

Culture Without Context



The Newsletter of the Illicit Antiquities Research Centre

Issue 19, Autumn 2006

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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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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

On 9 March 2007 the Schøyen Collection announced in a press release that it is to sue University College London (UCL) for the recovery of 654 Aramaic-inscribed incantation bowls (http://www.schoyencollection.com/news_articles/UCL-090307.htm). The Schøyen Collection comprises manuscripts and other inscribed materials assembled by Norwegian businessman Martin Schøyen. The contested bowls have been held by UCL since October 2004 pending the outcome of an internal enquiry into the legality of their provenance. The enquiry was initiated after a Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) television documentary investigating the Schøyen Collection alleged that the bowls had been excavated illegally in Iraq in 1992 or 1993 (see S. Lundén, 'Skriftsamleren [The Manuscript Collector]', *CWC* Issue 19 (2005), 3–11). The bowls reached UCL over the period 1996 to 1997, where they were being held by the Institute of Jewish Studies for cataloguing and research. While it is believed that the UCL enquiry has completed its investigations and prepared a report, its findings have not been made public, and it is not clear either whether they have been communicated to the Schøyen Collection. The press release states that the Collection has 'become frustrated with the waste of time and money caused by a lengthy and inconclusive inquiry', and that 'following a series of unsatisfactory meetings and communications, it has now come to the view that legal proceedings are the only way forward'. These statements might be taken to imply that UCL has decided in light of its enquiry not to return the bowls. Prompt publication of the enquiry's report and recommendations might help to clarify the situation.

The press release also claims that UCL's enquiry into the incantation bowls 'seemed designed to deflect attention from the provenance of UCL's own permanent collections, including the ethnographic collections and other collections that may contain unprovenanced material'. This allegation is a serious one, though no corroboration is provided, and it might equally be designed to deflect attention from the Schøyen bowls.

The Schøyen Collection launched an independent website on 19 February 2007, having formerly been hosted by the National Library of Norway. The Collection's association with the publicly-funded Library had become increasingly problematical following the allegations and revelations of the NRK programme. The new website has an interesting 'statement of provenance' about the material of probable Iraqi origin (<http://www.schoyencollection.com/archeoprov.htm>), where it lists 16 old collections as sources. The dates provided for 10 of these collections show that they were still being assembled in the 1980s, however, years after the enactment of the 1974 Iraqi law banning antiquities export, and so it is hard to see how they have any direct bearing on the question of lawful export from Iraq. Nevertheless, it is encouraging that the Collection is prepared to talk about provenance, and perhaps when the documented provenances of individual pieces are made public then the controversy surrounding the Collection will subside.

The statement of provenance also makes a deceptive and nonsensical claim about the 'original archaeological context' of objects in the Collection, when it states that the context will not be known until 'all texts in both private and public collections have been published and compared with each other'. In fact, the archaeological context will only be known when the excavations that produced the objects are published. If the excavations were conducted clandestinely and never published then the archaeological context will never be known.

There might be more to the Schøyen Collection press release than meets the eye. Its website also outlines plans for future publication (<http://www.schoyencollection.com/infopub.htm>), and it seems that publication of its cuneiform material will be coordinated by a senior scholar from the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies. Whether the threat of legal action is intended to intimidate UCL and to deter the University of London from following UCL's lead is open to speculation, but it will be interesting to see whether the publication of the UCL enquiry has any effect on this publication plan.



UCL had already been in the firing line in November 2006 when a postgraduate

student at the Institute of Archaeology organized an evening seminar to consider the history and possible future of the so-called Sevso treasure.

Comprising 14 pieces of Roman silver, the Sevso treasure had been displayed in October at an exhibition held at Bonham's auction house for an invite-only audience. At first, Bonhams announced that the Marquess of Northampton, the present owner of the silver, had no plans to sell it, but then during the exhibition it was reported that 'The Marquis of Northampton has made it clear that it is his intention to sell the treasure' (M. Bailey, 'Bonhams U-turn on Sevso silver', *Art Newspaper*, November, 5).

Hoping for a balanced debate, the UCL student twice asked Bonhams if they would like to send someone to represent the owner's interest. The reply, when it came, was in the form of a letter from Lane and Partners, lawyers to the Marquess of Northampton, threatening a legal claim for damages if certain 'extremist academics' chose to discuss a possible Hungarian provenance. This rather clumsy attempt to stifle discussion

backfired spectacularly as it only went to ensure that every authority on the subject turned up on the night to offer their support in a packed room, and there was a full and frank discussion of what evidence there is for a Hungarian origin. The robust response shown by UCL staff and students to legal sabre-rattling was commendable, and Lane and Partners' representatives at the meeting must have left feeling suitably chastised.

The Marquess of Northampton has good title to the Sevso treasure, but the problem for any potential purchaser is that his title looks vulnerable. His cause was not helped when in March 2007 the *Art Newspaper* showed that even now new evidence about the treasure's provenance might appear. It claimed to have seen documents dating from the 1980s suggesting that 187 spoons, 37 cups and 5 bowls that had originally been part of the treasure had been separated off before the Northampton purchase. The likelihood that there are previously undisclosed documents relating to the provenance of the silver still in circulation will do nothing to allay the fears of potential purchasers.

The effect of an artefact's provenance on its saleability

NEIL BRODIE

It is a welcome development that in recent 'Antiquities' sales the major auction houses have started to offer more information about provenance than was previously the case. Sometimes this provenance comprises a named previous owner, sometimes a publication, sometimes simply a previous auction sale. These provenance data can contribute towards a fuller understanding of the market and aid the investigation of individual market histories. In this short paper they are used to examine the effect of provenance on saleability.

Cannon-Brookes (1994) has suggested that in a climate disapproving of the sale of unprovenanced antiquities the market might start to discriminate against them without any imposed regulation by awarding higher prices to well-

documented pieces. Higher prices would in turn encourage the release into the public domain of more provenance-related information, and the market would gradually become more transparent, allowing the customer to be more selective about acquisitions. The idea that the market may act to regulate itself in this way is clearly an attractive one to the trade community as it weakens the case for statutory regulation, and it has often been suggested since Cannon-Brookes first floated the idea that, in fact, it is exactly what is happening. Unfortunately, it is difficult to obtain empirical verification of the positive effect of provenance on price because the variable quality of material offered for sale makes it hard to make direct price comparisons between provenanced and unprovenanced pieces. To do so, it would be necessary to collect price information on a large series of near-identical objects, which is not readily available.

One possible method of investigating the effect of provenance on price is to compare the estimated prices of auction lots with their realized prices. If the realized prices of lots with good provenances

consistently exceed their estimates by a greater amount than those with no provenances, then it would seem to confirm Cannon-Brookes's hypothesis. Silver (2005) analysed 1773 lots sold at Sotheby's New York through the period December 2000 to June 2005 and showed that lots documented before 1971 sold on average for 122 per cent of their median estimated price, while those that were not documented before 1971 sold on average for only 58 per cent of their median estimate. There is an element of subjectivity about price estimates, however, and if the auction house staff responsible for estimating prices think that provenance adds value, they would be expected to set the estimates higher to take that possibility into account. If that is the case, then it would strengthen Silver's results still further.

Another test of the Cannon-Brookes conjecture might be that the provenance of an artefact will effect its saleability, and it is attempted here. Provenance information has been collated for two October 2005 'Antiquities' sales in London — one at Christie's and one at Bonhams. Auction lots have been classified according to the date of their earliest verifiable provenance. Verifiable provenance is defined here as a name and a date, which can, in principle, be corroborated through independent means. It might consist of a previous sale or owner with both name and date provided, or a publication reference. Entries such as 'with European private collector in 1950', or 'bought at Sotheby's' are not considered to be verifiable provenance because they cannot be verified. The chronological classification is as follows:

1. before 1914;
2. 1915–1945;
3. 1946–1969;
4. 1970–2005;
5. other.

With the exception of the 1970 distinction, these classes are arbitrary. 1970 is the date of the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, and increasingly it is being adopted by museums as a date threshold to separate acceptable from unacceptable provenance. In other words, objects with a legitimate provenance that can be documented back to before 1970 are considered acceptable purchases. The final class 'other' includes lots with no provenance and lots with provenances

Table 1. Christie's London October 2005: earliest verifiable date of provenance.

	<1914	1915–45	1946–69	1970–2005	Other
Number of lots offered	18	65	25	76	89
Number of lots sold	16	47	22	37	66

Table 2. Bonhams London October 2005: earliest verifiable date of provenance.

	<1914	1915–45	1946–69	1970–2005	Other
Number of lots offered	5	18	107	103	263
Number of lots sold	5	18	95	62	177

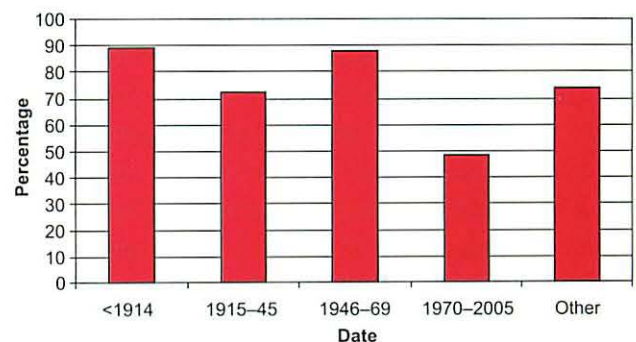


Figure 1. Christie's October 2005: percentage of offered lots sold according to provenance classes.

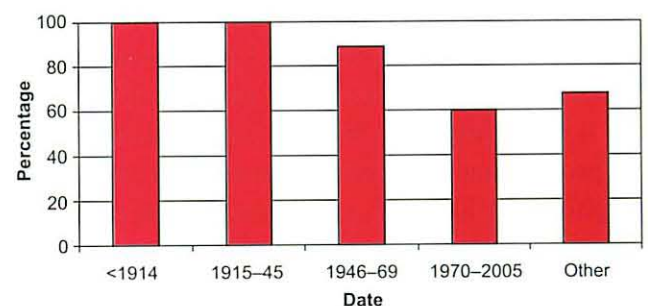


Figure 2. Bonhams October 2005: percentage of offered lots sold according to provenance classes.

not considered to be verifiable by the criteria adopted here.

The data are presented in Tables 1 and 2, and suggest that provenance does improve the saleability of a lot, particularly a pre-1970 provenance, although the effect is only marginal (Figs. 1 & 2). However, from this data set at least, it is hard to say whether the improved saleability of lots with long provenance is due to customer concern over origin, or because objects coming onto the

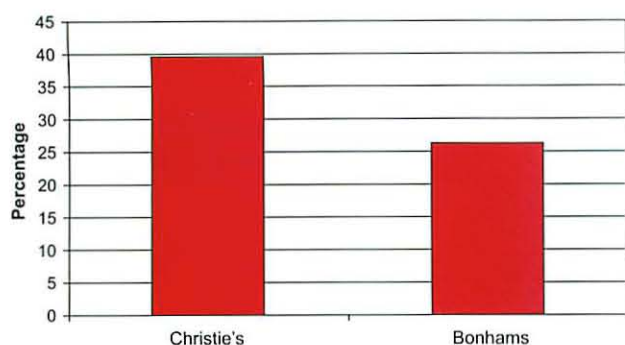


Figure 3. *Percentage of lots offered for sale with a verifiable provenance stretching back to before 1970.*

market from long-established private collections are of higher quality than objects coming onto the market from other sources. The problem arises because lots in the earlier provenance classes are comprised mainly of material from old private collections, while the later classes are comprised more of material provenanced by a previous sale date. So, in the two auctions under consideration here, three old private collections were sold. First there were the 11 Capesthorpe Hall antiquities sold at Christies with a provenance stretching back to the early nineteenth century. The second collection, also sold at Christie's, comprised 27 lots acquired by Wilhelm Horn in the 1930s. Finally, at Bonhams, there were 78 lots from the collection of Hugh Stanley Russell that were acquired in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Perhaps a larger data set including more lots with a sale provenance from before 1970 will allow a better understanding of the reasons for the positive effect on saleability exerted by provenance.

It is interesting to note that the positive effect of provenance on saleability only really becomes apparent for lots with a provenance that stretches

back to before 1970. 1970 has been promoted in Britain as a provenance threshold for many years now, by the Museums Association since at least 2002, the British Museum since 1998, and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport since 2005. In the United States, the 1970 threshold is adhered to by the Archaeological Institute of America and, since October 2006, the J. Paul Getty Museum. Figure 3 shows that less than 40 per cent of antiquities offered for sale at Christie's and Bonhams in October 2005 have a verifiable provenance stretching back to before 1970 that would have rendered them acceptable for purchase by the British Museum or the Getty. The provenances of more than 50 per cent of the lots offered for auction remain resolutely unaccounted for. Previous owners seem more likely to be named by Christie's than by Bonhams, and so perhaps the percentage would have been higher if Bonhams had been more forthcoming about the names of previous owners, and perhaps this observation might encourage them to be so in the future.

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In the News

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Iraq

- On 25 July 2006, a diorite statue of the Sumerian king Entemena of Lagash, stolen from the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad in April 2003, was returned to Iraq during a ceremony at the Iraqi Embassy in Washington. It was discovered in Syria in 2005 and is thought to have been recovered with the cooperation of New York dealers Ali and Hicham Aboutaam (B. Meier & J. Glanz, 'Looted treasure returning to Iraq National Museum', *New York Times*, 26 July 2006).
- *July 2006*: Following a conference at the University of Qadisiya, Iraqi archaeologists urged the authorities to protect the site of Uruk (modern Warka) from looting.
- In September 2006, Scotland Yard returned two incantation bowls, believed to have been stolen from an archaeological site in southern Iraq, to the Iraqi Foreign Minister. They had been handed in to police by dealers in London after having been smuggled into the United Kingdom (see: R. Beeston, 'Looted artefacts returned', *The Times*, 15 September 2006).
- Concerns have been voiced around the world about the removal of well-qualified archaeologists and heritage professionals from their posts in Iraq. They have apparently been replaced by political and religious appointees after archaeological and cultural heritage sites were put under the jurisdiction of the Tourism Ministry, which is connected with radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. It is thought its main focus will be the protection of Islamic cultural heritage (see: 'Iraq: antiquities continue to be pillaged, destroyed', Radio Free Europe, 12 October 2006).

- International archaeologists have written to the Iraqi authorities asking that the holdings of the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad are not broken up and sent to regional museums, as has been suggested (see: M. Bailey, 'International archaeologists' pleas to Iraqi government', and 'An open letter to the government of Iraq', *The Art Newspaper*, No. 174, November 2006).
- Following the resignation of Donny George as chairman of the State Board of Cultural Heritage, the Iraq Cultural Heritage Initiative (a programme co-ordinated by the Getty Conservation Institute and the World Monuments Fund to provide training and infrastructure support for the protection of Iraq's cultural heritage) must now make new arrangements with the next administration. The new chairman is said to be keen to continue the project. (see: L. Harris, 'International project to safeguard Iraqi heritage will continue', *The Art Newspaper*, No. 175, December 2006).



Turkey

- According to reports in Turkey, prosecutors allege that Uşak Museum Director Kazim Akbiyikoğlu had 259 telephone conversations with other suspects alleged to have been involved in the theft and attempted sale of a gold brooch — a star item in the famous Lydian Hoard, or Karun Treasure, which is on display at the museum. It was discovered in 2005 that the brooch had been replaced with a fake (see: 'In the news', *CWC*, Issue 18, (Spring 2006); also see: 'Editorial', *CWC*, Issue 2, (Spring 1998)). Quoted in the *Turkish Daily News* (10 September 2006) Tourism and Culture Minister Atilla Koç said he believed the genuine brooch was still in Turkey, adding 'Those who stole it took it to Istanbul. The buyers beat them up and sent them back to Uşak without paying them. It is obviously not a professional job.'

- *November 2006*: Ancient artefacts were confiscated during construction work in the industrial zone of the village of Koseler in Gebze, after rumours that items were being smuggled from the site. Artefacts are usually transferred directly to local museums. Upon inspection it emerged that the area was a Hellenistic cemetery.
- A marble statue of two women holding a globe, believed to be Roman, was recovered from an olive depot in Gemlik, southwestern Turkey, after a tip-off to police. Two men, Kemal K and Ismail A, were arrested for allegedly trying to sell the statue for £15 million. They claimed to have bought it cheaply in the Aegean region (see: 'A Roman statue work \$15 million found in an olive depot', *Sabah*, 27 December 2006)



USA

- In July 2006, after an FBI investigation, prosecutors in Miami charged Edgar Nakache, Cecilia Marcillo-Aviles and her daughter Susan Aviles with illegal importation of pre-Columbian artefacts from Ecuador. The FBI had been on the case since February, when Nakache's offer to sell around 600 artefacts had alerted ICOM (International Council of Museums) in Paris. ICOM contacted Interpol, Interpol contacted the Ecuadorian police, and the Ecuadorian police contacted the FBI. During the course of the FBI's investigation undercover officers, posing as potential buyers, met Nakache and Marcillo-Aviles at her daughter's house in Miami and photographed some of the pieces before pretending to negotiate a \$2 million deal. About 100 objects from the house and around 60 more from a storage company were recovered, but the location of the remaining pieces is unknown. (For pictures see: 'Three charged in smuggling pre-Columbian artefacts into the United States', Press Release, United States Attorney's Office, Southern District of Florida,

21 July 2006 <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls/PressReleases/060721-02.html>).

- Linda Farnsworth, sole BLM (Bureau of Land Management) archaeologist responsible for the Canyon of the Ancients National Monument in Colorado, showed *The Los Angeles Times* (Julie Cart, 'Agency Struggles to stop artefact theft', 3 September 2006) a series of backfilled looters' holes, evidence of illegal pot hunting. Looters are increasingly targeting Anasazi sites in the area, where only around 18 per cent of the archaeology is believed to have been surveyed. In the six years since the Canyon of the Ancients has been in existence there have been no arrests for archaeological theft, despite increased evidence of looting.
- *August 2006*: 26 Caddo pots, dating to about AD 600, which had been discovered during a dig along the Red River in 1980, were stolen from Southern Arkansas University in Magnolia. Archaeologists were about to return the collection to the Caddo Nation.
- Two Arizona State Land Department investigators have turned to aerial surveillance to spot the tell-tale signs of archaeological looting in the 9 million acres of state land they must patrol. Indications of illegal digging include makeshift roads, heavy equipment and series of linear cuts. They say they are getting an ever-increasing number of calls, and the benefits (as much as \$75,000 for an intact pot) outweigh the risks (fines of less than \$500). John Madson, curator of archaeology, at Arizona State Museum, highlighted another problem in region — large ranches are being split into 'ranchettes' which are then leased to pothunters, as treasure-hunting is legal on private land (see: T. Ropp, 'Looters still ravaging ancient Arizona', *The Arizona Republic*, 6 July 2006).
- Following a six-year investigation, called 'Operation Bring 'Em Back', Michael Orf

from Redmond was sentenced to a two-and-a-half-year prison sentence and a \$20,000 fine payable to the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation for trafficking an American Indian skeleton. He offered the skeleton for sale to an undercover operative in 2004. His sentencing marks the end of the first phase of the operation, which looked at unlawful diggers (often methamphetamine users, see: 'In the news', *CWC*, Issue 17 (Autumn 2005)) and unlawful traders. Attention will now turn to the buyers of such artefacts and a number of collectors' homes have been searched although no charges have yet been brought (see: B. Denson, 'Cultural pillagers leave trail of ruin', *The Oregonian*, 1 November 2006).

- *November 2006*: Tribal chairman Robert Martin said that the Morongo Band of Mission Indians would no longer take a passive approach to looting on their reservation lands, but will aggressively prosecute thieves. In May or June a large granite boulder with a bedrock mortar (grinding hole) was stolen from a secured area of the reservation and thieves attempted to steal another. The heist must have required heavy equipment and transport facilities (see: 'Morongo tribe announces intent to prosecute cultural thefts; no pocketing of the past permitted', Yahoo, 27 November 2006).



China

- *August 2006*: Suspended death sentences were given to two Chinese nationals for stealing 119 items from Song dynasty tombs in the province of Shaanxi near Xian. Two others involved in the theft were given 15-year jail terms.
- The US State Department has delayed a decision on China's request for a bi-lateral agreement to restrict importation of Chinese cultural material. The delay came after a group of Senators, backed by dealers and museum directors, expressed concerns

about the transparency of the decision-making process and the legality of the request. They argue that China must prove it has taken steps to police the antiquities market within its own borders, show that such restrictions in the US would help combat looting, and that category of material covered by the request is too broad. Robert E. Murowchick, of the University of Boston, said the delay was critical because 'every month or year that goes by with looting getting worse, the more sites are being destroyed' (see: J. Kahn, 'U.S. delays rule on limits to Chinese art imports', *New York Times*, 18 October 2006).

- Graves dating back to the Warring States Period in Gansu province, which were discovered in August 2005 when local police apprehended looters there, have been nominated as one of China's top 10 most important archaeological discoveries of the year. Zhu Zhongxi, director of the archaeological institute of Gansu told *Shanghai Daily* ('Proposed leading archaeology sites found by robbers', 22 December 2006) that he found the nomination by provincial authorities ironic given the circumstances of the site's discovery. The same situation occurred in Lixian County, where an ancient cemetery was heavily looted in the 1990s until archaeology and security departments stepped in.



United Kingdom

- *August 2006*: Scotland Yard recovered a valuable Moche headdress, which disappeared after the excavation of a tomb in the Jequetepeque Valley, Peru in 1988, as it was being passed to a lawyer in London for safekeeping. They acted on information provided by former art smuggler Michel van Rijn. The 3-ft wide, gold headdress is believed to have been in the possession of Peruvian dealer Raul Apestiguia, but after his murder in 1996 it appeared for sale on the black market alongside 41 other stolen

pieces (see: S. Connor, 'Solved: case of the disappearing headdress, the Mona Lisa of Peru', *The Independent*, 18 August 2006).

- In October 2006 the British Museum and Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) teamed up with eBay.co.uk and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council to monitor eBay sales of objects which could potentially be 'treasure' as defined by the 1996 Treasure Act and thus belong to the Crown. Sellers were contacted and illegal listings reported to police. An average of almost 3500 objects per day were on sale on eBay between August and September, around 50 of which could potentially have been treasure under the terms of the Act. The British Museum said that it had not seen a drop in the number of potential treasure items listed since the project had begun, while a spokesperson for eBay said they are usually traded innocently by people unaware of their legal requirement to report such finds to the Coroner with 14 days of discovery (see: 'Museum warns of illegal eBay treasure trading', *The Evening Standard*, 18 December 2006). Claire Costin of the PAS told *The Times* (D. Alberge, 'Illicit artefacts sold as eBay turns a blind eye', 18 December 2006) that many sellers are simply insisting their items were bought overseas at antiquities fairs or from private collections.



Syria

Official news agency SANA reported in August that a number of people had been arrested on suspicion of looting at Palmyra. They were said to have been found in possession of two stone statues, the bust of a priest and portrait of a woman.



Albania

Auron Tare, former Director of the National Park of Butrint in Albania, told *The Tirana Times* ('Expert charges officials doing nothing

to protect national heritage', 31 July 2006) that not enough is being done by Albanian authorities to protect archaeological heritage. He said:

- Authorities never updated international partners about the return of the Gllavenica Epitaph a few years after its theft from the National History Museum in the mid-1990s.
- Looting at the archaeological site of Finiq is being ignored. He added that a year ago he gave authorities a photo file of stolen pieces, which he claims have been smuggled to Greece by an Archeology Institute official. He says they have not responded.
- Illegal digging is commonplace.
- He has demanded, but not received, an official explanation from the manager of the Butrint Foundation about the alleged 2004 sale to an English expedition of a collection of Crusader-era coins found by locals. He claims the sale was carried through with no official notice or inventory and without the involvement of the right people in the national park.
- The national museum, while still a wonderful resource, is vulnerable to thefts because of the lack of inventory (which Tare believes suits corrupt officials) and non-functioning security equipment.



Bulgaria

- *June 2006:* The National History Museum of Bulgaria opened an exhibition of illicit antiquities recovered by police in the towns of Knezha and Veliko Turnovo. Four people were arrested (who were also planning bank robberies) and police said they were looking at possible involvement of customs officers. Antiquities had been exported to Germany and the Netherlands.
- Archaeologist Daniela Agre told the *Observer* (D. McLaughlin, 'Bulgaria fights to save its golden past from the curse of the gangsters', 24 September 2006) that in August she came across a Black Sea hotel

owner destroying a 2000-year-old Thracian burial mound which, on excavation, was found to contain gold and silver jewellery.



Pakistan

- In an elaborate ceremony in Newark, NY, July 2006, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement Department and the Department of Homeland Security returned to Pakistan's consul-general a shipment of smuggled antiquities, including 39 Gandharan artefacts. The shipment, sent from Dubai, was impounded in 2004.
- Archaeologists and museum professionals estimated the value of shipment of 625 ancient statues impounded in Karachi at Rs 30 million. They suspect that the antiquities may have come from the Swat area, but are also considering the possibility that they were smuggled from Afghanistan, or stolen from a private collection or museum. Officials of the Drug Enforcement Cell of the Preventive Collectorate of the Pakistan Customs impounded the consignment, which was hidden in 376 packages stored in 23 wooden boxes in a container en route to Sharjah. They refused to name the clearing agents handling the shipment. This is second largest seizure made by Pakistani customs in a decade: last November a consignment of 1400 pieces was intercepted ('Antiques smuggling case: customs want clearing agents' bail cancelled', *Daily Times Pakistan*, 20 November 2006; 'Customs foil bid to smuggle 625 relics', *Dawn*, 19 November 2006).



J. Paul Getty Museum

- The *Los Angeles Times* reports that the J. Paul Getty Trust paid \$64,000 towards collector and Getty trustee Barbara Fleischman's legal fees when she gave a deposition on former curator Marion True's behalf (R. Frammolino & J. Felch, 'Getty paid Trustee's legal fees despite lawyer's warning',

29 June 2006). Lawyers have advised the Trust that the payment may violate federal tax rules as the deposition was not directly related to her role as a trustee.

- July 2006: 'After a thorough internal investigation', the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles agreed to return two items to Greece: a sixth-century BC relief from Thassos and fourth-century BC tombstone from Thebes. In return, Greece offered a long-term loan of antiquities to the Getty. Further objects from the collection remain contentious.
- The J. Paul Getty Museum announced that it is tightening its acquisitions policy (see: 'Getty tightens acquisitions policy', *Los Angeles Times*, 27 October 2006). In order to acquire an object there must now be documentation or substantial evidence to prove that:
 - the piece entered the USA by November 17, 1970, and there is no reason to suspect it was illegally exported from its country of origin;
 - the item was out of its source country by 1970 and has been or will be legally imported to the USA;
 - the item was legally exported after 1970 and has been or will be legally imported to the USA.

In October, the Corte Costituzionale in Italy approved the enactment of a law extending the statute of limitations on certain offences. This means that both Marion True and Robert Hecht, presently on trial in Italy for dealing in and conspiring to receive illicitly-excavated artefacts, may escape charges on a technicality (see: F. Castelli Gattinara, 'Getty curator could escape charges on a technicality', *The Art Newspaper*, No. 175, December 2006).

Following the threat of a cultural embargo by Italy, the J. Paul Getty Museum agreed to return contested antiquities, including the bronze statue of a boy found in 1961 off the coast of Fano and bought by the Getty for \$3 million (see: 'Getty agrees

return of antiquities to Italy', *The Art Newspaper*, No. 175, December 2006).

- *November 2006*: Greek prosecutors charged former Getty Museum curator Marion True with conspiring to receive stolen antiquities. The allegation concerns a golden wreath, which was sold to a Getty representative in 1993 for £1.15 million. It is believed to have been removed illegally from an ancient tomb in Macedonia (see: K. Grohmann, 'Former Getty curator charged with Greek art theft', *The Washington Post*, 21 November 2006). According to *Kathimerini* ('New antiquity charge filed', 22 November 2006), five people were involved in getting the artefact to the United States after it was discovered by a farmer in Serres in 1990: two Greeks in Munich, a Serbian, and an antiquities dealer in Switzerland.
- Marion True wrote to the J. Paul Getty Trust in December 2006 complaining that the J. Paul Getty Museum authorities have left her 'to carry the burden' of the case against the museum regarding its purchase of looted antiquities from Greece and Italy. She claims in the letter that her superiors were well aware of the risks associated with the purchases and approved all the acquisitions. The J. Paul Getty Museum is paying for True's defence against prosecutions in Italy and Greece, but has stopped short of saying she is innocent or has been wrongly charged (see: J. Felch & R. Frammolino, 'Getty lets her take the fall', *Los Angeles Times*, 29 December 2006).

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Illegal digging goes on in broad daylight around the village of Isar Marvinci, which is surrounded by remains dating back to the Bronze Age, according to a report in *Kathimerini* ('FYROM treasures looted', 3 January 2007). There is little danger of looters being caught, as there is no local police force and

resources are scarce and there are no laws against the collection and sale of antiquities. One looter told the newspaper that if he did not take artefacts then the next looter or visitor would take them. Coins are currently most sought after.

Local archaeologist, Goran Karapetkov told *The Economist* ('Looting history: a Balkan battle is on to save the past', 23 November 2006), that in October looters dug up a bronze figurine of Apollo and sold it for €20,000 to a Greek dealer. He despairs of doing anything about the situation because he believes that corrupt police and customs agents were involved.

Italy

- Omero Bardo, tombarolo-turned-creator of modern replicas, told the *New York Times* that recent high-profile criminal cases have decimated the illicit market in Italy. He is quoted as saying: 'No one is digging tombs anymore because no one is buying' (see: E. Povoledo, 'Entrepreneur in Etruscan knock-offs', *New York Times*, 17 August 2006).
- The Italian government has written to collector Shelby White requesting the return of more than 20 artefacts from the collection she amassed with her late husband Leon Levy. They claim the artefacts were illegally removed from Italy but do not suggest that the couple acted criminally in buying them. According to the *New York Times* (E. Povoledo, 'Top collector is asked to relinquish artifacts', 29 November 2006) the request is timed to coincide with the opening of the new Greek and Roman galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art, which are named after and were paid for by Levy and White and will display some of the their collection.
- A Roman statue and its head were returned to Italy in December 2006. The head (stolen in 1983 in Rome) was traced to an antiquities shop in Barcelona in 2005, while the headless body (stolen in 1986) was identified by Ital-

ian police in a Christie's auction catalogue in New York in 2002 (see: '2nd century statue and marble head stolen in 1980s returned to Italy from New York, Spain', *International Herald Tribune*, 12 December 2006).

- In September 2006, convicted Italian antiquities dealer Giacomo Medici offered to return a previously unknown ancient masterpiece which he refers to as 'Object X' in exchange for a reduction of his 10-year prison sentence and €10 million fine. Prosecutor Paolo Ferri said that he would rather lose Medici's masterpiece than get duped, fearing the offer is a bluff (see: V. Silver, 'Art smuggler offers Italy mystery masterpiece "X" to end trial', *Bloomberg.com*, 25 September 2006)

Terror funding

The Art and Antiques Unit, Scotland Yard, London, say that money from antiquities looted in the Middle East is definitely funding terrorists. Examples of faked 'Mesopotamian' art which have been confiscated in the UK were also shown at an exhibition of forged artwork seized by the Unit (M. Holden, 'Forged Iraq art used to fund terrorism', *Reuters*, 22 November, 2006).

Afghanistan

The Afghanistan Museum in Exile, founded in 1999 by Paul Bucherer-Diestschi to house artefacts saved during the conflict in Afghanistan, is to close and its collections will return to Kabul now that Unesco has deemed the situation to be safe (see: M. Bailey, 'Exiled antiquities returned to Afghanistan', *The Art Newspaper*, No. 174, November 2006).

Egypt

Archaeologists discovered a burial complex dating to the Old Kingdom when they carried

on digging a looter's hole at Saqqara after the thieves were caught. It appears to be the resting place of three Royal dentists.

Greece

In November, three men and a woman were arrested in Larissa, central Greece when they offered to sell an undercover policeman 170 illegally excavated antiquities for €200,000. The items are believed to have come from a Classical site near the village of Pelasgia (see: 'Arrests over antiquity stash', *Kathimerini*, 4 November 2006)

Iran

- Archaeologists have been carrying out a rescue dig at the Babajian mound in Lorestan Province after illegal excavations there. Looters have almost completely destroyed the previously uninvestigated cemetery site, which is believed to date to 1300 BC, and it is unclear if anything now remains (see: 'Smugglers entice archaeologists to excavate Babajian ancient mound', *Mehr News Agency*, 10 October 2006).
- Items which appear to be very like the type looted from Jiroft (also see: 'In the news', *CWC*, Issue 15 (Autumn 2004)) were offered for sale by Salander Decorative Arts of Manhattan. Managing director Diane Buckley told *The Art Newspaper* that they had no idea the pieces might be a problem, and that they were from a private collection in New York, but refused to name the collector (see: J. E. Kaufman, 'Were these objects looted from Iran', No. 175, December 2006).

Libya

Giama Anag, director of Libya's Bureau of Antiquities, says that looting is a big problem in the country and that it is difficult to esti-

mate the extent of the loss. In an interview with *Archaeology* magazine (Conversations: 'Saved by sand, the challenge of preservation in Libya', Volume 59, Number 6, November/December 2006) he refers to the case of the Castiglione brothers, found guilty of theft in 1983, and a statue of Hades from Cyrene retrieved from an auction in Maastricht. He would like to see increased policing of sites and museums, and cultural property treaties with the USA and other nations to act as disincentives.



Zimbabwe museum theft

Objects stolen from the Zimbabwe National Gallery in Harare in June 2006 were recovered when offered for sale to an American collector/dealer by a seller in Poland. Recognizing the pieces, the collector contacted Ton Cremers, director of the Museum Security Network, who had published photographs of the stolen pieces shortly after the theft. Polish police confiscated the objects and the thief has now been arrested thanks to the efforts of international authorities (see: 'Ethnographic objects stolen in National Gallery Harare, Zimbabwe, June 2006 all recovered in Poland', Museum Security Network, 11 December 2006, <http://msn-list.te.verweg.com/2006-December/006493.html>).



India

- In September 2006 thieves broke into Patna Museum and stole at least 17 extremely rare statues of Buddha and Mahavir from the first floor. They used a bamboo ladder to scale the building and police were not ruling out the possibility that the heist was an inside job. The robbery followed the theft of objects found during excavations at Muzaffarpur, Bodhi Gaya and Darbhanga three months earlier, which highlighted the lack of security at the museum (see: P.K. Chaudhary, 'Museum did not heed warnings', *The Times of India*, 26 September 2006). The

border with Nepal was sealed following the theft with every person crossing the border from either side being checked (see: 'Bihar-Nepal border sealed following museum heist', *Patna Daily*, 27 September 2006).

- In an undercover operation in Benares, Uttar Pradesh, India, police arrested five suspects for allegedly trying to sell a stolen idol (see: 'Priceless Indian statue recovered', BBC News, 10 October 2006). The statue, of Buddha sitting in meditation, was stolen during a break in at Patna Museum (see: 'In the news', *CWC*, Issue 18 (Spring 2006)).
- Police in the state of Bihar have set up a special force, led by 25 specially trained officers, to tackle increased theft and smuggling of Buddhist antiquities. More than 3600 have been smuggled out of the state in the last year. Criminal gangs there have taken advantage of lack of law and order and poor policing of the border with Nepal (see: B. Majumdar, 'India to curb smuggling of Buddhist relics', *New Scotsman*, 17 October 2006).
- The temple-rich states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu are suffering most from looting by antiquities smugglers, according to *The Times of India* (see: M. Pandey, 'Latest theft only the tip of an iceberg', 28 September 2006). The recovery rate is low, with artefacts recovered in only 14 of the 44 theft cases recorded in the last five years (32 of which occurred in the last three years alone).
- *December 2006*: Six ancient Bihar statues, seized at Heathrow airport in August 2005, were returned to Indian authorities at a ceremony in London. They weighed 172 kg and were estimated to be worth £3000–£5000 each (see: P. Sonwalkar, 'India gets back antique statues seized in Britain', *Telugu Portal*, 14 December 2006).
- *December 2006*: Following a tip-off, Crime Branch officials in Delhi arrested Manoj

Soni, a goldsmith from Humayunpur for trying to sell an ancient ashtadhatu Majavira statue near the Shri Ram Institute in Maurice Nagar (see: 'Police seek help from archaeologist to track Jain statue mystery', *Delhi Newslite, Express India*, 5 December 2006).

Switzerland

- *October 2006*: The Italian and Swiss governments signed an agreement to combat smuggling of antiquities across the border. Importers will now have to show customs officials in both countries evidence proving an artefact's origin and lawful export.
- *December 2006*: The Peruvian and Swiss governments signed a bi-lateral agreement to combat trafficking in stolen Peruvian antiquities.

Cambodia

- *October 2006*: Australian tourist Steven Doyle was arrested for stealing three Angkor stone sculptures after a tip-off to police from hotel staff. When it emerged that he had purchased the small carvings, he was charged with attempting to take culturally-significant artefacts out of the country without authorization and ordered to pay \$A1345. Doyle said he did not know it was illegal to take such items out of the country.
- *September 2006*: Sometime after midnight one night during the week-long Festival of The Dead celebrations thieves broke into the Wat Botum Vatey pagoda and stole a 70 kg statue of sitting Buddha. The statue was on full display in the main area of worship during the day, but locked away at night. Police have no leads so far but believe more than one person must have been involved because of the weight of the statue, and fear that the piece will be smuggled across the border for sale on the art market.

Romania

In November 2006 it was announced that an exceptionally rare gold Dacian bracelet, noticed on the Ariadne Gallery (New York) stand at the Paris Grand Palais Biennial Exhibition in September, would be returned to Romania and displayed in the Treasury Hall at the National History Museum (the only Romanian institution with suitable security). It is believed to have been stolen from the Sarmisegetuza Regia archaeological site in the Orastiei Mountains and has been valued at €1.5 million. The item will still be presented as evidence in a pending lawsuit.

Croatia

All the artefacts stolen during a break-in at the archaeology museum of Vinkovci in eastern Croatia have been recovered. The thief was arrested in Vinkovci with the six kilo collection of ancient gold in September, days after the theft. He had no idea of the value of the items (which included pre-Roman and Roman coins and a 5000-year-old medallion that had been kept in the museum safe for security reasons) and was offering them for sale for only €300 (see: Croatian police nab thief of priceless gold collection, *Deutsche Press Agentur*, 20 September 2006).

Palestine and Israel

The leader of the Bedouin village of Herodian tells the *Boston Globe* of the villagers' expeditions into the Judean hills with sleeping bags and tools to rob ancient tombs. They are driven by necessity in the face of the deteriorating economic situation in Palestine. He displays a table full of artefacts and explains that he has become expert in recognizing archaeological artefacts, and how items are sold to dealers in Bethlehem and Jerusalem and the proceeds shared in the village. The most valuable thing found was a Bar Kochba era coin,

sold for \$15,000 — usually \$300–\$400 is the maximum price realized for an item, and then only a couple of times a month (see: M. Kalman, ‘Tomb-raiding tradition thriving in West Bank’, 31 December 2006).

Jordan

An attempt to smuggle antiquities over the border at Al Omari in a secret compartment in a truck was foiled by Jordanian Customs officials in December (see: Jordan News Agency, 27 December 2006).

Nigeria

In a report by the *Daily Sun*, Nigeria (‘Nok, Nok, who’s there?’, 30 November 2006), Mr Gang Chai Mang, head of Nok station of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) said that there are only three security personnel to watch over 10 archaeological sites, numerous cave sites and a gallery of artefacts, which are spread over a very wide area. He says they have been lucky at the Nok museum in that they have experienced no thefts to date. It is hoped that changes in directorship of the NCMM may speed up plans drawn up by the Kaduna State Tourism Board to build new facilities and fulfil tourist potential in the area.

Algeria

During the first 11 months of 2006, Algerian customs officials seized 947 archaeological artefacts found in tourists’ luggage at Tiska airport in Djanet (Sahara desert). They were from the site of Tassili n’Ajjer and returned to Djanet museum (see: ‘Almost 1,000 artifacts seized at Algerian airport’, *Middle East Times*, 20 December 2006).

Sevso silver

The controversial Sevso Treasure, which was the subject of a lawsuit in the 1990s, was displayed at a private exhibition at Bonhams auction house in London in October 2006 (see: M. Bailey, ‘Bonhams to show Sevso silver’, *The Art Newspaper*, No. 173, October 2006). Bonhams now suggest that earlier legal obstacles preventing the sale of the Roman silver hoard have been resolved — even though it had assured *The Art Newspaper* in September that they had no plans to sell the treasure on behalf of the owner, the Marquess of Northampton. Bonhams now says it might (see: M. Bailey, ‘Bonhams U-turn on Sevso silver’, *The Art Newspaper*, No. 174, November 2006). Lawyers acting on behalf of Hungary, which claims the treasure, wrote to Bonhams and the Marquess highlighting their claim, which Ludovic de Walden, lawyer for the Marquess, says was dismissed in the New York court case.

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The lost, found, lost again and found again Gospel of Judas

A review of:

***The Secrets of Judas* by James M. Robinson**
(New York, HarperSanFrancisco,
ISBN-13 978-0-06-117063-8).

***The Gospel of Judas*, edited by Rodolphe
Kasser, Marvin Meyer & Gregor Wurst**
(Washington DC, National Geographic,
ISBN-13 978-1-4262-0042-7).

***The Lost Gospel*, by Herbert Krosney**
(Washington DC, National Geographic,
ISBN-13 978-1-4262-0041-0).

NEIL BRODIE

On 6 April 2006 the National Geographic Society announced that a project funded by the National Geographic and the Waitt Institute for Historical Discovery in collaboration with the Maecenas Foundation for Ancient Art had restored and translated a previously unseen Gospel of Judas. The Gospel was discovered in Egypt and ultimately it will be donated to the Coptic Museum in Cairo. It was featured in the April 2006 issue of the *National Geographic* magazine and in a National Geographic television documentary programme that is now available

on DVD. It also forms the subject matter of two National Geographic books that are reviewed here, one authored by Krosney and the other edited by Kasser *et al.* The third book under review is by James Robinson of Claremont Graduate University, who has known about the existence of the Judas Gospel since 1983 and who has now written his own account of the events leading up to the Gospel's publication.

These three books have much to say that is of theological interest, but between them they also cast a great deal of light on the trading history of the Gospel, which stretches back to the 1970s or earlier, when it was discovered in Egypt. The amount of provenance-related information published is unusual for what would normally be considered an 'unprovenanced' antiquity, and offers a good opportunity to consider the organization and operation of the underground trade in ancient manuscripts, as well as the actions and motivations of the people involved.

The books agree in outline about the sequence of events leading up to the National Geographic project, though there are some interesting differences of opinion about key issues. None of the authors can be considered an unbiased commentator. The Krosney and Kasser books are published by National Geographic and are clearly intended by National Geographic to constitute the authorized accounts of the Gospel's discovery and publication, Krosney up to the year 2001, Kasser after that date. Robinson had himself tried but failed over many years to secure access to the

Gospel, and so his book provides a more sceptical account of events and of the main protagonists. His Preface sets the tone when he says that his narration is not expurgated, sanitized, cleaned up to make it an appetizing story. What has gone on in this money-making venture is not a pleasant story — about how all this has been sprung upon us, the reading and viewing public — and you have a right to know what has gone on (p. vii).

The books also make use of different primary sources. Krosney's role as official chronicler seems to have afforded him access to several people who had come into contact with the Gospel while it was still on the market, and he relies particularly on the testimony of Mario Roberty and Frieda Tchacos-Nussberger, principles of the Maecenas Foundation and present owners of the Gospel. By contrast, for his commercial information, Robinson draws upon the website of Michel van Rijn,¹ and he was provided with information by many of his academic colleagues that was not available to Krosney.

The Gospel of Judas is a third- or fourth-century AD Coptic translation of a Greek original composed in the second century AD, one of four Coptic texts found together in leather-bound papyrus codex. The codex is not intact but what survives comprises:

Pages 1–9, Letter of Peter to Philip, also known from Nag Hammadi Codex VIII;

Pages 10–32, 'James', a version of a text known from Nag Hammadi Codex V;

Pages 33–58, Gospel of Judas, text previously unknown;

Pages 59–66, Book of Allogenes (provisional title), previously unknown.

(Kasser p. 49).

The discovery of the codex

Krosney's account of the discovery of the codex leans heavily on the testimony of an Alexandrian art dealer, hiding behind the pseudonym Joanna Landis, who claims to have been taken to the place of discovery in 1978 by a friend of the finder. The finder is now dead, but in 2005 Landis obtained more information over the telephone from another of the finder's friends. The story goes that the codex was discovered sometime during the middle to late 1970s inside a white limestone sarcophagus that had been deposited in a still uninvestigated catacomb in the Jebel

Qarara on the east bank of the Nile in Al Minya province. Along with the sarcophagus were two caskets, also containing texts, and found with the codex inside the sarcophagus were a human skeleton and some Roman glass flasks. Different accounts of the discovery stem from dealer Hanna who subsequently bought the codex. Ultimately, however, any report of the codex's discovery is hearsay. None have been and perhaps cannot be corroborated — at this distance in time they are best discounted.

The provenance of the codex 1980–1999

By 1980, the codex had reached the hands of a Cairo-based antiquities dealer, identified in Krosney's book by the pseudonym Hanna Asabil, by Robinson as Hanna, and henceforth here as Hanna. Kasser (p. 51) thinks that Hanna would not have realized the significance of the codex and must have been alerted to its value by European papyrologists. Krosney concurs, reporting that Ludwig Koenen of the University of Cologne and, after 1975, the University of Michigan was an active buyer in the 1960s and 70s and 'opened the eyes of the dealers' to the value of ancient papyri (p. 40), but that it was probably the papyrologist Manfredo Manfredi of the University of Florence who suggested to Hanna it might be worth \$3 million (p. 41).

In March 1980, Hanna gathered his stock together in his apartment in readiness for a visit by a female friend of the Greek antiquities dealer Nikolas Koutoulakis. Known familiarly as Mia or Effie, she introduced some customers who agreed to buy Hanna's entire stock before leaving to fetch their money, which they said was on their yacht in Alexandria. They never returned. The next day Hanna's apartment was burgled and his entire stock, including the Coptic codex and some other papyrus manuscripts, written in Greek, was stolen.

Not surprisingly, Hanna suspected a Greek connection, and in 1981, 18 months after the burglary, he turned to Athenian art collector and occasional dealer Yannis Perdios for help in recovering the stolen material. Perdios persuaded Koutoulakis and Mia to meet with Hanna in Cairo, though the meeting proved inconclusive. In 1982, Hanna, Perdios and Koutoulakis met again, this time in Geneva. Koutoulakis told

Hanna that he had come into possession of the stolen papyrus manuscripts, including the codex, and would return them, but nothing else that had been stolen.² Hanna, with no real options to do otherwise, accepted the offer. He then deposited the codex in a safe deposit box in a Geneva bank, and together with Perdios proceeded to look for a buyer. Perdios sent photographs of the material to several potential purchasers, including Koenen, and also gave some photographs to the antiquities dealer Frieda Tchacos-Nussberger (henceforth Tchacos) whom he visited at her Zurich Galerie Nefer. The identity of the person who burgled Hanna's apartment, or of the person who initiated the theft, remains unknown.

From this point on, the provenance of the Judas Gospel becomes more secure. Koenen wanted to inspect Hanna's papyrus manuscripts with a view to purchase. He came to Geneva with two Michigan colleagues (David Noel Freedman and Astrid Beck), where they were joined by Stephen Emmel, then of Yale University, who had been nominated to attend by James Robinson. The Michigan contingent was interested in buying the Greek papyri, while Emmel was authorized to buy the Coptic codex. Between them, they had something like \$150,000 available for purchase. The meeting took place on 15 May 1983, but Hanna's asking price of \$3 million was more than the visiting academics could afford. The meeting broke up and the codex was returned to the bank vault. Soon afterwards, Emmel wrote down what he recalled seeing of the manuscripts on offer, and sent his memorandum to Robinson. The memorandum's contents were not made public at the time because Robinson and Emmel did not want the vendors to discover the significance of the material on offer and so increase its price. Robinson did, however, communicate some of the memorandum's content to various colleagues, including Hans-Gebhard Bethge (then at Berlin's Humboldt University) and Marvin Meyer (then a student of Robinson), who both made early mentions of the codex in their academic publications.

Emmel's memorandum is the earliest reliable account of the composition and condition of Hanna's papyri, including the codex, and in his book Robinson publishes it for the first time (pp. 117–20) and discusses its content in some detail. Emmel recorded three boxes containing papyri,

which comprised a mathematical treatise and a Book of Exodus, both in Greek, a Coptic manuscript Letters of Paul, and a Coptic codex with its back cover missing. The codex contained the First Apocalypse of James and the Letter of Peter to Philip, both texts already known to scholars, and a third, previously unknown text. He thought there were also possibly the remains of a second Coptic codex. Emmel counted page numbers in the codex up to 60, and he suspected that the back part of the codex might have been missing along with its back cover.

After the intended Geneva transaction had fallen through, in 1984 Hanna took the codex to the United States to look for a better market. He had good contacts in the Coptic community of New Jersey, who arranged a meeting for him with the Manhattan book dealer Hans P. Kraus, but again no sale was agreed. A second meeting between Kraus and Hanna was arranged for 27 March 1984 in the Columbia University office of Classicist Roger Bagnall. Bagnall later told Krosney that he had recognized the codex texts as 'Nag Hammadi' (p. 149), but at that time the Gospel of Judas had still not been identified. Again, however, the asking price was too high. Disillusioned, Hanna placed the codex in a safe deposit box at Citibank in Hicksville, Long Island, and returned home to Cairo.

The codex was to remain undisturbed in its box for 16 years. During that time, Robinson, who was in receipt of Emmel's report and of some photographs he had been sent by Koenen, had found a possible buyer for the codex in the person of Norwegian collector Martin Schøyen. Robinson also in 1990 made contact with Perdios in Athens. Between them they arranged that Perdios, Hanna, Robinson and Schøyen should meet in New York in January 1991 to discuss a possible sale, but the meeting was cancelled when Hanna refused to leave Egypt in the run-up to the 1991 Gulf War. Robinson didn't give up there. Krosney records that in 1994 Schøyen visited Robinson in Claremont, and in August the same year Robinson travelled to Norway to view Schøyen's collection. Schøyen subsequently bought 10 Dead Sea Scroll fragments 'that were housed at Claremont', each containing one letter, for \$50,000, and Krosney goes on to make the alarming allegation that Robinson personally transported the fragments

from Claremont to Norway, carrying them in a pouch around his neck to avoid attracting the attention of either US or Norwegian customs (p. 161). Not surprisingly perhaps, Robinson makes no mention of this escapade in his own account of events. In 1997 Robinson again made contact with Perdios, but nothing came of it.

The provenance of the codex 2000–2004

After meeting with Perdios at her Zurich gallery in 1982, Tchacos had contacted the J. Paul Getty Museum curator Jiri Frel about a possible sale, who had in turn put her in touch with PhD student Roy Kotansky at the University of Chicago's Divinity School, though there does not appear to have been any follow up. Seventeen years later, in 1999, she received a phone call from a Greek person offering her a manuscript. She asked for photographs, which she then sent for identification to Robert Babcock, curator at the Beinecke Library at Yale University. Babcock advised that the manuscript most likely comprised pages taken from the Coptic codex recorded by Emmel in Geneva. Tchacos subsequently bought them. The photographs supplied to Tchacos had been taken against the background of a Greek newspaper dated to 21 October 1982, and she thinks the Greek seller was most probably Mia.

Tchacos remembered the visit of Perdios 16 years earlier. She had done business with Hanna since the 1970s, and in late 1999 during a visit to Egypt she made contact with him, and managed to persuade him to meet her in New York where she would buy the papyri. The purchase was agreed on 4 April 2000 for a price said by Tchacos to have been in the neighbourhood of \$300,000 (Cockburn 2006, 93). Unfortunately, the papyri had deteriorated badly during their 16-year sojourn in the safe deposit box, and were clearly in need of expert attention. Tchacos deposited them with Babcock at Yale, where they were also examined by Bentley Layton and Harry Attridge, both also of Yale. Layton became the first person to recognize that one of the previously unknown Coptic texts in the codex was in fact the Gospel of Judas. By August 2000, however, Yale's lawyers had vetoed the purchase of the codex because of its uncertain provenance, and it was returned to Tchacos.

According to Krosney (p. 211), the London-

based dealer Bill Veres had visited Tchacos in Zurich in June 2000 and suggested that the manuscript dealer Bruce Ferrini of Akron, Ohio might be a potential buyer. Veres had been introduced to Ferrini by a curator of ancient coins at Oxford's Ashmolean Museum. Tchacos contacted Ferrini, and after retrieving the papyri from Yale, she travelled to Akron where they agreed a sale on 8 September 2000. The price was \$2.5 million, and in return for the papyri Ferrini handed over two post-dated cheques for \$1.25 million each, one dated to 15 January 2001 and the other to 15 February 2001. Robinson quotes from the sales contract, which was subsequently posted by van Rijn on his website.

Ferrini's backer was US businessman James Ferrell, who arrived in Akron a few days later. However, by that time, Ferrell had lost faith in Ferrini and decided against buying the papyri. It is said that Ferrini had deep frozen the manuscripts to help separate the pages. On 11 September 2001 Ferrini offered them to Schøyen, but Schøyen's valuation of \$986,000 fell far short of Ferrini's requirements. Krosney (p. 215) suggests that Ferrini was in financial trouble, and Tchacos was worried that he might fail to honour the cheques. Ferrini himself has claimed that he pulled out of the deal because he didn't believe Tchacos's account of provenance (Schutten 2005). In December 2000 Tchacos and her lawyer Mario Roberty met with Ferrini and his lawyer Eric Kaufman in New York. Roberty had already spoken to Ferrini in October 2000 about the possibility of a charitable foundation to conserve and exploit the codex, and at the December meeting the idea was explored further through the concept of the 'Logos Project'.

According to Krosney (pp. 211–13), the idea of a foundation set up to conserve, publish and exploit the commercial content of the manuscripts occurred first to Ferrini and Veres, in autumn 2000. The plan was to put together teams that would perform the necessary scholarly work, another team 'to Do Film Journalism', while Ferrini and a friend would 'Sensationalize and Romanticize'. In a memorandum dating to 15 December 2000 quoted in part by Krosney, and more extensively by Robinson from a copy that is available on van Rijn's website, Roberty built on their idea and outlined to Kaufman plans for a

proposed Logos Project, which would be a charitable trust under Swiss law. Ferrini would pay Tchacos \$300,000 for the mathematical treatise and the Letters of Paul, he would return the codex and the Book of Exodus to Tchacos (in exchange for his cheques), Tchacos would then transfer the manuscripts to the Logos Project in return for 80 per cent of the Project's future income from commercialization. Ferrini was offered the option of buying into the Project for \$1,100,000 in exchange for half of Tchacos's rights to any future revenues. The purpose of the Logos Project would be to:

... save and publish the Gospel of Judas and other related manuscripts for the benefit of historical truth and to generate the funds necessary for this task as well as for the compensation of the expenses and efforts incurred by the promoters, leaving them with a decent profit.

Ferrini could not have been too keen on the idea of collaboration, because Roberty decided to involve Michel van Rijn as a means of bringing pressure to bear on him. Van Rijn maintains a widely-read and scurrilous website on which he reports and passes opinion on the illegal art and antiquities trades. On 27 January 2001, he announced to the world that Ferrini was in possession of a papyrus codex containing the Gospel of Judas, that Tchacos had set up a public foundation to arrange for its receipt, but that Ferrini was trying to sell it to Japan. He also hinted of legal proceedings and criminal prosecutions. This web posting seems to be the first public announcement of the existence of the Judas Gospel. Robinson suggests, from reading an e-mail sent by Roberty to van Rijn that was available on van Rijn's website, that Roberty had actually written the text for this posting (Robinson p. 135). If he is right, then Roberty was directly responsible for leaking news about the Gospel. Roberty was later to admit that 'deploying van Rijn worked' (Cockburn 2006, 95), a surprising admission perhaps for a practising lawyer, but he was right, and within a month the codex was back in the possession of Tchacos.

On 16 February 2001 at Akron, Ferrini paid Tchacos \$100,000 for the Greek mathematical treatise and returned to her the remaining papyri, including the codex. Krosney (p. 228) states that it was on the flight home to Switzerland that Roberty persuaded Tchacos to hand over the papyri to

his Maecenas Foundation for Ancient Art, though van Rijn's web posting of 27 January 2001 had already mentioned the existence of a 'public foundation'. Kasser says that the Maecenas Foundation was founded by Roberty in 1994 (p. 55) and according to Krosney it has 'participated actively in supporting several archaeological digs in Egypt, safekeeping the archaeological collection of the Republic of Tajikistan, and cooperating in other archaeological projects in the various countries of the former Soviet Union as well as China' (pp. 228–9). Robinson suggests otherwise — that the only purpose of the Maecenas Foundation is 'to commercialize The Gospel of Judas and other less sensational texts' (p. 139). His view is shared by Ted Waitt, who ultimately provided financial support for the National Geographic project (see below), and who has been quoted as saying that the 'foundation is just a vehicle for Mario Roberty and Frieda Tchacos ... to make money' (Bell 2006). On 19 February 2001 the codex was imported into Switzerland as the property of the Maecenas Foundation. Roberty has been quoted as saying that in exchange for the codex he paid Tchacos \$1.5 million and half of any proceeds that might accrue from its commercialization, and that he put \$1 million into the initial work of restoration (Gugliotta & Cooperman 2006). This transaction has been confirmed by Tchacos (Felch & Frammolino 2006).

Ferrini subsequently separated the Greek mathematical treatise into two parts. One part he sold to an unnamed US collector through the mediation of London dealer Sam Fogg. It is being studied by Alexander Jones of the University of Toronto together with Columbia's Roger Bagnall. The second part (of three pages) he sold to US collector Lloyd Cotsen, who deposited it in the University of Princeton's archives, where it was recognized by Jones. Ferrini filed for bankruptcy on 15 September 2005.

Ferrini also involved Charles Hedrick of Southwest Missouri State University. Hedrick occasionally identified material for Ferrini, and in late 2000 Ferrini sent him nearly 200 digital images and photographs of the codex and associated papyri. Hedrick circulated these images and his own transcriptions of the texts to several of his colleagues, including Robinson. Tchacos and Roberty were alarmed by the prospect of Hedrick

publishing a full translation of the Gospel before their own plans were fully mature because, according to Krosney, a pre-emptive publication would lead to 'misinterpretation or inaccurate speculation' (p. 252), or, according to Robinson, it might threaten their chances of 'of making big money from sensationalizing the text' (p. 144). Ferrini's despatch of photographs was in breach of his agreement with Tchacos, by which he was obliged to return all photographs and images of the papyri to Tchacos along with the material itself. When they became aware of Hedrick's photographs, Tchacos and Roberty contacted him through a Cleveland law firm. Hedrick replied that he held the material legally and in June 2002 he gave first notice in the academic literature of the existence of the Judas Gospel in *Bible Review* (Robinson p. 131). Hedrick had transcribed and translated pages 40 and 54–62 of the codex.

On 24 July 2001, Roberty and Tchacos met Coptologist Rodolphe Kasser of the University of Geneva at a cafe in Zurich to show him the codex and to explain their plans for its restoration, publication and eventual return to the Coptic Museum, and a follow-up meeting in September included Florence Darbre, chief restorer from the Bibliothèque Bodmer. After this second meeting, the manuscripts were deposited with Kasser and Darbre for restoration, conservation and study. For three years they worked on the material and were joined by Martin Krause, formerly of the University of Münster, who was later succeeded by Gregor Wurst, also of Münster.

On 1 July 2004, Kasser, speaking at the Eight International Congress of the International Association for Coptic Studies in Paris, announced the existence of a previously unseen Gnostic Gospel of Judas. He said that restoration work was being supported by an anonymous Swiss foundation and the intention was that the codex would be returned to Egypt.

The National Geographic project

Krosney first heard about the Gospel of Judas in autumn 2000 from a client of Ferrini, and by June 2004 he had tracked it down to Switzerland. He approached the National Geographic Society about publication opportunities and must have convinced them because on 5 December 2004 a team assembled by the National Geographic met at Nyon

in Switzerland with Kasser, Darbre, Tchacos and Roberty. The National Geographic team comprised Bart Ehrman of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, radiocarbon specialist Timothy Jull of the University of Arizona, and Stephen Emmel; they were joined by John Huebesch of the Waitt Institute for Historic Discovery.

Van Rijn must have had notice of this meeting, presumably from Roberty, as he had already announced on his website on 3 December 2004 that the National Geographic were going to film the Gospel. He had also mounted a photograph of the final page of the Judas Gospel together with Hedrick's translation of the text. Robinson thinks this was the first public mention of National Geographic involvement, but that at the time it attracted little attention (pp. 161–2). On 31 March 2005 van Rijn published photographs of three pages of the Allogenes text, together with transcriptions and translations by Hedrick. In November 2005 Robinson was contacted by the journalist Patrick-Jean Baptiste, who told him that National Geographic planned three books as well as magazine articles and television programmes. Robinson was able to reveal these plans on 20 November at the Society of Biblical Literature meeting in Philadelphia. Baptiste himself published in the January 2006 issue of *Sciences et Avenir*.

After National Geographic's 2006 launch, it was reported in the press that in 2005 the National Geographic had indeed bought the publication rights for the contents of the Judas Gospel with \$1 million donated by the Waitt Institute (Gugliotta & Cooperman 2006). The full financial details of the arrangement have not been made public, though a spokesman told the *Washington Post* that Maecenas would receive 'some compensation' from book sales (Gugliotta & Cooperman 2006).

The deterioration of the codex since its discovery

The extent of deterioration of the codex since its discovery can be assessed from the expert albeit limited examination of Emmel in 1983 (Robinson pp. 117–20), and the more thorough report on the present condition of the codex produced by Kasser and his team. Emmel thought that the codex had probably been discovered intact. He noted that the front leather cover of the codex

was present, but that the back cover, with part of what is now known to be the fourth text, had probably disappeared since discovery. There were between 54 and 56 pages. By the time Emmel saw the codex it had been divided into two parts by a horizontal break, so that all pages were represented by a smaller upper part (containing page numbers but not much text) and a larger lower part (containing the major part of the text). Already by 1983 these page parts had been 'shuffled' — Kasser (p. 55) has recognized that one of the 'pages' on a photograph sent to Tchacos at that time was actually a composite of two pieces from different pages.

Kasser was clearly shocked by the condition of the codex when he first saw it on 24 July 2001. He writes about the codex 'so precious but so badly mistreated, broken up to the extreme, partially pulverized, infinitely fragile, crumbling at the least contact' (pp. 47–8). His 2006 assessment was that 66 pages survive, containing the first three texts including the Gospel of Judas, but that the fourth text, the provisionally named and previously unknown Book of Allogenes, bound last in the codex, has been badly damaged and lost a number of its pages. The width of the horizontal break has been increased to between one and two centimetres by further fragmentation and crumbling. Emmel thinks this has happened since his 1983 examination (Kasser p. 57). In all, Kasser thinks that between 10–15 per cent of the codex has disappeared.

Not surprisingly, Kasser is highly critical of Ferrini's reported freezing (pp. 60–61), explaining the physical damage that would ensue. He is also critical of the practice of dealers to break open manuscripts for photography (p. 69). His impression is that the pages of the codex were 'shuffled about to optimize its commercial appeal' (p. 70), and he concludes from the photographs sent to Hedrick that Ferrini must have forcibly opened the codex in several places (p. 74). For his part, Ferrini claims that when returning the codex to Tchacos because of its dubious provenance, one of the recipients slammed it on to a table and tiny pieces flew off. Hedrick, who reported this incident to Robinson, does not think that Tchacos would have damaged her merchandise in such a fashion, though Robinson himself is not so sure (p. 148).

When receiving the codex back from Ferrini,

Tchacos had not properly checked that it was complete. Indeed, given its poor state of preservation at the time, a thorough check would probably have been impossible. On 12 March 2001 an 'Ivy League papyrologist' 'who had once examined the codex in some depth'³ (Krosney pp. 231–2) examined the recovered material in Switzerland and pronounced that several pages were missing. Nothing more was heard about the missing pages until November 2004 when Tchacos learned from Veres that Ferrini had probably sold some individual pages of the codex before returning it. In January 2006 two pieces of the Gospel (the lower parts of codex pages 37 & 38) were returned by an unnamed New York collector who had acquired them from Ferrini. In April 2006 more papyrus fragments that might be from the Gospel turned up in the hands of Ferrini's receiver (Kropko 2006). Kasser thinks that some pieces of the codex are still missing, including the upper part of page 31 and lower part of page 32, with the final title of 'James'. He has identified a possible composite of these two pieces in the catalogue of a travelling religious exhibition in the United States, though has not named the exhibition (p. 71).

The apotheosis of Frieda Tchacos-Nussberger

For her part in acquiring the codex the National Geographic seems keen to cast Tchacos in the role of saviour, a role which Tchacos herself seems quite comfortable with. She has been quoted as saying 'I think I was chosen by Judas to rehabilitate him, I think the circumstance of this manuscript coming to me was predestined' (Felch & Frammolino 2006), and 'I wanted to protect them and give them to people who could read them and conserve them. I wanted to save them.' (Krosney p. 157). Krosney's own opinion is made clear in his Acknowledgements where he thanks Roberty and Tchacos for 'trying to rescue an historical artefact from the darkness to which it had been condemned' (p. 308). Fundamental to her apparent apotheosis are her responsibility in ensuring that the codex was properly restored and her charity in returning it to Egypt. But are these true depictions of her actions and motives? Tchacos, it must be remembered, sold the codex to Ferrini, a person she hardly knew, in the hope of making a quick \$2 million profit, and Fer-

rini's rough handling has in turn been blamed for causing the codex unnecessary damage. Perhaps Tchacos should shoulder some of that blame for not being properly diligent in ascertaining the expertise and motives of her customer? It is also far from clear that her decision to return the codex to Egypt was a voluntary one. The first mention of Egyptian involvement is in the memorandum Roberty sent to Kaufman on 15 December 2000, so the decision must have been made after that date but before the July 2001 meeting with Kasser. Krosney suggests that it was made on the flight home to Switzerland. The relevant paragraph in the December 2000 memorandum makes for interesting reading:

Depending on the conclusions we will reach regarding Frieda's title to the manuscripts, we will decide on the further steps to be taken with regard to the legal protection of the Project, including — if necessary — notification to the Egyptian authorities.

This paragraph suggests that the decision to return the Gospel to Egypt might not have been a voluntary one after all, but a pragmatic response to potential dangers posed by the questionable legality of the codex's provenance. It is important to remember that in early 2001 a police investigation was under way into the activities of US antiquities dealer Frederick Schultz, and in July 2001 he was charged in New York with handling archaeological material stolen from Egypt. The antiquities restorer Jonathan Tokeley-Parry had been convicted only a few years earlier in 1997 of a similar offence. Tokeley-Parry and Schultz must have been known to Tchacos,⁴ and perhaps she drew the sensible conclusion that the time was not a propitious one to be caught holding an Egyptian antiquity of uncertain provenance, and so decided to offer its return. Roberty himself said as much in the memorandum:

From a first risk analysis we have concluded that the US are to be considered a potentially risky territory for the manuscripts due to political considerations possibly taking precedence over pure legal aspects, especially when involving application of principles of foreign law.

This sounds like a direct reference to Schultz, whose prosecution was opposed by the trade community on the very grounds that Roberty mentions.

In any event, and despite protestations to the contrary, her actions have hardly been borne out of a charitable impulse — she has in fact made

quite a profit. She bought the codex and its associated papyri for something like \$300,000 and recouped \$100,000 when she sold the mathematical treatise to Ferrini; she then made a further \$1.5 million from the subsequent sale of the codex to Roberty. Thus at the present time she has made more than \$1 million out of the codex, and stands to make more from the various National Geographic ventures.

Roberty and Tchacos had taken the decision to return the codex to Egypt several years before the National Geographic became involved in 2004. But by then there was another problem. It has been widely reported that in February 2002 Tchacos had been arrested in Cyprus and placed under house arrest pending interrogation by the Italian authorities. On 17 September 2002 she was convicted of handling stolen artefacts. It hardly seems likely that the National Geographic would want to enter into a commercial arrangement with a convicted dealer, though when challenged on the point, the National Geographic stated that it could find no evidence of a conviction (Felch & Frammolino 2006), and Tchacos herself has denied the conviction, calling the situation 'equivocal' (Felch & Frammolino 2006). However, an Italian state prosecutor has confirmed the conviction (Meier & Wilford 2006), and told the *Los Angeles Times* that 'In the past, she was at the center of the looting in Italy'. Two of the artefacts Italy is reclaiming from the J.P. Getty Museum were sold to the museum by Tchacos. A third piece the museum had bought from Tchacos was returned to Italy in 1999 after it was discovered to have been stolen (Felch & Frammolino 2006).

Clearly, for the National Geographic to proceed with the collaboration, it would want to reassure the public that Tchacos's business practices were above reproach. From the positive and sympathetic way in which she is portrayed in the two National Geographic-authorized books, particularly the one by Krosney, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the National Geographic deliberately set out to rehabilitate Tchacos by casting her in the role of altruistic saviour. This much is clear from the quotes discussed earlier, but also from the sympathetic treatment accorded to her by Krosney.

Krosney refers to Tchacos routinely throughout his book by her first name Frieda, while calling everyone else by their second names (including

the only other significant female protagonist Florence Darbre). The constant references to 'Frieda' evoke in the reader a feeling of familiarity, and ultimately sympathy, which is reinforced by the empathetic reporting some of Tchacos's actions and recollections. In 2000, for example, Krosney says she arrived at New York 'feeling nervous, all alone' (p. 206). When faced with the costs of restoration she says 'How can I, little Frieda, do this job?' (p. 206). She describes the Akron recovery meeting as follows:

Never in my career had I had to undergo such a restitution with litigations and legal representatives all around me. ... I was mortified to the bone ... Everybody looked at me inquisitively ... I nodded sheepishly (p. 224).

Whether calculated or not, this authorial brushwork conjures a cultural stereotype: the caring and sensitive woman adrift in the hard-nosed commercial world of men. Yet this depiction of Tchacos may be far from accurate. She had, after all, for more than thirty years made a successful career out of trading antiquities, she is fluent in several languages and regularly travels around the world. When first introducing Tchacos in his book, at a time before she had become involved with the codex, Krosney describes her as 'tough and temperamental' (p. 37), and says that 'Dealers are a tough breed, and few women have made it into the ranks of the elite' (p. 66). He sees her to have been a credible rival to the Greek dealer Koutoulakis, whom he describes in turn as a tough fighter (p. 69) and one who 'was unparalleled in his ability to trade advantageously' (p. 68). Would this tough rival to Koutoulakis, this successful and cosmopolitan businesswoman, really be nervous when entering New York and nod sheepishly when looked at by a couple of lawyers? Or is it simply another sales pitch, this time selling Tchacos to the general public for the benefit of the National Geographic?

Krosney does not mention her 2002 arrest. When interviewed by the *New York Times* he said that Roberty was 'dismissive' of 'rumours' about Tchacos and Italy, and that he had never asked her about it (Meier & Wilford 2006). This arrest was made as part of a long-term and wide-ranging Italian investigation into antiquities smuggling that culminated in 2005 with the arraignment of Getty Museum curator Marion True and US dealer Robert Hecht in an Italian court. Krosney

does mention this trial (p. 76), which makes his failure to mention the reported involvement of Tchacos even more surprising.

A positive outcome?

The propriety or otherwise of the collaboration between the Maecenas Foundation and National Geographic will ultimately be judged on its results. Is the outcome a positive one for the Gospel, the public, and Egypt, or could there have been a better outcome if events had taken a different course?

To deal with the second question first, could there have been a better outcome? The legality of the export of the codex from Egypt was questionable, to say the least. Because the Egyptian authorities were never aware of the codex while it was still in Egypt, it is impossible to say how they would have reacted to a request for export, but almost certainly, if the precedent of the Gnostic Nag Hammadi texts is anything to go by, they would have refused it. The Nag Hammadi texts were taken into state ownership after payment of compensation to the dealer who held them (Robinson 1988, 24).

Over the years, many scholars came into direct contact with the codex, though not always recognizing its true significance, and others learned about it indirectly from colleagues in academia and the trade. Many of these scholars were aware that the codex had been taken out of Egypt unlawfully. Emmel for example is quoted in Robinson (p. 97) as saying in 2005 that '... there was no question but that this material should have been in Egypt'. The Beinecke Library took a similar view when it turned down the chance to acquire the codex. Yet despite widespread knowledge of its uncertain provenance, not one single person seems to have alerted the Egyptian authorities or indeed any law enforcement agency about the existence of the codex. Bagnall told Krosney that although it was known at the time that the 1983 Egyptian antiquities law had just taken effect, 'no one in the manuscript trade was taking it seriously' (p. 147). In fact, the usual and thus presumably conventional response was to hunt around for a financial backer to support a purchase. For the 1983 Geneva meeting, Harold Attridge had secured \$50,000 from the Southern Methodist University at Dallas (Robinson p. 93); in the late 1980s Robinson approached Schøyen

and in the 1990s he negotiated with the Canadian Bombardier Foundation (Robinson p. 114). The idea that Egypt might have a legitimate claim to ownership seems not to have entered anybody's head, except perhaps as a possible complication of acquisition.

One reason for this apparent reluctance to report the codex to an appropriate authority is perhaps simple academic cupidity. Scholars were motivated by the opportunity to produce the first and authoritative translation and interpretation of the text, with the academic prestige that would follow. Even Robinson, who seems to favour open scholarly access, is disappointed that the Schøyen purchase fell through (p. 128), perhaps because it would have assured him a leading role in study and publication. If intellectual curiosity alone had been governing the academic agenda, there were several opportunities to secure the return of the codex to Egypt, and to arrange for its conservation and publication by an international team. If prompt action had been taken in the 1980s, for example, it might have prevented the damage caused by 16 years in a safe deposit box and Ferrini's clumsy surgery. Perhaps it is wrong to be too critical of academic practice in the 1980s, the 2000 decision of Yale not to acquire the codex is a sign that attitudes are changing. But even though Yale quite clearly had doubts about the provenance of the codex, it still failed to take the further step of alerting the Egyptian authorities or the police.

As regards the second question, it is not possible to say at the present time whether the outcome is a positive one for the Gospel and all interested parties or not. Although the Gospel will be returned to Egypt, no mention has been made of what — if any — financial arrangements are in place to accompany its return, and whether any provision has been made for the recurrent costs that will be incurred by the Gospel's long-term storage, conservation and display at the Coptic Museum. It is equally unclear what property rights will accrue to Egypt, and this is an important point. If, for example, the Coptic Museum decides to raise money on the Gospel through media collaborations, will it be free to do so or will it be regarded as an infringement of the National Geographic's publication rights? Perhaps this eventuality will not arise because the physical codex itself no longer matters as an intellectual or commercial resource. Its content will in future

be channeled onto the world market through the offices of the National Geographic for the benefit of the National Geographic and the Maecenas Foundation, and even with full property rights, there might not be much of a market left for the Coptic Museum to exploit.

If no financial provision has been made to secure the future of the Judas Gospel, then its return will set a dangerous new precedent. It will be deemed acceptable for an illegally-exported artefact to be stripped clean of its commercial potential before being restored to its rightful owner, who will then be expected to pay for its long-term curation. E-mail questions on this subject addressed to the National Geographic were answered with an assurance that the National Geographic will 'certainly help all we can to preserve this document in the future', which is heartening, but that 'we cannot offer financial details', which is less so.⁵ The answer fell short of a firm assurance that the Gospel is well-provided for. Until the 'financial details' are made public, the propriety of the National Geographic–Maecenas collaboration will remain in doubt.

Notes

1. All material relating to the Judas Gospel on Michel van Rijn's website can be found at <http://www.michelvanrijn.nl/artnews/judastotal.htm> (last accessed 19 March 2007).
2. Even though he had previously recovered two stolen gold artefacts from the possession of London dealer Jack Ogden on the pretext of restoring them to their 'rightful owner'. Koutoulakis subsequently sold one of these pieces to dealer Peter Sharrer (Krosney pp. 99, 104).
3. Presumably the 'Ivy League scholar' must be one of the three Yale academics who studied the Gospel while it was in the Beinecke Library. Why the sudden shyness is not made clear. Krosney also offers thanks in his Acknowledgements to the 'Ivy League scholar who has played an enormous positive role in bringing the manuscript to light and who deserves a medal for his still largely unknown efforts' (p. 308).
4. Jonathan Tokeley-Parry has recently published a book reproducing some pages from his 'journal' (Tokeley 2006), in which he often disguises the identities of individuals by substituting a letter of the alphabet for their name. He records in 1987 that with the knowledge of the Egyptian authorities a female Swiss dealer 'G' operating out of Galerie 'M' in Zurich was entering Egypt under different names and with different passports and was collaborating with an Egyptian citizen to move antiquities out of Egypt (pp. 220, 234, 238).
5. Reply sent to author on 12 February 2007.

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