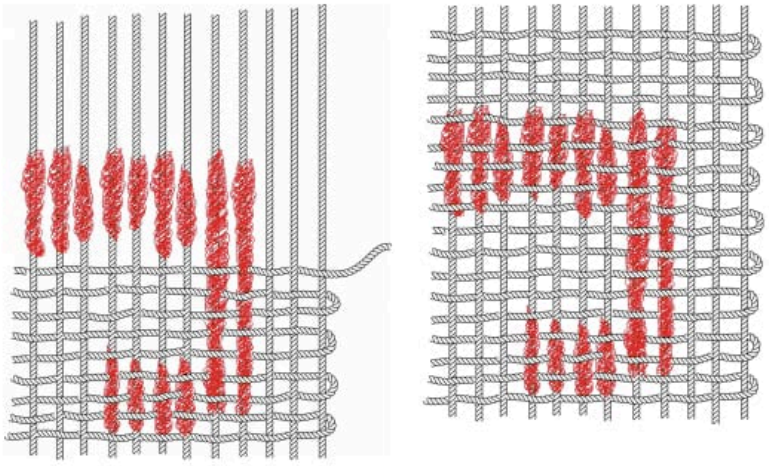


Figure 17.12.16.6: Warp wrapping (diagram by Lois Martin)

The central cloth's design of 32 geometric faces is created by "warp-wrapping," a technique in which colored fleece is wound around sections of cotton warp threads before weaving.
Because the central cloth and the border have different color palettes, they may have been created at different times. The triple-layer border has colorful outer veneers of wool "crossed-looping" that envelop inner cotton cores of looping or weaving.

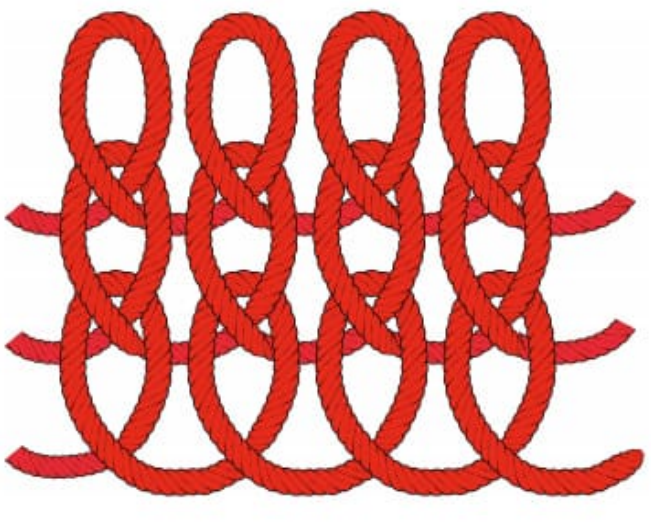


Figure 17.12.16.7: Crossed looping (diagram by Lois Martin)

"Crossed-looping" resembles knitting (but is accomplished with a single needle); in areas where the threads are broken, it is possible to glimpse the underlying cotton substrates. While the cotton is off-white, the wool is dyed in jewel-bright tones.



Figure 17.12.16.8: Alpaca herd, Ausangate, Peru (photo: **Marturius**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The combination of materials suggests extensive trading relationships: for while cotton was grown in coastal valleys, wool came from camelids (such as the llama, alpaca, and vicuña) that live at high altitudes in the Andes mountains.

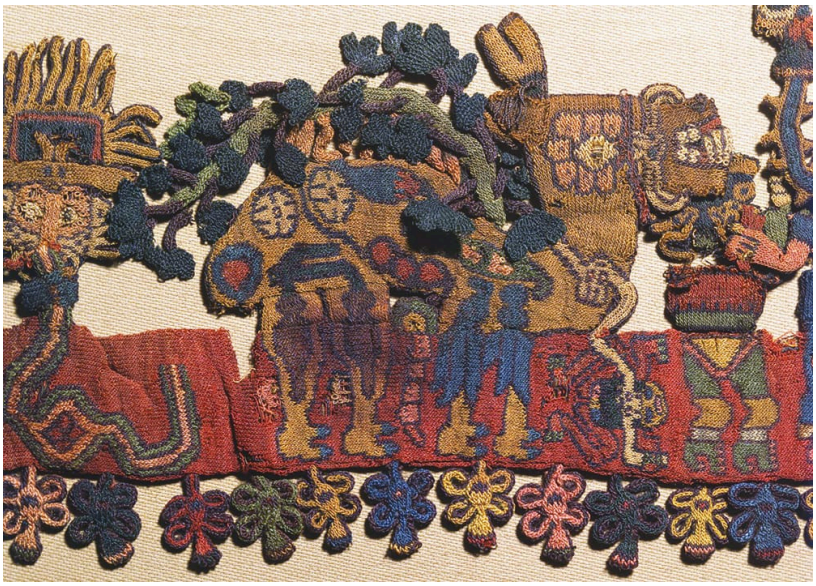


Figure 17.12.16.9: The llama is laden with a bounty of vegetables. Since pre-Columbian people had no wheeled vehicles for transport, llama caravans carried goods between regions. Border figure 26, Nazca, *Mantle* ("*The Paracas Textile*"), 100-300 C.E., cotton, camelid fiber, 58-1/4 x 24-1/2 inches / 148 x 62.2 cm, found south coast, Paracas, Peru (Brooklyn Museum)

Monstrous hybrids

On the border, a parade of 90 figures is linked together on their lower bodies, which are worked two-dimensionally against a red background.



Figure 17.12.16.10: Detail of border figures (composite photo), Nasca, *Mantle* ("*The Paracas Textile*"), 100-300 C.E., cotton, camelid fiber, 58-1/4 x 24-1/2 inches / 148 x 62.2 cm, found south coast, Paracas, Peru (Brooklyn Museum)

Each figure's upper body and head is constructed as a separate unit, and attached to the woven strip. The upper bodies are worked in bas-relief, with some parts projecting outwards from the plane of the fabric. Tiny components (like leaves and feathers) were worked as separate pieces and then attached, giving a wonderful three-dimensionality and liveliness to the figures, especially because they mingle and overlap.



Figure 17.12.16.11: Nasca, *Mantle* ("*The Paracas Textile*"), 100-300 C.E., cotton, camelid fiber, 58-1/4 x 24-1/2 inches / 148 x 62.2 cm, found south coast, Paracas, Peru (Brooklyn Museum)



Figure 17.12.16.12: Nazca ornament, gold (Brooklyn Museum)

The parade is arranged in four, single-file, L-shaped lines that proceed around each corner of the cloth. A wide variety of types appear, including human, animal, and monstrous hybrids. Some figures are unique, others are twins, triplets, or even sextuplets; a few are in related groups.

Most of the animals and plants that appear can be tied to species still found on the South Coast, and many human figures wear or carry items that directly relate to the archaeological record.

Their jewelry, for example, corresponds to specimens formed from thin sheets of gleaming gold. These include: “forehead ornaments” (shaped like a bird with outstretched wings); “hair spangles” (disk or star shapes that dangle from the wingtips of the forehead ornament); slender, feather-shaped headdress “plumes;” and “mouthmasks.” Mouthmasks hung from the nose septum, and had flaring extensions, like cat whiskers.

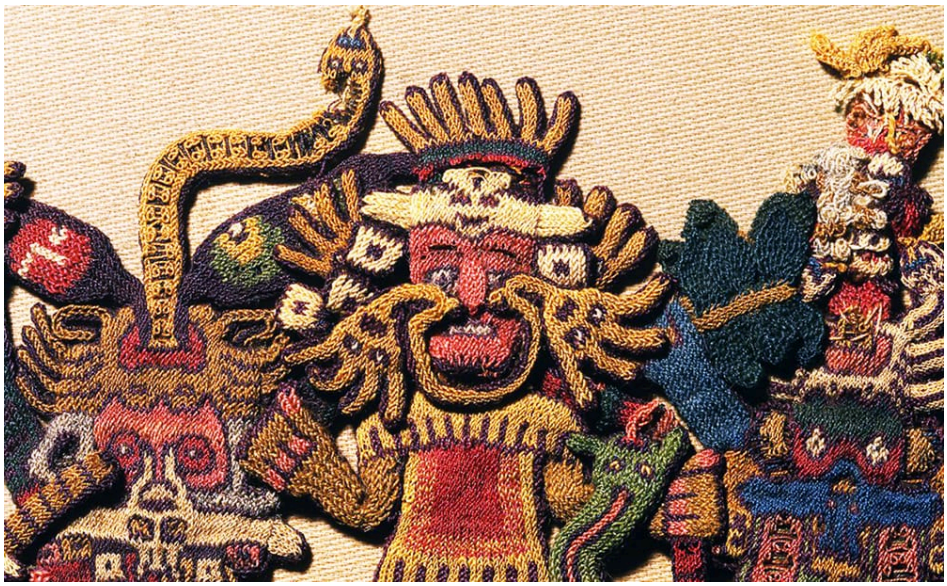


Figure 17.12.16.13: Detail with face ornament, border figure 63, Nasca, Mantle (“The Paracas Textile”), 100-300 C.E., cotton, camelid fiber, 58-1/4 x 24-1/2″ / 148 x 62.2 cm, found south coast, Paracas, Peru (Brooklyn Museum)

Garments

The border figures’ clothing also matches examples found archaeologically, and some bear minuscule designs that faithfully

represent embroidered decorations found on life-sized garments. Some wear wrap-around dresses of a style worn by women in ancient times; others wear two-part outfits, associated with men (below). The largest and most beautifully decorated garments were mantles that draped over the shoulders, and fell to the knee. By examining stitches on actual mantles, archaeologists have determined that teams of artists worked on them, sitting side-by-side.



Figure 17.12.16.14: One of three figures with a front and back, painted or tattooed skin, wears a bristling mouthmask, and a headdress with flower-like plumes. He carries a striped staff topped with a winged creature, and wears a tunic and loincloth. Over his shoulder hangs a boldly-patterned mantle ending in a feline. Detail of border figure 16, Nasca, *Mantle* ("*The Paracas Textile*"), 100-300 C.E., cotton, camelid fiber, 58-1/4 x 24-1/2" / 148 x 62.2 cm, found south coast, Paracas, Peru (Brooklyn Museum)

Other border details, rather than realistic, seem to be fantastic or mythological. The severed heads (sometimes called "trophy heads") brandished by some figures, for example, sometimes sprout flourishing plants—as if to suggest themes of sacrifice and fertility. And snake-like streamers that flow from some figures do not correspond to any known object, and may indicate supernatural qualities.

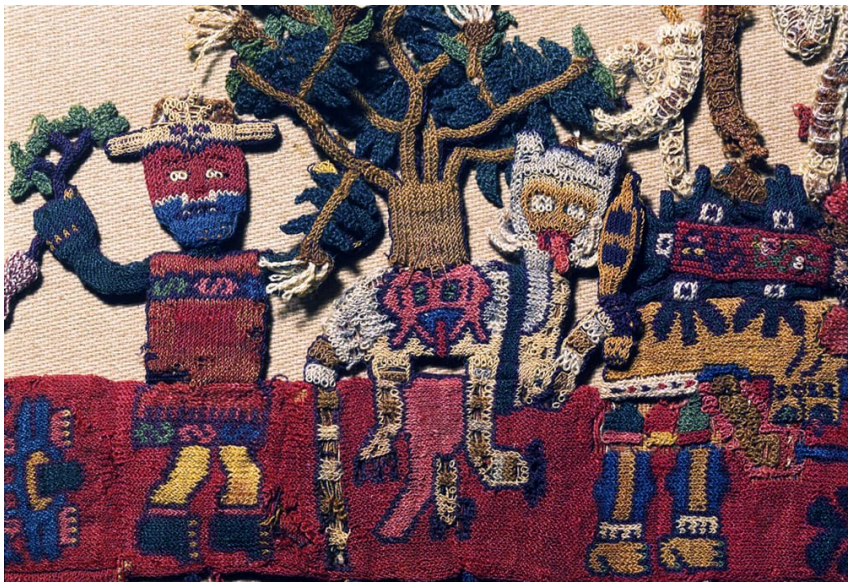


Figure 17.12.16.15: Pampas cat and tree, border figure 3, Nasca, *Mantle* ("*The Paracas Textile*"), 100-300 C.E., cotton, camelid fiber, 58-1/4 x 24-1/2" / 148 x 62.2 cm, found south coast, Paracas, Peru (Brooklyn Museum)

When they depicted clothing, Paracas and Nazca artists often added a face, or an animal body to the loose ends of fabric hanging behind a wearer. This artistic convention seems to suggest the lively movements of cloth fluttering behind a wearer, and hints that these ancient people considered cloth a precious carrier of vitality: an interpretation that seems warranted because this vibrant

textile gives us such an evocative and animated glimpse into their world.

Backstory

The Paracas Textile is only one of hundreds of similar textiles that originate from multiple burial sites on the Paracas peninsula. These burials were first identified and excavated by the renowned Peruvian archaeologist Julio Tello in the 1920s. For political reasons, Tello was forced to abandon the site in 1930, and, without a team of archaeologists to oversee the area, a period of intense looting followed. It is now believed that a great number of the Paracas textiles in international museum collections were acquired as a result of this looting, which occurred most heavily between 1931 and 1933.

A large group of these illegally acquired textiles is held by the **Gothenburg Collection** in the **Museum of World Culture** in Gothenburg, Sweden. The objects were smuggled out of Peru by the Swedish consul in the early 1930s, and donated to the city of Gothenburg. The museum and city fully acknowledge the objects' illicit provenance, and have been working with the Peruvian government on a plan for their systematic return. As stated on the museum website,

> **Large quantities of Paracas textiles were illegally exported to museums and private collections all over the world between 1931 and 1933. About a hundred of these were taken to Sweden and donated to the Ethnographic Department of Gothenburg Museum. Today, problems associated with looted artifacts and illicit trade in antiques are better acknowledged and being addressed.**

Though Peru began lobbying for repatriation in 2009, Gothenburg has been somewhat slow to respond to the requests, partly due to the fragile condition of the textiles. According to the museum website, even the transport of these objects between the museum's archives and their exhibition space in Sweden—a distance of only a few kilometers—has resulted in their **deterioration**. Despite these concerns, a plan has been put in place to systematically return some of the textiles to Peru. The first four were delivered **in 2014**, and another 79 **in 2017**. Further works are set to be returned by 2021. The repatriated textiles are now in the possession of Peru's General Directorate of Museums of the Ministry of Culture.

The case of the Gothenburg Paracas textiles highlights the need not only for governmental and institutional agreements regarding the restitution of illegally acquired objects, but also for oversight concerning the continued stewardship and preservation of these fragile artworks.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Additional resources:

This textile at the Brooklyn Museum

The Gothenburg Collection of Paracas textiles

Article on the looting of Paracas textiles on Trafficking Culture

"Peru recovers 79 pre-Hispanic textiles illegally kept in Sweden," *The Local,* December 15, 2017

"Peru recovers Paracas textiles," *Diario UNO*, December 15, 2017

"Sweden Returns Ancient Andean Textiles to Peru," *The New York Times*, June 5, 2014

Frame, Mary. 2003–4. "What the Women Were Wearing: A Deposit of Early Nasca Dresses and Shawls from Cahuachi, Peru." *Textile Museum Journal,* 42/43:13–53.

Paul, Anne. 1990. "Paracas ritual attire: symbols of authority in ancient Peru," *Civilization of the American Indian series*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Paul, Anne. 1991. *Paracas art & architecture : object and context in South Coastal Peru,* 1st ed. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Silverman, Helaine. 2002. "Differentiating Paracas Necropolis and Early Nasca Textiles," *Andean archaeology II: Art, Landscape, and Society*, edited by W. H. Isbell and H. Silverman. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 71–105.

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17.12.18: The Taj Mahal

by ROSHNA KAPADIA



Figure 17.12.18.1: Taj Mahal, Agra, India, 1632-53 (photo: **Mathew Knott**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Shah Jahan was the fifth ruler of the Mughal dynasty. During his third regnal year, his favorite wife, known as Mumtaz Mahal, died due to complications arising from the birth of their fourteenth child. Deeply saddened, the emperor started planning the construction of a suitable, permanent resting place for his beloved wife almost immediately. The result of his efforts and resources was the creation of what was called the Luminous Tomb in contemporary Mughal texts and is what the world knows today as the Taj Mahal.

In general terms, Sunni Muslims favor a simple burial, under an open sky. But notable domed mausolea for Mughals (as well as for other Central Asian rulers) were built prior to Shah Jahan's rule, so in this regard, the Taj is not unique. The Taj is, however, exceptional for its monumental scale, stunning gardens, lavish ornamentation, and its overt use of white marble.



Figure 17.12.18.2: Taj Mahal and Yamuna River (photo: **Louis Vest**, CC BY-NC 2.0)

The location



Figure 17.12.18.3: Agra, Uttar Pradesh, India

Shah Jahan built the Taj Mahal in Agra, where he took the throne in 1628. First conquered by Muslim invaders in the eleventh century, the city had been transformed into a flourishing area of trade during Shah Jahan's rule. Situated on the banks of the Yamuna River allowed for easy access to water, and Agra soon earned the reputation as a "riverfront garden city," on account of its meticulously planned gardens, lush with flowering bushes and fruit-bearing trees in the sixteenth century.

Paradise on Earth



Figure 17.12.18.4: Entrance, Taj Mahal, Agra, India, 1632-53

Entry to the Taj Mahal complex via the forecourt, which in the sixteenth century housed shops, and through a monumental gate of inlaid and highly decorated red sandstone made for a first impression of grand splendor and symmetry: aligned along a long water channel through this gate is the Taj—set majestically on a raised platform on the north end. The rectangular complex runs roughly 1860 feet on the north-south axis, and 1000 feet on the east-west axis.



Figure 17.12.18.5: Aerial view from Google Earth, Taj Mahal, Agra, India, 1632-53

The white-marble mausoleum is flanked on either side by identical buildings in red sandstone. One of these serves as a mosque, and the other, whose exact function is unknown, provides architectural balance.

The marble structure is topped by a bulbous dome and surrounded by four minarets of equal height. While minarets in Islamic architecture are usually associated with mosques—for use by the muezzin who leads the call to prayer—here, they are not functional, but ornamental, once again underscoring the Mughal focus on structural balance and harmony.

The interior floor plan of the Taj exhibits the *hasht bishisht* (eight levels) principle, alluding to the eight levels of paradise. Consisting of eight halls and side rooms connected to the main space in a cross-axial plan—the favored design for Islamic architecture from the mid-fifteenth century—the center of the main chamber holds Mumtaz Mahal's intricately decorated marble cenotaph on a raised platform. The emperor's cenotaph was laid down beside hers after he died three decades later—both are encased in an octagon of exquisitely carved white-marble screens. The coffins bearing their remains lie in the spaces directly beneath the cenotaphs.



Figure 17.12.18.6: Cenotaphs, Taj Mahal, Agra, India, 1632-53 (photo: **Derek A Young**, CC BY-NC 2.0)



Figure 17.12.18.7: Carving and inlaid stone, Taj Mahal, Agra, India, 1632-53 (photo: **Martin Lambie**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Qur'anic verses inscribed into the walls of the building and designs inlaid with semi-precious stones—coral, onyx, carnelian, amethyst, and lapis lazuli—add to the splendor of the Taj's white exterior. The dominant theme of the carved imagery is floral, showing some recognizable, and other fanciful species of flowers—another link to the theme of paradise

Some of the Taj Mahal's architecture fuses aspects from other Islamic traditions, but other aspects reflect indigenous style elements. In particular, this is evident in the umbrella-shaped ornamental chhatris (dome shaped pavillions) atop the pavilions and minarets.

And whereas most Mughal-era buildings tended to use red stone for exteriors and functional architecture (such as military buildings and forts)—reserving white marble for special inner spaces or for the tombs of holy men, the Taj's entire main structure is constructed of white marble and the auxiliary buildings are composed of red sandstone. This white-and-red color scheme of the built complex may correspond with principles laid down in ancient Hindu texts—in which white stood for purity and the priestly class, and red represented the color of the warrior class.

The gardens

Stretching in front of the Taj Mahal is a monumental char bagh garden. Typically, a char bagh was divided into four main quadrants, with a building (such as a pavilion or tomb) along its central axis. When viewed from the main gateway today, the Taj Mahal appears to deviate from this norm, as it is not centrally placed within the garden, but rather located at the end of a complex that is backed by the river, such as was found in other Mughal-era pleasure gardens.



Figure 17.12.18.8: View from the Mahtab Bagh, Taj Mahal, Agra, India, 1632-53 (photo: **Steve Evans**, CC BY-NC 2.0)

When viewed from the Mahtab Bagh, moonlight gardens, across the river, however, the monument appears to be centrally located in a grander complex than originally thought. This view, only possible when one incorporates the Yamuna River into the complex, speaks to the brilliance of the architect. Moreover, by raising the Taj onto an elevated foundation, the builders ensured that Shah Jahan's funerary complex as well as the tombs of other Mughal nobles along with their attached gardens could be viewed from many angles along the river.

The garden incorporated waterways and fountains. This was a new type of gardening that was introduced to India by Babur, Shah Jahan's great great grandfather in the sixteenth century. Given the passage of time and the intervention of many individuals in the garden since its construction, it is hard to determine the original planting and layout scheme of the garden beds at the Taj.

From the outset, the Taj was conceived of as a building that would be remembered for its magnificence for ages to come, and to that end, the best material and skills were employed. The finest marble came from quarries 250 miles away in Makrarna, Rajasthan. Mir Abd Al-Karim was designated as the lead architect. Abdul Haqq was chosen as the calligrapher, and Ustad Ahmad Lahauri was made the supervisor. Shah Jahan made sure that the principles of Mughal architecture were incorporated into the design throughout the building process.



Figure 17.12.18.9: Taj Mahal, Agra, India, 1632-53 (photo: **LASZLO ILYES**, CC BY 2.0)

What the Taj Mahal represents

When Mumtaz Mahal died at age 38 in 1631, the emperor is reported to have refused to engage in court festivities, postponed two of his sons' weddings, and allegedly made frequent visits to his wife's temporary resting place (in Burhanpur) during the time it took for the building of the Taj to be completed. Stories like these have led to the Taj Mahal being referred to as an architectural "symbol of love" in popular literature. But there are other theories: one suggests that the Taj is not a funeral monument, and that Shah Jahan might have built a similar structure even if his wife had not died. Based on the metaphoric specificity of Qur'anic and other inscriptions and the emperor's love of thrones, another theory maintains that the Taj Mahal is a symbolic representation of a Divine Throne—the seat of God—on the Day of Judgment. A third view holds that the monument was built to represent a replica of a house of paradise. In the "paradisiacal mansion" theory, the Taj was something of a vanity project, built to glorify Mughal rule and the emperor himself.

If his accession to the throne was smooth, Shah Jahan's departure from it was not. The emperor died not as a ruler, but as a prisoner. Relegated to Agra Fort under house arrest for eight years prior to his death in 1666, Shah Jahan could enjoy only a distant view of the Taj Mahal. But the resplendent marble mausoleum he built "with posterity in mind" endures, more than 350 years after it was constructed, and is believed to be the most recognizable sight in the world today. Laid to rest beside his beloved wife in the Taj Mahal, the man once called Padshah—King of the World—enjoys enduring fame, too, for having commissioned the world's most extravagant and memorable mausoleum.

Backstory

The Taj Mahal is one of the world's great tourist attractions, hosting millions of visitors per year. Though it was designated as **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1983 and is currently overseen by the Archaeological Survey of India, its heavy visitor traffic is just one of the many factors that threaten the integrity of the site.

One of the biggest risk factors for the Taj Mahal is air pollution, which discolors the exterior and, some experts think, causes acid rain that deteriorates the marble. Air pollution is caused by a multitude of factors including industry, vehicle emissions, and the burning of household waste. The government of India designated an area called the Taj Trapezium Zone (named for its trapezoidal shape), a 10,400 square kilometer swath (about 4,000 square miles) of Agra encompassing the Taj Mahal as well as the Agra Fort and the historic Mughal settlement of Fatehpur Sikri. Oil refineries and coal-burning industries have been ordered to regulate their emissions or switch to natural gas within this zone, and most have complied.

There has also been a ban on auto traffic near the Taj Mahal, air quality monitors have been installed, and the Archaeological Survey of India has proposed a **tourist cap** and increased fees to limit visitor impact.

Another potential risk for the Taj Mahal is the drying up of the Yamuna River, which flows along the rear of the complex. The river has been partially dammed upstream from the Taj Mahal in order to augment municipal water supplies, and some argue that the changes in the soil due to the lower water table may be threatening the structural integrity of the monument. **Various activists and scholars** have claimed to have found cracks in the marble platform, sinking of the structure, and tipping of the minarets, though **UNESCO** asserts that

> **The physical fabric is in good condition and structural stability, nature of foundation, verticality of the minarets and other constructional aspects of Taj Mahal have been studied and continue to be monitored.**

The Taj Mahal is rightly a top destination for millions of travelers. As global tourism grows and the economic pressures of industry continue to increase, the authorities who oversee the site must strive to implement legal and structural measures to ensure that this irreplaceable monument survives.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Additional resources:

The Taj Mahal on the UNESCO website

View from the roof (360) from The Google Art Project

Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor, translated, edited and annotated by Wheeler M. Thackston (Oxford University

Press, 1996).

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Giles Tillotson, *Taj Mahal* (Harvard University Press, 2008).

“How to Save the Taj Mahal?” Smithsonian.com, September 2011

“Is a cap on tourists at the Taj Mahal a sign of things to come?” *The Telegraph,* January 5, 2018

“The Slow Decay of the Taj Mahal,” *The Diplomat*, August 1, 2016

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17.12.20: The Great Pyramids of Giza

by DR. AMY CALVERT



Figure 17.12.20.1: Pyramid of Khafre (Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

One of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world

The last remaining of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, the great pyramids of Giza are perhaps the most famous and discussed structures in history. These massive monuments were unsurpassed in height for thousands of years after their construction and continue to amaze and enthrall us with their overwhelming mass and seemingly impossible perfection. Their exacting orientation and mind-boggling construction has elicited many theories about their origins, including unsupported suggestions that they had extra-terrestrial impetus. However, by examining the several hundred years prior to their emergence on the Giza plateau, it becomes clear that these incredible structures were the result of many experiments, some more successful than others, and represent an apogee in the development of the royal mortuary complex.

Three pyramids, three rulers

The three primary pyramids on the Giza plateau were built over the span of three generations by the rulers Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure. Each pyramid was part of a royal mortuary complex that also included a temple at its base and a long stone causeway (some nearly 1 kilometer in length) leading east from the plateau to a valley temple on the edge of the floodplain.

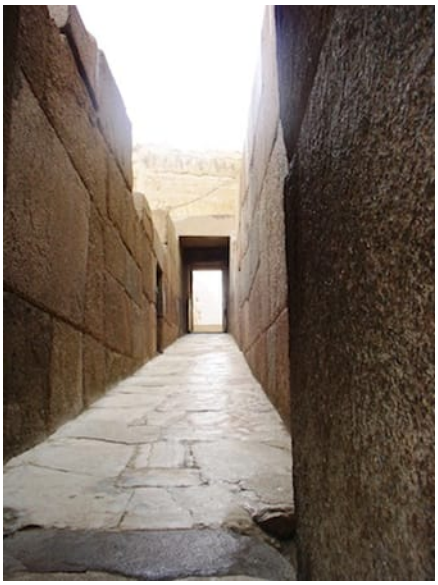


Figure 17.12.20.2: View up the causeway from Khafre's valley temple towards his pyramid (Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

Other (smaller) pyramids, and small tombs

In addition to these major structures, several smaller pyramids belonging to queens are arranged as satellites. A major cemetery of smaller tombs, known as mastabas (Arabic for 'bench' in reference to their shape—flat-roofed, rectangular, with sloping sides), fills the area to the east and west of the pyramid of Khufu and were constructed in a grid-like pattern for prominent members of the court. Being buried near the pharaoh was a great honor and helped ensure a prized place in the afterlife.

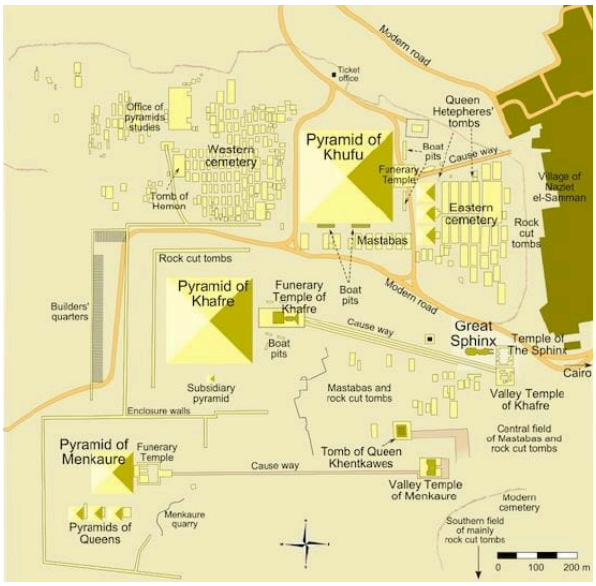


Figure 17.12.20.3: Giza Pyramid Complex

A reference to the sun

The shape of the pyramid was a solar reference, perhaps intended as a solidified version of the rays of the sun. Texts talk about the sun's rays as a ramp the pharaoh mounts to climb to the sky—the earliest pyramids, such as the Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara—were actually designed as a staircase. The pyramid was also clearly connected to the sacred ben-ben stone, an icon of the primeval mound that was considered the place of initial creation. The pyramid was considered a place of regeneration for the deceased ruler.

Construction

Many questions remain about the construction of these massive monuments, and theories abound as to the actual methods used. The workforce needed to build these structures is also still much discussed. Discovery of a town for workers to the south of the plateau has offered some answers. It is likely that there was a permanent group of skilled craftsmen and builders who were supplemented by seasonal crews of approximately 2,000 conscripted peasants. These crews were divided into gangs of 200 men, with each group further divided into teams of 20. Experiments indicate that these groups of 20 men could haul the 2.5 ton blocks from quarry to pyramid in about 20 minutes, their path eased by a lubricated surface of wet silt. An estimated 340 stones could be moved daily from quarry to construction site, particularly when one considers that many of the blocks (such as those in the upper courses) were considerably smaller.



Figure 17.12.20.4: View up the side of Khufu's pyramid showing scale of the core blocks (Photo: Dr. Amy Calvert)

Backstory

We are used to seeing the pyramids at Giza in alluring photographs, where they appear as massive and remote monuments rising up from an open, barren desert. Visitors might be surprised to find, then, that there is a golf course and resort only a few hundred feet from the Great Pyramid, and that the burgeoning suburbs of Giza (part of the greater metropolitan area of Cairo) have expanded right up to the foot of the Sphinx. This urban encroachment and the problems that come with it—such as pollution, waste, illegal activities, and auto traffic—are now the biggest threats to these invaluable examples of global cultural heritage.

The pyramids were inscribed into the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1979, and since 1990, the organization has sponsored over a dozen missions to evaluate their status. It has supported the restoration of the Sphinx, as well as measures to curb the impact of tourism and manage the growth of the neighboring village. Still, threats to the site continue: air pollution from waste incineration **contributes to the degradation of the stones**, and the massive illegal quarrying of sand on the neighboring plateau has created holes large enough to be seen on Google Earth. Egypt's 2011 uprisings and their chaotic political and economic aftermath also negatively impacted tourism, one of the country's most important industries, and the number of visitors is only now **beginning to rise once more**.

UNESCO has continually monitored these issues, but its biggest task with regard to Giza has been to advocate for the **rerouting of a highway** that was originally slated to cut through the desert between the pyramids and the necropolis of Saqqara to the south. The government eventually agreed to build the highway north of the pyramids. However, as the Cairo metropolitan area (the largest in Africa, with a population of over 20 million) continues to expand, planners are now proposing a multilane tunnel to be constructed underneath the Giza Plateau. UNESCO and ICOMOS **are calling** for in-depth studies of the project's potential impact, as well as an overall site management plan for the Giza pyramids that would include ways to halt the continued impact of illegal dumping and quarrying.

As massive as they are, the pyramids at Giza are not immutable. With the rapid growth of Cairo, they will need sufficient attention

and protection if they are to remain intact as key touchstones of ancient history.

Backstory by Dr. Naraelle Hohensee

Interactive Content

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Additional resources

Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

UNESCO webpage for Memphis and its Necropolis – the Pyramid Fields from Giza to Dahshur

Giza 3D

Giza archives, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Building the Great Pyramid, BBC

Mark Lehner, *The Complete Pyramids*, Thames and Hudson, 2008.

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INDEX

A

agora
17.4: Place and identity
Ark of the Covenant
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
Attic
17.2: Whose art? Museums and repatriation
author
17.3.2: Views of past and present- the Forum Romanum and archaeological context

B

Battle of Waterloo
17.7: Documenting and protecting cultural heritage
Black Mountain College
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm

C

caduceus
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
Calvinist
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
camp
17.1: A beginner's guide
casus belli
17.3: Ruins, reconstruction, and renewal
Charles VII, King of Spain, Naples, and Sicily
17.8: The role of archaeology
cherubim
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
commission
17.2: Whose art? Museums and repatriation
conservation
17.8: The role of archaeology
Constantine V
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm

D

Daesh
17.6: Destruction, looting, and trafficking
damnatio memoriae
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
deified
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
Divine Liturgy
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm

E

ex novo
17.3: Ruins, reconstruction, and renewal

F

fertile crescent
17.4: Place and identity
findspots
17.8: The role of archaeology
Flavian dynasty
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm

G

Ganga
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
Grand Tour travelers
17.8: The role of archaeology
Gueux
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm

H

Han Dynasty
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
Hawaiki homeland
17.2: Whose art? Museums and repatriation

I

iconoclast
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
iconoclastic
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
illuminated manuscript
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
Irene
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
Isis
17.4: Place and identity

J

Justinian II
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm

K

Khmer Rouge
17.6: Destruction, looting, and trafficking

L

Lent
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
Leo III
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm

M

Māori
17.2: Whose art? Museums and repatriation
mercy seat
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
Methodios I
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
Mongol court
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
Mount Vesuvius
17.8: The role of archaeology
Mujahideen
17.6: Destruction, looting, and trafficking

N

napoleon
17.2: Whose art? Museums and repatriation

O

oasis
17.4: Place and identity

P

parvenu
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
polychromy
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
popish
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm

R

remargined
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
restored
17.8: The role of archaeology

S

Safavid
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
shaikhs
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
Shang dynasty
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
Shi'i
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
silk routes
17.4: Place and identity
Sufi
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
sympotic
17.2: Whose art? Museums and repatriation

T

Taliban
17.6: Destruction, looting, and trafficking
tetrapylon
17.4: Place and identity
Theodora
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
Theoktistos
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
Theophilus
17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm
tombaroli
17.6: Destruction, looting, and trafficking
trafficking
17.7: Documenting and protecting cultural heritage

U

unification of Italy in 1860
17.8: The role of archaeology
unprovenanced
17.1: A beginner's guide

V

Via dell'Abbondanza
17.8: The role of archaeology

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S

Sample Word 1 | Sample Definition 1

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    - 17.2.6: Paikea at the American Museum of Natural History - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.2.7: Nazi looting- Egon Schiele’s Portrait of Wally - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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    - 17.2.9: Looting, collecting, and exhibiting- the Bubon bronzes - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.2.10: Napoleon’s appropriation of Italian cultural treasures - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.2.11: Napoleon’s booty—Perugino’s (gorgeous) Decemviri Altarpiece - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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    - 17.3.5: The Roman Forum- Part 3, Ruins in modern imagination - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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    - 17.3.7: Looted and revered- The Rosetta Stone - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.3.8: Ruin as abattoir, the Colosseum - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.3.9: Before the fire- Notre Dame, Paris - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.3.10: Reconstructing a masterpiece — Mantegna’s St. James Led to his Execution - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 17.4: Place and identity - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.4.1: Palmyra- the modern destruction of an ancient city - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.4.2: Ancient Babylon- excavations, restorations and modern tourism - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.4.3: Venice’s San Marco, a mosaic of spiritual treasure - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.4.4: The Renaissance Synagogues of Venice

- *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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    - 17.4.8: Seneca Village- the lost history of African Americans in New York - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.4.9: Ceremonial belt (Kwakwaka'wakw) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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    - 17.5.7: Iconoclasm in the Netherlands in the Sixteenth Century - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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    - 17.6.3: Save culture – end trafficking - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.6.4: Trafficking the past - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.6.5: We will need Monuments Men for as long as ancient sites remain battlefields - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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    - 17.6.7: Lost History- the terracotta sculpture of Djenné-Djenno - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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    - 17.6.9: Sotheby's Returns Looted 10th Century Statue to Cambodia - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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    - 17.7.1: Diarna- documenting the places of a vanishing Jewish history - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.7.2: A Landmark Decision- Penn Station, Grand Central, and the architectural heritage of NYC - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.7.3: Frameworks for cultural heritage protection- from ancient writing to modern law - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.7.4: A race against time- manuscripts and digital preservation - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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    - 17.7.6: A Renaissance masterpiece nearly lost in war- Piero della Francesca, The Resurrection - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.7.7: Saving Torcello, an ancient church in the Venetian Lagoon - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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    - 17.8.1: What is archaeology- understanding the archaeological record - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.8.2: Underwater archaeology and the Antikythera Shipwreck - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.8.3: Saved by shipwreck, The Antikythera Youth - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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    - 17.8.5: The importance of the archaeological findspot- The Lullingstone Busts - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.8.6: When there is no archaeological record- Portrait Bust of a Flavian Woman (Fonseca bust) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.8.7: Conservation vs. restoration- the Palace at Knossos (Crete) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 17.9: Cultural heritage endangered round the world - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.9.1: Saving Venice - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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- 17.10.1: What can be done to protect cultural heritage? - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 17.10.2: Organizations and agencies that work to protect cultural heritage - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

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- 17.12.13: Great Mosque of Djenné (Djenné peoples) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 17.12.14: Mogao caves at Dunhuang - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 17.12.15: Machu Picchu - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 17.12.16: The Paracas Textile - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 17.12.17: Leonardo, Last Supper - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 17.12.18: The Taj Mahal - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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  - 17.1: A beginner's guide - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.1.1: ARCHES, an introduction - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.1.2: What is cultural heritage? - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.1.3: Cultural heritage “in crisis” - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.1.4: Blow it up- cultural heritage and film - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 17.2: Whose art? Museums and repatriation - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.2.1: Repatriating artworks - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.2.2: From tomb to museum- the story of the Sarpedon Krater - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.2.3: The many meanings of the Sarpedon Krater - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.2.4: Who owns the Parthenon sculptures? - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.2.5: Plunder, war, Napoleon and the Horses of San Marco - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.2.6: Paikea at the American Museum of Natural History - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.2.7: Nazi looting- Egon Schiele’s Portrait of Wally - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.2.8: Seizure of Looted Antiquities Illuminates What Museums Want Hidden - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.2.9: Looting, collecting, and exhibiting- the Bubon bronzes - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.2.10: Napoleon’s appropriation of Italian cultural treasures - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.2.11: Napoleon’s booty—Perugino’s (gorgeous) Decemviri Altarpiece - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 17.3: Ruins, reconstruction, and renewal - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.3.1: Destruction, Memory, and Monuments- The Many Lives of the Parthenon - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.3.2: Views of past and present- the Forum Romanum and archaeological context - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.3.3: The Roman Forum- Part 1, Ruins in modern imagination - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.3.4: The Roman Forum- Part 2, Ruins in modern imagination (The Renaissance and after) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.3.5: The Roman Forum- Part 3, Ruins in modern imagination - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.3.6: Rome’s layered history — the Castel Sant’Angelo - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.3.7: Looted and revered- The Rosetta Stone - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.3.8: Ruin as abattoir, the Colosseum - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.3.9: Before the fire- Notre Dame, Paris - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.3.10: Reconstructing a masterpiece — Mantegna’s St. James Led to his Execution - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 17.4: Place and identity - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.4.1: Palmyra- the modern destruction of an ancient city - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.4.2: Ancient Babylon- excavations, restorations and modern tourism - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.4.3: Venice’s San Marco, a mosaic of spiritual treasure - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.4.4: The Renaissance Synagogues of Venice

- *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.4.5: Unearthing the Aztec past, the destruction of the Templo Mayor - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.4.6: Bayt Farhi, a Jewish house in Damascus - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.4.7: Unearthing New York's history of slavery - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.4.8: Seneca Village- the lost history of African Americans in New York - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.4.9: Ceremonial belt (Kwakwaka'wakw) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.4.10: Voyage to the moai of Rapa Nui (Easter Island) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.4.11: The Gwoździec synagogue- the lost art of painted wooden synagogues - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 17.5: The many forms of iconoclasm - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.5.1: Erased from memory- the Severan Tondo - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.5.2: Rewriting history- damnatio memoriae in ancient Rome - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.5.3: Byzantine Iconoclasm and the Triumph of Orthodoxy - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.5.4: Making and Mutilating Manuscripts of the Shahnama - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.5.5: Folio from a Shahnama, The Bier of Iskandar (Alexander the Great) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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    - 17.5.7: Iconoclasm in the Netherlands in the Sixteenth Century - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.5.8: Submerged, burned, and scattered- celebrating the destruction of objects in South Asia - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.5.9: "Creative iconoclasm"- a tale of two monasteries - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.5.10: Erasing Art- Rauschenberg's Erased de Kooning drawing - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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- 17.6: Destruction, looting, and trafficking - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.6.1: Mesa Verde and the preservation of Ancestral Puebloan heritage - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.6.2: A market for looted antiquities - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.6.3: Save culture – end trafficking - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.6.4: Trafficking the past - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 17.6.5: We will need Monuments Men for as long as ancient sites remain battlefields - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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    - 17.9.1: Saving Venice - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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- 17.9.5: Cultural heritage at risk- Syria - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 17.9.6: Cultural heritage at risk- Cambodia - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 17.9.7: Cultural heritage at risk- United States - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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- 17.10.1: What can be done to protect cultural heritage? - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 17.10.2: Organizations and agencies that work to protect cultural heritage - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

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