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# Cultural heritage and the ancient world: authenticity, ethics, collecting, and 'ownership'

MALCOLM CHOAT



# Issues and Principles












1. The material cultural record of antiquity.  
> the modern history of an artifact is as important as its ancient history.
2. Cultural heritage.  
> intangible cultural heritage is just as important as the tangible
3. The 'ownership' of cultural heritage  
> no one 'owns' the past.
4. Balance and equality

## METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

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### ‘The Investigation of Ancient Sites and Sources’ (Ancient History Syllabus, p. 28)

Students investigate:

- the changing nature of archaeological excavation and recording techniques
- the contribution of archaeological and scientific techniques to the discovery and investigation of the ancient past, including site surveys using radar, excavation, dating methods, forensic examination and DNA analysis (ACHAH018) 
- problems associated with reconstructing the past through archaeological evidence, for example in relation to understanding ancient customs and religious beliefs    
- the contribution and limitations of ancient texts, inscriptions and iconography to an understanding of the ancient past    

# Balance



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IN:

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- Sources and approaches
- Historiography – of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the present day
- Modern readings
- Examples of practitioners
- Problematising the disciplines



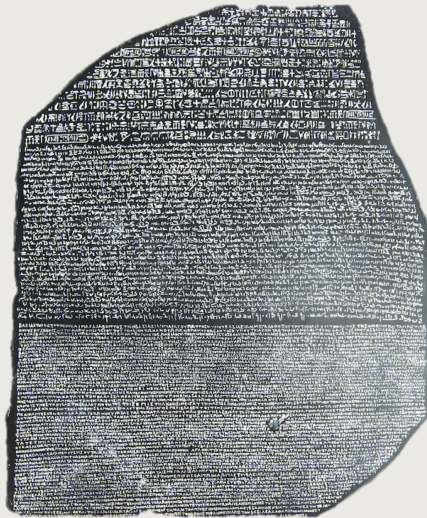
# Balance

- ***Never*** use these fictional characters as examples of archaeologists.



## Modern uses of ancient Evidence

## USING ARTIFACTS TO CONNECT TO THE PAST



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## Fake History: Netanyahu Boasts About 'Ancient Jerusalem Coin' - Turns Out to Be Kids' Souvenir

Netanyahu uploaded (then deleted) to Facebook a photo of the object, describing how its discovery attested to long-time Jewish ties to the Holy Land

Nir Hasson | Aug 29, 2017 10:18 AM

 11
  Tweet
 



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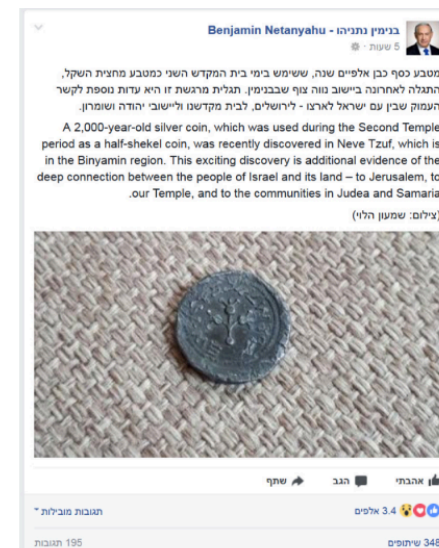
**① Zen**

**Subscribe now**

- The crying game of Tisha B'Av
- Uncovered ancient city wall in Jerusalem tells story of great Jewish revolt
- Talks underway to arrange Trump-Netanyahu meeting next month, Israeli official confirms

Among those captivated by the recent story of the little Israeli girl who stumbled on a 2,000-year-old half-shekel coin – only to learn some days later that what she had found was a roughly 15-year-old souvenir – was Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#).

Various news outlets reported last week that Hallel Halevy, 8, had discovered a rare coin from the days of the **Jews' Great Revolt** against the Romans, from 67 to 70 C.E., when walking to get her little sister from kindergarten in the West Bank settlement of Halamish, north of Ramallah.



# Modern uses of ancient Evidence



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## POLYCHROME STATUES

Sarah Bond, 'Whitewashing Ancient Statues: Whiteness, Racism And Color In The Ancient World', Forbes, 27/4/17

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/drsarahbond/2017/04/27/whitewashing-ancient-statues-whiteness-racism-and-color-in-the-ancient-world/>


APR 27, 2017 @ 08:54 AM 61,432 2 Free Issues of Forbes

### Whitewashing Ancient Statues: Whiteness, Racism And Color In The Ancient World

**Sarah Bond, CONTRIBUTOR**  
Theorist, digital humanist and baseball fan [FULL BIO](#) ✓  
Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.



Although we often romanticize the bare marble of ancient sculpture today, most of these specimens were in fact painted in bright shades of blue, red, yellow, brown and many other hues. Over the past few decades, scientists have worked diligently to study the often-minute traces of paint, inlay and gold leaf used on ancient statues and to use digital technologies to restore them to their original polychromy.

As this history of painted statuary returns to view, it brings with it an unsettling question: if we know these statues were polychromatic, why do they remain lily white in our popular imagination?



**Sarah B. Bond**  
*Head of a Young Man, Centrale Montemartini, Rome, Italy. Color and gilding still visible. Uncovered in the area of Piazza Dante. [1]*

How we color (or fail to color) classical antiquity is often a result of our own cultural values. Before a show on color in antiquity at Frankfurt's Liebieghaus Skulpturensammlung, art historian Max Hollein noted that well into the twenty-first century, the idea of a "pure, marble-white Antiquity" prevailed despite many hints that sculpture was often painted. One influential purveyor of this falsehood was Johann Joachim Winckelmann (d. 1768). His two volumes on the history of ancient art, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, were hugely popular in Europe and helped define art history as we know it today. They also perpetuated and further entrenched the idea that white marble statues like the famed Apollo of the Belvedere were the epitome of beauty.

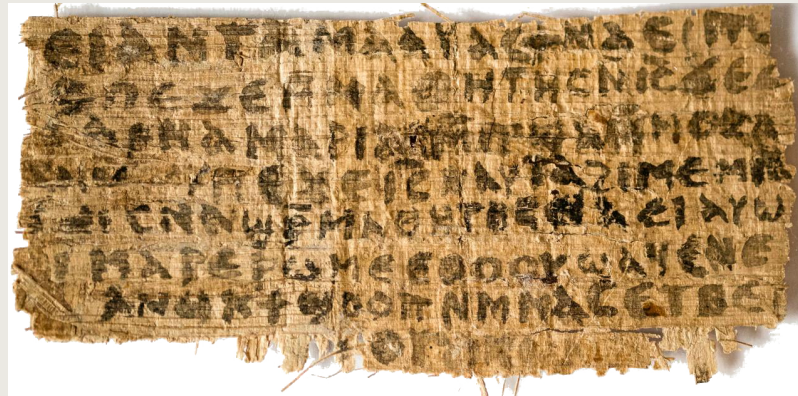




# Historical Authentication and Reliability

## EXAMPLES OF FORGERIES FOR DISCUSSION

- 'Gospel of Jesus Wife'
- Jehoash Inscription
- Dead Sea scrolls
- Getty Kouros



## WEB RESOURCES

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- [www.forgingantiquity.com](http://www.forgingantiquity.com)
  - Website of the Macquarie University ARC-funded project on fake papyri, 'Forging Antiquity'.
- <https://markersofauthenticity.com>
  - Blog of the Macquarie University interdisciplinary research cluster 'Markers of Authenticity'.
- Conference 'Manuscripts from the margins', 22 September, Macquarie University
- 'Faking it' – exhibition at the Museum of Ancient Cultures, Macquarie University, mid-August–October.

## PROVENIENCE AND PROVENANCE

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- Provenience: where an object was found (or sometimes made)
  - Need to know archaeological find-spot and circumstances of finding.
- Provenance: collection history – how did the object get from the ground to where it is now?

## PROVENIENCE AND PROVENANCE

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- What is the modern history of the artifact?
  - how did we come to have it?
  - Where was it found?
  - When?
  - By who?
  - Do we know?
  - If not, why?
- What happens if we take unprovenanced artifacts out of our analysis?



# Ancient Sites

## TEMPLE OF BEL AT PALMYRA

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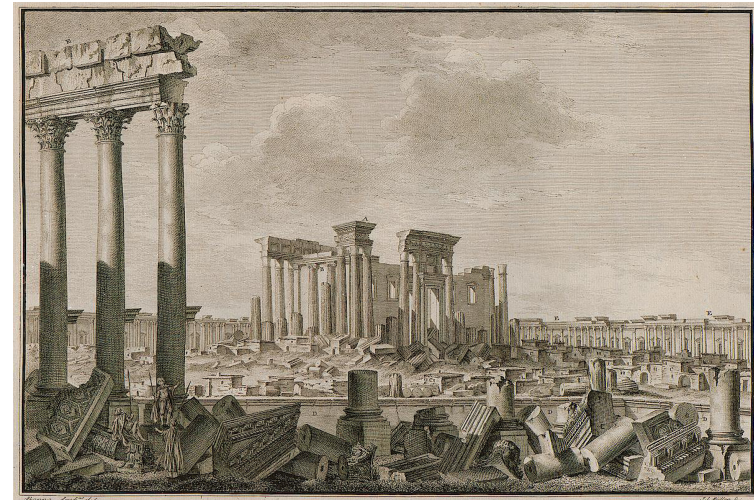
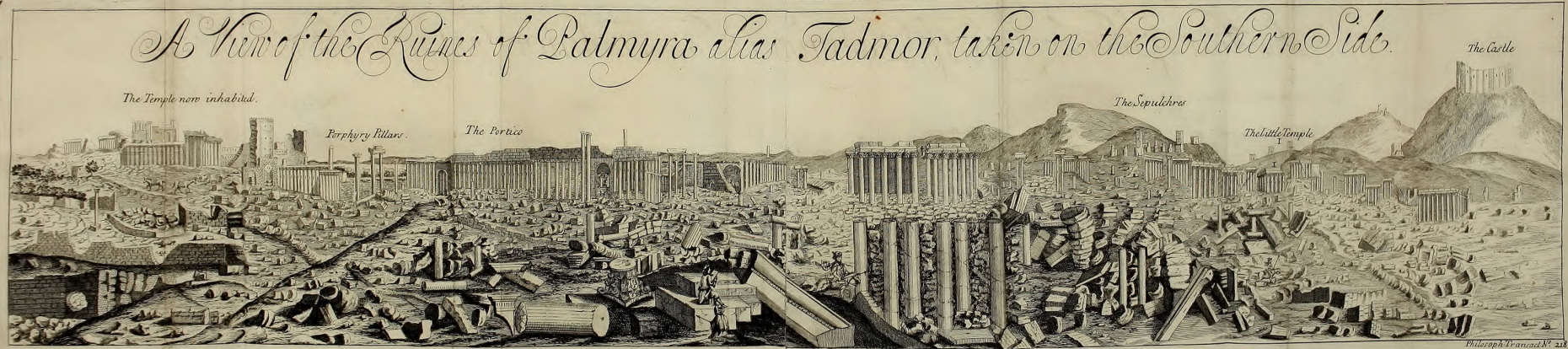


# Ancient Sites in modernity



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## THE VILLAGE IN THE TEMPLE OF BEL AT PALMYRA

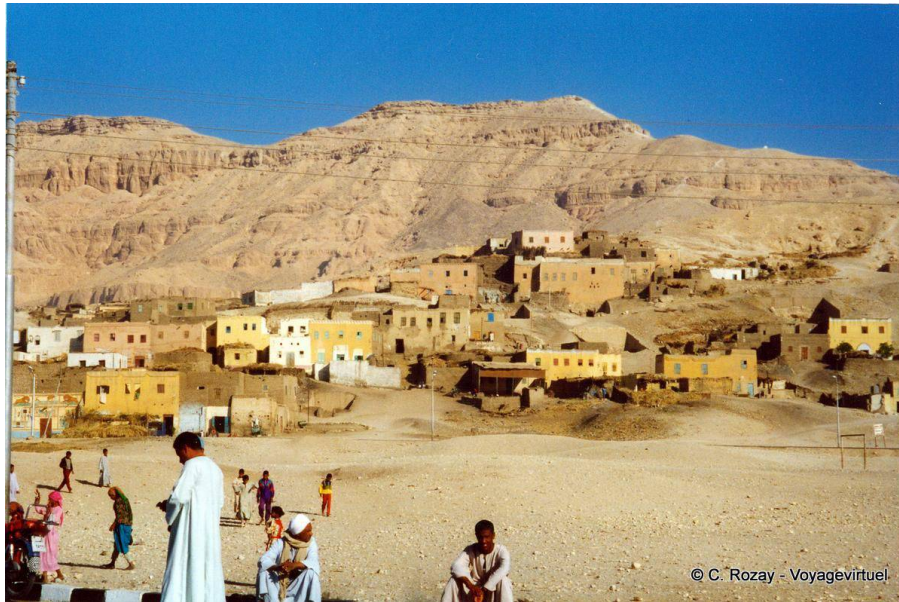




# Ancient Sites in modernity

## THE VILLAGE OF GURNEH IN WEST THEBES

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# Reconstructed Ancient Sites

## THE DEIR EL-BAHRI ('NORTHERN MONASTERY')

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The Monastery of Phoibammon, 1890s



The Funerary Temple of Hatshepsut, today

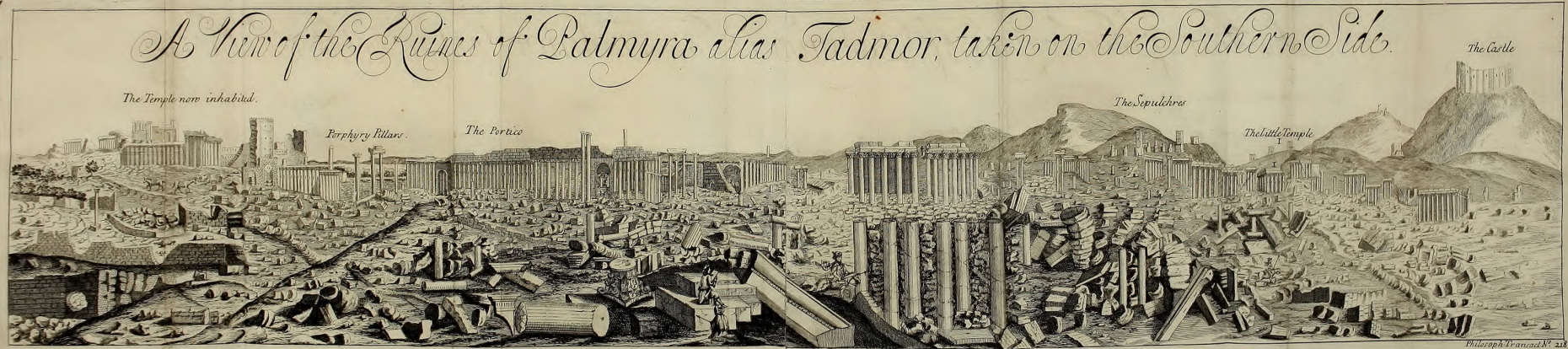


# Ancient Sites in modernity



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## THE VILLAGE IN THE TEMPLE OF BEL AT PALMYRA





# Reconstructed Ancient Sites

## THE TRIUMPHAL ARCH OF PALMYRA

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# Egypt, present and past

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‘Like the treatment of Native Americans, the collection of Egyptian skeletons is rooted in colonialism and a disregard for the wishes of the dead. But, while living Native Americans claim descent from their continent’s first peoples, **the Islamic communities of Egypt do not claim continuity with the people who built the pyramids**. And even if they did, mummies were gathered to glorify ancient Egyptians while Native American skeletons were long collected to dehumanize indigenous peoples. The modern-day Egyptian government has given its consent for the excavation of tombs.’

Chip Colwell, ‘The Long Ethical Arc of Displaying Human Remains’,  
[Atlas Obscura, November 16, 2017](#).

# Egyptian identification with the past



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National Military Museum, Cairo.



Alaa Awad's mural from  
Mohammad Mahmoud Street, Cairo

# Prohibitions on disturbing the dead



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## FROM PHARAONIC EGYPT

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- As for any man who will do something against this (tomb), there will be judgement with him by the Great God”
  - 6th Dynasty tomb of Djenwen.
- “As for anyone against this tomb in my place: the one who disturbs is a criminal”
  - 25th Dynasty Block Statue of Montuemhat from Karnak.
- “As for anyone who will desecrate my corpse in the necropolis, who will remove my statue from my tomb, he will be a hated one of Re, he will not receive water from the water-jar of Osiris, he will not hand over his possessions to his children, ever.” ... “As for the one who desecrates my place, who will damage my tomb or remove my corpse, the soul of Re will hate him, he will not hand over his possessions to his children, his heart will not rest in life, he will not receive water in the necropolis, his soul will be destroyed forever.”
  - 18th Dynasty Statue of Wersu from Koptos.



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- Don't begin and end with repatriation debates
    - If you do, go beyond the famous cases (e.g. Parthenon marbles)
  - Don't present out of date debates
    - Universalist claims to heritage, arguments of better access, better preservation, etc. are increasingly problematic
  - The past cannot be 'owned'.
  - It cannot be commodified, or its value expressed in financial terms.
  - Explain the legal picture, but promote discussion of an ethical approach to the past.



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