Censorship

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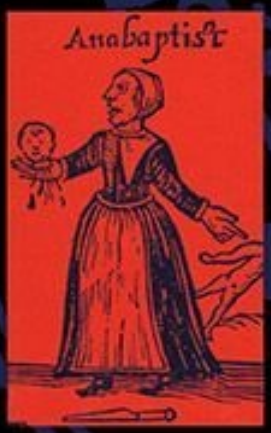
A World Encyclopedia



EDITED BY

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Volume 1-4

The Arab Gateway website "Arab League", http://www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/league.htm

Archaeology

The censorship of archaeology and archaeologists covers: direct attempts to censor interpretations of the past resulting from archaeology, indirect political censorship of archaeologists, and finally, restrictions imposed by those whose sites are under investigation. The intent to manipulate the past is the strongest on the first level and the concept of censorship most applicable. On the second and third levels, the intentional censorship of the past is progressively less present. This essay provides a basic listing of the best known cases of archaeological censorship.

Direct censorship

In many countries archaeologists have found themselves under severe ideological constraints emanating from political and religious authorities, in particular in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. The Nazis destroyed ethnographic objects found in Poland and deemed Slavic in order to eradicate from the record the culture such objects represented. In the Soviet Union, Mikhail Miller and some 20 other archaeologists were forced into exile in 1929 for criticizing the Marxist approach to archaeology. In 1936 this was documented and condemned by the Finnish archaeologist Arne Tallgren, who was promptly deprived of his honorary membership of the Soviet State Academy for the History of Material Culture and denied further entry to the country.

Until the 1980s, Soviet censorship forbade any mention of the work of Jonas Puzinas, the first professional archaeologist in independent Lithuania before the 1940 Soviet occupation, for the fear of the spread of non-Russian (i.e. Baltic) interpretations of the past. In the Ukraine, historian and archaeologist Mikhail Braychevsky was dismissed in 1968 and again in 1972, for challenging the official theory that the Ukraine was "reunited" with Russia in 1654.

Manipulating the past is a worldwide phenomenon. In the ultranationalist Japan of the 1930s and early 1940s, restrictions were placed on archaeological research that might touch on the origins and early history of the imperial family. In Southern Rhodesia after the emergence of the Rhodesia Front government in 1962, fieldwork became almost impossible. Archaeologists supporting the obviously African origin of Great Zimbabwe ran a risk. In 1970, two of them - Roger Summers, employed by the National Museum, and monuments inspector Peter Garlake - left the country because they could no longer work under its regime and sustain their intellectual integrity. In 1968 Garlake had supervised the excavations of a newly discovered group of ruins at Bindura. He supported the view that these and other such ruins were erected by the indigenous people, a view shared by all professional archaeologists since 1914. State employees, however, were warned that they would lose their jobs if they credited Africans with the monuments. They were forbidden to discuss the radiocarbon dates of the ruins, and they had to distribute guidebooks censored by the minister of internal affairs. The protest against the governmental efforts was joined by Raymond Inskeep, professor of archaeology at Cape Town University.

Archaeological evidence for early indigenous settlement played a major role in refuting the legal fiction of *terra nullius* (no man's land) in his own country as it did also in Australia.

In 1988 the Sudanese minister of culture and information, 'Abd Allah Muhammad Ahmad, ordered the pharaonic statues in the National Museum to be clothed because he considered their nudity to be offensive. In addition he required the removal of all Christian relics from the museum on the grounds that only the Islamic heritage counted as authentic. In 1990, as the minister of education, he dismissed the National Museum's senior staff, who had "offended" him in 1988. They included three prominent archaeological experts: Usama 'Abd al-Rahman al-Nur, director-general of the Department of Antiquities and National Museums; Muhammad Hassan Basha, assistant director of the Sudan National Museum; and 'Ali TJthman Muhammad Salih, associate professor of Nubian archaeology at Khartoum University. In May 1990, the first two were arrested and held at Kober Prison. In Egypt during Sadat's presidency, pressures led to the withdrawal of mummified pharaohs in the Cairo Museum on the grounds that offending religious sensibilities had to be avoided. In Pakistan, historians inspired by the Ideology of Pakistan promulgated by Zia ul-Haq (president 1978-88) underestimated the importance of the archaeological heritage because of its largely non-Islamic nature.

Damage to archaeological sites caused by economic development and tourism and the destruction of sites and graves by looters and illicit excavators are problems well-known to archaeologists concerned with heritage protection and conservation. In 1971, during the war for independence in Bangladesh, for example, at least zooo Hindu temples were destroyed or substantially damaged as a result of deliberate plunder, while some 6000 pieces of sculpture were removed or destroyed by looters. Thirty-five bronze sculptures were taken from the Archaeological Museum at Mainamati and the entire collection of the Dinaipur Museum was looted.

When governments or radical groups destroy monuments, on the other hand, they are asserting their views of history. The Turkish government attempted to efface traces of the Armenian civilization by destroying their historical monuments. In 1978, there were reports that the Turkish authorities demolished Kurdish historical monuments. In India, a mosque at the Indian sacred city of Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh), which many claimed to be the site of the birthplace of Hindu deity Rama, was demolished by militant Hindus on 6 December 1992, the climax of a controversy that began in the mid-19th century. Out of revenge a Hindu temple in Lahore (Pakistan) was razed two days later by radical Muslims.

Also in the 1990s, during the war in the former Yugoslavia, many historic urban structures and monuments, archives and graveyards were destroyed or damaged by all sides, frequently in a deliberate effort of what has been termed a "denial of the enemy's history" and by the Council of Europe as a form of "cultural cleansing": For example, the museum at Vukovar, Croatia, housing materials from the Copper Age, was destroyed in the Serbian siege of 1991. In 1992 Radio Tirana reported that Albanian historical and archaeological monuments in Kosovo were being destroyed by the Serbian authorities.

Indirect censorship

In many countries work conditions for archaeologists are insecure. Perhaps the most publicized example of the risks they may run was the kidnapping of French archaeologist Frangoise Claustre, who from 1974

to 1977 was investigating prehistoric tombs in Chad and was imprisoned by rebel forces. In 1989, several archaeologists withdrew from highland Peru because of political violence. In the Nile Valley, archaeological sites and even tourists visiting them became targets for terrorism. In the Middle East archaeologists working in a specific country have often been forbidden from working in the territory of its enemies. In Iran special restrictions have existed for female archaeologists. In 1991-92 the *Sâzmân-e Mîrâs-e Farhangî* (Cultural Heritage Organization) strictly applied Islamic principles and restricted their archaeological activities to a designated area. The effects of this restriction became so extensive that the universities cancelled the excavation course for female students and women were confined to museum work.

Sometimes the reasons for the disruption of research are not wholly clear, as in the famous case of the Dead Sea Scrolls. For decades, access to the scrolls - Hebrew manuscripts, discovered at Qumran in 1947, which challenged many received opinions on the history of Judaism and the origins of Christianity - was severely restricted by a small editorial committee appointed in 1953. Its *de facto* monopoly was broken only in September 1991, when a complete set of photographs of the scrolls was pur at the disposal of competent scholars. There were more dubious cases. In 1962, British archaeologist James Mellaart, assistant director of the British Institute of Archaeology in Ankara, Turkey, and discoverer of the Neolithic site of Çatal Hüyük - one of man's earliest urban settlements - was barred from field work in the country. The dismissal occurred after the newspaper *Milliyet* had accused him of smuggling out the so-called Royal Treasure of Dorak. In 1958 Mellaart had seen and studied the clandestinely excavated treasure, after coincidental contact with its owners at Izmir. He reported its existence to the Turkish authorities and to the director of the British Institute and in 1959, after written authorization by the owners, he published an article about it in a London magazine. A 1962 police investigation could not trace the treasure or its owners. One theory holds that the owners of the treasure needed a scholar's opinion to authenticate the trove in order to sell it. In March 1975, Indonesian archaeologist I Made Sutayasa was arrested when he returned from a conference in Sydney, and dismissed from his post at the National Research Center of Archaeology a few months later. In October 1975 he was imprisoned without charge or trial. The reason for his arrest was believed to be his membership ten years earlier of a Balinese student movement associated with the Communist Party.

In August 1978 Ethiopian security forces asked Jon Kalb, an American archaeologist and geologist, to leave the country because of unsubstantiated rumours that he was connected with the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). In Afghanistan in 1982, the British archaeologist Ralph Pinder-Wilson was charged with smuggling archaeological finds out of the country, with helping Afghan nationals to leave the country, and with spreading anti-government propaganda. He was first sentenced to death but finally granted a pardon. In Bulgaria in August 1995, another British archaeologist, Douglas Bailey, was deported after taking part in an excavation project at Podgoritsa, while 14 of his students were searched, interrogated, and accused of military espionage. When he returned later to reclaim confiscated equipment, his passport was seized and he was interrogated for three days before being deported.

On several occasions, a tense political climate has influenced the fate of archaeology. In 1950-51, a Mexican scientific commission that included archaeologists Manuel Gamio and Alfonso Caso, and historians Manuel Toussaint and Wigberto Jimenez Moreno devoted 37 sessions to verifying the authenticity of the bones of Cuauhtemoc - the last Aztec emperor and a national symbol of resistance to

European imperialism. These were discovered in the church of Ixcateopan (Guerrero) in September 1949. The commission found no proof of their authenticity. Unable to satisfy national pride, the commission was confronted with extreme hostility in the press. The bones were enshrined in a glass case in the local church. In 1975, a new commission came to the same conclusion as its predecessor.

China provides another example. Li Ji was considered the major founder of modern Chinese archaeology. In 1948, he was elected to the *Academia Sinica,* which was evacuated to Taiwan, and assisted in removing the art treasures and archaeological specimens from the mainland. In 1955, as director of the *Academia's* Institute of History and Philology, he was one of the accused in a Chinese Communist Party campaign launched against the capitalist stance in archaeology and the handling of cultural relics. In late 1965, with the start of the Cultural Revolution, institutionalized archaeological research came to a halt in mainland China, but was less affected than historical writing. Some excavations were reportedly disrupted and some sites attacked. The journal *Kaogu* (Archaeology) ceased to be published. Xia Nai, a leading archaeologist, Egyptologist, and director of the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences, was persecuted but rehabilitated in 1971 because his expertise was needed for new excavations.

The Israeli-Arab conflict also had its archaeological repercussions. In the 1950s, the Egyptian government led by president Nasser discouraged the search for ancient Jewish remains at Elephantine Island (near Aswan), because Egypt was officially at war with Israel. In the late 1970s, professor Bezalel Porten of the Hebrew University was repeatedly denied permission by the trustees of the Cairo Museum to study the Aramaic papyri of Elephantine Island, stored in the museum's manuscript collections. He was finally allowed to enter Egypt in 1978, following the signing of the Camp David Agreements. Although he had relatively free access to the papyri, his freedom to work in the museum was progressively restricted after president Sadat's death. A fresh application to study the papyri was later rejected. In Israel itself, the Palestine Archaeological Museum and its library were confiscated in 1967 by the Israeli authorities. In January 1992, the American archaeologist Albert dock, head of the Archaeology Department of Birzeit University (West Bank) and co-founder of its Archaeological Institute, was killed by an unidentified gunman in Birzeit. The investigations by both the Israeli authorities and the Palestine Liberation Organization into the murder remained unresolved.

South Africa's apartheid unleashed a crisis in the World Archaeological Congress. In September 1986, 27 South African and Namihian participants were banned from the congress in the United Kingdom. The decision to ban them, made in the autumn of 1985, was inspired by a variety of reasons: to avoid withdrawal of financial support, to avoid disruption of the congress by anti-apartheid groups, to try to maximize the number of participants from those countries who would not attend if South Africans and Namibians were present, and the wish to demonstrate solidarity with the black majority of South Africa who, through the African National Congress (ANC), had called for a boycott. In January 1986 the International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences, which did not support the move, withdrew recognition from the World Archaeological Congress. Among the banned South Africans several strongly opposed apartheid.

In some countries political upheaval led to the exile of archaeologists. Michael Rostovtzeff, a distinguished historian of antiquity and supporter of the Kerensky government, went abroad following the 1917 Russian Revolution, while in China Guo Moruo escaped Chiang Kai-shek's death squads in 1928

and later became president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Li Ji and Zheng Dekun fled from China just before the Maoist takeover in 1949. Margarete Bieber, Otto Brendel, George Hanfmann, Paul Jacobsthal, Georg Karo, Karl Lehmann, and Willy Schwabacher were refugees from Nazi Germany in the 1930s; Abdul Jalil Jawad, a specialist of Northern Mesopotamian archaeology, forcibly left Iraq in 1968; Yiannis Leloudas, first sentenced to life imprisonment for his membership of the Communist Patriotic Front under the Greek dictatorship in 1967, then amnestied, escaped to France in 1969.

Elsewhere, refugee historians have become involved in the field of archaeology *after* their dismissal or exile. Clemens Bosch, a German numismatist dismissed during the Nazi period because of his "non-Aryan" wife, went to Turkey where he worked at the Archaeological Museum and the University of Istanbul, and became a Muslim. Johannes Quasten, a lecturer in ecclesiastical history, also dismissed by the Nazis, became a professor of Christian archaeology in the United States. Gerhart Ladner, an Austrian historian of patristic theology and canon law, went to Canada after the *Anschluss* and became an assistant professor of medieval history and archaeology. Jiří Muška, a specialist in World War I history dismissed in the wake of Czechoslovak "normalization" in 1973, became a clerk with the Institute of Archaeology.

Ownership and control of the past have become burning issues in the archaeology of recent decades. The debate centres on whether the descendants of original occupants have special rights over ancestral territories, or whether these territories and their contents should be seen as common heritage. The right of archaeologists to access and desecrate burial sites (especially sacred ones), the return of cultural property to the country of origin (particularly human remains and objects of special religious or cultural significance), and the possible reburial of human remains, are complex issues.

In 1981, thousands of ultra-orthodox Jews held a demonstration in Jerusalem against the alleged desecration of graves at a major archaeological site. In August t986, an important archaeological project in the Negev desert was vandalized, probably by members of an ultra-orthodox group dedicated to preserving the sanctity of Jewish cemeteries. In October 1982, the government of Ethiopia halted all foreign prehistorical expeditions. The archaeological teams of Desmond Clark and Tim White and of Donald Johanson were the first to be affected. Reasons suggested for the ban were that foreign teams had exploited Ethiopian resources while giving little attention to training local scholars or developing local facilities. In addition, Johanson's book, *Lucy* (written with Maitland A. Edey) had angered Ethiopians. In it, the author described how he and a colleague had removed a leg bone from a recent Ethiopian grave for comparison with a fossil knee joint some three million years old. This act was considered to be desecration. In Western Australia, Aboriginal communities were offended and withdrew their permission when a female archaeologist visited ceremonial sites forbidden to women. In Tasmania, the Crowther Collection of skeletal material, collected in an appalling way, was returned to the Aboriginal community and underwent traditional cremation in 1985.

In all these cases, the scholarly right of archaeologists was weighed against the concerns of those who believed they spoke in the name of the dead. In 1985 Hayden Burgess, vice-president of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, expressed the viewpoint of those directly affected by the work of archaeologists as follows:

> The Earth ... is the seat of spirituality, the fountain from which our cultures and languages flourish. The Earth is our historian, the keeper of events and the bones of our forefathers. It is the source of our independence; it is our Mother.

In the cascade beginning at the level of ideological constraints, continuing at the level of work conditions, and ending at the level of respect for the dead, formal or informal censorship may be everywhere, but is most in evidence at the top, and least so at the bottom.

ANTOON DE BAETS

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Archives

Destroying records and restricting access are regular features of any official information policy. Selective destruction of current records is inevitable since preservation of everything is physically impossible. In addition, the release of noncurrent records - those transferred to archival custody - is subject to varying terms of embargo (generally 25 to 50 years). Access to certain classes of documents deemed sensitive - chiefly for reasons of privacy or state security - may be restricted for longer. When, however, political rather than archival or historical criteria prevail and lead to wholesale destruction, neglect, or excessive secrecy of records, censorship creeps in.

Two examples, concerning the United States and the Soviet Union after 1945, illustrate some of the main risks. In the United States, a system of restrictive executive orders, issued by presidents Roosevelt (1940), Truman (1950, 1951), and Eisenhower (1953), regulated access to the archives. According to Steven Mitchel, "Heavy overclassification and neglect of declassification in the 1950s and 1960s could not be considered abuses of the security classification system, because the regulations, by their vagueness, were so permissive." Only a 1959 executive order by Eisenhower provided for non-official historical research into classified materials. Executive orders issued by Nixon (1972) and Carter (1978) brought substantial relaxation.

The 1980s and early 1990s were a critical period. In 1982, an executive order on national security information issued by president Reagan reversed almost completely the government's overall attitude towards access to its records. The order advised that, when there was doubt about whether or not to classify, documents should be classified, and for "as long as required". Two new provisions permitted reclassification of previously released information, and classification of unclassified documents after they