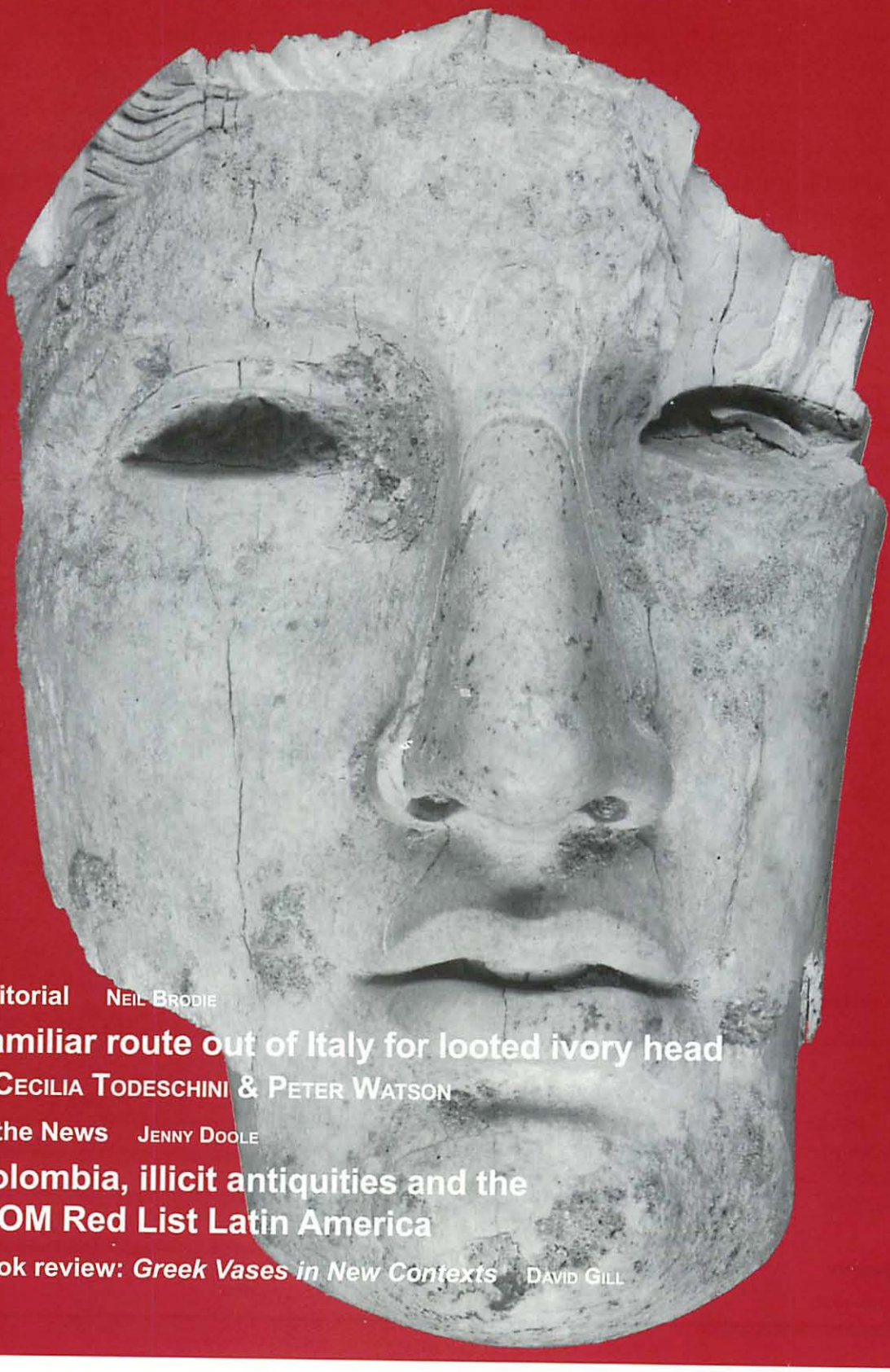
Culture Without Context

The Newsletter of the Illicit Antiquities Research Centre

Issue 12, Spring 2003



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

Illicit Antiquities Research Centre

The Illicit Antiquities Research Centre (IARC) was established in May 1996, under the auspices of the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research in Cambridge, England, and it commenced operations in October 1997. Its purpose is to monitor and report upon the damage caused to cultural heritage by the international trade in illicit antiquities (i.e. antiquities which have been stolen or clandestinely excavated and illegally exported). The enormous increase in the volume of this trade over the past twenty years has caused the large-scale plundering of archaeological sites and museums around the world. The IARC will raise public awareness of the problems caused by this trade and seek appropriate national and international legislation, codes of conduct and other conventions to place restraint upon it.

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Front cover. *Greek ivory head, possibly of Apollo, recovered in February 2003 (see p. 5).*

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http://www-mcdonald.arch.cam.ac.uk/IARC/home.htm

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

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Editorial

Culture is not the first casualty of war, nor is it the most important, but the sack of Iraq's National Museum and other cultural institutions towards the end of the recent Iraq conflict caused outrage around the world. The US and UK Governments were put on the defensive as high-ranking officials set about explaining why the museums had not been afforded some degree of protection, not even a tank. No convincing justification has yet emerged. The events of April 2003 were hardly a surprise, regional museums around Iraq were first looted at the end of the Gulf War and since then archaeological sites have been subject to chronic looting (see correspondence at http://www.mcdonald.cam.ac.uk/McD/iraq/acr-looting.htm). More and more material of probably Iraqi origin but no clear provenance has been appearing on the Western market, and neither Governments nor dealers have done anything about it. The justifiable outrage over the Iraq museums should not be allowed to obscure the basic fact that archaeological sites throughout Iraq have been and continue to be targeted by gangs of looters in search of saleable artefacts.

There is a ready market for Iraqi material. In the days immediately following the break in at the National Museum I located 53 inscribed cuneiform tablets and cones for sale on the Internet. It took me about an hour in total and so it was hardly an exhaustive search, and as many if not most trade outlets do not maintain websites the true number up for sale worldwide is anybody's guess. But what is important about these tablets is that they constitute a sample, they provide us with a glimpse of the bigger picture, and none of them had any indication of provenance. Indeed, if anything, the reverse was the case. Many of the tablets were claimed to have been authenticated and translated by Professor Wilfred Lambert, which implies that they were fresh to the market and previously unknown. Indeed, Professor Lambert said as much himself when he was interviewed by the *New York Times* (30 April 2003). He was reported as saying that he had authenticated several hundred objects from Iraq, and that he did not know where any came from. He suspected the dealers he worked for did not know either. Yet the absence of clear provenance did not deter their sale. Indeed, absence of provenance presents no legal impediment to their sale. Yet while Iraqi artefacts of unknown origin continue to be sold openly it is probably safe to assume that somewhere in Iraq archaeological sites are being dug out in the search for more.

One of the first responses to the looting of Iraq's National Museum has been to mount images taken from museum catalogues and other publications of what might be stolen material on the Internet. Websites include *The Art Newspaper* at http://www.theartnewspaper.com/iraqmus/stolen.html and the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago at http://www.oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/iraq.html. There have also been calls for the construction of a searchable data base which will store descriptions and images of stolen objects. These are good, practical measures, but in themselves they are not enough. Data bases and catalogues of stolen objects can deter the sale of objects stolen from museums, or they might aid their identification and recovery, but data bases can do nothing to prevent the trade in material that has been secretly and illegally excavated from archaeological sites. More is needed. For example, with the help of the US State Department the International Council of Museums is preparing the *Emergency Red List of Iraqi Antiquities at Risk*, which will describe and illustrate categories of material under threat from looting and theft. At the very least, there should be an immediate moratorium on the trade of any object of a type appearing on the Red List, unless it is accompanied by written documentation of good provenance.

It should not be necessary in 2003 to be calling for a moratorium on trade. In theory at least, for the past decade or so, trade in Iraqi artefacts has been outlawed by the UN Security Council's imposition of trade sanctions, although in practice these sanctions have had no noticeable effect on the antiquities trade. They might as well not have existed. The United Nations will now be looking to lift trade sanctions as soon as it is practicable to do so, but it is imperative that restrictions are left in place for archaeological material, and that they are enforced.

In the immediate aftermath of the war both the US and UK governments confirmed that it is illegal to trade in archaeological material that has

left Iraq since the Gulf War. In the United Kingdom, on 14 April 2003, the British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced in the House of Commons that the British Government would do everything in its power to prevent the sale in the United Kingdom of cultural objects looted from Iraq, and also to ensure that any such objects that appear in Britain will be returned to Iraq and not sold. Tessa Jowell, the British Secretary of State for Culture, announced on 15 April that she had written to colleagues in the UK Government reminding them that under UN Resolutions it is illegal to import Iraqi antiquities into the UK. However, by the 29 April it was possible to discern a weakening of resolve when in a DCMS press release the Secretary of State made no mention of Government plans to impose an embargo on trade, and on the 8 May the Government spokesperson in the House of Lords announced only that the Government have alerted Customs of the need to enforce the current embargo.

At the time of writing (12 May) there have been no reports of British police or customs officers seizing any Iraqi artefacts of unknown provenance. What is needed now is an unequivocal statement by the British Government that it is illegal to sell unprovenanced Iraqi antiquities, and an explanation of how the law will be enforced on the ground.

Britain and the United States have both signed the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. The UNESCO Convention, however, was not designed to cope with the extreme forms of looting and despoliation that have taken place during wartime in countries such as Cambodia, Afghanistan and Iraq. It is an instrument of inter-governmental cooperation, and may fail if, for whatever reason, cooperation is not possible. The First and Second Protocols of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, on the other hand, have the express purpose of protecting archaeological and other forms of cultural heritage during wartime, and are not dependent upon cooperation. The obligations of guardianship fall solely upon a signatory State, and failure to comply with these obligations is a criminal offence. Neither the United States nor the United Kingdom have signed the Hague Convention, but if they had we can be sure that those responsible for securing the National Museum and other cultural sites and institutions throughout Iraq would have been far more diligent in the execution of their charge.

In October 2002 *The Art Newspaper* reported the launch of the American Council for Cultural Policy (ACCP), which has 45 advisors, including lawyers from major museums, and aims to advise on aspects of US legislation as it relates to the art trade. Members of the ACCP met with the US Departments of State and Defense in January 2004 and soon found themselves embroiled in a public debate over what exactly did or did not represent ACCP policy as regards Iraq's antiquities laws. This debate was rather tiresome, as it drew attention away from more serious policy shortfalls, and could have been avoided. The problem is that nobody really knows what are the aims of the ACCP, what is its membership, and what is its funding base. A good clear statement of these facts will save a lot of future confusion and ill-feeling.

Ashton Hawkins, speaking for the ACCP in *The Art Newspaper*, said that World War II issues are more important to most museums than antiquities issues, and he is probably right. But why that should be so is not clear. Many museums around the world have recently established programmes to research the provenance of any art in their collections that might have changed hands in Nazi-era Europe. These are laudable initiatives, and they are not being criticized here, but why are they restricted only to material that might have been expropriated by the Nazis? The same museums no doubt contain many objects of archaeological interest that were illegally removed from their countries of origin during wartime — from Cambodia, Afghanistan and Iraq to name only a few. But the museums in question have shown no interest in researching archaeological provenances. Perhaps it is because of the disparity in monetary value between what are mainly paintings seized by the Nazis and archaeological artefacts — paintings are, by and large, more expensive. Maybe it is because the

property stolen by the Nazis was from private rather than from public owners, and so in the legal opinion of those who represent the museums it was a crime more deserving of redress. Perhaps it is simply because paintings are generally accompanied by a more complete provenance than archaeological objects, and therefore are much easier to research. Whatever the reasons, they should be made explicit, and genuine consideration should be given to extending provenance research to encompass all material that has changed hands illegally during wartime. Starting with Iraq. At the very least, museums should be prepared to cooperate fully with scholars who take an interest in such things, and not block access to museum records.

Familiar route out of Italy for looted ivory head

CECILIA TODESCHINI & PETER WATSON

One of the world's rarest and most important looted antiquities has been recovered by Italian police in London. The object, a unique life-size ivory head, is thought to be of Apollo, the Greek god of the sun, and perhaps dates from the fifth century BC (Fig. 1 overleaf). But it could be more important still: the ivory is of such superb quality that Italian archaeologists who have examined the head, believe it may have been carved by Phidias, one of the greatest of classical Greek sculptors, whose carvings graced the Parthenon and the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. Pliny, Pausanias and Lucian all sang Phidias' praises but not a single work of his has survived.

The head was seized from the London antiquities dealer Robin Symes, who has premises in Ormond Yard, St James'. A fragment of a fresco, stolen from a villa near Pompeii, was also recovered at the same time.

The seizure of the head comes after a long investigation, lasting several years and ranging from Italy, to Cyprus, to Munich, to London. In the final stages, a raid on the premises of a known dealer in smuggled antiquities in Munich led two officers of the Italian Carabinieri Art Squad to London in February 2003, where they took possession of the antiquities from Symes' lawyers, Peters and Peters. Symes himself is currently living in Geneva. Presented with irrefutable evidence that the statue had been illegally excavated and smuggled out of Italy, and that the fresco had been stolen, Symes' lawyers surrendered the two objects at the Italian embassy.

Besides the face, which has its eyes, straight nose and sensual lips intact, a series of fragments was also recovered — fingers, toes, an ear, some curls of hair. In antiquity, it was the practice for exceptionally important statues to consist of ivory heads, hands and feet, with bodies of stone or wood, which were covered in gold sheets. Such objects were known as *Chryselephantine* sculptures, after the Greek for gold and ivory. Ivory was so expensive in antiquity that only emperors and other major figures could afford such statues.

Mr Symes is no stranger to controversy, or to the Carabinieri. In the early 1990s he sold a statue of the Greek god Artemis to an American collector who, when he attempted to sell it on openly through Sotheby's in New York, found that the sculpture had been stolen in 1988 from a convent near Naples. After a complaint from the Italians, that too went back to Italy. And in 1997, as part of an exposé of Sotheby's, published in *The Times*, and on Channel 4 Television, in which it was shown that the auction house was selling smuggled goods, it was also revealed that Symes had, in conjunction with the salesroom, arranged for an Egyptian statue of the god Sekhmet to be smuggled out of Italy, to London, via Switzerland.

The ivory head and other fragments were originally discovered in 1995 by Pietro Casasanta, a *tombarolo* (or tomb robber) of Anguillara, north of Rome, on the shore of Lake Bracciano. Mr Casasanta granted us an exclusive interview and

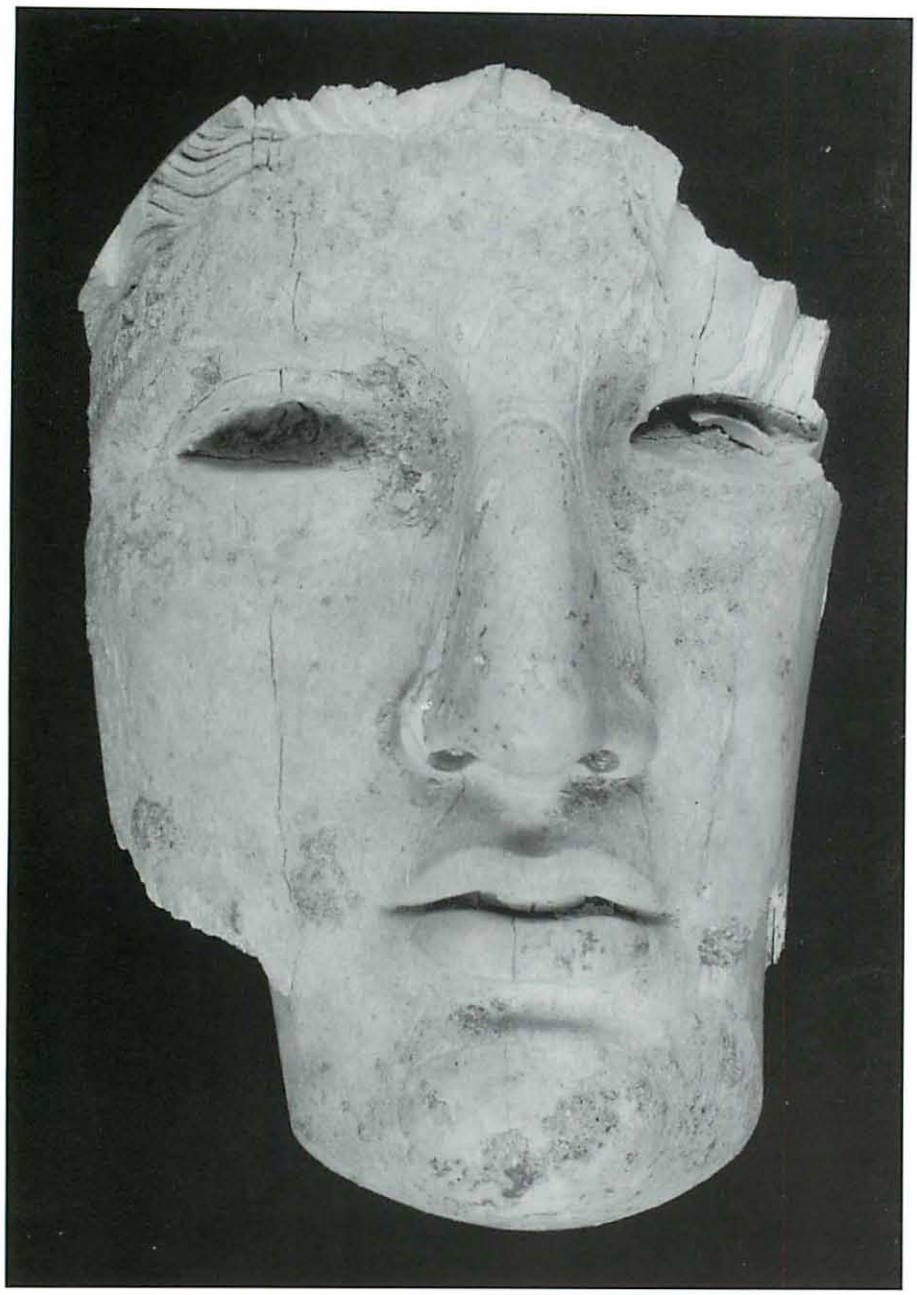

Figure 1. *Greek ivory head, possibly of Apollo, recovered in February 2003.*

agreed to be photographed in the field where he discovered the statue.

The site is a few hundred yards from a well-known archaeological landmark, the Baths of Claudius, and Casasanta told us that he believes the statue came from a large, luxurious villa that belonged to the family of the first-century Roman Emperor, Claudius. At the time he found the mask and fragments, Casasanta also discovered three Egyptian statues of goddesses, two in green and one in black granite, and some pieces of mosaic. 'This was obviously the residence of a very rich, very important family,' he said.

Photographs of the three statues were found by police at Casasanta's home when he was raided. These statues are still missing, though Casasanta believes one is in London.

Mr Casasanta is no stranger to controversy either. Since he began digging illegally, in 1960, he claims to have discovered about a hundred villas (he does not, he says, plunder tombs) and, before finding the ivory head, his greatest claim to notoriety was his discovery, in 1970, of L'Inviolata, a large settlement, a temple cult, which he says contained 63 statues, 25 of them life-size. He returned to L'Inviolata in 1992 when he discovered the famous 'Capitoline Triad', a six-ton marble statue of three seated gods — Jupiter, Juno and Minerva — that is now in the Palestrina National Archaeological Museum, southeast of Rome. This is the only marble sculpture in which the three gods of the Triad are intact.

The Triad was recovered by the carabinieri in 1994 after a two-year 'Operation Juno'. For that discovery, Mr Casasanta was sent to prison for a year.

A rough, portly 65-year-old, and a wheezy chain-smoker, he invited us into his home in Anguillara itself, where we drank wine from a table made of looted Roman marble. A large picture of the looted Triad hung on the wall. He told us that he usually pays an 'entrance fee' of 'about 25 million lire' (roughly £9000) to the owners of land for permission to dig, and in addition promises the landowner a share in any profits.

Casasanta said that the minute he set eyes on the ivory head he knew it was the most important object he — or any other *tombarolo* —

had ever found. He smuggled the head and fragments, and the three statues, out of Italy himself, and sold them to Nino Savoca, an Italian dealer based in Munich. They agreed a fee of $10 million. Savoca, he says, showed the head to two American museums, one of whom attributed it to Phidias, but neither of which was willing to risk buying such an obviously looted object. Following this, Savoca stopped paying him after $700,000, and they fell out.

Savoca died in 1998 and, during a raid on his premises, police discovered documentation that helped them close in on a number of important looted antiquities. Partly because Savoca had reneged on payment, possibly calculating that the Carabinieri had him in their sights again, Casasanta volunteered to the art squad that Savoca had sold the ivory head to a London dealer who, he told us, was 'a homosexual whose partner died recently'. Mr Symes' male Greek partner died in an accident in 1999, when he fell down in a villa in Tuscany and hit his head on a radiator. Mr Symes was unavailable for comment.

Professor Antonio Giuliano, emeritus professor of Greek and Roman art at Rome University, who has examined the statue, which is now at the Central Institute of Restoration in Rome, provisionally dates the ivory to the fifth or fourth century BC. He considers the main head to be of Apollo, and he thinks that the associated fragments are from a second, somewhat smaller statue, possibly Artemis or Atona (the toe, for example, is on a smaller scale than the head). He doesn't rule out that the artist was Phidias.

With Praxiteles, Polyclitus and Lysippus, Phidias was the greatest of ancient Greek sculptors. Born about 500 BC, he died some 70 years later. He or his pupils were responsible for many of the marble reliefs on the Parthenon, and for two colossal — and colossally important — ivory and gold statues that were the talk of classical Greece and Rome, and have been wondered about ever since, because they have been lost. These were the Athene Parthenos — the Virgin Athene, dominating the Parthenon itself (it was 34 feet high) — and an equally huge statue of Zeus, in his temple at Olympia. This statue was said to be larger than anything, except the Colossus at Rhodes and, like the Colossus, was considered one of the seven wonders of the world. Phidias' great gold and ivory statue of Zeus, seated, with a figure of Victory on his outstretched right hand, which stood in the main hall at Olympia, was taken to Constantinople and burned in a palace fire in AD 475.

Ivory sculptures, even in antiquity, were extremely rare. Dozens of fragments are known, and some small statuettes. But only one other life-size figure is known to have survived in Italy, found at Montecalvo (again, near Rome), and now in the Apostolic Library in the Vatican. And only one set of life-size *Chryselephantine* sculptures survives in Greece. This includes statues of Apollo and Artemis at the Delphi Museum. They were unearthed by French excavators in 1939 in the so-called Halos Deposit at Delphi, in a cache that had been damaged by fire. They have since been restored.

But whereas the Delphi *Chryselephantine* figure is from the archaic period (*c.* 550 BC), the head just recovered has more refined features and details, and is therefore more likely to date from the classical era of Phidias. Many of Phidias' sculptures were copied by Roman artists (this is one reason why we know how the original Athene Parthenos looked) but usually they were much smaller and made entirely of marble.

The fragment of fresco returned with the ivory statue shows a satyr pouring wine or water from a pitcher. It was stolen in the 1970s from Castellamare di Stabia near Pompeii.

The recovery is a major coup for Lieutenant Colonel Ferdinando Musella, operational head of the Carabinieri Art Squad. The importance of the statue is underlined by the fact that Italian Minister of Culture, Giuliano Urbani, hopes to persuade the country's President to display the head at his official residence, the Quirinale Palace.

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In the News

Jenny Doole

War in Iraq

Over a two day period, 10–11 April 2003, **Iraq's National Museum was broken into and sacked by looters**. Initial estimates suggested that thousands of pieces, including large objects which required heavy lifting gear to move, had been removed, many others were smashed, and records were also destroyed. The National and Religious Libraries of Baghdad and the National Archives were also burned and destroyed. It is difficult at the present time to provide an accurate assessment of the damage caused, or of the losses incurred. In the days following the sack some material from the National Museum was returned by local residents, and there were other reports that some of the Museum's collections had been moved into safe storage before the war began. On the 4 May it was reported that although the National Library was gutted, 80 per cent of its holdings remained safe in mosques where they had been taken to for protection. The situation remains confused but it appears that the damage might not be as severe as was originally feared.

Archaeologists and institutions worldwide who had lobbied the US and UK governments on the danger that war would pose to Iraq's culture heritage reacted with anger and dismay that such a situation could have been allowed to develop and that their warnings had apparently been disregarded.

- On 17 April, UNESCO brought to their headquarters in Paris some 30 experts from all over the world, including the heads of archaeological missions that had until recently been working in Iraq. Although the meeting was arranged at very short notice, it provided an opportunity for experts to propose a set of recommendations that the press has disseminated widely. Among these recommendations, the experts called for an immediate prohibition to be placed on the export of all antiques, antiquities, works of art, books and archives from Iraq; and an immediate ban to be placed on the international trade in objects of Iraqi cultural heritage.

- On 29 April an **emergency meeting was held at the British Museum** in London, during which:
  - Donny George, Director of Research at Iraq's National Museum, angrily accused American occupying forces of failing in their duty to protect the museum from looters.
  - He also called for tightened border controls to stop stolen material being smuggled out of the country.
  - British Secretary of State for Culture, Tessa Jowell, claimed that no-one could have foreseen the situation.
  - It emerged that records and photographs were apparently safe, but scattered over 120 offices, making the job of collating and recording what is missing so much more difficult.
  - The state of some storerooms, which are possibly intact, cannot be established yet because of lack of electricity and concerns over safety.

- ICOM (International Council of Museums) has secured funding for and is preparing a ***Emergency Red List of Iraqi Antiquities at Risk***, now on the Internet (icom.museum/redlist/irak/en/index.html), which will indicate categories of material for dealers, museums and collectors to avoid handling and be a tool for customs and law enforcement officials.

- The **Baghdad Museum Project** has been launched (see www.baghdadmuseum.org) to lobby the US government to create an **Iraq Cultural Heritage Act**, which would prohibit the importation into the United States of any archaeological or cultural material removed from Iraq without appropriate documentation after the imposition of sanctions on that country in August 1990.

- On 7 May the *Chicago Tribune* reported a **gun battle at Nimrud** where an armed gang of **looters eventually chased off** the site's guards. There were also reports of other archaeological sites being attacked, particularly in the northeastern parts of Iraq where the US military presence is still weak.

Italian discovery

In February **Italian authorities recovered a unique ancient ivory** after a six-year enquiry into a **looting and smuggling ring** (which included, amongst others, an Italian university lecturer) and following investigations in Britain, Switzerland, Germany and Cyprus (see p. 5). The Greek sculpture, possibly the head of a six-foot *Chryselephantine* statue of Apollo once covered in gold, had been smuggled from Italy and ended up in Britain. Police said the face and about 100 fragments of the statue were **excavated seven years ago from a site near Lake Bracciano**, northwest of Rome.

French controversy

French president Jacques Chirac's project, the creation of the **Musée du Quai Branly** (Paris) which will display indigenous art and antiquities from Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas, has once again aroused criticism (see also In the News, *CWC* issues 6, 7 & 10). *Swissinfo* (11 April 2003) reports that around half of the new museum's acquisitions budget has been put aside to purchase works from the controversial **collection of Geneva billionaire Jean-Paul Barbier** — one of the largest private collections of indigenous art in the world. Concern has been expressed that some of the objects, especially those that appear on the ICOM Red List (see *CWC* issue 6) may have been illegally excavated or exported from their countries of origin.

Dispute over Mayan objects

26 Mayan stone and ceramic vessels and figurines, worth $165,000 and with an extraordinary history, are the subject of a legal dispute in the USA. The objects were **impounded by US Customs agents** in January 1998, when Patrick McSween and Judith Ganeles attempted to bring them into the country **without official permission from Guatemala**. The items were packed in suitcases and described on customs documentation as '30 artefacts and two books'. Following their seizure the objects were stored in the basement of US Customs' offices in the World Trade Centre, New York. They were recently rediscovered, undamaged, by crews sifting through rubble in the aftermath of the destruction of the building during terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001. McSween and Ganeles are fighting to keep the artefacts, arguing that it cannot be proved that they were produced in Guatemala.

Egyptian antiquities

- In November 2002, representatives of the Egyptian **Supreme Council of Antiquities** (SCA) visited Basel and **retrieved four antiquities**, including a black granite statue of an 18th-Dynasty queen, which had been found in the possession of four Swiss collectors. A Swiss lawyer acting for the Massina Foundation, a charity which helps restore stolen cultural heritage to its countries of origin, was instrumental in facilitating the restitution.

- *January 2003:* Egyptian customs police arrested Mohamed al-Shaaer (merchant), Abdel Karim Abu Shanab (SCA official, responsible for investigating stolen artefacts), and Mohamed Abdel Rahman Fahmy (SCA inspector). The SCA employees are charged with **allegedly accepting a bribe** of $5000 from Al-Shaaer in return for a **fake certifi-**

cate certifying that 362 genuine Pharaonic, Roman and Greek antiquities were modern replicas. Using the certificate Al-Shaaer attempted to smuggle the pieces (including 288 icons, 13 bracelets, 60 small sculptures and the head of a large statue) to a **private dealer in Spain**, but they were intercepted by airport police (see In the News, *CWC* issue 11).

- **Two security guards and two excavators** working with the French Mission were **arrested for alleged theft** in February. Three days later the Supreme Council of Antiquities **received three important antiquities** from the Sakkara area (Old Kingdom engravings depicting hunting and celestial scenes, sawn from inside the funerary temple of a Sixth Dynasty Queen), which were recovered by the Tourist Police.

Coin theft in Holland

In February thieves **stole 19 Roman gold coins from Utrecht city museum**, Netherlands, probably during the crowded opening of another exhibition. The coins form part of a hoard discovered in 1933 during excavations in the centre of the city which was once a Roman fort. There are very well-documented which, it is hoped, will make them harder to sell.

Easter Island mystery

January 2003: Two **massive stone heads at the Cronos Gallery, Miami** (put up for sale by **Hernan Garcia Gonzalo**, formerly a senior aid to General Augusto Pinochet as part of a collection of 15 Easter Island artefacts) became a source of speculation when the Chilean government began investigating whether they were **genuine antiquities illegally exported, or fakes**. According to press packs at the gallery, the giant sculptures are around 1000 years old and were given to one of Garcia's uncles in 1912, along with other stone and wood carvings, in return for his development work with Easter islanders. Chilean officials said they had **not authorized the export of the a private collection** of objects from the island. Archaeologists expressed doubt that authentic statues could have been smuggled out, and confirmed that while the pieces are made from genuine Easter Island stone they display modern tool marks.

Thefts in Pakistan

- *February 2003:* Friends of archaeology in Peshawar, Pakistan announced that **more than 400 sculptures disappeared** and were **replaced with fakes** when the store of the **Federal Archaeology Department** moved premises.

- They also expressed concern that **illegal excavations were taking place at Rustam**, and that Federal Archaeology Department excavators had also stolen antiquities from the site, causing locals to register complaints about both legal and illegal diggers.

Thefts in India

The Times of India (11 Feb 2003) reports that up to **19 ancient Panchaloha idols**, including one of the main deity Sri Laxmivenkatesha, have been **stolen from Srilaxmivenkatesha temple**, Bhatkal.

Afghanistan update

- Museum director Omara Khan Masoudi says that **renovation has begun in several rooms of the Kabul Museum**, Afghanistan.

The museum was emptied by looting in the 1990s and artefacts considered idolatrous to the Taliban regime were destroyed in 2001. With the help of the British Museum, the British Embassy in Kabul and British peacekeeping forces the long process of museum and artefact restoration has begun. In addition, the Japanese have promised photographic equipment, the Greeks are to rebuild a wing, the Asian Foundation will help with documentation, while the US have pledged more money for the restoration department and UNESCO will work on the windows and water supply.

- Sayed Raheen, Minister for Culture and Information in Kabul, Afghanistan, told *The Times* that **illicit excavation and trade in antiquities is the worst of the country's problems** at present and is getting worse by the day, adding that for the criminals the **profit margins are bigger than in the opium trade**.

- Jim Williams of UNESCO confirmed that **London has long been the biggest market** for Afghan material.

- Under questioning, a group of men arrested at the Afghan/Pakistan border carrying **24 Buddhist artefacts**, including statues (see In the News, *CWC* issue 11), admitted they were **looted from Kafir Kot**, a little known ancient site in the remote Kharwar district in central Afghanistan.

- **Confusion over past and present laws** on protection of cultural heritage in Afghanistan is **hampering attempts** to stem the flow of illicit antiquities from the country and facilitate their return. Although the 1958 Code for the Protection of Antiquities in Afghanistan, passed under the royal government, is still valid, a 1980 Law on Cultural Heritage introduced after the Soviet invasion is actually in use. Policies on cultural heritage during the Taliban years were contradictory so dealers outside Afghanistan can claim that objects left the country during these years, without apparently breaking Afghan law. It is **often impossible to prove** when an item did leave the country. Minister for Culture Dr Raheen has promised to **strengthen the legal framework**. It is hoped that Afghanistan will soon ratify the 1970 UNESCO Convention.

Museum declaration

8 December 2002: A **joint Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums** signed by more than 30 major museums and research institutions in Europe and the USA (including the Metropolitan Museum, the Louvre, The Hermitage, the State Museums of Berlin, and the British Museum) was released following an October meeting in Munich of the International Group of Organisers of Large-scale Exhibitions. The statement (prompted by what the group felt was increasing politicization of the dispute over the Parthenon sculptures in the British Museum) emphasizes the ideals of the universal museum and **articulates attitudes towards restitution of artefacts**, but is prefaced by 'the conviction that **illegal traffic in archaeological, artistic, ethnic objects must be firmly discouraged'** — a view which was welcomed by ICOM (International Council of Museums).

Looting in the US

- An anonymous call on 15 August 2002 to the Army Corps of Engineers at Wappapello Lake, southeastern Missouri, led to the discovery and arrest of Steven Tripp and William Cooksey as they were about to leave a remote archaeological site they had been illegally digging in the area. They had stolen about 15 arrowheads and artefacts, some of which were found in Tripp's shoes.

It was not immediately clear to which culture the artefacts belong as various Native American tribes lived near the lake. The two were indicted in October on charges of destroying archaeological resources on federal land and damaging federal property (maximum penalties of two years in prison and $20,000 fine and 10 years' jail and $250,000 fine respectively).

- In November 2002 **Tammy Woosley and Danny Keith Rose pled guilty** (as part of a plea agreement) in federal court to misdemeanours in connection with **illegally digging up a ancient Anasazi burial** in Reservoir Ruin, a federally protected archaeological site near Dolores, Colorado. When discovered by a Federal Ranger digging with a garden trowel and a collapsible shovel in October 2000, Woosley said the couple had come to looking for cacti, saw archaeological material on the surface and got carried away.

  Linda Farnsworth, archaeologist with the San Juan Public Lands Center said such **looting is pretty widespread** and estimated 15 incidents on US Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management land in the region in 2002.

- *December 2002:* **Jack Lee Harelson** of Grants Pass, Oregon was **fined $2.5 million in civil penalties for damage and destruction caused when he looted Elephant Mountain Cave,** Nevada over several years in the early 1980s. He and his wife removed the bodies and grave goods of a **boy and girl they found in two large baskets** burying the bodies in their garden. Among **2000 other artefacts seized** were a pair of 10,000-year-old sandals — possibly the oldest footwear known — indicating the archaeological potential of the material, had it been excavated scientifically. Harelson, who told the court he dug a 'test hole' to interest archaeologists in the site, indicated that he was unlikely to pay the fine, saying he is on Social Security and crippled.

Schultz appeal

New York antiquities dealer **Frederick Schultz**, sentenced in June 2003 to a 33-month jail sentence (see *CWC*, issue 10) has **appealed his conviction** for receiving illicit Egyptian antiquities (see *the Art Newspaper* December 2002). His lawyers argue that:

1. The National Stolen Property Act (NSPA) applied in the case does not cover antiquities regarded as stolen under foreign ownership laws;
2. The court would not let a video be shown which lawyers say would prove that Schultz believed US law did not recognize foreign ownership laws (the NSPA requires that offenders know they are dealing in stolen merchandise);
3. That the court was wrong to say it could convict him not only if he knew of Eygpt's antiquities ownership law, but also if it were found that he had 'consciously avoided learning' it, which Schultz deliberately avoided confirming. In this case, it is argued, a 'high probability' test should have been carried out;
4. That the evidence from five other witnesses, called to testify their knowledge of Egyptian antiquities laws to establish that 'even an ignoramus' in the field would know of them, was prejudicial and did not refer to what Schultz knew.

The **US is contesting the appeal**.

China and illicit antiquities

- *The Seattle Times* (27 January 2003) carried out an investigation which compared various thermoluminescence dates registered in tests on a Chinese ceramic vessel purchased from **Thesaurus Fine Arts in Seattle**. The piece came with certification, signed by **Dr Po Lau Leung of City University of Hong Kong**, stating the piece was

1200 years old — subsequent tests by **Oxford Authentication (UK) and Daybreak Archaeometric Laboratory (USA)** found it to be **less than 100 and less than 45 years old** respectively. Leung could not explain the difference, but admitted that he had, in the past, turned a blind eye when **Professor Steven Cheung**, operating under the trading name of Thesaurus Fine Arts and **Dandelion Fine Arts** had changed the 'dynasty' of a pot to suit the thermoluminescence date achieved. Cheung, a famous economist with special interests in art and antiquities market behaviour, apparently bought equipment to set up **Adsigno Thermoluminescence Laboratory** in 2001, which certified a purportedly Ming Dynasty (400–600 years old) tile bought at the same shop by *The Seattle Times*. Again, subsequent tests at the laboratories above indicated this object was also fake. A few weeks later the newspaper, now banned by the gallery from purchasing further items, noted that tiles of the same type, confirmed as being from the same group, were now mysteriously being marketed as Han Dynasty (more than 1000 years older) and cost hundreds of dollars more.

Cheung claimed either *The Seattle Times* or mailing service must have re-fired the ceramics in order to alter the thermoluminescence reading and frame Thesaurus Fine Arts, but Oxford Authentication said their test would have detected such tampering.

Hollywood Road antiquities dealer Victor Choi told the newspaper that **sale of fakes hurts the whole industry**.

- In a companion article *The Seattle Times* also looked at the **long tradition in China of making and selling reproductions** and how this tradition clashes with modern concepts of originality and ever-increasing Western demand for genuine ancient Chinese material.

- On 17 December 2002 the decapitated **head of the Akshobhya Buddha** of the Four Gate Pagoda, Shandong Province in eastern China (stolen during a raid in 1997 for which one of the perpetrators was sentenced to life imprisonment) was **replaced on its torso and the join reinforced by a steel rod to prevent future theft**. Buddhist master Sheng-yen, founder of the Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association of Taiwan received the head as a gift from disciples in 2002 but immediately suspected it was an illicit antiquity, as his enquiries subsequently proved (see In the News, *CWC* issue 11).

- In China, officials said that around **50 Eastern Han dynasty (2000-year old) tombs** in Bieli, Sichuan province, had been **looted** after a farmer dug up a green, carved brick. It is believed that jades, bronzes and other treasures were taken, leaving only less monetarily valuable items for archaeologists scientific excavation and study. Some items, including coins were recovered from local homes but most are believed to have been sold on. Since most of the families in nearby villages appear to have been involved, **police are concentrating on finding and detaining ringleaders** and middlemen.

- *March 2003:* **Farmers** in the northern province of Shaanxi were **praised for reporting their find of a hoard of 2900-year-old bronze vessels**, including a bronze cauldron. The artefacts are now on display in Beijing.

- Following reports in 2002 that the **royal mausoleum of Loulan/Kroraina** (Lop Nur region on the Silk Road in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region) had been **looted**, a fact-finding team of archaeologists from Xinjiang Cultural Heritage and Relics Institute was sent to the area. They found:
  - That the ransacked tomb, situated beneath a pagoda, was indeed a highly **significant noble tomb, but not the legendary resting place** of Loulan royals.
  - **Smashed murals** on the walls of the looted tomb nevertheless provided fresh insights into the lives of ancient inhabitants of the area after the demise of the Loulan Kingdom.

- At the ruins of **Loulan City** were around **50 looted graves** with wooden coffins torn open, exposed human skeletons (some charred as thought they had been used by the tomb robbers to make campfires), and fragments of destroyed silk.
- Two large tombs contained nothing but **skeletons and broken coffins**.
- Police found **little evidence** to work with, although car tracks, old and new, were visible.
- The wilderness Lop Nur area (on the east of the vast Taklamakan Desert) was, until petroleum exploration began in the mid-1990s, almost inaccessible. New roads have **increased accessibility** which has led to an **epidemic of looting**, some, judging from still-smouldering fires, very recent.
- An intact, decorated coffin from the area can fetch up to one million yuan ($120,000) in Urumqi, the regional capital.
- A **one-million yuan State Development Planning Commission and State Administration of Cultural Heritage fund** has been set up for the protection of the Loulan area, which has helped **install satellite telephones and check points** on major roads.
- Looters now apparently enter **restricted archaeological areas claiming to be involved in environmental protection or wildlife protection programmes**, or approach from a different direction.
- Police are encountering looters with **increasingly sophisticated equipment** and **financial backing**.

- In May 2003 the **Archaeological Institute of America** announced that their **2004 award for Outstanding Public Service to archaeology will go to He Shuzhong**, founder and director of Cultural Heritage Watch in China. The prize honours individuals or groups that have done most to promote public understanding of, and interest in, archaeology.

Israeli issues

- Lawyers for collector **Oded Golan** (see In the News, *CWC* issue 11) **criticized the Israel Antiquities Authority** when they cast doubt on the possible authenticity and legality of an object (a **black sandstone tablet** with a 15-line Hebrew inscription said to date from the ninth century BC) which the collector offered to let them study. Attorney Lior Bringer argues that the 'King Jehoash inscription', if genuine, could stand as the first external evidence of some biblical events and so the question of ownership is 'irrelevant', and that the police and authorities are unjustly vilifying a man '**thanks to his connections, is capable of getting his hand on cultural treasures** and rare and valuable archaeological findings' (19 March, Haaretz.com.). But the Antiquities Authority suggested that documents seized from Golan's house indicate that **contrary to his claims he does own the piece**, that he may have obtained it in violation of antiquities laws and that given the stone's importance if genuine they are obliged to conduct investigations.

- *October 2002:* The **Israeli Unit for the Prevention of Antiquities Theft** found **15 tons of stolen antiquities**, including Roman marble pillars and a Second Temple Period stone sarcophagus, in the home of an Israeli man in **Caesarea**. He claims to have found the objects near his house.

  The Unit says that most of the time diggers are looking for oil lamps, pottery, glassware, bronze objects, clay stamps and inscribed items. Such objects sell for hundreds, even thousands of dollars, or more if intact.

- Hershel Shanks and colleagues speculate (BAR Jan/Feb 2003) about the **origin of the considerable number of bullae** (clay sealings with sometimes important seal impressions) that have recently surfaced on the market. Very few bullae are known from

legal archaeological excavations which seems to indicate that, if the source of those now appearing is illegal excavation, looters are much better at finding them than archaeologists. Rumour has it that they may originate from Jerusalem or Hebron.

Japan and 1970 UNESCO Convention

Agency of Cultural Affairs officials **voiced scepticism** that Japan's signing of the 1970 UNESCO Convention will affect deals involving stolen goods, since many are 'carried out behind the scenes' (Asahi.com, 22 November 2002). They drew attention to:

- the left foot of a sculpture of Zeus from national museum of Afghanistan, Kabul, which surfaced in Japan;
- a marked influx of china and porcelain from Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines during the last 20 years.

Happy returns to Mali

Samuel Sidibé, director of the **National Museum, Bamako**, Mali was **delighted at the return of 18 (16 terracotta, 2 wooden) statuettes** stolen from the central Bandiagara region of the Niger river delta and believed to have been found in the possession of a **private collector and French antiquities dealer**. Sidibé said the return was just reward for the efforts Mali has made in recent years to raise awareness of the looting of its cultural heritage.

New Swiss law

March 2003: The **House of Representatives, Switzerland**, approved in principle and with amendments a **new law to tighten trade in illicit antiquities** in the country. The draft law, which has been proposed for 10 years, would increase the period of limitation after which cultural goods of unknown origin become legal from **5 to 30 years**, but has been **strongly opposed by dealers, museums and art associations** who came together to create a counter-proposal. If passed by both houses of parliament the earliest it will come into force would be 2004. Andrea Rascher, who is responsible for law and international affairs at the Federal Culture Office, said action was considered after the extent of the problem of illicit trade came to light in recent years.

New law put to Parliament

Liberal Democrat MP Richard Allan **introduced to Parliament a private members' Bill,** proposing a new **Cultural Objects (Offences) Act**, which will make it a criminal offence to knowingly acquire or dispose of any object stolen from an archaeological site, monument or shipwreck, whether in UK or abroad. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport said the new Bill is aimed at professional looters and dealers who accept suspicious artefacts. It has the full backing of Government.

Metal detecting in Ireland

- In the weeks preceding Christmas, archaeologists in Ireland **advised people not to buy or accept metal detectors as gifts,** and told shops and manufacturers not to advertise them for fear of **potential criminal use**. It is illegal to dig for archaeological objects in Ireland, or to use metal detectors for archaeological purposes, without a licence.

- Meanwhile objects (including a gold covered early crucifix, Bronze Age daggers, and Iron Age pin, and hundreds of coins) from the **800 item hoard** impounded from convicted illegal metal detectorist Anthony

Malloy, and his son Kevin (see In the News, *CWC* 11), were put on **display at the National Museum**, Dublin.

Endangered rock art

Alec Campbell and David Coulson, founder of **TARA (the Trust for African Rock Art)** are trying to draw international attention to the **possible extinction of Africa's rich and important rock-art heritage**, some of which dates back to at least 10,000 BC. Amongst other threats identified, traders are carving out whole sections to sell to art dealers in Europe.

Archaeological discovery in Germany

Looters of an **ancient bronze disc**, depicting the sun, moon, stars, and a possible 'solar boat' (see In the News, *CWC* issue 10), have **led archaeologists to the site** where they discovered it along with axes and jewellery four years ago. Excavations at **Nebra**, 100 miles southwest of Berlin have revealed a **wooden structure surrounded by a circular ditch**, from which the summer solstice sun can be seen setting behind the highest mountain of the Harz range. The site could be interpreted as an ancient observatory, and appears to have been in use for more than a millennium.

Peruvian case studies

Roger Atwood, reporting in *Archaeology* magazine (January/February 2003) describes the efforts being made by **'citizens' brigades' in northwestern Peru** to stem business-driven looting of archaeological sites. Among other things he notes:

- That until quite recently looting amounted largely to souvenir collecting, but around 1990 it became big business with outsiders coming from the city to dig material for sale.
- Walter Alva, director of excavations at Sipan (see *CWC* issue 4), organized eight patrols (known as *grupo de protección arqueológica* or *la grupa)* in the early 1990s in response to this phenomenal growth in commercial looting.
- *Grupas* stop people occupying land on archaeological sites, chase off or hold looters, confiscate tools and call the museum staff who call the police.
- Decline in demand for sugar has contributed to economic difficulties which make looting a lucrative option.
- Most looters are not local villagers. Many come from the market town of Cayaltí, well known in the region as the place where antiquities are bought and sold.
- Atwood bought a genuine Inka pot and broken Moche portrait vessel for $3 each from a black market dealer in Cayaltí, who enquired if he was a museum director.
- The history and importance of pre-Columbian cultures like the Moche, Chimú, Chavín is now taught in schools.
- Alva says about 350 locals are now actively involved in patrolling, and have seized about 3200 objects.
- The situation in the northwest of the country contrasts with that in the Cañete area south of Lima (famous for its ancient textiles, worth up to $250,000 on the market), where *huaqueros* encounter less police attention and there are no citizen patrols.
- On a nightime raid by four looters on an Inka huaca, Atwood witnessed them probing for and finding tombs 10 feet down, digging down to them in 15 minutes and trashing and discarding the material remains within (human bones, gourds containing peanuts, knitting and musical instruments, children's toys etc.) because they were unsaleable. They took special care removing a textile shirt wrapped round the body of a male youth and sold it to an 'important buyer' named Lucho early the next morning for $1000.

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Colombia, illicit antiquities and the ICOM Red List Latin America

Colombia has suffered as much as any country from the attentions of archaeological bandits, probably more than most, and authorities there have been working with increasing effect to raise awareness of the importance of cultural heritage, with a view to stopping its theft. It is no surprise then that ICOM chose Bogota to be the venue of their April 2002 workshop for the preparation of the *Red List - Latin America*. The meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Culture of Colombia and attended by museums and heritage professionals from Latin America, Europe and North America. They compiled a list of categories of cultural heritage thought to be under severe threat from looting and theft, much along the lines of ICOM's similar and highly effective *Red List - Africa*, published in 2000.

ICOM's 1997 volume in their One Hundred Missing Objects series *Looting in Latin America* had already illustrated 22 objects missing from Colombia, but the reality that lies behind the illustrations is far worse. Some of the photographs were of objects known to be stolen, for example the stone anthropomorphic figures stolen in San Agustín, but many other objects shown were in fact only examples — examples of types of artefacts under threat from looting. And it was a long list of examples: Sinú and Muisca gold, Muisca pottery, Tairona pottery, La Miel pottery, Tamalameque pottery, Tumaco pottery, Calima pottery, and Malagana pottery.

Not much is known about the looting of archaeological sites in Colombia, nor about how much archaeological material has been illegally removed. We can gain some idea from the widely reported plunder of a cemetery at Hacienda Malagana in 1992, when something like 160 kg of gold were removed by more than 5000 people and one person was murdered (Figs. 1 & 2). Hundreds of tombs were destroyed in this one incident, and presumably it is a loss that has been repeated many times over throughout Colombia. Not much is known either about how much archaeological material has left the country, and it probably never will, but very little has ever been recovered. Those objects that have been recovered include some anthropomorphic figures from San Agustín, an area which was badly looted during the 1980s and 1990s. 17 statues are known to have been stolen, although a number have been

Figure 1. *Looting in progress at the cemetery site of Malagana.*

Figure 2. *Pits left by looters at Malagana.*

returned. One piece, weighing over 1200 lb, left Colombia illegally in 1993 and was discovered at a gallery in California whence it was returned to Colombia; the French government has also returned another four figures that had been bought by a private collector in Nantes (Fig. 3).

There is certainly a good market for Colombian material. In 2000, for example, at the annual Cultura Fair, in Basel, Switzerland, one dealer offered a gold hoard from Colombia (consisting of 130 archaeological objects) for about $3 million. The Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History reports that some pieces leaving Colombia illegally may have two certificates: the first, which accompanies the piece through customs certifies that it is a replica; the second, which is produced at point of sale when the piece has left Colombia, guarantees its authenticity as an archaeological piece.

Colombian response

The energetic and committed team at the Colombian Ministry of Culture have publicized heritage laws and created an innovative National Campaign against Illicit Traffic in Cultural Heritage. The aim of the programme is raise awareness and protect cultural heritage by means of press campaigns, posters, community group and youth activities and educational initiatives.

Figure 3. *Returned San Agustín statue.*

At cinemas in Colombia, advertisements produced by the National Campaign are screened between films and graphically highlight the damage done by archaeological theft. They leave the viewer with powerful images in mind, such as lifesize, Precolumbian San Agustín statues bleeding as they are ripped from their contexts. Posters, an effective tool seen also in other awareness campaigns, are prominently placed (Figs. 4 & 5). They shout messages like '*Speak Out! — Don't allow the destruction of our history*' and depict cartoon *huaqueros* going about their destructive activities. In the National Museum, labels attached to artefacts that have been returned — like one of the San Agustín statues mentioned above, stolen in 1994 and repatriated from France in 1998 — include references to the 'incalculable value of our heritage', and are designed to encourage Colombians to care for and protect cultural heritage.

An example of such curation is very visible in the form of young members of the *Vigia* programme, which was the brainchild of Direc-

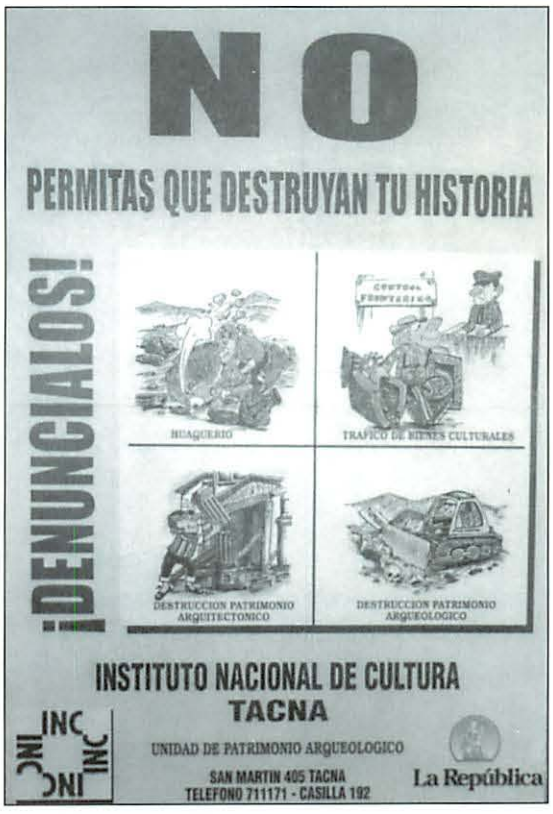


Figure 4. *Poster produced by the National Campaign promoting the preservation of Columbia's cultural heritage.*

Figure 5. *Poster produced by the National Campaign promoting the preservation of Columbia's cultural heritage.*

tor of Heritage, Katya González Rosales and Minster for Culture, Araceli Morales López (Fig. 6). The *Vigia* initiative harnesses the enthusiasm and energy of civic-minded university students from all over Colombia, who are prepared to become volunteer 'culture scouts' as part of a legally sanctioned, organized culture programme designed to encourage the protection and promotion of Colombia's rich heritage. It is hoped that programmes like this will consolidate or change attitudes, helping to create a vision of a shared future.

Vigia culture scouts are given their distinctive blue and yellow uniforms when they swear an oath to help fight for the preservation of the national heritage bequeathed to them by their ancestors, and to help maintain and enrich that resource for the sake of future generations. Their duties include supporting the work of the Ministry for Culture by helping to inventory collections, organizing and participating in cultural events, like National Culture Day, acting as educators at places of interest for local citizens (Fig. 7), campaigning against the destruction of moveable and immoveable cultural heritage, conducting scholarly research on cultural themes and providing an example of citizen participation for their communities. In relation to the ongoing campaign against illicit antiquities their value is clear and explicitly stated, especially in the areas of documentation, promoting legislation and education.

Beyond archaeology

Archaeological artefacts are not the only category of cultural heritage under threat in Colombia, or indeed Latin America more generally, a reality that is acknowledged in the ICOM *Red List - Latin America*. In a paper issued by the Colombian Ministry of Culture Maria Isabel Gomez Ayala (the Coordinator of the National Campaign against Illicit Traffic in Cultural Objects) gave an account of the theft of paintings by Colombian artists and of historical artefacts which go to feed the appetite in Spain and the United States for 'Colonial Art'. She wrote[1]:

> As dawn broke on 26 February 1993 a group of men arrived at the church of La Peña in Bogotá. They bound and gagged the parish priest and an employee, and proceeded to take 11 colonial paintings, mainly of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some are by anonymous artists, others by Baltazar de Figueroa and one is by the master Gonzalo Ariza. None have been recovered.
>
> In May 1993 the Museum of Religious Art in Santafé de Antioquia was robbed of 18 large format colonial paintings, of the Quiteño school and by painter Gregorio Vásquez de Arce y Ceballos. Fortunately, these pieces were listed in the cultural heritage inventory of Antioquia and, despite having to be restored after recovery due to the damage they had suffered, they escaped the fate of most other listed items that have disappeared. Timely

Figure 6. *Vigia logo.*

notification, through press and television, together with public cooperation and efficient work by DAS, allowed the recovery of 15 of these works in October. Investigations suggest the thieves belonged to a gang specializing in looting art.

The Art Museum of the National University discovered that 35 engravings from the Pizano collection went missing between 1992 and 1995; while from 1971 to 1998 the Colonial Art Museum lost 217 objects from its collection, mainly silver pieces. The last robbery happened in 1998, when 136 pieces were taken. On 30 August 2001 111 pieces were recovered by the national police after efficient action by their intelligence service. It is important to emphasize that without pre-existing documentation (recording forms and photographs) and the active commitment of this organization the search for this valuable material would have been fruitless.

On 20 December 2001, 11 colonial paintings were taken from the collection of the church of Tópaga, Boyacá. They are invaluable to the national heritage because of their religious and historical value and also their great antiquity. Also, in the April 2001, 68 pieces were taken from the collection of the Historical Museum of Cartagena — archaeological and historical and objects among them.

Over the last few decades the Augustinian and Franciscan communities, as well as the churches of small villages in Boyacá, Pasto, Santander and Cundinamarca, have also been the victims of continuing robberies. Unfortunately, because of the lack of inventories, search and recovery cannot even begin.

Similar events have taken place in galleries as well as the homes of painters and collectors, although scant information of these thefts is available in the offices of the Directory of Heritage of the Ministry of Culture. In most cases thefts are not reported to this department, despite the fact that it is entrusted with sending data to INTERPOL, and within Colombia to the relevant police and customs agencies, the office of Public Prosecution, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the media, in order to help in the search and recovery of the missing

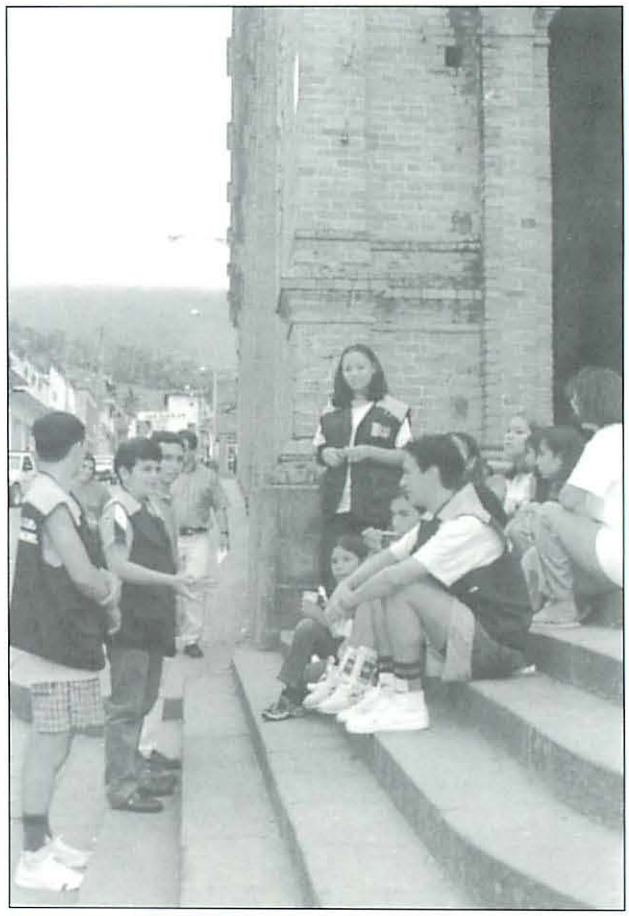


Figure 7. *Vigia culture scouts talking to the public.*

pieces. The owners are often not aware of the procedures to be followed in such cases, and so their complaints seldom arrive in time for action to be effective. Even so, one can mention the robbery of 34 pieces from radiologist Hernándo Morales in 1994, some of which have been recovered. The teacher Edgar Negret was also a victim of crime when, in 1993, 17 of his paintings were taken; the painter Armando Villegas was robbed in his own house when 15 paintings from the series Los Guerreros were taken; in 1990, 53 colonial works were stolen from the home of Soffy Arboleda in Cali by bogus workers of a telephone company; 23 works by the painter Fernando Botero were stolen from his country home, near Bogotá, in December 1999, all of which were recovered. This list cites only some of the best-known cases.

Everyday objects from the colonial period are also in demand. They are antiques in effect, but as they are from a poorly-recorded period they still constitute an irreplaceable source of knowledge for the social history of colonial Colombia. Coffers, large and small chests, desks, tableware, screens, boxes and many other types of furniture are all in demand. Some pieces are related to important historical events. They are valuable no

doubt for adding a touch of authenticity to a neo-colonial hacienda, and uninteresting as historical documents to those who buy them, but when properly studied they have much to tell us about techniques of production and the organization of the colonial economy. This is yet another group of illegally exported cultural objects, and one which deserves to be protected with the same zeal as stolen art or archaeology.

Red List - Latin America

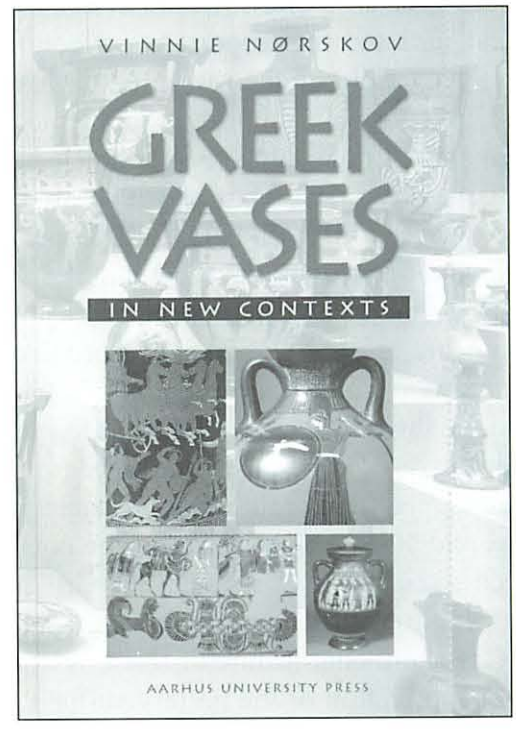
The *Red List - Latin America* was agreed at the April 2002 workshop in Bogota and is now available in preliminary form on ICOM's website at http://icom.museum/redlist_latina_eng.html. It comprises a list of types of Precolumbian and Colonial cultural objects that are thought to be particularly at risk from looting and theft. The categories are critical in that they represent material most in danger, but they are certainly not exhaustive. There is much other material in Latin America under threat, and its non-inclusion on the list is not intended to legitimise its sale or collection. The Red List is scheduled for full publication, in paper and electronic formats, in September 2003, when a full description of each category of object, photos and details of legislation protecting those objects will be added.

Note

1. Translated from the original Spanish by Alexander Herrera.

Book review: *Greek Vases in New Contexts*

David Gill



Nørskov, Vinnie, 2002. *Greek Vases in New Contexts: the Collecting and Trading of Greek Vases — an Aspect of the Modern Reception of Antiquity*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 407 pp.

Dr John Disney, the founder of the Disney Chair of Archaeology at Cambridge, once compared the discovery of fine Greek pottery ('fictile vases') in the cemeteries of Etruria to the finding of truffles (Gill 1990). *Greek Vases in New Contexts* is a major study of the phenomenon of collecting, displaying, and selling these tasty and expensive treats — Greek figure-decorated pots ('vases') — from the fifteenth century onwards. It ranges from the explorations of Campanian cemeteries by Sir William Hamilton to the display of (replica) Greek vases in the Florida villa of Italian fashion-designer Gianni Versace. There are six main chapters that include 'The history of collecting Greek vases', 'Vases for sale: trade and restrictions', 'Vases in museums: case studies', and 'A look at the market: availability or choice'.

At the heart of the study is an important discussion of eight European and North American collections of Greek pottery: the British Museum, the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (see now also Chippindale *et al.* 2001, 20–22), the National Museum in Copenhagen, the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, the Antikensammlung Kiel, Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig,

the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Duke Classical Collection. The impact of the Code of Practice by the (British) Museums Association can be seen in the Acquisition Policy for both the Ashmolean Museum (p. 220; see also Vickers 1992) and the British Museum (p. 128). This contrasts with other museums which are not bound by such clear rules: 'no firm guidelines' (National Museum, Copenhagen; p. 142), 'a general reluctance to acquire objects without secure provenance' (Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, p. 178). Some of the donors behind the expansion of the Greek and Roman galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (p. 165) are individuals whose collections have been the subject of study elsewhere (Chippindale & Gill 2000, 472–5): it is clear that these private collections have been formed from newly-surfaced antiquities. The importance of Greek pottery as part of a wider university 'art' collection can be illustrated by the purchase of the Greek vases once owned by the traveler William M. Leake in 1864. This in effect initiated the important collection of Greek pottery held by the Fitzwilliam Museum in the University of Cambridge, supplementing the founding gift of sculpture by John Disney in 1850 (compare p. 204 table 11 which gives the date 1848; see Gill 1999). In Oxford, 82 per cent of the antiquities acquired by the Ashmolean Museum during the 1930s consisted of Greek pottery (Chippindale *et al.* 2001, 21). The problem of forming a new collection of Greek pottery has been highlighted by the San Antonio Museum of Art (Shapiro *et al.* 1995). Not one piece from the 183 catalogued items comes with a stated provenance, and at least 86 per cent of the pots had surfaced since 1974 (Chippindale & Gill 2000, 479, especially supplementary tables 20–21).

One significant feature of Nørskov's study is the quantification of the pottery surfacing on the antiquities market. Over 18,000 Greek pots from 596 catalogues were registered from auction and other sales between 1954 and 1998. This sample suggested that 80–90 per cent of the pots surfacing had no previous history ('provenance') suggesting that they were recent finds (p. 259). This is consistent with other studies, of the London antiquities market (Chippindale *et al.* 2001, 19, 'just under 90 per cent of objects offered for auction in the survey since World War II first "surfaced" in the sale itself'), and of Apulian pottery (Elia 2001, 147, 'some 94.5 per cent of all recorded Apulian vases have been unearthed without the benefit of systematic archaeological investigation'). It would have been helpful to have a more nuanced analysis of when the individual pots with some history first surfaced. The most expensive 20 Greek pots sold at auction between 1969 and 2000, were worth more than $15 million (p. 356 appendix C). How many of the collections listed were in fact of recent formation? One piece even appears to come from the realization of an antiquities investment portfolio. For example a pelike from the Embiricos collection — a collection represented in the top 20 — was sold at auction in 1993 but 'it did not have the documented history necessary for acquisition by the British Museum' (p. 130). In the top twenty were 5 pots once owned by the Hunt brothers, sold for $3.8 million. This collection was once presented as 'The Wealth of the Ancient World' (Tompkins 1983). This raises the intellectual consequence of how modern monetary (and aesthetic) values are placed on ancient pottery, which we know from ancient commercial graffiti was in fact a humble medium (Vickers & Gill 1994). The unwillingness of contemporary 'vase' scholarship to recognize this tension between modern interpretation and the ancient evidence, perhaps reflects the way that 'vases' have been robbed of their original archaeological contexts. All that scholarship can now provide is a superficial art-historical interpretation with attributions to anonymous pot-decorators, a situation not dissimilar to that for Cycladic figures. One area which could have been explored is the movement of Greek pottery from the cemeteries of Etruria to Switzerland, and then on to the auction rooms of London before being acquired by private collectors and museums (Watson 1997). The unmasking of this route led Sotheby's to discontinue its antiquities operation in London (in spite of what has been said by a certain London dealer to a House of Commons Select Committee: Gill & Chippindale 2002, 54), though all that has happened is that it has moved the selling of antiquities onto the internet (see now Chippindale & Gill 2001). Peter Watson identified the role of Giacomo Medici, who also appears as one of the dealers behind the Hunt collection (p. 270 n. 55).

A future study should attempt to identify the pots handled by Medici, and perhaps acquired by unsuspecting museums and collectors in good faith believing that they came from 'old European collections'. Nørskov's index of personal names will also help to identify the validity (or otherwise) of such 'old' collections.

The tables showing numbers and percentages of Greek pots on the market between 1954 and 1998 will provide the basis for future research. The low figure for East Greek pottery (59 pots) may suggest that the cemeteries of Turkey and the Greek islands have yet to be looted in the systematic way of the Italian cemeteries. The quantification of the South Italian pottery is not dissimilar to the histogram created by Ricardo Elia for 'Sotheby's South Italian pottery sales, 1965–1998' (Elia 2001, 149, fig. 18.2), though Nørskov has highlighted a further South Italian peak in 1990. Interestingly Attic pottery has 'highs' in 1985 and 1990: 1990 is the year of the Nelson Bunker Hunt and the Erlenmeyer sales (p. 275, table 15).

Nørskov has identified a number of material consequences for the collecting of Greek fine pottery, though the nettle of intellectual consequences was not, perhaps, grasped. For pots attributed to 'the Berlin Painter', only some 13 per cent comes a relatively secure archaeological context, and 50 per cent have no archaeological context at all. This has implications for the interpretation of the development of style and the dating of associated material, as well as the understanding of the funerary function of pots attributed to this hand.

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