

ARCHÉOLOGIE ET TRANSFERTS CULTURELS

The Dialectics of the Antiquities Rush ¹

Suzanne Marchand

Having been involved in the study of the history of archaeology for some time now, I have become interested a set of global cultural dynamics which begin in about 1800, and which I will call “the dialectics of the antiquities rush”. According by my definition, an ‘antiquities rush’ is a roughly simultaneous attempt by several individuals or states to take advantage of an opportune moment to extract antiquities for export. It may be done either by buying artifacts at reduced prices, by bribing local authorities, or simply by pilfering; typically, the extractors are amateurs, and, as “rush” implies, there is usually time pressure; the territory is usually distant from the European metropole, and for one reason or another, not well policed by its supposed sovereigns. The term “antiquities rush” is, of course, meant to suggest the same sort of cupidity, haste, and reckless processes of extraction on exhibit in the ideal-typical “gold”, “silver”, or “copper” rush – and like these quintessentially nineteenth-century forms of sub-colonial assault on the land, the antiquities rush differs from previous forms of acquisition not in kind, but in the three factors the American historian Alfred Chandler long ago made characteristic of the second industrial revolution: increased speed, enhanced scale, expanded scope². All of these rushes enabled the speedy traveling of artifacts through space, as an unprecedented series of subcolonial trawls transferred objects to European museums and private collections, enriching western scholarship and diversifying western tastes. Ironically, however, the net result of this transit was to spawn vehement and perhaps irreversible nationalist attempts to insist on the *immobility* of objects.

In this synthetic paper, I hope to sketch some of the global, political and cultural consequences of this passage, from era of the great “rushes”, during which millions of objects traveled, essentially in one direction (from south to north and from east to west), to the era of institutionalized immobility³. It is part of an attempt to understand the cultural history of the modern field sciences, and their development in what we can now see was a brief but critical moment, lasting from about 1800 until about 1945 (after which time some archaeological prospectors moved southward, to Latin America and to sub-Saharan Africa). This is the period I have described elsewhere as the era of “open door science”, a period in which

1 A Spanish translation of this essay was published as “La dialéctica en la fiebre de los hallazgos arqueológicos,” in *Istor: Revista di historia*, 10, nr. 43 (2010). I hope that this essay, something of a synthesis of work in the history of archaeology I have done over the course of about two decades, provides a proper tribute to the work of Ève Gran-Aymerich, whose remarkable ability to survey the whole of the history of archaeology with such erudition and elegance.

2 Chandler 1990.

3 For some reflections on current problems relating to cultural property and museums, see Gibbon 2005.

Europeans ranged more or less freely across the world, and used their access, their superior wealth, and sometimes their imperial power to extract vast collections of flora, fauna, and archaeological treasures⁴.

There has been a good deal of work recently on these extractive procedures and the ways in which their fruits were used to enrich Europeans and justify empire⁵. I have no real dispute with that line of thought, except that it misses some crucial, dialectical developments. First of all, imperialist ideas and practices were accompanied by intense, inter-European competition, and local reactions to extraction, which in some places quickly, in others more slowly, actually set nationalist processes in motion. Excellent recent books by Donald Malcolm Reid on Egypt, Wendy Shaw on the Ottoman Empire and Tapati Guha-Thakurta on India have shown this clearly, but are little read by Europeanists, all too often eager simply to criticize their own traditions, and sometimes too hubristic to believe they need to take into account the agency of others⁶. And secondly, those who focus on imperialist usually fail to consider how important the new speed, scope and scale of antiquities extraction was to the *destruction* of European aesthetic ideals. If popular culture and museum exhibitions lagged, as they surely did, already by the pre-1914 era a number of European scholars were calling for an end to Eurocentric views of art. What I would like to do in this essay, in theoretical terms, is to link the imperialist processes with their nationalist forms of reaction and with their unexpected intellectual consequences. My hope is to try to get past a division conventional in the history of science, and becoming more prominent in the history of archaeology, a division that separates “externalist” histories of the discipline, focuses on context and politics, and “internalist” histories, which tell only the story of scholarly pursuits, and usually achievements.

A second desire here is to get past work modeled on the ideas of Edward Said and Michel Foucault, which supposes that quests for power always shape knowledge – and by extension supposes that the powerful are able to control and anticipate the outcomes of their quests. If we would only scrutinize our own intellectual labors, and apply what we learn to the now all-too-easily parodied nineteenth century, I believe we would realize that we can't possibly uphold a model of knowledge-making that excludes curiosity, serendipity, aesthetic tastes, ideas we get from others, outdated concepts we learned in our youth, the desire to please and to vex, the need to say something new, but not too new, etc. One might say that all of this can be comprehended under Foucault's idea of 'power' but I doubt it. Nor can we doubt – judging by our own experiences, again – that there is no such thing as an all-embracing “discourse” which encompasses both what a scholar of Islam and the average person on the street in Bogalooosa, Louisiana might say about religion, or about the meaning of patriotism. Let me be clear: I do not want to praise imperialism, or to pretend to bury it. What I want to

4 See Marchand 2009.

5 Anderson 2006; Trümpler 2008; Diaz-Andreu 2007; Altekamp 2000.

6 See Guha-Thakurta 2004 and 1992; Reid 2002; Shaw 2003.

do is to understand, historically speaking, what it has done for archaeology and for the interpretation and display of artifacts, for Europe, and for the rest of the world as well.

The paper has three parts, the latter two much shorter than the first. I will start by offering a few examples of the extraction of artifacts in the period between, roughly, 1800 and 1914, describing along the way their political-legal fallout. The second part will describe some of the intellectual consequences of the antiquities rushes, offering just a few examples of those whose experience led them to elaborate new understandings of the history of art. The third will briefly describe the lag-time between the articulation of these post-classical world-views, and the exhibition of non-western artifacts, and then suggest just a few of the costs and benefits of the antiquities rush.

THE EXTRACTION OF ARTIFACTS

The dialectics of the “rush” I will describe do not apply to events before about 1800, although there certainly were treasure-trawlers who celebrated their triumphs by displaying the cultural goods of others – the Romans spring to mind – and proto-nationalist appropriations of the past – here, the Scandinavians were already active in the early seventeenth century. There were immense private collections and antiquities laws, of a sort – though these were largely extended versions of ancient treasure-trove laws, ensuring the king the right to gold and silver finds. The rushes really begin, in my view, once whole nation states get involved, and *national* museums (as well as monument commissions, academies of science, and patronage associations), in addition to private antiquaries, begin to do the collecting and exhibiting; these institutional changes – and the legal and political consequences they entail – laid the groundwork for new sorts of clashes over monuments. And this story, I think, really begins in empire’s old heartland, Rome – but with a different sent of conquerors, the French.

Rome was, for centuries, where one purchased or picked up antiquities, and the Papacy had long been proud of its collections of pagan antiquities – Egyptian, Etruscan, Greek and Roman – a collection which symbolized Roman Catholicism’s global empire. It was also in the Papal state that some of the first antiquities laws protecting monuments found in Rome were passed: in 1646, 1686, 1701, 1704, 1717, and 1726 – but none of these really worked, or were seriously enforced. What pressed the Romans to issue another prohibition, and to try to actually enforce it, was a series of intra-European imperial acts, viz., the French occupation of Rome and the hurried seizure of 83 ancient masterpieces from Roman museums between 1797 and 1799, including the Apollo Belvedere, the Laocoön, and the Belvedere Torso. The sculptures were sent back to Paris, and put on display in the Musée Napoleon. But when the Pope was again recognized as the city’s sovereign after the Concordat in 1801, reaction to French extraction surged. In 1802, Pius VII issued an edict prohibiting exports and defining ancient monuments – including those in private hands – as public goods; he commissioned excavations (under the supervision of an Italian antiquarian, Carol Fea) in the Forum to assert Rome’s cultural autonomy and provide objects for the now-depleted museums⁷. The

7 See Ridley 1992, 17 sq.

Napoleonic interlude – the French reoccupied the city and ruled it as a department, from 1809-1814 – was already less extractive, and when Pius returned to political power in 1815, Carlo Fea was made Commissioner of Antiquities and the French were forced to give back what was now considered to be “Roman” property⁸. After this time, collectors in the market for something impressive moved eastward in their search for booty, and archaeologists, now mostly Italian, settled in to dig for years or even decades at specific spots, rather than seeking quick rewards. Even today, a lively *private* trade in antiquities goes on in Rome; but it is largely underground, and states or large institutions only involve themselves with it at their peril – as the Getty Museum recently found out. Italian reaction to the state-sponsored raiding of Roman antiquities set something of a precedent; and Pius VII could be celebrated even by anti-clerical liberals as an Italian, national hero⁹.

The Greek case is a little different, as Ottoman-controlled Greece was, many centuries, not easily accessible to would-be collectors. Interestingly, the infamous antiquities despoiler Lord Elgin began extracting the pediments from the temple of Athena on the Acropolis just after Pius VII began his efforts to protect Rome’s patrimony, that is, between 1801-1805; he had arranged his visit to Athens in 1799, while serving as ambassador to the Sublime Porte in Constantinople, intending only to make copies of the Parthenon marbles, but in gratitude to the British for their help in ousting the French from Egypt, Ottoman authorities essentially told him to help himself – and he did, to his own cost. When the British Museum finally agreed to buy the marbles from him in 1816, they paid him far less for the collection than Elgin had spent acquiring it, and the Scottish aristocrat never got out of debt, nor recovered from Byron’s stinging criticism. But Elgin was not alone in attempting to use the opportunity of crumbling political control to acquire Greek goodies. Soon thereafter, a German-British group also extracted the pediments of the Aphaia Temple at Aegina (sold to Ludwig I of Bavaria in 1813, and still at the Glyptothek) and exported a considerable number of marbles from Bassae in 1811-1812, the very years in which George Gordon, Lord Byron, penned his attacks on Elgin, in *The Curse of Minerva* (1811) and *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (1812). Inspired by Byron (and by nationalist-revolutionary rhetoric), Greek reaction was swift; the Society of Friends of the Muses in Athens was formed in 1813. Greek nationalists may or may not have felt particularly powerfully about the ancient pagan past, but those who had traveled to Italy, France or England learned quickly how devoted Europeans had become to ancient Hellas, and they played this philhellenic card at every opportunity – or allowed others to play it for them.

Playing up Greek antiquity, and antiquities, helped the Greeks win their war against the Turks – and despite the fact that it was ruled by a foreign king and populated by eastern orthodox peasants rather than secular Athenians, the new Greek state’s legitimacy rested heavily on antiquity’s foundations¹⁰. Even before wars ended, in 1827, the Greek national assembly passed a prohibition on the export of antiquities – though this was amended in 1829 to allow for the export of finds “if it is requested by a scientific institution of any nation”.

8 Diaz-Andreu 2007, 72. By no means did the French give back all they had taken from occupied lands, however.

9 See Hoijtink 2008, 39.

10 See Hamilakis 2007.

In unstable circumstances – for Greece’s new Bavarian king did not arrive until 1833 – the cartographers, botanists and archaeologists who had accompanied France’s military expedition to the Morea were thus permitted to continue work for several years – but with a difference. This time they took relatively little – only a few nice metopes from Olympia – a sure sign that interlocutors and experience on the ground had altered their conception of “the glory that was Greece”.

Even so, the Morea expedition caused a reaction in Greek officialdom, and in 1834, the chamber of deputies passed the first full Greek antiquities legislation¹¹. In 1833, the German liberal scholar Ludwig Ross had been appointed as conservator of antiquities (Ephoros); but in 1836, Ross, despite his ardent philhellenism, and despite having made enormous contributions to the development of field archaeology, museum collections, and conservation in the new nation, was removed from his job in favor of a Greek scholar. In the course of his hard work, Ross had facilitated the sending of many artifacts to the antiquities-crazed Bavarian King, Ludwig I (Greece was at the time ruled by Ludwig’s second son, Otto I), and had, apparently, on occasion attempted to please influential foreign leaders and visitors by presenting them with artifacts; these gifts – which Ross surely saw as gestures of good will which would enhance Greece’s image abroad – were denounced in the Greek press, and used by his enemies to engineer his ouster¹². Ross was devastated by these accusations and intrigues, but continued to live, work, and teach in Greece, hoping to be reappointed Ephoros. The revolution of September 1843, Greece’s growing commitment to “the great Idea”, and the nationalists’ lack of gratitude toward the other European nations would finally drive Ross out of Athens, despite admitting to a friend that he would now feel a stranger in any other land: “I have grown too old in the Orient [a term he regularly applied to Greece] to feel in the future at home anywhere else”¹³. A remarkable similar story to that of Ross’s denunciation disillusionment can be told of Near Eastern archaeologist Ernst Herzfeld’s services for the Shah of Iran in the 1920s and 1930s¹⁴; in both cases, the dialectics of the antiquities rush forced scholar-transplants to leave their adopted homes.

After Ross’s departure, excavations were rare in Greece; the Greek state had few funds for such extravagances, and foreigners were scared away by the ban on exports, as well as by banditry. It is instructive that the next wave of interest in Greek sites came after 1870s, as both the German state and the German buccaneer archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann vied for permission to excavate at Olympia... this time explicitly renouncing the right to bring home treasures¹⁵. You may recall that Schliemann’s really controversial extractions involved his *Trojan* material, dug up in the Greek territories of the relatively exploitable Ottoman Empire, not the stuff he got at Mycenae and Tiryns (where his work was overseen by Greek officials). As for the excavation of Olympia, the Germans’ agreement with the Greeks stipulated both that the Germans receive only doubles and casts of the finds, and that the new Reich pay to erect a museum *at Olympia* to house their finds. The Germans, and their

11 Quoted in Kalpaxis 2002, 21.

12 On Ross, see Minner 2006, especially 189-201.

13 Quoted in Minner, 265.

14 On Herzfeld, see Gunter & Hauser 2005.

15 See Marchand 1997.

museum administration, had to be satisfied with boasting about their “peaceful endeavors”, and interpreting the massive number of minor finds, which archaeologist Adolf Furtwängler described as little more than “ancient rubbish”¹⁶ – though it is upon that “rubbish” that most of the modern study of archaic Greece was built.

Let me make one more point about the Greeks, and Schliemann, before we move on. In 1872, Ottoman authorities had issued a ministerial decree banning the export of antiquities, though property owners could keep half of their share of excavated treasure. Schliemann, who began excavating Troy in 1873, was supposed to share half of “Priam’s Treasure” with the Ottomans – and when he highjacked it all, and smuggled his treasures out of the country, the Sublime Porte, naturally, objected¹⁷. A few years later – taking the opportunity to profit from Ottoman confusion in the wake of the Russo-Turkish War – Carl Humann hurriedly excavated and sent home another famous monument, the Pergamon Altar. Even though the monuments were in some sense “Greek” and the imperial elite was Muslim and Turkish, the scandals surrounding the Trojan treasure and the Pergamon Altar were so great that a new law was passed in 1884, and a Turk, rather than a foreigner, was hired to run the antiquities service¹⁸. Governments all of Europe also began to frown upon *private* excavations (which, also, did not necessarily net the national museums any artifacts) and rather to work through state archaeological services, or at least larger privately-funded committees (like the Egypt Exploration Fund) to obtain permits, and not just the property, on which to dig.

We are moving toward a more sessile, and a more bureaucratized form of antiquities-mining. We are also moving towards a situation in which local officials can and do take on a larger role in overseeing and regulating the “rush”. There would ensue a number of attempts by Ottoman officials to enforce the law, and as the British, French, and Germans all tried to get separate “secret” deals from the Sultan – who, unlike the Pope, cared little about pagan remains, and was willing to give them away if they made his European creditors or potential allies happy. But Abdul Hamid’s European educated Antiquities Director, Osman Hamdi Bey – who had also learned orientalist painting in Paris – became more and more protective of his artifacts. He staged his own excavations at Sidon, in Lebanon, where among other things he found the famous Alexander sarcophagus. In 1891, Hamdi founded his own archaeological museum in Istanbul; as the classical façade suggested, the museum was built to house the sorts of artifacts Europeans had been searching for across the Mediterranean for centuries. He also became insistent upon training *Turkish* archaeologists to work on what Hamdi increasingly considered Turkish soil¹⁹.

But if we are moving toward a more sessile, and more nationalistic world, we are also moving toward one in which canonical ideas of Greek beauty can no longer be maintained. Viewers had to learn to see the Pergamon finds as Greek – and as beautiful, in their own way. After about 1880, collecting point became more and more ecumenical – and more sweeping in its embrace. We are entering the age of what Karl Scheffler called “Anhäufspolitik”, or the

16 Furtwängler quoted in Marchand 1996, 91.

17 See Allen 1999, 252.

18 See Marchand 1996, 198-206.

19 For more on Osman Hamdi bey, see Shaw 2003.

policy of heaping things up – mostly in cellars, but with consequences for scholarly interpretation none the less²⁰.

The case of Egypt is in many ways like that of Rome. Egyptian antiquities had been coveted and possessed by Europeans long before Napoleon's ill-fated expedition, as demonstrated by the Vatican obelisk – originally brought to Rome in 37AD – and the Sphinx that sits next to Diocletian's Palace in Split, Croatia. But outright extraction here was limited between the time of the Roman Empire's fall and Napoleon's rise; as late as the 1760s, the great Danish traveler Carsten Niebuhr had found it too dangerous even to carry surveying tools around Cairo²¹. The Napoleonic depredations are well-known – less well-known, perhaps, is the fact that the reports of the *expédition d'Égypte* provided a model for many later archaeological expeditions. It was, however, after 1815 that the Egyptian antiquities rush began in earnest.

Those who descended on the region in the 1820s included the English consul Henry Salt and his French counterpart (of Italian descent) Bernadino Drovetti. Their often reckless treasure hunts netted many a masterpiece for a private collection – but the scholar and curator of the Louvre Egyptian collection, Champollion, also bought many of their finds. How ironic, then, that it would be Champollion himself who organized the first purely 'scientific' rather than merely extractive trip to Egypt in 1828-1829, and that during this trip, he would send Pasha Muhammed Ali a memorandum, asking him to protect exposed monuments from the greed and blundering stupidity of philologically-untrained collectors²². Though this had little initial effect, in 1835, Muhammed Ali issued a decree banning antiquities exports and citing European precedents for protecting national property; antiquities were to be sent to the Egyptian historian Riffa Rafii al-Tahtawi, director of the school of languages; another Egyptian was appointed to inspect important sites and to supervise the construction of a national museum²³. As in Greece, nationalism began to be linked with pagan antiquities and their pursuit. But Ottoman rulers were not so passionate about their national pasts that they could not occasionally try to use their antiquities to win European hearts; in 1842-1845, for example, Muhammed Ali allowed Richard Lepsius and his state-funded Prussian expedition to leave Egypt with 15 000 antiquities and plaster casts. These were promptly put on display in Berlin's Neues Museum, whose "Egyptian Court" opened in 1850, and became a hugely popular attraction²⁴. A big change, however, came with the appointment of Auguste Mariette as antiquities director in 1858; Mariette took the law so seriously that he refused to give the Empress Eugenie a newly discovered necklace belonging to Queen A-hetep,

20 K. Scheffler used the phrase in his *Berliner Museumskrieg*, Berlin, 1921; I discuss some of the intellectual and institutional fall-out of 'the policy of heaping things up' in Marchand 2009, chapters 4 and 9.

21 Roger Guichard, unpublished manuscript, cited with author's permission.

22 Gran-Aymerich 1998, 77-80.

23 Reid 2002, 55-56.

24 Reid 2002, 45. It must be said, however, that the Lepsius team was already much more respectful not only of the Pasha, but also of the monuments and terrain than were their predecessors; Lepsius himself prevented the illegal export of some antiquities by some Prussian officials in the name of 'German-Egyptian friendship.' See Marchand 2009, 89-90; and "Tapferen Männer in ihren preußischen Nachthemden," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 08.12.2007, 286, 41; thanks to Till van Rahden for this reference.

and prohibited virtually all European fieldwork – other than his own²⁵. When the British Egypt Exploration Fund managed to wangle digging concessions in Egypt thereafter, they had to abide by Mariette's laws – even after Egypt fell under English domination after 1882. Though the British tried to suppress it, the Germans too, began to train Egyptian scholars to excavate and oversee their own antiquities; and Egyptian nationalists began to find their Pharonic past useful in articulating their right to reclaim ownership of their deep and autonomous Egyptian history²⁶. Already in travel-book illustrations by the Egyptologist Georg Ebers (1889), one can see Egyptian mothers bringing their children to see the monuments²⁷. Under the nationalist khedive Abbas II Hilmi, a museum arose—with more than 107 rooms; it opened in 1902. The archaeologists, in turn, often turned to less well-known or sensitive sites, digging now in trash heaps or, like Flinders Petrie, at prehistorical Syrian or Palestinian sites; and here, European scholars learned things about the Near Eastern past of which Champollion and Drovetti had no inkling. Although, of course, the illegal antiquities market continued to function, big, impressive objects were now virtually impossible to obtain – one of the reasons the Germans began to look to Mesopotamia to procure something new for their national museums.

As you can see, we are being pulled rather relentlessly eastward, as laws and nationalist sentiment in Greece, Italy, the Ottoman west and Egypt begin to make major acquisitions difficult, if not impossible. There are other stories to be told about rushes in Syria, Persia and Mesopotamia, and some interesting parallels can be drawn by studying the dynamics of imperial surveying in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Here the work on monument-protection pushed forward by Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg with the intention of giving nationality groups *cultural* representation in the Empire also ended by producing more and more national consciousness and anti-imperial *political* sentiment²⁸. Surely there are also similar stories to be told about India, where the British Imperial government founded the Archaeological Survey of India just after the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Those who participated in surveying, studying, and conserving the monuments turned out to be a combination of local notables and British imperial officials ; it was Lord Curzon himself who propelled into law, in 1904, the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, in part an attempt to defuse religious disputes between Buddhists and Hindus over shared sacred spaces²⁹. This preservation act, like others, was designed to prohibit local collectors and plunderers from profiting from increasing traffic in non-classical antiquities, and to promote the interests of foreign archaeologists over those of the local users of the site. But it also contributed to the treatment of works of Indian architecture and sculpture as art rather than as ethnographic oddities, and the obtaining of a perspective like that of E. B. Havell, who insisted that Indian art needed to be appreciated as an autonomous and equally precious form of the beautiful, rather than simply contrasted, to its detriment, to Graeco-Roman models³⁰. Another survey project, the

25 Diaz-Andreu 2007, 120-121.

26 Reid 2002, 108 sq.

27 Ebers 1880, 13. On Ebers, see Marchand 2007, 181-188; fig. 187.

28 Marchand 2014.

29 Guha-Thakurta 2004, 292-297.

30 Havell 1908 and 1911.

Geological Survey of India, produced another important outcome for archaeology: during his term as director, Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy wrote *Essays in National Idealism* (Madras, 1911), in which he articulated a neoromantic, nationalistic critique of Eurocentrism. We will come back in a moment to perspectival changes – but I would like to add one more little known example of an antiquities race to our list, the one that occurred even farther to the East, in Chinese Turkestan, in the years just before WWI.

The Russians were the first to send scientific expeditions to Central Asia, already in the eighteenth century; but there were few other travelers in the area until the 1890s, when a series of individual travelers began to explore the Taklamakan desert and the Turfan plateau, areas through which the long abandoned “Silk Road” had run. It was only after the Qing emperor called in European support to suppress the Boxer Rebellion in 1899-1900 that the great Central Asian antiquities rush began – but once it began, it was one of the most rapacious, and rapid, of races.

Who started it is unclear; the Germans acted on a tip from a Russian, but soon thereafter, the French, British and Japanese joined in. In 1901, the director of the Berlin Ethnographic Museum’s Indian Department, Albert Grünwedel, urged the German state to support a quick dash into Turkestan despite the fact that scholars hardly knew what they might find there. The scholars too were desperate for haste, lest all the good stuff be snapped up by others, and the all too text-oriented and slow-moving Germans would have to resign themselves “to dealing with minor bits of trash”³¹. The Kaiser signed on, and beginning in 1902, the state dedicated a total of over 200 000 marks to four “Turfan” Expeditions. The Turfan excavators worked furiously, wrenching ancient murals off cave walls and moving from site to site with absurd rapidity. Their efforts netted the Prussian Academy of Sciences and the Ethnographic Museum approximately 16 115 kilos of manuscripts, murals, statues, and other artifacts, shipped back with fantastic difficulty over deserts and treacherous mountain passes³². In the meantime, Aurel Stein was acquiring most of the library of Dunhuang for his British paymasters; the French scholar Paul Pelliot, who followed afterwards, spent three weeks in a cave, examining as many as 1000 scrolls a day. He paid about £ 90 for a selection of the most important ones – but was still accused of wasting public money when he returned to Paris in 1909³³. Very little of this material would be exhibited, not to mention translated and interpreted, until decades later; but like the other bits of “trash” antiquities trawlers had hauled home, the wall paintings and manuscripts inspired unprecedented interest in Central Asian art, allowing for the elaboration of stylistic and historical trajectories never before suspected or attempted³⁴.

The Great War halted the antiquities rush in Chinese Turkestan – though only briefly. It is a tribute to the lure of the Central Asian stuff that the British, French, American, Italians,

31 Quoted in Marchand 2009, 420.

32 Le Coq gives the number of boxes for each expedition and an average weight of each of the boxes. See Le Coq 1926, 8-9.

33 Hopkirk 1980, 181-189.

34 Colpe 1961, 31. *Auf Hellas Spuren in Ostturkistan* was the title of Albert von Le Coq’s popular account of the 3rd Turfan expedition. It is instructive that Albert Le Coq titled his popular treatment of the Turfan expeditions *Auf Hellas Spuren*, even though Alexander and the Greeks play no role at all in the book.

Dutch and Japanese all tried to send expeditions back to China after the war's end. For a few years the trawling continued, but in late 1926, the Chinese began to restrict access, something they were able to do because of competition for concessions and compelled to do by indigenous nationalists who resented foreign depredations. An American expedition was sent home; and Aurel Stein, for once, was unable to sneak into China via Kashgar³⁵. The Swedish traveler Sven Hedin, used to running his own vitalist show, was forced to strike a landmark deal: he would accompany a Sino-Swedish expedition, jointly supervised by himself and his Chinese hosts. He would take Chinese scholars with him; he would not excavate at all; he could expect to export only what the Chinese explicitly did not want to keep, including prehistoric materials, which officials in Peking considered "trash"³⁶. But in 1935 Hedin was kicked out too, and today Chinese antiquities laws are even more restrictive than Greek or Egyptian ones³⁷.

INTELLECTUAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE ANTIQUITIES RUSHES

Space is too short here to elaborate in detail the new kinds of vision these races made possible – and what practices they necessitated. But we can certainly note that they eventually forced archaeologists to slow down, to get one excavation permit before traveling on to another site. Less haste made for more contextualization, more commerce with local cultures, and of course more care in the extraction of objects. More diverse material forced museum assistants to change their categories, and to become specialists in fields previous thought impossibly obscure or barbaric. "Greek" became a wider category – as did "Egyptian", "Roman" and "Chinese" – and hundreds of new categories were added. It was no longer respectable to scholars to destroy upper layers with documenting them, or for connoisseurs and auctioneers – to think non – western forms undesirable for public and private collections.

We know about the impact on artists of their exposure to "exotic" art at the world exhibitions and museums of ethnography – but there is a much larger story to be told about the way in which the huge wave of increasingly humble, increasingly unfamiliar artifacts pushed European scholars to decenter and rethink their aesthetic prejudices and cultural histories. If we focus on the German case, we can see how "open door" archaeology permitted the acquisition of an increasing array of "oriental" artifacts, including the Ishtar Gate from Babylon, the Mschatta Gate from present-day Jordan, and the Buddhist cave paintings from Turfan. The manuscripts collected in many cases were even more numerous and important than were the artifacts, and the humanistic imperative requiring scholars to take them apart from the inside, and to determine their authenticity, date, and authorship, made necessary the expansion of scholarship on an unprecedented scale. Enhancing, undermining, or forcing the rethinking of conventional histories, these findings could be, if one dared, used to recreate lost worlds. Though this sounds like an arcane and narrow process, and was completed mostly by Eurocentric scholars in European libraries and museum basements, the lasting beauty of it was that at least in principle, one listened to the texts and the artifacts

35 See Meyer & Brysac 1999, 381-393.

36 Hedin 1943, part 3, 84-228, on the "trash" 301.

37 On the trade in Chinese antiquities, see James Lally's account in Lally 2005, 196-198.

themselves, speaking in their own tongues, and even sometimes trusted their testimony or came to share their vision over and against that of traditional authorities.

If we look at the study of art and artifacts over the course of the nineteenth century, we must be struck by its increasingly historicist sensibilities and its increasingly diverse range of topics. This has very little to do with Hegel, and much more to do with the mounting hoards of less and less classically beautiful artifacts, and with scholarly institutions, which rewarded those who found or described something “new”. This dynamic process is one that was replicated in geology and paleontology, zoology and botany, over the course of the nineteenth century: venturing afar, to the “darkest” Africa or “unknown Asia” had scholarly payoffs, including the possibility one might return home with a novel species of plant or a new fossil find. For archaeologists, too, the era of the “open door” permitted professionally-useful as well as intellectually interesting discovery to go on almost continuously; but inevitably, interpreting one’s finds made one rethink old categories. Spending time in foreign climes and among local connoisseurs and collectors exposed Europeans like Josef Strzygowski and Otto Kummel, E. B. Havell and Stella Kramrisch that the European way of judging art, by classicizing standards, was a narrow-minded and historically-distorting point of view. By no means did these scholars convince everyone, or even every academic, to give up Greek standards of beauty. As we shall see, they had a very slow and halting impact on what was actually displayed in the National Museum, and what the general public thought was great art. But they did change scholarly attitudes toward art, and in many ways made possible some of the multi-cultural visions we celebrate today.

Here is but one (English) voice from a 1912 review of E. B. Havell’s *The Ideals of Indian Art in Burlington Magazine*: “Within the last half-century the veil of mystery, which was allowed with intention to obscure the truth, has been in many places lifted with astonishing results. China and Japan have vindicated in triumph their right to an independent place in the history of Art, and even the presumed indifference to art on the part of the peoples of Islam has been shown to be an illusion. Now it is the turn of India to claim attention, and to shake off once and for ever the degrading tradition that Indian art was only a remote and debased imitation of a Graeco-Roman model”³⁸. And this critique grew ever more vehement. In the 1920s, even scholars like Albert von Le Coq, who devoted his career to the study of Indian art, wrote a seven-volume masterwork, *Die Buddhistische Spätantike in Mittelasien* (1922-1933), and nearly lost his life in its pursuit during the Turfan Expeditions, was accused by younger critics of seeing everything Asian through Greek spectacles³⁹. Finally I want to quote a passage from the breakthrough book of the latterly influential scholarly of Indian art and symbolism, Henrich Zimmer, published first in German, in 1926. Here Zimmer evokes Richard Strauss’s *Salomé* in an attempt to explain the difference between classical and Indian art:

“The classical work of art presupposes an eternal eye that lingers on it, enjoying and interpreting it: it knows that it is beautiful and wants its beauty to make an impression. Like Salomé in her desperate love proposal to the Prophet, it triumphantly calls to its antagonist: “Man, look at me!” – and if we are not spellbound and our eyes sweep past it, removing

38 Le Coq 1912, 118.

39 Waldschmidt 1930, 147-8.

ourselves from its presence, it may grieve, like Salomé over Jochanaan's head: "Oh, why did you not look at me? If you had looked at me, you would have loved me!..." Naturally we have no right to use here her words, "your eyes are blindfolded like those of one who wants to see his God", but with them and with Jochanaan's descent into the dark shaft of his lonely cistern, lighted by the face of his God, something of the world is sketched in which the images of Buddhas, gods, and the holies of India have their origin and their life⁴⁰.

Zimmer is contrasting here a seductive, feminine Greek art of superficial beauty with the religious art of the East – one that has as its goal bringing the viewer into harmony with God rather than charming the eye. There are certainly primitivist qualities to his appreciation: but at least he understands that the classicizing "eternal eye" is a presupposition. There are other arts, and other sources of "light".

Now, I do not wish to say that these scholars did not have their own interests and ideological axes to grind; Havell and Strzygowski were both obsessed with Aryan heritage; Zimmer was a Schopenhauerian, and his devoted student, Joseph Campbell, author of *The Hero of a Thousand Faces*, did much to muddle the important tradition of *Mythenforschung*. But what they do demonstrate is an evolving vision, at the margins of scholarship before the Great War, but becoming more influential afterwards, that was very much at odds with what was on view in the great imperial museums, reflecting instead material that remained in the basements. Havell, Strzygowski, Le Coq, and Zimmer asked their contemporaries to really *look* at the art of India, Persia, and Central Asia – but how many did?

COSTS AND BENEFITS OF THE ANTIQUITIES RUSH

To understand a final irony of the antiquities rush, we need a history of exhibition, not just one of collection – for the huge increase in the scale, scope and speed of "open door" collecting could in no way be matched by Europe's states ability or willingness to put all of these objects on display. To give you just one index of the new problems of exhibiting, we can note that while Napoleon might have had a relatively easy time putting the 83 sculptures he stole from the Vatican on display, it would have been almost impossible for the Hamburg Ethnographical Museum to display the 26 000 objects it bought from the African ethnographer Leo Frobenius, or for the Berlin Museums to display the 16 000 kilos of finds carried back from Turfan⁴¹. Moreover, Napoleon took big, famous statues – like the Apollo Belvedere, and the Laocoön – the Turfan expeditions brought back fragments, and Buddhist ones at that. There was a series of attempts to put oriental artifacts on display in Germany before 1914, including a massive exhibition of Islamic art in Munich in 1910. The exhibitors, admirably, refused to display the stuff as if it were "commonplace bazaar junk"; hoping for real appreciation of the artistic and historical value of the material, Friedrich Sarre, founder of the Islamic department of the Berlin Museums, offered an austere display of more than eighty rooms of artifacts. Unfortunately, as one disgusted art historian wrote, the exhibit did not attract many visitors, precisely because it did not bring visitors into a "harem interior with

40 Zimmer 1984, 19-20.

41 Marchand 1997, 160-161; on Turfan, see Marchand 2009, chapter 9.

soft divans, jolly fountains and a thousand geegaws, clouded and scented with intoxicating perfumes..."⁴².

I could offer a series of other examples of the non-visibility of the fruits of the later nineteenth-century's antiquities rushes: the exhibiting of the monumental Mschatta Gate, acquired in 1905, in so dark and obscure a basement of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum that few visitors ever found it; the exhibition of only a few of the Turfan finds, and those in the Ethnography Museum rather than on Berlin's central Museum Island; and the huge and ultimately unsuccessful battle fought by Wilhelm von Bode, Friedrich Sarre, Strzygowski and others to establish a museum of Asian *art* rather than ethnography in post-1910 Berlin. One of the reasons this campaign failed was that the money for building a great new museum went into the erection of the Pergamon Museum, a museum which showed some departures from neoclassical taste, but still featured, as it does today, things Greek. It is no small detail that while the Turfan murals and Mschatta Gate were cemented to museum walls, and thus blown to smithereens by Allied bombs, the Altar, by contrast, was packed up and put in a basement, and though initially seized by the Russians, eventually restored to East Germany in 1956. The point is that exhibition spaces do not necessarily reflect scholarly trends, and it often takes some time for popular opinion and national institutions to "catch up". Thanks to the work done by pioneering art historians and archaeologists, thanks to the nationalist reactions which ended with the passage of monument protection laws and the creation of on site museums, thanks to traveling exhibitions – a fine way around the problem of the post-imperial immobility of objects – and to ecumenical internet, we may finally be learning to "see" differently. And that too, in no small way, belongs to the dialectics of the antiquities rush.

The antiquities rushes cost colonized and/or less wealthy nations, taking away major monuments and destroying the aesthetic, spiritual or ecological integrity of important sites. But imperialism was never the only threat to the preservation of antiquities; we must not forget that countries sometimes destroy their own patrimony, as did the Chinese during the Cultural Revolution, and that grave robbing and the recycling of spolia are worldwide practices. The building of dams, subways and railways regularly both uncovers and destroys ancient artifacts in many places; wars, of course, also continue to wreak havoc, as recent events in Iraq and Afghanistan show. Today there are other threats, such as tourism and pollution, to the preservations of monuments. Nor does the remarkable, and apparently rising, resonance of archaeology for contemporary nations and sub-national ethnic groups guarantee that objects are well-tended, or objectively interpreted⁴³. The "dialectic" has not necessarily made the world safer for artifacts, or for archaeologists.

But the "dialectics of the antiquities rush" have certainly changed the legal and institutional contexts in which artifacts are excavated and exchanged. Now that most archaeology is rigorously regulated by nation states – and now that UNESCO and other bodies seek to protect cultural property, it is no longer tolerable for foreigners to excavate or extract without explicit state permission. Source nations now have considerable legal power to repossess re-

42 Kühnel 1910, 209.

43 See here Kohl *et al.* 2007.

cently-purchased treasures. This is undoubtedly for the best, but in many cases, the exertion of national sovereignty over objects – sometimes with no connection to the modern nations itself – limits not only archaeologists' access to sites, but their interpretive possibilities as well. Ironically, one of the intellectual consequences of the sub-colonial antiquities rushes of yesteryear is that objects, today, are at the mercy of states who are obliged, sometimes grudgingly, to protect them, and we might well ask: Will Islamic sites be studied in Greece? How well will the Israelis protect Christian and Islamic sites? In some cases, minority materials will be well treated, but fair treatment can only be assured by strong liberal governments, in the absence of which events like the blowing up of the Buddhist statues of Bamiyan by the Taliban in March, 2001 will take place. As in earlier times, it took exemplary scholars to see and save other cultural remnants in the search for "great" ones, doing archaeology right now requires exemplary *political and scholarly* visions in pursuit of a fair and responsible treatment of the past.

Among the costs of the antiquities rushes I would also count the recent, unavailing battles over the ownership of prize objects. Among these are, of course, the Elgin Marbles, for which the Greeks have just completed a museum on the acropolis, the Rosetta Stone and the head of Nefertiti, and the Pergamon Altar. In part these demands are nationalistic; in part they are attempts to divert London's tourist industry to Athens, or Berlin's to Turkey; but in part too, they are a reaction to the older museums' lock on great treasures: the Vatican will never sell the Laocoön, and if it did, the Athens Museum could never afford to buy it. In any event, research has shown that all of these cases involved fuzzy legal and political situations, which both sides interpret to their own benefit, and they will not be resolved by the discovery of any new evidence. On the whole, scholars seem more likely to back returning the objects, and while politicians and museums officials fiercely oppose repatriation. Personally I would like to see the situation resolved by sending the Greeks not the Elgin Marbles but some marvelous paintings by Turner, Van Dyke, Constable and Reynolds; rather than empty the Musée Guimet, the French should send the Cambodians David's painting of Napoleon's coronation, an assortment of French medieval works from the Musée Cluny, and a whole building by Le Corbusier.

We can and must find ways to make restitution for the unbridled pursuit of cultural treasure that was the great European antiquities rush – and in quiet ways, many archaeologists and European and American "schools", foundations and private scholars teams are doing that, devoting themselves to restoration or excavation without expectation that the end result will be museum treasure. But we must not forget that in the course of these rushes, we learned more about the global history of art than ever before, and we learned some valuable lessons. The rushes taught first scholars, and gradually a larger and larger population, to value and protect monuments of all sorts, in places far beyond the Mediterranean. Excavators learned to interpret things that look less like treasures than like trash; and they learned that there are benefits to be reaped from digging longer into the same hole, and from studying monuments in situ. Much of what we today call modern archaeology – and modern art history as well – is in fact the product of what I have called the dialectics of the antiquities rush;

so too is the use of archaeological finds as legitimations of nationhood, or as trophies of conquest. That “rush” is over – but the lessons, and the conflicts, remain.

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