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From the SelectedWorks of Patty Gerstenblith

January, 2006

Reviewed Works: Stealing History: Tomb Raiders, Smugglers, and the Looting of the Ancient World by Roger Atwood; Destruction and Conservation of Cultural Property by Robert Layton, Peter G. Stone, Julian Thomas

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Review
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Review by: Patty Gerstenblith
Published by: Archaeological Institute of America
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40026366
fate as a male prestige system and specialized warriors and warfare techniques is an important and clear-sighted one that many authors miss. Moreover, the discussion of the evidence for weapon-inflicted injuries in the French Neolithic presents new, original, and fascinating material in a detailed way. These features make it a useful and important volume for European prehistorians teaching on the subject or seeking general reading on warfare and violence.

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Roger Atwood’s *Stealing History* presents a compelling, thorough, and firsthand investigation of the many facets of the international trade in looted archaeological artifacts. This is the first book to address the topic since the publication of Karl Meyer’s book *The Plundered Past* (New York 1973). Atwood’s volume is, therefore, a most welcome addition to the literature. Atwood, however, takes the subject much further than Meyer did and, as such, does a significant service by adding to our understanding of the operation of the international market in archaeological artifacts and its disastrous consequences for the preservation of archaeological sites.

Trained as a journalist, Atwood is the first author to interview and trace the process of looting, from the very ground, when he accompanies *huáqueros* in Peru on their nightly forays to loot archaeological sites, to the middlemen and smugglers, and finally to the courtroom and the halls of museums, private collectors, dealers, and auction houses in the United States and other market nations. The book begins with an introduction recounting the early information about the looting of archaeological sites in Iraq, but it focuses on Peru. Atwood tells the story of one of the most spectacular archaeological finds in Peru, the Sipan treasure, much of which ended up in the United States, and also documents the contemporary looting of sites in Peru. The threads of the book are interwoven in such a way that while the Sipan treasure is traced from Peru through smuggling routes to the United States, the theme of contemporary looting is presented simultaneously, so that one gets a sense that in the time it takes to read the book, another tomb or site has been looted.

In his discussion of the Sipan case, Atwood also describes the results of the subsequent scientific excavations at the site and draws a contrast that vividly illustrates how much information was lost as a result of the looting. The information retrieved from the scientifically excavated tombs, including DNA evidence, allowed Walter Alva to reconstruct the family histories of the Sipan “dynasty” and to determine the use of religious and royal implements found in the tombs. When sites are looted, this type of fragile evidence is typically lost and the historical record is irreparably impaired.

*Stealing History* is also an ethnographic study. It explains the transformation of long-term, low-level “subsistence” looting, which was given an almost ritualistic and religious context in Peru, into commercial looting often fomented by the middlemen smugglers who offer what seem to be large financial rewards to those who find the most salable archaeological artifacts. Atwood’s research also demonstrates that looting reflects current taste in market trends and, therefore, is responsive to the demands of the market. This type of study offers considerable insight into the causes of looting, the formation of smuggling networks, and the direct incentive provided by the market. It also offers parallels to these activities carried out in other parts of the world.

To his credit, Atwood tries in the last section to propose some solutions. In particular, he focuses on the need for archaeologists and government officials to engage local populations by making them the guardians of their own past. He also points out that this approach will work in some communities and not in others, depending on the history, the economic status, and the social structure of the individual communities.

Atwood’s book makes a significant contribution to the scholarship on this subject, but it is accessible to the archaeologist, legal expert, and general public alike. The legal information presented is accurate and provides a useful guide to the underlying legal issues. This book contributes more than any other publication in more than 30 years to an understanding of the devastation to cultural heritage caused by site looting and to the search for solutions.

** Destruction and Conservation of Cultural Property, edited by Robert Layton, Peter Stone, and Julian Thomas, addresses a different aspect of cultural heritage preservation. While the volume includes papers on a variety of subjects related to cultural heritage, the genesis of the volume was the destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya in India because it was allegedly constructed on the ruins of an earlier Hindu temple. Several of the articles in this volume focus on both the archaeological evidence for the earlier temple and, more important, the role of archaeology in verifying contemporary political and religious claims to the mosque site and in justifying acts of violence and aggression. Regardless of the archaeological basis for the belief that a Hindu temple on the site had been destroyed, it should be easy for us to conclude that archaeology cannot be used for contemporary po-
political purposes and particularly not as a basis for destruction and loss of human life. The third World Archaeological Congress held in New Delhi in 1994 coincided with the second anniversary of the mosque’s destruction and so fell victim itself to the politicization of archaeology.

The relationship between archaeology and the modern nation thus presents a double-edged sword, one with which both archaeologists and cultural property specialists need to be concerned. The past, as recovered through archaeology, if misused and misunderstood, can serve as a justification for modern nationalist territorial and other claims. However, the modern nation has an obligation to protect the archaeological heritage located within its borders so that the past can be preserved, recovered, and studied by people of all nations. The modern nation must be empowered through the international and national legal regimes as the entity with legal authority to protect the archaeological sites and remains found within its borders. Archaeologists and anthropologists who have theoretical objections to the modern nation-state and some of its excesses must nonetheless distinguish between the nation as a legal construct and the nation as a theoretical construct.

A full-fledged consideration of the role of archaeology and Ayodhya was postponed, and the timing of the delayed conference in 1996 allowed for consideration of the even greater cultural devastations that took place during the Balkan wars. Several of the papers address the effect of this conflict on cultural heritage and its aftermath, particularly a case study of reconstruction efforts.

Many of the articles address a second theme: the tension between modern society and views of the past. This tension often is seen in the reconstructions of historic sites and districts, and the volume turns to examples from many different parts of the world, ranging from Cape Town to Sri Lanka to Egyptian Alexandria to Vietnam. The two themes of the volume are linked because both address the relationship between archaeology and the past to modern politics and uses of archaeology for political purposes. However, the book would have benefited from a tighter theme that would have linked these disparate papers in a more coherent fashion. Questions of how best to preserve an historic monument may be loosely distinguished between the nation as a legal construct and the nation as a theoretical construct.

One paper in particular that retains its value in the years since this volume was published is by Kathryn Tubb and Brodie document the market shift to include more ordinary and less expensive pieces suitable for interested primarily in “museum-quality” pieces. Rather, Tubb and Brodie document the market shift to include more ordinary and less expensive pieces suitable for decorative purposes in a larger number of homes. They demonstrate the existence of this new market by examining the use of advertising techniques and then turning to the rhetoric of the dealers themselves to examine what constraints exist on their conduct with respect to illegally obtained antiquities. The authors debunk some of the market’s favorite explanations, such as the idea that many artifacts are chance finds and that countries with a rich archaeological heritage could reduce looting through making more objects available to a legal market. The state of the market in the United Kingdom as recounted in this paper has changed to some extent because the country has now ratified the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property and has enacted domestic legislation creating a new criminal offense for dealing in tainted cultural objects. It remains to be seen how much effect these legal changes in the United Kingdom will have on the market in looted artifacts.

The experiences of the war in Iraq over nearly three years and its effect on Iraq’s cultural heritage demonstrate that both these books are timely and present information that is useful to analyzing these current problems. Atwood’s description of the transformation of looting in Peru contains relevant insights for understanding the relatively recent advent of large-scale looting of archaeological sites in Iraq. The relationship of the past to current politics, war, and nationalism, as depicted in many of the papers in the Layton, Stone, and Thomas volume, is unfortunately all too relevant to the situation in Iraq as well.

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A widely accepted version of modern human origins proceeds as follows: (1) anatomically modern humans originated in Africa by 150,000 years ago; (2) around 100 kyr some left Africa and dispersed into Asia but were still “archaic” or “unmodern” in their behavior; (3) sometime between 45 and 35 kyr in Eurasia, they suddenly became modern in their behavior, particularly in their ability to symbolize; (4) this new behavioral package “spread like a virus” (C. Stringer and C. Gamble, In Search of the Neanderthals [London 1993] 218); (5) contemporary indigenous populations that could not symbolize or keep up in other behavioral realms (like the European Neanderthals) were ultimately out-competed and became extinct, whether or not they were, to a degree, “acculturated”; and (6) in other regions, humans became modern. The rest, as they say, is history.

Biologically, this scenario (or origins myth) relies on scattered evidence for anatomically modern humans in Africa and Southwest Asia, and behaviorally it relies heavily

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