

MAPPING THE SUPPLY: USUAL SUSPECTS AND IDENTIFIED ANTIQUITIES IN ‘REPUTABLE’ AUCTION HOUSES IN 2013

Cartografiando el suministro: sospechosos habituales y antigüedades identificadas en ‘reputadas’ casas de subasta en 2013

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ABSTRACT The confiscation of the Medici, Becchina and Symes-Michaelides archives by the Italian authorities (with the cooperation of the French and Swiss) and Greek police and judicial authorities, has led to more than 250 repatriations of antiquities so far. Apart from these successful claims, the main contribution of the on-going research on the archives lies in revealing the fundamental role played by the main members of the international antiquities market (auction houses and galleries) in circulating illicit material *after* the 1970 UNESCO convention (against the illicit traffic in cultural material). It is telling for the current antiquities market, that despite the exposure of the wrongdoings of Sotheby’s, Christie’s, Bonhams, ‘Phoenix Ancient Art’, ‘Royal Athena Galleries’, etc., the same auction houses and galleries continue to rule this market and to sell material depicted in the confiscated archives. This article not only indicates and analyses the cases identified in 2013 in the most ‘reputable’ auction houses, but also reconstructs and maps the paths by which these antiquities reached and circulated in the market.

Key words: Illicit Antiquities, Auction Houses, Sotheby’s, Christie’s, Giacomo Medici.

RESUMEN La confiscación de los archivos de Medici, Becchina y Symes-Michaelides por las autoridades italianas (con la cooperación de las francesas y suizas) y la policía griega y autoridades judiciales, ha conducido a más de 250 repatriaciones de antigüedades hasta ahora. Aparte de estas exitosas reclamaciones, la principal contribución de la investigación en curso sobre los archivos es la revelación del fundamental papel jugado por los principales miembros del mercado internacional de antigüedades (casa de subasta y galerías) en la circulación del material ilícito *tras* la convención de 1970 de UNESCO (contra el tráfico ilícito de bienes culturales). Resulta llamativo que el actual mercado de antigüedades, a pesar de la revelación de malas prácticas de Sotheby’s, Christie’s, Bonhams, ‘Phoenix Ancient Art’, ‘Royal Athena Galleries’, etcétera, las mismas casas de subastas y galerías siguen controlando este mercado

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y vendiendo materiales incluidos en los archivos confiscados. Este artículo no solo indica y analiza los casos identificados en 2013 en las más ‘reputadas’ casas de subastas, sino también reconstruye y traza los caminos por los cuales estas antigüedades llegaron y circularon en el mercado.

Palabras clave: Antigüedades ilícitas, Casas de subastas, Sotheby’s, Christie’s, Giacomo Medici.

INTRODUCTION

Last year (2013) I published an article analysing the seven identifications of antiquities I made in Christie’s during 2012, focusing on the main uses of the term ‘confidentiality’ in the international antiquities market: despite advertising their ‘transparency’, the auction houses themselves deny access to researchers regarding the consigners and buyers of antiquities depicted in the confiscated archives (Tsirogiannis, 2013a). The term ‘due diligence’ is similarly mis-applied, and the misleading use of ‘provenance’, which conflates the geographical origins and the collecting history of each lot, is by now well known. The repatriation of a pair of Canosan volute kraters identified at auction in 2012 verifies these points (Tsirogiannis, 2013a:10-11; Bernardini and Lolli Ghetti, 2013:246-249).

The publicity that these cases gained before and after the auctions, might be expected to make the market more careful. However, I soon identified more antiquities in the same auction houses, involving the same members of the market making illicit transactions during the last four decades. This was not a surprise, given the inactivity of state authorities to claim their stolen property and their inability to prosecute the receivers of stolen goods. As I predicted (Tsirogiannis, 2013a:16):

Under the current circumstances, it seems inevitable that the activities of major auction houses in 2013 will produce cases for another report on the appearance of Medici, Becchina and Symes-Michaelides material in the market.

I now present 12 cases identified in six auctions in 2013, from which we may now more confidently identify the emerging patterns of sources and routes of supply for antiquities lacking collecting history. Building on the work of criminologists since the early 1980s (Bator, 1982; Kersel, 2007; Lo, 2010; Campbell, 2013; Levi, 2014; Polk, 2014), a recent article by Mackenzie and Davies mapped the movement of Cambodian antiquities as they passed from looters to middlemen and dealers, identifying the double role that a key individual (a dealer who appears also as a collector) may have in the trade (Mackenzie and Davies, 2014:736). It is the aim of the current article to contribute not only to the classification of the stages in the journey of antiquities through the market, but also to the realisation that another key part of the market (auction houses) may appear also with up to three different identities.

CHRISTIE’S AUCTION OF 2 MAY 2013 IN LONDON

On 2 May 2013 Christie’s offered for sale in London 433 antiquities in 145 lots, numbered 1-145 (although for some reason there is no lot 55: see Christie’s, 2013a:37).

According to the 'provenance' for each of these antiquities given by Christie's, 60 antiquities have no collecting history before 1970 (the year of the UNESCO *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*, see UNESCO 1970). In fact, from these 60 antiquities, 42 have no collecting history before 1980, among which 27 have no collecting history even before 1990 and one not before 2001. Only 18 antiquities from this category seem to emerge in the 1970's. In addition, for 36 antiquities it is not clear if they surfaced before 1970, and 150 and 5 groups with an unspecified number of antiquities (but in only 62 lots) appear to have a pre-1970 collecting history. By my calculations from the pre-sale estimations, Christie's anticipated fetching between £1,437,600 and £2,149,500 in total. In the event, although 28 antiquities remained unsold, Christie's sold the remaining 218 for £4,241,775.

Although 150 antiquities and 5 groups of antiquities appear in the catalogue to have a pre-1970 collecting history, a week before the Christie's auction, a British Museum Assistant Keeper and an Egyptian archaeologist identified at least 1 (lot 58) as stolen. Together with five more antiquities (lots 56-57, 59-61), it was withdrawn before the sale. A seventh antiquity was not identified in time and it was sold for 'around £10,000' (Bailey and Gerlis, 2013). Christie's accepted the collecting history given by the consigner, Neil Kingsbury: 'Private collection, UK, acquired Egypt 1940s; thence by descent' (he claimed that he inherited them from his uncle), without the auction house exercising their much-advertised 'due diligence'. The withdrawn antiquities appear to have been excavated a decade ago from the Amenhotep III temple in Thebes, Luxor, and at least one of them was confirmed as having been discovered there in 2000 (Sultan, 2013). It remains unknown when the storage space of the temple was robbed. Kingsbury had consigned more antiquities with fake collecting histories to two earlier auctions at Christie's and Bonhams. Therefore, the number of antiquities with a pre-1970 collecting history in this auction cannot be trusted, as it is certainly lower than Christie's claims.

Christie's spokesman stated about the case (Bailey and Gerlis, 2013):

This case shows how our procedures, our due diligence and the transparent and public nature of our sales combine to make our saleroom highly unattractive to those engaged in the illicit trade.

In fact, the case exposes Christie's inability to exercise *due diligence*, since the objects reached Christie's catalogue and were offered for sale, and their subsequent statement reveals their tendency to take the credit for others' work; once caught offering stolen antiquities, they advertise that it was *their* procedures, *their* due diligence and *their* transparency that made their saleroom unattractive to traffickers. Christie's clients are left unprotected against the possibility of acquiring a stolen antiquity. In recent years Christie's have been caught selling stolen antiquities on different occasions: an alabaster duck-shaped vessel, stolen from an archaeological storeroom in Egypt after its excavation in 1979 surfaced in a Christie's auction in 2006 in New York (Handwerk, 2006; Hope, 2007); a Roman marble head of a woman, stolen in 1990 from the Sabratha museum in Libya, surfaced in 2011 in a London Christie's auction (Bailey, 2011).

We now turn to objects I identified in this auction (fig. 1).



Fig. 1.—Up: The two sides of the hand as it appears in the Symes-Michaelides archive. Down: The same hand as it appeared in Christie's in 2013.

A western Asiatic copper right hand

Among the 433 antiquities that were offered for sale by Christies in this auction, I identified one antiquity (lot 32), a western Asiatic copper right hand (with remains of silver fingernails) holding a bronze dagger (fig. 1, down). The object is depicted in two professional images from the Symes-Michaelides archive (nos. 1859-1860) which was confiscated in a raid on the island of Schinoussa in 2006 (fig. 1, up). On the back of each photograph is a code number indicating the year that the object was photographed while in the hands of Robin Symes and Christos Michaelides, as well as its number among those that Symes and Michaelides acquired in that year, and the photographic shot number (Tsirogiannis, 2013b). Therefore, the two code numbers '86/4/24' (no. 1859) and '86/4/25' (no. 1860) indicate that the object passed through the hands of Symes and Michaelides in 1986 and it was one of at least four objects that were acquired by the two dealers in that year.

According to Christie's catalogue, the object dates 'circa mid-late 3rd millennium B.C.' and has the following collecting history ('provenance'):

Anonymous sale; François de Ricqlès, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 5 December 1994, lot 107. Private collection, Switzerland.

Indeed, the object first appears in the 5/12/1994 antiquities auction of Hôtel Drouot in Paris (Hôtel Drouot, 1994). Christie's refuse to make known the names of the buyers and the consigners of the objects in their auctions (Tsirogiannis, 2013a:11), a tactic apparently adopted also by minor auction houses like Hôtel Drouot in Paris, since there was no answer to my written request (19/6/2014) for the disclosure of the object's consigner and collecting history prior to the December 5, 1994 auction, addressed to three different departments of the Hôtel Drouot (Mr. Frédéric Elkaïm, former training director for the Hôtel Drouot, La Gazette Drouot, the weekly magazine of auction sales, and the press office).

The name 'François de Ricqlès' is the link between Hôtel Drouot and Christie's; according to Christie's website¹:

François de Ricqlès débute sa carrière en 1980 au sein de l'Etude Couturier-Nicolay avant d'être habilité Commissaire-priseur en 1988. Il crée son étude et se spécialise autour des ventes d'archéologie, d'art islamique et tribal. Devenant rapidement incontournable dans son domaine de prédilection, il organise en 2001 la vente de la Collection Hubert Goldet (13 700 000€) qui établit un record du monde pour une vente d'Art Primitif.

En 2002, François de Ricqlès rejoint Christie's en qualité de Vice-président. A l'initiative des dispersions les plus exceptionnelles, on lui doit notamment l'historique « vente du siècle » Yves Saint-Laurent et Pierre Bergé, qui bat sous son marteau tous les records existants pour une collection vendue aux enchères (342 000 000€). Il succède à François Curriel en janvier 2010 et devient Président de Christie's France.

1. <http://www.christies.com/features/welcome/french/specialists>.

This information suggests that François de Ricqlès was the auctioneer and not necessarily the consigner/owner of the object in 1994, in Hôtel Drouot, a competitor that Christie's decided to exclude from de Ricqlès' short biography on their website.

As for the term 'Private collection, Switzerland': we know well by now that this term often covers convicted dealers of illicit antiquities (Watson and Todeschini, 2007:82). Therefore, it should not be a surprise that the object appears in two professional images from the Symes-Michaelides archive. This information is missing from the 'Provenance' section given by Christie's, a common occurrence for antiquities lacking a pre-1970 collecting history which are later revealed in the confiscated archive of a dealer (Tsirogiannis, 2013a:3-19). In light of the identification, should we assume that the 'Anonymous' seller and/or the 'Private collection, Switzerland' were Robin Symes and Christos Michaelides, dealing with or even laundering this antiquity, respectively? We know that Giacomo Medici, at least, was laundering looted antiquities by consigning them at auction houses and then buying them back from himself (Watson and Todeschini, 2007:137).

Last but not least, another connection should be mentioned: François de Ricqlès, who auctioned for Hôtel Drouot in 1994 an object which appears in the Symes-Michaelides archive, had auctioned in February 2009 two more antiquities, again depicted in the Symes-Michaelides archive (Tsirogiannis 2013b), this time for Christie's in Paris, as part of the famous 'sale of the century' which de Ricqlès led; the auction of the collection of Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé (Christie's 2009). One of these antiquities re-surfaced at Christie's, London, in October 24, 2013 (see below). The financial success of the Yves Saint Laurent auction and the publicity it gained (a source of pride for Christie's; see again de Ricqlès's bio on Christie's website), must have been part of the reason that de Ricqlès was promoted to Chairman of Christie's France in January 2010.

The western Asiatic copper right hand was estimated at £25,000 - £35,000 and was sold for £32,500. The buyer and the whereabouts of the object remain unknown (fig. 2).

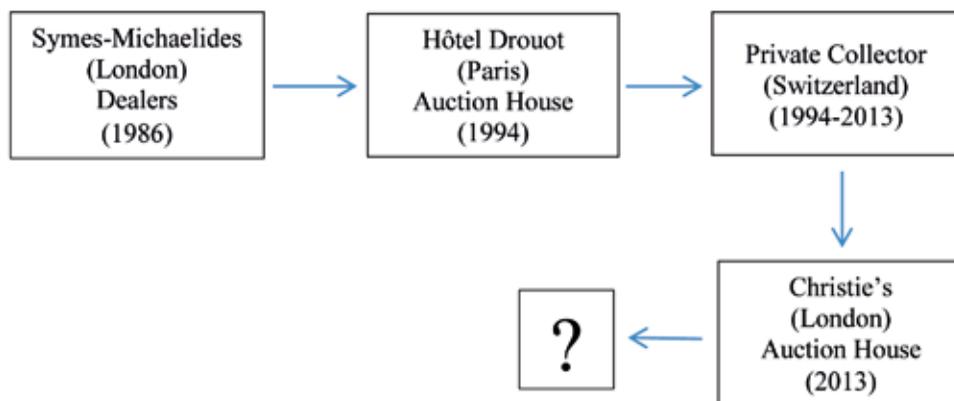


Fig. 2.—The path taken by the western Asiatic copper right hand through the market.

CHRISTIE'S AUCTION OF 6 JUNE 2013 IN NEW YORK

On 6 June 2013 Christie's offered for sale in New York 224 antiquities in 194 lots, numbered 501-694 (Christie's, 2013b). According to the collecting history for each of these antiquities, as given by Christie's, 161 antiquities have no collecting history before 1970. In fact, from these 161 antiquities, 108 have no collecting history before 1980, among which 48 have no collecting history even before 1990. In addition, for 12 antiquities it is not clear if they surfaced before 1970 and only 51 appear to have a pre-1970 collecting history. Christie's estimated to fetch from the sale of all the lots (by my calculations) between \$6,038,000 and \$8,952,000. Although 61 antiquities remained unsold, Christie's sold the remaining 163 for \$8,178,212.

Among the 224 antiquities offered for sale, I identified four antiquities depicted in the confiscated Medici, Becchina and Symes-Michaelides archives. A fifth antiquity was identified from an image published in a Greek magazine in 2006, and a sixth antiquity was spotted in an image in Bruce McNall's book, *Fun While It Lasted* (McNall, 2003) verifying Christie's 'provenance' section of that entry. All the identifications and the relevant images from the three confiscated archives were sent three weeks before the auction (on May 17, 2013) to the Italian public prosecutor Dr. Paolo Giorgio Ferri, to Professor David Gill and to the Italian journalist Fabio Isman. Fabio Isman (with Michele Concina) published the images of the identifications in the Italian website 'Artemagazine' on May 18² and Professor Gill made several posts on his blog 'Looting Matters'. Below, I present and discuss the collecting history of the six identified antiquities and their fate up to August 31, 2014.

An Euboean black-figured amphora

An Euboean black-figured amphora is depicted in a regular image from the confiscated Medici archive (CD 2, racc. 4, pag. 18, foto 6) (fig. 3, left). The vase is presented lying on a red surface on which have been photographed by Medici several other antiquities that later were proven to be illicit. In that image the vase is depicted intact and with soil and salt encrustations on its surface.

The same Euboean black-figured amphora dating 560-550 B.C. (fig. 3, right) first surfaced in an auction in Sotheby's London branch on December 3rd, 1991, as lot 383 (Sotheby's 1991b). The amphora was among 442 lots that were offered for sale. The vase was offered under the title 'Greek, Etruscan and Roman antiquities (Part II)', with no previous collecting history and with an estimation of £3,000-4,000. It was sold for £6,600.

The vase surfaced again in Christie's branch in New York, on June 6, 2013 (lot 540). The collecting history accompanying the amphora was:

2. <http://www.artemagazine.it/archeologia/2389/la-grande-razzia-e-ancora-tra-noi-e-christies-lo-sa/>, although 12 days later (May 30), my name as the one identifying these antiquities was excluded from the revised publication.



Fig. 3.—Left: The amphora as it appears in the Medici archive. Right: The same amphora as it appeared in Christie's in 2013.

Provenance

Anonymous sale; Sotheby's, London, 3 December 1991, lot 383. with Elie Borowski, Jerusalem. *Ancient Greek Vases formerly in the Collection of Dr. Elie Borowski*; Christie's, New York, 12 June 2000, lot 27. with Royal-Athena Galleries, New York, 2001 (*Art of the Ancient World*, vol. XII, no. 172); and 2010 (*1000 Years of Ancient Greek Vases*, no. 31).

Details not given here may be supplied from combining this information with that from the archive. As already stated, it is the standard policy of auction houses not to reveal the consigner and the buyer of any object in an auction, although several consigners and buyers are revealed by the 'provenance' sections of future sales. It has also been shown that in many cases in the past the consigner and the buyer was the same person ('laundering', see Watson and Todeschini, 2007:137). Together with the fact that this object has no collecting history before 1970, the Medici photograph suggests its illicit excavation from a tomb. The appearance of antiquities passing through Medici's hands and subsequently surfacing in Sotheby's London branch auctions is reported throughout Watson and Todeschini (2007). Therefore, it is quite possible that behind the 'Anonymous sale' of the amphora in Sotheby's 1991 auction in London is Giacomo Medici or one of his companies ('Edition Services', etc.).

From the 'Provenance' section in the 2013 Christie's catalogue, it appears also that the buyer of the amphora in 1991 was the notorious antiquities dealer Dr. Elie Borowski, who was involved in the trade of numerous cases of illicit antiquities, falsifying their collecting history. Borowski became the main link between two generations of dealers in the international illicit antiquities network, since in his gallery in Basel, he introduced dealer George Zakos to his future wife Janet, who at the time was working in Borowski's gallery (Apostolides, 2006:116); he also hired the young Becchina to work for him in the 1960s (as testified by former Getty Museum's curator of antiquities Marion True, during her examination by the Italian authorities, 2001:83-84), was supplied by the young Medici even before 1970 (Watson and Todeschini, 2007:166-167), and he started Robin Symes in the antiquities business (Symes' interrogation by the Italian authorities, 2003:196).

In order to fulfil his life-long dream to build a museum in Jerusalem to house the rest of his antiquities, Borowski sold his ancient Greek vase 'collection' (actually his most prized vases from his stock as a dealer) directly to Christie's, as a company, in the late 1980s or early 1990s (International Head of Antiquities, Max G. Bernheimer stated that Christie's acquired the vase collection from Borowski 'about 10 years ago', Christie's, 2000: 9). This is a case of a dealer acting also as collector (MacKenzie and Davis, 2014: 736). By acquiring the Borowski vase collection, Christie's also acquired a second dual identity, that of a collector, transforming the company into a hybrid, that of the auction house/collector.

Furthermore, when on June 12, 2000, in a record sale for an ancient Greek vases collection, Christie's sold the ex-Borowski collection for a total of \$7,053,906, it was the auction house that appeared with three identities in total: a) that of an auction house (as a vehicle through which an antiquity is passing temporarily and being sold), b) that of a collector who, after acquiring the whole stock of a dealer (as Jean Paul Getty did with Jerome Eisenberg's stock in Royal-Athena Galleries in 1971 —Marion True's examination, 2001: 42—, later sells his whole collection in an auction —as the Hunt brothers did in 1990—, Sotheby's, 1990) and c) that of a dealer who is selling his/her merchandise (as Borowski did). The case is a significant example of a market-member's acting with different identities every time, or with a dual identity each time, within the same market, in order to achieve a profitable financial deal.

Among the 157 vases in the sale of the Borowski collection was the same Euboean black-figured amphora (lot 27). The 'Provenance' section stated:

Antiquities, Sotheby's London, 3 December 1991, lot 383.

The amphora was estimated at \$15,000-20,000 (Christie's 2000:23). It was sold for \$10,575.

In 2001 the amphora surfaced in 'Royal-Athena Galleries' in New York (no. 172 in Eisenberg 2001). The owner of the gallery, Dr. Jerome Eisenberg has, like Borowski, been involved in numerous cases of illicit antiquities (Tsirogiannis, 2013a:15). Particularly telling is that in 'Royal-Athena galleries' have surfaced some of the antiquities stolen from the Museum of Corinth in 1990; other antiquities stolen from excavation warehouses in Italy appeared later in Eisenberg's gallery (Godart, De Caro and Gavrili, 2008: 122-123; 184-185). From 2010 to 2012, I identified on sale in 'Royal-Athena Galleries' dozens of

antiquities depicted in the confiscated Medici, Becchina and Symes-Michaelides archives. Although the Italian authorities were notified and the cases were published (Gill, 2013, Isman and Concina, 2013), no authority investigated even one of these cases; moreover, in June 2012 Eisenberg was awarded by the Italian state a medal usually awarded to those who ‘have provided a meaningful contribution to the prestige of Italy’ (International Association of Dealers in Ancient Art, IADAA 2012).

In 2010 the same amphora resurfaced in ‘Royal-Athena Galleries’, as no. 31 of its antiquities catalogue. The vase was described as ‘Ex-Elie Borowski (1913-2003) collection, Basel, Switzerland. Published: J. Eisenberg, *Art of the Ancient World*, Vol. XII, 2001, no. 172’ (Eisenberg, 2010:12). There was no mention of the owner of the amphora in the period 2001-2010. The fact that the object resurfaces in the same gallery in which it last appeared, without any information given for the intermediate period, may mean that the object never left the gallery during that period. On its resurfacing in 2010, this amphora became one of my first identifications in Eisenberg’s gallery, among several other antiquities appearing in the confiscated archives of Medici, Becchina and Symes-Michaelides (Isman, 2011).

The Italian state authorities apparently did nothing, since in 2013, the vase surfaced again in Christie’s, was estimated at £15,000-20,000 and was sold for \$15,000. The Italian authorities were notified long before the auction (my email to Paolo Giorgio Ferrion May 17), but the amphora was sold at its minimum estimated price, and I have not heard from the Italian authorities about any development of the case; the whereabouts of the object are once again unknown (fig. 4).

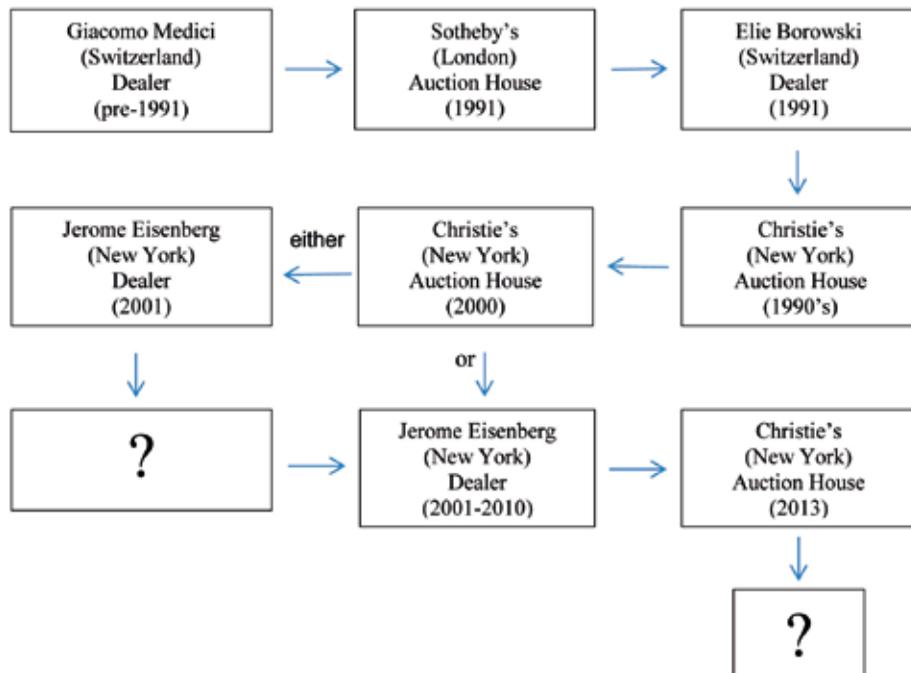


Fig. 4.—The path taken by the Euboean black-figured amphora through the market.

An Archaic East Greek bronze warrior

An Archaic East Greek figure (fig. 5, left) of a bronze warrior dating 540-530 B.C., partly covered by soil encrustations, first surfaced as no. 74 in the collection of the Thétis Foundation in Geneva (Zimmermann, 1987:39, 148). In the same collection was an Archaic Greek bronze boar (no. 72 in Zimmermann, 1987:37-38) that I identified in Christie's auction of June 8, 2012 in New York as matching an image in the confiscated Medici archive (Tsirogiannis, 2013a:6-8) (fig. 5, right). It appears that the two antiquities have a parallel collecting history, at least in part.

The same figure of a warrior was offered for sale in Sotheby's antiquities auction in London on May 23, 1991, as lot 77 (Sotheby's 1991a:47). The figure was then presented as 'An East Greek Bronze Figure of a Running Hero', characterised as 'probably Perseus', standing on the same (very dusty) wooden black base and measuring '9.5 cm. (3 3/4in.)' in height (it is not clear if this measurement included the base or not). Additionally: 'It is suggested that the figure probably decorated a bronze tripod'; the authority who made that suggestion is not given. The only collecting history given was:

Literature: Zimmermann, *Thétis*, p. 39, no. 74.

The figure was estimated at £8,000-12,000 and was finally sold for only £7,700. In the same auction the bronze boar was also offered for sale at £6,000-£8,000 and was sold for £14,300.



Fig. 5.—Left: The figure as it appears among other antiquities in the Geneva Free-Port, in the image that Medici himself delivered to Nikolas Zirganos. Right: The same figure as it appeared in Christie's in 2013.

Like Christie's, Sotheby's have a 'confidentiality' policy, according which they do not disclose the names of objects' consigner/owner or buyer (Tsirogiannis, 2013a:7). Therefore, it is not possible to discover from Sotheby's the name of the person who acquired the figure of the warrior in the auction of May 23, 1991. However, in my publication on identifications in Christie's auction house in 2012, I referred to the figure of the bronze warrior in proving that the buyer of the bronze boar was Giacomo Medici. It was a surprise to see the figure of the bronze warrior resurfacing a year later (2013) in the same auction house. I am reproducing here the relevant part of my article, on the bronze boar, since the story is repeated:

The same figure is depicted in one of Medici's regular (non-Polaroid) images, among 11 other figures and vases against a red background, equally divided in two shelves of what appears to be a case for exhibiting antiquities. The image was produced by Giacomo Medici in his warehouse in the Free Port of Geneva (Zirganos, 2006a:24), the same one that was raided in 1995 by the Swiss and Italian authorities, who there discovered thousands of antiquities and the famous Medici archive with its thousands of images (Watson and Todeschini, 2007:21-23, 54). The image depicting the boar was delivered, among several other images, to the Greek journalist Nikolas Zirganos by Medici himself, during an interview that took place in late January 2006 in Rome; these images were subsequently published by the Greek magazine *Epsilon* on 19th February 2006 (Zirganos, 2006a:22-34). The boar appears at the right corner of the top shelf. Although the print of the previously existing label is still visible on one of the wooden base's long sides, a white thread tied tightly around the boar's right front foot ends in a small paper label which is not readable. A ruler is depicted in front of the objects on the lower shelf. In the caption of the image Zirganos wrote (my translation from the original Greek text):

One of the images that Medici used to send to potential buyers. The ruler helped them to estimate the scale of the antiquities.

The image proves that the boar was once owned by Medici in Geneva before 1995, since it was not found during the 1995 raid by the Swiss and Italian authorities. It is not known whether the Medici image pre-dates the 1987 Zimmermann publication or was produced after the Sotheby's 1991 auction, since there is no date on the image. However, the appearance of another figure on the same shelf, also published in Zimmermann and auctioned by Sotheby's in 1991, suggests that the Medici image was produced after the Sotheby's 1991 auction and that Medici was the buyer of both figures.

The other '[...] figure on the same shelf, also published in Zimmermann and auctioned by Sotheby's in 1991' is, of course, the bronze warrior. Like the figure of the boar, the bronze figure of a 'Hero' is depicted with a white thread, tied tightly around the 'Hero's right forearm and ending in a small paper label (not readable). It is highly probable that these are Sotheby's labels, immediately after the 1991 auction.

Twenty two years after this 1991 auction in London, the figure of the warrior reappeared in Christie's New York branch (Christie's, 2013b:24-25, lot 543). The object was now offered not as 'An East Greek Bronze Figure of a Running Hero' but as 'An Archaic East Greek bronze warrior'. It was depicted with the same soil encrustations, on the same wooden black base, but the measurements given were now '3 15/16 in. (8.4 cm.) high', that is, 1.1 cm

less. A comparison of the object's images in the two auction catalogues verifies that the object remained intact and on the same metal rod on the same base over the last 22 years; we may deduce from the proportions of the object and its metal support that Sotheby's in 1991 measured the object from the base of the rod to the highest point, whereas Christie's in 2013 measured from the bottom of the leg upwards. The only collecting history given in Christie's 2013 catalogue was:

PROVENANCE:

Thétis Foundation, Geneva, acquired prior to 1987.
Thétis Foundation; Sotheby's, London, 23 May 1991, lot 77.

PUBLISHED :

J.-L. Zimmermann, *Collection de la Fondation Thétis, Développements de l'art grec de la préhistoire à Rome*, Geneva, 1987, pp. 39 and 148, no. 74.

The figure was estimated at \$30,000-50,000, but remained unsold and, thus, does not appear in the 'Auction Results' on Christie's website. It is most probable that the object was returned to its consigner, according to Christie's policy for objects left unsold.

Several issues need to be clarified. Most have been extensively discussed in my 2013a article (p. 8) in relation to the identification of the bronze boar. The pattern is repeated: Anonymous, to Thétis Foundation, to Sotheby's, to Medici, to Christie's, to anonymous (fig. 6). It is again the identification of the object in the confiscated archive

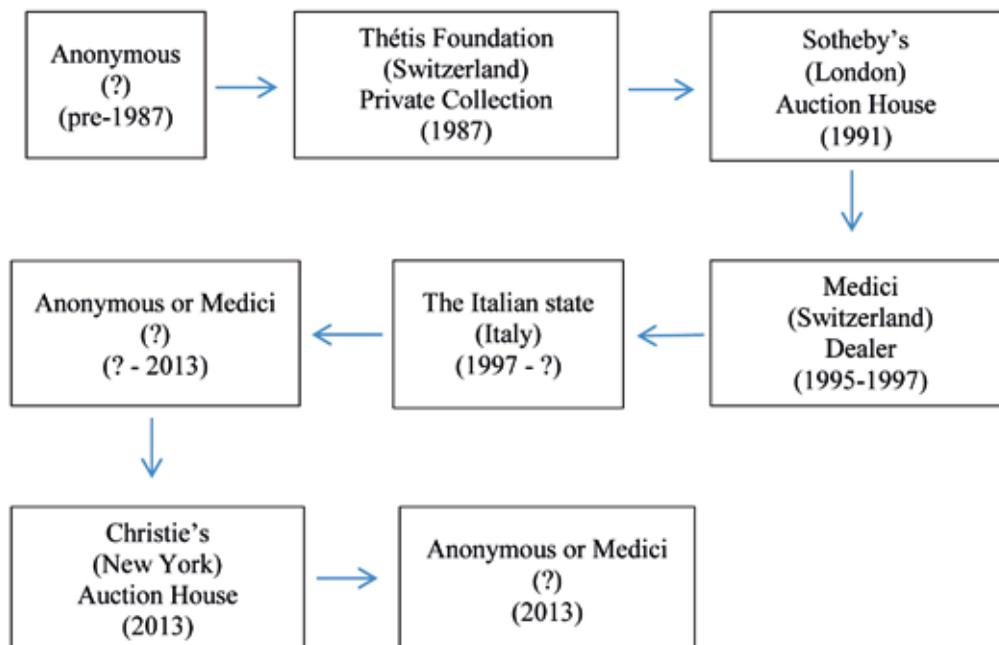


Fig. 6.—The path taken by the Archaic East Greek figure of a bronze warrior through the market.

that determines Medici's involvement in the route that the object followed from at least 1987, if not earlier, to 2013. It is the identification of the object that reveals that Christie's, at least, despite advertising 'the transparency of the public auction system' (Gill, 2009), hid the information that both bronzes have passed through Medici's hands. It is not known if Medici was the one who before 1987 supplied Thétis Foundation with these two bronzes or other antiquities, once forming part of the collection. It is not known who is behind Thétis Foundation.

A further issue emerges from the fact that antiquities dealer Mr Kevin R. Cheek in the photograph section of his book, *Into the Antiquities Trade* (Cheek, 2003: 122) includes the image of the 'Hero' figurine with its Sotheby's 1991 entry; he states that the object was confiscated from Medici during the 1995 raid in the Geneva Free-Port and that the same object is discussed by Peter Watson at his book *Sotheby's: Inside Story*. This appears only in the hardback edition of Watson's book (Watson, 1997), which contains an appendix of documents and several images that do not appear in the paperback edition of the following year. Among these extra images there is a black-and-white version of the Medici image that appeared in colour in Zirganos' 2006 publication (see the extract of Tsirogiannis, 2013a above), with the caption:

A few of the ten thousand antiquities sequestered in one of four warehouses sealed by police in Geneva Freeport in January 1997.

This raises the question how, if the two bronze figurines were found during the raid at the Geneva Freeport in 1995, officially confiscated in 1997 and so made part of the Italian state's cultural heritage, did it come to surface in Christie's auction in June 2013? Medici received back from the Carabinieri the images of his photographic archive. It appears that Medici also received about 100 antiquities which have never been claimed by the Italian or other states. According to archaeologists Dr. Daniela Rizzo and Maurizio Pellegrini, who put together the list of these 100 objects returned to Medici, the bronze warrior and the boar were among them. Therefore, it is highly probable that it is Medici himself or someone connected to him who consigned these two objects to Christie's, regardless of all the revelations in recent years about Medici's laundering illicit antiquities through auction houses. This is a proof that the situation in the antiquities market is even worse than pre-1995.

An Attic Black-figured column-krater

According to Christie's, an Attic Black-figured column-krater attributed to the Bucci Painter and dating c. 530 B.C. first appeared in the Freiburg art market in 1988. Two years later (1990) the antiquity appeared on sale in 'Royal-Athena Galleries' in New York (Eisenberg, 1990a: no. 35). The object was acquired by the businessman and collector John Kluge and his wife Patricia, before reappearing at 'Royal-Athena Galleries' in 2010 (Eisenberg, 2010: no. 50). The krater was put on sale by Christie's in their 6 June, 2013 antiquities auction in New York, as 'The property of a Midwest private collector' (lot 546). Christie's added in the 'Provenance' section that the krater has an entry (no. 44199)

in the Beazley Archive Database, which confirms the information supplied by Christie's regarding the collecting history of the krater.

However, the krater appears also in the confiscated Becchina archive. In 1984 a Mr. E. Crisafulli, resident of Palermo, sent a letter to Gianfranco Becchina asking if Becchina was 'interested in anything or everything you [he] saw'³. Becchina replied on December 11, 1984 that he 'after his vacation will pass by Palermo to discuss various possibilities'. The two letters are followed in the archive by handwritten notes of the telephone numbers for E. Crisafulli and Xeroxes of both sides (where required) of 22 vases. The fifth vase in the sequence is the Bucci Painter krater under discussion, which appears in two Xeroxes of a single image, for each of the two sides of the vase (fig. 7, left). On the top left corner of one copy is written in blue pen: '(NO)'. On the top right corner of the same copy is written in blue pen: '(5)'. The second Xerox is a photocopy of the first (Becchina, CD1, Raccoglitore 5, images nos. DSCF 1447-1448). The same markings, with the addition of 'BIS' under the number '(5)', appear on the Xerox (and *its* copy) depicting the reverse side of the krater (nos. DSCF 1478-1479). No. 5 is excluded from a handwritten note entitled 'oggetti comperati' ('objects bought'), listing

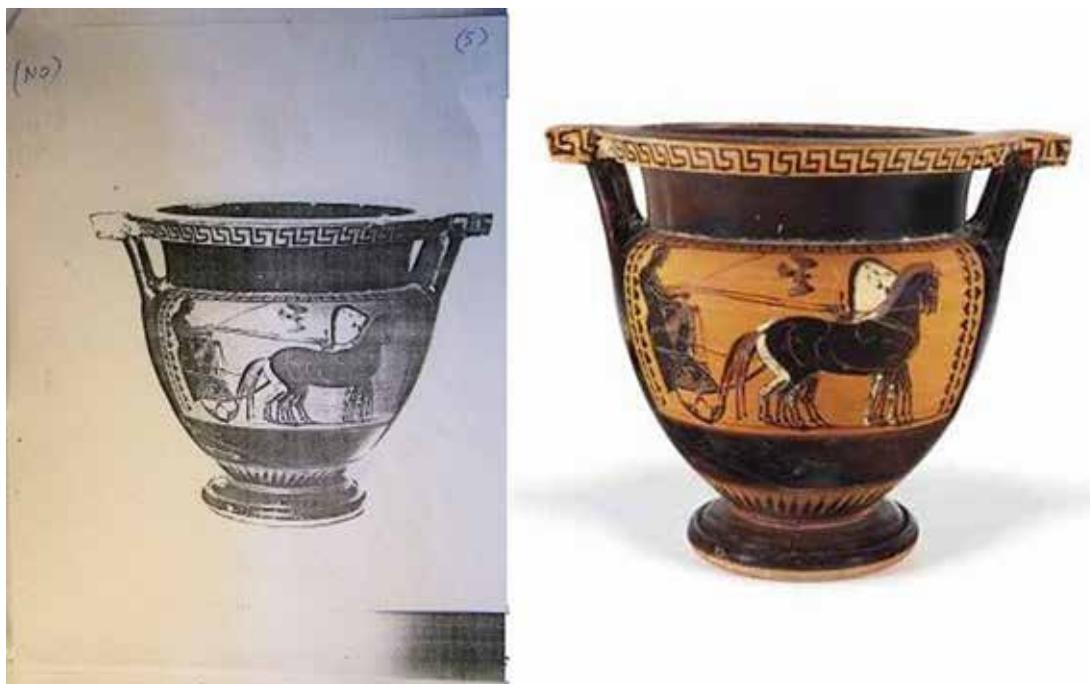


Fig. 7.—Left: The krater as it appears in the Becchina archive. Right: The same krater as it appeared in Christie's in 2013.

3. I am grateful to Ms. Sofia Cecchi for translating the letter from Italian to English and for her overall help.

the numbers of the seven objects that were finally bought by Becchina from the whole lot. All four Xerox copies and the note are included in a file entitled by Becchina ‘M.B. I’. This file is dedicated to transactions during the period 1980-1991 between Becchina and Mario Bruno, a known receiver of stolen goods (Watson and Todeschini, 2007: 187; Tsirogiannis, 2013c:83) (a second file deals with transactions 1991-1993).

This Bucci Painter krater is depicted in the Xeroxes in the same condition in which it appears in Christie’s in 2013 (fig. 7, right). It seems that this vase remained in the possession of E. Crisafulli at least until December 1984. The path followed by this object from 1984 till 1988 is not known. Also unknown are the object’s consigners and buyers in the ‘Art Market, Freiburg, 1988’, and the ‘Midwest private collector’ consigning the krater to the 2013 Christie’s auction. Nor do we know when the krater passed through the hands of Gianfranco Becchina or/and Mario Bruno, although it seems that Becchina and Bruno did not acquire the krater for themselves. We do know that Gianfranco Becchina and Jerome Eisenberg maintained a close cooperation for several years, because Eisenberg was acquiring for his ‘Royal-Athena Galleries’ in New York many objects from Becchina’s ‘Antike Kunst Palladion’ gallery in Basel. Both dealers have been involved in selling illicit antiquities (see above p. 8 for Eisenberg, ICE 2013 for Becchina). It was the responsibility of Christie’s and (twice) of ‘Royal-Athena Galleries’ to have exercised the *due* diligence procedure they advertise in order to locate and present the collecting history of the krater between 1984 and 1988.

This case has many similarities with the most celebrated repatriation for the Greek state taking place in recent years. A gold wreath, originally looted in the early 1990s from Macedonia, Northern Greece, ended up at the Getty Museum in California, and the Greek government repatriated it based on photographic evidence found in the Becchina archive; the wreath appears in a Polaroid image sent to Becchina, along with an image of another vase, in an envelope posted from Thessaloniki, Greece. It has been verified that Becchina did not buy the object, but the images and the envelope were kept in his archive and—together with testimonies and other photographic evidence—were successfully used as evidence for the illicit origin of the wreath (Watson and Todeschini, 2007: 310-313; 320-321). This Bucci Painter krater similarly lacks a pre-1970 collecting history, appears in the Becchina archive, was also offered to Becchina and was not acquired by him.

In 2013 in Christie’s, the krater was estimated at \$35,000-55,000 and was sold for \$37,500. It is not known if the Italian state took action regarding this case. The vase’s current whereabouts remain unknown (fig. 8).

A Greek terracotta bust of a goddess

A classical Greek terracotta bust of a goddess, dating c. early 4th century B.C., was offered in Christie’s June 2013 auction as lot 573 (fig. 9, left), under the title ‘Another Property’, accompanied by the following collecting history (fig. 10):

Provenance
with Summa Galleries, Beverly Hills, 1981.
Private Collection, Los Angeles.

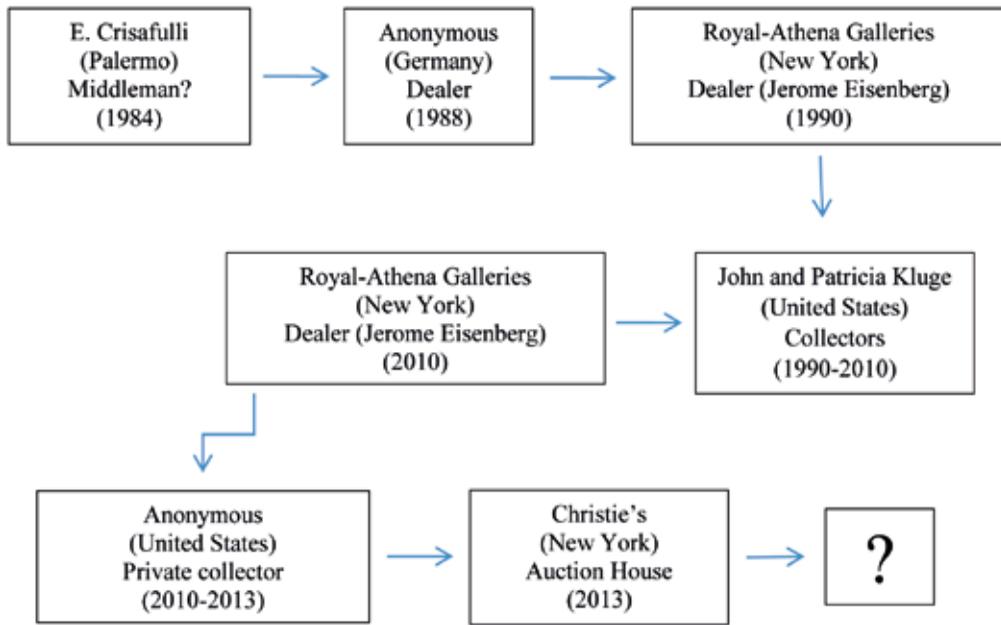


Fig. 8.—The path taken by the Attic Black-figured column-krater through the market.

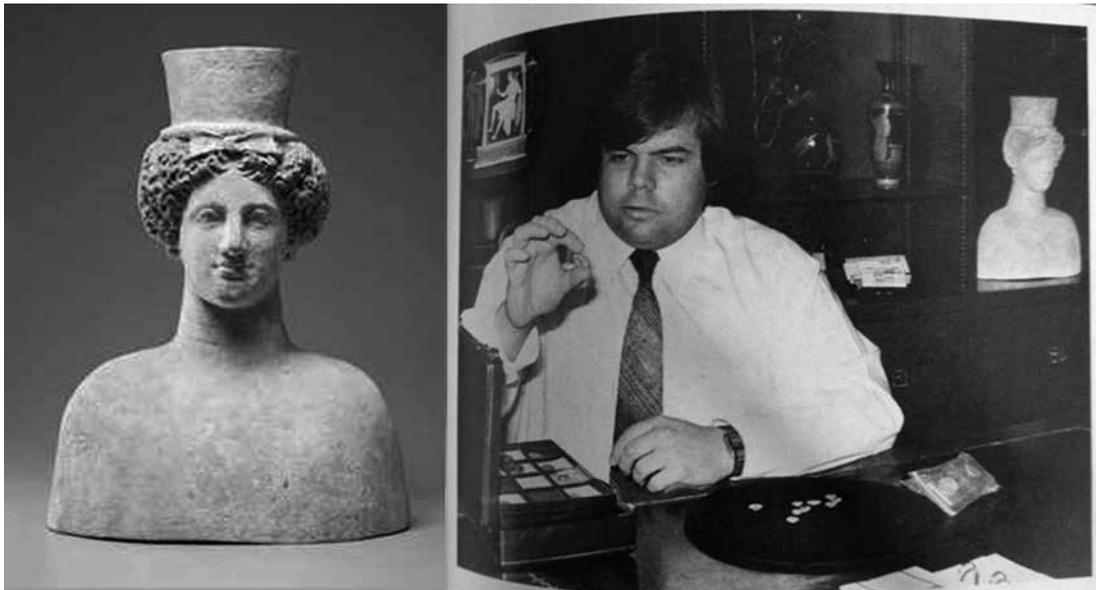


Fig. 9.—Left: The bust as it appeared in Christie's in 2013. Right: The same bust (far right) in 1980's as it appears in McNall's book.

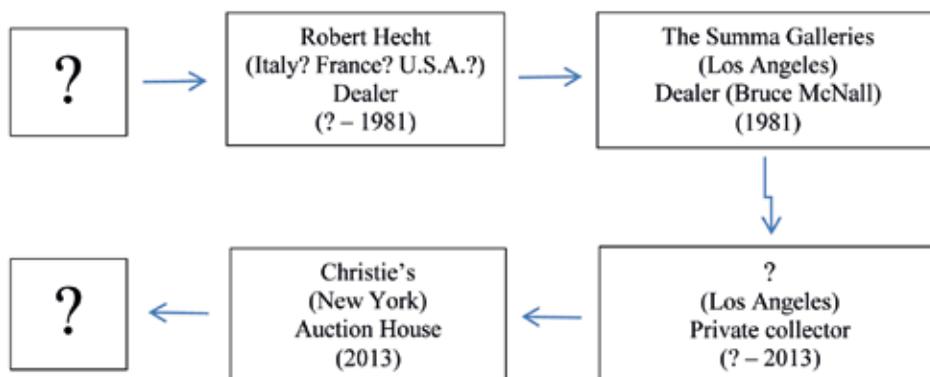


Fig. 10.—The path taken by the Greek terracotta bust of a goddess through the market.

The Christie's catalogue states that the object originates from 'Magna Graecia', not in the 'Provenance' section of the entry, but in the title for the bust in the catalogue.

The object's time in 'Summa Galleries' is preserved in the first page of the photographic section of the book *Fun while it lasted*, written by the owner Bruce McNall (fig. 9, right) states that nearly all the antiquities he traded in his gallery were supplied by Robert Hecht (McNall, 2003:41), the notorious antiquities dealer who dominated the international antiquities market from the late 1950s to the late 1970s. More scandal is attached to the 'Summa Galleries'; they sold looted and smuggled objects that first passed through Medici (Silver, 2010; Tsirogiannis, 2013a:8-10), and McNall was found to have been operating 'fraudulent businesses' (Hoving, 1996:287); he was sentenced to 70 months in jail, but was released after serving almost 48 of them (McNall, 2003:237, 284).

In 2013, the bust was estimated at \$15,000-20,000 and was sold for \$35,000. Its current whereabouts remain unknown.

An Apulian Gnathian-ware bell-krater

A South Italian (Apulian) Gnathian-ware bell-krater dating c. 330-300 B.C. was offered for sale in Christie's auction of June 2013 (fig. 11, right) in New York with a minimal collecting history:

PROVENANCE
Art Market, Switzerland, 1994.

I had identified the object in 2012, however, in the 'Phoenix Ancient Art' gallery, which maintains branches in Geneva and New York. The gallery is owned by the Aboutaam brothers (Ali and Hicham), who have been found guilty in Egypt and USA (Watson and Todeschini, 2007: 244-245) for their wrongdoings regarding antiquities, and have been involved in numerous cases of antiquities without a documented collecting history (e.g. the Apollo Sauroktonos statue in Cleveland Museum, Gill, 2014:69-75), as well as in



Fig. 11.—Left: The krater as it appears in the Medici archive. Right: The same krater as it appeared in Christie's in 2013.

fakes (Muscarella, 2013:14). The Aboutaam brothers maintained a close cooperation with Giacomo Medici (Watson and Todeschini, 2007: 140-141). Therefore, it was not a surprise that I identified the vase in 'Phoenix Ancient Art' from five regular images from the confiscated Medici archive (Medici, CD 1, Busta 54, images nos. 18-19; Medici CD 2, Raccoglitore 4, Pagina 25, image no. 7; Medici CD 3, Raccoglitore 82 ceramica, Pagina 12, image no. 6; Medici CD 3, Raccoglitore 82 ceramica, Pagina 17, image no. 4), depicting the vase before and after the removal of the soil encrustations, as well as among many South Italian, Etruscan and Villanovan objects (fig. 11, left). Once again, Medici is missing from Christie's 'provenance' for the krater; once again, arrested and convicted antiquities dealers are hidden behind a vague description ('Art Market, Switzerland, 1994'). Why are the Aboutaams, the probable consigners, not named in the 'provenance' given in Christie's catalogue? The krater was estimated at \$10,000-15,000 and remained unsold; it was not included in Christie's 'Auction Results' online. The object's whereabouts remain unknown (fig. 12).

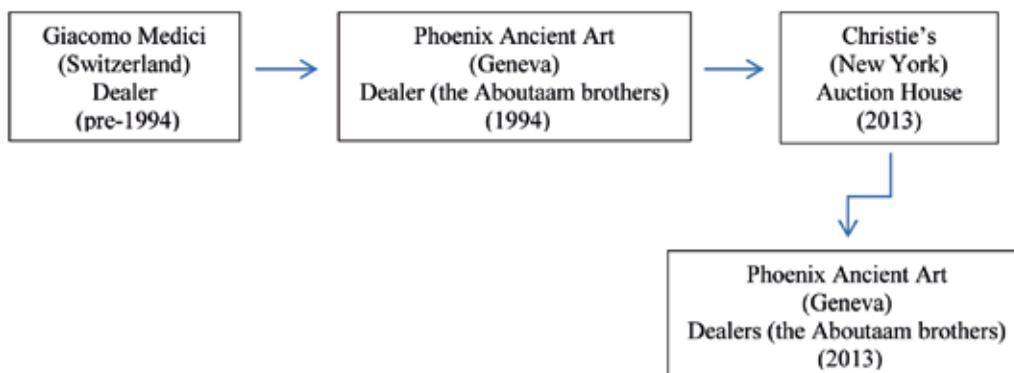


Fig. 12.—The path taken by the Gnathian-ware bell-krater through the market.

A Roman marble torso of Apollo

A Roman marble torso of Apollo dating c. 1st century B.C.- 1st century A.D. appeared in the same June 2013 Christie's auction in New York (fig. 13, right), as part of the Mona Ackerman collection (lot 610, featured on the catalogue cover). The collecting history in the 'Provenance' section of Christie's catalogue was:

PROVENANCE:
with Hosur Corporation, Kusnacht.
Switzerland, 1989.

However, the object is depicted in three professional photographs from the Symes-Michaelides archive (nos. 2001-2003), in the same condition as it is found in Christie's catalogue (Fig. 13, left). The code on the back of the three photographs does not make clear the date on which Symes and Michaelides acquired the object. The omission of

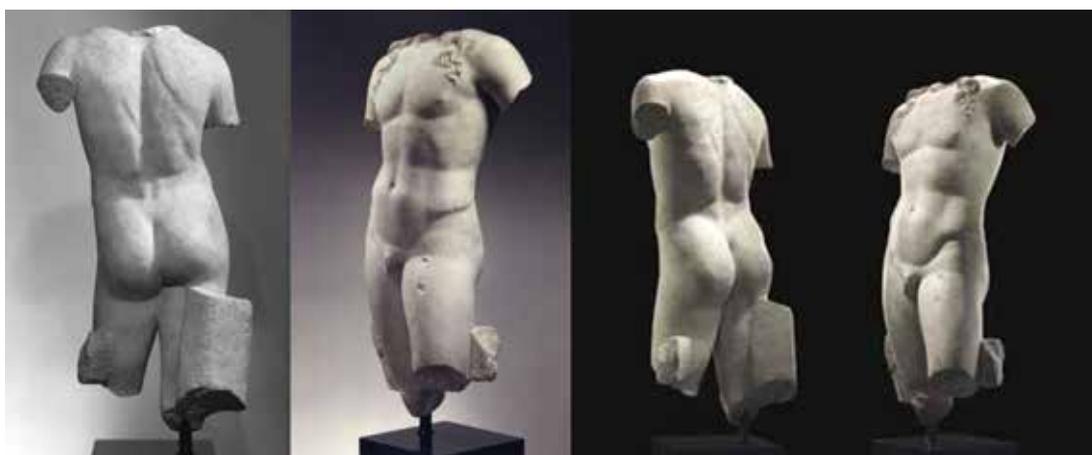


Fig. 13.—Left: The two sides of the statue as it appears in the Symes-Michaelides archive. Right: The same statue in Christie's in 2013.

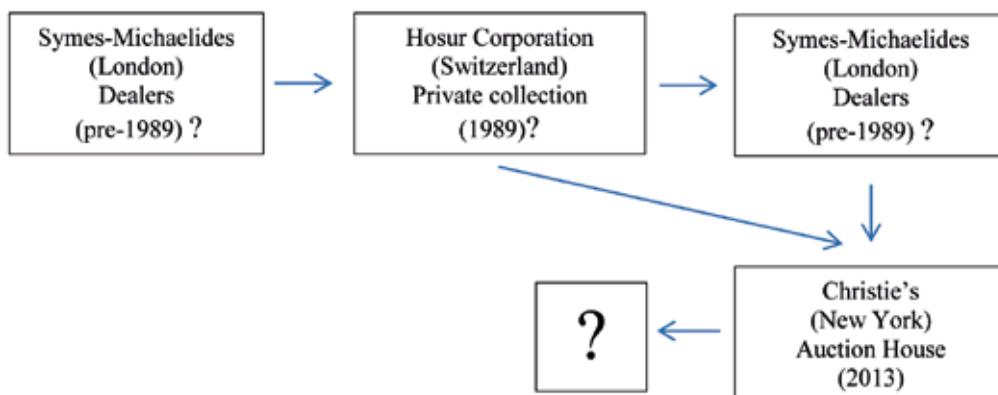


Fig. 14. The path taken by the Roman marble torso of Apollo through the market.

their names from the ‘provenance’ section of the statue’s entry in Christie’s catalogue is interesting (did they handle the object before or after ‘Hosur Corporation’?) and Christie’s do not say who owned ‘Hosur Corporation, Kusnacht’, in 1989, implying only that Mona Ackerman bought the object directly from that company (fig. 14). The statue was estimated at \$200,000-300,000 and was sold for \$195,750.

CHRISTIE’S AUCTION OF 24 OCTOBER 2013 IN LONDON

On 24 October, 2013, Christie’s offered for sale in London 290 antiquities in 130 lots, numbered 1-130 (Christie’s, 2013c). According to the collecting history for each of these antiquities, as given by Christie’s, 85 antiquities have no collecting history before 1970. In fact, from these 85 antiquities, 75 have no collecting history before 1980, among which 30 have no collecting history before 1990. Ten antiquities apparently emerged in the 1970s, but for 1 of these (lot 123) we are told only that the collection in which it surfaced was ‘formed primarily 1970s-1980s). In addition, for 21 antiquities it is not clear if they surfaced before 1970, e.g. because we are given only the dates of their collector’s birth and death. Only 184 appear to have a pre-1970 collecting history. By my calculations, Christie’s estimated to fetch from the sale between £2,455,500 and £2,647,000 in total. Although 82 antiquities remained unsold, Christie’s sold the remaining 208 for £3,408,250.

From the 290 antiquities offered for sale, one antiquity was then withdrawn; another, which was sold, was closely related to the one withdrawn. I also identified another antiquity in the confiscated Symes-Michaelides archive. The reconstructed collecting histories of the three objects are as follows.

Two Elamite silver beakers

Two Elamite silver beakers dating c. 1900-1500 B.C. (lot 11) and 2500-1500 B.C. (lot 14) were offered for sale under the title ‘Various Properties’, estimated respectively at £70,000-100,000 and £50,000-70,000. Christie’s supplied the two beakers with the same collecting history:

PROVENANCE:

Private collection, UK, acquired 1940s-1950s.

The second Elamite beaker (lot 14) (fig. 15), although estimated lower than the first (lot 11), was the central piece in the ‘Ancient Near East’ section of the Christie’s catalogue, detailed throughout pp. 4-5, introducing all the Near Eastern antiquities of the

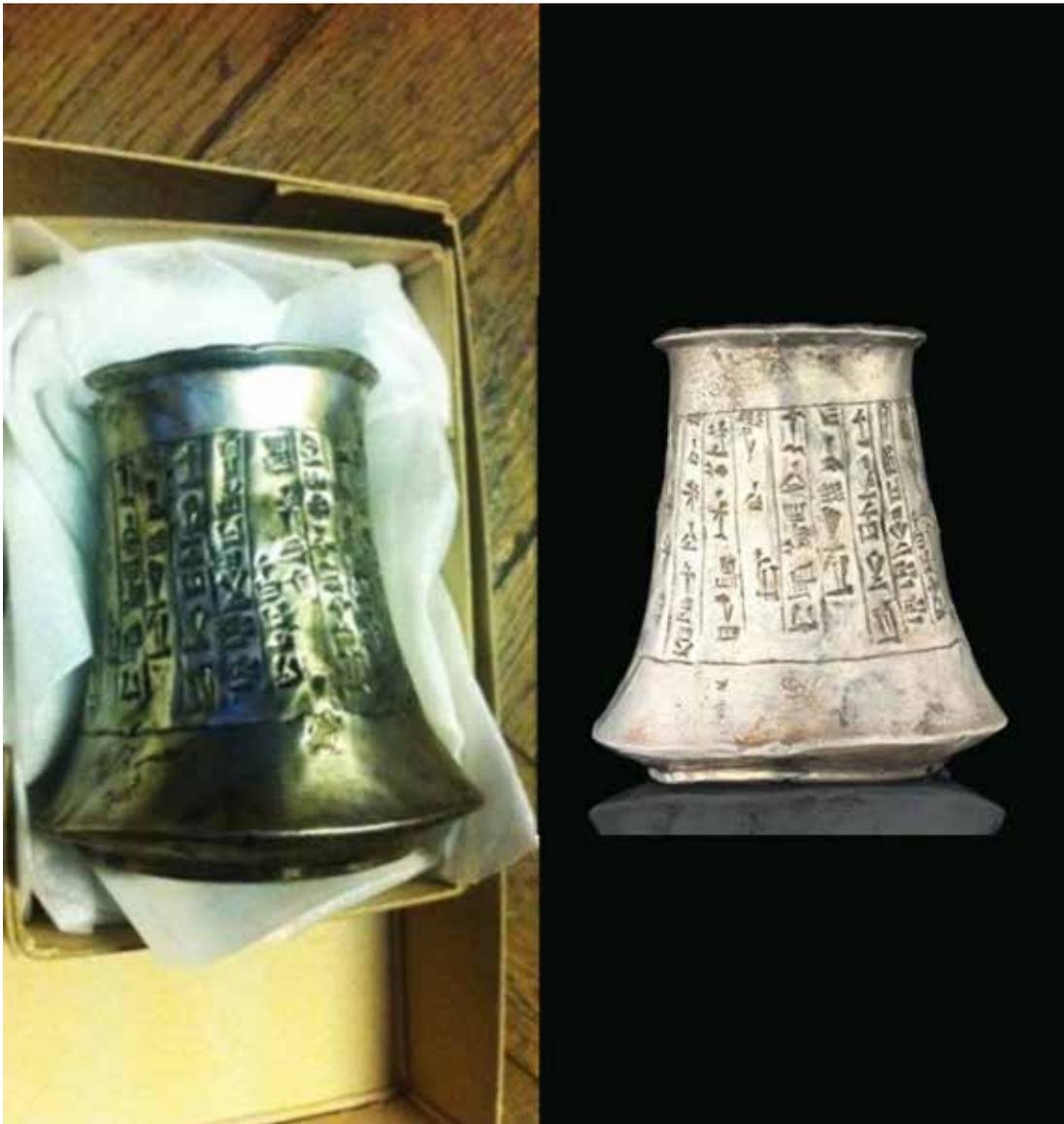


Fig. 15.—Left: The withdrawn beaker as it appeared in ‘Der Spiegel’ (Photo: Zenith). Right: The same beaker in Christie’s in 2013.

catalogue. It should not go unnoticed that only the second beaker (lot 14) was additionally supplied with a reference for a similar piece:

Cf. H. Mahboubian, Elam, Art and Civilization of Ancient Iran 3000-2000 B.C., Salisbury, 2004, nos 1-5, for similar.

Along the bottom of every even-numbered page in this section, Christie's reminded potential buyers of a special notice regarding Iranian antiquities in the first pages of the catalogue. The notice stated (p. 3):

LOTS OF IRANIAN ORIGIN

Please note that the US Iranian Transaction Regulations prohibit the import into the USA, and the purchase by US persons, of Iranian origin 'works of conventional craftsmanship' (works that are not by a recognized artist and/or that have a function, for example: bowls, ewers, tiles, ornamental boxes). It is the responsibility of US persons to ensure that they do not bid on prohibited Iranian origin property. US persons include US citizens and US permanent residents (green card holders) wherever these individuals are located, US entities and any other persons temporarily resident or located in the US.

Four days before the auction (20/10/2013) Mr. Zsombor Földi, a graduate student of Assyriology and Hebrew in Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary, sent an email to the 'Agade' mailing list (agade@listserv.unc.edu, maintained by Professor Jack M. Sasson, the Mary Jane Werthan Professor of Jewish Studies and Hebrew Bible at Vanderbilt Divinity School), stating:

An inscribed silver beaker of Elamite origin will be offered for sale at a Christie's auction on the 24th October 2013
(see<<http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/LotDetailsPrintable.aspx?intObjectID=5726644>>).

To judge by the image, it is undoubtedly the same object which has already been studied by Michael Müller-Karpe in München in 2007, when it was offered for sale at a Gorny & Mosch auction. He considered it as originating (presumably) from an illicitly excavated temple of Napiriša at Anšan. See especially his article 'Antikenmarkt als Geldwäsche: Der Silberbecher des Königs Ebarat', *Kunst und Recht* 14 (2012), 195-202, available via his academia.edu profile. One finds another article on the topic at <http://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/mensch/raubgut-becher-koennte-aus-tempel-von-anschan-stammen-a-856561.html>.

Unfortunately, the German authorities finally closed the investigation and the beaker was given back to its the dealer [*sic*].

Michael Müller-Karpe was kind enough to forward this information to Interpol but they decided neither to take action nor to forward it to England, for the reason that the investigation has been closed. I suppose it may be of some worth to inform the subscribers of the Agade list about this case, but it's up to your decision.

According to Professor Müller-Karpe (Müller-Karpe, 2012:196, fn. 6), the beaker was offered for sale by Gorny & Mosch in their auction of June 22, 2007, as lot 35. The Gorny & Mosch catalogue (2007) reveals that the first appearance of the beaker was in the auction of Hôtel Drouot on November 28, 2005 (lot 164). (For Hôtel Drouot, see above,

pp. 4-5). In this catalogue, the collecting history of the beaker concludes: ‘Seit den 70er Jahren in englischem Privatbesitz’ (‘Since the 1970s in an English private collection’). As for the *Spiegel* article, it names the dealer Houshang Mahboubian as the owner of the beaker (Metzger, 2012). A *New York Times* article refers to Mahboubian’s conviction by a United States court in 1987 for conspiracy, burglary and attempted grand larceny; Mahboubian had masterminded a burglary in 1986 to defraud his insurers of \$18 million ‘after he was unable to sell the art pieces because they were forgeries’ (Johnson 1987).

The Agade mailing list published Földi’s email on 20 October, 2013⁴. On the following day (21/10/2013) Lord Renfrew of Kaimsthorn, Emeritus Professor of Archaeology at the University of Cambridge, sent a letter to Christie’s to ask ‘whether the bronze-age Elamite beaker [lot 11] had been exported illegally from Iran because it was ‘apparently identical’ to an object recently identified as loot by Professor Michael Müller-Karpe, a specialist in Middle-Eastern antiquities’, as *The Times* reported the following day (22/10/2013). Christie’s were ‘understood to dispute the claim, but withdrew the item because an investigation could not be completed before the sale’ (Malvern, 2013). A Christie’s employee at the London antiquities department stated publicly on 23/6/2014 (during the conference ‘New Approaches to Heritage Ethics: Interdisciplinary conversations on heritage, crime, conflicts and rights’, held at the University of Kent), that Christie’s never announce the results of their internal investigations. Lord Renfrew focused on the absence of Müller-Karpe’s article and the Gorny & Mosch 2007 auction from the collecting history of the beaker in the ‘Provenance’ section of the Christie’s catalogue, regarding it as ‘a notable failure of the due diligence expected of a reputable dealer in antiquities’ (Malvern, 2013). After the withdrawal of the beaker, Professor Lord Renfrew had a letter from a firm of lawyers, representing the Mahboubians, father and son, requesting a retraction and apology. Professor Lord Renfrew’s lawyer replied, ‘asking for more details of the complaint. Nothing more has been heard so far’ (email from Professor Lord Renfrew to me on 2/9/2014).

The second Elamite beaker (lot 14) was sold for £56,250. We do not know for sure that the owner of that beaker was also Mr. Mahboubian, since Christie’s do not disclose the names of the sellers or buyers. However, it is indicative that Mr. Mahboubian was the owner of the withdrawn beaker and that the second (sold) beaker in the Christie’s catalogue was accompanied by a reference to Mr. Mahboubian’s 2004 publication (fig. 16).

A Roman marble torso of an athlete

In 2008 Christie’s announced that the collection of Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé would be auctioned in Paris on 23-25/2/2009 (Christie’s, 2009). The impact of the announcement was such that even some of the various printed auction catalogues of this sale (each covering a different section of the collection) immediately became collectible. One of the catalogues featured on its cover a Roman marble torso of an athlete (lot 680,

4. Following my enquiry, Mr. Zsombor Földi verified with his 14/8/2014 email that it was he who identified the Elamite beaker, lot 11, on October 16, 2013.

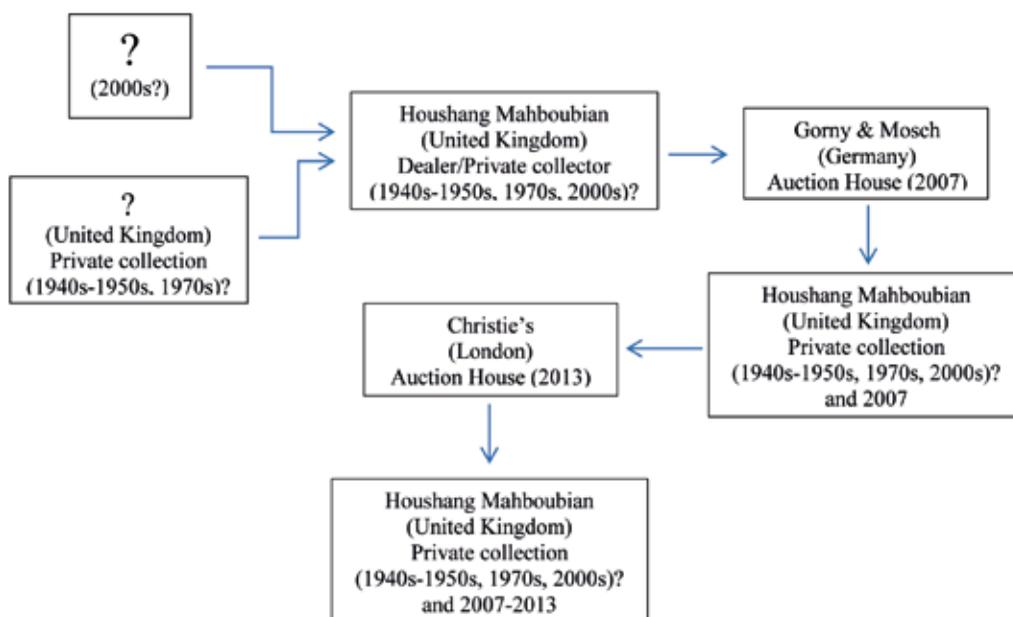


Fig. 16.—The path taken by the two Elamite silver beakers through the market.

detailed pp. 472-475). When the catalogues came online (January 2009), I identified this object in the Symes-Michaelides archive (fig. 17, left), in two professional photographs (nos. 0233+2004). The only collecting history given by Christie's was: 'Galerie Marc Lagrand, Paris, 1970-1980'. The marble torso was estimated at €300,000–500,000 and finally sold for €1,297,000.

The statue resurfaced about 4.5 years later, again in a Christie's auction (24 October, 2013), this time in London (Christie's, 2013c:70-73) (fig. 17, right). The object was offered as 'The property of a gentleman', accompanied by the following collecting history:

Provenance
 with Galerie Marc Lagrand, Paris.
 Yves Saint Laurent (1936-2008), acquired prior to 1974.
 Collection Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé; Christie's, Paris, 25 February 2009,
 lot 680.
 Private collection, Switzerland.

PUBLISHED:

'Les années 20 revues dans les années '70: chez Yves Saint Laurent par Philippe Julian', *Connaissance des arts*, December 1973, p. 103. 'Architectural Digest Visits: Yves Saint Laurent', *Architectural Digest*, September/October 1976, pp. 112-119.

This time the statue was estimated at £800,000 - 1,200,000 and was sold for £962,500.



Fig. 17.—Left: The statue as it appears in the Symes-Michaelides archive. Right: The same statue in Christie's 2013.

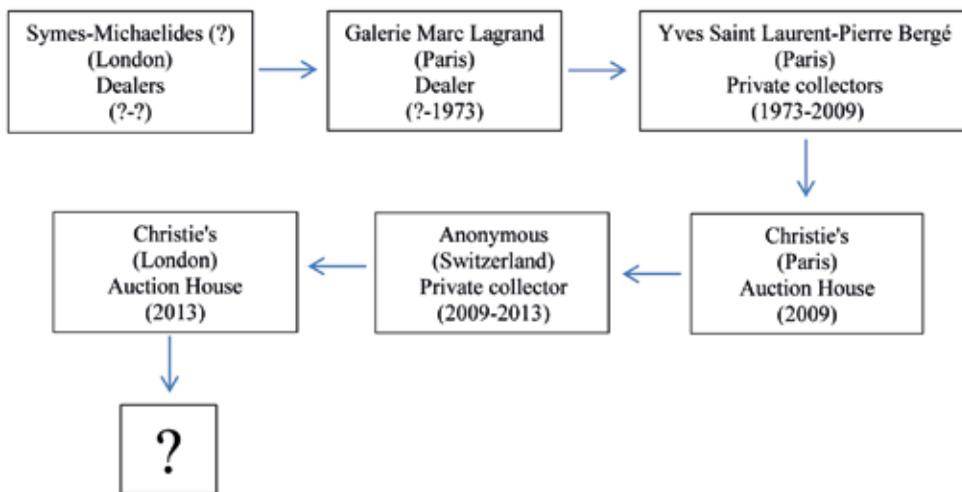


Fig. 18.—The path taken by the Roman marble torso of an athlete through the market.

Several questions arise regarding this case (fig. 18). Why are Symes-Michaelides not mentioned in either of the two auctions? Did the statue become part of their stock, or was it offered to them but they did not acquire it? (The code number of the object does not refer to a specific date of acquisition). Why did Christie's not mention the 1973 publication in the catalogue of the 2009 Yves Saint Laurent-Pierre Bergé auction? Who is the anonymous private collector in Switzerland who consigned the statue to the October 2013 auction?

SOTHEBY'S AUCTION OF 12 DECEMBER 2013 IN NEW YORK

On 12 December, 2013, Sotheby's offered for sale in New York 91 objects (80 antiquities, 10 17th c. Ottoman, Persian and Chinese objects, and a painting) in 85 lots, numbered 1-85 (Sotheby's, 2013b). According to the collecting history given for each of the antiquities, 21 have no collecting history before 1970. Of these 21 antiquities, 4 have no collecting history before 1980, among which 2 have no collecting history before 1990 and 7 emerged in the 1970's. The remaining 10 objects from this category (lots 56-60), dating on the 17th and 18th century, were offered for sale without being clear if they surfaced in the 1970's or the 1980's. In addition, for 23 antiquities it is not clear if they surfaced before 1970, and 47 appear to have a pre-1970 collecting history. By my calculations, Sotheby's estimated to fetch from the sale between \$8,208,200 and \$12,536,600 in total. Although 19 objects remained unsold, Sotheby's sold the remaining 72 for \$16,106,625.

Among the 91 antiquities offered for sale I identified two in the confiscated archives of Medici and Symes-Michaelides, respectively, and I notified Ms. Sharon Cohen Levin, Chief of the Money Laundering and Asset Forfeiture Unit in the Southern District of New York U.S. attorney's office, by email on 3 December, 2013. She forwarded the case to the Homeland Securities Investigations. HIS appointed an agent, to whom I passed all the information and the images I had regarding this auction. The Italian public prosecutor Dr. Paolo Ferri, Professor David Gill, journalist Fabio Isman and the Association for Research into Crimes against Art (ARCA) were also notified at the same time. The reconstructed collecting history of these antiquities is as follows.

A Monumental Marble Head of Hermes-Thoth

A Late Hellenistic marble head of Hermes-Thoth is depicted in three professional images from the Symes-Michaelides archive (nos. 0869, 2105–2106) (fig. 19, left), in the same condition in which it appears in Sotheby's December 2013 auction as lot 39 (fig. 19, right). The object had the highest estimation in this antiquities auction (\$2,500,000-3,500,000) and was presented as 'Property from a private collection'. The collecting history in Sotheby's read as follows:

Provenance
Douglas H. Fisher, London, 1950s/60s



Fig. 19.—Left: The marble head as it appears in the Symes-Michaelides archive. Right: The same head as it appeared in Sotheby's in 2013.

Robin Symes, Ltd., London
Albrecht Neuhaus, Würzburg, by 1970
American private collection, acquired circa 1990
acquired by the present owner on the European art market in 2006.

No evidence could be found regarding the object's possession by Douglas H. Fisher in London 1950s/60s. Sotheby's gives a date for every part of the collecting history of the head, except for Symes. However, the Schinoussa archive gives the answer: the head passed through Symes and Michaelides' hands in 1993, since this date is part of the code number on the back of two of the three professional images. Therefore, the collecting history published by Sotheby's is misleading, since the impression given is that Symes handled the object before Albrecht Neuhaus, therefore before 1970. There is always the possibility that Symes and Michaelides first acquired the head before 1970 and then bought it back from the anonymous American collector 'circa 1990' (actually in 1993). However, this scenario seems unlikely, since Symes and Michaelides (including Michaelides' family) probably could not back up such an acquisition financially in the early days of their partnership (before 1970).

The Hermes-Thoth head was on offer in the German market, at Würzburg, in the gallery 'Albrecht Neuhaus', at least from May 1970. This is verified by an image of the same head, accompanying an advertisement in *The Burlington Magazine* (Vol. 112, No. 806, May, 1970, p. 75)⁵. Its caption reads: 'Hermes of Hermoupolis, Late Hellenistic marble head, Height 44 cm.' Thus, the Hermes-Thoth head has a documented collecting history before the (November) 1970 UNESCO Convention.

In 1998 the magazine *House & Garden* published in its June issue an article referring to the decoration of a villa in Colorado. In one of the accompanying images appears the marble head as part of the decoration in one of the living rooms (Moonan 1998:131). From the same article I was able in 2006 to identify in the villa several other antiquities depicted also in the Symes-Michaelides archive. The article did not name the owner of the villa. However, documents that reached the American courts in October 2006 refer to a case of William T. and Lynda L. Beierwaltes, residents of Colorado, versus the administrators of the estate of the late Christos Michaelides. The documents state that the Beierwaltes were clients of Symes and Michaelides (05-1021, Appeal no. D.C. No. 03-MC-103).

Between 15th and 24th September, 2006, 'Phoenix Ancient Art' gallery, owned by the Aboutaam brothers, participated in the 'XXIII^e Biennale Des Antiquaires', hosted in Grand Palais, Paris. Among the antiquities exhibited was the Hermes-Thoth head, presented as 'Colossal Marble Head of Hermes, 2nd Century B.C.' Two versions of the same videoclip⁶, produced on October 2006 and accessible from the 'Phoenix Ancient Art' website, present the head during the exhibition.

In 2007 Dr. Robert Steven Bianchi, a former curator in the Department of Egyptian, Classical and Ancient Middle Eastern Art at the Brooklyn Museum, published an article about another marble head which depicts Alexander the Great⁷. On the first page, Bianchi mentions Hermes (Sotheby's) head, along with others, as coming not only from Egypt, but also from a specific site ('Hermopolis, modern Ashmunein in Middle Egypt') which coincides with Neuhaus gallery's collecting history (Bianchi, 2007:29):

The subject of this essay is a marble portrait of Alexander the Great which is currently in an American private collection (figs. 1 and 2). The portrait was formerly part of the inventory of Maurice Nahman (1868–1948), the Cairene Antiquities dealer, and was said to have come from Hermopolis, modern Ashmunein Middle Egypt. This site has been excavated of late by a team from London's British Museum Expedition to Middle Egypt and was dedicated to Thoth often equated with Greek Hermes. At least two other accomplished portraits of Ptolemaic rulers in Hellenistic style are known to have come from that site, to which can be added a marble image of Hermes, perhaps of second century B.C. date, with remains of its original inlaid eyes still preserved, in a private collection⁶ [...]

5. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/876300?seq=77>.

6. <http://vimeo.com/68057055> and <http://vimeo.com/73823665>.

7. Available at http://www.academia.edu/744595/_The_Nahman_Alexander_JARCE_43_2007_29-42.

Professor David Gill first published these two references on his blog 'Looting Matters' on December 5, 2013 (<http://lootingmatters.blogspot.co.uk/search?q=Thoth>).

In his footnote no. 6, Dr. Bianchi states: ‘Not published; I thank the present owner for granting me permission to study this portrait and mention its existence here’. The collector who owned the head in 2007 is not named. Matching this up with the head’s collecting history published by Sotheby’s, this ‘present owner’ must have been the consigner of the object in Sotheby’s 2013 auction, since (s)he owned the antiquity since 2006. Combining this with the ‘provenance’ given by Sotheby’s, if we accept that as true, yields the following fuller collecting history:

Douglas H. Fisher, London, 1950s/60s
 Robin Symes, Ltd., London
 Albrecht Neuhaus, Würzburg, by 1970
 American private collection, acquired circa 1990
 Robin Symes-Christos Michaelides 1993
 American collectors 1998
 Phoenix Ancient Art, Geneva, 2006
 Private collection (Bianchi 2007)
 acquired by the present owner on the European art market in 2006

Its difference from Sotheby’s version of the head’s collecting history prompts questions. If the object is licit, why do Sotheby’s not mention the Aboutaam brothers or their gallery? Why did Sotheby’s fail to give the correct dates for Robin Symes and Christos Michaelides and the American collector(s) (Beierwaltes) who apparently has/had a villa in Colorado full of antiquities originating from Symes-Michaelides? Why Symes’ date of acquisition of the head is omitted? Is the ‘European Art market 2006’ actually covering the Aboutaam brothers, either because of the Geneva branch of their gallery or because of the September 2006 exhibition in Paris, where the sale of the head may have taken place? Some of the missing parts of the head’s collecting history were published in other media well before the auction (fig. 20). Nevertheless, the head was sold for \$4,645,000, the record price for this auction.

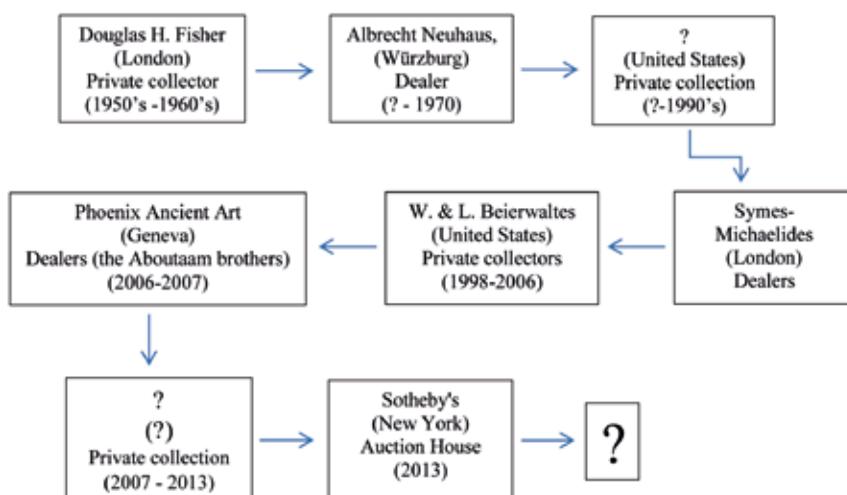


Fig. 20.—The path taken by the marble head of Hermes-Thoth through the market.

A Marble Herm head of Pan

The confiscated Medici archive includes among thousands of Polaroids one which depicts a ‘Roman giallo antico marble Herm head of Pan’. This Polaroid is affixed to an A4 size sheet entitled ‘Hydra Gallery’ (the name of Medici’s former antiquities gallery in Geneva), along with a short handwritten description and a price, probably written by Medici himself (fig. 21, left). The note reads:

ERMETTA. PANISCO MARMO GIALLO FR. 4’o,
[‘Small herm. Yellow marble small Pan’ [probably] 4,000 Swiss Francs].

The head of Pan is depicted in the Polaroid on what appears to be a carpet.

The same object appeared as lot 51 in Sotheby’s antiquities auction of 12 December, 2013 in New York (fig. 21, right), estimated at \$10,000-15,000. Sotheby’s presented the object with the following collecting history:

French private collection, Fontainebleau, acquired circa 1975

I sent the identifications before the auction to Homeland Securities Investigations and they were published online by Looting Matters and ARCA blogs. Sotheby’s withdrew the head of Pan on the day of the auction (12/12/13). The head of Pan was immediately removed from the online catalogue as well and since then has not appeared in Sotheby’s website (‘Auction Results’)⁸. The name of the French private collection remains unknown (fig. 22). There have not been yet any official announcements by Homeland Securities Investigations regarding the case, but it usually takes 3-5 years for an investigation and a forfeiture to be concluded and publicly announced (Tsirogiannis 2013a:5; St. Hilaire 2014).



Fig. 21.—Left and centre: The marble head as it appears in the Medici archive. Right: The same head as it appeared in Sotheby’s in 2013.

8. <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2013/antiquities-n09056.html#&page=all&sort=lotNum-asc&viewMode=list>

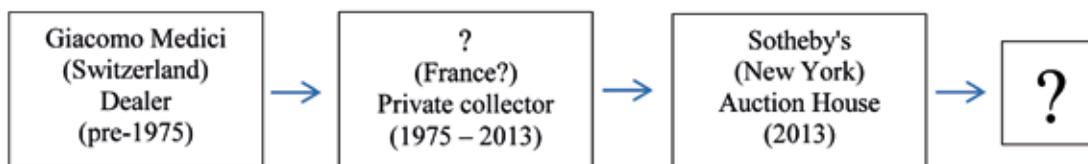


Fig. 22.—The path taken by the marble Herm head of Pan through the market.

CHRISTIE'S AUCTION OF 13 DECEMBER 2013 IN NEW YORK

On December 13, 2013 Christie's offered for sale in New York 217 antiquities in 173 lots, numbered 1-173 (Christie's, 2013d). According to the collecting history given by Christie's for each of these antiquities, 100 antiquities have no collecting history before 1970. In fact, from these 100 antiquities, 77 have no collecting history before 1980, among which 38 have no collecting history before 1990. Therefore, 23 antiquities from this category seem to emerge in the 1970s. For 18 antiquities, it is not clear if they surfaced before 1970. 99 appear to have a pre-1970 collecting history. By my calculations, Christie's estimated to fetch from the sale between \$4,912,800 and \$7,283,700 in total. Although 60 antiquities remained unsold, Christie's sold the remaining 157 for \$4,407,250.

Among these 217 antiquities, I identified one antiquity depicted in the confiscated Symes-Michaelides archive. Its reconstructed collecting history is as follows:



Fig. 23.—The figurine as it appears in the Symes-Michaelides archive. In this same condition the figurine appeared in Christie's in 2013.

A Greek terracotta Pan

A Greek terracotta figurine of Pan, lot 114 in Christie's, estimated at \$8,000-12,000, appears in the same condition in one professional photograph (fig. 23) from the confiscated Symes-Michaelides archive (no. 449). Christie's 'Provenance' for the entry was:

with Edward H. Merrin Gallery, New York, 1968.
Private Collection, New York, 1968-2011.

That is, the collecting history excluded Symes and Michaelides, as well as the identity of the object's owner since 2011, also apparently the consigner to the December 2013 auction.

Five days before the auction (8/12/2013) I notified Ms. Sharon Cohen Levin at the New York U.S. attorney's office and the following day Ms. Cohen Levin passed the information to the same agent handling the Sotheby's case on behalf of the Homeland Securities Investigations. The same day

the agent sent me an email verifying receipt of the relevant information and photographic evidence for both the Sotheby's and the Christie's cases. The Italian prosecutor Dr. Paolo Ferri, Professor David Gill, journalist Fabio Isman and the Association for Research into Crimes against Art (ARCA) were also notified at the same time.

On the day of the auction, Christie's withdrew the figurine of Pan from the auction. The whereabouts of the object remain unknown. We await an official announcement about this case, too, from U.S. Homeland Securities Investigations. It is surprising that Christie's decided to withdraw the figurine, since this antiquity was accompanied by a 1968 collecting history and it is not clear if Symes-Michaelides ever owned the figurine. Does this mean that the collecting history given by Christie's could not be verified? (fig. 24). A detail emerging from research of the confiscated Symes-Michaelides archive connects the two Symes-Michaelides pieces in Sotheby's (head of Hermes-Thoth) and in Christie's (figurine of Pan), both in New York, to be auctioned with a day's difference; both the antiquities were photographed by the same British photographer hired by Symes-Michaelides.

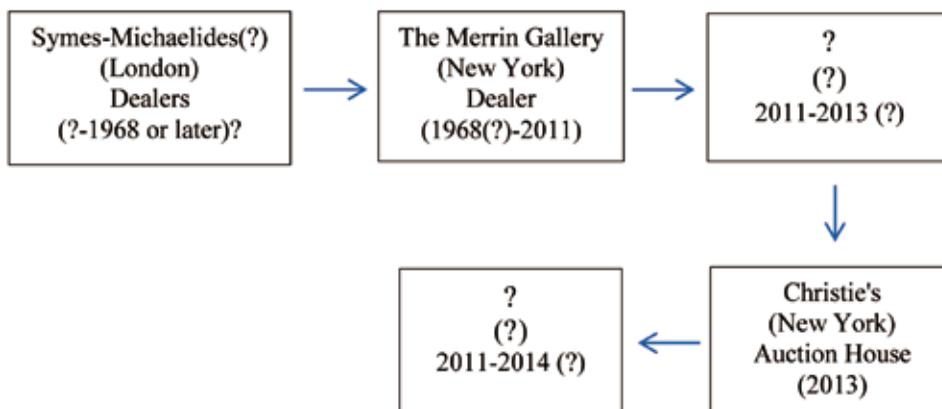


Fig. 24.—The path taken by the terracotta figurine of Pan through the market.

CHRISTIE'S AUCTION OF 13 DECEMBER 2013 IN NEW YORK

On 13 December 2013 Christie's offered for sale in New York 356 ancient jewellery in 149 lots, numbered 201-349 (Christie's, 2013e). According to the collecting history given by Christie's for each of these antiquities, 212 antiquities have no collecting history before 1970. Of these 212 antiquities, 131 have no collecting history before 1980, among which 106 have no collecting history before 1990. Therefore, 77 antiquities from this category seem to emerge in the 1970s; for 4 antiquities it is not clear if they surfaced during the 1970s or 1980s. Another category includes 32 antiquities for which it is unclear if they surfaced before or after 1970. The remaining 112 antiquities appear to have a pre-1970 collecting history. By my calculations, Christie's estimated to fetch between \$1,321,800 and \$1,944,400 in total. Although 100 antiquities remained unsold,

Christie's sold the remaining 256 for \$1,403,937. No antiquities were identified from the confiscated archives in this auction.

CONCLUSIONS

Several striking conclusions can be drawn from the results of this research:

First, analysis of the collecting histories of 1424 antiquities appearing in 5 Christie's and 1 Sotheby's auction in London and New York during 2013, has yielded telling results. According to the information released *by the auction houses* for these 6 auctions, 639 antiquities (44,85%) had no collecting history before 1970, for 138 antiquities (9,7%) it was uncertain if they surfaced before or after 1970, and 647 (45,45%) had a reported pre-1970 collecting history. However, this last percentage should be lower, since, as we have seen (p. 2 above), stolen antiquities excavated in 2000 in Egypt found their way into the Christie's catalogues with a fake collecting history that Christie's failed to verify, despite advertising that 'due diligence is incredibly thorough' (Loader Wilkinson, 2011). Therefore we see that the antiquities market at the highest level continues to be based largely on antiquities with no pre-1970 collecting history, while some of them appear to be illicit, as suggested by the photographic evidence from the confiscated archives in the hands of convicted dealers.

Apart from the 'due diligence' hypocrisy, we see too that throughout 2013, the top auction houses in several cases continued to cover with vague descriptions the identity of convicted dealers in the 'provenance' section of their catalogues (e.g. 'Art Market, Switzerland, 1994' for the Aboutaam brothers or Medici in the case of the Apulian Gnathian-ware bell-krater), or even failed to trace and name them as the original source or part of the collecting history of these antiquities.

The market has a standard argument to defend its wrongdoings: since research of the confiscated archives started to produce evidence leading to identifications of illicit antiquities in the market, its members have complained that the archives are not publicly available and, therefore, the market does not have the sources to protect itself from selling such antiquities. This argument is disingenuous; the easiest, most inexpensive and most honest way for the market to be protected from selling illicit antiquities is to stay away from any antiquity that is lacking *documented* collecting history *beyond any doubt* before 1970. The market would have no need of the archives, if their aim were really to create a totally legal market. However, it seems that the real aim is profit, for which end they will sell licit and illicit antiquities, even stolen ones, until a few of the illicit antiquities are identified. Even then, the sale usually continues; a few objects may be withdrawn, but most of them will be returned to their consigners who will remain unnamed and thus protected. This situation means that the few repatriated antiquities are significant exceptions; the majority of illicit antiquities go unidentified, inefficiently researched or unclaimed.

As we attempt to reconstruct the patterns followed by all the identified illicit objects within the market, using information emerging from the research on the confiscated archives, the identification of antiquities on sale during 2013 and the reconstruction of

the collecting history of each of these antiquities, a few points may be underlined: a) Following up Mackenzie and Davies on dealers with double identity (operating as dealer *and* collector, who use a dirty hand to acquire illicit antiquities from suppliers and a clean one to pass them up the supply chain) as 'Janus' figures (Mackenzie and Davies, 2014: 723), the dealer Elie Borowski who sold his vase collection to Christie's equally can be identified as 'Janus'. However, I have found an auction house (Christie's) holding a triple identity (that of a dealer and a collector, as well); in this case it resembles Cerberus, the three-headed dog who in Greek mythology guarded Hades (the underworld). b) The collective map below makes evident that once an antiquity reaches a dealer it begins being circulated in the market. However, if the state authorities of the so-called 'source countries' (the market's term) could prevent the objects' passing to dealers, capturing them while they are still in the possession of a looter or a middleman, the market in illicit antiquities would collapse, since a looter or a middleman do not appear to have direct contacts with an auction house or a private collector who does not operate also as a dealer. c) While dealers and auction houses were known to be key members of the antiquities market, it appears that collectors too can be so regarded, since they are not always the final destinations of the antiquities (as the museums often are), but just as often offer the same objects back to the market. This observation partly verifies the famous point of Professor Elia ('collectors are the real looters', Elia, 1993: 69) and Mackenzie and Davies' point that, at least in the network they studied, Janus (a dealer, often with two identities) 'is the real looter' (Mackenzie and Davies, 2014: 737), due to his identity as a collector. However, auction houses holding a triple identity in this market, committing wrongdoing over a long period, are equally qualified to be the real looters (fig. 25).

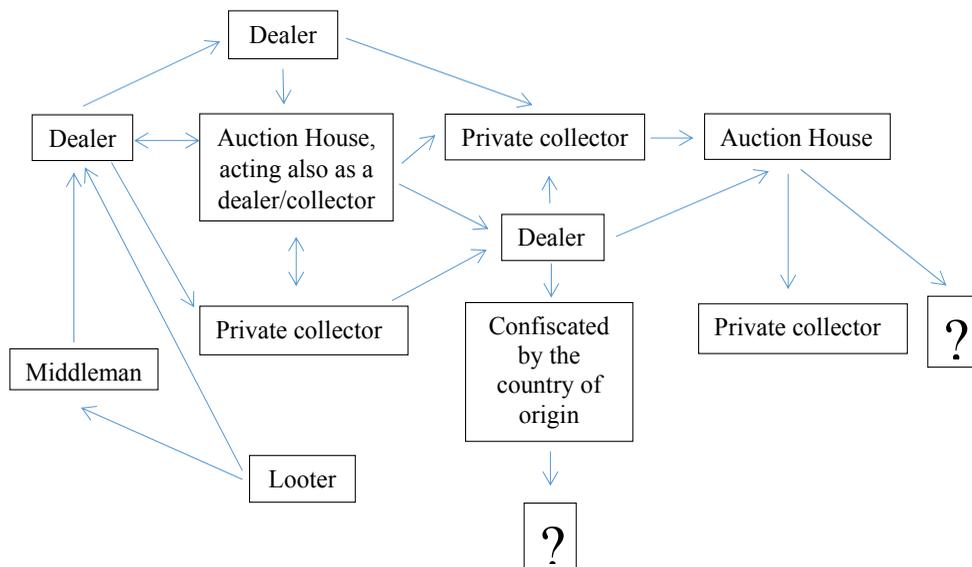


Fig. 25.—Combination of paths taken by the 12 antiquities through the market.

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