

pioneer European writers of Arabic grammars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries explicitly distanced themselves from the Arabic tradition. Yet he argues that they often borrowed more than they cared to admit and in other cases cut themselves off from relevant and useful insights. Pierre Larcher criticizes the view that derivation in Arabic is based on consonantal roots and points out the Arabic tradition of morphological analysis did not in fact adopt this assumption but was based on relating words to words. Mohammed Nekroumi untangles the complicated history of attempts to characterize the distinction between the two Arabic question particles *ʔa* and *hal*, showing that the “inconsistency” that Western scholars found in the traditional analysis is due to the fact that different authors within the tradition actually developed two distinct approaches—one with a semantic basis, the other with a syntactic basis. Certainly the outstanding contribution in this category is Michael Carter’s reevaluation of the ancient debate between the Basran and Kufan schools of Arabic grammar. Drawing on newly published and underutilized manuscript sources, Carter shows that the controversy centered not simply on the question of analogy vs. anomaly (the standard view) but on fundamental issues of linguistic methodology and the nature of evidence. Recognizing that the method of inductive reasoning was vulnerable as long as new examples could be added to the pool of evidence over which the induction was drawn, the Basrans (so-called analogists) wished to close off the canon. The Kufans (so-called anomalists but on Carter’s account perhaps better labeled “descriptivists”) wished to keep the corpus open to new examples and evidence. The ultimate victory of the Basrans not only defined the methodology of future linguistic research in the Arabic tradition, it also defined what came to be thought of as the only “true” or “pure” form of Arabic and thus brought to an end the descriptive phase of traditional Arabic linguistics.

Two philologically oriented contributions round out the volume. Lutz Edzard compares the problems of linguistic reconstruction and reconstruction of manuscript traditions, and Joseph Bell discusses medieval Muslim definitions of love. The papers are in French, German, and English and reflect, as the title announces, both the best

tradition of European scholarship on Semitic languages and texts and the innovative ways in which contemporary scholars are building upon that tradition.

ROBERT R. RATCLIFFE

Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Messages from the Past: Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Isaiah through the Destruction of the First Temple. By ROBERT DEUTSCH. Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publications, 1999. Pp. 205 + 17 pls.

Biblical Period Personal Seals in the Shlomo Moussaieff Collection. By ROBERT DEUTSCH and ANDRÉ LEMAIRE. Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publications, 2000. Pp. 228 + 209 figs.

Rare is the archaeological publication that fills the reader with both admiration and dread. Robert Deutsch, an antiquities dealer in Tel Aviv, has produced two tremendous publications presenting 109 bullae and 203 seals from one of the world’s largest collections of unprovenanced artifacts, that of Shlomo Moussaieff. Or perhaps this experience is all too common, and archaeologists and Near Eastern scholars have simply become fatigued or immune to the problem of unprovenanced—that is to say, stolen—artifacts. The glimmer of pretty things, the mystique of the wealthy, and the lure of their money are corrosive yet familiar to our community. Indeed, they seem unavoidable, if not indispensable. In the absence of a firm sense of morality and decency, it is therefore our well-deserved fate continually to experience existential pain, as unsavory contradictions between scholarship, stewardship, and money are played out. The great accomplishment of these volumes, if that is indeed the word, should be to produce outrage.

By now a rehearsal of ethical concerns should be unnecessary. But as these volumes dramatically demonstrate, ethics are more pressing than ever. In a wise and just world, Moussaieff’s collections and these volumes would either not exist, or barring that obviously utopian fantasy, we would feel free to ignore them completely. Sadly,

we cannot. They exist and must be addressed, first from a moral and then a practical perspective.

Much has been said about the morality of collecting and scholarly collaboration with collectors, but little seems to have been internalized.¹ As archaeological sites worldwide are devastated by all manner of forces, too many archaeologists and Near Eastern scholars continue this quising-like behavior with those doing the most damage to the past. These volumes are explicit examples of this collaborationist process. We archaeologists wish fervently to dwell in shades of gray, thus maintaining our room to maneuver. At best, most of us shrug our shoulders and wring our hands, claiming that all this looting goes on anyway, despite lame, indeed, contradictory, efforts to educate the public that looting is bad. The lamentation of the means are too often canceled out by the valorization of the ends.²

In the middle, we take money from collectors for excavations, laundering their reputations and consciences or, at an extreme, becoming beholden to them for our livelihoods.³ And, at worst, we sail merrily on collectors' yachts or advise them and appraise their new acquisitions. Within the community of scholars, there are further divisions, based on narrow self-interest. Archaeologists simply want to excavate more, perhaps as a way of thinking less, and epigraphers and art historians are all too happy to make the acquaintance of collectors and their wondrous things, as if there were not enough excavated artifacts going unstudied. About dealers and the entertainment industry that supports it,

magazines such as *Biblical Archaeology Review* and *Minerva*, the less said the better.⁴

Collectors, of course, argue that they are the true stewards of the past, not eggheads in ivory towers. After all, they did not invent capitalism, they merely excelled at it. Neither did collectors invent commodification, they merely participate in its ebb and flow. Indeed, for many collectors, ancient artifacts are simply another item to be bought and sold, like tulip bulbs, comic books, or Renoirs. The market giveth, and the market taketh away, and for the ancient Near East this is an especially old story. So too is fakery, about which more will be said below.

Some collectors, however, stand out for the sheer scale of their rapacity and their ability fundamentally to create and manipulate forces of demand and supply. Moussaieff is certainly in this rarified category, along with Leon Levy and Shelby White, Elie Borowski, George Ortiz, Norbert Schimmel, Norton Simon, and a few others. They are no mere participants; the market exists to serve them. These individuals are not small-timers like Mrs. William H. Moore, nor are the dealers that supply them colorful natives in fezzes from deep in the suq. These are industrial-strength collectors, served by a global web of dealers, middlemen, and assorted others, all leading back to gangs of thieves with heavy machinery and automatic weapons.⁵

There is indeed something ineffable about possession, but for collectors collecting is not simply about the past, it is about power, the

¹ For recent literature, see the Illicit Antiquities Research Centre at the Macdonald Institute for Archaeological Research at <http://www-mcdonald.arch.cam.ac.uk/IARC/iarc/resources.htm>. See also the important paper by C. Chippendale and D. W. J. Gill, "Material Consequences of Contemporary Classical Collecting," originally published in the *American Journal of Archaeology* and now available on-line with supplementary information at <http://www.swan.ac.uk/classics/staff/dg/looting/gc2/gc2.rtf>.

² Consider the practical and rhetorical stance, exemplified by the title of D. von Bothmer, *Glories of the Past: Ancient Art from the Shelby White and Leon Levy Collection* (New York, 1990).

³ For example, the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon.

⁴ For a discussion of the art market, see O. W. Muscarella, *The Lie Became Great: The Forgery of Ancient Near Eastern Cultures* (Groningen, 2000).

⁵ For an example of demand and supply, see the discussion in J. M. Russell, *The Final Sack of Nineveh: The Discovery, Documentation, and Destruction of King Sennacherib's Throne Room at Nineveh, Iraq* (New Haven, Conn., 1998). Note also that a Nineveh fragment was purchased, in good faith, by Moussaieff, who sent a photograph to be authenticated to the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem, founded by collector Elie Borowski. See the report in the newsletter *Culture without Context* at <http://www.mcdonald.arch.cam.ac.uk/IARC/CWOC/issue3/News.htm>. For a careful review of collectors' mendacious approach to provenance, see Chippendale and Gill, "Material Consequences."

ability to exercise will and indulge whim in pursuit of narrowly defined beauty that they feel entitled to monopolize. The process of acquisition, being the strange intersection of ego, connoisseurship, competition, and wealth, would also seem to be as thrilling as possession.⁶ In the process, the past is destroyed, and the rest of us are made to bow down low. There is also something qualitatively different about collections assembled in the wild days prior to World War II, or at least the 1950s, and those which have been coldly and methodically created since then. We may certainly condemn the methods and even the goals of Belzoni, Drovetti, Cesnola, and Budge, to name but a few. Even giants such as Layard were complicit in what was then a blurred distinction between investigation and collection.⁷ But their appropriations took place at a unique time and under unique circumstances, and their spoils are now, for the most part, in the public, not private, domain. These larger-than-life characters have also become an inextricable part of the artifacts, and their stories have historical and didactic value in themselves. For these reasons, the world's major museum collections should not be emptied, in some hopeless exercise in returning the status of ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian objects to what it was before, say Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. Even major nineteenth-century private collections such as Marcopoli, and minor early-twentieth-century collections, such as those of the Mrs. Agnes Baldwin Bretts and Mrs. Edward Newells of the world, fall into another, more benign category. Unlike the Moussaieff collections, these collections were published only after they became dormant. They were not the products of continuing criminal activity.

⁶ For example, Elie Borowski, "Introduction to the History of the Seal Collection of the Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem," in J. G. Westenholz, ed., *Seals and Sealing in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Symposium Held on September 2, 1993, Jerusalem, Israel* (Jerusalem, 1995), pp. 11–22.

⁷ See J. M. Russell, *From Nineveh to New York: The Strange Story of the Assyrian Reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum and the Hidden Masterpiece at Canford School* (New Haven, Conn., 1997).

Collecting has fundamentally distorted the study of the ancient Near East, creating a bias toward "pretty things" that has been insurmountable. The intellectual bias has been a function both of the slowly developing appreciation of the diversity of prosaic archaeological data and of the political economy of Near Eastern studies. Museums since the outset have been coopted by the lure of laundering stolen objects and the fear that loot will go to rivals or remain hidden in apartments, estates, and bank vaults. Scholars too have been lured into salons, enticed by the opportunity to catch a glimpse of the rarest of the rare, and the chance to kowtow to the superrich in exchange for access, glamour, and money. The "rape of the Nile" and similar crimes occurred before the birth of modern ethics and cannot be judged by today's standards. But in the aftermath of World War II, the massive theft of art and antiquities, and the establishment (and still incomplete ratification) of UNESCO treaties on cultural property, our approach to collecting today must be totally different.

The rationalizations abound. After all, the artifacts would be stolen anyway, why not profit in some way? Put another way, this defense states that the corpses were already stuffed and mounted, all we did was examine them with the assent and on behalf of the murderer. Any support and encouragement we might offer is surely coincidental.⁸ But to paraphrase the humorist P. J. O'Rourke, putting archaeologists and epigraphers in a room with antiquities collectors is like putting whiskey and car keys in the hands of teenage boys.

Truth and beauty have a troubled relationship in the best of times. These volumes spare no expense to expose the beauty of seals and even of bullae. As examples of a vanishing breed, books, these volumes are extraordinary. The artifacts themselves are beautiful, presented with line drawings, black-and-white and even color plates, printed on semigloss paper. The photos are generously large, often at 3:1 or 4:1,

⁸ H. Shanks, "Bringing Collectors and Their Collections Out of Hiding," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 25/3 (May/June 1999).

which, for a change, often do justice to the objects. But it must be noted that the volumes were published by Deutsch's firm, the grandiosely titled "Archaeological Center." They must therefore be understood first as sales catalogues, displays of goods rendered, and enticements for future transactions.

Furthermore, as scholarly as they may appear on the surface, they are fundamentally uncritical, designed merely to flatter the owner. Why would a scholar, much less a salesman, contend that the wise collector has, say, purchased a fake? The seal collection presents only the inscription, material, size, suggested date, and purchase place. The price tastefully remains private. The bullae collection, however, does present extensive discussions of paleography and prosopography, since it is a revision of Deutsch's 1996 MA thesis, written at Tel Aviv University under the supervision of Anson Rainey. This fact is so disturbing it cannot be subsumed under simple conflict of interest. The obligations of the academy are utterly at odds with those of the marketplace and that scholars of the first rank have legitimized an illustrated shopping list provided by a fence is appalling.

The structure of the more "scholarly" bullae collection is revealing. Derived from a thesis, it presents not only objects from the Moussaieff collection, but material from the Borowski and Sasson collections and the Hecht Museum. To complicate matters further, material presented by other scholars, principally N. Avigad and then B. Sass in the *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* (Jerusalem, 1997), as well as by Deutsch and his collaborators, is republished. The result is a subtle blending of the Moussaieff collection with the larger pool of inscriptions and a dilution effect that is seemingly designed to cleanse its dubious circumstances. The scholarship, erudite though it may be on the arcane points of paleography and prosopography, does not remotely begin to revivify these butchered artifacts.

It is another irony that practically these volumes contribute little. To a non-seal specialist, interested in institutions and administration and identity and ideology, the pages are tantalizing but hopelessly compromised. Without context, the consumer simply cannot trust what is being presented, much less understand the function of

artifacts in the past. Since that context has been destroyed by pillage, we cannot even employ the puny means that archaeologists have to reconstruct everything that once surrounded the artifacts, the spatial and material relationships that gave them meaning and life. This is one of the many tragedies that surround modern collections such as Moussaieff's. The pathetic rationalizations that paleographers give, that somehow their auguries compensate, mitigate, or even dispense with the need for archaeological context, that anything is better than nothing, go beyond self-serving. They contribute further to the distortion and destruction of the past.⁹ Here, as elsewhere in "biblical" archaeology, the unnecessary, but all too real, divide between archaeology and history becomes evident. Too often the tail of the *lamed* wags the dog of the profession.

The seals could, in theory, revolutionize the study of Israelite and Judean administration, about which precious little is known. Indeed, in her excellent book, *In the Service of the King: Officialdom in Ancient Israel and Judah* (Cincinnati, 2000), Nili Sacher Fox confronts this issue directly and reaches the inevitable conclusion that unprovenanced artifacts cannot be used. The lists of names and officials may simply be fake, and we also know nothing about where and how these objects, if real, were used. What was their function in life? Were they really in use as personal administrative tools, with scribes and/or merchants daily impressing bullae, which were then saved as part of a complex accounting system? How did the objects function within the visual environment of social symbolism and ideological statement?¹⁰

⁹ See now the important critique of traditional paleographic dating in A. G. Vaughn, "Paleographic Dating of Judaean Seals and Its Significance for Biblical Research," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 313 (1999): 43–64.

¹⁰ See the discussions of use in N. Avigad and B. Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* (Jerusalem, 1997), pp. 31–41. Note that only 61 bullae have been found in "controlled excavations," as opposed to over 300 from "uncontrolled excavations." Compare the many OBO volumes on seals edited by Othmar Keel, Christoph Uehlinger, and Michelle I. Marcus, *Emblems of Identity and Prestige: The Seals and Sealings from Hasanlu, Iran: Commentary and Catalog* (Philadelphia, 1994).

The sheer numbers of seals and bullae imply widespread literacy and a vivacious, and litigious, economy. But beyond the study of style and prosopography, which essentially tell us what we already know, that ancient Israel and Judah were influenced by the iconography of their neighbors and used lots of theophoric names, unprovenanced materials tell us nothing. Worse than that, of course, is the fact that putting these objects into the hands of a wealthy person required that surrounding archaeological materials be destroyed. The sheer lack of curiosity evinced about the context of the artifacts is stunning to an archaeologist. Are not the authors concerned about where a bullae that reads "Belonging to ʔAhaz (son of) Yehotam, King of Judah" might have been found? Where would such a son have lived and worked? What might his work have been? If a bullae reads "Belonging to ʔAdoniyahu who is over the house," would it not be interesting, even desirable, to ask what "over the house" really meant in context? Disembodied artifacts are not only worthless in and of themselves, they are destructive, evidence of a crime, and in a very real sense, enticements to future violence against the past. And the scholarship they have helped breed about ancient Israel in particular has been shockingly superficial, barebones recitations of political history and speculations about religious beliefs. Even a seal impression of Hezekiah, from the Moussaieff collection and published in BAR (British Archaeological Reports), can produce little more than a tired contention about whether Judean kings used Phoenician or Egyptian iconography.¹¹

The violence is all too real. Thousands of tombs have been looted in the area of ancient Judah since 1967. The criminal fiction of a "legal" antiquities market in Israel is a primary cause, as every visitor from Des Moines is moved to acquire a pot from the "Holy Land" for his/her mantle. The role of the antiquities market as a component of Israeli foreign policy, however, demands separate study. It must

suffice to say that it has been good politics and must be contrasted not simply with the closed markets of the surrounded states, but also with the fact of their closed, often totalitarian, societies. Nevertheless, one need only visit a site such as Tell Beit Mirsim to witness not only the looted cemetery but looted tell, for as bullae became popular in recent decades, the town itself became a target. Collections assembled in the later twentieth century are almost exclusively the products of prospecting for antiquities, not chance finds. It is time that Israel do away with the fiction of a legal antiquities market and for the major middlemen states, Switzerland, England, and the United States, to exercise control over the resale market.

It must be repeatedly emphasized that the crime is not simply the destruction of sites but the destruction of scholarship. This has at least two components. The frantic desire for inscribed artifacts has led to a terminal relaxation of what lawyers call the chain of evidence. All important context has been dismissed as hopelessly lost or superfluous to the information presumably intrinsic to the artifact itself. That this is a criminal rationalization has been noted above. Scholarship has been forced to adapt and content itself with evidence skewed toward "beauty" and away from prosaicness, toward abstract and often subjective assessments of artistic or literary style and away from concrete questions of context, material, manufacture, and so on. The political economy that indulges the whim of the wealthy has also been mentioned above.

But the disregard for chain of evidence has also opened the floodgates to a world of parallel artifacts, the art of the forger. Fakery has as long and distinguished a pedigree in the ancient Near East as collecting. Obvious frauds have been with us since the days of the Shapira forgeries,¹² and inscriptions in particular have been a thorn in the side of every legitimate scholar. Scholars dealing with texts have been all too willing to suspend disbelief every time something too good to be true has appeared. Tragically, this

¹¹ F. M. Cross, "King Hezekiah's Seal Bears Phoenician Imagery," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 25/2 (March/April 1999). Cf. M. Lubetski, "King Hezekiah's Seal Revisited," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 27/4 (July/August 2001).

¹² J. M. Eisenberg, "A 19th Century Forger in Palestine: Eilhelm Moses Shapira," *Minerva* 12 (2000): 21–25.

is increasingly a problem with the study of ancient Israel, and the Moussaieff collection is one of the primary reasons. Legitimate artifacts with real contexts, such as the Tel Dan inscription, have, along with their honorable excavators, been slandered because questionable goods in usually anonymous collections have been turning up with alarming frequency, usually on the pages of BAR.¹³

Are there fakes in the Moussaieff collection? Almost certainly, and it will be up to epigraphic and linguistic specialists to ferret them out as best they can, given that the objects themselves are inaccessible. The scientific analyses provided for two fragmentary bullae appear to establish their antiquity but say nothing about the collection as a whole. And while not presented in the present volumes, the apparently increasing numbers of inscribed arrowheads and ostraca in the Moussaieff collection must be regarded with particular suspicion.¹⁴ There is a clever and skilled forger at work, distorting the history of ancient Israel still further, with the complicity of scholars and collectors. On one level, we might even applaud this, since the impulse to see the wealthy waste their money is almost irresistible. On a more sober level, the intellectual and the practical damage, the multiplier effect of more sites and tombs looted, is incalculable.

Curbing the power of the superrich is about as likely as new Israelite sites being created. But the past has only one set of advocates whose

charge it is vigorously to defend the integrity of the archaeological record. If we lack integrity ourselves, we will surely continue to fail miserably in our chosen task. Consumer capitalism, ultranationalism, and infotainment are dangerous foes, and it is naïve to think that compromises are not necessary. But what are those compromises? What are the short-term and long-term results? What are the limits, and where do our professional responsibilities lie? Should we take money from collectors for excavation or publication projects if they persist in destroying the archaeological record for personal amusement? Should we publish their collections while they are still in private hands or insist on the moral fig leaf of collections being held by museums? And what happens when the collectors set up their own museums? Is moral absolutism a luxury or a necessity? If nothing else, these publications should force a practical and ethical reassessment, one that Near Eastern archaeology has been shamefully reluctant to undertake. Indeed, it may be argued that these volumes contribute little else.

The Moussaieff seals and bullae are dead and flat images, pretty pictures and lists of names, sad curiosities at best, saying more about the vanity and destructiveness of the ultrawealthy and the slavish hypocrites who serve them than about the past. The world of ancient Israel that these objects helped animate has now been destroyed twice—and finally for good.

ALEXANDER H. JOFFE

Boston University

¹³ For example, N. P. Lemche and T. L. Thompson, "Did Biran Kill David? The Bible In the Light Of Archaeology," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 64 (1994): 3–22; H. Shanks, "Three Shekels for the Lord: Ancient Inscription Records Gift to Solomon's Temple," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 23/6 (November/December 1997): 28–32. See now G. Galil, "A Re-Arrangement of the Fragments of the Tel Dan Inscription and the Relations between Israel and Aram," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 133 (2001): 16–21.

¹⁴ P. Bordreuil, F. Israel, and D. Pardee, "Deux ostraca paléo-hébreux de la Collection Sh. Moussaïeff," *Semitica* 46 (1996): 46–76. Compare I. Eph'al and J. Naveh, "Remarks on the Recently Published Moussaieff Ostraca," *Israel Exploration Journal* 48 (1998): 269–73.

Archaeology and the Bible. By JOHN C. H. LAUGHLIN. Approaching the Ancient World. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. Pp. x + 196. \$18.99.

Archaeology and the Bible is a well-intentioned effort to answer the question what archaeology can really do for biblical studies that falls somewhat short of success. Designed for a lay audience, the volume is nonsectarian, which is refreshing given recent evangelical attempts