

# What are you looking at?



Editors:

Jaime Almansa Sánchez & Elena Papagiannopoulou



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*Online Journal in Public Archaeology*

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## FORUM

### The looting of archaeological heritage

Last year, in addition to AP Journal Volume 2, JAS Arqueología also published a book in Spain about the looting of archaeological heritage: *Indianas jones sin futuro* (Indianas jones without future), by Ignacio Rodríguez Temiño. We then realised there was an urgent need to debate this issue more thoroughly at an international scale, to show how different things can be and try to find better strategies for the protection of archaeological heritage.

While the forum was being designed, a special issue of Internet Archaeology on looting was published (Issue 33) and new projects started to emerge. This shows an increasing interest in these topics and opens the way for wider debates and perspectives.

At first, we thought metal detecting was the main topic to be discussed in the forum. Then we started to realise it was just a small part of a wider problem: looting. This is how we decided to initiate a series of forums for the coming years, with a focus on different aspects of looting, and from different perspectives\*.

PART I (vol. 3 – 2013) Beyond metal detectors: around the plundering of archaeological heritage.

PART II (vol. 4 – 2014) Conflict and looting: alibi for conflict... and for the looting of archaeological heritage.

PART III (vol. 5 – 2015) Beauty and money: a market that feeds looting.

PART IV (vol. 6 – 2016) Managing development: from the building of a country, to the destruction of archaeological heritage.

*\*Participation is open for anyone interested, for both published and unpublished parts. We would like the debate to constantly flow among topics.*

## **PART II**

### **CONFLICT AND LOOTING: ALIBI FOR CONFLICT... AND FOR THE LOOTING OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE**

Conflict is not just about war. When Jaime first went to Ethiopia, one of the sites he was working on had been vanished due to religious beliefs. This can be also seen in the case of the Bamiyan Buddhas, not that long ago, in Afghanistan. Purely political beliefs affect cultural heritage in many countries, in what can be described as a conflict with no weapons but with a large social impact. However, we cannot help to sadly recall all those military conflicts which, combined with other reasons, are causing pain and damage all around the world. A world in constant conflict, where people—and heritage—suffer. A world where people suffer for heritage!

This is the reason why this forum starts with a paper in which there is no looting... The Ayodhya conflict in India is one of the most widely known conflicts related to heritage, and deserved a spot in this forum. Next, avoiding military conflict and looting, a topic about which a lot has already been written, we will explore the abuse—and plundering—of both heritage and communities by the mining business in two cases that bring us to Romania and Argentina. Finally, this forum covers a postcolonial debate that has been hot in Nigeria for the past few months: the conflict generated between local and foreign archaeologists, including strong accusations of looting.

## **Responses**

Sabita NADESAN

*The Politics of Ayodhya*

One of the most pivotal incidents of religious violence between Hindus and Muslims in modern-day India occurred on December 6th, 1992, when *kar sevaks*, hard-line Hindus who belonged to the VHP (Vishva Hindu Parishad) organization and the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) political group, tore down the Babri Mosque in the north Indian town of Ayodhya. The *kar sevaks* believed the mosque

had been built over a temple belonging to the Hindu deity Rama in proclamation of his place of birth. Seventy-five thousand people rioted at what began as a peaceful demonstration, eventually demolishing the mosque in a single day. The event sparked nationwide violence and led to the deaths of more than 2,000 people. In a statement to the press, the BJP claimed 'moral responsibility' for the mosque's destruction (Rao 2006, 156).

Ayodhya is a place of significant importance to both Islamic and Hindu cultures. The events of that December riot may be interpreted as an example of the exploitation of a cultural heritage site for political gain. The VHP and BJP parties used the history and tension of Ayodhya as a platform to promote a Hindutva agenda, or Hindu Nationalist movement, and re-energize the Hindu identity in India. A peacefully planned procession was heightened by emotions and led to the eventual destruction of the mosque. As a result, religious tensions between Muslims and Hindus intensified for more than two decades.

The town of Ayodhya lies on the banks of the Sarayu River in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The Archaeology Survey of India (ASI) reports that the earliest record of human habitation occurred in the 13th century BCE (Shrivastava 2010), though this date remains uncertain. Originally known as Saketa, it was believed to have been renamed Ayodhya when the capital of the Gupta dynasty shifted from Pataliputra to this area in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Ayodhya is most well known as the birthplace of Rama, or Ram Janmabhoomi, an incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu. He is also the main protagonist of the Hindu epic, the *Ramayana*, written by the poet Valmiki in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The *Ramayana* tells of Rama, heir to the throne of Ayodhya, his wife, Sita, and his brother, Lakshmana, who are forced into exile for fourteen years to live in the wilderness. Sita is kidnapped by King Ravana of Lanka, with the bulk of the story narrating Rama's pursuit of her and the battles fought between Ravana and Rama, the future king of Ayodhya. This, alongside the *Mahabharata*, are two important epics in the Hindu religion, and various versions of the tale are important cultural and religious elements in many Southeast Asian countries, including Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar.

Two years after establishing the Mughal Empire in 1528 CE, the Muslim king, Babar the Great (*ca.* 1483-1530), ordered the building of the Babri Masjid, also known as the Babri Mosque. It was built

upon Ramkot Hill (Rama's Fort), one of two mounds in Ayodhya, where it is presumed to have functioned as a fully operational mosque. Why it was constructed on this particular mound, and whether it was built on top of a previous structure such as a temple, is still heavily debated. Shrivastava (2010) suggests the mosque may have been built on Ramkot Hill because the second mound, Kuber Teela, was most likely occupied by a temple, perhaps the controversial one belonging to Rama.

Peace is said to have existed at Ayodhya up to the 1850s. According to the District Gazeteer, Faizabad of 1905, "It is said that up to this time (1855), both Hindus and Musalmans [Muslims] used to worship in the same building" (Ghosh 1987, 24). The first documented religious violence between Muslims and Hindus over the site occurred in 1853. Further disputes were most likely resolved by the British in 1859 when they divided the area: the inner courtyard of the mosque was given to the Muslims while the outer courtyard and constructed platform (*chabutra*) to the Hindus. Thereafter, in 1885, a Hindu holy man filed a petition with the court to build a temple on the platform in the outer courtyard, which was already being used for worship. It was denied, though it was most likely the beginning of the long history of petitions filed with the court by both sides.

According to Noorani (1989, 2461), Islam and Hinduism coexisted at Ayodhya without any further major conflicts until 1949. In December of that year, Ram Lalla idols mysteriously appeared inside the mosque, which was considered an act of desecration to the Muslims (*OOS No. 4 of 1989 (Reg. Suit No. 12-61)*). To Hindus, the sudden appearance of these idols likely lent credence to the idea that the site was originally a Ram temple, though on-duty police reported that the idols were brought to the site in the middle of the night by Hindu worshippers. To mitigate the situation from further escalation, the local magistrate locked down entry into the compound.

For nearly thirty-five years, there were no major developments in the dispute over Ayodhya. In 1984, however, the VHP -- translated into English as the World Hindu Council -- took interest in the matter. The Hindu right-wing organization, founded in 1964 with the goal of consolidating Hindu society in India and protecting Hindu Dharma, or way of life, believed the Mughals had destroyed a Ram temple that had previously stood on the site and wanted recovery of the

temple for Hindu worship. The VHP spearheaded a committee to build a temple in honor of Lord Rama and was heavily supported by the BJP political party, whose roots lay with the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, founded in 1951, and was the amalgamation of two political parties also associated with the Hindutva movement.

Two years later, a district judge ordered the gates of the structure to be opened and allowed Hindu devotees to perform poojas. Arun Nehru, a member of the Indian National Congress, said in an interview, "In early 1986, the Muslim Women's Bill was passed to play the Muslim card; and then came the decision on Ayodhya to play the Hindu card. It was supposed to be a package deal." (Noorani 1989, 2461 via *The Statesman* on August 17<sup>th</sup>, 1989).

The unlocking of the gates in 1986 for Hindu worship encouraged continued campaigns to construct a Hindu temple at the Babri Mosque. As requested by the VHP's Shilannya Puja program in 1989, *kar sevaks* from all over the country began bringing *pujan shilas* (bricks) to the site to help the VHP lay the foundation for a new Ram temple on land adjacent to the mosque. A year later, VHP volunteers damaged the mosque's walls and domes by climbing on them to hoist flags. In December of the same year, a botched bombing occurred at the site. Following this, negotiation attempts by the Indian Prime Minister failed to resolve the dispute. This was not the last major bomb threat. Twenty years later, in 2005, six heavily-armed terrorists tried to storm the makeshift Ram temple at Ayodhya.

In 1991, the BJP came to power in Uttar Pradesh, most likely riding on the popularity of their Hindu nationalist movement. Consequently, the Government of Uttar Pradesh was given possession of Ayodhya on orders of the High Court, though construction of permanent edifices remained prohibited. Finally, in December of 1992, the religious dispute over spiritual and physical control of the site reached its climax. At a symbolic brick laying ceremony to demonstrate the Hindu nationalist desire for the construction of a temple, participants turned violent. The Babri Mosque was destroyed. More than 2,000 people were killed in riots that spread between the religious communities. Many believe that the Mumbai bombings a year later were partly in retaliation to the 1992 riot, as were subsequent communal outbreaks of violence in which thousands more died.

Despite the violence, the VHP continued its pledge to build a Hindu temple at Lord Rama's purported birthplace in Ayodhya. From 1998 - 2004, a BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), comprised of a coalition of parties, formed the national government of India, for which their 1998 Manifesto re-committed itself to the "construction of a magnificent Shri Ram Mandir at Ram Janmasthan in Ayodhya" as it "lies at the core of Indian consciousness." The VHP set a deadline of March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2002 to build a Ram temple, for which Hindu volunteers gathered at the site. Soon after, a train in Godhra, Gujarat, carrying Hindu activists returning from Ayodhya, was attacked and 58 people were killed. Between 1,000 and 2,000 people were again killed in proceeding riots. Rao (2006) writes that in 2002, the BJP did not commit itself to the construction of the temple in its election manifesto for the Uttar Pradesh assembly, perhaps due to these violent outbreaks. However, this hesitation lasted only two years until 2004, when the Indian National Congress party was elected as the central government and the BJP, in the opposition, again proclaimed unwavering commitment for the building of a Ram temple.

Simultaneously, in 2003, the High Court of India began hearings to conclusively determine ownership of the religious site. The court asked the ASI to excavate the area to see if a Hindu temple had previously existed and also ruled that seven Hindu leaders should stand trial for inciting the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992, though no charges were ever brought against L.K. Advani, the future home minister and deputy prime minister (2002-2004) who led the BJP at the time of the December 1992 campaign.

Controversially, the completed 2003 ASI Report indicated the possible discovery of a Ram temple under the Babri Mosque in its final chapter, despite previous chapters that made no mention of such findings. The conflicting results were first written about by esteemed Indian archaeologist B.B. Lal, whose own reports changed over the span of his career. In an excavation of Ayodhya from 1975-76 and in the journal *Indian Archaeology: A Review* (1977), he made no mention of any evidence found of a Ram temple at the site -- which was the common conclusion of many similar excavations of that time period and later. However, in 1990, in a Hindu nationalist publication titled *Manthan*, Lal wrote of the discovery of brick and stone pillars to the south of the mosque, suggesting they were the likely remains of an unclarified previous

structure. The only photograph of the pillar was published in *New Archaeological Discoveries* (1992), a book by scholars with Hindu nationalist associations. His comments were interpreted to conclude that a temple did in fact exist before the mosque, with features that had been incorporated into the Muslim edifice. From that time on, and then again after the publication of the ASI Report, controversy in the academic world erupted, with many researchers wondering why Lal had not declared such findings in official reports earlier and why evidence for the existence of a temple was only reported in the last chapter of the ASI Report.

The ASI documents also suggested the presence of a temple or shrine-like structure below the 'C' floor of the mosque. According to Shrivastava (2003), however, the short time interval between construction of the possible shrine-like structure and the mosque's 'C' floor -- and with no definitive knowledge of the shape of the structure below -- made it incredibly difficult to determine whether a shrine or temple had actually existed prior to Babri Masjid. Therefore, it is still debatable as to what lay below.

In 2009, the Liberhan Commission, which had been tasked to investigate the riots of 1992, submitted their report to Parliament. Seventeen years after the riot, the report condemned high ranking political officials of the BJP for their involvement in the destruction of Ayodhya. As the report states, "These leaders have violated the trust of the people and have allowed their actions to be dictated not by voters but a small group of individuals who have used them to implement agendas unsanctioned by the will of the common person" (Liberhan 2009, 166.12). It also suggested that the symbolic protest of 1992 was actually a well-coordinated and pre-planned action (Liberhan 2009, 132.3).

A year later, the Allahabad High Court ruled the site be split. It stated that the Muslim community should control one third, another third – the main disputed section – to go to the Hindus, and the last third to the Nirmohi Akhara sect. Hindu and Muslim groups appealed, leading the Supreme Court to suspend the decision. Currently, the ownership of the site continues to be under dispute in the courts.

To this day, political parties use Ayodhya and other culturally significant landmarks as provocation to re-energize the Hindu identity of the country. In 2003, the VHP threatened to reclaim

30,000 Hindu temples and shrines, which they declared had been converted to mosques, if “they [Muslims] do not ‘reconsider’ their statements or ‘change their mindsets’ on the Ramjanmabhoomi issue” (*The Telegraph* 2003). This included the Gyan Vapi mosque in Varanasi, believed to be built on the site of the Kashi Vishwanath temple, and the Idgah mosque in Mathura adjacent to the Krishnajansmathan, considered the birthplace of the Hindu god Krishna. In addition, the extent to which the Ayodhya conflict is still alive politically in the eyes of the BJP is evidenced by the BJP Manifesto of 2014, which “reiterates its stand to explore all possibilities within the framework of the constitution to facilitate the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.”

Ironically, Ayodhya translates in Hindi as “a place where there is no war.” Since 1853, however, controversy has surrounded it, resulting in violence, rioting, and death. Evidence to support the claim that a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Rama once stood at the site is still uncertain. Yet, because the belief is so strong, it is nearly equivalent to tangible, physical evidence. When coupled with the rise of political groups attempting to come to power in a nation home to so many different religions, ethnicities, and communities, archaeological and historical claims can be used to fuel ideological zealotry, often resulting in needless bloodshed.

Despite the structural controversy and conflict over history and ownership, it is hard to contest Ayodhya’s use as a political tool to reinvigorate the Hindu nationalist identity of India and bolster ideological support for this movement. While many political parties have gained support from these actions, there have been no real benefits for either the historical integrity of Ayodhya or Indian culture as a whole, as would occur if monuments and areas of land were protected and preserved for future generations. In fact, this very statement is touched upon in the Constitution of India, Part IV, Article 49:

*“It shall be the obligation of the State to protect every monument or place or object of artistic or historic interest, declared by or under law made by Parliament to be of national importance, from spoliation, disfigurement, destruction, removal, disposal or export, as the case may be.”*

Ayodhya holds significant meaning for many of the communities

that make up the Indian nation. It is rich in heritage and history, though overshadowed by controversy and dispute. Ayodhya is not the first site to face harmful political exposure and, sadly, it will not be the last. Hopefully in the future, however, communities and governments can act to preserve and protect such important cultural heritage sites before they are exploited and used as tools for political gain.

The recently concluded 2014 Indian national election has given the BJP a clear mandate to form the government. How they will implement their Manifesto aims regarding Ayodhya and how this will impact the site and India remains to be seen. Only time will tell.

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Ivana Carina JOFRÉ LUNA

*Modes of Cultural Production of the 'Mega-mining Reality' in the San Juan Province: The Role of Contract Archaeology and Local Responses to the Global Order*

## **Introduction**

The present study focuses on the relationship between cultural heritage and mega-mining<sup>1</sup>, and aims to show how contract archaeology—linked to mining projects through the patrimonialisation of indigenous places of memory—is part of a complex network of hegemonic actors that contribute towards the institutionalisation and naturalisation of a neo-extractivist developmental model. This

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1 Sometimes called transnational mining or large-scale mining.

model is implemented regionally in South American countries as well as the Global South, where socio-cultural, environmental, political, and economic circumstances preclude a decolonisation model. In this study, patrimonialisation processes in the context of mega-mining projects are examined based on the assumption that economic, environmental, and cultural conflicts are part of the same dynamic, in that they originate from and overlap with the 'colonial difference' (Escobar, 2011).

From a macro perspective, it can be said that mega-mining is a model of modernisation—in that the normative path of development for flexible capitalism is sustained by the mineral extraction industry, particularly in the natural reservoirs in the regions peripheral to metropolises. Mega-mining involves extraction companies being assigned titanic projects to extract minerals for the purpose of commodity production (i.e., primary products), such as gold, copper, silver, and other metals for industrial and technological use. As a scientific/technical discourse with social and cultural impact, the archaeological production that is at the service of mega-mining exhibits a symbolic efficiency, at both the local and global levels, as the semiologist Mirta Antonelli notes: she defines mega-mining as "discourse-forming biopolitics" that link together notions of security, territory, and population (2012). Accordingly, this study addresses some of the characteristics of the cultural interventions brought about by mega-mining in the San Juan Province, Argentina, where 43 mining projects are now in operation.

### **The role of contract archaeology in archaeological patrimonialisation within the context of transnational mining**

Generally, the processes of archaeological patrimonialisation produced in the context of mega-mining in Argentina are shaped by the context of the country having a reprimarised economy. Despite being strongly dependent on the global financial market, it has at the same time helped set up new scenarios, such as the recruitment of professional archaeologists and anthropologists. This refocused economy also caused the patrimonial administrative state management landscape to change, as did the role of

universities as sources of scientific and technological knowledge. It was instrumental in further legitimising the neo-extractive development model, and therefore, the dispossession and plunder of vast territories and populations. This modernisation project has also affected the economic, cultural, social and political life of the San Juan, since not only private sector businesses, but also the policies of State institutions gravitate around it. All cultural institutions and policies at the local level are permeated by mining interests.

According to Provincial Patrimony Law 6801, the Direction of Cultural Patrimony, under the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, is the State board in charge of granting licenses for projects of archaeological research in San Juan. It also deals in the issuance of permits, and the evaluation of archaeological impacts studies (AIS) conducted by professionals hired by environmental consultants or mega-mining companies. The Direction of Cultural Patrimony is composed of a Director (a political appointment usually occupied by an architect) and a Provincial Council (composed of representatives of public and private museums, universities, municipal delegates, NGOs, and representatives of indigenous peoples). To date, the agency has only two archaeologists serving as external consultants who evaluate projects and AIS presented to the Direction.

Usually, research authorisation cases filed before the Office of Cultural Heritage by professional archaeologists are met with seemingly endless bureaucratic obstacles—despite the investigators working on the project being renowned, or endorsed by universities and recognised national scientific agencies. However, mega-mining permit applications are commonly met with a very different fate. These applications are backed by formal presentations of environmental consultants and mining companies, and are first passed through the Ministry of Mines of the province, one of the most important and influential bodies in the current State government. The review process for these applications is also accelerated, as it responds to a string of presentations articulated in various ministries, and as it represents the sector considered most 'productive' in the chain of social actors.

Over the last decade, independent archaeological research in San Juan has stagnated, as has local archaeological scientific

production. This is consistent with the historical setting of academic and scientific isolation of the discipline of archaeology in San Juan from the 1960s until today. However, there has been an upsurge in the number of AIS related to mega-mining projects, that includes comprehensive archaeological inventories and technical reports of rescue tasks. These reports are commonly left unpublished, and is often characterised by theoretical and methodological frameworks informed by a conservationist and seemingly depoliticised scientific narrative (Jofre and Biasatti Galimberti, 2011). AIS are evaluated with very low standards of scientific quality, to encourage 'flexible' state assessment, and therefore the approval of areas for mining. Furthermore, there is a notable strengthening of the collective of small corporate groups of archaeological researchers, both local and external, that are favoured by state policies, because of their contracts with private companies. In the province of San Juan, contract archaeology associated with mega-mining projects often employ professional archaeologists who position themselves ideologically as "opposing...processes of indigenous resurgence" and "anti-mining environmental social movements."

Given the forced absence of independent archaeological research projects, or those not linked to contract archaeology, a "protectionist fiction" has also developed—one that places mega-mining companies in the protective role of patrons of local archaeological heritage (Jofre, Biasatti and González, 2010; Jofre and Biasatti Galimberti, 2010). This can be seen in the remarkable spread of news items in the media linking companies and the provincial state to patrimonial activities in locations inside and outside mining areas, or training activities organised through partnerships with local educational institutions. These activities form part of the narrative of 'sustainable development,' where mining is seen as 'a sustainable activity' undertaken by 'socially responsible companies.'

The above situations point to the self-exclusion of the state from its role as protector of provincial heritage (imposed through the legal system, i.e., Law 6801). In this case, the provincial state delegates to corporations the responsibility, work, and cost of memory activation through cultural heritage, and in doing so, designates itself as the 'meta regulating State' that exerts control over these private sector interventions. In other words, this is a case of 'mining

privatisation' in places of memory, partimonialed by the meta regulating State through inventories and interventions, seemingly carried out to evaluate archaeological impacts in mega-mining projects. The memory locations are converted to archaeological sites through the archaeological scientific narrative offered by these reports. This nominally designates these sites as 'artefacts', given that physical access is not open to the public, but only to a select group of company employees. The 'mining privatisation' of places of memory—converted to provincial and national cultural heritage—underlines the fact that they are located within mining sites, permissions for which are granted in the form of long leases to mining companies (depending on the mining code). Projects under the Binational Mining Covenant between Chile and Argentina, for instance, saw the national sovereignty of high Andean peaks being surrendered to transnational mining companies. On the Argentine side, the Pascua-Lama and El Pachon projects, operated by Barrick Gold Corporation and Glencore Xstrata Copper respectively, have full territorial sovereignty over the areas to exploit. Additionally, although mining companies and the State insist on emphasising transparency in the communication of their activities, access to the reports of the professionals preparing the AIS is commonly limited to a narrow bureaucratic circuit, or is considered exclusive and confidential business information.

Although international declarations on human rights for indigenous peoples ratified by Argentina establish respect for cultural diversity, as well as free and informed consultation as a necessary precondition of the execution of these projects, mega-mining projects in San Juan do not comply with these treaties. Consultation mechanisms with local, indigenous, or non-indigenous communities, are only performed at the beginning, and not at all project stages, and in any case, do not meet the requirement for prior free and informed character (see Claps, 2011). Furthermore, reports from studies and AIS ideologically fed the illusion that the control and monitoring of the socio-environmental impacts of these monstrous mining works is possible (Colectivo Voces en Alerta, 2011; Jofre, and Biasatti Galimberti, 2010). Or rather, they feed the fantasy that scientific studies and state control over these large-scale works in its different phases—exploration, construction, operation and closure of the mine—are geared to protect the

interests of citizens, and not the interests of the companies. What needs to be clarified here is that the interests of mining companies do not always coincide with state interests, since—as described above—the objective in South America is to adopt a neo-extractivist developmental model, and to convert local economies to the measure of the global economy. Science and technology are in the service of this new project of neo-colonial modernisation, as can be seen in the arguments raised against the acceptance of funds from the mining company Yacimientos Mineros Agua de Dionoso (YMAD). In this socio-political context, the role of contract archaeology, both within and without Argentinian universities, cannot be other than to facilitate exploitation.

### **Concluding remarks**

Jöel Candau argues that “heritage is a result of a work of the memory that, as time runs by, and according to very varying criteria, selects inherited elements from the past to be included in the category of heritage objects,” which is why heritage “works effectively as an ideological apparatus of memory” (Candau 2002, pp. 89-90). In my previous studies, I have argued that archaeological patrimonialisation is an act of memory, within which forces of political struggles are involved, and whose purpose is the production of a significant heritage for provincial and national states, through which certain social actors seek to preserve special memories of their past (Jofré, 2011, 2013a, 2013b). I have referred to ‘patrimonialisation processes’ as those practices and institutionalised mechanisms through which these acts of memory occur. In the case of San Juan, I contend that archaeological patrimonialisation does not ignore the ‘mining reality’ installed by appliances and devices of state control, and related to this, contract archaeology is just an effect, not a cause, of this neo-colonial resetting of the territory and the memory—turned into heritage—in the transnational context.

Following from my argument of heritage as hegemonic construction, I understand that cultural heritage (as part of archaeological heritage), participates in the formation and strengthening of collective cohesion of groups as well as ethnic, national, provincial, and regional identities; at the same time, however, it inherently

suppresses other symbols and meanings, excludes differences by replacing them or reproducing them in the name of certain national and global projects. In this case under study, the expansion of the neo-extractive developmental model represented by mega-mining in the province of San Juan, offers an opportunity to understand how these and culturally disciplining devices obey strategic patterns previously delineated by the objectives of global financial capital, and end up shaping singular modes of production of new transnationalised sovereignties. Archaeological patrimonialisation processes are an active part of this socio-cultural machinery, and correspond to a general reorganisation of glocal cultural production, of its modernising speeches and tools of inclusion in the capitalist world system through the production of negotiable merchandise.

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Sam HARDY

*The politics of archaeological work in structurally weak places: Frankfurt in Nigeria*

Archaeometallurgist Bertram Mapunda (2013) previously reflected upon the conflicts of expectations (primarily) between archaeologists and local communities in Tanzania, the consequent resentment, and the resulting harm to site protection, conservation and management. Grounded in my blogging on professional conflicts (Hardy 2012a-2012f) and the illicit antiquities trade (Hardy 2012g), this article will consider conflicts of expectations, and other negotiations, amongst professionals who work on the archaeology of Nigeria.

## **Background**

The plunder of the material history of West Africa itself has a very long history; and, due to poverty, corruption and insecurity, it became far worse in the second half of the Twentieth Century than it had been in the first (Brodie 2000: 14; Darling 2000: 18; 2001). Perpetuating that loss, Nigerian cultural heritage workers have had to limit their campaigns for restitution of looted cultural property, in order not to lose Western support for work to preserve the cultural property that remains in Nigeria (Brodie 2000: 14; Opoku 2012b).

So, some negative expectations are to be expected, especially when thousands of blood antiquities/conflict antiquities remain in the same countries from which foreign archaeologists originate (cf. Opoku 2012a), and when the profits from the illicit digging

and trafficking of antiquities continue to encourage looters and 'compromise' archaeologists (Gundu and Assa 2009). However, some conflicts seem to be actively produced in order to advance certain causes. This piece considers the politics surrounding collaborative or otherwise international projects in structurally weak places; it considers how archaeologists might be able to manage those conflicts, though it is not confident that there is an answer.

### **Imperialist plunder or ethical engagement?**

Early in 2012, the President of the Archaeological Association of Nigeria (AAN), Dr. Zacharys Anger Gundu (also written as Zachariya Gundu or Zachary Gundu), launched a miniature media tour to campaign against a collaborative German-Nigerian archaeological project (e.g. Gundu and APA 2012; Gundu and Fred-Adegbulugbe 2012; Gundu and NAN 2012); the AAN (2012) later supported the position of its president, in a letter by its president (see also Hardy 2012c). Dr. Gundu's allegations were reported in national and international print and online media, and republished or highlighted on international professional news sites and discussion lists (see Hardy, 2012b).

Apparently, based on complaints from the Ham Community Development Association and the Kpop Ham Malam (King of the Ham), Gundu alleged that archaeologists of the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)) were arrogant, unethical cultural imperialists, who had participated in, funded and driven illicit digging in their fieldwork area; that the German construction company Julius Berger had funded plunder; and that corrupt elements within the (Nigerian) National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) collaborated with the Germans in the looting of archaeological sites, and sold off half of the national collections and replaced them with fakes (Gundu and APA 2012; Gundu and Fred-Adegbulugbe 2012; see Hardy 2012a).

In fact, "the Germans" had designed the project to rescue sites from looting, to provide economic alternatives to subsistence digging, to establish infrastructure for local development and to build capacity for cultural heritage work through professional training and employment. The Germans had worked in partnership with the NCMM and the local communities; had used their public platform to campaign against looting; and had paid locals who identified sites for scientific excavation, on which those locals were trained and employed, but had refused to rescue antiquities by buying them from looters, precisely because that would have

funded the illicit digging (Breunig, Neumann and Rupp 2012; see also Hardy 2012a; 2012b).

### **Public relations**

In fact, Gundu had never visited or contacted the project itself, and had ignored the project's personal invitations (Breunig, Neumann and Rupp 2012). Nonetheless, his claims spread. Unfortunately, part of the reason that the claims spread is that they went unchecked by archaeologists as well as 'churnalists' (journalists who recycle published material); the project had been plainly explained and accessibly published both in German (e.g. JWGU 2012) and in English (e.g. Atwood 2011; Schulz 2009).

Some German-speaking archaeologists tried to stop the spread of misinformation through the English-language professional community. For example, archaeologist Guido Nockemann (2012) summarised the most recent German-language information for the English-language professional audience, which he introduced with a cynical analysis of the problem: 'someone was not paid enough.... [T]he [G]erman archaeologist transported some artefacts for an exhibition in [Germany].... [T]hey will go to [N]igeria afterwards.... [T]hey have an agre[e]ment with some officials about this.' But it is impossible to tell whether these interventions were effective, or whether the damage was already done.

When I blogged about the case in an attempt to identify the truth and expose any wrongdoing, Gundu categorised me as a colonialist 'attack dog for the Germans' (2012a), refused (even privately) to provide any material evidence or eyewitness for his claims (2012b), and refused to provide a copy of the public memorandum of understanding between JWGU and the NCMM for ethical and legal review (2012b; see also Hardy 2012d).

### **Truce**

The ethical justifications for and changes from Gundu's positive proposals were not immediately apparent. The Ahmadu Bello University archaeologist proposed that Goethe University should collaborate with Nigerian universities, which it had already been doing for years, but 'especially our members at the Ahmadu Bello University [ABU]' (Gundu and NAN 2012), 'particularly Ahmadu Bello University' (paraphrased by Sowole 2012).

In the end, JWGU, the NCMM, the Ham Community Development Authority, representatives of the local community, ABU and others held a stakeholders' meeting and achieved a supposed 'truce';

but immediately after the meeting, Gundu again accused JWGU of 'unethical' and 'illegal excavations' (Sowole 2012; see also Hardy 2012f). And the seeds of doubt that he sowed did take root.

When I (2012e) asked journalist Tajudeen Sowole *how* Gundu had 'substantiate[d]' his accusations, Anonymous (2012) suggested that he 'may not have proven his allegation', but that he had 'raised a very important issue: how does a country like Nigeria, which has not got the right expertise and technology know if her Nok terracotta taken to Germany are returned as genuine as they were taken away?'

Rephrased from another perspective, how does an archaeologist prove a negative? How does an archaeologist predict and manage negotiations for access to resources – archaeological sites for them, project funding for their partners – when one or more of their negotiating partners is (comparatively) local, well-known, trusted, and able to exploit a community's historical experience to advance their own interests? Should an archaeologist try to win the trust of a distrustful gatekeeper, or try to bypass them – even if they are an elected professional representative – and earn the trust of the community?

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