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Myths of the Excavator-Supplier. The Valuation of Archaeological Material and Justification of Transactions in Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology, 1880-1930

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Abstract: The 1882 British military occupation of Egypt accelerated an antiquities rush in the Nile Valley, driven by the collecting desires of individuals, states and museums in the Global North. In the United Kingdom, much of this supply came through licensed excavations operating under the division of finds/partage system, which allowed archaeologists to export a share of their finds. Excavator-suppliers also purchased freely on the antiquities market to supplement their excavated finds. Work in the source country was funded by destination country donors, either through archaeological funds such as the Egypt Exploration Fund, via excavation committees, or by direct patronage. These relationships created a business cycle that required exported antiquities to be distributed to financial backers to secure ongoing support. Drawing on archival records, this article examines select transactions to consider the role of excavator-suppliers in British-led archaeology and their proximity to modern definitions of 'dealing'. It identifies three socio-functional myths used by excavator-suppliers to justify their actions, expenditures, and transactions in relation to the financial value of archaeological objects and labor.

Keywords: archaeology; Egypt; Sudan; antiquities market; finance

Introduction

The 1882 British military occupation of Egypt accelerated an antiquities rush in the Nile Valley that had been unfolding in prior decades. From the late 19th century to the interwar period, individuals, states and museums in the Global North seized the opportunity to extract antiquities from Egypt and Sudan.[1] Museums and private collectors in the United Kingdom were considerable beneficiaries of this mass transfer of heritage as they sourced material through archaeological excavations and the legalized antiquities market.

A significant share of this transfer was directed through a "business cycle of archaeology", in which excavators were given financial support in return for exported artefacts, with the anticipation that successful work would secure future funds and exports.[2] Unlike the state-sponsored excavations of other European powers, British-led efforts relied on alternative funding models.[3] These included: the collective excavation fund, such as the Egypt Exploration Fund and the British School of Archaeology in Egypt which drew on large numbers of mainly low contribution funders; the excavation committee as employed by John Garstang (1876-1956) which relied on a small number of high-value donors; and

1 Suzanne Marchand: The Dialectics of the Antiquities Rush, in: Annick Fenet / Natacha Lubtchansky (eds.): Pour une Histoire de l'Archéologie xviie-1945, Bordeaux 2015, 191-206.

2 Daniel Potter: An ‚antiquity-dealing-business on a large scale'. The Business of Egyptian Archaeology and Capital, 1880s-1930s, in: Bulletin of the History of Archaeology 35, (2025), No. 1, 3, 1-15.

3 For a summary of the history of British Egyptology, see Meira Gold: British Egyptology (1822-1882), in: Rune Nyord / Willeke Wendrich (eds.): UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology, Los Angeles 2022, https://escholarship.org/uc/item/07v2d8vk, <25.09.2025>; Kathleen Sheppard: British Egyptology (1882-1914), in: Rune Nyord / Willeke Wendrich (eds.): UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology, Los Angeles 2020, https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7nt9d23q, <25.09.2025>.

the direct, private arrangement like that of Lord Carnarvon (1866-1923) and Howard Carter (1874-1939).[4]

Although earlier laws had restricted the export of antiquities, sustained European diplomatic and social pressure resulted in changes in policy that enabled increasing numbers of exports.[5] This change in the mode of production culminated in the 1891 legal establishment of a 50/50 post-excavation division of finds between the Egyptian state through the Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte (henceforth Antiquities Service) and the excavator, known commonly as partage.[6] Under this system, acquisition and export became central aims for excavators. Some, such as the EEF and Petrie, expanded their focus beyond the provision of monumental objects to include smaller, more prosaic, archaeological finds in efforts to provide more objects to satisfy the wants of a greater range of funders.[7] Competition for excavation permits intensified, as sites promising profitable object returns were highly sought after. In 1911, the English excavator and Antiquities Service official, Arthur Weigall (1880-1934), later described excavations under the partage system as "legalised plundering", also commenting on several of Gaston Maspero's decisions and actions that he saw as evidence of bias, favoritism and the ducking of proper process.[8] It is important to note that the Antiquities Service itself was under pressure to supply objects, hence its actions granting excavation permits to dealers, conducting excavations specifically to acquire certain classes of objects and selling entire monuments, experiencing similar business demands to those felt by excavator-suppliers.[9]

In addition to their excavation work, most excavators actively engaged in the antiquities market to supplement their finds, fulfil commissions, or build personal collections. The archaeologist Alice Stevenson (UCL) has called for "radical transparency" in the study of Egyptian archaeology, an approach that critically examines provenance and collecting history to foster greater accountability for colonial extraction.[10] This article contributes to that aim by examining how cultural assets were valued and traded by excavator-suppliers, as recorded in archival holdings. It considers their work in relation to modern definitions of 'dealing' and highlights three common arguments used by their community to justify their actions, expenditures, and transactions in relation to the financial value of objects. Rather than providing an ethical judgment of their actions, this article seeks to document and develop a better understanding of their historic practices.

Discussion here centers on the so-called "Father of Egyptian Archaeology", Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie, known commonly as Flinders Petrie (1853-1942), the Liverpool based archaeologist John Garstang and the Canadian collector-for-hire and Royal Ontario Museum Curator Charles Trick Currelly (1876-1957).[11] These men were active in British-led excavations in Egypt and Sudan, had differing financial arrangements, and were integral to the development of National Museums Scotland's collections, the main case study of this research. By the nature of this focus it follows that these individuals present a bias towards the anglosphere, however, they were not

4 Amara Thornton: ‚... a Certain Faculty for Extricating Cash'. Collective Sponsorship in Late 19th and Early 20th Century British Archaeology, in: Present Pasts 5 (2013), No. 1, 1-12.

5 Donald Malcolm Reid: Representing Ancient Egypt at Imperial High Noon (1882-1922). Egyptological Careers and Artistic Allegories of Civilization, in: Astrid Swenson / Peter Mendler (eds.): From Plunder to Preservation. Britain and the Heritage of Empire, c.1800-1940, London 2013, 187-214, discusses these changes as differing collecting styles.

6 Adrienne Fricke: Appendix II. A New Translation of Selected Egyptian Antiquities Laws (1881-1912), in: John Henry Merryman (ed.): Imperialism, Art and Restitution, Cambridge 2006, 175-192, here: 177-178; Antoine Khater: Le Régime Juridique des Fouilles et des Antiquités en Egypte, Cairo 1960, here: 280-284.

7 Alice Stevenson: Scattered Finds. Archaeology, Egyptology and Museums, London 2019, here: 10 and 27.

8 Frederik Hagen / Kim Ryholt: The Antiquities Trade in Egypt 1880-1930. The H. O. Lange Papers, Copenhagen 2016, 123-124; Julie Hankey: A Passion for Egypt. Arthur Weigall, Tutankhamun and the 'Curse of the Pharaohs', London / New York 2007, 168-169.

9 Victor Loret (1859-1946) stopped issuing permits to dealers in 1898, see: Hagen / Ryholt 2016 (see FN 8), 23. For monument sales and targeted excavations see: Hagen / Ryholt 2016 (see FN 8), 49.

10 Alice Stevenson: Egyptian Archaeology and the Museum, in: The Oxford Handbook of Topics in Archaeology, Oxford 2015, online edition: https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935413.013.25, 8.

11 Morris Bierbrier (ed.): Who Was Who in Egyptology, 5th Edition, London 2019, 116, 177 and 363-365.

anomalies, and as such, evidence of their contemporaries is also referenced.[12] I term these individuals 'excavator-suppliers' to emphasize their dual roles, not applicable to modern archaeologists. This corresponds to the "explorer" title once given to excavation leaders and avoids the sanitized "collector" title prevalent in Egyptological literature, which does not account for their varied activities that have led to their description by the historian Jeffrey Abt as "academic entrepreneur[s]".[13] The multifaceted careers of these individuals and their colleagues as excavators, educators, agents, curators, and collectors all relied upon the circulation of archaeological and financial capital within the archaeological business cycle.[14]

The Valuation of Archaeological Assets

The archaeologist Robert Paynter (1949-2023) observed that post-1945 archaeology "produces objects to produce ideas. Business produces objects to make a profit."[15] While this may characterize much modern practice, it does not reflect the conditions of Nile Valley archaeology at the turn of the 20th century. At that time, the overlaps between archaeologist and entrepreneur, production and consumption were much greater, as excavator-suppliers relied upon the regular production of consumable antiquities to secure funding and sustain future work.[16] Their choices in the field and in the market played a "decisive role in determining what empirical material is available for study".[17] However, the scholarly significance of objects frequently clashed with the economic management of excavation, despite the ostensibly altruistic aims of organizations like the Egypt Exploration Fund, which framed their work as acts of preservation.[18] The value of archaeological objects was defined by archaeologists, prioritizing types of material they wanted to find and collect – often in consideration of what their sponsors, museums and the public desired – often influencing their choices in the field.[19] Their supply was also an integral part in the creation of market demand.[20] Financial valuations became enshrined in laws, which stipulated what was and was not archaeologically important.[21] The need to satisfy backers led excavators to leave objects of "no museum value" on site, or to rebury them if they were surplus to requirements.[22]

While defending his on-site purchasing, which he considered a kind of archaeological survey, Petrie claimed to prefer "historic" finds "not worth 6d in the market" over "commercial returns".[23] However, as historic importance was ineffable,

12 Many other European excavator-suppliers illustrate that such an engagement with archaeology and the market was a broader phenomenon. For example, the French archaeologist Bernard Bruyère (1879-1971) was also a frequent patron of dealers in Luxor as part of his regular excavation work, per Hagen / Ryholt 2016 (see FN 8), 43-44. The German Egyptologist Ludwig Borchardt (1863-1938) was a key supplier to German museums and other collectors, see Hagen / Ryholt 2016 (see FN 8), 178-182; and the records of his supply to Staatliche Museen zu Berlin evidence in their accession registers, 'Acquisition and Accession Logs of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin', https://www.smb.museum/en/research/acquisition-and-accession-logs/, <25.09.2025>.

13 For example, the Egypt Exploration Fund described excavation leaders as 'explorers', Garstang self-reported his occupation as "Professor of Archaeology + Explorer" in the 1911 United Kingdom census. See Jeffrey Abt: Crafting an Institution. Reshaping a Discipline. Intellectual Biography, the Archive and Philanthropic Culture, in: Claire Lewis / Gabriel Moshenska (eds.): Life-Writing in the History of Archaeology. Critical Perspectives, London 2023, 91-118, here: 111.

14 Potter 2025 (see FN 2).

15 Robert Paynter: Field or Factory? Concerning the Degradation of Archaeological Labor, in: Joan Gero / David Lacy / Michael Blakey (eds.): The Socio-Politics of Archaeology, Boston MA 1983, 17-29, here: 25.

16 Paynter 1983 (see FN 15), 15.

17 Hagen / Ryholt 2016 (see FN 8), 11.

18 For an overview of the valuation of art and cultural assets, see Michael Hutter / David Throsby: Value and Valuation in Art and Culture. Introduction and Overview, in: Michael Hutter / David Throsby (eds.): Beyond Price. Value in Culture, Economics, and the Arts, Cambridge 2008.

19 William Carruthers: No More Heroes. What Is the History of Egyptology Actually For?, in: The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology 110 (2024), No. 1-2, 305-311, here: 309. For example, Flinders Petrie aimed to export Greco-Roman funerary masks from Hawara, despite his low opinion of them due to their interest to "British Philistines". See William Matthew Flinders Petrie: Journal. 1887-1888 Medinet el-Faiyum and Hawara, Griffith Institute, University of Oxford, Petrie MSS 1.7, 84.

20 Neil Brodie: Scholarly Engagement with Collections of Unprovenanced Ancient Texts, in: Kurt Almqvist / Louise Belfrage (eds.): Cultural Heritage at Risk. The Role of Museums in War and Conflict, Stockholm 2016, 123-142, here: 130-131.

21 John Carman: ‚Governed by Legislation'. What Laws Do to Archaeology, in: Margarita Díaz-Andreu / Laura Coltofean (eds.): The Oxford Handbook of The History of Archaeology, Oxford 2025, 617-636, here: 633.

22 Peter Der Manuelian: Walking Among Pharaohs. George Reisner and the Dawn of Modern Egyptology, Oxford 2023, 486.

23 William Matthew Flinders Petrie to Reginald Stuart Poole (Egypt Exploration Fund), el-Nebireh/Naucratis, Egypt, 21.6.1885, in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.COR.016.f.69-1.

financial valuations became a practical proxy.[24] Petrie's method of tipping local excavators for finds shown to European supervisors, known by the Arabic term 'bakshish', exemplified on-site valuation. Petrie (and his students who inherited the system) assessed each object at the price that he would be willing to pay travelling dealers.[25] This reflected a colonial mindset that denied Egyptians, despite their intimate involvement in archaeology and the market, the ability to appreciate the value of an object and privileged a destination market bias.[26] Additionally, Petrie utilized this system to control labor by reassigning workers, thus removing the possibility of bakshish as punishment for losing an object or going on strike.[27]

Following the 1891 codification of post-excavation finds division, excavators and the Antiquities Service were supposed to jointly divide objects into "deux lots d'égale valeur".[28] In practice, equal division was apparently rare, and excavator-suppliers often boasted about their high levels of retention up to 5/6th, further justifying their expenditures, no matter whether this was the full reality of the division process.[29] When the Antiquities Service selected the "finest" objects from Petrie's 1887-1888 season, he complained about his loss of quality material, but also highlighted that Egypt retained less than a third.[30]

Financial valuations became embedded in Egyptian laws governing excavation, division, and sale. Excavation licenses from circa 1891-1912 rationalized the transfer of objects as the recognition of excavation expenses.[31] Laws also provided the state with the right to purchase objects to retain from the excavator. If their offer was refused, the object(s) could be appropriated in return for a payment to the excavator up to the costs of their excavation.[32] For instance, following an agreement between the British Under-Secretary of State for Public Works Sir William Garstin and the French Head of the Antiquities Service of Egypt, Gaston Maspero (1846-1916),[33] the Egyptian Research Account was paid £200 as compensation for the Cairo Museum's retention of the copper statue group of King Pepi I (circa 2321-2287 BCE) from Hierakonpolis.[34]

Law no.14 of 1912 required that Antiquities Service officials divide finds equally, or for monetary values to be agreed by both parties. This law also shifted the responsibility of valuation from the officials to the finder.[35] External actors could influence these valuations, for example, Sir Murdoch Macdonald (1866-1957), advisor to the Ministry of Public Works, intervened to set the value of the granite coffin lid of the General Paser from Sedment (circa 1539-1292 BCE), ensuring the full financial half of finds were exported.[36] Petrie stated that this was the only occasion where all objects were financially assessed for partage.[37] Material proposed for export required declaration of commercial valuation to facilitate a 1,5-2,5% tax on the artefacts.[38]

24 Henning Franzmeier: Where Have All the Shabtis Gone? The Effects of Petrie's Project Funding for Research in the 21st Century, in: Henning Franzmeier / Thilo Rehren / Regine Schulz (eds.): Mit archäologischen Schichten Geschichte schreiben. Festschrift für Edgar B. Pusch zum 70. Geburtstag, Hildesheim 2016, 105-117, here: 106.

25 William Matthew Flinders Petrie: Methods & Aims in Archaeology, London 1904, 33.

26 For example, Hagen / Ryholt 2016 (see FN 8), 26.

27 Petrie 1904 (see FN 25), 26 and 35; Margaret Drower (ed.): Letters from the Desert. The Correspondence of Flinders and Hilda Petrie, Warminster 2004, 149; Allison Mickel / Nylah Byrd: Cultivating Trust, Producing Knowledge. The Management of Archaeological Labour and the Making of a Discipline, in: History of the Human Sciences 35 (2022) No. 2, 3-28, here: 16.

28 Khater 1960 (see FN 6), 282; Fricke 2006 (see FN 6), 178.

29 Potter 2025 (see FN 2).

30 William Matthew Flinders Petrie: Journal. 1887-1888 Medinet el-Faiyum and Hawara, Griffith Institute, University of Oxford, Petrie MSS 1.7, 119-120.

31 "en considération des dépenses faits par le fouilleur" quoted in Monica Hanna: Contesting the Lonely Queen, in: International Journal of Cultural Property (2023), 1-19, here: 3.

32 Law No. 14 of 1912 on Antiquities, article 4; Fricke 2006 (see FN 6), 183.

33 Bierbrier 2019 (see FN 11), 307-308. During the British occupation of Egypt, the Antiquities Service was administered by French officials, while the governmental positions that adjudicated over other elements of the state were run by British officials. This separation of control was reiterated in article one of the Franco-British Declaration, 1904, known commonly as the Entente Cordiale.

34 William Matthew Flinders Petrie: Journal. 1899-1900 Abydos Umm el-Qa'ab, Griffith Institute, University of Oxford, Petrie MSS 1.18, 29.

35 Hagen / Ryholt 2016 (see FN 8), 279-280, with reference to articles 11 and 12.

36 Today Penn Museum E15415; Franzmeier 2016 (see FN 24), 106-107.

37 William Matthew Flinders Petrie: Seventy Years in Archaeology, London 1931, 263.

38 Ministerial Order No. 5 of December 8th 1912, Containing Regulations for the Exportation of Antiquities, articles 3 and 4; Fricke 2006 (see FN 6), 182, 187-188; Hagen / Ryholt 2016 (see FN 8), 142 and 282-283.

The Nature of Dealing

The Egyptologist Tom Hardwick has highlighted Egyptology's delayed engagement with the commercial aspects of the discipline in relation to provenance and archaeological context.[39] This oversight is most conspicuous when trading/dealing was undertaken by prominent archaeologists and philologists whose work continues to underpin the field. As a result, Egyptological historiography has often avoided labelling influential Euro-American excavator-suppliers as 'dealers,' arguably to safeguard their scientific standing and preserve the foundational narratives of museum collections. This tension may reflect what Egyptologist Juan Carlos Moreno García has described as the subordination of the researcher to preserved objects and their study.[40] The conflict between scholarly identity and market activity is exemplified in Bernard Grenfell's (1869-1926) admission of selling papyri "for slight profit" and undertaking commissioned purchases to supplement his funds, while delaying resale to prioritize publication.[41] Historian Sarah Griswold has noted a disciplinary dichotomy that frames archaeology as lawful collecting and the antithesis of "looting, treasure hunting, or dilettante digging".[42] Profit-motivated transactions, though rarely acknowledged, may be usefully added to this characterization.

Egyptologists Frederik Hagen and Kim Ryholt state that "anyone who found or somehow acquired antiquities [in Egypt] might turn 'dealer'".[43] In their typology of antiquities vendors, they propose four categories: 1) opportunistic finders, 2) middlemen acting as agents for dealers and collectors, 3) semi-professional, mobile dealers who traded alongside other businesses or employment,[44] and 4) professional dealers whose primary income was derived from the trade, often selling to foreigners through shops.[45] Excavator-suppliers might be considered semi-professional dealers or middlemen, but perhaps merit their own category. It may be due to this part-time and full-time equivalency that some excavator-collectors have been labelled as dealers while others have not. Howard Carter, for example, has been labelled as a dealer during certain points in his career when his dependence on trade income was greater.[46] I would contend that many of his transactions, including those made on behalf of his patron Lord Carnarvon, were akin to the business of his contemporaries. Flinders Petrie offered his own stratification of collectors, ranking them from "plunderers" to "blue-blooded dilettante collector(s)", through dealers dependent on their information to "genuine excavators."[47] This allowed him to frame his transactions as distinct from dealing, even as he regaled readers of his autobiography with stories of buying and selling objects, and even complained about the delayed payments of the British Museum for material.[48] Some figures, such as the American archaeologist George Reisner (1867-1942), later advocated for a less extractive, more research-oriented approach to archaeology, a position that elides his earlier role as supplier to museum collections.[49] His appeal has led to a modern interpretation of Reisner's work that ignores his long-standing need to gain funding and provide objects in return.[50]

39 Tom Hardwick: Peddlers and Pen Pushers: The Antiquities Trade in Egypt, in: The Journal of the American Oriental Society 144 (2024), No. 3, 633-669, here: 633.

40 Juan Carlos Moreno García: The Cursed Discipline? The Peculiarities of Egyptology at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century, in: William Carruthers (ed.): Histories of Egyptology. Interdisciplinary Measures, London 2014, 50-63, here: 55.

41 Todd Hickey / James Keenan: At the Creation. Seven Letters from Grenfell, 1897, in: Analecta Papyrologica 28 (2016), 351-382, here: 373 quoting Petrie Museum of Archaeology Archive, 6/GRE/01; Brodie 2016 (see FN 20) discusses the commodifying effect that publication of textual objects has.

42 Sarah Griswold: Locating Archaeological Expertise: Debating Antiquities Norms in the A Mandates, 1918-1926, in: Norig Neveu / Chantal Verdeil (eds.): Experts et Expertise dans les Mandats de la Société des Nations. Figures, Champs, Outils, Paris 2020, here: 8, https://books.openedition.org/pressesinalco/38328, <25.09.2025>; David Gange: The Ruins of Preservation. Conserving Ancient Egypt 1880-1914, in: Present Pasts 226 (2015), 78-99, here: 83 and 93.

43 Hagen / Ryholt 2016 (see FN 8), here: 31.

44 See also Hardwick 2024 (see FN 39), 646, which notes the dealing activities of individuals holding other, outward facing trades.

45 Fredrik Hagen / Kim Ryholt: The Antiquities Trade in the Time of Rudolf Mosse, in: Jana Helmbold-Doyé / Thomas L. Gertzen (eds.): Mosse im Museum. Die Stiftungstätigkeit des Berliner Verlegers Rudolf Mosse (1843-1920) für das Ägyptische Museum Berlin, Berlin 2017, 59-74, here: 64-65.

46 For example, Campbell Price: Afterlives of Discovery. Tomb Robberies, Treasure and Untangling Tutankhamun, in: Antiquity 98 (2024), No. 401, 1433-1437. For examples of his buying and selling, see Thomas Garnet Henry James: Howard Carter. The Path to Tutankhamun, London / New York 1992, 136, 153, 199, 373.

47 Petrie 1904 (see FN 25), 48; National Museums Scotland, Edwin Ward Archive, EW.4.3 lecture notes entitled 'Notes on Excavating in Egypt in the seasons 1906-7 and 1907-8' likely delivered to the Edinburgh Association of Science and Art, 15th March 1909.

48 Petrie 1931 (see FN 37), for example: 79-80, 142-143.

49 Manuelian 2023 (see FN 22), 103.

50 Carruthers 2024 (see FN 19), 308-309.

The Museums Association currently defines 'dealing' as "making a speculative acquisition with the intention of reselling for profit."[51] Petrie's speculative purchases, which he sometimes made with an eye to their inflated London market value, fit this definition.[52] So too do commissioned purchases that catered to backers' interests, and those which functioned as a strategy to defray excavation costs. Contemporary recognition of these practices is also evident, for example the 1890 restriction on British-led excavations by the Head of the Antiquities Service Eugène Grébaut (1846-1915) was said to be in part due to Petrie's "kind of exploration or antiquity-dealing-business on a large scale" and object sales.[53] This reaction was likely influenced by Grébaut's high-profile attempts to control the trade in the country.[54]

The format of these transactions may have contributed to their disassociation from commercial dealing. Excavator-suppliers did not operate in proprietary shops (though they did hold public exhibitions of their material), opting instead for what amounts to private treaty sales which invited less scrutiny. In 1885, Petrie proposed that duplicate "scarab moulds, tetradrachm, pottery" from Naukratis be sold to Egypt Exploration Fund subscribers who had enquired about making purchases. He recommended that any arrangements "be announced viva-voce to subscribers at the general meeting. It will thus not be as likely to be heard of in Egypt, if that is feared."[55]

Similarly, Egyptologist Percy Newberry (1869-1949),[56] a market participant himself, disapproved of his colleague John Garstang's proposed use of an external agent for sales, fearing it would cause friction between Garstang and the Antiquities Service.[57] Despite halting public sales, private sales continued under the terms agreed by the Garstang's Institute of Archaeology in 1905.[58] Payment from Garstang's patron, the insurance average adjuster, Sir Francis Chatillon Danson (1855-1926) were paid directly to Garstang as a "private affair", but purchases made for Aberdeen University were repaid to the Institute of Archaeology, as were later Institute sales.[59] The institutional sales of the Antiquities Service facilitated through the Salle de Vente, a sale room affiliated with the Egyptian Museum established in 1892, omitted their private treaty sales of monuments and ready-made collections from their published takings.[60] This stratified system of visibility reinforced distinctions between private and public transactions, even though both involved profit and speculation.

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) defines 'dealing' as "buying and selling items for personal or institutional gain",[61] a definition that broadens the scope to include the generation of symbolic capital which sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) termed "cultural capital".[62] Viewed in this light, many excavator-suppliers clearly

51 Museums Association: Museums Association Code of Ethics for Museums, 23, https://media.museumsassociation.org/app/uploads/2020/06/11090023/20012016-code-of-ethics-single-page-8.pdf, <05.04.2024>.

52 For example: William Matthew Flinders Petrie: Journal. 1880-1881 Giza, Griffith Institute, University of Oxford, Petrie MSS 1.1, 1, 67, 70 and 287. William Matthew Flinders Petrie: Journal. 1881-1882 Giza, Griffith Institute, University of Oxford, Petrie MSS 1.2, here: 74, 138.

53 Riamo d'Hulst to Reginald Stuart Poole (Egypt Exploration Fund), Cairo, Egypt, 19.2.1890, in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.COR.003.j.74; Édouard Naville to Reginald Stuart Poole (Egypt Exploration Fund), Cairo, Egypt, 7.4.[1890], in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.COR.003.j.86.

54 Hagen / Ryholt 2016 (see FN 8), 143.

55 Original emphasis. William Matthew Flinders Petrie notes titled "Memoranda", 2.11.1885, in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.COR.016.f.85-1 and 85-2.

56 Bierbrier 2019 (see FN 11), 341.

57 John Garstang to Francis Chatillon Danson, 7.9.1906, in: National Museums Liverpool, Danson Archives, PF#12.

58 Institute of Archaeology Finance and Executive Committee Book, 8.12.1905 meeting minutes, in: University of Liverpool Library, Institute of Archaeology Archive, S152, "VI Agreed that the Hon: Sec: be empowered to offer for sale such duplicate antiquities as may be deemed surplus, at a price to be determined at his discretion, and be empowered to issue with each such antiquit~~ies~~y [sic!] sold, a certificate of its antiquity."

59 Liverpool Institute of Archaeology Assistant Secretary to Nora MacDonald, Liverpool, 18.12.1905, in: John Garstang Archive, University of Liverpool, FC-1-4-5; John Garstang to Francis Chatillon Danson, 18.6.1909, Institute of Archaeology, Liverpool in: World Museum Archive, National Museums Liverpool; also discussed in Potter 2025 (see FN 2), 11.

60 Hagen / Ryholt 2016 (see FN 8), 49; Patrizia Piacentini: The Antiquities Path. From the Sale Room of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, Through Dealers, to Private and Public Collections. A Work in Progress, in: Egyptian and Egyptological Documents, Archives, Libraries 4 (2013/2014), 105-130. Informal sales took place before 1892, see Patrizia Piacentini: Notes on the History of the Sale Room of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, in: Helmbold-Doyé / Gertzen 2017 (see FN 45), 75-87, here: 76-77.

61 International Council of Museums: ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, 2017, 43, 47, https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICOM-code-En-web.pdf, <05.04.2024>.

62 Donna Yates / Emiline Smith: Museums and the Market. Passive Facilitation of the Illicit Trade in Antiquities, in: Alice Stevenson (ed): The Oxford Handbook of Museum Archaeology, Oxford 2022, 87-97.

participated in practices that qualify as dealing. The capitalist mode of production in archaeology sought to maximize financial and socio-cultural capital, the ownership of archaeological objects and the production of archaeological knowledge (displays, exhibitions, and publications).[63] Archaeology generated both financial and socio-cultural capital for donors, excavator-suppliers and collectors alike. Excavator-suppliers secured funding, direct profit, scholarly status and reputation, while their funders/clients obtained valuable assets, enhanced their personal or institutional renown and received reflected glory from associated publications.[64] Additionally, the financial value of their assets, which might include objects sourced on the illicit or grey markets, would have been increased by their interactions with the excavator-suppliers.[65] The socio-cultural legacy of these transactions persists in named galleries, university chairs, and in the museum objects that name excavator-suppliers and their supporters as beneficent donors.[66]

Applying this broader framework challenges traditional narratives surrounding several individuals who have often eluded the "dealer" label within Egyptology. The Italian diplomat Bernadino Drovetti (1776-1852), though acknowledged by contemporaries as acquiring objects with the intention of selling, has more often been described as an agent or collector.[67] His preference for en bloc sales to European museums has allowed his work to be reframed as museum formation rather than business. Reverend Greville John Chester (1830-1892) has been similarly portrayed as a "collector" who "saved" objects from destruction,[68] though he actively marketed priced stock to potential buyers,[69] and was described by Egyptologist Sir Ernest Alfred Wallis Budge (1857-1934) as someone who could have been a "first-class dealer" given more "capital and boldness".[70] Jan Herman Insinger (1854-1918) has been called a dealer by some. Maarten Raven (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden) prefers to describe him as a "collectioneur" without "marked commercial flavour" and argues that his lack of financial profit from his sales to the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden makes him a museum benefactor.[71] I contend that these individuals and others benefitted from the cultural capital their transactions generated and, by contemporary and modern definitions alike, engaged in practices consistent with 'dealing'.

63 Allison Mickel: Essential Excavation Experts: Alienation and Agency in the History of Archaeological Labor, in: Archaeologies. Journal of the World Archaeological Congress 15 (2019), No. 2, 181-205, here: 187-188; Neil Brodie: Congenial Bedfellows? The Academy and the Antiquities Trade, in: Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice 27 (2011), No. 4, 408-437, here: 410; Yates / Smith 2022 (see FN 62), 90.

64 Alice Stevenson: Circulation as Negotiation and Loss. Egyptian Antiquities from British Excavations, 1880-Present, in: Felix Driver / Mark Nesbitt / Caroline Cornish (eds.): Mobile Museums: Collections in Circulation, London 2021, 261-282, here: 264; Thornton 2013 (see FN 4), 6; Wendy Doyon: The History of Archaeology through the Eyes of Egyptians, in: Bonnie Effros / Guolong Lai (eds.): Unmasking Ideology in Imperial and Colonial Archaeology. Vocabulary, Symbols, and Legacy, Los Angeles 2018, 173-200, here: 176-177; Amara Thornton: Exhibition Season. Annual Archaeological Exhibitions in London, 1880s-1930s, in: Bulletin of the History of Archaeology 25 (2015), No. 2, 1-18, here: 4.

65 Brodie 2016 (see FN 20).

66 Alice Stevenson: Egyptian Archaeology and the Twenty-First Century Museum, Cambridge 2022, 13.

67 Ikram Ghabriel / Stephen Quirke: Finding the Village. Qurna in the 1810s Between Antiquities Collectors and Local Working Practice, in: Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt 58 (2022), No. 1, 83-99, here: 92; Bierbrier 2019 (see FN 11), 136.

68 Bierbrier 2019 (see FN 11), 101.

69 Meira Gold: Victorian Egyptology and the Making of a Colonial Field Science, 1850-1906, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge 2019, 70, quoting Samuel Birch: 'Report respecting offers for purchase', 8.6.1871, in: British Museum central archives 529; Greville John Chester to William Amherst, 5.9.1867, in: University of Toronto Archives, William Amhurst Tyssen Amherst Papers (MS COLL 00206).

70 Ernest Alfred Wallis Budge: Nile and Tigris. A Narrative of Journeys in Egypt and Mesopotamia on Behalf of the British Museum Between the Years 1886 and 1913, Vol. I, London 1920, 85.

71 Maarten J. Raven: 'The Most Prominent Dutchman in Egypt'. Jan Herman Insinger and the Egyptian Collection in Leiden, Leiden 2018, 9 and 49-50; Bierbrier 2019 (see FN 11), 223.

Myths of the Excavator-Supplier

Archaeologist Ricardo Elia (Boston University) examined the use of socio-functional myths within the antiquities market, common rhetorical devices that collectors use to explain, justify, and validate the community's collecting behaviors.[72] These myths reinforce self and group identity and create an alternative reality that enables collectors to continue their activities. Excavator-suppliers employed their own myths that allowed them to construct a self-image as scientific agents, while casting their competitors as being business-like or dealers.[73]

The myths presented here are not exhaustive, excavator-suppliers also employed other pervasive arguments, such as the well-trodden rhetoric about the preservation of heritage.[74] Elia's myth of the guilty source country was particularly powerful; it allowed excavator-suppliers to acknowledge looting, plunder and extraction, while deflecting blame onto restrictive local laws. For example, Flinders Petrie criticized the 1912 laws for equating "scientific excavators", like him, with casual finders.[75] This was really protesting potential limitations on his export. In later life, he relocated to Mandatory Palestine to take advantage of more permissive partage in reaction to tightening Egyptian regulation of the practice.[76]

Building on archival research and original publications, I have identified three myths employed by excavator-suppliers. Like those observed by Elia for the antiquities market, these myths served to rationalize the business of Nile Valley archaeology that practiced the valuation, transfer, and collection of assets. These rhetorical themes centered on differences in cost price and market value, the repayment of funding or labor, and the reversion of funds to other work.

Cost Price versus Market Value

Variations between source and destination country prices are well-attested in art market studies. In 1817, Egyptian historian Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti (1753-1823) noted the inflation of Egyptian archaeological "merchandise" in European markets.[77] Excavator-suppliers frequently framed transactions as being at cost price or below destination market value. For example, Garstang's sale of the Meroë Augustus bronze statue head to the British Museum (discussed below), Insinger's sales to the Rijksmuseum, and Flinders Petrie's sale of his personal collection to UCL were all justified with reference to original costs or current market prices.[78] Similarly, Charles Currelly's sales to the Royal Scottish Museum and Garstang's sales to his funders often matched the prices paid to previous vendors.[79] This was not unique to excavator-suppliers; the Armenian dealer Dikran Kelekian (1867-1951) offered objects to the V&A in 1901, at cost or loss terms.[80] While such pricing could foster supply relationships, it may also have functioned as commodity disavowal, i.e. limiting the commodity phase of objects and distancing transactions from the open market.[81] This enabled suppliers to downplay allegations of profiteering while demonstrating a commitment to public institutions. As such objects could be portrayed simultaneously as valuable assets and modestly priced. Charles Sills (UC Davis) relates a 1939 transaction in which Syrian bronze figures were described both as worthless metal and

72 Ricardo Elia: Mythology of the Antiquities Market, in: James A. R. Nafziger / Ann M. Nicgorski (eds.): Cultural Heritage Issues. The Legacy of Conquest, Colonization, and Commerce, Leiden 2009, 239-256, here: 242-244.

73 David Gange: The Ruins of Preservation. Conserving Ancient Egypt 1880-1914, in: Past & Present 226 (2015) No. 10, 78-99, here: 83. For the use of preservation narratives in other archaeological source countries see Christina Luke: Diplomats, Banana Cowboys, and Archaeologists in Western Honduras. A History of the Trade in Pre-Columbian Materials, in: International Journal of Cultural Property 13 (2006), No. 1, 25-57, here: 29-30.

74 Gange 2015 (FN 73).

75 William Matthew Flinders Petrie: The New Law on the Antiquities of Egypt, in: Ancient Egypt 1-2 (1914), 128-129.

76 William Matthew Flinders Petrie: Egypt Over the Border. Work of the British School of Archaeology in Egypt, in: Ancient Egypt 12 (1927), No. 1, 1-8.

77 Ghabriel / Quirke 2002 (see FN 67), 92.

78 Petrie 1931 (see FN 37), 248, states that his sale to UCL was at or below cost price; Rosalind Janssen: The First Hundred Years. Egyptology at University College London, 1892-1992, London 1992, 15-17, describes handlists that show the repeated valuations of the collection, one of which included £1.500 interest to account for rising market prices.

79 Potter 2025 (see FN 2).

80 Alyson Wharton-Durgaryan: ‚I have the honour to inform you that I have just arrived from Constantinople'. Migration, Identity and Commodity Disavowal in the Formation of the Islamic Art Collection at the V&A, in: Museum & Society 18 (2020), No. 2, 258-279, here: 269-270.

81 Wharton-Durgaryan 2020 (see FN 80), 259.

priceless works of art.[82] This dissonance had previously vexed Petrie, who believed that the Egypt Exploration Fund's refusal to sell artefacts might indicate that they exported valueless objects.[83]

Under their 1883 object purchasing agreement, Gaston Maspero was obliged to pay Petrie the cost price of any small objects desired by the Egyptian Museum.[84] Petrie argued this ensured that the Museum could "secure" things from distant sites "as cheaply as possible", below their "public value".[85] He later claimed that Maspero benefited financially by purchasing objects "far below market value".[86] To justify his transactions to the Egypt Exploration Fund, he cited profit of up to 100%, reflecting the differences between objects' "intrinsic", "Cairo" and "English" or "London" values.[87]

In 1910, Garstang tried to reassure David James Vallance (1814-1949) the Acting Director of the Royal Scottish Museum that the statue of the Egypto-Nubian god Iryhemesnefer/Arensnuphis (NMS A.1910.110.36) would be worth at least "£400 if it came to market", against the museum's £100 excavation share.[88] Similar appeals to destination market value were made by Francis Griffith (1862-1934), Arthur Cruttenden Mace (1874-1928), and Arthur Weigall, the latter estimating that the tomb of Yuya and Thuya, valued locally at £20.000, would command £50.000 internationally. Currelly also underscored the gap between the CA$500 cost of his purchases and their higher destination market value.[89]

Repayment of Funding or Labor

Object valuations also served to justify the figurative and literal repayments of funding or labor expenditures. In his inaugural lecture, Petrie stated that financial outlay ought to be repaid by finds, a theme he returned to often regarding specific finds or sites.[90] In 1905, he stated that objects from Serabit el-Khadim should only be transported to Cairo if worth at least double the cost, while £70 worth of excavations at Tell Dafana were said to return objects worth 2-3 times that.[91] He also justified three weeks' wage costs at the Palace of King Apries, Wahibre Haaibre (circa 589 BCE) in Memphis, solely by the recovery of a silver, gold and copper inlay of the goddess Hathor; retained by the Cairo Museum due to its uniqueness.[92]

82 Charles Sills: Cultural Imperialism and the American Scramble for Antiquities in Mandate Syria. 1920-1939, in: Middle Eastern Studies 60 (2023) No. 4, 650-662, here: 650.

83 William Matthew Flinders Petrie to Reginald Stuart Poole (Egypt Exploration Fund), Bromley, Kent, 24.6.1886, in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.COR.016.f.132.

84 Daniel Potter: 90 minutes in Paris, 3 years in Egypt. The Petrie-Maspero Purchasing Agreement 1883-1886, in: Egyptian Archaeology 67 (2025), 4-7.

85 William Matthew Flinders Petrie to [Reginald Stuart Poole] (Egypt Exploration Fund) 7.11.1883, in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.COR.016.f.6.

86 William Matthew Flinders Petrie to Reginald Stuart Poole (Egypt Exploration Fund), Bromley, Kent, 21.11.1885, in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.COR.016.f.98.

87 William Matthew Flinders Petrie: Journal. 1883-1884 Tanis, Griffith Institute, University of Oxford, Petrie MSS 1.3, 119-120; William Matthew Flinders Petrie to Reginald Stuart Poole (Egypt Exploration Fund), June 1885; Tell Dafana, Egypt, 5.5.1886; Bromley, Kent, 18.6.1886; Bromley, Kent, 8.7.1886, in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.COR.016.f.86; EES.COR.016.f.126; EES.COR.016.f.130; EES.COR.016.f.137. For further discussion of varying valuations, see Carolyn Wilde: The Intrinsic Value of a Work of Art: Masaccio and the Chapmans, in: Michael Hutter / David Throsby (eds.): Beyond Price. Value in Culture, Economics, and the Arts, Cambridge 2008, 220-235.

88 John Garstang to David James Vallance (Royal Scottish Museum) 15.9.1910, in: University of Liverpool, John Garstang Archive. Reverend Archibald Sayce compared the statue of Iryhemesnefer/Arensnuphis to the statue of Sebiumeker in Copenhagen which had been valued at £100 but was not as 'perfect' or 'unique', see Archibald Henry Sayce to David James Vallance (Royal Scottish Museum), 27.11.1911, in: Royal Scottish Museum, Director's Minute Book, National Museums Scotland Archive.

89 Tine Bagh: Finds From the Excavations of J. Garstang in Meroe and F. Ll. Griffith in Kawa in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen 2015, 86-89; Arthur Cruttenden Mace: Journal. 1899-1900, Griffith Institute, University of Oxford, Mace MSS 1.2, 55; Nicholas Reeves: Love Letters from Luxor. Arthur Weigall and the Tomb of Yuya and Tjuyu, in: Pearce Paul Creasman (ed.): Archaeological Research in the Valley of the Kings and Ancient Thebes. Papers Presented in Honor of Richard H. Wilkinson, Arizona 2013, 287-323, here: 304; Lovat Dickson: The Museum Makers. The Story of the Royal Ontario Museum, 21.

90 Janssen 1992 (see FN 78), 99; William Matthew Flinders Petrie: Journal. 1899-1900 Abydos Umm el-Qa'ab, Griffith Institute, University of Oxford, Petrie MSS 1.18, 34, stated "That ivory tablet is worth all that we have spent on the royal tombs yet". Petrie later claimed a gold statuette of the god Herishef found at Ihnasya that "more than covers all the cost of work so far", see William Matthew Flinders Petrie: Report A. 1903-04, in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.COR.016 and Unnumbered. He also asserted that Tel Dafana had "more than paid its way, and though the things may be given away it is so much credited to the Fund", see William Matthew Flinders Petrie to Reginald Stuart Poole, [without place], 5.5.1886, in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.COR.016.f.126.

91 William Matthew Flinders Petrie to Emily Paterson (Egypt Exploration Fund), Serabit el-Khadim, Egypt, 21.2.1905, in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.COR.005.k.83; William Matthew Flinders Petrie to Egypt Exploration Fund [1897], in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.COR.001.c.12.

92 William Matthew Flinders Petrie: Journal. 1909 Thebes, Griffith Institute, University of Oxford, Petrie MSS 1.27, 19; William Matthew Flinders Petrie: The Place of Apries (Memphis II), London 1909, 11-12 and pl. XIV.

John Garstang's boast about having £11.000 of finds or excavating £100 worth of objects a day did not imply an intent to sell all exported material,[93] rather, it accorded with the prevailing discourse and practice.[94] While the find of a gold cache at Meroë was said to be able to defray all excavation costs that year, in 1906, he had chosen not to pursue further excavations near Messawiyeh as the finds would probably not equal his costs.[95] Similar cost-benefit reasoning was common. In 1900, Gaston Maspero claimed that selling duplicate objects in the Salle de Vente could nearly eliminate excavation costs at Saqqara.[96] Edward Russell Ayrton (1882-1914) wrote that £20 spent on excavation had already yielded more than £200 of objects.[97] Bernard Pyne Grenfell (1869-1926) described recovering £150 of papyri in one day, hoping to return £700 worth of finds from a £70 investment, and considered a 2-3 times return acceptable, even when "tenfold" had been achieved.[98] George Reisner later compared the circa $5.500 costs of clearing King Menkaure's Mortuary Temple at Giza to over $120.000 of objects and stated that the finds of reserve heads would repay the entire season's expenditure by November.[99] He later emphasized the appreciating value of exported objects, as valuations he provided to the Museum of Fine Arts continued to rise.[100]

Reversion of Funds to other Work

Objects transferred for a payment were rarely described by excavator-suppliers and their organizations as sales. Most transactions entailed the obligation of repayment, distinguishing them from open donations, which entail no such expectation.[101] Donors, whether major patrons or small-scale subscribers to funds like the Egypt Exploration Fund, expected returns on their funding, such as publications or object distributions. These expectations show that they did not provide disinterested financial gifts.[102] These types of transactions operated in what could be termed a 'gift economy', as explored by the art historian Elizabeth Honig, where transferred assets require reciprocity, but not always in exact equivalence.[103] To manage expectations, and to ensure that substantial funders received commensurate returns, pro-rata distribution systems were implemented by archaeological funds, aligning financial contributions with archaeological returns.[104]

Garstang's Excavation Committees functioned differently from larger archaeological funds as his "shareholders" were liable for all costs, while his responsibilities were spelled out in annual contracts. The contract also detailed how the exported objects would be the "absolute and sole property of the Shareholders" to be divided into "approximately equal and representative groups" for each member.[105] Though some objects became part of the collection of the Institute of Archaeology, the priority of the shareholders was often personal collecting. Paraphrasing historian Michael Greenhalgh (Australian National University), such funds were investments and not simply philanthropic contributions, a dynamic mirrored in other archaeological patronage systems.[106]

93 Mac Eugene James: ‚Who is to say they will not demand our shirts next...'. A Review of the Loan Collection of the Institute of Archaeology at the University of Liverpool 1904-1920, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Liverpool 2019, 118.

94 Stevenson 2019 (see FN 7), 13; James 2019 (see FN 93), 114, 117-119.

95 Remarkable Results Obtained from Recent Activities of Archaeologists, in: New York Times, July 2nd 1911, 3; End of year report, Esna Excavations, 9.5.1906, in: John Garstang Archive, University of Liverpool, JG-4-1-2.

96 Piacentini 2013/2014 (see FN 60), 117-118.

97 Edward Ayrton to Emily Paterson (Egypt Exploration Fund), 15.1.1909, in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.COR.001.k.05.

98 Hickey / Keenan 2016 (see FN 41), 363 and 377, quoting Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.DIST.15.06 and EES.DIST.15.05.

99 Manuelian 2023 (see FN 22), 210-211 and 312.

100 Manuelian 2023 (see FN 22), 543 and 624.

101 Florence Weber: Conclusion. 'Interested' Vs 'Disinterested' Giving. Defining Extortion, Reciprocity and Pure GiFNs in the Connected Worlds, in: Alena Ledeneva (ed.): The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality, Vol. I, London 2012, 196-199, here: 197.

102 Weber 2012 (see FN 101), 198-199. Further discussion in Florence Weber: Daniel Michael Potter Gifts, Purchases, and Stock: National Museums Scotland's Acquisition of Nile Valley Antiquities 1880-1939 (in preparation).

103 Elizabeth Honig: Art, Honor, and Excellence in Early Modern Europe, in: Hutter / Throsby 2008 (see FN 87), 89-105, here: 91-93.

104 Stevenson 2019 (see FN 7), 16; Franzmeier 2016 (see FN 24), 108-109; Alice Stevenson: Circulation as Negotiation and Loss. Egyptian Antiquities from British Excavations, 1880-Present, in: Felix Driver / Mark Nesbitt / Caroline Cornish (eds.): Mobile Museums. Collections in Circulation, London 2021, 261-282, here: 270; Potter 2025 (see FN 2).

105 Abydos Excavation Fund 1907 Contract sent to Francis Chatillon Danson, 10.11.1906, in: Danson Family Archive, D/D/V/4/3, National Museums Liverpool Archives Centre.

106 Michael Greenhalgh: Plundered Empire. Acquiring Antiquities from Ottoman Lands, Leiden 2019, 529.

The notion that such transactions constituted the sale of objects was often rebuffed. After Flinders Petrie's death, Lady Hilda Petrie (1871-1956) offered the British School of Archaeology in Egypt's remaining stock to public institutions, explaining to Derby Museum officials that material would be sent "in return for grants"; a transfer that was not a sale as the School did not "sell in the ordinary way".[107] Objects sent to Australia were also described as the return on "a grant + not a sale or purchase".[108] These and similar transactions that were framed as donations might be called pseudo-sales. This rhetoric functioned as a clear 'appeal to higher loyalties' neutralization technique used by collectors to place their activities above competing ethical or legal considerations.[109] These higher loyalties certainly included archaeological preservation, aesthetic appreciation and supporting scientific activity.

The Salle de Vente was founded with the purpose of directing sale proceeds of excavated finds and material confiscated from dealers towards excavations and clearances.[110] Maspero later used its profits to fund improvements to the museum library, and in the late 1920s Hans Osterfeld Lange (1863-1943) suggested that sales could fund "better administration and more museum positions".[111]

During their private partnership, Howard Carter proposed using profitable object sales to other collectors to offset the fieldwork costs of his patron Lord Carnarvon.[112] Carnarvon's £5.000 exclusive press deal with *The Times*, with 75% royalties, was similarly justified as underwriting the clearance of Tutankhamun's tomb.[113]

In 1907, Petrie specified that the complete tomb assemblage of Nakhtankh and Khnumnakht (the "Tomb of the Two Brothers"), excavated at Deir Rifa, could be allotted to Manchester Museum in exchange for a £500 contribution "to the coming excavations at Memphis".[114] This can be seen as both the purchase of the group and an investment in objects for 1907/08, as the proposal would give Manchester the first claim on the next season's finds.[115] Similarly, the £100 purchase of the so-called "Qurna Queen" burial assemblage by the Royal Scottish Museum was described by Flinders Petrie as a grant towards the work. The Museum had not funded that year's work so had no claim on the finds.[116]

In 1905, the Egypt Exploration Fund offered a gold statuette of the god Herishef (circa 740-725 BCE) to ten museums in return for a "special donation" of £300/$1.500, reasoning that its £300 value was too high for regular distribution.[117] Margaret Drower (1911-2012) suggested that the sale helped to relieve the Fund's financial issues.[118] A similar situation occurred in 1914 when the Sithathoryunet jewelry group (circa 1887-1878 BCE) was exported by the British School of Archaeology in Egypt. As it exceeded any single patron's financial contribution, Petrie offered it to three museums for a "special grant" aligned to its market value

107 Hilda Petrie to Derby Museum, [without place], 5.12.1928, in: Derby Museums Archive, on display in 'Displaced', Temporary Exhibition held 5.7.2024-24.11.2024.

108 Stevenson 2019 (see FN 7), 223.

109 Simon Mackenzie / Donna Yates: Collectors on Illicit Collecting. Higher Loyalties and Other Techniques of Neutralization in the Unlawful Collecting of Rare and Precious Orchids and Antiquities, in: Theoretical Criminology 20 (2016), No. 3, 340-357; Graham Sykes / David Matza: Techniques of Neutralization. A Theory of Delinquency, in: American Sociological Review 22 (1957), No. 6, 664-670, here: 669.

110 Piacentini 2013/2014 (see FN 60), 112-113.

111 Gaston Maspero: Rapports sur la Marche du Service des Antiquités de 1899 à 1910, Paris / Cairo 1912, 24 and 45; Hagen / Ryholt 2016 (see FN 8), 133.

112 Hagen / Ryholt 2016 (see FN 8), 43. This plan was conducted, per Hardwick 2024 (see FN 39), 637.

113 Kathleen L. Sheppard: Tea on the Terrace. Hotels and Egyptologists' Social Networks 1885-1925, Manchester 2022, 175.

114 William Evans Hoyle: Preface, in: Margaret Alice Murray: The Tomb of Two Brothers, Manchester 1910, 3.

115 Campbell Price: Interpreting the 'Two Brothers' at Manchester Museum. Science, Knowledge and Display, in: Archaeologies. Journal of the World Archaeological Congress 19 (2023), 104-128, here: 108-109; Anonymous: The Royal Scottish Museum and Egyptology, in: The Scotsman, November 1st 1907, 5; Margaret Drower: Flinders Petrie. A Life in Archaeology, London 1985, 309-310.

116 Margaret Maitland / Daniel Potter / Lore Troalen: The Burial of the 'Qurna Queen', in: Gianluca Miniaci / Peter Lacovara (eds.): The Treasure of the Egyptian Queen Ahhotep and International Relations at the Turn of the Middle Bronze Age (1600-1500 BCE), London 2022, 205-236, here: 210-211; Petrie 1931 (see FN 37), 228; Drower 1985 (see FN 115), 311, describes this as funding the next year's work.

117 Considerably above Petrie's initial £100 estimate. William Matthew Flinders Petrie: Report A. 1903-04, in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.COR.016, Unnumbered; Egypt Exploration Fund General Committee Minutes, 1903-1915, 34.

118 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 06.2408; "unusual" is underlined in a draft letter by James Sutherland Cotton [November 1904], in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.COR.005.h.24; Louis Dyer to Herbert Appold Grueber (Egypt Exploration Fund), Oxford, 28.7.1905, in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.COR.005.h.66; Drower 1985 (see FN 115), 275.

(over £8.000).[119] Petrie explained the sale as one museum indemnifying other institutional backers, later describing it as an ethical "investment" in the future of Egyptian archaeology, quantified as "keeping three students in training during [sic!] 20 years".[120] Hilda Petrie later described the £20 pseudo-sale of the mummified body of Hermione Grammatike (circa CE 1-100) to Girton Gollege, Cambridge as a "special donation" to work.[121]

Despite his frequent transactions outside the regular distribution of finds, Petrie publicly distanced himself from the commercial aspects of archaeology. He even claimed, absurdly given his standing and attitude, to exert no influence over object distribution during his Egypt Exploration Fund employment as that was "business + not archaeology."[122]

In 1914, Garstang protested to the Governor-General of the Sudan, Sir Reginald Wingate (1861-1953), that his committee had never sold any antiquities as it would be distasteful to some of the members. The "only hint of a transaction" was the £1.050 pseudo-sale of the bronze statue head of the Emperor Augustus (BM 1911,0901.1) to the British Museum via the National Art Collections Fund.[123] Garstang justified the transaction on three grounds: 1) the valuation was well below the £5.000 "marketable value", 2) the funds were given in recognition of the magnanimity of the Sudan Excavations Committee offering it to the British Museum (though the Sudanese government specified there as the only acceptable destination), and 3) the proceeds funded further excavations at Meroë.[124] In practice, the takings were combined with the value of that season's find of a gold cache to offset the costs of the 1911/12 shares.[125] Notably, during the negotiations around the statue head, Danish Egyptologist Valdemar Schmidt (1836-1925) proposed that it might be purchased by his employer, the Danish brewery magnate and Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek funder Carl Jacobsen (1842-1914) as or another Sudan Excavations Committee member in a private sale.[126] The Hamadab Stela (BM EA 1650) was acquired by the British Museum from the Sudan Excavations Committee in a similar pseudo-sale, in return for "a contribution of £300", a third of which was redirected to the Sudanese government as conservation funds.[127]

Conclusions

In 1881, Flinders Petrie dubbed Émile Brugsch *Pasha* (1842-1930), a German Egyptologist and employee of the Bulaq Museum, the "king of dealers" due to his official and private sales of finds.[128] While Brugsch was often described as a dealer, he was also key to the formation of several collections.[129] Yet he embodied the same business dynamics as other excavator-suppliers like Petrie, Garstang and Currelly. However, Egyptology has too often relied on either the self-images created by such individuals, or their characterizations by their peers, obscuring the financial frameworks in which they operated.

119 Petrie 1931 (see FN 37), 251; Petrie's note in: Guy Brunton: Lahun I. The Treasure, London 1920, 44; Herbert Eustis Winlock: The Treasure of El Lāhūn, New York 1934, v-vii; Stevenson 2019 (see FN 7), 98-99.

120 Petrie 1931 (see FN 37), 251-253.

121 Girton College: Information leaflet, https://www.girton.cam.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-04/lawrence_room2.pdf, <05.04.2024>. On the British School of Archaeology in Egypt/ Egyptian Research Account receipt card "subscription" was crossed out by Hilda Petrie and replaced with "special donation".

122 Percy Newberry papers, Griffith Institute, University of Oxford, Newberry MSS 1 37/39; William Matthew Flinders Petrie to Reginald Stuart Poole (Egypt Exploration Fund), Bromley, Kent, 19.8.1885, in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society (Egypt Exploration Fund), EES.COR.016.f.90; and William Matthew Flinders Petrie to Reginald Stuart Poole (Egypt Exploration Fund), Bromley, Kent, 28.8.1885, in: Lucy Gura Archive, Egypt Exploration Society, EES.COR.016.f.92.

123 Thorsten Opper: The Meroë Head of Augustus, London 2014, 16. Stated by Garstang as £1.000. The remaining £50 was used to pay for the commissioning of plaster facsimiles of the head for members of the Sudan Excavations Committee. The National Art Collections Fund later funded the purchase of the wooden statuette of Meryrahashtef (BM EA 55722) from the British School of Archaeology in Egypt, see Drower 1985 (FN 115), figure 74. This purchase was not listed with other institutional transactions, see Franzmeier 2016 (see FN 24),110.

124 John Garstang to Sir Francis Reginald Wingate (Sudan Government), 18.2.1914, in: University of Durham, SAD.189/2/39-46.

125 For example, the Royal Scottish Museum paid only £3/16/5 in 1911-1912; David James Vallance (Royal Scottish Museum) to John Garstang, Edinburgh, Scotland, 17.4.1911, in: John Garstang Archive, University of Liverpool; Royal Museum Register of Specimens Vol. 11, 1908-1913, in: National Museums Scotland Archive, 309.

126 Bagh 2015 (see FN 89), 26.

127 John Garstang to Sudan Excavation Committee, Institute of Archaeology, Liverpool, 1.8.1914, in: Wellcome Collection Archive, Garstang, Professor John (WA/HMM/CO/Ear/300). Notably, the Sudan Excavations Committee's share of the £300 was used to balance their accounts.

128 William Matthew Flinders Petrie: Journal. 1880-1881 Giza, Griffith Institute, University of Oxford, Petrie MSS 1.1, 227; Bierbrier 2019 (see FN 11), 71.

129 See Heicke Schmidt: The Notorious Emil Brugsch. 'It is said That Brugsch Bey Would Sell the Whole Museum.', in: Neil Cooke (ed.): Journeys Erased by Time. The Rediscovered Footprints of Travellers in Egypt and the Near East, Oxford 2019, 81-99; Piacentini 2017 (see FN 60), 76 and 79.

Financial valuation of objects was a routine aspect of Nile Valley archaeology in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This practice reflected both the structural dependencies of British-led excavation funding and the legal frameworks regulating antiquities extraction and export. Excavator-suppliers frequently sold exports via private treaty sales or pseudo-sales that framed payments as donations. Excavator-suppliers justified their practices through socio-functional myths, including cost price versus market value, the repayment of funding and the reversion of funds to future work. These were used to rhetorically justify their actions, reinforce community behavior and distinguish their conduct from dealers.

Egyptology must situate its early practitioners' scientific achievements within the commercial systems that they leveraged. A historiography that continues to downplay these financial transactions risks perpetuating the discipline's "intrinsic colonial structure".[130] Only by critically reassessing the fiscal underpinnings of past collecting activities can we avoid repeating or excusing the same myths that once justified the extraction and redistribution of Egypt's cultural heritage.

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130 Claus Jurman: Pharaoh's New Clothes. On (Post)Colonial Egyptology, Hypocrisy and the Elephant in the Room, Heidelberg 2022, 1.