Another Side to Archaeology

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"Chapter 1
The Discipline of Archaeology

I have deliberately used the word 'discipline' at the very opening of this book because of its two shades of meaning. In the first place, we usually use the word to mean the opposite of slackness and untidiness, to imply something carried out methodically and according to rules. On the other hand, when one refers to an academic discipline, the word has a slightly altered meaning, defining an intellectual study which has certain qualities involving the use of reason, judgement, deduction, and so on, in a way which will not only elucidate the subject studied, but will help to train a person's mind to work accurately and economically, and as an efficient instrument, on any intellectual problem." (Piggott, 1959, page 1)

Having been exposed to archaeology for two school terms, no better explanation has been found by this student for a definition of the field and science of archaeology. There is probably no worthwhile endeavor that is without its problems, however. The subject of this paper will deal with one area, that adds to the perplexities of archaeology. This area is concerned with the taking of archaeological artifacts from sites with economic, and not historic, gain being the prime end.

"The centuries-old art of tomb robbing came into the limelight when it was charged earlier this year that a 2,500 year-old Greek vase bought by the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art for $1 million was dug up in 1971 by tomb robbers from an Etruscan grave near Cerveteri, Italy. The huge vase, or calyx krater, is generally considered the best Greek vase in existence. It was of such quality that the painter Euphranios and the potter Exixtheos proudly signed their names on the front.

The Metropolitan's version is that the vase, used for mixing wine and water, came from a Lebanese collector but Italian police have since charged that it as stolen near here." (Kayser, April 23, 1973, page B2)
"The Etruscans, Europe's earliest civilization, flourished in central Italy between the 9th and 3rd century B.C. They were a great trading nation and artistically gifted as the paintings on their tombs still show today.

They were also inordinately fond of painted Greek vases which they not only imported in large quantities but also copied.

Etruscan tombs were usually filled with the dead man's most treasured possessions—jewelry, drinking cups and the precious Greek vases, all of which have since been systematically plundered, first by the Romans, then by Barbarians and finally by 20th-century tomb robbers." (Kayser, April 23, 1973, page B2)

"The notoriety of the New York Metropolitan Museum's Euphronios vase has had at least one beneficial effect: directing attention to the scandalous world market in archaeological thievery. The looting of ancient sites is an ancient custom. A great deal of the treasure in the world's museums was originally pirated by foreign powers or smuggled out. Today the countries of the world officially operate on more elevated principles—but art thievery thrives as never before. It is a multimillion-dollar business that gets amphetamine shots from events like the Met's $1,000,000 calyx krater purchase. Tragically, it is also leading to the wholesale destruction of archaeological treasures, and occasionally murder along with theft.

Authorities estimate that $7,000,000 worth of antiquities evaporate from sites in Egypt, Turkey, Greece, Lebanon, Israel and Italy every year. Treasure worth millions of dollars more is plundered from Latin America and the countries of Southeast Asia. Some $3,000,000 in booty originates in Italy alone, the richest source of plunder in the Mediterranean basin." (Time, March 26, 1973, page 93)

"With the advent of spring and tourists, tomb robbing and antique faking are getting into full swing again in Cerveteri, Italy, center of the ancient Etruscan civilization." (Kayser, April 23, 1973, page B2)
"Tomb robbers-or 'tombaroli'-cheerfully admit that in this area of central Italy alone their turnover from loot sold to dealers runs at between 300 and 400 million lire ($537,500 and $712,500) a year. Most of the loot ends abroad, usually via Switzerland.

Customs police in Cerveteri believe that at least 300 tomb robbers operate in the city itself and a further 600 in the surrounding area. Since 1969, they have sent 300 cases of tomb robbing up for judgment but so far only 16 people have ended up in jail.

During the same period, Cerveteri customs police say they have recovered about $537,500 worth of stolen pieces. But they stress this is only a fraction of what has actually been ransacked from the tombs." (Kayser, April 23, 1973, page B2)

"The racket in Italy involves a couple of thousand full-time, professional 'tombaroli' or tomb robbers, most of them peasants who know their land intimately. They work in teams. There are, for instance, at least twelve organized groups plundering the Etruscan sites in Cerveteri. Their scorn for official archaeologists is extreme." (Time, March 26, 1973, page 93.)

"Today's tomb robbers are frequently well organized. They rely on two-way radios to get advance warning from their look-out of any police patrol in the area, powerful lights and modern digging equipment.

Their only real opposition is the superintendency's pathetically small army of 12 men who are meant to watch over 2,500 acres of territory, all of it honey-combed with tombs." (Kayser, April 23, 1973, page B2)

"Since most Etruscan tombs are underground, they are found by pushing a steel probe into the earth or sometimes by stamping and listening for reverberations. Then a hole is opened with a pick and shovel and the prizes dragged out. Just two weeks ago, in the area of Cerveteri from which the Etruscan 'blue vase' is alleged to have come, the police found one group at work; the robbers fled, leaving their haul of 51 valuable Etruscan objects behind." (Time, March 26, 1973, page 93)
"The flow of Italian artifacts converges on about 50 'mediatori' (middlemen), who make their arrangements primarily with dealers in Switzerland or Italy. Important pots and bronzes are smuggled across the Swiss border in car trunks or, if small enough, in air luggage. Once in Switzerland, the hot object can be 'washed' (given a provenance, or certificate of origin) and exported legally to any country in the world. For every dollar a 'tombarolo' makes, the 'mediatoro' will will stand to get $5-and the final dealer $20 or more.

Collectors often show a frank indifference to the origins of their pots and bronzes. Said an official of the antiquities museum in Basel, Switzerland: 'it's public knowledge that 90% of the certificates of origin accompanying such works of art are totally unreliable. Most certificates are manipulated. The Italians can raise a ruckus, as in the case of the Metropolitan vase. But if they cannot prove anything, their claims are worthless. Unless the Italian authorities can come up with something like a photograph showing a work of art in an identifiable Etruscan tomb, they don't have a leg to stand on.'

Meanwhile, the cycle of thievery and corruption repeats itself all over the world. Harvard's Professor G. Ernest Wright, president of the American School of Oriental Research, recalls how in the Middle East he met 'the son of an Iranian government official with a suitcase full of ancient works of art,' which he was selling to defray his university expenses. Turkey has some 3,000 archaeological sites, of which only a fraction have been excavated by trained and government-sanctioned archaeological teams. The rest are simply raped. Even the official digs are ill-protected by a skeleton force of guards, who are paid an average $50 per month-not a salary likely to attract qualified men capable of thwarting organized robbers like the trio who, in 1968, broke into the Izmir Fair Archaeological Museum, rifled its collection of antique Aegean jewelry, vases and marble carvings, and crushed the watchman's skull with a stolen statue as they departed.

What infuriates responsible archaeologists about the bootleg trade is not merely its illegality, or its size, but the fact that it involves a wholesale destruction of knowledge about the past. The traditional excuse of collectors-museums as well as private individuals-has been that the way a vase or a bronze is acquired cannot
New York Met Director Thomas Hoving proclaimed that with the acquisition of the Euphronios vase, 'the histories of art will have to be rewritten.' Dr. Giovanni Scichilone, 39, archaeological director of the Italian government's antiquities bureau of southern Etruria, rejects this aesthetic evaluation as too narrow. 'Maybe a new generation of men will come,' says Scichilone, 'who are finally ready to appreciate the fact that the Euphronios vase by itself is nothing more than a war trophy, a lion skin. You can't get any historical meaning from archaeology until you deal with tomb groups, not single items. The tomb group of Euphronios might have helped write for the first time a few lines of entirely new history about Etruria, about Etruscan trade and economy of life.'

What 'tombaroli' disperse and often destroy is precisely that kind of vital information. In this way the unfettered acquisitiveness of museums in America and elsewhere, with their concentration on 'masterpieces,' results in a form of destruction of the past. Connoisseurship and history have become enemies.

Archaeological theft is so open that museums that buy stolen objects do not always bother to conceal it. Their regular policy, says William D. Rogers, a Washington, D.C. Attorney concerned with the legal and ethical aspects of acquisition, is 'the less you know, the better.' The Met itself has a suspect collection of 219 objects ranging from pottery to rare silver ewers and vases. When the collection was bought through a New York dealer, J.J. Klegman, in 1966, it was widely rumored that the Met had at last acquired the so-called Lydian treasure trove. The Lydian collection came out of four 6th century tombs found near the ancient site of Sardis in Turkey. There is no doubt, according to Turkey's Foreign Minister Haluk Bayulken, that the entire Lydian collection was looted. Though the Met was invited by Time to comment on the acquisition, it declined to do so.
"By and large, the poorer and more primitive the country, the worse the thievery. Says Clemency Coggins, an authority on pre-Columbian art and archaeology: 'Not since the 16th century has Latin America been so ruthlessly plundered.' Teams descend (sometimes literally, from helicopters) on any of the hundreds of Mayan ceremonial sites that lie scattered throughout Mexico and Guatemala.

The face carvings are ripped away with carbide-toothed power saws; cruder thieves use hammers, wedges or fire to split the irreplaceable sculptures into fragments for easy transport. In March 1971, Archaeologist Ian Graham, a research fellow in Middle American archaeology at Harvard's Peabody Museum, entered La Naya, a Mayan site in Guatemala; looters opened fire, killing his guide Pedro Sierra. In Costa Rica, says Dr. Dwight Heath of Brown University, who spent a Fulbright year there in 1968-69, 'One percent of the labor force was involved in illicit traffic in antiquities—which means there are more bootleggers in that little country than there are professional archaeologists in the whole world.' " (Time, March 26, 1973, page 94)

In addition to the professional archaeologist's attitudes mentioned above, in letters written in response to the Time article used above, the following attitudes on this subject were reflected in the April 23, 1973 issue of Time under the "Letters" section:

"Sir/As archaeologists currently engaged in research in the Near East, we were extremely gratified by your strong condemnation of the illicit antiquities trade (March 26). You neglected, however, to single out perhaps the most flagrant offenders—people in diplomatic positions with access to 'unsearchable' means of shipment. Here on Cyprus, for example, greater damage to the island's heritage is caused by the rapacity of both foreign diplomatic staff and United Nations forces in a single week than by an entire year's tourist trade.

Alfred and Susan Kromholz

Kyrenia, Cyprus"
"Sir/Your article on the antiquities racket ignores one of the major causes of it: the governments who make it illegal to export antiquities.

As with Prohibition, the laws don’t lessen the demand, but they do limit suppliers to those willing to violate the law. Antiquities should be regarded as natural resources, to be exported to those that value them highly. Give the discoverer a percentage for finding the antiquities, set up some minimal requirements for the sake of archaeology and make exporting routine.

David Carl Argall
La Puente, Calif

Is there any one right solution to this problem? This will be dealt with later on in this paper.

Adding to the consternation of archaeologists, in one instance, grave robbers have been assisted by another enemy of professional archaeologists, art forgers. "During the middle of the last century at the time of the discovery of the lake-dweller’s civilization in Switzerland, Russian archaeologists were excavating in South Russia in the great mounds of the Crimea and the Taman peninsula opposite Kertch. Here besides the tombs of rich Scythians were found Greek graves with splendid painted wooden sarcophagi, accompanied by beautiful vases and often too by fabulous gold ornament. Local farmers, digging among the graves found many a fine piece and sold it secretly to private collectors, although probably the greater part of these gold treasures finally came to rest in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg. Gold jewellery from the Crimea was eagerly bought by antique dealers and soon the demand far outstripped the supply. Grave robbers, under dire penalty, were unable to fulfill the needs of rich collectors. But the forgers came to the rescue, although it was by no means easy to copy the brilliant craftsmanship of this splendid gold work. They started with rather small decorative pieces, that were fairly easy to copy: brooches, earrings, bracelets. These forgeries were supplied not only to private collectors but to museums as well: Odessa, Cracow and Petersburg. The Museum in Cracow obtained a gold mask with a dedication to Pentacles as well as a pair of golden sandals. A small gold skeleton was specially prepared for the collection of Baron Rothschild. The forgers, who seemed to be reasonably well-informed both on the
archaeological and epigraphical side, had many original ideas. They passed their new creations into the hands of farmers who offered them to dealers so as to be able to provide a more or less credible provenance. In this fashion the so-called gold crown of Olbia and a ceremonial dagger came into the hands of the trade. Both were said to have been found together and furnished with inscriptions. At any rate there were stylistic differences of several hundred years in the letters; for instance the lettering on the dagger appeared to be late Roman, while that of the crown was early Hellenistic. But at first that did not make such an impression as the inconsequential arrangement of the reliefs on the crown, which placed Zeus irrelevantly beside Medusa, and Artemis next to a dolphin; the garlands were in Empire style and the whole piece fantastically crowned with a wall, battlements and towers. The inscription on the crown was not conceived without some historical knowledge. It ran: 'Kallinikos, son of Euxenor, goldsmith of Olbia, dedicated this crown to Achilles the great leader after a victory over the Scythians when Kallisthenes was priest.' This 'precious' piece arrived in Berlin and would have been purchased when the archaeologist Furtwängler expressed doubts: 'the success of these forgeries,' he said, 'is entirely due to the hypnotic effect of gold on man.' " (Rieth, 1970, page 117 and 119)

In an instance that must have brought joy to the heart of every archaeologist that learned of the story, one set of grave robbers had the tables turned on them, and through their intended deceit, a very valuable find was made by an archaeologist. "Egyptian forgeries have on occasion even been the cause of new discoveries as was the case with A.E. Mariette. In 1860 the famous Egyptologist was excavating near Thebes in an area frequented and dominated by Egyptian grave-robbers. In order to get rid of their scientific competitors, the mummy-hunters constructed the ruins of a new grave mound so that it looked like a grave and offered Mariette as a bait a beautiful, and genuine alabaster vase, supposed to have been found there. Mariette seeing the vase allowed himself to be persuaded and abandoned the original plans for excavation in favour of the new grave-site. The robbers had achieved their end, never dreaming that below the fake grave there was part of one of the oldest cemeteries of Thbes so far discovered, containing the undisturbed grave of Queen
Ahotep (1600 BC) with splendid jewellery and gold funeral barges. It was in fact an astonishing piece of luck." (Rieth, 1970, page 26)

A relatively new addition to the field of archaeology is marine archaeology, where the remains of sunken ships and their artifacts are being studied, and ways of excavating them are being probed. To be a success in this aspect of archaeology, one must not only be an archaeologist, but a competent sailor and experienced diver. The archaeologist working above ground and below has his share of problems, but these do not compare with working underwater, battling currents, bad weather at sea, supplies of oxygen, trained seamen and divers or marine life such as sharks. Just as his counterpart on land, however, the marine archaeologist must deal with site robbers, due primarily to the current popularity of scuba diving. Adding to this problem the marine archaeologist faces one of lack of cooperation, and sometimes open hostility with international governments.

This is illustrated in the two following stories. Another problem illustrated here is the problem that site robbers have been responsible for these government's attitude.

"In 1961, Edwin Link, inventor of the Link trainer for student pilots and internationally known researcher into problems involved in the exploration of the sea, came to Greece with his research boat Sea Diver. He had permission from the government, as represented by Admiral Voutsaras, to carry out a modest research program in southern Greece. He was arrested more or less by accident for stealing antiquities, and sentenced to two years in jail. This made headlines all over Greece, and was in fact the hit of the season among a populace which has long been a connoisseur of smuggling stories.

He paid the fine one is permitted to pay instead of going to prison, left Greece, appealed the sentence, and was eventually judged to be innocent. This second trial did not even make the second page of any of the papers.

A deputy of the French parliament, a friend of his, and their wives had hired a boat for an afternoon in Methone in 1963. They found some potsherds, showed them to one another on the boat, then proposed to drop them back in the sea where they had been found. Not on your life, said the boatman. They were taken to the harbor-
master and arrested for stealing antiquities. More headlines were followed by an acquittal, which was not reported." (Throckmorton, 1969, page 220)

"Sir, my grandfather knew the place, near the old stones. He told me. I will show you for a share. There was a golden sow, made by the ancients, and her seven piglets. ... Gold, sir, gold, It's for a foreigner to find them...

Greek village legend, commonly told to archaeologists" (Throckmorton, 1969, page 210)

"Compounding resentment at the loss of ancient sculptures to foreign museums is the conviction that the sea is littered with priceless treasures which foreigners are dead set on stealing. (Here, digressing for a moment, it is instructive to observe that the Greek for 'guest' and for 'stranger' is the same word. Tourist guides make much of this, touting peasant hospitality, but others point out correctly that the inspiration of the proud and delightful hospitality offered guests is a fear of that guest, the stranger, and the damage he might do his host if not placated.)

Like most obsessions, there is just enough truth in this one to make it impossible to cure with reasonable argument. There have indeed been fabulous finds in Greek waters, the most interesting of them being the Antikythera wreck which had a cargo of life-size and colossal bronze and marble sculptures. Another wreck, off Cape Artemesion, produced the famous bronze Poseidon, or Zeus, that is now in the Athens Museum. A copy stands in the lobby of the United Nations building in New York." (Throckmorton, 1969, page ix)

"It is a frustrating and fairly useless proposition to argue to the Greeks and Turks and the diminishing group of western land archaeologists still against 'going underwater' that a huge national and international effort is needed if ancient shipwrecks are to be saved. I now have nearly a thousand Aegean shipwrecks in my files. Most of these are steadily being robbed. It is generally conceded that all ancient wrecks in the south of France, down to a depth of fifty meters have been looted and destroyed by skin divers. It is as bad in Italy and Spain. Although marine archaeology has been developing as a subdiscipline of land archaeology for twenty years, and hundreds of shipwrecks have been 'excavated' by
skin divers, sponge divers, and conventional archaeologists, I am hard put to think of ten correctly excavated and published marine excavations. Ancient shipwrecks in the Mediterranean, like the buffalo of the great western American plains a hundred years ago, are disappearing.

There is a lack of trained underwater excavators to use the means which navies, foundations, and governments are often willing to put at their disposal, and it is the archaeologists' fault that this is so. There are few incentives for young people to go into marine archaeology, and many difficulties put in their path. As a result, there are not more than five trained marine archaeologists in the world.

In contrast, the world of marine archaeology is overrun with amateurs and adventurers who can be compared with the treasure hunters who ruined so many land sites at the beginning of the development of modern archaeology in the early 1900's. As then, there is a time gap between interest and technique, technique and its inclusion in respectable curricula of universities. The gap is presently filled by sticky-fingered sportsmen, the subject itself dispersed to the mantelpieces and coffee tables of the world." (Throckmorton, 1969, page x)

This attitude was furthered by Throckmorton when speaking of destroyers of underwater antiquities. "There are other ship eaters as well, from tiny organisms not visible to the naked eye to the human scavengers out for a day's sportive plunder: 'If it moves, spear it; if it doesn't put it on the mantelpiece.'

"The first obvious, and correct, point is that the deeper wreck has a much better chance of 'survival'. Deeper and colder water discourages both sea organism and human plunderers, and if the wreck is covered by sand or mud it will last, we may assume, indefinitely." (Throckmorton, 1969, page 17)

The popularity of scuba diving which opens the accessibility of obtaining these underwater artifacts, along with the obvious desire for them as "treasures", adds to the marine archaeologists problem.

"Still today most 'classical' archaeologists are by training Latin or Greek scholars or historians or epigraphers or numismatists or philologists. Photography, surveying, and sufficient chemistry to ensure conservation of finds are just now
"Whatever they were, archaeologists were very rarely sportsmen, and it was the sportsmen-skiers, sports car drivers, light-plane fliers, bobsled racers—who rushed like lemmings to explore the world at the bottom of the sea. Archaeologists and divers would have had trouble talking to each other at dinner; it was all the more improbable that they would consider their occupations involved with one another.

In short, no one meant the marine archaeological situation in France to go sour, but it did. Other groups of divers were formed, and found more amphoras on the bottom of the sea. Wrecks began to shrink. Aside from being an exotic souvenir of an afternoon's outing, an ancient amphora can be a wonderful thing, and this wonder is shared by tomb robbers, antiquarians, archaeologists, artists, historians, and everyone else with a little imagination. It is splendid to hold in one's hand an object which has been used by other men, other women, perhaps thousands of years ago, and even better to have it at home holding geraniums or being a doorstep.

Some groups like the Club Alpin Sous-Marine urged their divers to report and turn in finds to the local authorities. All through the 1950's Professor Benoit at the Musée Borely struggled to cope with floods of reported wrecks. The law forbade removal of objects from ancient sites, but the notion of enforcing the law at the bottom of the sea was absurd. What difference could it make, thought one souvenir hunter after the other, as amphoras vanished like flies in Flit, if there were one amphora more or less among hundreds of identical ones on so many sites? In any case the law was unclear, being confounded with salvage laws fixed in the time of Colbert, in the mid-seventeenth century." (Throckmorton, 1969, page 181)

"The future of marine archaeology at the moment is doubtful. There are said to be something close to three million skin divers in America, and probably over a million in Europe. In twenty years they have done more harm to archaeological sites in the sea than all the forces of nature together in three millennia. They have done some good, too." (Throckmorton, 1969 page 210)
"The problems seem to be more or less the same everywhere—the right authorities don't care, the wrong authorities do; people generally find it more fun to read about and support groups that hunt gold than expeditions which measure broken pots and draw nail holes; and divers themselves think of looting wrecks as legitimate sport. Or if they think it is wrong, it is just a little bit wrong, like tearing up a parking ticket in a foreign city. A brochure from a California travel agency for 1968 advertises a visit to the wreck of the Matancero, 'an eighteenth-century Spanish galleon that usually yields artifacts...crosses, bottles, gems, spoons, cannon, cannonballs, etc.' The divers who go on these trips are nice men, not criminals; if they cheat on their income tax at all, they probably don't cheat much.

The divers think of ship archaeology as an enormously complicated activity practiced by a very few specialists who are somehow never in the neighborhood when wrecks are found. In a way, but only in a way, they are right. The authorities, archaeological and otherwise, think of ship archaeology as an enormously complicated activity engaged in by exotic beefy types one step removed, if that, from the smuggling trade. And in a way, but only in a way, they are right too." (Throckmorton, 1969, pages 210 and 211)

"The French predicament is one of alienation between archaeological authorities and divers, though there are a few passionate researchers like Frederic Dumas who continue their solitary inquiries with a great deal of honor and next to no financial backing. For a while the coast guard watched those sites it was told by the state archaeological service to protect, but after many dozens of arrests and acquittals they simply gave up. There were too many sites, and the bottom of the sea is impractical to police. There are many diving clubs, some of them concerned with archaeology, but not one has yet carried out and published a technically correct excavation.

Likewise in Spain dozens of shipwrecks have been found, but none systematically excavated, none published. It is probably safe to say that there are no visible wrecks on the Spanish, French, or Italian coasts under less than one hundred fifty feet of water which have not been looted and fairly well destroyed." (Throckmorton,
"There are many thumbs in the dike, trying to hold off the flood of ravenous scavengers. Perhaps the best of the organizations is the Committee for Nautical Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology in London, which gives courses and seminars in marine archaeology as well as technical discussions and advice. The committee has not yet carried out an excavation, lacking funds and leadership to do so. But it has done excellent work in training students, and out of so many Indians a chief or two is bound to turn up before long.

In the United States, the Council of Underwater Archaeology has existed since 1958, but has yet to support a full-scale ship excavation. The council's interests are broad. At the third conference sponsored by the council, held in Miami in March, 1967, out of thirty-two papers delivered only two were reports of ship excavations. One was given by Anders Frantzen on that excellent, hardy perennial, the raising of the Vasa. The other was by Fred Van Doornick, giving an account of his restorations of the Yassi Ada wreck.

Smaller groups have done good work, such as the survey, done by the University of Acadia in Nova Scotia, of Louisbourg harbor and the ships destroyed by the British fleet there in 1758. This was done by a group of divers led by two young instructors who were not professional archaeologists but had done their archaeological homework thoroughly.

The Western Australian Museum in Perth has created a post for a curator of nautical and colonial history, who has been entrusted with the six known precolonial wrecks in western Australia. These include the wrecks of the Batavia and the Golden Dragon, both unfortunately dynamited before the creation of this position.

In Denmark Ole Crumlin Pedersen, a young naval architect, has gotten the government to finance a maritime museum and has started a true center of ship research. In Holland as well, the Dutch Archaeological Service has started a project to save shipwrecks that turn up in the lands reclaimed from the Zuider Zee. Directed by G.D. Van Der Heide, the meticulous Dutch have excavated dozens of shipwrecks dating from the early 1400's. Hundreds more have been located." (Throckmorton, 1969, pages 227-228)
"A number of individuals—Honor Frost, Frédéric Dumas, Robert Marx and Gerhard Kapitän, among others—have worked singly or with small groups, digging and drawing history in the sea as fast as they can before it disappears. A group of divers from Cambridge University, including architects and engineers, have worked for several summers on their own or with other groups, training themselves and learning from others, as much as a summer's holiday will permit, about marine archaeology.

This last is perhaps particularly relevant. The growing groups of treasure divers whose principle tools are dynamite and metal detectors are not bad men. They are not scholars either. They dive for thrills, but are often susceptible to the other sort of thrill, that of learning about a ship's construction and journey from its careful excavation on the bottom.

The technology of marine archaeology is relatively simple, and can be mastered by most mechanically minded small-ship seamen. The only place in the world where a student can train to be a professional marine archaeologist is the University of Pennsylvania Museum, but not everyone wants to be a full-time professional. The urgent problem of the moment is turning looters into recorders, with some sort of organization to which finds can be reported without, as in Greece or France, drowning the diver in scandal or red tape.

There is a great deal of talent and goodwill available in museums, universities, navies and commercial organizations. The question is its organization for use. The barriers in the way of marine excavations are mainly the result of political bickering in city offices.

The problem is desperate. Soon the object of the bickering will have vanished like the American buffalo or the whooping crane; nor can we mate the last survivors and hope against hope they will breed." (Throckmorton, 1969, pages 228 and 229)

Hopeful suggestions to the problem of land archaeologists are coming into focus.

"It was not until 1970 that UNESCO adopted a convention aimed at the thieves' trade. Like other museum men, Hugues de Varine, director of the International Council of Museums in Paris, thinks this document is 'better than nothing.' But neither he nor anyone else is really optimistic about it as only three of its 26
articles call for real action from the signatory nations; these refer to the need for export certificates, tightening of penalties for theft and prohibiting museums from buying stolen antiquities. So far, only a few countries, like Ecuador and Honduras have signed the convention. The U.S. Signature has been ratified by the Senate, but not the House of Representatives.

A more useful potential deterrent to illicit trade is a U.S. law passed by Congress last fall prohibiting the import of pre-Columbian monumental sculpture and murals without the approval of the country of origin. This is a start, but not an end; it does not apply to smaller pieces like pottery and goldwork, and thieves in Latin America will destroy a whole site to find one Mayan gold ornament. One thing is clear: as long as astronomical prices are offered by rich countries, no local laws will keep robbers from plundering.

The ultimate responsibility lies with the consumers-private collectors and museums alike. John D. Cooney, the curator of ancient art at the Cleveland Museum, ruffled his colleagues' feathers by publicly declaring earlier this month that '95% of ancient art material in this country has been smuggled.' He was only voicing what is common knowledge to every curator, collector and dealer in the world.

The standard defense for smuggling is the Elgin Marbles ploy: if Lord Elgin had not 'rescued' the Parthenon sculptures from the Turks in Athens, they would probably no longer exist. The British Museum was built on the Empire's blunder. Likewise, since the Latin Americans or Italians 'cannot look after' their own archaeological wealth, it is the collectors who preserve it by extracting it from their hands.

Offered in 1973, such reasoning drives archaeologists to near frenzy, Said Nicholas Hellmuth, who headed a 1970 dig in the ancient Mayan city of Yaxjá in Guatemala and saw tombs laid waste by robbers: 'I'd like to take the next museum art director I see and dip him in honey and tie him up near an anthill.' The big collections, say Curators Bennet Bronson and Donald Collier of Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History, are supporting an entire underworld. Collectors usually deal only with the last-and most gentlemanly-middlemen. In an atmosphere of genteel negotiation, it is all too easy for acquisitive collectors to concentrate on the
beauty of the object and forget about how it was obtained. This is natural, since the death of the stolen antiquities trade might mean the end of grand-scale collecting.

One possible solution to the dilemma would be an international fund to enable each country to protect its treasures, and then a systematic, international sharing-on a long-loan basis—or swapping, so each country could broaden its collections. Italy, for example, could swap a vase for a French impressionist painting. Failing that, museums must become more scrupulous. A group of museums in the U.S. has already taken the first significant step. In recent years policy statements have been issued by the Field Museum, the University Museum in Carbondale, Illinois, The University Museum in Pennsylvania and all the collections of Harvard University. They all agreed not to buy any ancient artifact whose pedigree was in doubt—and their embargo extends to accepting gifts of such pilfered material from collectors.

Although cultivated murmurs of approval have been heard from other U.S. museums, so far only a handful have followed suit. So the bootleg market rises, the plundering goes on and the split between scholars and collectors widens. All of which brings to mind the words of Alfred Jarry’s monarch of absurdity, Fa Ubu: ‘Hornstrumpot! we shall not have succeeded—unless we demolish the ruins as well.’" (Time, March 26, 1973, page 94)

The Chinese, having a seemingly natural aptitude for common sense decisions in most matters, seem to have arrived at the best approach of all.

"The Chinese believe that the past is the property of the people. They encourage everyone, not just the archaeologists, to dig up and preserve what they find." (Davis, Newsweek, May 14, 1973, page 75.)
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Pledge: This is my work alone.

James E. Toler, Jr