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**Silberman, Neil Asher, and Ernest S. Frerichs**

*Archaeology and Society in the 21st Century: The Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Case Studies*

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This handsomely produced volume brings together eighteen papers presented at the Dead Sea Scrolls conference held in April 1998 in the installations of the New York Public Library, under the auspices of the Dorot Foundation. In a sense this is a first in Dead Sea Scrolls studies, since it focuses upon five main areas that are discussed from distinct viewpoints and even distinct fields of studies. The book opens with a concise introduction by the editors ("The Dead Sea Scrolls and Archaeology: Looking Back and Looking Ahead" [1-10]) describing the project design, its realization, and the main focus of the different contributions. The focus of the public conference can be summarized in the following quote from the introductory chapter: "It [the conference] would present the scrolls as metaphors, examples, and perhaps as cautionary examples of the universal human fascination with antiquity" (2).

The first section includes three fascinating papers looking at the "Politics of the Past." Neil Silberman discusses the political implications of Dead Sea Scrolls studies in the context of the reality of modern Middle East politics ("The Politics of the Dead Sea Scrolls" [11-20]). Competing nationalism as well as diverse religious convictions have shaped (and are shaping) Dead Sea Scrolls studies since its inception. Silberman provides a useful review of the first years of Scroll

research and challenges present-day Scroll scholarship to study the process of “delegitimation” of ancient politics as visible in the Scrolls and their impact upon modern politics. Irene Silverblatt contributes the second study in this section, taking the reader to the use of pre-Colombian past in ancient and modern power politics of Latin America (“Power and Memory in Latin America: The Use of the Pre-Columbian Past” [21–32]). Silverblatt stresses that “the legacies of Spanish colonialism shaped and continue shaping Latin America’s political conflicts. Struggles of the meaning of the ‘past’ (including the consequences of colonialism and the nature of indigenous society) along with related struggles over the present are colored by the cultural, ethnic, and racialized divides conquest set in motion” (21). Silverblatt, drawing from examples from Mexico (Mayas) and Peru (Incas) emphasizes the reshaping of the past by different interest groups over the course of history. The final chapter in the first section is contributed by Martin Hall and describes South Africa’s apartheid and postapartheid reality of archaeology as a scientific discipline (“Landscapes of the Past” [33–40]). Hall provides an insightful historical review of the past of archaeology as a scientific discipline during apartheid and postapartheid eras. While most archaeologists claimed an apolitical stance, their presupposition and research design and focus illustrates the power of politics upon the discipline. As a result, structuralist interpretations of the past, the “new archaeology” with its emphasis upon general ecological principles of human behavior, a rather simplistic concept of culture in archaeology, had a rather prolonged life span in South African archaeology (38–40), and—surprisingly—postapartheid archaeology is facing both a crisis of funding and resources as well as a crisis of legitimacy, due to the more pressing current economical, political, and social necessities.

The second section focuses upon “Presenting the Past to the Public” and includes three different contributions from Israel, Jordan, and Greece. The curator of the Israel Museum, Adolfo Roitman, chronicles in a well-documented chapter the way major exhibitions have presented the Dead Sea Scrolls over the past fifty years (“Exhibiting the Dead Sea Scrolls: Some Historical and Theoretical Considerations” [41–66]). Clearly, museums and their policies mold and change the way the public at large views a specific body of antiquities and are thus an interesting barometer of the politics of antiquities. Roitman ends by describing the vision of the Israel Museum for future Qumran exhibitions that will be able to reach young people (which are often indifferent to the past), including interactive displays, daily-life descriptions, and a dramatic (theatrical) presentation representing the Jewish historian Josephus providing actual historical context and stories. The director of the Department of Antiquities in

Jordan, Ghazi Bisheh, focuses upon the protection and preservation of the archaeological heritage of Jordan ("The Protection and Preservation of the Archaeological Heritage of Jordan: The Challenge for Constructing a Responsible Stewardship" [67–74]). Bisheh emphasizes not only protection and preservation but also information and education as a vital element to communicate antiquity (with examples from the Madaba Archaeological Park and the Petra Church projects). Foreshadowing the later discussion, Bisheh also openly questions the effectiveness of a blanket ban on antiquities trade, especially in view of the socioeconomic realities of the region (73–74). Christos Doumas ("Interpreting the Past in Modern Greece" [75–92]) offers a Greek perspective on the issue and sketches succinctly the ideological and administrative history of the study and preservation of antiquities administration in urban and rescue contexts. As in the chapters by Roitman and Bisheh, Doumas suggests that successful preservation needs to be coupled with interesting and innovative presentation that demonstrates connections to real life. He concludes with a challenging question: "Is the concern of our generation to rediscover the values of the past a reaction to it, an escape from it, or simply an alibi?" (91).

The third section focuses on the interaction of decipherment and publication in the context of the politics of antiquities. After a brief introduction to the topic by Brian Fagan (93–95), Emanuel Tov ("The Decipherment and Publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls" [96–103]), as editor-in-chief of the official DJD series by Oxford University Press, chronicles the history of the decipherment of the Scrolls and the problems facing the original (and subsequent) generation of scholars, such as the fragmentation of the remaining pieces due to the lack of original context. Tov suggests that, besides the additional data about Jewish literature of the Second Temple period and the important contribution of the scrolls to Old Testament textual criticism, there is an additional major contribution, namely, the "first-hand information about the copying and transmission of the biblical text." Donald Redford ("New Perspectives on Ancient Egyptian Texts" [104–10]) provides a window into the history and nature of the textual world of Egypt, which is—according to him—an ongoing project going beyond the mere decipherment of the language and seeking to understand the difference between the oral and written "world." George Stuart ("Maya Hieroglyphic Writing: The History and Consequences of Decipherment" [111–31]) provides a good introduction to the history of the decipherment of the Maya hieroglyphic writing system. Especially for the nonspecialist (which will be most of the readers of the chapter!) Stuart has provided ample bibliographical support and a well-written linear account of the major events in this field of study. As with the Dead Sea Scrolls and Egyptian texts,

Mayan studies did not finally “arrive” when the language was deciphered but are now venturing out to understand the ideological, historical, sociological, and cultural contexts that gave rise to these texts.

The fourth section discusses the contentious issue of “Who Owns the Past.” The section is introduced by a brief prologue written by Patty Gerstenblith from DePaul University College of Law concerning the main international conventions that deal with ownership and protection of cultural property (128–31). Hershel Shanks, well-known editor of *BAR*, argues in his contribution (“How to Stop Looting” [132–37]) that a strict “no” to the acquisition, academic discussion, and publication of unprovenanced artifacts is both ineffective as well as counter-productive (133). Shanks argues for a controlled sale of antiquities from official digs on the low end of the market, which may result in curbing the illegal digs that mostly produce these kind of low-end artifacts (coins, pots, lamps, etc.). Higher-end items should be sold only to “particular kinds of buyers” (135), including public institutions, educational institutions, museums, churches and synagogues, and the like. Proceeds of these sales should go into archaeological budgets and research. Ellen Herscher’s take on the same issue (“Destroying the Past in Order to ‘Save’ It: Collecting Antiquities from Cyprus” [138–54]) from the viewpoint of Cyprus is diametrically opposed to Shanks’s position. Sketching the history of major private collectors from Cyprus, Herscher suggests that ready collectors encourage more looting (142–43), as does the willingness to “ransom” important objects from the illegal antiquities market (148). Furthermore, scholars willing to publish unprovenanced artifacts will result in a corruption of the material culture database of any given place. Hester Davis (“Facing the Crisis of Looting in the United States” [155–59]) provides an insightful essay into the shadowy world of illicit antiquities trade (and looting) in the United States. Davis documents profound changes in the practice of archaeology over the past thirty years. The legal standing of protected artifacts was debilitated by the vague language and definitions of the 1906 Antiquity Act. Also, beginning in 1971 Native American organizations began to challenge archaeologists as yet “another instance of colonialism, of the powerful doing as they wished with the remains of the disenfranchised” (156). Davis favors a renewed educational campaign directed at the general public, although he acknowledges that especially in the West, “looting continues as before despite arrests and convictions” (159).

The final section looks at modern philosophical approaches to the past and includes four chapters. Lawrence Schiffman (“Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: The Significance of the Scrolls for Judaism and Christianity” [160–68]) shows how confessionalism and international politics have always influenced the study

of the Scrolls. However, he hopes that a new generation of Qumran scholars, regardless of their confessional stance, may be able to work together far beyond the confessional barriers (167–68). Social historian Paul Hyman (“Forgotten Voices and Legacies” [169–76]) looks at new questions that Scroll research should focus upon, especially the role of women in a particular period. Hyman cites examples involving the Babatha cache during the Bar Kokhba revolt, women in ancient synagogues, and women in the Talmud. David Lowenthal (“The Tangible Past in a Commemorative Age” [177–87]) focuses upon the inherent value of artifacts and the awe that they arouse among those “aware of an historical part, however little they may know about that past” (177). Lowenthal sees that growth of attachment to heritage and remains in general as an affirmation of group identity and empowerment.

The final chapter, by Lawrence Schiffman (“The Many ‘Battles of the Scrolls’” [188–210]) is actually the lecture that was presented on the eve of the beginning of the conference whose results have been published in this volume. Schiffman follows along traditional lines covering the history of research (188–96), initial theories (196–98), the viewpoints of later generations (198–99), the nature of the library (199–201), theories about the origins of the sect (201–2), and the impact of the Scrolls upon the reconstruction of religious Jewish life of the period (202–4) as well as their bearing upon early Christianity, the history of the biblical text, and the new texts found in the caves that were not known before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Schiffman concludes that the true battle of the Scrolls is yet to be fought, namely, “to make the results of scientific scholarship on the Dead Sea Scrolls, based on the availability of the entire corpus, part and parcel of the history of Western Civilization” (210).

The present volume contains a lot of interesting and diverse material. Who would have thought to look at Latin American or South African parallels for a discussion of the politics of the past? Both Silverblatt’s and Hall’s contribution were not only to the point and fascinating but in a sense also autobiographical, since both (apartheid era) South Africa and Peru has been home to our family for an extended period of time and we could connect to many of the observations contained in the chapters. The section dealing with the presentation of the past not only documents past approaches but also challenges the reader to connect scholarship with present realities—or face a lack of relevance and legitimacy. Clearly, postmodernism’s lack of interest in history (especially general history) poses a serious problem to any vision of presenting the past. The tenor of both Tov’s, Redford’s, and Stuart’s chapters on script decipherment from distinct periods and areas is a call to look beyond the mere translation of texts toward a

more integrated reading of the texts in their specific cultural, religious, and historical contexts. Most probably the most contentious issue presented in the volume concerns the uses, strengths, weaknesses, or abuses of present antiquities laws and the ethics of professional bodies. Opinions of the presenters from different contexts were diverse, in some cases diametrically opposed to one another. During the past two years, following the publication of the volume, events have overtaken the theoretical discussion in the context of the archaeology of Palestine with the discussion surrounding the ossuary of James and the Joash Inscription. The final opinion on both has not yet come in, although it appears as if the latter one should be included in the long lists of known hoaxes. The final section focusing upon modern philosophical approaches to the past seems to me the weakest part of the collection, since it does not go much beyond the call to answer new questions (something we try to challenge our students on a daily basis). Specifics and more concrete research designs would have been more helpful for the interested reader.

The volume is generally well edited. In Hall's chapter "setters" (33) coming from Europe should not be mistaken for the canine type but should rather be corrected to "settlers." Unfortunately, the presentation of the individual contributions is not equal in the sense of layout, bibliographical format, or specifics. For example, a number of chapters do not include a significant amount of (or even any) references (Hall, Bisheh, Tov, Redford, and Davis), whereas others contain copious notes. Clearly, the transition from oral to written presentation was not uniform. Some of the articles also utilize different footnote styles, most probably due to the fact that different research areas utilize different styles. One would have wished for more consistent editing in this case. Another shortcoming of the volume is its lack of indices. In a day and age of electronic publishing and editing, at least an author's index (plus a selected subject index) would have been a relatively easy task and would have enhanced the usefulness of the volume. Notwithstanding these minor critical observations the volume is well worth a first and second look. Its truly innovative interdisciplinary perspective and its multiplicity of different (sometimes even opposing) voices is both challenging and invigorating and should be duplicated.