

Brian A. Brown, Marian H. Feldman (eds.)

Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art

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Edited by
Brian A. Brown and Marian H. Feldman

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- Figure 4: Figurine M14884.
- Figure 5: Figurine B16934.
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Henry P. Colburn

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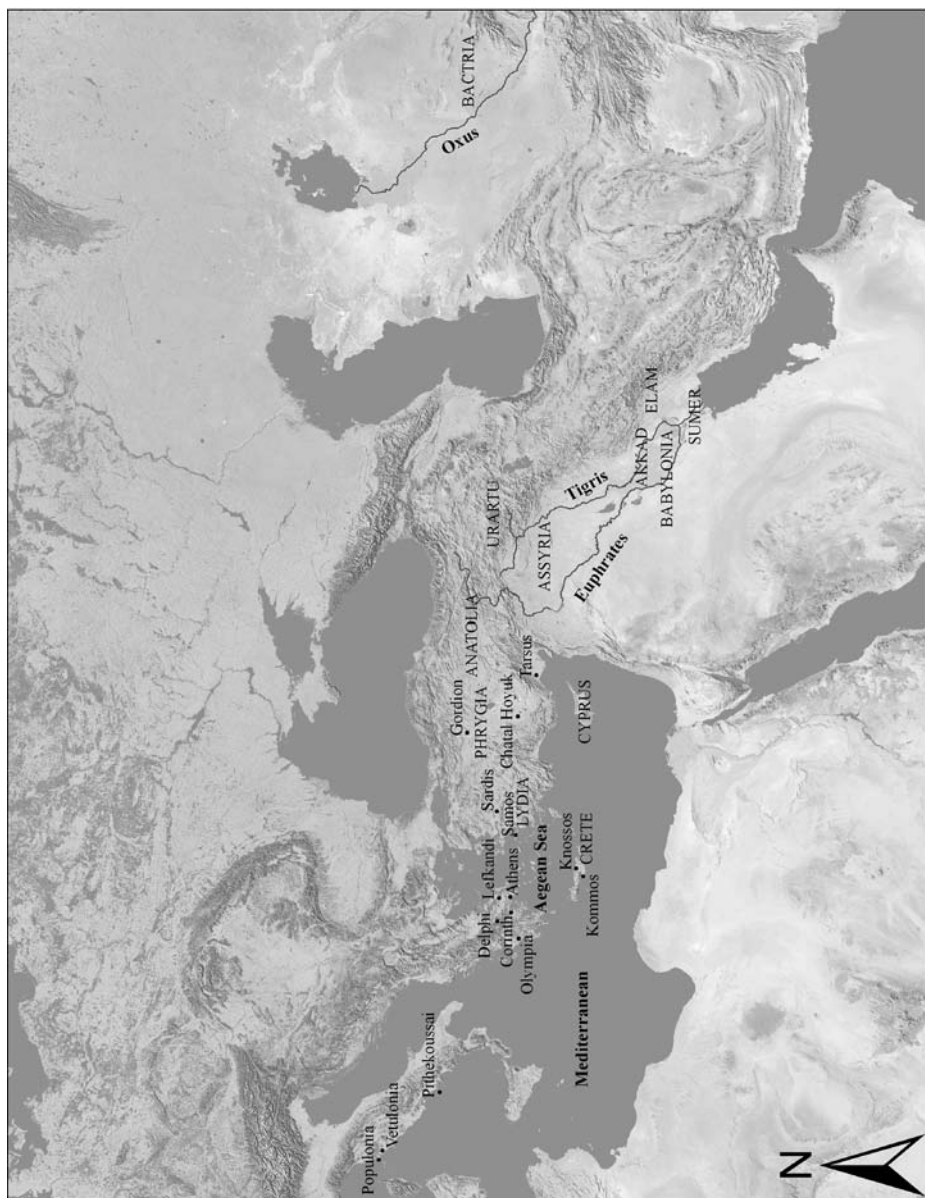
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Editors' Note

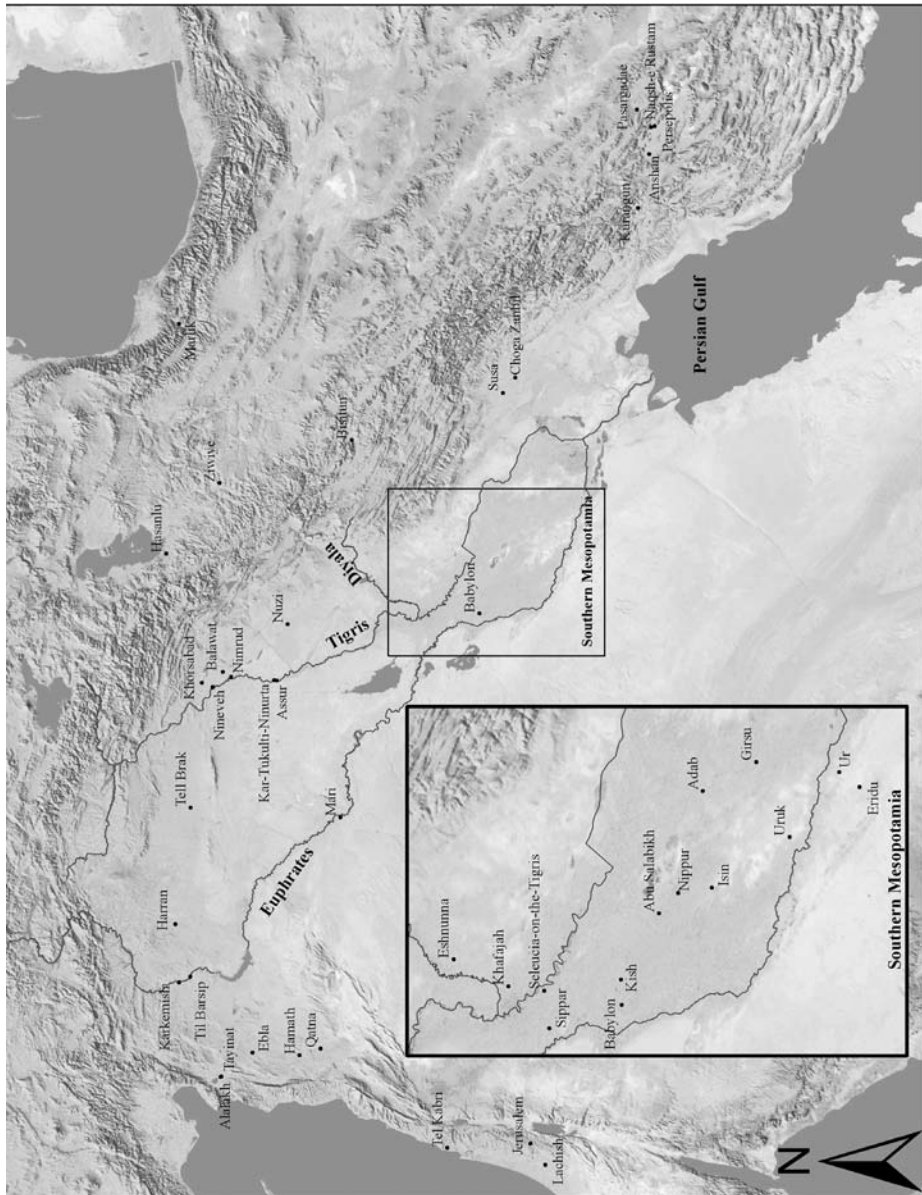
The editors chose not to impose particular rules of transliteration, spelling or dates, although contributors have been consistent within their papers. Akkadian and other ancient languages are rendered in italics, except Sumerian which is set in spaced letters.

Abbreviations of journals follow those used in the *Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (CAD) and the *American Journal of Archaeology* (AJA). In addition, the following abbreviations are used:

- | | |
|----------|--|
| CANE | Sasson, Jack M., ed. 1995. <i>Civilizations of the Ancient Near East</i> . New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. |
| ETCSL | Black, J. A., G. Cunningham, J. Ebeling, E. Flückiger-Hawker, E. Robson, J. Taylor, and G. Zólyomi. 1998–2006. <i>The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature</i> (http://etcs1.orinst.ox.ac.uk/). Oxford: University of Oxford. |
| RIMA 1 | Grayson, A. K. 1987. <i>Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC (to 1115 BC)</i> . Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods 1. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. |
| RIMA 2 | Grayson, A. K. 1991. <i>Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I: 1114–859 BC</i> . Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods 2. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. |
| RIMA 3 | Grayson, A. K. 1996. <i>Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC II: 858–745 BC</i> . Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods 3. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. |
| RIME 1 | Frayne, Douglas R. 2008. <i>Presargonic Period (2700–2350 BC)</i> . Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods 1. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. |
| RIME 2 | Frayne, Douglas R. 1993. <i>Sargonic and Gutian Periods (2334–2113 BC)</i> . Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods 2. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. |
| RIME 3/1 | Edzard, Dietz Otto. 1997. <i>Gudea and His Dynasty</i> . Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods 3/1. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. |
| RIME 4 | Frayne, Douglas R. 1990. <i>Old Babylonian Period (2003–1595 BC)</i> . The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods 4. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. |
| RIA | Ebeling, Erich, Bruno Meissner, Dietz Otto Edzard, and Michael P. Streck, eds. 1928–. <i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i> . Berlin: De Gruyter. |



Map 1: Map of the Ancient Near East and Eastern Mediterranean showing regions and sites mentioned. Map by Martin Weber; © Marian Feldman 2013.



Map 2: Detailed Map of the Ancient Near East showing sites mentioned. Map by Martin Weber;
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Marian H. Feldman

Introduction

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When De Gruyter approached me about editing a volume on Ancient Near Eastern art, the time seemed right for such a venture on at least two fronts. First was the notable absence of any current, large-scale compendium or textbook devoted solely to the art of the Ancient Near East, a particularly glaring gap given the numerous handbooks and companions on Ancient Near Eastern literature, archaeology and culture that have appeared in recent years.¹ Second was the groundswell of innovative thinking concerning Ancient Near Eastern art that I had encountered at conferences and in disparate publications, which assured me that there was a large pool of exciting scholars who could contribute to such a volume. The result is this collection of articles by a diverse group of scholars working on the visual, material and environmental arts of the Ancient Near East. The volume uses the term “critical” in its title in a twofold manner: critical in that the contributions employ the most current and innovative approaches in the field today, and critical in that the authors turn a close eye on both the material under study and the methods and approaches used now and previously. It does not strive to be comprehensive in surveying the periods and media of Ancient Near Eastern art, although its contents cover a wide temporal and geographical extent. Rather, authors were asked to write on topics that they felt were most pressing and of greatest interest at this moment, thus capturing a cross-section of the field of Ancient Near Eastern art history as it stands in the second decade of the twenty-first century. At the same time, the contributors anchor their approaches in the ancient evidence, providing rich historical contextualizations. Specific case studies range temporally from the fourth millennium BCE up to the Hellenistic period and geographically from Iran to the Mediterranean.

What is the Ancient Near East?

This is far from a straightforward question and has no single, absolute answer. Here, all three parts of the designation are capitalized – Ancient Near East – to indicate the

¹ The most recent publication that serves this purpose for the art is Dominique Collon’s general survey from 1995, which concentrates on the Ancient Near Eastern collections held by the British Museum.

constructed nature of the terminology;² it does not reflect any ancient understanding of a geographical realm, nor does it equate with commonly used contemporary designations, which tend to favor the terms “Middle East” or “Western Asia.” Geographical terminology is always freighted with biases and culturally contingent, and we acknowledge this in our use of the term “Ancient Near East,” which here includes areas stretching from Iran and Mesopotamia westward to the Levant, Anatolia and the eastern Mediterranean.

The lack of correspondence with contemporary geographical units complicates the problem of where to draw the boundaries around the “Ancient Near East.” As editors, we did not explicitly state any one set of boundaries, nor did we impose any geographical expectations on the authors, who ranged geographically as they saw fit. Nonetheless, through the selection of authors and topics, *de facto* certain geographical foci have been targeted while others receive less attention; most obviously this is the case with Egypt, which makes only occasional appearances in the course of the contributions. We made the decision to set aside Egypt, not out of any ideological or pedagogical reasoning, but rather for the sake of manageability in terms of scale of the project; Egypt strikes us as worthy of an entire volume on its own.

Not only are the geographical boundaries elusive, so too are the chronological ones. How far back in time might we extend our discussions of visual culture? The earliest topics of this volume lie in the fourth millennium BCE, generally considered to be the formative period of urbanization in southern Mesopotamia. However, contributions might well have stretched back further in time, considering the recent discoveries of carved stone reliefs at the tenth-millennium BCE site of Göbekli Tepe in eastern Turkey, or the late Neolithic and Chalcolithic period remains at numerous sites around the Ancient Near East (Çatal Höyük, Ain Ghazal, Susa, etc.).³ The absence of these earlier periods in this volume is primarily a product of current institutional and disciplinary divides that tend to separate the pre-literate societies from those of the “historical” periods, with scholars working in the earlier periods being placed more in anthropology departments and “natural history” museums than in area studies departments or “fine art” museums.

The cut-off for the latest date of case studies must likewise be acknowledged to be arbitrary. Only one article crosses the traditional end-date of the “ancient” part of the Ancient Near East – the conquests of Alexander the Great between 333 and 330 BCE: Stephanie Langin-Hooper’s discussion of Hellenistic figurines from Babylonia. This, too, is more a reflection of institutional, rather than real, divides, with the Hellenistic period generally falling within the purview of Classics departments, and the later

² However, individual authors chose their own geographical terminology; none were imposed by the editors.

³ See, for example, Schmidt 2010, 2011; Hodder 2010; Hansen 2006.

Iranian states – Parthian and Sassanian– occupying an uneasy no-man’s land between the “ancient” and the “Islamic” Near East.

It is not possible in this introduction to provide even a general outline of the historical developments for all the places and times covered by the articles.⁴ However, the reader will find that the individual authors have provided such background and historical contextualization as is relevant for their specific topics, which, in the end, cover much of what might be called the Ancient Near East.

Ancient Near Eastern Art History

Can we speak of a discipline of “Ancient Near Eastern Art History”? The contributions in this volume provide an answer in the affirmative to this question and sketch the outlines of such a discipline. While the number of scholars devoted to its study may be small in comparison with other fields such as Classical Greece, and while within the scholarship of the Ancient Near East, the study of texts and archaeology is predominant, the numerous articles gathered here demonstrate the vitality of the art historical study of the Ancient Near East. Many of them directly engage with what can be understood as the discipline of Ancient Near Eastern Art History through critical examination of prior work – building upon, enriching, and often challenging earlier interpretations. In the very process, these articles also contribute to the ongoing construction of the discipline today and point to its future directions.

At the same time, the volume reveals the impossibility of describing any one, monolithic disciplinary approach that might be referred to as “art historical,” and hence our reference to multiple “approaches” in the book’s title. In the diversity of materials studied, questions asked, and approaches and methods applied, it is evident that there is no one way to conduct an art historical study of the Ancient Near East. It cannot be reduced to only the identification of subject matter (iconography) or the attribution to place or time (connoisseurship), though these remain important elements of study. The discipline is, moreover, closely allied to archaeology and anthropology. This alliance is forged not just through the general trend toward contextual concerns that favor provenanced artworks, which by definition have an archaeological component to their study, but also through the application of anthropological theories of material culture.

A primary concern of the volume is to provide specific case studies by which new theories and approaches can be applied to the ancient evidence. To this end, most of the contributions take not only an intellectual problem, such as the relationship between text and image or the juncture of the royal with the divine, but also a defined body of evidence – visual, material, architectural, environmental, and/or textual – through which to tease out the problem.

⁴ For an excellent general overview of the history of the Ancient Near East, see Van De Mieroop 2007.

We begin the volume with a section, “Defining the Field,” that provides different perspectives on the development of the Ancient Near Eastern art historical endeavor as a whole. Lamia al-Gailani Werr contributes her personal experiences and conversations with friends and colleagues to sketch the historical trajectory of Iraqi archaeology from the early twentieth century up to today. Turning to the issue of fakes and their impact on scholarship, Oscar Muscarella cautions us against the creation of a “false history” derived from forged objects, such as for Media in pre-Achaemenid times.

Next, Constance von Rüden and Ann Gunter examine the Near East’s relationship to the “West.” Von Rüden, with regard to the appearance of frescoes in the Levant during the second millennium BCE at sites such as Qatna, Alalakh and Tel Kabri, argues against an East-West classification dichotomy. Her historiographic investigation reveals how old assumptions and interests continue to shape and constrain current scholarship. Gunter picks up the thread of this argument for the first millennium BCE, critically evaluating how scholarship has approached the question of Orientalism and Orientalization. Like von Rüden, she warns against lumping everything together into an ahistorical “Orient”/“East” that denies cultural, period, or regional diversity. In proposing a closer, renewed look at Assyrian influence on Greece and Italy, Gunter suggests moving beyond motifs and style to technologies and object genres, such as decorated bronze vessels and horse trappings, carved ivory furniture and containers, or faience amulets and figurines.

Following Gunter’s call, the next section considers technologies and practices of artistic production. The section opens with Silvana Di Paolo’s consideration of the fundamental concept of “workshops” in the Ancient Near East, in which she raises the core question of the relationship between specialized crafters and structures of power. Due to the general lack of documentary and archaeological evidence for Ancient Near Eastern workshops, art historical approaches such as connoisseurship, formalism, and iconography have been employed to determine workshop locations. However, Di Paolo notes that new questions posed by scholars today, particularly influenced by semiotics, mark a shift away from a concern with origins to consider fluid forms of meaning and significance.

Allison Karmel Thomason’s article focuses specifically on the terminological choices made by scholars in their classification of art genres and how these choices are accompanied by baggage that conditions the kinds of questions we ask. Starting with a historiographical overview of the term “minor arts” and its relationship to “fine arts” and “crafts,” Thomason surveys the treatment of the so-called minor arts in standard, English-language textbooks of Ancient Near Eastern art. Like Di Paolo, Thomason traces the evolving treatment of the issue in the field, noting a recent “material culture turn” that focuses on questions of agency and identity.

The following three articles in this section take specific case studies through which to explore questions of technology and artistic practice. Francesca Onnis considers how the material properties of an artwork’s shape, medium and use affects the decorative schemes employed on it in the specific case of “Phoenician” metal bowls

from the early Iron Age. Yelena Rakic and Joanna Smith ask similar questions of cylinder seals, the Near Eastern art/administrative object *par excellence*. Rakic argues that changes in sealing practices during the Akkadian period drove stylistic changes in the popular motif of the contest. In particular, she points to innovations of standardization in the operation of the administrative apparatus of the state. Smith applies a biographical approach, in addition to practice theory and aspects of materiality, to seals and seal carving in Late Bronze and Iron Age Cyprus. Analyzing the palimpsest of recarved seals characteristic of Cypriot production, in combination with close stratigraphic study of archaeological findspots, she considers changes through time in the reception and use of certain themes in Cypriot art.

With the so-called Linguistic or Semiotic Turn in humanistic scholarship of the 1970s and 80s, questions of the relationship between text and image came to the fore in Ancient Near Eastern art historical studies. It seems, therefore, particularly relevant to assess the current state of the question, forty years on, and thus the third section of the volume is devoted to the theme of “Text and Image.” Cory Crawford begins with a critical review of the theme, arguing that text and image operate in Mesopotamia in ways that may not align with our expectations because neither text nor image needed to “encode propositions” about the “real” world. After reviewing the general privileging of word over image, which Crawford traces from biblical discourse through Protestant reforms and early modern aesthetics, the article then explores the intersecting, overlapping and collapsing boundaries between text and image in Mesopotamia through a case study of the statue of Idrimi from Alalakh.

Karen Sonik takes the specific situation of mythological texts and their relationship to images as her topic of analysis. She first examines the terminology that we use to define concepts of art and artists, as well as the parameters of what constitutes “mythology” in Mesopotamia. Like Thomason, she challenges the distinction between “fine arts” and “crafts,” and considers issues of distributed agency and collaborative production. Sonik suggests that the divergence between the extant textual versions of myths and visual images of seemingly mythological motifs may be due to differences in how texts and images were produced and disseminated: mythological texts being restricted to the scholarly realm of the advanced literate, while art was produced along “universalized” lines of pattern books and repeated traditions that were circulated in iconic rather than narrative form.

The next three articles continue to explore questions of text and image through specific case studies. Jennifer Ross analyses the relationship between seals and writing during the formative Late Uruk period, starting with the premise that both acted as technologies of communication that affirmed identities and verified transactions. Drawing on the practice theory of Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, which interrelate people, agency and structure, she proposes that the categorizing and ranking of seal motifs resulted in the development of the quintessentially Mesopotamian text genre that we refer to as lexical lists.

Melissa Eppihimer takes the question of later representations of Akkadian period rulers as the starting point for an examination of how Mesopotamians remembered and constructed the past through images and texts, what she calls their “historical consciousness.” For Eppihimer, the divergent legacies of the Akkadian kings as remembered in the textual versus the visual traditions derive from the fundamentally different nature of images and text in Mesopotamia. Similarly, Chikako Watanabe argues that styles of pictorial narratives reveal visual thought processes that are not explicitly stated in texts, but that belonged to shared, “normative” traditions. She identifies an unusual narrative arrangement in Assurbanipal’s famous lion hunts in Room C of the North Palace at Nineveh – a compositional arrangement that she calls “centric.” The hallmark of this narrative composition is a symmetrical arrangement around a central axis, which is most commonly applied to non-narrative representations. Its unusual application to narrative imagery during Assurbanipal’s reign permits the conceptual association of separate incidents through their visual symmetry – what Watanabe calls a “manipulated visual framework” – that enabled a new perspective of historical events.

The next section consisting of six articles explores different facets of Ancient Near Eastern social identities. Several of them focus on the human body and clothing as especially charged sites of personhood and identity. Sarah Graff studies Mesopotamian mold-made terracotta plaques of females dating from the late third to early second millennium BCE. Rather than search for any single identification of these female figures, for example as a particular goddess, Graff considers them within concepts of gender, sexuality and reproduction. Drawing on literary and mythological texts, she illuminates conceptions of sexuality and the role of clay in Mesopotamian creative and reproductive acts. Amy Gansell synthesizes an overview of ideal feminine beauty during the Neo-Assyrian period through an analysis of artistic representations, artifacts like jewelry, literary references and ethnographic comparisons. Examining the representational arts and artistic artifacts within the larger cultural horizon of the Assyrian Empire, Gansell accesses ancient attitudes and conceptions of beauty.

Aubrey Baadsgaard takes a critical look at fashion trends in Early Dynastic Mesopotamia. Drawing upon theoretical perspectives of embodiment and materiality, she considers the role of fashion, clothing and body modification in forging social relations during a formative period in Ancient Near Eastern history when the political complexity of the city-state emerged. Shifting to the other end of the temporal spectrum, Stephanie Langin-Hooper examines the complex intermingling that happened “on the ground” during the Hellenistic period in Babylonia. Taking terracotta figurines as a starting point, she provides a fresh look at the so-called Herakles figure in relation to developing notions of masculinity through an analysis of multiple “inter-object entanglements.” From this, she concludes that hybrid qualities speak to both Greek and Babylonian cultural traditions and point to their purposeful selection by the ancient users and producers.

Mark Garrison's article demonstrates how seals and their impressions on archival documents provide an ideal vehicle for exploring the socio-political dynamics of visual imagery. With a detailed study of sealings found on tablets from the Achaemenid period Persepolis Fortification archive, Garrison reconstructs a system of administrative interactions and identities that allow him to delineate differing levels of the administrative hierarchy. Brian Brown analyzes representations of ethnicity in late Assyrian art, identifying an increasing emphasis on "ethnic" features in the depictions of foreigners over the course of the ninth through seventh centuries BCE. His study relates the use of ethnic markers to demographic changes in the empire. Noting that the rendering of ethnic difference is not bound by any mimetic need to reproduce "reality," Brown proposes that the increasing interest in depicting such markers derives from the Assyrian state's own growing sense of threatened identity and a need to more clearly define "us" versus "them."

As a subset of social identities, the relationship between religion, ritual and politics forms the thematic core of the next section of five articles. The first three articles in this section, in different ways, each address the question of royal deification. Claudia Suter tackles the difficult problem of identifying figures in early Mesopotamian art, particularly differentiating between human and divine figures during the Late Uruk period. Drawing on aspects of philosophy, cognitive science, and visual studies, Suter stresses the need to interpret Mesopotamian imagery in the context of the object on which it appears and the larger network of images and monuments within which it would have circulated. To this end, she performs a close reading of the Uruk (Warka) Vase, arguing against the traditional interpretation of a sacred marriage and instead linking the image to royal power and ideology associated with grain storage and new fiber technologies. Tallay Ornan also investigates the close relationship between royalty and the divine through a consideration of the divergent ways texts and images link kings to gods. Providing an overview from the third millennium through the Assyrian Empire, Ornan proposes that texts make a more explicit association between kings and gods, even to the point of deification, while images rely more on indirect means to bring the king closer to the divine realm. Anne Porter's article on the charismatic Akkadian ruler, Naram-Sin, finds inspiration in anthropological studies of Melanesian conceptions of partible personhood to consider how images of Naram-Sin could actively distribute his presence around the empire. She challenges Naram-Sin's long-accepted status as self-deified and reassesses critical monuments from his reign, including his victory stele and the Bassetki bronze, to reinterpret his relationship to the divine world.

The last two articles in the section investigate more broadly the relationship between the divine world and politics. Paul Collins examines the complex intersection between texts and images during the Neo-Assyrian period, which combine ideas of power and authority with those relating to the natural and supernatural worlds. He argues that mythological and heroic aspects of kingship lie at the heart of Assyrian representations of warfare. The final article in this section by Jean Evans approaches

Early Dynastic “votive” sculptures through an audience response perspective and proposes that style – in this particular case, “abstraction” – serves specific affective roles (and by implication was purposely selected for by the producers) rather than being the material expression of an inevitable artistic developmental scheme. Evans considers the abstract Early Dynastic sculptures within their ritualistic contexts and suggests that they mark a turning point in the way such temple sculptures functioned, from cultic paraphernalia to embodiments of (potentially multiple) donors.

Space, as the relational glue holding together individual objects, monuments, and buildings, has become a topic of increasing interest in studies of visual and material culture. The final section of the volume is dedicated to explorations relating to spatial signification on a variety of scales. Alice Petty explores three carved stone monuments from Middle Bronze Age Ebla to consider how they structured sacred space through their visual narratives. Relying on close formal analysis of the imagery in conjunction with their spatial presence within cultic architecture, she examines how image, placement, scale, and form engage the viewer and elicit ritual performances.

Shifting the focus from cultic space to palatial space, David Kertai provides a reexamination of the Assyrian palace, revising Geoffrey Turner’s generally accepted typology of palace suites. Kertai argues for neither strictly formalist/morphological criteria nor for purely functional criteria in constructing a building typology, but for a flexible combination of the two. In his overview of the changes and continuities in palace building over the course of the Neo-Assyrian period, Kertai raises questions of circulation and challenges the dichotomy between public and private spaces.

The next two articles look at spatial concerns across a larger scale – the “landscape.” Ann Shafer considers the representation of landscape in Neo-Assyrian arts as a subject matter in and of itself and not just as a setting for a narrative, treating visual landscapes and the journeys that they depict as embodied elements of ritual activity. According to Shafer, both the depiction of landscapes and the reality that they point to served as cosmically charged motivations for the Assyrian kings to explore and exploit the greater world around them. This motivation catalyzed the actual journeying through the landscape, accompanied by ritual activities, that involved the human body in experiences of the world on a phenomenological level, which in turn contributed to the acquisition of specialized, esoteric knowledge of distant places controlled by the king. Javier Álavarez-Mon analyzes the aesthetics of the natural environment – how landscape and topography generate an aesthetic affect – through a case study of the Elamite rock-cut sanctuary at Kurangun in southwestern Iran. For Álavarez-Mon, agency can be seen in the natural landscape such that topographic features, and their (re)shaping by human activity, generate affective qualities that engaged human senses and connected to the numinous.

Expanding the spatial scale yet again, to the farthest extents of the Achaemenid Empire, Henry Colburn differentiates between two facets of Achaemenid art: official imperial art (*art of the empire*) and art produced in the local areas of the empire (*art in the empire*). Looking at three specific case studies – Darius’ Egyptian statue found at

Susa, two seals of the high official Parnakka, and a statue of an Egyptian official Ptahhotep – Colburn shows how these two modes of production were always in dialogue with one another, as well as with older artistic traditions.

Historiographic and Theoretical Contributions of the Volume

In addition to assembling a rich collection of Near Eastern case studies, the volume's articles contain critical historiographic reviews at the level of Ancient Near Eastern art history, Ancient Near Eastern studies as a whole, and more generally the discipline of art history. Several articles closely examine the frameworks – philosophical, political, and economic – that provide the field with its intellectual structure(s). Muscarella, in reviewing the situation of collecting, displaying, and studying objects without archaeological provenances, shows how we today construct ancient cultures; when we include items that are not truly ancient, we create a false picture of the past. Similarly, al-Gailani Werr's reminiscences of the practice of archaeology in the state of Iraq highlight the role that external factors, particularly politics, have on the reconstruction of past historical times.

The Ancient Near East's institutional and methodological relationship with Biblical and Classical studies assumes a central position in discussions regarding the development of the field, seen for example in the articles by Crawford, von Rüden, Gunter, Langin-Hooper, and Colburn. Classical and Western philosophy informs the background of articles that touch upon notions of aesthetics, such as those of Di Paolo, Thomason, Onnis, Suter and Álvarez-Mon. Álvarez-Mon, for example, discusses Kantian aesthetics and critiques its usefulness for Ancient Near Eastern art, arguing instead for a “pre-Kantian religiously-informed notion of aesthetics.” In order to avoid a dependency on modern, Western notions of beauty, Gansell argues for a culturally contextualized study of images and adornments of women from the Assyrian period.

Questions and problems of terminology – definitions and the assumptions and constraints that they bring to interpretations – receive sustained treatment in many of the contributions. As just a few examples, Thomason explores the different connotations that are often unacknowledged in the use of terms such as “minor” and “fine” arts; Sonik likewise interrogates our definitions of art and artists. Brown provides a succinct discussion of ethnicity and its often vague usage in Ancient Near Eastern studies. Álvarez-Mon provides an overview of recent scholarship on landscape and the environment, while Shafer defines “landscape” within a Neo-Assyrian conceptualization, noting that its definition is culturally contingent.

Scholarly reception is also addressed by several of the authors, including that of Cypriot antiquities in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries of the common

era by Smith, as well as the treatment of Hellenistic period figurines from Babylonia by Langin-Hooper and of “minor” arts such as cylinder seals by Thomason. Evans reviews early twentieth-century CE viewing habits and expectations that colored scholarly interpretations of Early Dynastic temple sculpture. Eppihimer, in line with current interests in memory studies, projects the question of reception back into the past, investigating how later Mesopotamians viewed the Akkadian past.

Influential theories and interpretations, derived mainly from scholarship on areas outside the Ancient Near East, are scrutinized by many of the authors, who present critical reviews of theories and methods employed more generally in the disciplines of art history, anthropology, and archaeology. Di Paolo provides overviews of anthropological and art historical approaches to the study of craft production from V. Gordon Childe and Cathy Costin to Giovanni Morelli, Heinrich Wölfflin and Erwin Panofsky. In considering depictions of females on terracotta plaques, Sarah Graff reviews the impact of general anthropological theories of a universal Mother Goddess on the interpretations of the Near Eastern material.

Prominent among the theoretical approaches employed by the authors are social history (for example, Garrison, Langin-Hooper, Collins, Kertai, Colburn), cognitive and phenomenological approaches (for example, Gansell, Porter, Suter, Petty, Shafer, Alvarez-Mon), and practice theory (for example, Ross, Rakic, Smith, Baadsgaard). Social history drives contextual approaches by which objects and artifacts are examined within larger assemblages of socially associated elements instead of being studied solely through typology and classification of similar objects. The cognitive and phenomenological approaches, espoused by archaeologists such as Colin Renfrew and Julian Thomas, posit a materiality to and embodiment of human ideas and thought, in which humans as social creatures engage with the physical world around them on an experiential level. Practice theory, rooted in the writings of Bourdieu and Giddens, has close relations with cognitive and phenomenological approaches and highlights the ways in which the larger social environment (what Bourdieu calls *habitus*) shapes and constrains individual and group activity. For art historical and archaeological topics, both phenomenology and practice theory find voice in material culture studies and anthropological theories of materiality. Of course, many of the papers draw upon multiple approaches and theories, deftly intertwining their insights in order to generate new interpretations, and those mentioned above by no means constitute the full array. The various papers engaged with these theories and approaches all provide richly nuanced discussions as well as lengthy bibliographies for the reader to access.

The inclusion early on in the volume of a section on text and image points to the important role that linguistic studies and literary criticism have played in the art historical study of the Ancient Near East, a culture wealthy in textual sources of many genres. Both Sonik and Suter, in their use of the notion of polysemy derived from the work of literary critics such as Roland Barthes, underscore the success of semiotic

approaches in the field.⁵ Sonik and Watanabe's articles demonstrate the continuing relevance of art historical studies of visual narrative by earlier scholars such as Franz Wickhoff on Roman art and Kurt Weitzmann on illustrated manuscripts. Crawford, in his detailed historiography of the study of text and image in the Ancient Near East, provides a critical review of the literary approaches, including Saussurian semiotics, bringing the discussion up to Thomason's Material Culture Turn of recent years, which integrates Peircian semiotics with phenomenological approaches and theories of materiality. With the Material Culture Turn has come an interest in exploring the affective, even agentive, properties of visual and material products as exemplified in the work of Alfred Gell and other anthropologists of art. This interest is explicitly pursued in the articles of Crawford, Sonik, Eppihimer, Porter, and Evans, but implicitly underlies many of the other articles as well, including those taking space as affective (Petty, Shafer, Álvarez-Mon).

As a sum total, this volume serves to rectify the often secondary role that artistic production has played in relation to texts in the Ancient Near East. The richness, depth and breath of the contributions showcase the current vitality of the art historical study of the Ancient Near East.

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⁵ See, also, Di Paolo in this volume.

I. Defining the Field

Lamia al-Gailani Werr

Archaeology and Politics in Iraq¹

Abstract: Governments have always tried to use archaeology for their agendas and as tools of propaganda. As a new country in the twentieth century, Iraq – its people and government – was searching for a unified identity; ancient Iraq has been a good vehicle for this purpose. This paper discusses the contribution of the Antiquities Department and the Iraq Museum in forming and exposing Iraq's history by excavations and exhibitions for the public.

Keywords: Iraqi Antiquities Department, Iraq Museum, Iraqi artists, archaeology, propaganda

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An impressive looking booklet was published by Iraq's Ministry of Information and Culture in the 1980s under the title *"From Nebuchadnezzar to Saddam Hussein, Babylon Rises again."* The title betrays what the contents would be. The pamphlet initially gives the history of the city and its famous kings, their conquests and building achievements. However, the purpose of this propaganda piece is to justify why Saddam is rebuilding Babylon. On page 6 of the booklet it says in English: *"Saddam Hussein, the grandson of the Babylonians,"* and on page 27: *"President Saddam Hussein was acting in his capacity as heir to this great civilization, and descendant of those Arab dynasties....."* His direct role in the rebuilding of the city is defined in another paragraph on page 26: *"Indeed the president's role went beyond giving directions, to outlining the goals to be achieved such as his orders to restore Babylon, its mountains, lakes, tourist facilities, restaurants and roads etc...."*² The consequence of this was unfortunate as many of the reconstruction work lacked

¹ The subject of archaeology and politics in Iraq during the first half of the twentieth century has been discussed in a number of publications, among them Lloyd 1947; Larsen 1996; Bernhardson 2005; Fales 2006; Goode 2010. Little has been written on the role of the Antiquities Department and the Iraq Museum in raising awareness about Iraq's ancient history, and how the successive governments dealt with this new discipline. Because of the lack of literature, I have relied more on my own recollection and conversations with friends and colleagues. I am particularly indebted to Salim al-Alousi and Dr. Muayad Dimerji for the valuable information they have given me.

² "Mountains" is an error in translation in the pamphlet – "mound" is the correct word. These are new mounds constructed to hold cable cars for tourists to have a birdseye view of the city. The word *lakes* is also an error in translation – it should be ponds. One of the mounds was named Saddam, the second Nissan, after the month when the Baath Party was established. Only one was named after the god Tammuz in recognition that these structures are in Babylon.

archaeological experts.³ The restoration of the palaces was in fact more rebuilding with free interpretation, in order to make them more impressive; for example, the walls were constructed to a higher level than the originals. The Hellenistic theatre became much larger and a special box for the President was added. Bricks were stamped with Saddam's name as the new builder of Babylon. This was in line with the notion that he was following in the steps of the earlier rulers of Babylon. Iraqis flocked to see it and reveled in their history as interpreted and appropriated by Saddam Hussein. All these activities, however impressive to the ordinary citizens, had an adverse effect to the ancient city; UNESCO declined to award it a World Heritage Site title.

Babylon was first excavated at the beginning of the 20th century by German archaeologists, ending with the outbreak of World War I. Most of the archaeological finds were taken to Berlin, including the remarkable Ishtar gate. Restoration and excavations were resumed in Babylon by the Iraq Antiquities Department in 1957, and in 1959 a small replica of the Ishtar Gate was built outside the main palace area. Work continued annually, but on a small scale due to fund restrictions. It was due to Saddam's interest in resurrecting the ancient city that work took a speedy and grander turn: the palaces and temples of Nebuchadnezzar, particularly those along the wide Procession Street, were completely reconstructed (Fig. 1). The Procession Street was used by the Babylonians during the New Year festival, when a procession carrying visiting gods from other cities took place.⁴

It is probably safe to say that Iraqis were not aware of their ancient history at the onset of the twentieth century. Their identity was with the Prophet Mohammed and the rise of Islam. History before Islam was *Jahiliyah* (pre-Islam age of ignorance). However, not all Iraqis were ignorant of the European archaeologists' discoveries of ancient Mesopotamia. Gertrude Bell mentions discussing the Old Babylonian ruler Hammurabi with the Naqib of Baghdad in 1909 (Bell 2008: 195). And the Antiquities Department and the Iraq Museum were important factors in building Iraq's identity as we know it today. The new discoveries in the 1920s and 30s of the Sumerians, Babylonians and the Assyrians became readily available to the Iraqis. A more important factor in the development of Iraq's identity was the employment of young artists, painters and sculptors from the Institute of Fine Arts to work as conservators in the

³ When the Director General of Antiquities voiced his objection to the digging of the ponds because of the danger of seeping water to the archaeological levels below, his membership in the Babylon Committee was terminated (personal communication with Dr. Muayad Dimerji).

⁴ By the 1980s, the people of the modern city of Hilla would come and celebrate their weddings by the replica Ishtar gate; the bride and groom would stand while the guests' dancing and singing were accompanied by a band. Unfortunately this custom came to abrupt end in 2003 when the American army pitched their camp in the city. It is a great pity that the international outcry has concentrated on the damage that befell the archaeological ruins while ignoring the loss of the local tradition, because the city has been closed to the public for the last ten years.



Figure 1: Procession Street, Babylon. Author's photograph.

newly established laboratory that served both the Antiquities Department and the Museum, a tradition that still continues today.

These young artists were the core of the burgeoning artistic movement in Iraq that flourished in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. A few of them had recently returned from scholarships in Europe. They were full of ideas of what they had learned and were ready to work as conservators and to study the remarkable antiquities of their own country. In addition, the officials in the Antiquities Department became patron of the arts. They played an important role in commissioning works of art from these artists beginning with the Director Sati' al-Husri and the directors after him. Khalid al-Rahal made the head of a Sumerian queen that was exhibited in the Iraq Museum. He dressed her with the jewelry from the Royal cemetery of Ur.⁵ It became an iconic figure representing the Sumerians in Iraq. She is known to Iraqis as Queen Shuba'd and she is still frequently illustrated on postcards and souvenirs (Fig. 2). Hafidh al-Droubi painted two large panels. One depicted life in Hatra, the Hellenistic city in north-eastern Iraq that was excavated by the Iraqis in the 1950s. The second panel illustrated life in Babylon. Both panels were displayed in the exhibition halls of the old Iraq Museum.

During the coronation of King Faisal II in 1952, Jawad Salim was commissioned to replicate an Assyrian chariot, which was paraded in the streets of Baghdad during the

⁵ For the Royal Cemetery, see, Zettler and Horne 1998.

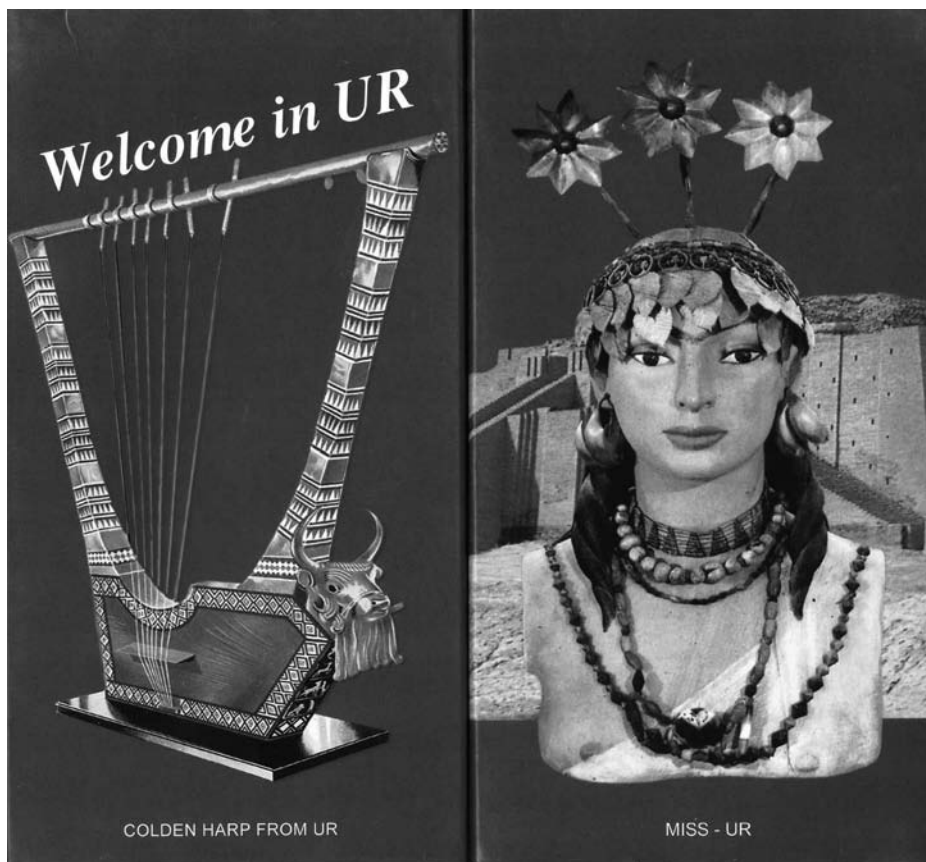


Figure 2: Letters and envelopes souvenir folder depicting the Lyre of Ur and Khalid al-Rahal's rendering of the head of Shuba'ad, a Sumerian queen. Author's photograph.

festivities. Abdulrahman al-Gailani made a replica of the Lyre of Ur; the original head of the bull was made of pure gold and so was that of the replica.⁶ The Ur Lyre became another icon of Iraq and the Sumerians and also appears today on posters and souvenirs (Fig. 2).

An illustration of the influence of the Iraq Museum and the Antiquities Department is best portrayed by one of Iraq's foremost painters today, Dia Azzawi, who has a degree in archaeology from the University of Baghdad. He was employed by the Antiquities Department and was assigned to the laboratory as an artist rather than as an archaeologist in the Iraq Museum. Many of his paintings betray the strong influence

⁶ This replica head has its own story. After the Gulf War, it was exhibited in the Iraq Museum, while the original was stored in the Central Bank. It was this replica that was looted in 2003.

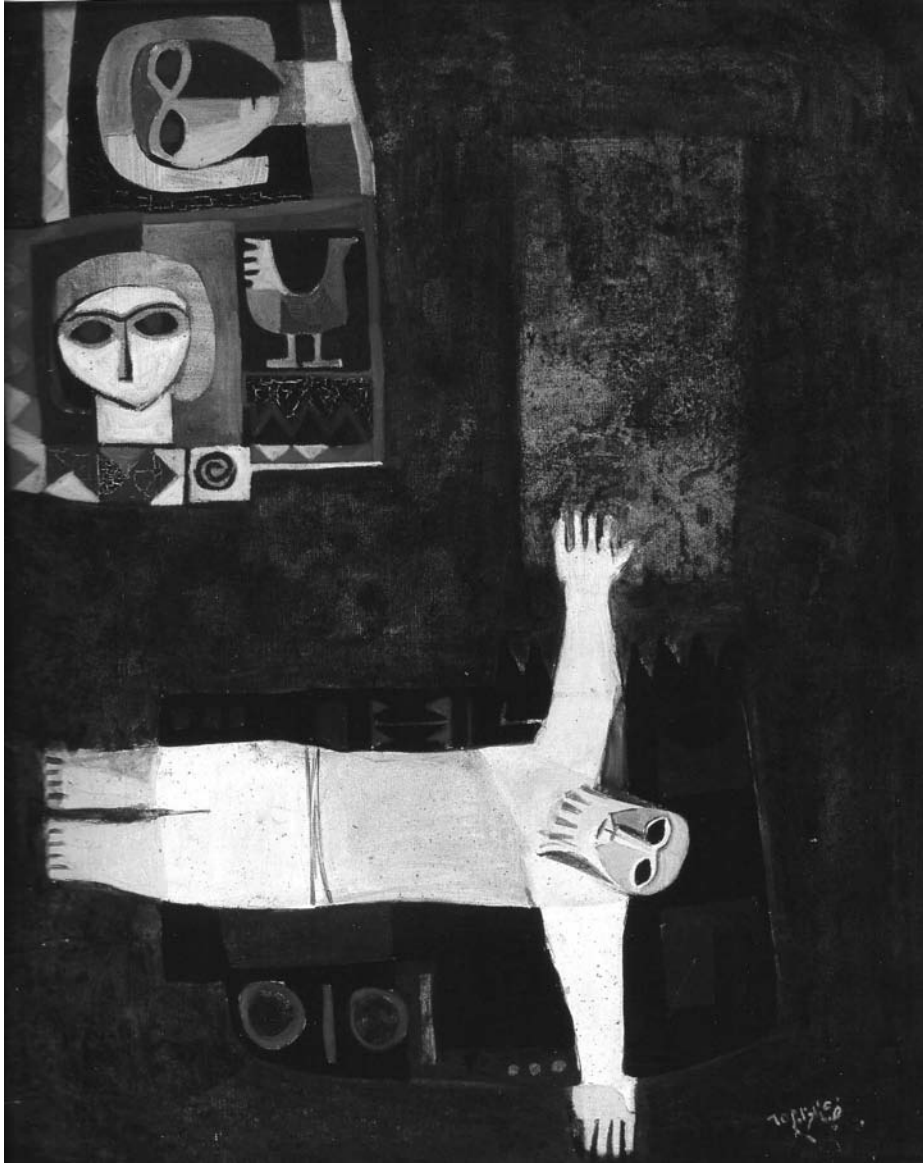


Figure 3: *Ishtar My Love*. Pocock 2009: 65.

of Iraq's ancient history. In his painting *Ishtar My Love*, the faces of the figures show the influence of Sumerian statues, and in fact this manner of rendering faces has become one of Azzawi's most distinctive characteristics (Fig. 3).

One publication that popularized Iraq's ancient myths was Taha Baqir's translation into Arabic of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, published by the Ministry of Culture in the

early 1960s. It became a best seller. As a rule the Ministry did not reprint its publications; however, because of popular demand, Taha Baqir's translation was frequently reprinted. The contribution of Iraqi pioneer artists, painters and sculptors who were inspired by the new discoveries of ancient Iraq, together with the translation of the *Gilgamesh Epic*, is unfortunately ignored by critics and historians.

Saddam like most Iraqis was aware of these new discoveries. He dreamt of following in the steps of those great leaders, which led to his interest in the artists because he knew they could help in immortalizing him. His two favorite historical figures were Nebuchadnezzar and Saladin. Both were conquerors of Jerusalem, and that was one of his propaganda policies of liberating Palestine. He was portrayed on posters with one or both of these historical figures. The phrase, "from Nebuchadnezzar to Saddam Hussein," was used on posters, on medallions and on a number of other objects. On one poster Saddam is shown building a wall in Babylon while Nebuchadnezzar is carrying a basket helping him. The Arabic text exclaims: from Saddam Hussein to Nebuchadnezzar (Fig. 4). On another poster Saddam is portrayed as Nebuchadnezzar wearing a Babylonian garment while holding a bow and arrow, aiming at an enemy helicopter (Fig. 5). He also emulated Saladin, the military leader who fought the Crusaders and regained Palestine.⁷ Again many posters illustrated the two leaders, always with the Dome of the Rock (thus Jerusalem/Palestine) visible in background (Fig. 6). In the late 1990s, a number of large-size statues and busts of Saddam were erected. Among them he is portrayed as the personification of historical figures. These statues were particularly placed to crown the towers of presidential palaces. Four gigantic busts were erected on the main Presidential Palace, where he is shown wearing the military helmet of King Faisal I. Another four, where he wears a medieval type of helmet, like that of Saladin, were placed on the towers of the newly built Palace of Dar Es-Salam. This building was completely gutted during the 2003 war (Fig. 7).

After the first Gulf War, many artists were encouraged or commissioned to illustrate the war. Saddam wanted to immortalize himself as the victor, so he turned to his favorite painter, Khalid al-Rahal, who more than any other artist included motifs from ancient Iraq in his artwork. Rahal designed a monument that combined ancient and Islamic symbols of victories over the enemy (Fig. 8a). The swords are those of the battle of Qadissiyyah, the battle where the Sassanid Persians were defeated by the invading Arab army in Iraq in 636.⁸ The hands are those of Saddam;⁹ a net hangs from each arm filled with the helmets of fallen Iranian soldiers (Fig. 8b). Rahal borrowed

7 Saladin was born in Iraq, possibly a Kurd, but his hometown was Tikrit, the same town of Saddam's birthplace. For posters of Saddam with Nebuchadnezzar, see Fales 2004: 172.

8 The Iraq/Iran war of the 1980s was called Qadisiyyat Saddam.

9 Al-Rahal died before the construction of the monument, and the sculptor Mohammed Ghani was commissioned to finish the work. Ghani made a cast of Saddam's forearms, and the bronze work was done at the Morris singer foundry in Britain.

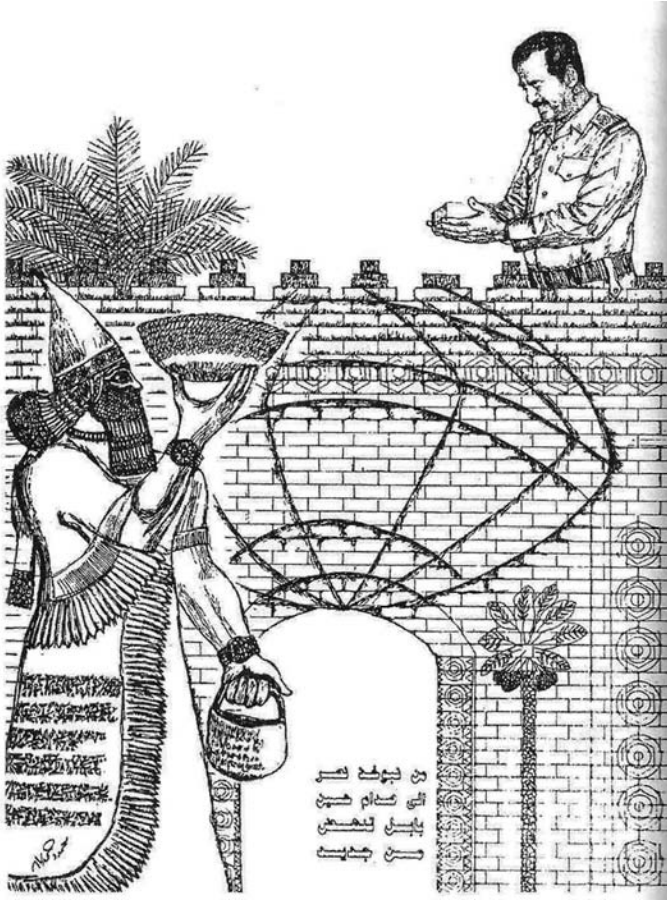


Figure 4: Nebuchadnezzar and Saddam as builder. Fales 2004: 172, no. 3.

this idea from a tradition of victorious monarchs in ancient Iraq, best known from the Stele of the Vultures of Eannatum, depicting the ruler of the Sumerian city-state of Lagash (c. 2460 BCE), where the god Ningursu, the patron god of Girsu, is holding a net filled with the corpses of the fallen enemy (see Winter 1985 for study) (Fig. 9). Thus the whole history and triumph of Iraq is summed up in one monument: Arab Islam (the Sword), ancient Iraq (the net), and modern Iraq is in Saddam forearms (see al-Khalil 1991 for study; note that al-Khalil is a pseudonym of Kanaan Makiya). Similarly, on a poster depicting the Hammurabi Law stele, Saddam replaced the figure of Hammurabi and is shown receiving the laws from the Sun God Shamash.¹⁰

¹⁰ A modern statue of Hammurabi, the work of Mohammad Ghani, stands in front of the National Assembly in Baghdad.



Figure 5: Saddam with bow and arrow. From author's collection of posters.



Figure 6: Postage stamp, Saddam and Saladin. Free Republic, <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/fr/560857/posts>.

The Baath Party, whose ideology identifies mainly with Arab history, turned to Iraq's ancient civilization to legitimize its rule of Iraq. Khalid al-Rahal was commissioned to design *The March of the Ba'th' Monument* (Fig. 10). When completed, it stood at the intersection between the Iraq Museum and the main bus station. Made of bronze relief plaques, it covers most of Iraq's history and is crowned with rosettes similar to those decorating the headdresses of the Sumerian women in the Royal Cemetery at Ur. Rahal had used the same motif on the head of the Sumerian queen discussed above (Fig. 2).¹¹

¹¹ Saddam and the Ba'ath party are not the only political entity in the Middle East to use archaeology to further its ideology, for example, so did the Shah of Iran and the government of Israel.



Figure 7: Presidential Palace, busts of Saddam. Bizarre Monuments of Saddam's Iraq; <http://www.michaeljohngrist.com/2009/10/7-bizarre-monuments-of-saddams-iraq/>.



Figure 8a–8b: Victory Arch. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Swords_of_qadisiyah.jpg.



Figure 9: Stele of the Vultures. After Winter 1985: fig. 3.

Islamic history was not forgotten either, especially when Sati' al-Husri became Director of Antiquity (1934–1941). Husri was a well-known Arab nationalist ideologue, who came to the Antiquities Department from the Ministry of Education, where he was instrumental in establishing the curriculum of the schools to include Arabic language and history books. He found that all the excavations in Iraq were conducted by Western expeditions whose main interest was on ancient Iraqi sites; none was excavating an Islamic site. He embarked on restoring the Abbasid buildings in Baghdad, for him a revival of the glory of Arab Baghdad. He saved the last few remaining buildings from the Abbasid Period. Most of them were in a very bad state and were destined for demolition. Baghdad was expanding and a plan was being implemented to open new roads and to build houses. To straighten Rashid Street, at that time the main artery of Baghdad, the Mirjan Mosque had been slated for demolition, as was Khan Mirjan, to

become a row of shops. He lobbied for their preservation and won. However, he lost the medieval South Gate; it was demolished at night by the Lord Mayor of Baghdad. Most of these buildings belonged to other government institutions, particularly the Waqf (Islamic religious endowment), but he doggedly pursued the government to transfer their ownership to the Antiquities Department. He then embarked on their restoration, in particular Khan Mirjan, Al-Mustansiriyah School, and the so-called Abbasid Palace. Because of the dilapidated state of these buildings, it took decades of restoration work to return them to something near their original state.



Figure 10: The March of the Ba'ath. After Fethi and Jabra 1987: 146.

Husri, also, formed the first Iraqi expedition to excavate and restore the Islamic sites of Samarra, Kufa and Wassit. The latter was perhaps chosen for ideological reasons, as it was the Umyyad capital in Iraq. Husri was a Syrian who came to Iraq with King Faisal I in 1921.¹² Husri's Islamic and Arab bent was demonstrated in his attempt to alter the design of the forthcoming project of the Iraq Museum. In 1934, the German architect Werner March designed the museum with ancient Babylonian houses and town plans in mind. The offices ran around courtyards, the interior walls were made of ceramic that looked like bricks and the building consisted of one ground floor with the outside walls of dressed brick. The museum is a remarkable and rather unassuming Art Deco-inspired building, but built with bricks. In the archive of the Iraq Museum are documents that reveal Husri trying to pressure the architect to add some Arabic or Islamic decoration to the entrance and the adjacent tower, with the justification that among the exhibits will be Islamic antiquities. This was resisted by the architect, who insisted that he was commissioned to design a museum for ancient antiquities. The project was shelved due to the outbreak of World War II, only to be resumed in 1954. Again the archive's documents show that the issue of adding Islamic decoration, particularly to the tower, had reached the level of the cabinet. Again the architect resisted complying, and he seemed to have succeeded in keeping the original plan. The Iraq Museum as we know it today was finally opened in 1966. However, the idea of adding an Arab/Islamic gate to the museum was again resurrected in the 1980s, and in line with Baathist Arab ideology, an Islamic style façade was erected.¹³

In the early years of Iraq's existence, the Department of Antiquities and the Iraq Museum were considered places of learning. If King Faisal I showed any interest it was due to Gertrude Bell. The two later kings Gazi and Faisal II would visit the museum on official and special occasions. But the museum, from the day it opened, was very popular with ordinary people, particularly when it was in the old building, situated in the center of Baghdad near the main shopping area. The gates were flanked by terracotta lions from the Old Babylonian site of Tell Harmal, and inside the gate were two Assyrian winged bulls from Nimrud.¹⁴

The government considered that no political harm would emanate from the Department or the Museum so it left the directors and curators to run them with no interference. However, when the government wanted to dispense with a well-known politician, who was at the same time cultured, well respected and difficult to sack, they would appoint him Director General of Antiquities. When Gertrude Bell began to

¹² Husri is known to Western archaeologists for the 1936 Antiquities Law, much resisted by the Europeans, because it benefited the Iraqis, particularly in the division of the antiquities (see discussion in both Lloyd 1947 and Bernhardson 2005).

¹³ An attempt to remove the above façade in 2003 was abandoned for fear of damaging the brick wall.

¹⁴ When I joined the Iraq Museum in 1961, my room was at the top of the stairs that led to the first Prehistoric room. It was heartening watching ordinary veiled women in their black abbayas holding their shopping bags going into the museum, curious about what they were going to see.

clash with the young Iraqi politicians who were eager to show their independence, King Faisal I appointed her as the Honorary Director of Antiquities. Similarly, when Sati' al-Husri was having trouble with the young Iraqis in the Ministry of Education, particularly those who had returned from studying in Europe full of new ideas about education and who were frustrated with Husri's Ottoman teaching, he was appointed Director of Antiquities. When Husri was sacked in 1941 for his support of the Rashid Ali coup against the royal family and the government, Youssif Ghanimah, a former Finance Minister and the author of historical books, was appointed in his place (1941–1944). At the time, he was suffering from the first stages of Parkinson disease. One benefit to the Antiquities Department deriving from his appointment was that it was upgraded to a Directorate General, since Ghanimah had previously held the rank of a cabinet minister, which precluded him from holding the position of just the director of a department. By 1944 another cultured politician was appointed, Naji al-Aseel, a diplomat and a former Foreign Minister. He had been in the government of Hikmat Suleiman, who was involved in a failed military coup in 1939. The government was sacked, and Naji al-Aseel was forcibly retired from public service. He went into self-exile and stopped engaging in public politics. Reconciliation took place in 1944 and he was offered the nonpolitical position of Director of Antiquities.

It should be noted that these high profile politicians who were sent to the Department of Antiquities as a form of cultural exile proved themselves to be the best Directors of Antiquities in the early years of the department's formation. Bell established the foundation of the administration; with the legislation of the 1924 Antiquities Law, she tried to regulate archaeological expeditions, the division of the antiquities and to limit the illicit digging of the ancient sites and sale of objects, and she established the Iraq Museum. Sati' al-Husri legislated the 1936 Antiquities Law, replacing Bell's 1924 one that had been more in favor of Western archaeologists. The 1936 law became the basis for the revised laws in 1959 and again in 2002. Husri organized the first Iraqi-led excavations and embarked on the restoration of the Islamic sites. He was successful in getting the government to allocate a plot of land for a new museum, something Bell had failed to persuade the cabinet to do, although before her death she obtained the old Law School, which served as the Iraq Museum until 1963, when the antiquities moved to the newly built site in 1966. During the Period of Naji al-Aseel, most of the major Iraqi excavations began, such as at Hatra, the Hellenistic-Parthian city in northeastern Iraq. The first restoration and excavation works at Nimrud and Babylon were undertaken, and the foundation for the new Iraq Museum was laid.¹⁵

¹⁵ The story of building the Iraq Museum started in 1934 with Husri, then building began in 1954 during the time of Naji al-Aseel. It continued in the time of Taha Baqir and was completed when Faisal al-Wailey was director. In political terms four different governments changed hands, each with a different ideology, but the Iraq Museum escaped any interference.



Figure 11: Iraqi republic symbol. Wikimedia, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iraq_state_emblem_CoA_1959-1965_Qassem.svg.

Two aspects in choosing the directors of antiquities changed after the 1958 coup that toppled the monarchy and made Iraq a republic. It was now a requirement that the director be an archaeologist and that politically he agree with the government.¹⁶ After 37 years of the country's existence, its ancient history was recognized in the new emblem of the Republic of Iraq (Fig. 11). The star symbol of the goddess Ishtar and the wavy rays of the sun god Shamash were part of the design made by Iraq's foremost artist Jawad Salim. He was a graduate from the Institute of Arts and had worked in the Antiquities Department in the 1930s.¹⁷ It had been a remarkable journey from the spectacular archaeological discoveries nearly a hundred years previously. It was not only a recognition that Iraq's ancient history resonated with the present, but the new symbol of Iraq showed the world that Iraq's ancient history had a global significance. But the history, arts and culture of a country are fragile entities, easily distorted by unscrupulous politicians, as we have seen above by Saddam Hussein and others keen to appropriate and use them for their own devices.

Neglect and bad management too are the enemy of a country's cultural heritage. And this is what has happened in Iraq over the last fifty years. It began with the formation of the republic, when politics began creeping into the day-to-day running of the Antiquities Department. During the Qassim government, Taha Baqir was appointed director. As a professional Assyriologist he wanted to continue work with the archaeological projects of restoration at a number of sites, including Babylon, Samarra and Nimrud, which required enormous funds that he obtained by yielding to government pressure to hire leftist staff. This trend became more obvious when the

¹⁶ By the end of the 1950s, there were a number of qualified archaeologists, many of whom had studied in Europe, such as Taha Baqir, Fuad Safar and Faraj Basmachi.

¹⁷ When designing the Freedom Monument in Tahrir Square in Baghdad in 1959, he apparently had the Assyrian palace relief in mind (personal communication with Rifaat Chadirji).

Baathist party came to power in 1968. Then it became almost obligatory for the top positions in the Antiquities Department to be held by members of the party regardless of their qualifications. Those who did not toe the line were not promoted, were sacked or occasionally transferred to other ministries.¹⁸

In addition to political pressure, the Iraq/Iran war had an adverse effect on the archaeologists, a number of whom had to join the army. Subsequently, a few lost their lives or ended up as prisoners of war in Iran. Some archaeologists with their children left Iraq afraid their sons would be conscripted. It was at this time that the militarization of the staff at the Antiquities Department began; many had to wear military uniform at work, particularly those who had joined the party. The hemorrhage of the best-qualified archaeologists started in the 1970s. I may have been the first to leave, more left in the 1980s, and one can say an exodus took place in the 1990s after the invasion of Kuwait. Due to the imposition of international sanctions and the collapse of the Iraqi currency, salaries were reduced to about \$10 a month, prompting a number to work in the Gulf States and other Arab countries.¹⁹ As a consequence of the international sanctions, all foreign archaeological excavations stopped and visiting scholars were seldom seen in the museum, cutting off Iraqi archaeologists from new developments, which was compounded by the lack of any new publications. However, Muayad Said Dimirji, who was the Director of Antiquities in the 1980s and 90s, took advantage of the annual Babylon Festival and started an annual archaeological seminar to which Western scholars were invited, giving Iraqi archaeologists an opportunity to meet them.

Although the Antiquities Directorate had been upgraded to a State Board, Muayad Said Dimirji, who had been director since 1977, was transferred to the Ministry of Culture in 1999, and no Director General has been appointed since. There has been a series of acting directors, which has had a negative effect on archaeological activities that was compounded by the looting of the Iraq Museum in April 2003 and the chaos that engulfed the country afterward. In addition, with the new restructuring of the government departments, the State Board was left “in the lurch,” not knowing which ministry it was going to be attached to. Would it be the newly formed Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities or would it stay with the Ministry Culture? The uncertainty of

18 I was one of the first members of the staff to be considered undesirable to stay at the Iraq Museum, but as I had no political activity and thus was difficult to sack, I was transferred in 1969 to the Ministry of Education with the intention of becoming a primary school teacher. Because I held only a BA degree, the authorities in the Museum expected me to resign. It was a great disappointment to them when I managed to get a position at the UNESCO department in the ministry, and thus did not resign as expected. I left Iraq for Britain in 1970.

19 Many Iraqi archaeologists went on scholarships to Europe and the United States to study for higher degrees. By 1970 there were more than a dozen of them at the Antiquities Department and even more at the university. However, by 2003 Dr. Jabir Khalil, then the Director of Antiquities, was the only one at the Department with a Ph.D. from Britain.

its fate left the staff in limbo and inertia. As an example of this standstill, the inventory of the antiquities objects in the museum has only started recently. In January 2012, new legislation was established and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities took over responsibility for the museum. According to the new legislation, the position of director was scrapped, to be taken by one of the minister's deputies. As of the writing of this article in December 2012, no Deputy Minister has been appointed yet.

Perhaps more serious than the administrative mismanagement is that over the years there has been a loss of expertise and a brain-drain of qualified people. Iraq's cultural heritage remains neglected and uncared for, pillaged and in chaos.

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Oscar White Muscarella

Forgeries of Ancient Near Eastern Artifacts and Cultures

Abstract: The thrust of this article is diverse: to present the historical and cultural backgrounds for the existence of numerous forgeries of Ancient Near Eastern antiquities prevalent in numerous private collections and public museums throughout the world as well as in countless scholarly publications of alleged ancient artifacts; to discuss the roles of archaeologist, scholars, and museum curators for the success of their existence and acceptance as ancient objects; and to review how the consequences of how such activities and behavior have distorted and perverted modern understanding among students, scholars and the public concerning the history and culture of many ancient polities and cultures, and not only for the Ancient Near East. Reviewed is the history and background of 19th and early 20th century forgery creations and the post-World War II acceleration of their manufacture, together with the respective modern cultural causes for their manufacture and, ignorant or not, acceptance. The trigger for the acceleration resulted from an increase of archaeological excavations and the increase of plundering of ancient sites and tombs, activities that both produced extraordinary artifacts. And soon thereafter, museums and private collectors demanded antiquities from dealers – to fulfill their display of wealth and power.

Keywords: antiquities, fakes, forgeries, museology, museum collecting, private collecting

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Introduction

“What one man can invent, another man can discover.”
(Sherlock Holmes, in *The Adventure of the Dancing Men*)

A comprehensive examination of forgery issues commences with two facts: when museum and private collecting occurs, modern forgeries have been manufactured; and they flourish in *all* archaeological, cultural, and artistic spheres from all chronological periods of the world’s cultures. Irrespective of which cultural or chronological periods of art or antiquities are involved, forgeries have continuously been manufactured and subsequently purchased as authentic works, no matter how sumptuous or minor the object may appear to be. The background for the enduring existence of

forgeries, often concomitantly supplied with a forged provenance, and their certification as genuine productions by scholars and museum curators in various publications are basically the same.

The acquisition of forgeries followed by scholarly acceptance primarily involves ignorance, but also personal or institutional dissimulation and deception (Muscarella 1977a: 164, 169, fns. 43, 68). Forgeries exist within the corpus of antiquities from all chronological periods and geographical backgrounds of ancient cultures, whether it is Ancient Near Eastern, Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Asian, African, Pre-Columbian.¹ The very same problems obtain for past and recent European as well as contemporary art, and all varieties of “collectibles,” (for example, Jones 1990) such as furniture, jewelry, coins, sculpture, stamps, musical instruments, scrimshaws (whale tooth engravings), shrunken Jivaro heads (South America), wine bottles, diaries (for example, Hitler’s), letters, maps, historical documents (such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*; Jones 1990: 70–72). Forgeries are made to deceive, to be sold. They exist to satisfy collectors’ cultural and personal needs. As long as antiquities continue to be purchased, forgeries will continue to be made and sold. And they are unceasingly being sheltered in museum and collector showcases all over the world, which is why forgers and their children – as well as those who seek to expose them – have lifetime jobs.

Addressing forgeries of ancient cultures, one commences with didactic declarations: without being aware of the vast quantity of destroyed sites that produce countless genuine antiquities, followed by the manufacture of forgeries of alleged plundered antiquities, all sold together in the marketplaces, it is not possible for scholars and students of archaeology, not to mention the public, to anticipate and recognize them and refrain from contextualizing them into proper archaeological research. Although some archaeologists, museum curators and collectors refer to their purchases as antiquities, only the *unexcavated* ones are correctly labeled antiquities; the excavated are correctly labeled artifacts. This distinction is not pedantic, considering that forgeries occur solely within the former category. Imperative for accurately identifying the historical nature of an antiquity is to comprehend that all *genuine* antiquities have been plundered from destroyed and now non-existing or damaged sites, tombs and mounds; and that forgeries are proffered as antiquities derived therein. Plunder and forgeries are interrelated enterprises. Without plunder there would be no forgeries: the former is a *sine qua non* for the latter. Ignorance of these matters readily facilitates forgeries of ancient art and artifacts to be prevalent in numerous public and private venues *and* in scholarly publications, thereby sabotaging archaeological research and deductions and destabilizing archaeological and historical reality.

¹ For Pre-Columbian forgeries, see Coe 1993; also valuable on the nature of forgeries in general are Feder 2006; Jones 1999; and Kelkner and Bruhns 2010.

Scholarly knowledge of why forgeries are made and the acute consequences of their acceptance as genuine artifacts engage a cluster of archaeological, historical and cultural problems. Ignorance deflates scholarly awareness that forgeries are not merely an aesthetic, a museum, or an “art” problem, that in fact they are an essential constituent of the archaeological discipline’s goal to accurately reconstruct and make known the world’s past cultural histories.

Forgeries of artifacts and iconographies from every ancient Near Eastern culture have been manufactured. It is difficult to name an artifact class that has not been forged. They include, in many forms and variations: human and animal sculptures and reliefs, pottery, vessels, jewelry, pins, plaques, cylinder and stamp seals, tablets, armor, horse equipment, etc. They are manufactured from all the materials used in antiquity: gold, silver, bronze, ivory, clay, and stone (Unger 1957–71: 7–8; Muscarella 2000a). They comprise copies of typical artifacts and iconography from specific polities or cultures; imaginative modifications of known artifact forms and iconography that are interpreted to be general Mesopotamian or Iranian productions; new and fictional configurations unknown in ancient works and ingenuously labeled as unique; a cast of a genuine artifact; pastiches, that is, the joining together of several objects, all of which could be ancient or a mixture of ancient and forged units; ancient unadorned artifacts, which, to increase their market value, are embellished with added religious and genre scenes. Forgers’ creations also include copied inscriptions, or strange, unparalleled signs identified as a hitherto unknown script (Muscarella 1995: 451; 2008b: 655; Feder 2006: 132–34, 160–64; Jones 1999: 153).

The consequence of these activities is that fictional constructions have negligently been accepted by scholars and incorporated into archaeological discourse apropos the alleged productions of a particular polity, thereby (unknowingly or otherwise) collaborating with the forgers (Muscarella 1995: 451–53; 2000a: 9, 16–18). The precise number of ancient Near Eastern forgeries may never be recorded, even were one to document those published in disparate venues, for numerous examples remain unpublished in dealers shops and private collections, visible to a selected few. Nevertheless, it is certain that countless fakes have been created since the 1950s (Muscarella 2000a: 9).

Forgeries in the Near East: The Case of Iran

Forgeries of ancient antiquities, mainly of Mesopotamian and Syria-Palestine backgrounds, have been made for a long time. They were prevalent in the 19th and early decades of the 20th centuries, available chiefly in local bazaars to tourists and collectors. A good number were recognized by a number of contemporary scholars.²

² Clermont-Ganneau 1885; Ménant 1887; Hilprecht 1894: 131–32; Banks 1904–05; Vayson De Pradenne 1932, which is still among the best publications on forgeries; Unger 1934, 1957–1971.

Plundering, and concomitantly forgery production, of Near Eastern antiquities in general increased after the plunder of the site of Ziwiye in Iran in 1947 and quickened extensively thereafter. In fact, Iran had endured concentrated incidents of plundering, beginning in the late 1920s, when quantities of its antiquities appeared on the market, deriving primarily from plundered tombs in Luristan. In this large region only one site has ever been excavated, that of Surkh Dum (by Erich Schmidt, in 1938), and beginning in the 1960s a good number of incompletely plundered cemeteries were excavated (by the Belgian archaeologist L. vanden Berghe and his students), fortunately yielding many artifacts. In the Luristan repertory there are countless unexcavated genuine antiquities, and hundreds of forgeries, integrated together and sold in Iranian and European bazaars.³ In the 1920s and 1930s local workers at archaeological sites in Iraq created forgeries (terracottas readily baked in villagers' bread ovens), pretending they had excavated them, because at that time, to encourage their efforts, dig workers were given *bakshish* (a tip) for each artifact recovered (Unger 1957–1971: 6; Muscarella 1977a: 158). These locally forged objects were then included in the final archaeological publications as excavated: an archaeologist digging at Zincirli in Turkey received as a gift a forgery (unknown to him) from a local and published it as found near his site. Subsequently, three other archaeologists cited it as excavated at Zincirli (Muscarella 2000a: 181, no. 24).

Invariably plundering occurs soon after a major archaeological discovery or an exceptional plundered find was publicized, for example, in Iran at Ziwiye, Marlik, Hasanlu, the Kalmakara Cave, and several cemeteries south of the town of Jiroft. Immediately thereafter forgers commenced their activities, their creations merged together with genuine antiquities and claimed to have been found at these sites. A silver beaker from Hasanlu was soon replicated by a forger (Fig. 1, right). Much of the excavated Marlik material is sumptuous and carefully constructed – qualities that appeal to all collectors, and hence to forgers. Ninety percent of the metal vessels published over the years as from Marlik and other Northwestern Iranian sites derive from dealers, about fifty percent of which are forgeries (Fig. 2, right), and only ten percent of the corpus consists of excavated artifacts.⁴ Beginning in 1947 hundreds of genuine and exotic gold, silver and ivory objects appeared (in collections worldwide), alleged by antiquities dealers to have come from Ziwiye (or the nearby site of Kaplantu); more than 40 forgeries are known (Muscarella 1977b: 211–12; 2000a: 76–81).

Many Achaemenian Persian period forgeries exist (Muscarella 2000a: 44–72), including vessels, jewelry, and many relief sculptures (Fig. 3, right, is manifestly a forgery). Regarding the latter, sometimes a museum purchase can create a misunder-

³ For a summary of plunder, forgeries, and excavations in Luristan, see Muscarella 1988: 112–206; 2000a: 81–119.

⁴ Löw 1993: 37–38; 1998: 525–62; Muscarella; 2000a: 9, 31–75; 2008a: 14, figs. 7a, b; for Jiroft forgeries, mostly made of stone, see Muscarella 2001: 179–97.

standing regarding what is a forgery. I assessed as forgeries three crudely made stone reliefs, poorly modeled after those from Persepolis and purchased by the Brooklyn Museum as ancient, and thus I labeled them forgeries (Muscarella 1977a: nos. 131, 132). I later realized that they were not originally made to be forgeries, but were adaptations made in Iran during the 19th century Qajar period (Muscarella 2000a: 46, nos. 12 a, b); there exists several other similar examples in a private collection, all, as in Brooklyn, labeled as from ancient Persepolis.



Figure 1: Left: Beaker excavated at Hasanlu with drawing by Grace Freed Muscarella; Right: A forgery. Muscarella 2000: 285.



Figure 2: Left: Excavated beaker from Marlik; Right: A forgery. Musée Rath (1966) *Tresors de l'ancien Iran*. Exposition: 8 juin–25 sept.: pl. 19.



Figure 3: Left: Achaemenian relief; Right: A forgery. Muscarella 2000a: 291.

Another provenience attribution deserves mention. In the late 19th century the British Museum acquired a group of gold and silver objects said to be Achaemenian antiquities deriving from the Oxus River area, where they had been purchased. Not one was excavated, and among them are forgeries (the Museum admits many of the coins are counterfeit). But all the objects, all purchased, are referred to as the Treasure of the Oxus, and in some instances, a specific locus is named. Then in 2002 the MIHO Museum in Japan published about 2500 purchased objects, which, in bazaar archaeological terminology, was labeled the Oxus Treasure 2, a treasure consisting of many forgeries (Muscarella 2003b).

Perhaps the most substantial assemblages of forgeries asserted to have been “found in Iran” or neighboring areas are those labeled Sasanian, a major polity in southwestern Iran (224–651 CE). Literally in the hundreds, they began to appear in the late 1950s and increased thereafter. Although the corpus comprises gold and silver vessels and plates (Fig. 4) presently owned by numerous museums and collectors worldwide (Muscarella 2000a: 203–204, 215, 528–35), not a single example of such Sasanian objects has been excavated in Iran or from nearby areas, an issue that scholars have ignored. The antiquity dealer A.U. Pope published in the *Illustrated London News* (Pope 1950) Sasanian vessels, asserting they had been “unearthed” (the unearther unnamed) in the Caspian Sea area: notwithstanding that three years previously the archaeologist Roman Ghirshman published one of these vessels as having derived from the Caucasus: it is a forgery provided by an archaeologist with a forged provenience (Pope 1950: 204).

Pope was one of the most prominent dealers in Iranian cultural material of all periods. He warrants special examination because for decades he was the archetype of a flourishing dealer, this because of his brilliance and, not the least, his successful



Figure 4: Forgery of a Sassanian plate. Antiquities Market.

dissimulations, one being falsely representing himself as an archaeologist. Throughout his career he (and his wife Phyllis Ackerman) sold genuine antiquities and forgeries, vigorously denying the quantity in existence of the latter and providing provenances for both categories; he also viciously berated archaeologists (especially Ezat Neghaban) who opposed plunder (Muscarella 1999; 2000a: 7–8, 25–28, fns. 7, 11, 210–11, fn. 38).

Collecting, the Antiquities Market, Looting and Forgeries

The continuous emergence of plundered Iranian antiquities in worldwide markets resulted in massive museum and collector demands for “antiquities,” encouraging dealers to meet this demand by forging antiquities for them. The desire to purchase antiquities and the associated manufacture of forgeries are ineluctably linked. Beginning in the early 1960s a major spur in public exhibitions (and selling) of Iranian antiquities commenced. A series of travelling exhibitions located in museums, each producing a catalogue, was organized collectively by scholars, dealers, and museum staffs, communally writing descriptions and providing alleged provenances (for example, *Kunstschätze aus Iran*, 1962; *Sept Mille Ans d’Art en Iran*, 1962; *Trésors de L’Ancien Iran*, 1966). They contained not a single excavated antiquity; all the hundreds of antiquities published were plundered, and possessed by dealers and collectors, the latter sometimes disguised as “coll. Particulière” or “Privatbesitz,” or owned by named museums. The catalogues were nothing less than sales venues, and large quantities of the material presented are forgeries. As intended, the exhibitions and catalogues succeeded in encouraging both more plunder and more collections of antiquities – and forgeries (Löw 1998: 541, fn. 65; Muscarella 2000a: 34).

As noted, the market distribution process of selling forgeries overlaps that of selling plundered antiquities. The latter are sold by the local plunderers to nearby dealers who pass them to couriers who arrange the smuggling abroad. Dealers who employ forgers pass them to the same couriers, who thereby serve both the plunderers and forgers. William Coe (1993: 273–75, fig. 5) has neatly outlined the full process (but neglecting to inform us that he is a very active collector of Pre-Columbian artifacts). And slyly incorporating forgeries into their corpus of ancient plundered antiquities, dealers offer for sale both categories concurrently, each equally camouflaged as a “recent acquisition,” or from Site X, and sell them for thousands, hundreds of thousands, even millions of dollars. Inasmuch as antiquities are acquired to confer prestige, power, and display of wealth, they also function for donors to museums as tax deduction investments through higher evaluations gained over time. Hence, every museum and private collection throughout the world, even national and university museums of antiquity-producing nations (Israel and Iran, for example), have antiquities and forgeries in their possession. Also, it is normal practice for museum staffs, to claim in museum-speak that they purchased their antiquities “in good faith”: a cliché defensive, and legal, term, which correctly read means “our deceit cannot be traced” (Muscarella 2000a: 2, 537–40; Muscarella 2012b). As long as collecting continues, plundering and its market agents will thrive, and forgeries will continue to be manufactured and sold (Unger 1934; 1957–71: 5).

To enhance the value of both their genuine and forged antiquities, dealers allege they had been found at a specific named site or regional area: Marlik, Hamadan, Hacilar, Bactria, the Caucasus, Mesopotamia, and so forth. But unmentioned in dealers’ sales catalogues is that the locus informer was a plunderer, a dealer, whose attributions are thereafter accepted by the purchasers as well as scholars as an archaeological reality. Consequently, countless unexcavated antiquities are displayed in museum vitrines and published in scholarly articles and books as having derived from the proffered sites (De Pradenne 1932: 586). This conduct constructs a forgery of provenience (or provenance), and when a forgery is accepted with a forged site name, we confront a double forgery. Their only original provenance is a dealer’s shop in Switzerland, England, Germany, Iran, the United States, etc. (Muscarella 1995; 2000a: 15–17; 2000b; 2003a; 2003b). Note that the term provenience should only be employed for an excavated artifact’s site; provenance is the label for the alleged, plundered site, or for the (unexcavated) antiquities’ modern locations: a dealer’s shop and museum or collector ownership.

The magnitude of the problems created by forgeries, the methods required detecting them, and an appreciation of how they sabotage archaeology’s aims – the preservation of the world’s cultural history – is still not fully comprehended. When forgeries are accepted as ancient creations jointly with genuine plundered antiquities they are equally employed as evidence of ancient cultural procedures. This solecism occurs in large part because forgery issues have not been normal components of art historical and archaeological education (Muscarella 1977a: 161–63; Muscarella 2012b).

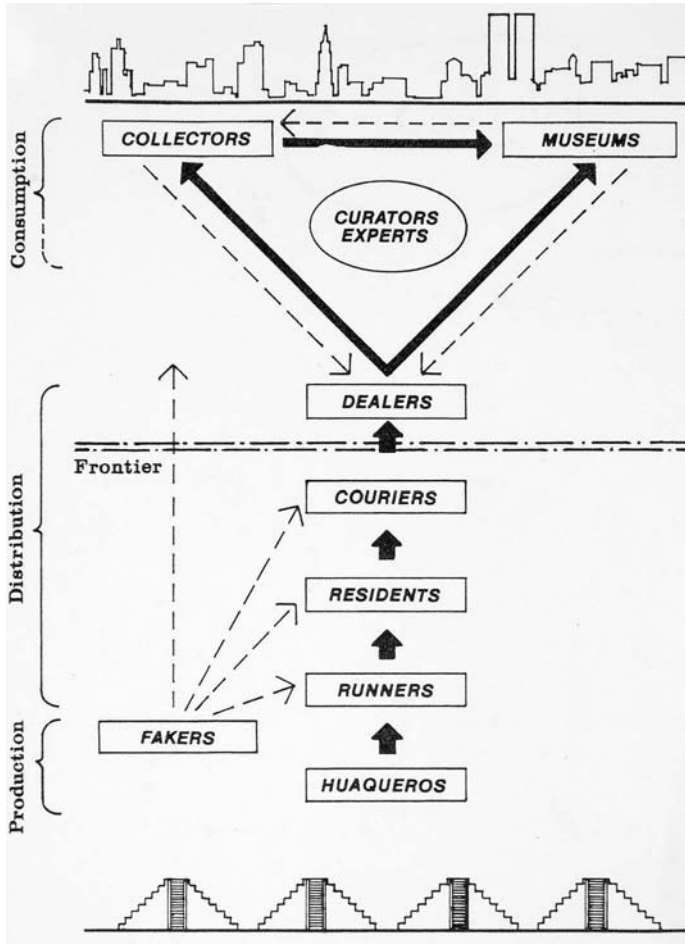


Figure 5: Plunder Chart. From Coe 1993: fig. 1.

But the deficiency is slowly changing and a perception of these problems has begun to circulate in the classrooms and in publications (for example, Löw 1993; 1998: 278–419, 525–62; Muscarella 1977a; 2000a).

The Style and Science of Forgeries

Addressing detection first, one begins with connoisseurship, that is, knowledge of stylistic patterns and details, representations of specific iconographic features and motifs, depictions of human and animal forms, etc., represented within a specific culture's repertory. And equally important is knowledge of manufacturing methods,

that is, casting, hammering, joining. Too few archaeologists are cognizant of this (Coe 1993: 272–73; Muscarella 2000a: 9–10; Kelkner and Bruhns 2010: 25–26, 123–26); indeed, the term *connoisseurship* is devalued by some self-labeled “anthropological archaeologists,” because to them it is a derided “art” term. Scientific methodologies also help determine age, such as analyses of corrosion, patinas, as well as thermoluminescence. But it has become known that forgers monitor the technologies involved in detecting forgeries, hence, “scientific” analyses are too often flawed, or corruptly determined. Although testing for corrosion patina on bronze antiquities has long been a scientific test yielding absolute results regarding their age, it is now recognized that patinas can be created over forged objects to mimic ancient accumulation (see Muscarella 2008a for the above).

Thermoluminescence testing dates the time a terracotta object was made by determining how long ago it was baked. To confound such analysis, forgers create works comprised of ancient clays or terracotta units formed together with their new creations, such as pottery, figurines, plaques, etc. (Kelker and Bruhns 2010: 31–32). Or they graft a genuine ancient vessel base below their freshly made one, well aware that scientists will only test the (ancient) base, so as not to damage the vessel itself, thereby skewing TL investigations (Muscarella 2008a: 12–13, fig. 2). Further, forgers soon learned to submit their terracotta productions to intensive X-rays, which skews the revealed chronology. Ivory carvings are tested for the presence of carbon and nitrogen, absent in ancient ivory (Baer and Indictor 1978). Carbon-14 testing is helpful, but limited to organic materials, and it is critically burdened by local climatic and magnetic disturbances that alter the actual recorded historical date of the object tested, facts sometimes ignored by scholars. A few scientists claim that they can date gold as ancient or modern, but this claim is rightly rejected by others (Muscarella 2008a: 13).

Some forgers are accomplished artisans, and their capabilities and research activities cannot be underestimated. Nonetheless, a large quantity of their productions (some perhaps made by apprentices) betrays unskilled workmanship and incorrect technologies, or depict misunderstood and artistically flawed scenes clearly evident to the knowledgeable eye. Despite these anomalies, vendors, collectors, and equally curators and scholars often defend them by sophisticated interpretations. If grossly made or deviating from normal productions, they defend them as a “provincial” production, or rare, a *unikum*, that is, a deviation from the canon, or deriving from a hitherto (now revealed for the first time) unknown polity, or reflecting different skills and talents, and discredit those who say the naked emperor has no clothes (Muscarella 2000a: 7–8; 2001: 178). Often dealers or collectors defend a forgery they possess, arguing that no forger could have made it, it is too good (for example, Muscarella 2000a: 24, 109, fn. 31; and not only with Ancient Near Eastern forgeries: see Kelker and Bruhns 2010: 17).

Spotting Forgeries – Some Examples

Most forgeries are recognizable to a trained *and* disinterested eye, an ability acquired solely by one who studies and observes style and details associated with *excavated* artifacts, the essence of acquiring knowledge of ancient designs, techniques, and styles. To be capable of formulating accurate decisions takes years of hands-on research and examination, again of excavated ancient artifacts. This involves studying a culture's methods of construction, the range of materials used, styles and motifs employed, the fashion in which they portray details such as eyes, ears, hair, hand and feet positioning, clothing decoration, and so forth, aspects often ignored by too many scholars and curators. They look but do not see.

I present but a few examples of deviations from the above data, constructional and other. The Berlin Museum curator Wolfram Nagel (1970) sumptuously published color photographs of two painted stone female figurines he had purchased, proclaiming, from his desk in Berlin, that they derived from Hacilar, a major Neolithic site in south central Anatolia (Fig. 6, right). That no excavated Hacilar figurine was made from stone is indeed recognized, but this fact was euphemized as “*ein Novum*,” thus revealing its rarity in antiquity – in museum-speak, providing prestige for his museum. But not mentioned is that all excavated figurines from Hacilar have their thighs joined together (Fig. 6, left), not, as in Berlin's “*Novum*,” separated. Further unmentioned is that one of the figurines has a non-Hacilar clown's smile, and that excavated painted figurines are rare at Hacilar. Nevertheless, the modern figurines were vigorously defended as ancient (*contra* Muscarella 1977a: nos. 221, 222) by the Mesopotamian scholar Eva Strommenger (1976–77: 321; see also Muscarella 1980–81: 120).

Numerous Hacilar forgeries exist in numerous museums and collections, there baptized as ancient productions. Eight are in the Louvre, where one of its curators informs us that a unique figurine introduces evidence of a hitherto unknown “*mythologie certainment [sic] très archaïque*,” avoiding the fact that it is not *archaïque* but *jeune*, as it was recently forged. All excavated Hacilar figurines were made by bonding spiral coils together, but two figurines in the Metropolitan Museum of Art are constructed in one piece (Muscarella 2000a: 135–41). The Ankara Museum has a large collection of confiscated Hacilar forgeries, clearly recognized as such by the museum staff and not on display.

Two gold beakers in the MIHO Museum in Japan published as deriving from the major northwestern Iran site of Marlik (but not disclosing how they came to Japan), have, in addition to crude, manifestly non-Marlik style decorative scenes, bases that were separately added, a characteristic unmatched on any excavated Marlik vessel, where all vessels were hammered from one sheet of gold. This crucial manufacturing technique was unknown to the forger, whose ignorance was explained by some scholars as reflecting a construction date earlier than the excavated vessels (Muscarella 2000a: 37–38, nos. 40, 41; 2008a: 14, fig. 7a, b).



Figure 6: Left: Excavated at Hacilar; Right: Two forgeries. Muscarella 2000a: 438–439.



Figure 7: “Ziwiye” ivory plaque forgery. Muscarella 2000a: 397.

A small ivory Assyrian-style plaque (Fig. 7) depicts an archer on a truncated horse (one of several misunderstandings of the forger) shooting an enemy with a bow held in his left hand, an unknown position in the ancient Near East, where the right hand was always privileged in human activities (Muscarella 2000a: 80, no. 40, 377; also 94, no. 1).

A Louvre Museum curator proclaimed from his Paris office that an unparalleled scene on an unexcavated purchased (and forged) object revealed important, indeed new, hitherto unknown information about early Zoroastrian religious ideology (Muscarella: 2000a: 85, no. 6).

The dominance of forgers is also indicated by their successful (albeit unintentional) ability to help fabricate, from a corpus of their modern creations, the seventh-sixth centuries BCE artifact history – its forms and style – of the pre-Achaemenian Medes, a polity in western Iran. Primarily it was curators who conceived the inter-

pretation that a corpus of odd antiquities resembling, but not quite the same as, Achaemenian-fashioned objects was therefore made by the Medes. This contrived conclusion was concocted predominantly from (unexcavated) forgeries of Achaemenian antiquities. In actuality, the forgers thought they were cunningly creating *varieties* of Achaemenian objects, which aim was transmogrified by scholars into their own forgery: Median forgeries, and a forged history. To date, not a single recognized excavated Median artifact is known (Muscarella 1987; 2000a: 73–75).

But even trained eyes and minds have problems. I offer two complex instances that continue to perplex scholars. One of the most knotty problems regarding determining if an unexcavated object is a forgery or not, and where archaeologists and philologists cannot agree, concerns two unexcavated stone statues of Gudea, the King of Lagash (late third millennium BCE). The time of manufacture of the statues has caused ongoing straightforward disagreements between them, and to date remains unresolved. A number of Gudea statues had been excavated at the city of Girsu in the late 19th century. Then in the 1920s a cluster of Gudea statues suddenly appeared in the art market, some ancient, others recognized to be forgeries. One of these statues is now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Fig. 8, right), another in the Detroit Institute of Arts (Fig. 8, left). To me and others, based on stylistic analysis, the Metropolitan Museum statue is ancient, but the one in Detroit is considered by the same scholars to be a forgery. However, the inscription of the Metropolitan Gudea is considered by all philologists who have studied it to be a recent addition, because to them its inscribed statue name is not conceivable for an ancient inscription, whereas that on the Detroit statue is to them most certainly ancient. Here we have a true paradox, a complex conundrum in the antiquities vs. the excavated artifact problem (Muscarella 2000a: 172–73; 2005).



Figure 8: Gudea statues: Left: Detroit Museum of Art; Right: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Although not from the Near East, an additional example of a forgery forging history (here in Italy) is an unexcavated gold fibula inscribed with the name “Manios” that surfaced in 1887. For some years the inscription was considered to be the earliest Latin writing ever recorded, but years later was revealed to be a forgery (Muscarella 2000a: 11). An Italian scholar (Guarducci: 1994) further argued that the fibula itself is also a forgery.

How Forgeries Infiltrate Museums and Scholarship

Forgeries come to the market via antiquity dealers, most of whom sell forgeries. Although none processes excavated objects, they describe themselves as antiquity experts, inasmuch as they handle them every day, and know more about them than archaeologists. All declare they never sell forgeries. They readily supply false provenances for their merchandise, whether it is genuine or a forgery. Some provide a forged letter attesting to the object’s (whether genuine or a forgery) provenance, in an old Italian, Swiss or German family collection, or that it was acquired by a European collector in the 1930s, but again, this is a forgery of provenance grafted onto a genuine or a forged antiquity.

Some dealers work actively with forgers, commissioning their productions; a number have their own family-owned forgery factories (in Iran, Egypt, Italy, Mexico, South America, etc.). To enhance future sales they donate forgeries to museums (in the United States to non-prominent institutions with non-specialist staffs) and then cite the displayed gift to potential customers, establishing a *bona fide* for related forgeries they possess. To authenticate forgeries they possess, dealers and collectors employ a scientist/conservator or a willing scholar collaborator, while some museums use their own staff. In both cases some are totally unqualified or worse (Muscarella 2000a: 5, 24, 37–38, nos. 40, 41; 2012a; Kelkner and Bruhns 2010: 54–55), and their authentication reports become a major component of collectors’ purchasing decisions. Put bluntly and succinctly, scholars, museum and private conservationists/scientists avoid necessary tests, or lie, for example, to protect and avoid offending and losing rich customers or donors, which include rich museum trustees (Muscarella 2008a: 14–15; 2009: 400; 2012a). Dealers will also lie about a scholar’s alleged authentication: I have been cited as authenticating a forgery when I had merely stated, “this piece is interesting,” inasmuch as all forgeries are interesting.

Auction galleries are the major venues for the sale of genuine antiquities and forgeries (some sell more than others), and as with dealers, their salespeople claim to be authorities in their areas of specialization, bearing titles such as Expert or Director. A tactic of dealers is that when discovering a forgery in their possession they often pass it for sale to an auction gallery. In such sales they do not list their name, but provide a source as from “a private collection,” or “from a European collection,” etc.

The ultimate consumers of antiquities and forgeries are museums and collectors who become sources of information/misinformation provided to the public and scholars via their public exhibitions and publications, where it is authoritatively proffered that every object therein is of course genuine, which their labels document. The reality, however, is that *most* public, private and university museums in Europe, Japan, and the United States, have antiquity forgeries (called ancient “art” in their collections); in some (I know several in the United States), all or the majority of the antiquities displayed are forgeries.

Antiquity curators are not necessarily specialists, and some have only a BA academic degree. In museum staff-hiring policies an individual’s social background and wealth are more important than skill or knowledge, and some are ignorant of necessary connoisseurship scholarship. A primary component of a curator’s job description is to “build up” the museum’s collection by purchases and acquiring donations from rich collectors, and thereafter fully uphold the authenticity of their acquisitions, which action equally defends their reputations. For the same reasons some refuse to perform scientific tests on their acquisitions, or possibly expose donations from rich collectors and museum trustees to the same; and they often keep recognized forgeries on exhibition (Muscarella 2000a: 2–5; 2008; Kelkner and Bruhns 2010: 12). Rarely, a curator will notify his director that there is a forgery in his collection, only to be ordered to keep it on view (for example, in Cleveland, see below). Blatant deception in the guise of loyalty to a director, trustee, benefactor, or lender is a museum job description in all curatorial areas.

Curators will accept loans of collections from collectors and other museums, knowing they contain forgeries. The rationale here is that this is a good-faith business arrangement undertaken to protect the lenders’ reputations, and to avoid terminations of future loans, donations, and exhibitions. Sometimes donations of recognized forgeries acquired from estate settlements are not exhibited, but kept in storage, collaboration in the tax deductions claimed by the estate. Or donated forgeries from rich collectors are exhibited (at least while the donor or lender is alive) and labeled as genuine ancient productions.

Museum directors may be skilled in one area of art, but from day one of their appointment, they transmogrify themselves into self-proclaimed art experts in all fields of art housed in *their* museums, where everything they procure by purchase or donation is genuine, superb (Muscarella 2000a: 24). Directors are responsible for controlling and accepting the purchase of all art and antiquities from all areas, and defend *à outrance* the authenticity of their objects possessed by their museum. One example: after consultation with a colleague, a curator at the Cleveland Museum of Art was removing a forgery from its case just as the museum director passed by and asked what he was doing. When the curator explained what was occurring, the director was furious and ordered him to place the forgery with its forged label back on display. He, its owner, *ipso facto* baptized the forgery as genuine and it continued to be exhibited (Muscarella 2000a: 2, 46–47, no. 1; 2009: 401).

Private collectors purchase antiquities to display their wealth and connected power to “own art.” They publicly communicate their personal desires, such as “I had to have it,” “he has a lust for antiquities,” “his collecting is passionate... miraculous... positive and creative.” A dealer proclaimed that if nations will not allow dealers to buy their antiquities, they will utilize “our own ways” (Muscarella 2000a: 12, 23, fn. 5; 2009). When collectors donate their possessions, both genuine and forgeries, to museums they take a tax deduction; and the museum administrations never notify the tax authorities of the latter’s forged tax evaluations.

Scholars have played a crucial role for the success of forgeries infiltrating into scholarly discourse, in most cases unwittingly and indirectly, but indeed, in some cases willingly (Muscarella 1980/1981; 2000a: 3–8, 22–26; 2009). A critical impediment in ancient art and artifact studies in universities is that the existence and extent of forgeries is rarely addressed as a component of antiquity and archaeological studies (Muscarella 2000a: 9–10; Kelkner and Bruhns 2010: 57). Until recently, most scholars received a Ph.D. in archaeology without hearing the word “forgery,” or heard it only as a casual footnote topic (Feder 2006 is a good exception).

For professional, social, and fund-seeking loyalties to museum colleagues a number of curators, archaeologists and scholars collaborate (often secretly) with rich and powerful collectors and dealers, evading the problem of plunder and collecting (Muscarella 2009: 401–404, fn. 38). Some scholars downgrade the importance of forgeries, claiming there are only a few, even asserting that it is not an important issue. Some write letters of authenticity for forgeries owned by collectors, or publish them. Other scholars condemn those who publicly mention forgeries, functioning as forgery enablers: for example, one private archaeology assembly decreed that “We do not exhibit our dirty laundry in public” (Muscarella 2000a: 6–7). And some scholars refuse to inform museum colleagues that they are exhibiting forgeries: one told me she knew of a forgery in a major museum, but would never say so publicly or in print: she was afraid she would be barred from recommendations and lecture invitations at that institution. A tenured cuneiformist from a major university refused to confirm my opinion about an inscription I thought was forged. He said he did not want to offend the object’s owner: a rich antiquities dealer and collector (Muscarella 1995: 451, fn. 4).

No individual scholar’s deeds in the discipline is more unsettling than those of Roman Ghirshman, a brilliant scholar and archaeologist, but one unceasingly and actively engaged over decades in supporting plunder by encouraging the selling of antiquities (he himself sold antiquities), and the publisher in books and journals of forgeries of Iranian antiquities, together with forged provenances, all submitted as genuine productions, which were then cited by scholars as such. Further, in his prominent book, a standard text in classrooms and scholarly publications for decades, *The Art of Ancient Iran* (Golden Press, New York, 1964), he published scores of unexcavated antiquities alongside forgeries housed by dealers, in “private collections,” and in named museums. He blatantly privileged unexcavated antiquities far more than excavated artifacts, countless numbers of which were manifestly available

to him; and he played an important role in the assembly and organization of the traveling exhibitions and their catalogues mentioned above (Muscarella 2000a: 8, 25–26, 28, 46–49, 205, fns. 7, 11). Further, outraged students informed me that their professor (an outstanding scholar, but corrupt) ordered her students not to discuss forgeries in a forthcoming lecture by Roman Ghirshman, whom the professor knew continuously published many forgeries as ancient (Muscarella 1977a: 164, fn. 42a; 2000a: 4).

Ghirshman's activities are a model of the problem of scholarly engagement in publishing forgeries, but he was not an isolated example. Numerous ancient art and archaeological publications have made public many hundreds of forgeries discussed as ancient antiquities, numerous furnished with a named site, sometimes being misled, manipulated to function as a laundering and advertising service for forgeries and their vendors. Such was the case with the *Illustrated London News*, at one time a major and respected publisher of archaeological excavation reports, but one also exploited by archaeologists (below) and self-proclaimed archaeologists, such as A.U. Pope (Muscarella 1999: 9–10; 2000a: 8, 25, 126, no. 11, 204, 209–211, figs. 36, 38), who published there both genuine plundered and forged antiquities with identified sites and areas. The *ILN* also published forgeries derived from dealers, claiming they had recently been excavated, sometimes naming a specific site, and they published forgeries supplied with false proveniences that were in dealers' possessions or had already been purchased (Muscarella 2000a: 8, 24).

The plunder and forgery culture are joined, both inhabited by a nexus of a powerful family, well populated by citizens of different academic and social backgrounds. They comprise incestuous alliances of museum personnel, its directors, curators and trustees, mutually collectors, dealers, auction house staff, and scholars. Many are wealthy; all are powerful. Its activities warrant continuous discussion, all the more so because some scholars and students remain ignorant of their activities (Muscarella 2007: 603, 608–609, 611, 613).

How Forgeries Harm Legitimate Scholarship

A different but concomitant category of forgery, one that parallels the forgery of antiquities, remains to be discussed in more detail. As already reported above, it has created havoc in the discipline, one that distorts and obviates an accurate interpretation of the loci of artifact distribution of cultural material in antiquity. This is the forgery of proveniences/provenances, where antiquities, both genuine and forgeries, are claimed to have been “found” at a specific named site provided by dealers and curators, which unanchored assertion is then incorporated into scholarly discourse regarding artifact distributions and a polity's trade patterns and foreign interactions. In the genuine assemblage the proveniences are not known either to antiquities dealers or scholars, but who nevertheless sophisticatedly submit the proffered site as

verified; in the forgery category they have background other than a forger's, then a dealer's, shop provenance (Muscarella 2000a: 13–17).

Some examples demonstrate the range and implications of such forgeries. For many years hundreds of plundered genuine Mesopotamian antiquities, but with no archaeologically known proveniences, have been sold in dealer's shops in Iran and elsewhere, as deriving from western Iran. Subsequently they were published in scholarly publications as found, and treated as if excavated, in that region. Each of these antiquities was bestowed with fabricated historical conclusions about Mesopotamian conquests and cultural exchange patterns between Mesopotamia and Iran over several millennia (Muscarella 1988: 120, fn. 6; 2000a: 13–15, 81–82). Ignored here is that it was legally easier to sell plundered Iraqi antiquities in Iran, hence they were smuggled there for prompt sale.

In the Van Museum in northeastern Turkey there is a collection of Iranian Luristan bronzes (also a forgery of an Assyrian relief), confiscated from smugglers from Iran. Had the bronzes not been confiscated but reached Turkish dealers, they would have been sold and accepted as Luristan antiquities uncovered in Turkey. A large collection of unexcavated (purchased? confiscated?) Luristan swords and pins in the Adana Regional Museum was proclaimed by the museum's director to have derived from Urartian tombs near Van (Taşyürek 1980: 212). And an archaeologist in Armenia (Piloposyan 1996: 124, 127) blithely informs us of eighth-seventh century Urartian material "reportedly found" (by whom?) at many sites in Syria and Mesopotamia, including Tell Leilan in Syria, which is a third millennium BCE site. I have also seen for sale in an antique shop in Van a classical Hasanlu lion pin. When asked about its source the dealer named a site north of Lake Van, when in fact it had surely been smuggled from Iran, probably stolen by a workman at Hasanlu. The extent of thefts by site workmen may not be common, although some have been reported by archaeologists; for example, workmen at Troy stole a large quantity of objects from the site, the so-called Treasure C, much of which was subsequently recovered.

Urartian antiquities were published by Ghirshman as having been discovered "fortuitement [!] par les paysans" south of the Caspian Sea, hundreds of miles distant from Urartu, thus demonstrating what no excavation had hitherto accomplished, how far east of their homeland the Urartians had traversed. All the antiquities presented were a fabrication, a forgery of a provenance (Muscarella 2000a: 214, fn. 56).

A number of bronze vessels asserted to have come from Luristan have two facing animal figures that had been added by dealers to their sides as handles; all elements here are ancient, but the forged result is a modern pastiche. And this composition has been cited by some scholars as the historical cultural background of the later Achaemenian handled vessels (Muscarella 2000a: 97, 99–100 406–409).

A silver vessel decorated in several horizontal zones with a complex Assyrian royal scene was claimed by a scholar to have derived from western Iran, thus demonstrating that an Assyrian army had penetrated and conquered the area in the 7th century BCE. The plundered (from where?) vessel itself is genuine, plundered, but

originally undecorated, and the representations recently added, creating a painstakingly made pastiche, but one bearing many misunderstandings and errors. The forger's employer knew that an unadorned plain vessel could not fetch as much money as a decorated one, and added new elements to an old object, a not uncommon activity (Muscarella 2000b; Kelkner and Bruhns 2010: 19). Equally, a genuine plundered, unadorned Urartian helmet was newly decorated also with a complex Assyrian scene, another pastiche to prove foreign contacts (Muscarella 2000a: 149–150, no. 17) (Fig. 9).

The so-called “Memphis Stele” (*Totenstele*) (Fig. 10) appeared in 1930 through its owner, an archaeologist and antiquities dealer, and was claimed by him to have been discovered in Egypt. Shown in relief are apparently mourning Achaemenian Persians officiating at a funeral ceremony, depicted in the Egyptian custom. Being unique, it was claimed by many scholars to be a rare occurrence of cross-cultural influences in Egypt, a foreigner accorded an Egyptian burial ceremony. And although correctly recognized in print as strange and coarsely executed, it was purchased by Berlin Museum curators from the archaeologist-dealer. Indeed, it has no parallels, and if genuine would have been stylistically correctly executed, unlike this stele, another crude forgery with a forged provenience (Muscarella 2003a).

An unexcavated terracotta nude male clay figurine claimed as from Marlik, bearing a circumcised penis, was shown to me by a dealer who joyously argued that his antiquity documented that Jews were present in the south Caspian Region in the second millennium BCE. Not one excavated figurine from any area of Iran is circumcised.

Another component of forgery productions involves archaeologists themselves: the disquieting conduct of archaeologists who allege to have excavated artifacts derived from their sites, when in fact they themselves had forged and insinuated them into their published reports as excavated within their sites. Such deliberate falsifications were undertaken to verify preconceived ideological beliefs. Collectively, they are forgeries of an archaeological site's cultural history and its historical background. Examples of such activity occurred in several geographical areas known to me, the United States, Japan, and Turkey. As for the United States, it involved charges that an archaeologist planted artifacts in his American Indian site (Sandia Cave). This material included both ancient and freshly made arrowheads, perpetrated to allow him to claim, and thereby gain prestige, an earlier age for his site than actually existed (Preston 1995). As for Japan, this involves several archaeologists who salted forged artifacts at their sites for cultural-political reasons, to demonstrate (the same tactic as above) that Japanese had been in the country far longer than hitherto recognized (French 2000; Yamada 2002; Feder 2006: 44–46).

For Turkey, there are several occurrences, all associated with one archaeologist, the brilliant and truly charismatic James Mellaart, whose actions are claimed to have also been accomplished to achieve fame and adulation in the discipline. In 1959 he published a report with eighteen drawings, but no photographs, of sumptuous



Figure 9: Iranian vessel with added scene. Muscarella 2000b.



Figure 10: The "Memphis" stela. Muscarella 2003a.

finds: figurines, weapons, jewelry, remains of decorated woven rug, and an Egyptian inscription on gold plaques. Mellaart claimed they were the contents of two tombs, dated by the inscription to the second millennium BCE, which he asserted had been recovered at Dorak in northwestern Turkey "some years ago." No information was offered concerning the source of the discovery, but in later publications he supplied tomb plans with the finds *in situ*, claiming they derived from a secret discovery in the 1920s, and that photos were shown to him recently in a private home in Izmir. The "Treasure of Dorak" was posited by Mellaart to be a major archaeological discovery. For decades the drawings were studied and evaluated, and vigorously challenged. Not a single object has yet to be seen and many scholars believe that the "Dorak" material was an extraordinary, but enigmatic (in human

and professional terms) fraud executed by Mellaart (Muscarella 1988: 397–98, fn. 5; 2000a: 141).

Further confounding the personal issue, Mellaart published wall paintings he claimed had been excavated and reconstructed by him at his Anatolian site, Çatal Hüyük, and hitherto unpublished (Mellaart 1990: 27, 32–46). Conversely, all his Çatal Hüyük colleagues denounced them as never having existed at the site, that they were his creations. Further, in the same publication (Mellaart 1990: 28–29) he offered drawings of a cluster of pebble female figurines along with pebbles incised with deities, children, ships, animals, and houses, which he incongruously dated to ca. 12,500 BCE. He claimed they had been “collected” (unrevealed by whom) on the seashore at Beldibi southwest of Antalya in Turkey, but no one has ever seen them to verify his drawings (nor determine who made them – Muscarella 2000a: 141–43; 212, fn. 52; for other decorated pebble forgeries see Jones 1999: 92–93). The salted and modernly created Piltdown Man is another matter, inasmuch as one does not know if it was the excavator or an outsider who secretly buried the modern formed composite skull in the soil (Jones 1999: 93–95; Feder 2006: 64–91).

An example of the alteration/forging of the locus of objects within excavated sites is best documented by Arthur Evans, indeed a remarkable archaeologist. But he falsified the actual level in which Linear B tablets, written in an earlier form of Greek, first occurred at Knossos, publishing them as deriving from a level earlier than where they had actually been retrieved, and which was accurately recorded in his field log book: the deceit proclaimed to prove his rigid belief that Linear B writing was employed in Crete earlier than in Greece. Evans also published altered photographs (a minimum of 16), over-painting them to falsify actual find-spots, which would have revealed the true chronological situation. All this was egocentrically undertaken to suit preconceived interpretations of Cretan Minoan power over the mainland Greek Myceneans (German 2005: 210–11, 218–25, 228–29).

A scholar researching an Iranian site’s stratigraphy reviewed its excavator’s published section drawing of the various levels of occupation used to document the chronological sequence argued by the excavator. When the scholar examined the original section drawing he discovered that the nature of two vessels drawn in the published section had been crucially altered before its publication. The excavator was attempting to prove a chronological conclusion he had incorrectly proclaimed, and would not correct.

The history of forgeries of Ancient Near Eastern artifacts is a multi-layered matter that involves and engages us, scholars and laypersons, contextually with modern-made antiquities, with purported geographical and site provenances, and with the falsification/forgery by archaeologists of data from their own excavations.

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Beyond the East-West Dichotomy in Syrian and Levantine Wall Paintings

Abstract: The discovery of new “Aegean style” fresco paintings in Syria and the Levant during the last 25 years has caused a sensation in the archaeology of the eastern Mediterranean and western Asia. Their technical and iconographic similarities to the wall paintings from Crete and the Aegean have overwhelmed the scientific community as well as the public media, and renewed the discussion about East-West relations during the second millennium BCE. Up to now the discussion of these contacts has been restricted mainly to the production of the paintings. Especially their execution *al fresco* has mostly been declared as a “Minoan” technique and, therefore, as a western invention. The motivation for many investigations seems to be the attempt to identify “Minoan” craftspeople and influences, and to see the murals, therefore, as a western product. Their local consumption and perception and thus the role they play within the material culture of western Asia have largely been neglected. By emphasizing the “western” origin of production techniques and iconographic aspects, the discourse became largely dominated by an East-West-polarity, dividing Syrian and Levantine wall paintings into a western and an eastern group, the latter being the antithetical pole of the former. This chapter examines the reasons for this fascination within the scholarly community and critiques the tendency to cement an East-West dichotomy in the production of knowledge. Furthermore, it seeks to open alternative perspectives on aspects beyond these well-known modernist categorizations, by considering the social consumption of these paintings.

Keywords: wall paintings, Orientalism, ethnicity, Qatna, Alalakh, Tall Sakka, Tall Burak, Tel Kabri, fresco technique, thalassocracy, ex oriente lux, movement

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Introduction

Since the late 1980s wall paintings have been brought to light at several eastern Mediterranean sites: at Tel Kabri (Niemeier 2002; Cline *et al.* 2011) in the central Levant, at Tell el Dab^a in the Eastern Nile delta (Bietak *et al.* 2007), at Tell Sakka (Taraqqi 1999), Ebla (Bietak 2007: 280–82) and Qatna in western Syria (von Rden 2011 and in press, a) as well as at Tall Burak on the Lebanese coast (Kamlah and Sader