

# Transcending Borders: Objects on the Move

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## ABSTRACT

Does the demand for archaeological artefacts in the legal marketplace in Israel increase the looting of archaeological sites in the region? Through the course of investigating this question it became apparent that while consumer demand may be at the heart of the trade in antiquities, the nature and driving forces behind looting are far more complex than is often understood. The motivations for looting involve notions of nationalism, the forces of globalism, conflicting preservation and management plans, colonialism, and long-entrenched traditional practices. It is an examination of this complexity (i.e. the multiple forms of and incentives for looting), which forms the focus of this paper. This is an exploration of the multivocality of the various agents who make it possible for objects to transcend borders.

Resumen: ¿La demanda de objetos/artefactos arqueológicos en el mercado legal en Israel ha incrementado el saqueo de los sitios arqueológicos en esa región? Al investigar esta pregunta se hizo evidente que mientras la demanda del consumidor puede ser el centro del comercio en antigüedades, las razones detrás del saqueo son mucho más complejas de lo que comúnmente se cree. Las motivaciones para el saqueo incluyen nociones de nacionalismo, las fuerzas de globalización, los planes de conservación y administración, colonialismo y prácticas tradicionales sólidas. El objetivo de este trabajo es explicar la complejidad de las múltiples formas e incentivos del saqueo. Esta es una investigación de la multivocalidad de los varios agentes que hacen posible que los objetos puedan ser trascendentes en las fronteras.

Resumé: Est-ce que la demande des objets façonnés archéologiques dans le marché légal en Israël augmente le pillage des emplacements archéologiques dans la région? Par le cours d'étudier cette question il est devenu évident que tandis que la demande du consommateur peut être au coeur des échanges des antiquités, la nature et les forces d'entraînement derrière le pillage sont plus complexes bien qu'est souvent compris. Les

motivations pour piller impliquent des notions du nationalisme, les forces du mondialisme, des plans contradictoires de conservation et de gestion, colonialisme, et des pratiques traditionnelles long-indélogeables. C'est un examen de cette complexité (c.-à-d. les formes de et les incitations multiples pour le pillage), qui forme le centre de cet article. C'est une exploration du multivocality des divers agents qui permettent pour que les objets dépassent des frontières.

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I recently completed my doctoral dissertation (Kersel 2006) on the effects of the demand for archaeological material on the surrounding archaeological landscape in Israel, Jordan, and Palestine (the PA). My fieldwork consisted of a series of oral interviews with the various stakeholders related to the quasi-legal<sup>1</sup> market for antiquities in Israel. During the course of my research I spoke with academics, anthropologists, archaeologists, architects, auctioneers, collectors, conservators, dealers, government employees, middlemen, museum professionals and tourists. My inquiries transcended modern political borders; ancient archaeological borders; borders associated with age, ethnicity, gender, language, and religion; illegal and legal borders; and public and private realms all in the quest of the answer to my PhD research question—does the demand for archaeological artefacts in the legal marketplace increase the looting of archaeological sites?

Through the course of investigating this question it became apparent that while consumer demand may be at the heart of the trade in antiquities, the nature and driving forces behind looting are far more complex than is often understood. The motivations for looting involve notions of nationalism, the forces of globalism, conflicting preservation and management plans, colonialism, and long-entrenched traditional practices. It is an examination of this complexity (i.e. the multiple forms of and incentives for looting), which forms the focus of this paper.

Some suggest that the art market is an economic system where there is primarily a one-way movement of material mainly from the less-developed world to the developed world (Coe 1993; Heath 1973). The trade in antiquities in Israel can be largely depicted as a three-part commodity chain operating nationally and/or transnationally. Defined by Hopkins and Wallerstein (1986:159), a commodity chain is a “network of labour and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity.” For the

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<sup>1</sup>Quasi-legal markets are those that possess both illegal and legal aspects. As an outcome of my research I determined that the supposedly legal market for antiquities in Israel is actually quasi-legal as looted material (illegally excavated) from Israel and Palestine is sold (after a laundering process) in legally sanctioned establishments and legally available for export from Israel.

purposes of this research, the finished commodity is the illegal artefact for sale in the legal market place. The process can be broken down into three links in the chain: (1) artefact cultivation and production (the looting of archaeological sites); (2) the movement of archaeological material by overseers and middlemen and the distribution by dealers either within the countries of origin or through exportation to other areas, and; (3) the eventual consumption of material in licensed antiquities shops by collectors, museums, and tourists. Through this system, artefacts move from archaeological sites to museums and private homes of collectors crossing both artificial and real boundaries, both inside and outside of the Middle East. And although artefacts cross borders with seeming ease, the various stakeholders in the system rarely operate outside of their designated sphere, producers seldom coming into contact with consumers.

In this article I want to focus on the literal crossings of frontiers by archaeological artefacts—looted by Israelis and Palestinians in the region and procured by overseers and middlemen (the Bedouin, Israelis, and Palestinians) who move the material across geographical and metaphorical borders into Jerusalem to the legally sanctioned dealers (both Israelis and Palestinians) licensed by the Israel Antiquities Authority. The dealers then launder the illegally excavated artefacts through a system of exchanging register numbers and sell the “legal” artefacts to unsuspecting or unconcerned tourists and collectors both nationally and internationally. Throughout this process archaeological objects cross numerous borders as they are transformed from illegally excavated artefacts to legally acquired cultural items. This paper, then, explores the multivocality of the various agents who make possible it possible for objects to transcend borders.

### **How it Works**

In Israel it is legal to buy and sell artefacts from legally sanctioned dealers, if the collections pre-date the 1978 national patrimony (ownership) law, which vests the ownership of all cultural material in the State (Antiquities Law 5738-1978). A tourist can legally purchase an antiquity from a licensed dealer and after obtaining an export license can take it out of the country. The process is monitored by the anti-theft unit of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), the governmental organization charged with the oversight of archaeology and cultural heritage in Israel. However, not all aspects of this trade are legal, and not all participants have an equal voice. Adding to the complexity of the situation is the porous nature of the border between Israel and Palestine as artefacts in the market come from those areas and go out to Europe, the Far East, and the United States: some of the material

for sale in the legally sanctioned shops in Israel crosses borders daily on its journey from looted sites in Palestine and Jordan. All roads in this antiquities business converge in Jerusalem. Under the terms of the licensing agreement dealers must provide a detailed list (including digital images and a description—often purposefully vague) of the inventory for sale in their shop. However, research (Ilan et al. 1989; Kersel 2006) has indicated that licensed dealers are able to sell looted material by exchanging the register numbers of inventoried items already sold with those of a similar description that have newly appeared on the market (illegally excavated).

When a tourist purchases an artefact with a particular register number from an officially sanctioned dealer, he or she receives a certificate of authenticity (supplied by the dealer) and an export license (but only if the tourist knows and remembers to ask for one) issued by the IAA. If the tourist requests an export license the dealer must then send a digital image and a description of the item to the IAA so it can be cross checked against the dealer inventory on file at the IAA. Alternatively the dealer can take the actual item to the IAA offices—located in close proximity to Jerusalem's Old City, where the majority of the licensed shops are situated—to obtain the necessary export license for the tourist. Both a description of the item and the official register number appear on the export license. Once the IAA is assured that the artefact was part of the dealer's registered inventory and the item has not been deemed of national importance, the IAA issues an export license and the artefact may legally leave the country. Yet, if the tourist does not acquire an export license the dealer can then reuse the register number as there is no formal record of the sale of the original artefact. If, for instance, the dealer has another artefact (an illegally excavated artefact) in his storeroom very similar in size, colour and design to the artefact just sold, he can then assign the second artefact the same register number and place it among his inventory to be sold.

Although frequently proffered as a remedy for reducing the destruction and theft of archaeological artefacts, the licensing of dealers and the use of register systems is often a dubious practice. Patrick O'Keefe (1997:31–32) states that “theoretically a register would allow acquisitions of artefacts to be traced and should dissuade dealers from acquiring those with dubious provenance—in practice their effectiveness is questionable.” As the situation in Israel demonstrates, the combination of overly broad descriptors and the lack of regular oversight make for a thriving trade in illegal material, which by all appearances seems legal. But how do the illegally excavated artefacts go from the ground to the dealer's storerooms, where they are laundered, to the tchotchke shelves of homes all over the world?

## Means of Production

A plethora of recent studies (Atwood 2004; Bogdanos 2005; Brodie et al. 2001; Brodie et al. 2006; Hollowell-Zimmer 2004; O’Keefe 1997; Smith 2005; Thoden van Velzen 1996) have documented archaeological site destruction throughout the world. Whatever the motivating factors are behind looting, it occurs. Concomitantly, valuable knowledge is lost as a result of the looting. Everyone in the cultural heritage realm agrees: the looting of archaeological sites is devastating to our collective understanding of the past. What some participants do not agree upon however is why people loot.

Looting activity ranges from the accidental, amateurish, episodic, and unorganised, to the organised, professional, systematic, and well-financed. Looting of archaeological sites in Israel and the PA, by both Israelis and Palestinians, to supply the legal market of antiquities is equally complex. Primarily, four motivational factors for looting have been identified in the area under investigation: looting as a viable source of gainful employment; looting as a leisure activity—something undertaken on the weekends and in the evenings; looting as a traditional activity stemming from years of experience as labourers on archaeological excavations, usually typified by the Bedouin of the area; and looting as a form of resistance. This last factor can create a paradoxical situation in which the archaeological heritage of a nation is being purposefully destroyed and yet, is the very resource that could provide tangible evidence of claims—by the looter or the community to which they belong—to the land.

## Looting as a Profession

Employing the model of cocaine production of Wilson and Zambrano (1994:303) artefacts are a suitable cash crop for local Israelis and Palestinians: artefact cultivation fits closely with the pre-existing, labour-intensive practices (construction, farming, menial labour), and uses readily available indigenous technology (agricultural implements, construction equipment). On a typical day there are usually dozens of people in archaeologically-rich areas throughout the region with picks, shovels, and metal detectors scouring the land for archaeological material. In some cases the looters use bulldozers to remove layers of topsoil to reveal unexcavated artefacts and sites. These individuals are professionals in every sense of the word. The mining of archaeological sites for objects is not a side-line activity but their main source of revenue and when asked they describe themselves as professional excavators.

Reports by the IAA anti-theft unit in *Hadashot Arkheologiyot—Excavations and Surveys in Israel* state that the robbing of archaeological sites in

Israel and the PA is planned and organised (Ganor 2003; Zissu 1998). Based on a description by Amir Ganor (2003:69–70)—head of the anti-theft unit, and corroborated by my own ethnographic interviews—a pyramid (see Figure 1) outlining the movement of material from the ground to the eventual consumer can be constructed to demonstrate the various borders crossed, networks of movement, and relationships involved in the professional trade in antiquities.

At the base of the pyramid are hundreds of looters, both Israeli and Palestinian, usually from a lower socio-economic class. These professional looters are organised and sent to specific sites and areas at the behest of an overseer (usually Palestinian), who has some knowledge of archaeology, excavation methodology, and consumer demand. The overseer provides the map and equipment (metal detectors, hand tools, heavy machinery) needed to undertake the pillaging. The activity often takes place at night and at sites on either side of the Israel/PA border. Sentries are always positioned to alert the diggers and the overseer of night raids by the anti-theft unit. Ganor (2003:69) reports that one overseer may employ two or three gangs simultaneously. Any material recovered is given to the overseer. In some instances looters are paid both for their time and by the piece, ensuring a steady salary whether they recover saleable artefacts or not.

The overseer, often crossing borders between Israel and the PA, distributes the recovered antiquities to a middleman traditionally from one of the many villages in the PA. The middleman, usually from an old collecting/dealing family and from a higher socio-economic sphere than either the looter or the overseer, provides the overseers with the necessary tools for excavation, as well as the financial backing. The middlemen from the Israeli/PA model are well-connected, and usually have a legitimate alternative profession that is not the trade of antiquities (Coe 1993:275). They also impart the knowledge about consumer demand and the market to the overseer. The importance of the middlemen, thus, is critical for maintaining the system.

According to Ganor (2003) it is the middleman who contacts the go-betweens (primarily the Bedouin), who function on the national level to move the material between the PA and Israel. These go-betweens make their purchases, which they then sell to dealers (both Palestinian and Israeli) in Israel licensed under the antiquities law. Dealing antiquities is a male-dominated (in 2004 there were only two women and they were co-licensees), well-established activity, which finds its origins in the Ottoman occupation of the region (Kersel 2006). Both Palestinian and Israeli families have been involved in antiquities business for decades and it is a small tightly-knit community despite the political divisions in the region. In 2004 there were some 46 licensed dealers. Through the exchange of register numbers described previously, the dealers sell the antiquities to

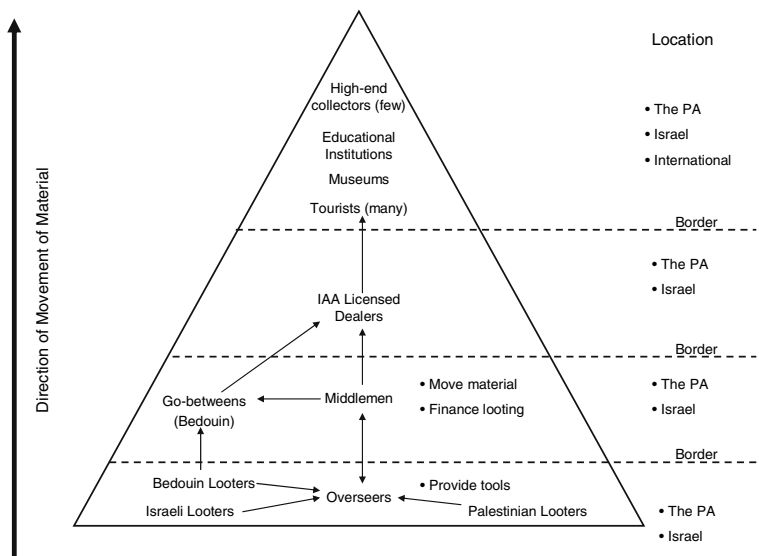


Figure 1. Israeli and PA looting pyramid (after Ganor 2003)

collectors, museums, tourists, and other merchants with the requisite export licenses and certificates of authenticity. In their position as the public face of the antiquities trade, dealers are key players in the trade. By means of direct sales to collectors or museums, and access to freshly looted archaeological material, they can sometimes influence both what is purchased and what is looted.

In an exposé on the movement of archaeological material from the PA to Israel, Goldin (2004) reveals that most of the illegal excavators see their work as a job—one that is sometimes risky but potentially lucrative. Even before the current unrest in the region, which precludes many Palestinians from employment opportunities in Israel, looting was often viewed as preferable to factory employment. The looters are outside in the fresh air; they make their own hours; if they make a spectacular find and reap the financial rewards, they may not have to work for weeks, living off of the proceeds from the sale; and most importantly, looted material is hard currency that is tax free (Silberman 1989). “It’s easy work and easy money,” states a looter from the Hebron area (Goldin 2004).

### Looting as a Leisure Activity

Various scholars (Hollowell 2006; Hollowell-Zimmer 2004; Migliore 1991; Smith 2005; Thoden van Velzen 1996) have discussed looting as a leisure

pursuit carried out by families as a weekend activity. Surrounding this activity is a set of specific rules of conduct, superstitions, and knowledge that is handed down through the generations. In her examination of *tombaroli* (the Italian term for tomb robbers and looters) Thoden van Velzen (1996, 1999) discusses the fact that the tomb robbers feel like they are connecting with their ancestors by looting, something echoed in statements by the Alaskans of St. Lawrence Island (Hollowell-Zimmer 2004; Staley 1993).

In December of 2004 a dealer and an archaeologist in two separate interviews told me that looting was taking place in the Modi'in area, a city halfway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv located along the no man's land between Israel and the PA. The dealer indicated that some of the Bar Kokhba material in his shop display cases was from a recently looted site. During the day Palestinians are employed as labourers on the construction projects in the Modi'in area. In the evening, unable to risk crossing borders to return to their village on the other side of the barrier wall (because they may be prevented from returning for their job the next day), they sleep in shelters in open fields and loot archaeological sites as a means to combat the boredom, in addition to earning some extra money.

On New Year's Day 2005 in the company of three other archaeologists, I travelled to the area of the reported looting to investigate the situation. We hiked up to the site and found evidence of looting in the form of spoil heaps (see Figure 2), discarded broken artefacts, dislodged tomb blocks and all of the paraphernalia associated with looting:



**Figure 2.** Broken Pottery in looters' back dirt pile, Modi'in. Photo courtesy of the author

ladders, buckets, shovels, tools, and a tea pot for the inevitable tea break. In our survey of the area we also found the makeshift lodgings (see Figure 3) and the Palestinian inhabitants. Whether these individuals were the actual looters was not possible to determine, but they were clearly





**Figure 3.** Make-shift homes of Palestinian construction workers. Photo courtesy of the author

agitated by our presence. The Palestinians kept watch of us from a close distance, but none seemed interested in answering the prying questions of a graduate student. We took notes, coordinates, digital images, and recorded as much of the area as possible and then left the area. Upon returning to Jerusalem one of the archaeologists informed the IAA anti-theft unit of the looting.

In late February of 2005 one of the archaeologists returned to the area with a tour group on a field walk. He noticed that looting in the area had increased since our last visit. In particular, he identified artefacts from the “Second Temple period” (early Roman period, 1st century BC to 1st century AD) in the spoil heap of some recent illegal excavations. Again he reported the incident to the anti-theft unit of the IAA and a week later in March of 2005 eight Palestinian construction workers were placed under arrest for conducting illegal excavations in the area of Modi’in (Lefkovits 2005a). In their defence the Palestinians claimed to be searching for a warm, dry place to sleep for the evening when they were apprehended in an underground compound of the Second Temple period.

Looters who conduct activities as a leisurely pursuit learn their trade in the same way as the professional looters—usually from relatives. Like the professionals, leisure looters do not search randomly. Looters share knowledge and expertise, which strengthens their sense of community. They spend time and effort investigating potentially lucrative archaeological sites searching for clues: differentiated soil patterns, broken ceramics, or signs of hewn stones. These looters rarely keep their discoveries and are also profiting from the pillage of archaeological sites. Even though looting is a leisure activity, these individuals are familiar with the networks of dealers,

go-betweens, and middlemen who can easily dispose of the material. For the leisure looter the goal is not to own a particular piece, rather the goal is the hunt and the discovery of the archaeological artefact or to ward off boredom. The money realised from the sale of these items is a happy consequence of their leisurely pursuits.

### Looting as a Traditional Practice

Traditionally a pastoral nomadic group, the Bedouin, were (and are) well suited to discovering archaeological material and sites as well as facilitating the movement of material from its original context to overseers, middlemen, and dealers throughout the region. Silberman (1982) states that as early as 1868 the Bedouin were well aware of Western interests in ancient artefacts. By the 1940s the Bedouin had become entrepreneurs in the trade in artefacts and they continue in this role today. It was a member of the Taamireh tribe of Bedouin who made the remarkable discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 (see Magness 2002; Silberman 1995). In his account of Jerusalem during the period immediately following the 1967 War, archaeologist Nelson Glueck (1968:90–91) recounts his visit to the antiquities shop of Palestinian dealer Musa Baidun. In negotiations with Baidun over a collection of pottery, Baidun states that he purchased the material from the Taamireh Bedouin who recovered the pieces from Dhahariyeh in the PA.

In interviews with archaeologists and dealers I corroborated that the Bedouin are still involved with the movement across borders and the looting of archaeological material in Israel and the PA. A recent news report alleged that Israeli archaeologist Hanan Eshel purchased an ancient scroll with a passage from Leviticus from the Bedouin (Lefkovits 2005c). In his defence, Eshel stated that he was saving the scrolls for the people of Israel because the Bedouin put glue on the scroll. As part of this investigation three Bedouin were arrested for illegally selling antiquities (Lefkovits 2005b). Many of the dealers I interviewed stated that in the heyday of the 1990s tourist boom Bedouin traders routinely came to their shops with archaeological material. One dealer admitted that in the past he had purchased “ancient coins by the kilo” from the Bedouin who came to his shop on a regular basis. It was clear from many of the interviews that the Bedouin primarily acted as the go-betweens, rather than looters—moving the material from the PA to Israel. The looting and movement of archaeological material is a traditional activity that has proven to be very rewarding for the Bedouin of the region.

Similar to the *huaqueros* of Peru discussed by Smith (2005), the Bedouin often view looting as a traditional activity, one that runs in families. Younger tribal members are trained in an apprenticeship-type setting

by other family members through a process of shared knowledge. Many Bedouin have worked as labourers on archaeological excavations and much of their experience is utilised when searching for archaeological sites and artefacts. Through my research it became apparent that many of the participants in the antiquities trade do not understand the rationale behind archaeological practice. As a result looters come to view archaeologists as looters themselves, but looters who operate above the law. Or as Smith (2005:165) asks “is archaeology simply the public face of looting?” as it is considered by many of the local population in Peru. Migliore (1991) and Thoden van Velzen (1996) witnessed similar sentiments in both Sicily and mainland Italy, where local looters, who did not really understand the process of archaeology, questioned the motives of archaeologists, who come to a region, excavate, find artefacts, and then take them away from the area—they are never again seen by the local population. Various accounts of the relationship between archaeology and the local population have stressed that communication between professional archaeologists and local groups is virtually non-existent (Luke and Kersel 2005; Thoden van Velzen 1996). “Artefacts represent money and power to archaeologists and art historians” assert the Italian tomb robbers interviewed by Thoden van Velzen (1996), “that is how they make their upper-class living.” In many examples of the traditional practice of looting, the locals cannot help but wonder if the artefacts recovered in scientific excavations also end up in the antiquities market.

In his examination of archaeological looting in Sicily as a deviant activity, Migliore (1991) maintains that “the local people (Sicilians) regard treasure hunting as an acceptable way of improving their financial status; they do not identify treasure hunters as criminals.” The same is true of the Bedouin communities in Israel and the PA, where looting and the movement of archaeological material is seen as a dependable source of income for the Bedouin whose income is never secure (French 1999). Research on looting and the motivating factors for the illegal excavation of archaeological sites has focused traditionally on issues surrounding subsistence and economics (Hollowell 2006; Matsuda 1998; Staley 1993). This academic focus resulted in the conclusion that looting is often the desperate act of people attempting to feed their families and eke out a living under harsh economic conditions. Despite prevailing literature, looting is not solely about the financial rewards but can also be a form of resistance.

### **Looting as Resistance**

Frustrated by the situation in the PA—the economic conditions and the construction of the separation wall—Palestinians have turned to an

everyday form of resistance, the looting of archaeological sites. Looters make a conscious decision to prioritise the destruction of the Jewish/Israeli past over the preservation of the Palestinian heritage. In *Weapons of the Weak*, Scott (1985:29) suggests that peasant rebellions are very rare and instead the weapons of the powerless group include: “foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, and so forth.” Looting of archaeological sites as a form of struggle meets many of the criteria of resistance: it requires little coordination, it is individually practiced, and it typically avoids any confrontation with authority (either Israeli or Palestinian) (Scott 1985). In her treatment of the looting of antiquities in Israel and the PA, Abu El-Haj (2001:255) suggests that looting “could well be analysed as a form of resistance to the Israeli state.” By pillaging archaeological sites that are thought to be associated with a Jewish claim to the land, Palestinian looters feel they are erasing the association, when instead they may be eliminating their own material connections to the past. Lowenthal (2005:394) in his explanation of the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage states “Heritage is destroyed and uprooted precisely *because* [emphasis original] it shores up enemy will and self-regard.” Destroying sites with Israeli (Jewish) associations, thus, bolsters local perceptions of Palestinian self-determination.

In repeated interviews I was told that one of the motivating factors for looting was a resistance to the Israeli occupation and subjugation of the Palestinian people. In a 2001 article on looting it was reported that “for Ahmed [a pseudonym] and other Palestinians, grave robbing, like everything else in the Middle East, also has a political angle. Some in the PA are worried that the pillaging is erasing whatever evidence exists to buttress Palestinian claims to the land” (Ephron 2001). Interviews with Palestinian archaeologists and government employees confirmed that the Palestinian looter, regardless of whether he digs in Israel or the PA, does not identify the material remains as his or her past but as an Israeli past, and it should therefore be eradicated.

In an interview with a government employee a discussion on the issue of looting as resistance provides some interesting insights:

However since the 1967 occupation there has appeared a new type of destruction of our land, by our own people. This is the most dangerous form of destruction as the people should be connected to their land and not destroying it. Some of the perpetrators knew/know exactly what they are doing when they loot the land.

As the Palestinians are still under the occupation they have turned to unusual forms of resistance as means of protest. One such way is illegal excavation in areas they consider still under Israeli control: Areas B and C<sup>2</sup>.

Area A where there is complete Palestinian control sees little or no looting as resistance. If looting occurs in Area A the looters are looking to make money and earn a living. In areas B and C there are competing reasons for looting and therefore it is more prevalent in these areas:

1. Looters feel that they are digging up things that are essentially Israeli. By looting and destroying sites they are destroying the cultural heritage of Israel not the Palestinians. They do not really see the relationship between the land and the Palestinians.

2. These looters realise that there is more money to be made from artefacts with a Jewish or Israeli connection.

The main job of the PA Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities should be to convince the looters that there is an ancient connection between Israel and Palestine and that looting and destroying these sites is actually ruining their own cultural heritage.

This type of looting also has an impact on the occupation. The Israelis just see the Palestinians looting their own cultural heritage and use it as an example to show that the Palestinians don't care about the land so they [the Israelis] should be the caretakers.

While looters may be aware of government regulations protecting archaeological sites, they often disregard the law as a form of resistance against the authorities (either Israeli or Palestinian). Looting as resistance is not only detrimental to the archaeological landscape but to global perceptions of Palestinians as a group destroying their own cultural heritage.

The region's unrest has ended the cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli antiquities policing efforts. Issues over jurisdiction have increased the tensions between Israeli and Palestinian archaeologists and government employees mandated with protecting the cultural heritage. Severely underfunded, the PA Department of Antiquities (DOA) cannot afford to police archaeological areas that are under Israeli control (Areas B and C) and Israelis do not travel to the PA often, hence sites under their jurisdiction are neglected and have become what one archaeologist referred to as "Swiss cheese" – dotted with looter's holes.

According to Bator (1983:6) the looting of archaeological sites is made possible by countries (and in this case it is two states who cannot decide who is in charge of what) providing services for the protection and preservation of archaeological remains (that are inadequately financed and poorly

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<sup>2</sup>Under the 1993 Oslo Accords the West Bank was divided into three zones: A, where the PA has the greatest authority; B, where the PA had some limited authority but Israel maintains a security presence and 'overriding security responsibility'; and C, under Israeli military occupation. It is in area C that the greatest amount of resistance looting takes place.

organised). Both the IAA and the PA DOA are chronically under staffed and under funded and as a result the policing of looting is not as successful as it could be. Added to these factors is the supposedly “legal” market for antiquities in Israel, which provides a close and lucrative venue for moving illegally excavated material across borders. Looters from either state do not trust the government so they rely on a quasi-legal system that rewards their activities, either financially or politically (by despoiling the archaeological heritage of the region).

### **Ease of Movement?**

As part of my weekly routine during my year of field research, I travelled to parts of the PA and Israel interviewing the various stakeholders associated with the trade in antiquities. Some days my geographical border crossings (between cities, states, and legal jurisdictions) were simple. Some days it took hours to make a 45-minute journey, or I would be turned back from the various checkpoints or border crossings, or traffic would be at a virtual standstill due to a bomb scare. Similarly, my metaphorical border crossings as a female in a male-dominated business (participants in the trade in antiquities are primarily male); language barriers; and issues of impropriety (asking too many probing questions) were often difficult to navigate and at times insurmountable. In contrast to my inability to circumvent boundaries, illegally excavated archaeological objects seemingly transcended most borders.

During my year there were only two reports of border interdiction where archaeological material was stopped either entering (from Jordan) or leaving Israel (Lefkovits 2005b). Yet, newly displayed archaeological material appeared regularly in the windows of the various licensed antiquities shops throughout Israel, register numbers were routinely exchanged, and illegally excavated material left the country. Inconsistencies in IAA oversight of the dealer registers and the seemingly easy movement of archaeological material across borders combine to create illegal elements in an allegedly legal market. Everyday artefacts cross borders in order to meet the demand for archaeological material in the legal market. The ease of movement of archaeological material between borders dictates the need for increased border controls, both intra- and inter- state cooperation to stop the movement, and greater oversight of the quasi-legal market in Israel.

My original doctoral dissertation research question investigating the entangled relationship between the demand for archaeological artefacts and the looting of sites led to some interesting observations regarding the movement of objects. The demand for archaeological material may dictate the ultimate disposition of illegally-excavated artefacts in the marketplace

and porous borders, economically distressed regions, and increased globalization may all facilitate trafficking, but there are varied inducements for pillaging. In moving from the ground to the marketplace, objects can transcend more than just geographical borders and this journey is affected by everything from traditional practice to nationalism. I also observed that an analysis of the various agents and facets in this complex chain of events can reveal many things about the practice and politics of looting, which may aid in archaeological site protection.

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