

**Archaeology as Salvage Operation in the Middle East
Ethics, Politics and Methods**

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON
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ABSTRACTS

9:15-10:15 Panel I - Salvaging, Understanding and Giving Back

Gül Pulhan (Director of Gre Amer Excavations) *Understanding the present while searching for the past: Stories from an upper Tigris excavation*

Until recently, the Upper Tigris area in southeastern Turkey was one of the last corners of Mesopotamia in which it was possible to practice archaeology. The construction of the Ilisu hydroelectric dam on the Tigris River had initiated a series of salvage excavations uncovering a long span of time from the pre-pottery Neolithic to the Persian-Hellenistic periods, in a previously unexplored part of northern Mesopotamia. The multi-period mound of Gre Amer, located on the Garzan tributary of the Tigris in the province of Batman, is one of these salvage projects that I have been directing since 2009. In this presentation I aim to open a small window to the human dimension of the excavation and to illustrate with the stories of individuals how Gre Amer became a platform for discovery, learning and exchange as well as dispute. Despite the intellectual, social and security pressures surrounding the rescue work in a conflict zone, one also experiences the privilege of developing a profound understanding of the past and the present of a remote region and the feeling of usefulness that comes from contributing (in small ways) to the breaking down of prejudices by means of the archaeological work.

Alan M. Greaves (University of Liverpool) and **Atilla Engin** (Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi, Sivas) *Survey as Salvage Operation: The Kilis Regional Survey on the Turkish/Syrian Border*

The small Turkish border province of Kilis was created in 1995. From 2000-2004, the authors conducted a full survey of the newly-formed province, creating its first cultural inventory and recording 155 archaeological sites. Since the outbreak of war in Syria in 2011, there has been conscious damage to archaeological sites in Kilis from collateral damage and looting and unconscious damage as the province has sought to accommodate over 120,000 refugees. In response to the resulting crisis, in 2016 the authors began to apply for funding to use their survey work as a basis for cultural heritage protection projects. The first will use Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) to create 'digital surrogates' of reliefs and inscriptions that are at high risk. The second will develop an integrated cultural heritage education programme for the province that builds on the research outcomes of the survey and engages with school children, college students, stakeholder professions and the public (including tourists and the province's newly-arrived refugee population). This paper will explore the fact that the importance of survey as a salvage methodology is often overlooked in favour of excavation and that when excavations begin, surveys are often forgotten. Yet the potential of surveys to be a vehicle for conservation projects and heritage education is largely unexplored. We also discuss the challenges of conducting survey in this sensitive border region, obtaining permits and working with stakeholders.

Brenna Hassett and Veysel Apaydin (UCL) *Should I stay or should I go? Ideals and realities of rescue archaeology in Turkey's southeast*

The mound sites of Başur Höyük and Cattepe provide a unique opportunity to examine the complex realities of doing archaeology in contested areas. Located in the southeast of Turkey, the sites are being excavated in advance of the construction of the Ilisu Dam, a controversial project that is supported by the state but contested by environmental, conservation, and political activists as well as local communities. One of the most important characteristics of sites like Başur that are under threat is their significance for the identity construction of the local community whose heritage, and therefore memories, are being stored in these locations. The project is administered under overlapping hierarchies of different political regimes—state, ministry, region, academic, local—which may have different and even competing interests. These interests manifest in conflicts between ‘top-down’ hierarchical approaches to rescue archaeology on one hand and a new ‘bottom up’ approach implemented in the current archaeology project, which places the interests and benefits of locals foremost. This paper will explore how the archaeological project can be a positive force in this situation, and when it cannot. It will examine the interaction between archaeologists, educators, heritage specialists at national and local level, and different groups among local residents at two sites in Turkey threatened by political insecurity and potential heritage loss due to development: Basur Hoyuk and Cattepe. The authors have worked at these sites as archaeologists and heritage specialists during periods of unrest and will discuss both the local community response alongside the broader academic and political response.

Sevil Baltalı Tırpan (Istanbul Technical University) *Archaeology as an intersubjective salvage operation: A thick-description from Central Turkey*

Abstract: This paper discusses how different expectations and perceptions of archaeology in contemporary Turkey can render the practice of archaeology as a salvage operation in a non-traditional sense. Caught between the alternating desires and impositions of the government, local officials and communities, Kerkenes, a well-known, Iron-Age archaeological site in Turkey has been subject to several status changes from being a foreign excavation project to museum project with a salvage designation and then back to a foreign excavation. The government and the local politicians require that the archaeologists excavate the whole site and reconstruct the architecture so that the “site” can become part of the neo-liberal tourism industry and help the local economies. Prompted by the accelerating nationalistic sentiment in the current political climate of the country, the local communities view the archaeological practice and foreign archaeologists as the threatening “other” and revitalize a distinctly Turkish and Muslim counter-narrative of the locality’s history, and argue that archaeologists should also excavate the Muslim and Turkish past rather than the perceived Christian past. The entanglement with larger conflicts, political discourses and local ideas about archaeology and “foreign” actors can position archaeological sites as salvage operations; however, it also raises critical questions about politics of presence, ethical obligations of researchers and the political implications of the discipline of archaeology.

11:00-12:00 Panel II – Methodologies, Digital Restoration and Paperwork

Stuart Blaylock *Reflections on rescue archaeology in south-east Turkey 1980–2015*

This paper will reflect on the author's involvement in rescue archaeology, excavation, and surveys, at two opposing points of north Mesopotamia over some 35 years: first at Tille Höyük in the Atatürk Dam on the Euphrates in the 1980s–1990s, including the lengthy process of post-excavation and publication work; second at Gre Amer in the Ilisu Dam on the Tigris in the 2000s–2010s in a recent and on-going rescue excavation project. In doing this it will aim to draw on one archaeologist's real experience of salvage archaeology on the ground to examine some themes, including: how broader scholarly strategies were deployed within research frameworks dictated by salvage imperatives; how the choice of sites may have skewed the results; and how those archaeological results look in retrospect. I also intend briefly to examine what we have learned versus what we have lost and place an emphasis on the practical lessons that have been learned. I will conclude with observations on the wider social and political context of dam schemes and their archaeological implications; plus a comparison of the two areas in their respective social and temporal contexts.

Jonathan Chemla (ICONEM) *Fast paced documentation works in the Middle East: the impact of new technologies in salvage archaeology*

Since the very early days of the Iconem project, our mission was dedicated to documentation efforts meant to help local archaeological teams document sites in the Middle East and Central Asia. By bringing together the knowledge and know-how of researchers, architects and engineers, and combining photogrammetry with recent drone technology and an important understanding of the terrain, we adapt to each problem faced by teams on the ground, set up a practical solution, build high precision 3D digital copies of the sites and use them to conduct thorough analyses to answer these problems using a scientific approach of experimentation. With partners such as UNESCO, the World Bank, or Ministries of Culture and archaeological teams, we addressed the following problems. The straightforward use of the model is to create a 3D digital copy of a site merging different scales and resolutions like we did for the site of Mes Aynak in Afghanistan - located on the 2nd largest copper mine soon to be exploited - from the large natural landscape to the architecture of the monuments and objects. By freezing the state of a site or monument like the Temple of Bel or Triumphal Arch in Palmyra, we can store in a same space all available layers of documentation of a site – old engravings, architectural drawings, photographs and 3D models at different instants in time. Using this multi-layered approach let us understand the degradation of sites by comparing them with archives photos (Shar e Zohak, Shahr-e Gholghola) in order to alert institutions to take action. We also helped Syrian archaeologist make a pre-conflict collaborative and evolutionary 3D model of the Krak des chevaliers in Syria to point out the structural damages it suffered. Finally, using long range drones, we can understand looting and ideological destructions on sites located in ISIS controlled Iraqi territories, namely Khorsabad and Nimrud. These scientific approaches - being described as multi scale, multi temporal, collaborative and remote assessment approaches - are the key to being adaptive to different contexts - remote places, dangerous terrains and short time frames – and to lead analyses dedicated to the understanding and resolution of different problems.

Davide Nadali (Sapienza Università di Roma) *Restoring Archaeological Traces. On the Recovery of Site Destruction in the Near East and Mediterranean*

Destruction affects archaeology in many aspects and from different perspectives. At first, archaeology itself implies actions of destruction: ancient deposits and archaeological strata of soil must be excavated destroyed, to reveal what they cover and hide. Moreover, archaeological sites can show traces of ancient destruction that has been caused by either war or natural disaster. More recently, archaeological sites in the Near East and the Mediterranean have been deeply affected by invasive premeditated destruction. Ancient historical places became rich mines for the recovery of objects and items. How can archaeologists face the excavation of plundered sites? Starting from the evidence of the traces of illicit excavations (sometimes even with diggers), this paper aims to investigate the possibility of restoring and repairing the damage: the wells of plunderers are actions of destruction that can be analyzed and investigated according to a new approach to archaeological research. Methodologically, all wells must be registered and studied, since they can in fact still provide important archaeological information and data. Therefore, new methodologies must be employed to achieve these objectives via an integrated approach: 1) satellite images mapping the sites and 2) a direct registration of the wells of the plunderers in the field (scanning the surface of the site is a fundamental prerequisite documenting the current state); 3) linking the fragments found in situ with the stolen vessels that had been partially broken during the operations of “excavation”. These integrated operations will therefore allow: 1) the recovery of archaeological sites that can be therefore exploited by local communities; 2) the identification of stolen items in private collections and museums. The present paper starts from a research project I am trying to build up: case-studies from plundered sites of Iraq (e.g. Umma, Larsa) and Syria (e.g. Ebla) will be presented explaining and showing how the new approach might indeed face the new way of doing archaeology and being archaeologists in the Near East.

William Carruthers (German Historical Institute London) *All of the Pasts, All of the Time: On UNESCO's Nubian Campaign and the Predicaments of Paperwork*

Abstract: UNESCO's International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia is remembered as a defining event—perhaps *the* defining event—in salvage archaeology in the Middle East. In order to situate the campaign within ethical discussions surrounding archaeological fieldwork, this paper will think through its history in two ways. First, it will discuss that history as defined by its paperwork: by the forms, reports, record cards and other printed material that fieldworkers filled out (or, sometimes, failed to fill out) before, during and after the processes of excavation and survey. Secondly, it will suggest that the practice of doing or not doing this paperwork allowed for the constitution of multiple new objects of enquiry and intervention; as one past was recorded, so it was argued that other pasts needed recording, too, and in different ways. There is nothing particularly unusual about this situation; documentation begets documentation as new types of ‘data’ are constituted. But this paper will suggest that we need to concentrate on the intersection of post-war archaeological fieldwork and the materiality of its recording if we are to engage with the reasons why this fieldwork has so often failed to take into account the stakeholders who challenge it.

2:00-3:00 Panel III - Ethics and Politics in Salvaging

Tevfik Emre Şerifoğlu (Bitlis Eren Üniversitesi) *Industrial and Economic Growth versus Cultural Heritage Preservation in Rough Cilicia: An Overview of the Current Situation and the Lower Göksu Archaeological Salvage Survey Project*

Rough Cilicia, or the Taşeli region in modern terms, is a part of Turkey which is still relatively untouched when it comes to industrialisation. The whole economy was based on low-density local tourism along the coasts, and agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry at other parts of the region almost until mid-1980s. As this rugged region is rich in terms of streams and springs, small irrigation dams were already common in the area but especially starting with the 1990s hydroelectric dam projects also became popular. The scarcity of settlements, its coastal location, its geological character and being seismically less active when compared to most of Turkey made the area a good candidate for new industrial investments and energy projects. Today the region has two large-scale hydroelectric dams, plenty of quarries and mines, and more hydroelectric dams, one coal plant and one nuclear plant is under construction. However, almost no archaeological or cultural heritage management projects were initiated in the whole region in connection with these massive projects. One of these grand projects is the building of the Kayraktepe Dam on the Göksu River, which started as a hydroelectric dam but was later changed into an irrigation dam project. The Lower Göksu Archaeological Salvage Survey Project was initiated in 2013 as a response to this project, which we heard about from the locals while excavating at Kilise Tepe. The main aim of this collaborative project of the universities of Bitlis Eren and Leicester is to document as much of the archaeological heritage as possible before the valley is submerged. In fact, the Kilise Tepe excavations were also started in 1994 because of this same dam project but it was cancelled while the excavations were still continuing. Another archaeological project that was started as a response to a dam project in the region was conducted further north along the Göksu Valley by Hugh Elton from 2002 to 2006. In this presentation, the current level and state of cultural heritage protection and management against rapid economic growth in this part of the Turkey will be discussed with an emphasis on how archaeological projects conducted in the Göksu Valley did and still contribute to the process, the scientific methodologies adopted by these projects, the level of community engagement, the level of collaboration with state departments and local officials, and what more can be expected from archaeologists and scholars from relevant fields. The Göksu Valley forms a special case as both of the two major projects initiated here were started as a response to the construction of hydroelectric dams and therefore the project methodologies, the aims and the scopes of the projects, and the limits of the areas that were investigated were all affected and shaped by this fact. The Lower Göksu Archaeological Salvage Survey Project also has the documentation of intangible cultural heritage as one of its aims and try to cooperate with state departments with the hope of minimising the scale of destruction that will be caused by the dam lake. The project team also try to increase cultural heritage awareness amongst the local inhabitants through workshops and visits to villages, and see this as one of the responsibilities archaeologists have in such cases. We hope our methods and approach to form an example to other scholars although we know that these may have to be modified based on the case and different sorts of actions may have to be taken when required.

Constance Wyndham (UCL) *The politics of threat: Buddhist heritage, rescue archaeology and counterinsurgency intervention in Afghanistan*

Mes Aynak is a Pashto name meaning ‘little source of copper’. At this site in Logar province, Afghanistan, the world’s second largest copper deposit lies beneath the remains of a Buddhist city dating from the second century BCE. In 2007, amidst accusations of bribery between the company and Afghan officials, the China Metallurgical Group (MCC), a state-backed Chinese mining company, won a thirty-year lease to exploit the copper. In 2009, the World Bank-funded Mes Aynak Archaeological Project was initiated to survey the site and conduct rescue excavation work. Media attention over the proposed destruction of Buddhist heritage has resulted in the site becoming a focus in the ‘rush for profile’ amongst donors involved in Afghanistan’s aid programme. I argue that since the destruction at Bamiyan, Afghanistan’s Buddhist past has been prioritised by the international community and, at Mes Aynak, is co-opted by various stakeholders to mask geopolitical and economic interests. I will explore the relationship between Buddhist heritage and the counterinsurgency strategy to win ‘hearts and minds’, showing how the country’s pre Islamic past plays into broader geopolitical and ideological battles currently being waged for Afghanistan’s future. This paper is based on several periods of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Afghanistan between 2012 and 2015 undertaken as part of my PhD research.

Marzia Merlonghi Miani (University of Udine) *From occupied to shared heritage: salvage excavations in the Holy Land*

The destruction of archaeological heritage in the Holy Land is closely related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although direct military damage are rare, comparing to the situation of Syria and Iraq, it is possible to observe loss (slow but unrelenting) of sites and data caused by new constructions (colonies, military structures, streets, houses), illegal diggings and wrong approaches (based on ideological bias) to excavation and conservation. In this paper I will try to investigate how salvage excavations in Palestine, especially in occupied West Bank, are often related to aspects of the conflict: many times salvage excavations are due to construction of military installation or illegal colonies. Often archaeological researches are conducted without agreement by the involved stakeholders: Arab population sees archeological researches as a tool for the occupation. Colonial and ethnocentric approach to archaeology never stopped in the Holy Land (Albert Glock talked about Arab’s alienation from their cultural past): during my PhD researches on a sample of 101 archaeological sites, I noticed how many times archaeology was used as an excuse for Israeli occupation and how much Arab population is still unaware of the importance of the archaeological heritage. I will try to explain how positive it would be a new, modern, non-colonial and non-ethnocentric approach to the excavation in the area, as some point Palestinian-Italian research projects seems to prove: for sure it is possible to be on people’s side even in a place where cultural and ideological factors affect interpretation and knowledge of archaeological heritage. But is it possible to make archaeological excavation a source of peace and dialogue between different cultures living in the same, contested, land?

Elifgöl Doğan and **Lucienne Thys-Şenocak** (Koç University) *Legislative, Ethical and Museological Issues regarding Archaeological Human Remains in Turkey*

“Human remains are not just another artifact; they have potency. They are charged with political, evidentiary and emotional meanings...”(Cassman, Odegaard, and Powell 2006, 1). Legislation, along with the ethical and museological implications surrounding the handling of archaeological human remains differs in various countries. The 1857 Burial Act passed by the UK was among the first legislative acts to address the handling of human remains found in archaeological contexts; protocols for managing the remains of indigenous populations were

developed in the 1970s in Australia and then in the US in 1990 with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Other countries, such as Turkey, have not specified what procedures should be followed for the excavation, storage, conservation or display of these types of excavation finds. According to the Turkish Law for the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Property (Law 2863) human remains are “state property”. Based on findings from interviews with several archaeologists and museum personnel working in Turkey, and the examination of on-site practices in selected museums and archaeological sites, this paper first presents the current legislative framework which shapes the excavation, conservation, storage, and practices of display of human remains and makes suggestions concerning how to change these practices and policies.

3:45-4:45 Plenary Forum

Emma Loosley (University of Exeter) *The Archaeology of the Khanuqa Gap on the Euphrates: Saved by the Syrian Civil War?*

Before the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War there were a number of international teams working in the Khanuqa Gap, a pinch point in River Euphrates north of Deir ez Zor, where a variety of sites were threatened by a proposed Russian-built dam and hydro-electric power station. Despite appeals to the highest court in the land, the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) had failed to stop the proposed development and there was a race against time to salvage as much information as possible before the dam was constructed and the water level began to rise. In the case of the author’s site, the Byzantine/early Islamic citadel of Zalabiyeh across the river from the better known Romano-Byzantine town of Halabiyeh, there was an added complication due to the fact that Zalabiyeh stood beside the suspected nuclear site bombed by the Israelis in Operation Orchard in 2007 meaning that survey and field-walking were forbidden by the security services. Work was suspended in 2011 when the DGAM said that there was too much ‘unrest’ for teams to return. Since then the archaeology of the region has been at risk of looting but the more existential threat, that of inundation, has been removed. At the same time the local population have been able to remain on their fertile lands in the valley, rather than forcibly removed to the arid plateau above. All in all the whole process (involving possible nuclear research, dispossession of local people, Russian influence in the Syrian oil fields) was an ethical minefield and it is my suggestion that the war may surprisingly have eased some of these problems whilst at the same time raising a whole new set of difficulties... Is this a rare case of a war offering a benefit to archaeology? Can we argue that in some cases conflict may yield accidental benefits?

Elena Corbett (CIEE Amman) *Nothing to Salvage: Porto Dead Sea as a case of development, diversion, and threat to Jordan’s heritage*

Sometimes there’s no opportunity for salvage archaeology. As *da’esh’s* outrageous iconoclasm in Hatra and Palmyra riveted the world, the occasion of the 70th session of the U.N. General Assembly in September 2015 gathered a global, A-list cast of perceived “public/private” partners for a number of “high-level” events—conference, roundtable, leaders’ summit, etc.—meant to do something about threats to cultural heritage from “violent extremism.” The Foreign Minister of Jordan, a country considered a key ally in this war against destruction of cultural heritage and the “war on terror” generally, was center stage. On the Jordanian shore of the Dead Sea, meanwhile, earth-moving and construction crews were hard at work on the first phase of Egyptian company Amer Group’s huge new Porto property—which will feature multiple hotels, malls, restaurants, entertainment venues, and

serviced apartments. The 800,000 square meters on which Porto is being developed is home to several key archaeological sites and is part of a landscape that was already experiencing unprecedented and irreversible environmental degradation. Within a week of the many salvos fired in the name of protecting the region's cultural heritage, a coalition of people from the local Ma'in and Madaba communities had filed a court case charging that parcels of land given by the government of Jordan to Amer Group for this project are actually their private property as registered since the late Ottoman period. Beyond the implications of Porto for the interstices of a cultural heritage landscape including archaeology, the environment, and usufruct, controversy regarding the project generally stems from what appears to have been the approval and implementation of the project without process, transparency, or adherence to the rule of law. There was not, of course, any kind of salvage archaeology at Porto Dead Sea. In the first place, there is no contract archaeology in Jordan, despite clarity in the antiquities law regarding construction and the presence or discovery of antiquities. The case of Porto is hardly unique in Jordan. And such things happen well beyond Jordan. At a conference dedicated to archaeology as salvage operation in the Middle East, this contribution considers that salvage archaeology often isn't an option, connecting this idea to archaeology as politics and the broader context of the ongoing years of regional uprising and counter-revolution.

Dominic Perring (UCL) *Archaeology and the Post-war Reconstruction of Beirut*

During Lebanon's terrible civil war Beirut was partitioned by the Green Line, which separated West from East and cut through the heart of the historic city centre. The reunification of Beirut and revival of the town centre were urgent priorities in post-war reconstruction, and archaeologists became closely involved the reconstruction process. Divisions and arguments attended every stage of the post-war rebuilding, and heritage issues were hotly contested, driving the archaeologists involved into opposing camps. This paper attempts to explain why this happened, and reviews some of the successes and failures of the post-war rebuilding efforts. The reconstruction programme relied heavily on private sector funding, and the institutions of the Lebanese state were left marginalised and under-resourced. Public debate convinced the developers to make greater use of the historic and archaeological landscape, although questions can be raised about the way in which this exercise was taken forward. The archaeological excavations themselves, and the wider public debate over heritage values in the revived city centre, played an important part in the rehabilitation of Beirut.

Ömür Harmanşah (University of Illinois at Chicago) *Near Eastern Archaeology as Salvage Operation: Ethics, Politics and Method*

Concluding Remarks & Final Discussion