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**Revolution or Evolution:
The Development of the Concern for the Preservation of Information
Uncovered during Archaeological Excavations in Israel and Palestine (1890-
1980)**

Leif Fredheim

Abstract: The ICCROM conference of 1983 in Nicosia represents a turning point in the profession of archaeological conservation; here it was expressed that conservators no longer were concerned only with the preservation of excavated objects, but also with archaeological information. This study of the development of concern for the preservation of information from archaeological excavations in Palestine traces the discipline from Flinders Petrie's first stratigraphic excavation in the region at the end of the nineteenth century to the heyday of American processual archaeology. Special attention is paid to the development of professionalism in the discipline, as made evident by the archaeologists' efforts to remain at the cutting edge of their field, publish efficiently, and preserve the material they uncovered. It will be shown that interestingly, despite only excavating for six weeks, Petrie's ideals in 1890 were closer to those of the 1983 conference than most his successors. The study is a response to those who have claimed that archaeology did not truly begin in the region until the 1950s and that the work done prior to this time is irrelevant for study. It is intended as a reminder of the need for professional humility and of the degree of continuity present in all intellectual disciplines that so easily is forgotten.

In 1983, ICCROM held a conference in Cyprus, sponsored by UNESCO and the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus, for archaeologists and conservators working in the Mediterranean region.¹ They were concerned with ensuring that archaeological excavations would "continue to be an effective and responsible technique for the investigation of human history."² This was because of the realization that in order to "recover and revive the life of societies of the past,"³ archaeologists must excavate, despite the fact that "the raw material of archaeology is, almost by definition, non-renewable."⁴

This conference was the first of many steps taken toward uniting the two professions, conservation and archaeology, which had up until this point been artificially separated. It was demonstrated that archaeologists and archaeological conservators no longer were concerned only with the artifacts themselves, conservators with their preservation and archaeologists with their discovery. The discernable change made explicit at the conference was the transition from concern with the artifact itself to the information the artifact could provide, as demonstrated by

the statement that “the loss of context caused by the removal of ‘immovable’ objects, as with movable ones, represents a loss of information for which only the fullest possible documentation can compensate.” It was concluded that archaeologists and conservators would have to unite in order “to minimize the loss of information suffered when the excavation process separates objects and the site from which they have come.”⁵ Only by combining the re-focused efforts of both disciplines could their common goal be reached; “the fullest knowledge, and the most complete preservation of things.”⁶

The conservation of artifacts is an ancient discipline; conserving archaeological sites is a more modern notion. This is especially the case in Israel, where the preservation of the region’s national heritage was not viewed as important prior to the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948. While professional conservators now often work at archaeological sites, most of the work done to preserve sites in the past was done by archaeologists. Thus, this study of the development of concern for the preservation of information uncovered during archaeological excavations in Israel and Palestine will resemble other histories of archaeology in the region with regard to the archaeologists studied, but will focus on excavators’ concern for the preservation of information obtained from the archaeological record.

The conference of 1983 represents a maturity of perspective which is commendable. It is the standard to which all previous archaeological work in Israel and Palestine will be held accountable in this study of the development of the concern for the preservation of information, in order to determine whether the critique of earlier work offered by archaeologists from the late 1960s through the early 1980s was legitimate. Expeditions will be judged by their professed concern for the preservation of information as well as the way in which they demonstrated this concern practically through publications, conservation work, and the effort made to keep up with the development of the discipline. It will be demonstrated that the first scientific excavators in the region held professionalism and intellectual integrity in the highest regard and that despite the development of the discipline, a surprisingly large degree of continuity is evident upon closer study.

Origins

Prior to 1890 archaeology in Palestine was limited to surveying and “exploring.”⁷ Flinders Petrie’s expedition to tell el-Hesi in 1890, sponsored by the London-based Palestine Exploration Fund, was the first scientific excavation of a tell performed in the region.⁸ Although Petrie is best known for his work in Egypt,⁹ he should be credited with introducing scientific excavations to Palestine,¹⁰ and has therefore aptly been named the father of Syro-Palestinian archaeology. Petrie was approached by the Palestine Exploration Fund because of his reputation, established in Egypt, for being a meticulous excavator.¹¹ While Petrie deserves praise for his pioneering efforts, it is important to remember that he did not live in a vacuum. His ideas were brilliant, but they were not entirely his own; Petrie gleaned from the innovative theorists of his day and adapted their thoughts to his field.

In his autobiography, Petrie credits his innovative genius to the range of intellectual fields he was exposed to, by his extended family, during his youth.¹² While some have suggested Petrie invented his own ground breaking methodology,¹³ it is interesting to note the extent to which his ideas resemble those of his contemporaries working in Britain, such as General Pitt Rivers and William Greenwell.¹⁴ All three emphasized the importance of context and detail. Greenwell wrote that “the urn, the dagger and the arrowhead possess a very trifling interest and give us comparatively little information, unless we know the circumstances of their deposit.”¹⁵ This statement is strikingly similar to Petrie’s “it need hardly be said that the greatest care is required in making certain as to exactly where things are found,”¹⁶ and Pitt Rivers’ claim that “on turning back to old accounts in search of evidence, the points which would have been most valuable [are often] passed over from being thought uninteresting at the time. Every detail should, therefore, be recorded in the manner most conducive to facility of reference.”¹⁷ Although Petrie’s field of study was geographically far removed, the ideas of his colleagues excavating in Britain clearly influenced his work.¹⁸

Despite receiving no formal training as an archaeologist, and developing an interest in prehistory late in life,¹⁹ General Pitt Rivers became a key figure in the process of developing British archaeology into a modern discipline. His interest in prehistory grew out of his fascination with typology, first realized while organizing his personal collection of weapons according to the development and improvement of form. Inspired by the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace and Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, Pitt Rivers realized that his study of the development of weapons could be extended to all areas of material culture.²⁰ This is what initially fuelled his interest in archaeology, a fact that is evident in his early fieldwork.²¹

The culmination of Pitt Rivers’ archaeological genius was his excavations at Cranborne Chase.²² Here he was able to combine his concern for the preservation of information with his now more mature take on typology; having realized that his most constructive typologies were based on common, less valuable objects, he introduced the notion that apparently insignificant objects could be the most important because of their typological value.²³ Pitt Rivers’ meticulous work was a direct reaction to the fact that “there are people who think they are doing good by digging and grubbing out antiquities, without making any record at all of their investigations.” His commitment to preserving the information contained in the archaeological record is made clear by his claim that a landowner “could do no better service to Archaeology, than by prohibiting the investigations of any one, without obtaining some security that they will be well recorded.”²⁴

Pitt Rivers’ commitment to conservation led him to emphasize the transmission of information from excavations to the public through exhibits, and its preservation for the future through publication. He therefore ensured that the information he retrieved would be absorbed as easily as possible, by providing detailed mahogany models in his museum and ample illustrations in his reports. It is also interesting to note that Pitt Rivers recognized the importance of digging stratigraphically, criticizing those who “dig down to the bottom in one spot, and then work out

the ditch horizontally all along,” because “this frequently leads to error in assigning the fragments of pottery and relics to their proper *gisement*.”²⁵

Flinders Petrie is hailed as the first archaeologist to undertake scientific, modern excavations in Palestine because his work emulated the concern for the preservation of the material and information retrieved from the archaeological record developed by his older contemporary Pitt Rivers. His commitment to the preservation of information is made explicit by his claim that “to ensure the fullest knowledge, and the most complete preservation of things, in the long run, should be the real aim [of archaeology].”²⁶ Like Pitt Rivers, he attempted to excavate stratigraphically and create a typology of pottery²⁷ for the dating of strata.²⁸ He also recognized that the best typology is based on the most common material, not the rarest. Pottery was chosen because “it is so vastly commoner than anything else,”²⁹ and for its “variety of form and texture, for decoration, for rapid change, for its quick fall into oblivion, and for its comparable abundance.”³⁰

As part of a critique of his own discipline, Petrie noted that only “a few people are beginning to see that history is far wider than any one of these former aims [gold, valuables, marbles, stone work, art, statues, inscriptions], if ever we are to understand the past, every fragment from it must be studied and made to tell all it can.”³¹ He regarded his concern for detail as what singled him out from the other Near Eastern archaeologists of his generation; “Layard and Newton and Schliemann had begun to dig up great things, but the observation of the small things, universal at present, had never been attempted.”³² He deliberately distanced himself from antiquarianism, leaving no doubt that he was more concerned with information than treasure by criticizing museums for promoting the “plundering of sites” by being institutions “where display is thought of before knowledge.”³³ In a similar vein he noted that “nothing whatever may be found that would be worth sixpence in the antiquity market; and yet the results from wells, and plans, and pottery, and measurements may be what historians have been longing to know for years before.”³⁴

Although Petrie was an archaeologist, not a conservator, he frequently wrote about the importance of preserving the archaeological material retrieved during excavations, both *in* and *ex situ*. He rightly observed that while methods of excavation had developed during the second half of the nineteenth century, “the ideas of conservation have not kept pace with the work of discovery.”³⁵ Experience taught him this was unfortunate, and led to his conclusion that “finding things is but sorry work if you cannot preserve them and transport them safely.” He recognized that conservation was not simple, as “however much it may be desired to preserve some things, they almost defy the excavators care ... [they] may slowly perish in a few days or weeks.”³⁶ Due to his concern for the preservation of information, Petrie strongly believed that it was better not to excavate than to excavate incorrectly. “To disclose things only to destroy them, when a more skillful or patient worker might have added them to the world’s treasures, is a hideous fault.”³⁷ “An excavator must make up his mind to do his work thoroughly and truly, or else to leave it alone for others who will take the trouble which it deserves and requires.”³⁸ His realization of the fact that more material was being brought out of the earth than could be analyzed and stored led

him to question the motives for indiscriminately excavating sites that could survive buried, arguing that it is “better [to] let things lie a few centuries longer under the ground ... than repeat the vandalisms of past ages without the excuse of being a barbarian.”³⁹

Petrie’s concern for preserving uncovered monuments was developed during his time in Egypt.⁴⁰ While the knowledge of cultural heritage being destroyed all over Egypt no doubt troubled Petrie, his emphasis on conservation was fuelled by an event that hit far closer to home. During his excavations at el-Amarna, Petrie uncovered a large frescoed floor, for which the antiquities authority provided a roof for protection from the elements.⁴¹ With bitterness Petrie recalled that “no provision was made by the authorities for proper access to it by visitors,”⁴² the consequence of which being that the fields surrounding the preserved floor were trampled by tourists. “One night a man went and hacked it all to pieces to prevent visitors coming. Such was the mismanagement of this unique find.”⁴³ It is in light of experiences such as this that one must read his statement that “to uncover a monument, and leave it to perish by exposure or by plundering, to destroy thus what has lasted for thousands of years and might last for a thousand to come, is a crime.”⁴⁴

What set Petrie apart from his colleagues working in the Near East was that his concern stretched past the conservation of uncovered artifacts to include the preservation of information. This concern is made clear by his definition of “archaeology, - the knowledge of how man has acquired his present position and powers.”⁴⁵ His first-hand experience of the destruction of archaeological material, such as at el-Amarna, led Petrie to realize that the best way to preserve archaeological heritage was to immortalize it through publication; because “there is always the chance of accidents ... the excavator should always be ready to take squeezes or photographs at once when required, and ... always copy every inscription as soon as it is seen.” The information retrieved from excavations was of the utmost importance to him, more so than ethics and honesty; “even when the owner will not allow a copy to be made, the most needful points may be committed to memory, and written down as soon as possible, even under the guise of making notes on other subjects.”⁴⁶ He argued that an archaeologist’s “first consideration is to record and preserve all the information about them [archaeological discoveries].” As far as Petrie was concerned, the only thing that separates archaeologists from dealers and plunderers is their concern for the preservation of information; “recording is the absolute dividing line between plundering and scientific work.” Ultimately he regarded intentions as all but irrelevant, arguing that without publication an excavation is merely a meticulous way of plundering the archaeological record and then destroying the spoils. This explains why “the unpardonable crime in archaeology is destroying evidence which can never be recorded; and every discovery does destroy evidence unless it is intelligently recorded.”⁴⁷

Petrie regarded excavating as an act that should not be taken lightly, arguing that “the destruction which is needful to obtain knowledge is justified [only if] the fullest knowledge is obtained by it, and if it is so safely recorded that it will not again be lost. The only test of right is the procuring [of] the greatest amount of knowledge now and in the future.”⁴⁸ Therefore, excavations should only be initiated after determining that the archaeological record will be

better preserved in “a few hundred copies of books ... [than] solid walls and hidden cemeteries.” Petrie emphasized the fact that “he [the excavator] record fully, and publish in full and detailed manner within two years.”⁴⁹ He stressed that the keeping of accurate records at excavations is of utmost importance because “in archaeological work we are removing what would be as solid proof in future ages ... and we are trusting all future knowledge of the facts to flammable paper ... [for] successive generations, many of whom may have very different interests.”⁵⁰ He remarked that when the entire site is excavated “whatever is not done ... can never be done. The site is gone forever; and who knows what further interests and new points of research may be thought of in the future, which ought to have received attention.”⁵¹ He therefore emphasized that excavators must be experts at observing details, insisting that “the power of conserving material and information; of observing all that can be gleaned; of noting trifling details which may imply a great deal else ... and not losing or missing any possible clues; - all this is the soul of the work, and without it excavating is mere dumb plodding.”⁵² Petrie was well aware that communication is a two stage process involving both explanation and interpretation; because the two parts might take place decades or even centuries apart, he observed that effort must be made to record as intelligibly as possible; “emptying ... note-books on a reader’s head is not publishing.”⁵³

Despite his high standards and great success excavating in Egypt, those who have written histories of Syro-Palestinian archaeology are often critical of Petrie’s work. While admitting that Petrie was an archaeological genius,⁵⁴ Sir Mortimer Wheeler saw it necessary to remark that “between the technical standards of Petrie and those of his older contemporary Pitt Rivers, there yawned a gulf into which two generations of Near Eastern archaeologists have in fact plunged to destruction.”⁵⁵

Petrie prided himself in his meticulous digging and note keeping, often proclaiming the importance of complete pottery typologies for the dating of archaeological strata. At el-Amarna, Petrie reports making sketches of all the Aegean wares “with distinctive patterns, besides mere circles and many pounds weight of other pieces ... as these are so very important for dating Greek pottery in various other places in Greece, Palestine and Italy.”⁵⁶ It is therefore somewhat surprising that his work on pottery at el-Hesi was criticized. In his book *Shifting Sands*, Thomas Davis suggests that Petrie only kept original pottery types in order to enhance his typology.⁵⁷ It appears as though Petrie was never entirely able to grasp the extent to which ancient Egyptian and Palestinian material culture differed from one another. Most of the pottery found in the hill country of Palestine is very plain; dating strata by decorated imported wares is therefore rarely, if ever, possible.

Upon arriving at Tell el-Hesi, Petrie was able to recognize that the site consisted of a number of superimposed strata. In his autobiography, he recalled that a “stream had cut away one side of a mound of ruin sixty feet thick, and I could begin terracing along each level and getting out its pottery ... the successive walls could be distinguished, and the outline of the great early fortification round the hill [also].”⁵⁸ By working in terraces, Petrie’s men were able to separate the artifacts discovered by their relative elevations; thus Petrie was able to demonstrate that each level contained distinct pottery which could be correlated with the occupational phases of the

city.⁵⁹ Unfortunately Petrie's stratigraphic approach was crippled by his insistence that debris accumulated at a relatively steady rate, and that the age of a stratum could therefore be determined by its depth under the surface.⁶⁰ He repeatedly reported using this method, and claimed that "there is nothing arbitrary in this reasoning."⁶¹ Petrie hoped that he would be able to use his knowledge of Egyptian wares to tie the emerging Palestinian typologies to those he had already established in Egypt; he reflected that "unfortunately no Egyptian objects were found which would give us a fixed point."⁶² Despite only finding pottery types he was familiar with in two strata, Greek in the topmost and Phoenician in the middle, he estimated the date of the remaining strata based on the difference in absolute depth between these two, concluding that every five feet of debris represented a century.⁶³

Rachel Sparks attempts to explain Petrie's apparent failure to apply the latest developments of archaeological method to his work in Palestine by making the point that excavating tells is completely different from anything he had done before.⁶⁴ While it might have been defensible during his previous work in Egypt, to dig a trench "along the whole of one side, reaching down to the undisturbed soil beneath," before proceeding to move horizontally across the whole site, "thus gradually turning over every scrap of rubbish without destroying a single wall;"⁶⁵ this was not suitable at a tell site like el-Hesi.

It is important to remember that Petrie was crippled by all the disadvantages faced by pioneers and that he only had six weeks to face them before returning to work in Egypt. He may rightly have been criticized for dating the site on the limited evidence offered by foreign wares alone, but there were no existing typologies of Palestinian pottery.⁶⁶ Despite falling short of the goals both Petrie and others might have set for his work, he was able to publish his findings the following year, 1891; no archaeologist has ever superseded Petrie with regard to timely publication.⁶⁷

During his excavation of Tell el-Hesi in 1890, Petrie introduced the principles of scientific, modern archaeology to Palestine.⁶⁸ While he may not have been able to successfully adapt the techniques that were being developed elsewhere in archaeology, Petrie made an honest attempt given the circumstances, demonstrating great concern for the preservation of the information he had been able to gather. This is made clear by the effort he made to dig stratigraphically and promptly publish a report of his work, ensuring that his research was made available for the use of his colleagues.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, the archaeologists that continued the work Petrie had begun in Palestine appear to have set the standards Petrie attained, not those he strove for, as their goal. They did not emulate his efforts to remain on the cutting edge of the discipline⁷⁰, nor his concern for the preservation of information through detailed publication; hence the work of the following two generations which Sir Mortimer in retrospect termed a "yawning gulf."⁷¹

The Yawning Gulf

Petrie began excavating in Palestine with admirable intentions. He incorporated his high regard for detail and conservation into his excavation at Tell el-Hesi, but was unable to perfect the adaption of these principles to his new environment. Because he returned to Egypt after

spending only six weeks in Palestine, he was unable to ensure that his successors continued to develop his methods the way in which he intended.⁷² The Palestinian Exploration Fund placed responsibility of continuing the work Petrie had begun at el-Hesi on Frederick Bliss. While he may not have had the archaeological experience and innovativeness of Petrie, he did accept the task humbly, eager to learn. In preparation for his first season in charge, Bliss was sent to Egypt “for a short apprenticeship to my predecessor, in the art of practical digging.”⁷³

It is clear that Bliss attempted to emulate Petrie’s regard for the preservation of information. He recognized that “the unscientific excavator may do damage that can never be remedied ... he may make the easy mistake of failing to distinguish between fallen or decayed brick and brick *in situ*, and thus destroy forever parts of some important building hitherto preserved for thousands of years.” Bliss argued that excavations must therefore only take place under adequate supervision, as it might be impossible to rectify the mistakes later.⁷⁴ This expressed concern is also evident in Bliss’ description of his excavations.⁷⁵ While Bliss adopted aspects of Petrie’s concern for the preservation of information, he did not develop Petrie’s method to that end. He consistently applied the theory that the age of the deposits contained in the tell can be directly correlated with the height of the tell. While he recognized that “absolute level is no criterion of age,”⁷⁶ he believed that the age of the lower deposits could be predicted by a simple surface survey and a measurement of the height of the tell. This had consequences for the way in which Bliss excavated stratigraphically, in arbitrary levels independent of architectural features.⁷⁷ It has also been claimed that he did not emphasize the development of pottery typologies sufficiently, and that a more rigorous recording of the most typical forms in each strata would have been beneficial.⁷⁸

R. A. S. Macalister took over Bliss’ position working for the Palestine Exploration fund after Bliss’ retirement in 1901, the two having previously worked together. Macalister’s first excavation as director was at Gezer, which is also the expedition for which he is the most famous. The excavations at Gezer are intriguing due to the discrepancy between Macalister’s professed concern for the preservation of information and his methods of excavation. Macalister acknowledged Petrie’s influence, stating that “his [Petrie’s] experience in Egypt had given him an appreciation of the worth of unconsidered trifles such as potsherds, and of small commonplace objects which an excavator who would seek merely for inscriptions or for works of art would be tempted to throw contemptuously aside.”⁷⁹ While professing to have learnt from Petrie “that potsherds have a higher average value even than inscriptions,” his analysis of Bliss’ reports from el-Hesi reads that “the most significant find was a single tablet, with a cuneiform inscription;” this despite the fact that “its contents, so far as they are intelligible, are intrinsically unimportant.”⁸⁰ It appears Macalister referenced Petrie only out of respect, not because he truly shared Petrie’s regard for the preservation of information.⁸¹

Macalister’s lack of regard for the preservation of information from his excavations at Gezer is all too apparent in his final report. He remarked that “the beginning of the work was discouraging. The heaps of cast limestone, subsequently found inside the city wall all around, contained no antiquities of importance.” It is also evident from his report that due to his initial

observation that “the stratification was much disturbed,” he made little effort to record the relative position of the objects he uncovered.⁸² Commentators have justly been critical of the fact that Macalister supervised hundreds of untrained workers with the help of a single assistant.⁸³ Neglecting to provide adequate supervision for his workers ultimately resulted in a report that contained many objects but no record of their chronological or spatial relationships.⁸⁴ The omission of stratigraphic analysis is surprising given his statement that “stratification must be studied with the most anxious care as the work proceeds, and the antiquities found in each layer must be sedulously kept apart.”⁸⁵ His lack of regard for the ordinary, in contrast to Petrie, is also made clear by his remarks regarding other excavations.⁸⁶

From 1908 to 1910, George Andrew Reisner of Harvard University directed excavations at Samaria. Like Petrie, Reisner was an Egyptologist; when Reisner began excavating at Samaria he brought with him a high regard for the preservation of information. However, unlike Petrie, Reisner was able to develop a set of methods that more adequately served his purpose, both digging and recording more meticulously than Petrie had been able to.⁸⁷ He accomplished this by emphasizing photography and draughtsmanship, in an attempt to facilitate the exact reproduction of the material and its context post-excavation.⁸⁸ His goal was to ensure that although future archaeologists might contend his conclusions, there would never be a question as to where the recorded objects were found.⁸⁹

It has been argued that Reisner revolutionized archaeological method in Palestine; that he was the first to systematically excavate in the region.⁹⁰ This may seem surprising, given that Petrie had already excavated at Tell el-Hesi. However, one must not forget that what made Petrie’s efforts at el-Hesi admirable were first and foremost his intentions, not his results. Reisner was the first to successfully excavate scientifically in a manner that approached the ideal Petrie espoused. Unfortunately, as Petrie had done earlier, Reisner returned to excavate in Egypt before his standards had become the norm.⁹¹ Coupled with the fact that his excavation report was not published until 1924, this is why Reisner’s influence was not discernible in the work of his colleagues in Palestine for over a decade.⁹²

William Albright is not primarily known for his contributions to archaeology as an excavator, but he did lead the excavations at Tell Beit Mirsim from 1933 to 1936. While Reisner emphasized stratigraphic method, Albright focused on pottery typology. Building on Petrie’s work at el-Hesi, Albright was able to establish a typology capable of dating strata of Palestinian tells without relying on imported wares.⁹³ His emphasis on typology came at the expense of stratigraphy. The reports from Beit Mirsim are devoid of sectional drawings which render the reconstruction of the excavated areas impossible. Albright actually determined the stratigraphy of the site based on the very typology he was in the process of creating. It has been suggested that such “poststratigraphical excavation” was all that could be expected at the time;⁹⁴ as Reisner conducted stratigraphic excavations two decades earlier this is obviously not the case. A patronizing defense is remains a criticism, thus statements such as Weippert’s further distort the commonly held position that all work done in Palestine prior to Kenyon was unscientific and without value to present research.

In 1931 excavations were resumed at Samaria, where Reisner had excavated two decades earlier, by John Crowfoot of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem. As Reisner had done, emphasis was placed on stratigraphic excavation, but this time with the assistance of a more complete typology of local pottery. Crowfoot also benefitted from the presence of Kathleen Kenyon, who brought with her the method of excavation developed by her mentor, Sir Mortimer Wheeler.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, the advancement of the archaeology in Palestine as a whole would have to wait, as the final report of the Samaria excavations would not be published until 1957. While the delay of publication is to be lamented, Albright pointed out that it was justifiable given extenuating circumstances such as the death of senior members of the excavation team, World War II, and the partition of Palestine after the war.⁹⁶ However, with the establishment of the Israeli Department of Antiquities in 1948, and the subsidy offered to foreign expeditions in 1951, the stage was set for Kenyon's return.

Renaissance or Revolution

During the 1950s the Wheeler-Kenyon method of excavating, as it later was termed, was established in Syro-Palestinian archaeology. Although Sir Mortimer Wheeler did not excavate in Palestine himself, he kept up with the development of the discipline in the region, and was extremely influential indirectly, through the work of his student, Kathleen Kenyon.⁹⁷ Upon visiting excavations in Palestine as part of his tour of the Near East, Wheeler made no attempt to hide his disappointment with the quality of the work he observed.⁹⁸ This, no doubt, played a part in his decision to include candid statements such as “[Palestine] where more sins have probably been committed in the name of archaeology than on any commensurate portion of the Earth's surface,” and “there is much, far too much, in more recent archaeological excavation that falls short of the highest available standards and therefore deserves the lash,”⁹⁹ in his book *Archaeology from the Earth*.

According to Wheeler, the main problem with Near Eastern excavations was that the leaders of the foreign expeditions had not made the most of the available training back home before travelling abroad. “Liberal endowment, coupled with the relatively cheap cost of native labor, has encouraged wholesale mass-excavation, rewarded by ... ample finds which gratify the patron but are far beyond the capacity of anything approaching exact record.”¹⁰⁰ With this in mind, Kenyon argued it is essential that excavations in Palestine resembled prehistoric archaeology rather than classical archaeology;¹⁰¹ She suggested that the goal of the Near Eastern archaeologist should be to “establish the cultural affinities of the people with whom he is concerned ... to establish their way of life, their social and economic organization, their relations with their neighbors, their natural environment,” and claimed that scientific excavation therefore was necessary.¹⁰²

In order to be able to access and provide the information, required for the complete purposes of archaeology as outlined by Kenyon, excavations had to be as methodical and detail oriented as possible. As it had been for Petrie, knowledge was the ultimate goal; therefore excavation was necessary. Kenyon recognized that the field archaeologist must be the provider of sufficient

primary evidence for future scholarship in addition to answering current research questions. While some of the analysis would be done by the excavator, it had become standard practice for much of the analytical work in “other subjects, such as works of art, coins, problems of technology, [to] be referred to experts in these particular fields.” These studies must then be assembled and published by the excavator in order to facilitate further study by other archaeologists who “combine the results into a bigger picture of some aspect of the subject, and so put together another chapter of prehistory, or supplement some aspect of history.” Thus archaeology had become sufficiently specialized by 1960 that all archaeologists were no longer required to excavate. This however, necessarily raised the expectations of those who chose to take on the role of the “excavator ... who provides the material on which his colleagues work.”¹⁰³

The mechanics of excavation were now increasingly emphasized because while “objects are interesting and may be artistically or technologically important ... they are far more so if they are found *in situ*.”¹⁰⁴ Kenyon was well aware that objects could become key pieces of evidence in the scientific study of man’s past despite the objects themselves being “apparently insignificant.”¹⁰⁵ The ability to pay attention to detail and a thorough knowledge of stratigraphy were therefore viewed as being of paramount importance for field archaeologists, to the extent that if they were not adequately qualified they “should be constrained from digging.”¹⁰⁶ This was the natural consequence of the realization that “it is far more important that archaeological field workers should be well trained than any of the other specialists¹⁰⁷ who contribute to the elucidating of the history of an archaeological site ... once a site has been badly dug or badly recorded its potential evidence is lost forever.” Wheeler similarly proposed that archaeology would be far better served if sites were left “awaiting a more humane and legitimate execution.”¹⁰⁹ He elaborated by claiming that “at best, archaeology is destruction; and destruction unmitigated by all the resources of contemporary knowledge and accumulated experience cannot be too rigorously impugned.”¹¹⁰ Similarly, Kenyon wrote “that all excavation is destruction. The evidence ... is contained in the layers of soil compromising its floors ... once these layers have been disturbed, the evidence ... has been destroyed altogether unless it has been properly observed, recorded and subsequently made public.”¹¹¹ Petrie had introduced these concerns to the region at Tell el-Hesi;¹¹² the standard he had foreseen but failed to attain could now be reached.

Kenyon recognized that keeping accurate records is especially important when excavating a tell. This is due to the fact that “it is usually essential to remove each structure, walls and all ... since otherwise it will be impossible to clear the lower stages.” She claimed that records are of utmost importance because “an excavation, however well conducted, is [a] waste of time unless it is adequately recorded and published, or worse, for evidence has been totally destroyed,” noting that a full report must contain “survey, records of stratification, the relations of finds exactly to these, and photography.”¹¹³ Like Pitt Rivers, she emphasized the use of diagrams, especially for the portrayal of stratification.¹¹⁴ Her concern for the transmission of information through clear, informative reports was shared by Wheeler, her mentor, as it had been by Petrie. Wheeler recognized that “the excavator’s fundamental function is that of record, primarily

pictorial record.”¹¹⁵ He emphasized that “the saving of effort on the part of the reader is worth a little extra effort on the part of the draftsman ... any medium or convention which is likely to encourage woolly thinking is to be deprecated.”¹¹⁶ Thus Kenyon and Wheeler revived Petrie’s concern for the preservation of information in published reports, emphasizing the importance of communicating clearly.

Like Petrie, Wheeler and Kenyon recognized that their primary duty as field archaeologists was to record information thoroughly. They must “secure beyond doubt the orderly succession of the vestiges with which [they dealt], even though, in any given phase of research [they might] be compelled to leave finer adjustment and interpretation to [their] successors.”¹¹⁷ Wheeler and Kenyon clearly exhibited the belief that excavations must be performed to the highest standard possible, and that evidence must be preserved through publication for further study. They recognized that they were merely stewards of the archaeological material they had the privilege of excavating. Although they no doubt were frustrated with the work that had been done before them, such as Petrie’s use of arbitrary stratigraphic levels¹¹⁸ and the belief that it was ideal to excavate an entire tell in one expedition,¹¹⁹ they were aware that development was to be expected.¹²⁰ While they seconded the importance of preserving both material and information from excavations, introduced by Petrie, they took his concern to another level. Wheeler specifically recommends the inclusion of “an archaeological chemist” in the staff of an archaeological excavation, in order to ensure the safe retrieval, transportation, and preservation of the artifacts exposed to the elements.¹²¹

Kenyon’s excavations at Jericho ushered in a new era of Syro-Palestinian archaeology. While this period has been labeled a revolution,¹²² it could perhaps more appropriately be termed a renaissance, a renewal of concern for the preservation of both artifacts and information. Wheeler openly recognized that many of his methods had been “derived from those of the greatest of all archaeological excavators, General Pitt Rivers,”¹²³ who also influenced Petrie. Wheeler praised Pitt Rivers for his devotion to detail, efforts to ensure all workers were adequately supervised, and foresight “in forming the relic tablets, by which means all records [were] kept up to date ... that, as far as possible, everything should be recorded whilst it was fresh in memory.”¹²⁴ The Wheeler-Kenyon method was not an entirely new invention; it was based on the principles of scientific excavation that had been introduced to Palestine by Flinders Petrie half a decade earlier. In many ways it naturally evolved out of Pitt Rivers’ and Petrie’s work at Cranborne Chase and Tell el-Hesi respectively, albeit regrettably far too many years later. Kenyon and Wheeler retrieved Syro-Palestinian archaeology from the obscurity of the gulf, bringing it once more in step with the development of the profession elsewhere.

New Archaeology meets Near East

In the late 1960s and early 70s, the disparity between the goals and methods of the various foreign expeditions to Israel increased; this was primarily a result of the dominance of the processual “New Archaeology” in North America.¹²⁵ When archaeology became a professional discipline in North America in the 1930s, archaeologists set about establishing a chronology of

North American cultures, propelled by the belief that “they could make empirically testable statements as archaeologists.”¹²⁶ Yet, realizing the limitations of the young discipline, they emphasized salvaging information from threatened sites, recognizing that any grand conclusions would be drawn at a later date.¹²⁷ After World War II, the focus of anthropology shifted to a more social orientation straining archaeologists’ emphasis on culture-history.¹²⁸ This, coupled with the growing disillusionment regarding the vast amount of material required to make informed claims about the human past,¹²⁹ set the stage for Lewis Binford’s aggressive promotion of New Archaeology,¹³⁰ which followed the intellectual migration of anthropological scholarship¹³¹ and paved the way intellectually for the drawing of scientific archaeological conclusions on limited samples of prehistoric material culture.¹³²

William Dever was perhaps the most vocal proponent of Syro-Palestinian archaeologists’ need to adopt the principles of New Archaeology. This was the result of his opinion of Biblical Archaeology,¹³³ which he described as being of an “amateurish nature” and a discipline suffering from a “scandalous lack of scholarly publication,” famously claiming that “at best this unsystematic inquiry into the past was antiquarianism; at worst it was treasure hunting.”¹³⁴ As a joint professor in the departments of Near Eastern Studies and Anthropology at The University of Arizona, William Dever wrote a number of articles over the course of the 1970s and 1980s criticising failure of Syro-Palestinian archaeology to engage with the developments that had been made in archaeology elsewhere. While North American archaeologists had already adopted the principles of processualism, those working in Near Eastern and Classical archaeology¹³⁵ were reluctant to follow suit.¹³⁶

Dever believed it was essential that archaeology in Palestine catch up with the developments that had been made back home; stating that “we are in 1980 just where American archaeology was ca. 1950,”¹³⁷ no doubt referring to W. W. Taylor’s *A Study of Archaeology*,¹³⁸ the pioneer work of American New Archaeology. However, as the disciplines of American and Syro-Palestinian archaeology were fundamentally different, New Archaeology could not simply be transplanted to Israel. While Syro-Palestinian archaeology was founded by foreigners who made the work in the region possible by adapting techniques developed elsewhere, there are a number of perfectly good reasons for why Syro-Palestinian archaeologists had not followed the lead of their colleagues in the New World.¹³⁹

It appears as though Dever had forgotten that Near Eastern archaeology was not purely an American endeavour. Scientific excavations were begun in the region by Flinders Petrie, who was influenced by Pitt Rivers, both British. Since then, excavations have also been led by French, German, Palestinian, Israeli, and American archaeologists. It is interesting to note that archaeology in Europe is a far older discipline than it is in America, and that the excavations done by Pitt Rivers in England in the late eighteenth century were of a far higher quality than anything archaeological executed in America during the first quarter of the 20th century. One must not therefore do as Dever, blaming Albright for not referring to archaeological work done in the Southwest; his work was part of a different archaeological context altogether, influenced by archaeologists working in regions where archaeological method was more developed and

relevant to his needs than the work that was being done back home by his fellow countrymen. It is ironic indeed, that Albright, who excavated between 1922 and 1934, was criticized for not keeping up with the developments in American archaeology,¹⁴⁰ bearing in mind the state of American archaeology at the time. Claiming that Syro-Palestinian archaeology, a branch of Near Eastern archaeology, is younger and less mature than American archaeology¹⁴¹ appears both ignorant and patronizing - an unfortunate combination.

It is a pity that Dever was unable to resist emulating “dogmatism of some ‘new archaeologists’ [who] tended to devalue the work of their predecessors ... and to foster the *prima donna* complex that has always plagued the discipline” he himself deplored.¹⁴² Claiming that Syro-Palestinian archaeology in 1980 was at the level “in *theory and method* ... where American archaeology was in the late 1940s,” is neither diplomatic nor fair, especially when remembering the fact that prominent colleges such as Berkeley were promoting “set-level” stratigraphy as late as 1950.¹⁴³ Similarly, the contention that archaeology in Israel and Palestine was only beginning the process of growing an “archaeological conscience” and becoming professional, is demeaning and unnecessary.¹⁴⁴ By the 1980s excavations had been performed by archaeological professionals for at least thirty years,¹⁴⁵ and an “archaeological conscience” was introduced, if not adhered to, well before that. His primary intention in writing was, no doubt, to call his colleagues’ attention to developments that had been made elsewhere and the possibility of enhancing the results of excavations in Palestine. Unfortunately, the tone of his argument and his apparent inclination to be critical rather than constructive overshadowed and undermined the virtue of his argument.¹⁴⁶ He was quite that Syro-Palestinian archaeologists must discuss the extent to which the principles of New Archaeology should be incorporated into their excavations, a topic hardly discussed since Kenyon and Wheeler,¹⁴⁷ despite its relevance.

With regard to the preservation of information from archaeological excavations, the benefit of the influence of New Archaeology is debatable.¹⁴⁸ While more attention was paid to detail than before, less was published. Integral to the New Archaeology promoted by Dever in the 1970s and early 80s, was the emphasis on research design and the testing of hypotheses in order to determine “general ‘covering laws’ and the ‘explanation’ of cultural patterns.”¹⁴⁹ While Syro-Palestinian archaeology may be aligned more closely to prehistoric than classical archaeology, there is a large historical component to the interest in the discipline. A mound in North America may only be important with regard to general laws of cultural evolution, but the value of the information contained in Israeli tells is more complex. Syro-Palestinian archaeologists are interested in the identity and cultural development specific to the site they are excavating, as archaeologists later studying their results also will be. Thus, with regard to preserving the archaeological record of a site, excavating and recording with a more detached attitude to research design and hypotheses, ideally as a professional field worker providing material for research, is preferable.¹⁵⁰

Conclusion

The principles of modern, scientific archaeological excavation were first introduced to Israel and Palestine by Sir Flinders Petrie in 1890. Due to the facts that “Petrie’s chronology has been modified by subsequent students, and his attribution of names known from textual sources to ancient sites cannot always be accepted,”¹⁵¹ some have claimed that scientific excavations were not done in the region until half a decade later. However, as this study has demonstrated, Petrie approached the task at Tell el-Hesi with the principles of scientific excavation in mind, attempting to apply methods developed elsewhere and promptly recording his discoveries with the preservation of information in mind; “modern excavation methods have improved on [Petrie’s]. But that is all as it should be in a living science.”¹⁵² Unfortunately he did not remain in the region long enough for his concern to become the norm. Methods capable of attaining Petrie’s goals were introduced by Reisner but he did not excavate in Palestine long enough for his methods to become the norm either.¹⁵³ In the years following Reisner’s excavations at Samaria, progress was made with regard to the typology of local pottery, but accurate stratigraphic excavations were not conducted until Kathleen Kenyon’s arrival in the region with her method of excavation that was developed with Wheeler from the techniques used by Pitt Rivers half a decade earlier.

Archaeological conservation “is the ensemble of means that, in carrying out an intervention on an object or its environment, seek to prolong its existence as long as possible.”¹⁵⁴ This definition aptly demonstrates that “conservation is a futuristic activity vested in the belief that we, who have the power today to safeguard or degrade what it is of value to society, should strive to be good ancestors for future generations.”¹⁵⁵ While the publication of excavation reports is vital, physical “conservation adds to the documentary value”¹⁵⁶ by preserving “the physical fabric in a way that allows maximum information to be retrieved by further study and analysis;”¹⁵⁷ both the conservation of objects and the preservation of information are therefore important. This is why efforts have been made to reunite the disciplines of archaeology and conservation, which have remained separate since the days where archaeology was more concerned with objects than information and continue to be estranged through the processes of professionalization and specialization. It is now being recognized that “if this separation is reversed, [the] meshing of the two can work powerfully to secure the archaeological record for the future while allowing its study and appropriate current use for the benefit of society.”¹⁵⁸

The current generation of archaeologists would do well to take a lesson in humility from Lieutenant-General Pitt Rivers and Sir Mortimer Wheeler, recognizing that future research will be based on current excavations and that “our successors will no doubt include ways which we regard today as relatively right [as wrong], in accordance with the natural principle whereby every generation is liable to belittle the achievement of its predecessors.”¹⁵⁹ It is vital archaeologists never forget that excavation is destructive; all archaeological fieldwork and recording must be done mindful of that “in archaeological work we are removing what would be as solid proof in future ages ... and we are trusting all future knowledge of the facts to flammable paper ... [for] successive generations, many of whom may have very different interests.”¹⁶⁰ This humble awareness of the development of the discipline, familiar to the pioneer,

is rare in the current environment where archaeologists excavate sites to answer their own research questions and the process of recording and interpreting appears indistinguishable in the few reports that actually are published. It is high time archaeologists recognize the urgency of the issue, choosing either to ensure that their excavations are “an effective and responsible technique for the investigation of human history,”¹⁶¹ or “leave it alone for others who will take the trouble which it deserves and requires.”¹⁶²

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Endnotes

¹Frank Matero, "Making Archaeological Sites: Conservation as Interpretation of an Excavated Past," in *Of the Past, for the Future: Integrating Archaeology and Conservation*, eds. Neville Agnew and Janet Bridgland (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2006), 61.

²Nicholas Stanley Price, "Excavation and Conservation," in *Conservation on Archaeological Excavations: with Particular Reference to the Mediterranean Area*, ed. Nicholas Stanley Price (Rome: Sintesi Informazione S.R.L., 1984), 9.

³Gordon V. Childe, "The Unity of Archaeology," in *Conference on the Future of Archaeology*, ed. Institute of Archaeology, University of London (London: The University of London Institute of Archaeology, 1943), 21.

⁴Stanley Price, "Excavation and Conservation," 2.

⁵*Ibid.*, 2.

⁶W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Methods and Aims in Archaeology* (New York: Benjamin Bloom Inc., 1972), 180.

⁷Rachael Thyrza Sparks, "Flinders Petrie and the Archaeology of Palestine," in *Future for the Past: Petrie's Palestinian Collection*, ed. Institute of Archaeology, University College London (London: Institute of Archaeology, University College London, 2007), 2

⁸Neil Asher Silberman, *Digging for God and Country: Exploration, Archaeology, and the Secret Struggle for the Holy Land 1799-1917* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1982), 148.

⁹Sparks, "Flinders Petrie and the Archaeology of Palestine," 1; Stanley Casson, "Flinders Petrie and Egyptology," in *Archaeology*, ed. Samuel Rappoport and Helen Wright (New York: Washington Square Press, 1964), 185.

¹⁰Institute of Archaeology, University of London, *The Archaeology of Palestine: An Exhibition in Commemoration of the Centenary of the Birth of Sir W. M. Flinders Petrie* (London: The University of London Institute of Archaeology, 1953), 5.

¹¹Sparks, "Flinders Petrie and the Archaeology of Palestine," 2.

¹²W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Seventy Years in Archaeology* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1932), 19; Grandfather's love of drawing and handling of men and material, great-grandfather's business ways and banking, three generations of Flinders surgeons' love of patching up bodies, grandfather Flinders' exquisitely precise surveys and his firm hold on men, father's engineering, chemistry, and draughtsmanship, mother's love of history and knowledge of materials.

¹³Roger Moorey, *A Century of Biblical Archaeology* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 1991), 27.

¹⁴M. W. Thompson, *General Pitt-Rivers: Evolution and Archaeology in the Nineteenth Century* (Bradford-on-Avon: Moonraker Press, 1977), 47, 51; Pitt Rivers describes himself as a student of Greenwell.

¹⁵William Greenwell, *Archaeological Journal* 22 (1865): 97, in *General Pitt Rivers: Evolution and Archaeology in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. M. W. Thompson (Bradford-on-Avon: Moonraker Press, 1977), 47.

¹⁶W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Ten Years' Digging in Egypt, 1881-1891* (Chicago: Ares Publishers, 1976), 161.

¹⁷Lieutenant-General Pitt Rivers, *Excavations on Cranborne Chase*, vol. 1 (London: Printed Privately, 1887), xvii.

¹⁸Pitt Rivers visited Petrie's excavations. Petrie's work also contributed to the development of archaeology in Britain; Glyn Daniel, *A Hundred and Fifty Years of Archaeology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 177; O. G. S. Crawford, *Archaeology in the Field* (London: Phoenix House Ltd., 1954), 29-30.

¹⁹He reportedly displayed no interest in antiquities prior to his transfer to Cork in 1962, despite previous postings in areas rich with archaeological monuments such as Malta; Thompson, *General Pitt-Rivers*, 45.

²⁰Daniel, *A Hundred and Fifty Years of Archaeology*, 170; Thompson, *General Pitt-Rivers*, 21, 42.

²¹Pitt Rivers was so driven by his love for typology that his first excavations left him unsatisfied and disillusioned; his efforts to fit objects into evolutionary sequences obstructed his ability to study site structure. Only after working with Greenwell in 1867 did Pitt-Rivers become the archaeologist, thoroughly concerned with the conservation of monuments and detailed records of excavation reports, for which he earned the title Inspector of Ancient Monuments, and later became famous; Thompson, *General Pitt-Rivers*, 47, 51, 63.

²²It is from the published reports of these excavations that his iconic quotes such as "the value of such investigations depends mainly, if not entirely, on the precision with which the evidence is recorded," are drawn. The excavations at Cranborne Chase and their subsequent reports are also what earned Pitt Rivers the honor of being named "the greatest of all archaeological excavators," by archaeologists such as Sir Mortimer Wheeler; Lieutenant-General Pitt Rivers, "Address to the Archaeological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, by *General Pitt-Rivers*, on the Occasion of its Visit to Dorchester, August 3, 1897," in *Excavations in Cranborne Chase near Rushmore on*

the Borders of Dorset and Wilts 1893-1896 (London: Printed Privately, 1898), 5; Sir Mortimer Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), v.

²³Pitt Rivers, "Address to the Archæological Institute," 27.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 28.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 23, 26, 27.

²⁶Petrie, *Methods and Aims in Archaeology*, 180.

²⁷Petrie identified pottery as "the very key to digging," and "the essential alphabet of archaeology; Petrie, *Ten Years' Digging in Egypt*, 158; Petrie, *Methods and Aims in Archaeology*, 15.

²⁸Sparks, Flinders Petrie and the Archaeology of Palestine, 3.

²⁹Petrie, *Ten Years' Digging in Egypt*, 158.

³⁰Petrie, *Methods and Aims in Archaeology*, 15.

³¹*Ibid.*, 171.

³²Petrie, *Seventy Years in Archaeology*, 20.

³³Petrie *Methods and Aims in Archaeology*, 171.

³⁴Petrie, *Ten Years' Digging in Egypt*, 161.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 130.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 165-66.

³⁷Petrie, *Methods and Aims in Archaeology*, 85.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 7.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 180.

⁴⁰He described the lack of concern for the preservation of cultural heritage exhibited by the Egyptians by highlighting some of the most shocking examples: "the temple on Elephantine ... was cut to pieces to build a powder magazine. The triumphal arch and colonnades of Antioch were carried off to build sugar works ... Roman marble columns were in request by the late Khedira for garden rollers."; W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Eastern Exploration Past and Future: Lectures at the Royal Institution* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1918), 84-85.

⁴¹Petrie, *Seventy Years in Archaeology*, 129.

⁴²Petrie, *Eastern Exploration Past and Future*, 86.

⁴³Petrie, *Seventy Years in Archaeology*, 148.

⁴⁴Petrie, *Methods and Aims in Archaeology*, 178.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, viii.

⁴⁶Petrie, *Ten Years' Digging in Egypt*, 165.

⁴⁷Petrie, *Methods and Aims in Archaeology*, 48.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 175.

⁴⁹Petrie, *Eastern Exploration Past and Future*, 95.

⁵⁰Petrie, *Methods and Aims in Archaeology*, 182.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 174.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 5.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 50.

⁵⁴Sir Mortimer Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 14.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁶Flinders Petrie, “28 March – 3 April 1892,” in *Letters from the Desert: the Correspondence of Flinders and Hilda Petrie*, ed. Margaret S. Drower (Oxford: Aris and Phillips, 2004), 86-87.

⁵⁷Davis, *Shifting Sands*, 29-31.

⁵⁸Petrie, *Seventy Years in Archaeology*, 125.

⁵⁹Walter G. Williams, *Archaeology in Biblical Research* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), 29.

⁶⁰Petrie, *Methods and Aims in Archaeology*, 10.

⁶¹W. M. Flinders Petrie, “The Story of a ‘Tell,’” in *The City and the Land: A Course of Seven Lectures on the Work of the Society*, ed. Palestine Exploration Fund (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892), 191; Sparks, “Flinders Petrie and the Archaeology of Palestine,” 4.

⁶²W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Tell el Hesi (Lachish)* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1891), 14.

⁶³Petrie, *Tell el Hesi*, 14-15.

⁶⁴Sparks, “Flinders Petrie and the Archaeology of Palestine,” 4.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 158-59.

⁶⁶A fair critique should also bear in mind the conditions under which Petrie had to work; their vast difference from modern conditions is aptly described by one of the events that caused Petrie to leave el-Hesi after just one season and return to Egypt. He relived the robbery in his diary, writing: “suddenly I saw a man, with his face tied across up to the eyes, pass from one bush to another over the road ... then two, three, and at last four showed themselves ... they seized the camel and threatened to fire ... but I backed up a slope to one side, revolver in hand.”; Petrie, “June 1890,” in *Letters from the Desert*, 78.

⁶⁷Institute of Archaeology, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 6.

⁶⁸Casson, “Flinders Petrie and Archaeology,” 186-187; Sparks, “Flinders Petrie and the Archaeology of Palestine,” 3.

⁶⁹Petrie claimed that he excavated to preserve information; he published to preserve information; he committed to publishing well in order to ensure the preservation of information.

⁷⁰Ironically, Petrie’s work done after his return to Palestinian archaeology in 1927 was symptomatic of the yawning gulf his absence had initiated almost four decades earlier. By this time Petrie was in his mid-seventies and was too set in his ways to contribute innovatively to the discipline. He continued where he had left off, paying little notice to the development of the typology of local wares, once again attempting to date his strata based on the occurrence of objects familiar to him from Egypt. Thus Nelson Glueck could write of Petrie after his death in 1942, that “in many ways he was a giant in our own day, but particularly was a he a giant of yesterday.”; Moorey, *Excavations in Palestine*, 24; Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 38; Moorey, *A Century of Biblical Archaeology*, 60; Nelson Glueck, “Sir W. M. Flinders Petrie (1853-1942),” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 87 (1942): 6.

⁷¹Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth*, 15.

⁷²Moorey, *A Century of Biblical Archaeology*, 27.

⁷³Frederick Jones Bliss, *The Development of Palestine Exploration: The Ely Lectures for 1903* (1906; Reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1977), 275.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 289.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 7, 9.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 294.

⁷⁷Moorey, *A Century of Biblical Archaeology*, 29.

⁷⁸William F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1931), 25; Moorey, *A Century of Biblical Archaeology*, 30.

⁷⁹R. A. S. Macalister, *A Century of Excavation in Palestine* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1925), 43-44.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 44-46.

⁸¹He acknowledged that context is important, yet his statement that a “painted vase, be it never so artistic, is shorn of half its scientific value if no record has been preserved of the place where it was found,” is symptomatic of his failure to acknowledge the degree of importance scientific archaeology places on context. Greenwell, Pitt Rivers, and Petrie, would no doubt have claimed that the vase had virtually no scientific value, let alone half; Macalister, *A Century of Excavation in Palestine*, 14.

⁸²R. A. S. Macalister, *The Excavation of Gezer: 1902-1905 and 1907-1909* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1912), 49.

⁸³Eric, H. Cline, *Biblical Archaeology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 26; Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*, 26-27; Roger Moorey, *Excavation in Palestine: Cities of the Biblical World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 24.

⁸⁴Graham I. Davies, “British Archaeologists,” in *Benchmarks in Time and Culture: Essays in Honor of Joseph A. Callaway*, eds. Joel F Drinkard Jr., Gerald L. Mattingly, and J. Maxwell Miller (Georgia: Scholars Press, 1988), 40; Moorey, *A Century of Biblical Archaeology*, 32.

⁸⁵R. A. S. Macalister, *A Text-Book of European Archaeology*, volume I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), 15.

⁸⁶Macalister commented that Dr Ernst Sellin’s excavations at Jericho were a disappointment because “Jericho proved to be an essentially ‘ordinary’ mound.” He claimed that the chronology of the region was established as well as could be expected and that because “types and forms were beginning to recur monotonously ... exceptional things [have] become desirable; for by now we can learn little from the perpetual recurrence of milk-bowls and cooking-pots.” He also somewhat ironically wrote that “it is truly fortunate that excavation was so long delayed. Much damage and little good, would have been done by excavation, at a time when archaeology was still in the rudimentary stage of development in which we find it so late as the beginning of the nineteenth century.” This is because while he made claims similar to Petrie such as that “the collector whose sole aim it is to hang trophies on his walls, or to fill the shelves of cabinets, in one of the greatest of all enemies of science ... excavators were working in the dark ... unconsciously destroying evidence,” his own method did not reflect his professed emphasis on detail and context. Excavators such as Pitt Rivers and Petrie would no doubt argue that

Macalister should have left Gezer “alone for others who will take the trouble which it deserves and requires.” While criticizing the work of his antiquarian predecessors, he failed to realize that because of his disregard for context and stratigraphy, his work resembled theirs more closely than the scientific archaeology introduced to the region a decade earlier. Macalister, *A Century of Excavation in Palestine*, 7, 14, 68.

⁸⁷Cline, *Biblical Archaeology*, 28.

⁸⁸William F. Albright, *New Horizons in Biblical Research* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 2.

⁸⁹Silberman, *Digging for God and Country*, 178.

⁹⁰Philip J. King, *American Archaeology in the Mideast: A History of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1983), 17; Silberman, *Digging for God and Country*, 179; William F. Albright, “George Andrew Reisner (1867-1942),” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 87 (1942): 10; Moorey, *A Century of Biblical Archaeology*, 36.

⁹¹Moorey, *A Century of Biblical Archaeology*, 35.

⁹²William Frederic Badè, *A Manual of Excavation in the Near East: Methods of Digging and Recording of the Tell en-Nasbeh Expedition in Palestine* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1934), 5.

⁹³King, *American Archaeology in the Mideast*, 19.

⁹⁴Manfred Weippert and Helga Weippert, “German Archaeologists,” in *Benchmarks in Time and Culture: Essays in Honor of Joseph A. Callaway*, eds. Joel F Drinkard Jr., Gerald L. Mattingly, and J. Maxwell Miller (Georgia: Scholars Press, 1988), 90.

⁹⁵Moorey, *A Century of Biblical Archaeology*, 63; Cline, *Biblical Archaeology*, 38

⁹⁶William F. Albright, “Recent Progress in Palestinian Archaeology: Samaria-Sebaste III and Hazor I,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 150 (1958): 21.

⁹⁷Her work did not receive much notice until she began excavating at Jericho in 1952; G. Ernest Wright, “Archaeological Method in Palestine – an American Interpretation,” *Eretz-Israel* 9 (1969): 125.

⁹⁸John Evans, “The Institute of Archaeology: the First Fifty Years and After,” in *Recent Advances in the Conservation and Analysis of Artifacts*, ed. James Black (London: Summer Schools Press, 1987), 10.

⁹⁹Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth*, 1, 16.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁰¹While Classical archaeologists have historical documents available for providing chronological and cultural context, Syro-Palestinian archaeologists, like prehistoric archaeologists, usually do not. As a result, Classical archaeology tends to focus on the study of objects, whereas prehistoric archaeology emphasizes stratigraphy, context, and the study of seemingly insignificant objects on a more scientific basis.

¹⁰²Kathleen M. Kenyon, *Beginning in Archaeology* (London: Phoenix House, 1952), 45.

¹⁰³Kenyon, *Beginning in Archaeology*, 15.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 14.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 9.

¹⁰⁶Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth*, 43.

¹⁰⁷It is important to note that Kenyon regarded the field archaeologist as a specialist, thus explaining her criticism of the fact that “often a reputation in the theoretical side of the subject has been regarded as qualifying someone to dig.” She believed it was no longer acceptable for excavators to learn “their methods by trial and error, [as] the errors have been at the expense of a partial destruction of the evidence of an archaeological site.”; Kenyon, “Training for Field Work,” in *Conference on the Future of Archaeology*, ed. Institute of Archaeology, University of London (London: The University of London Institute of Archaeology, 1943), 41, 54.

¹⁰⁸Kenyon, “Training for Field Work,” 39.

¹⁰⁹Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth*, 92.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 1.

¹¹¹Kenyon, *Beginning in Archaeology*, 68.

¹¹²Petrie, *Methods and Aims in Archaeology*, 180.

¹¹³Kenyon, *Beginning in Archaeology*, 103, 115.

¹¹⁴Kenyon, *Beginning in Archaeology*, 125.

¹¹⁵Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth*, 189.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 61.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 40.

¹¹⁸Kenyon, *Beginning in Archaeology*, 75-76.

¹¹⁹Kenyon and Wheeler both emphasize the importance of leaving part of the site unexcavated in order for later expeditions to be able to verify and expound on present excavations; Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth*, 92; Kenyon, *Beginning in Archaeology*, 105-106.

¹²⁰Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth*, 11.

¹²¹Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth*, 169.

¹²²William G. Dever, “Syro-Palestinian and Biblical Archaeology.” in *The Hebrew Bible and its Modern Interpreters*, eds. Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 40; G. Ernest Wright, “What Archaeology Can and Cannot Do,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 34 no. 3 (1971): 72.

¹²³Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth*, v.

¹²⁴Pitt Rivers, *Excavations in Cranborne Chase*, I, xviii, in *Archaeology from the Earth*, Sir Mortimer Wheeler (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 14.

¹²⁵While there had always been a difference in geographical interest between the archaeology of the Old and New Worlds, the gap between the two disciplines widened with the advent of New Archaeology. The majority of American archaeologists working in the Old World employed a culture-historical ethic, which led archaeologists working in America to view the work of their colleagues as old-fashioned and humanistic. Syro-Palestinian archaeology, being neither Classical nor prehistoric exclusively, was caught in the middle; Bruce Trigger, “Prehistoric Archaeology and American Society,” in *American Archaeology Past and Future: A Celebration*

of the Society for American Archaeology 1935-1985, eds. Meltzer, David J., Don D. Fowler, and Jeremy A. Sabloff (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1986), 202.

¹²⁶Dunnell, "Five Decades of American Archaeology," 29.

¹²⁷Jesse D. Jennings, "American Archaeology, 1930-1985." in *American Archaeology Past and Future: A Celebration of the Society for American Archaeology 1935-1985*, eds. Meltzer, David J., Don D. Fowler, and Jeremy A. Sabloff (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1986), 54.

¹²⁸It has been suggested that New Archaeology was introduced in the 50s and 60s because culture-historical archaeology was not anthropological; this is not the case. The culture-historical approach of archaeologists in the 1930s, which emphasized chronology, was anthropological at the time; Dunnell, "Five Decades of American Archaeology," 36-38.

¹²⁹Alice Beck Kehoe, *The Land of Prehistory: A Critical History of American Archaeology* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 117.

¹³⁰It was repeatedly emphasized that New Archaeology was more scientific, and thereby less speculative.

¹³¹Dunnell, "Five Decades of American Archaeology," 37.

¹³²Kehoe, *The Land of Prehistory*, 117.

¹³³Biblical archaeology is a term used to refer to archaeological discoveries relating to the places and events mentioned in the Bible. Prior to Dever's coining of the term "Syro-Palestinian archaeology" in the 1970s, Biblical archaeology described virtually all excavations in Israel and Palestine; Dever's critique of Biblical archaeology is therefore a critique of the period of Syro-Palestinian archaeology discussed in this paper.

¹³⁴William G. Dever, "American Palestinian and Biblical Archaeology: End of an Era?" in *Assembling the Past: Studies in the Professionalization of Archaeology*, eds. Alice B. Kehoe and May Beth Emmerichs (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 95.

¹³⁵The difference between the two was not primarily with regard to method but to theory, as is demonstrated by Dever's claim that New Archaeology "has raised the right questions ... it has forced us to focus on the potential of archaeology for discerning cultural change in general." Dever described the purpose of New Archaeology as "testing out general 'covering laws' and the 'explanation' of cultural patterns in the scientific sense.;" William G. Dever, "The Impact of the 'New Archaeology' on Syro-Palestinian Archaeology," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 242 (1981):17, 22; see also William G. Dever, "Two Approaches to Archaeological Method – the Architectural and the Stratigraphic," *Eretz-Israel* 11 (1981): 8.

¹³⁶Stephen L. Dyson, "From New to New Age Archaeology: Archaeological Theory and Classical Archaeology – a 1990s Perspective," *American Journal of Archaeology* 97, no. 2 (1993): 196.

¹³⁷Dever, "The Impact of the 'New Archaeology,'" 22.

¹³⁸Walter. W. Taylor, *A study of Archaeology* (Carbondale, IL.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1948)

¹³⁹The most obvious reason is, perhaps, that a lot of the material unearthed by archaeologists in the Near East originated from times and places already known by history, unlike most North American archaeology which almost by definition is prehistoric. Archaeology in America had followed the development of anthropology and become more scientific, attempting to determine general anthropological laws because their cultural-historical work was deemed too speculative. The shift in the orientation of American archaeology after World War II never took place in Near Eastern archaeology because the emphasis on “historical-chronological developments” in Syro-Palestinian archaeology had born fruit. Since Petrie’s pioneer excavation there had been great interest in the archaeology of the region; unlike American archaeology, Syro-Palestinian archaeology was respected for embellishing history, not dismissed as being unscientific; Dever, “The Impact of the ‘New Archaeology,’” 16.

¹⁴⁰Dever, “The Impact of the ‘New Archaeology,’” 24.

¹⁴¹Ibid., 22.

¹⁴²Ibid., 19.

¹⁴³Robert F. Heizer, ed., *A Manual of Archaeological Field Methods* (Palo Alto: The National Press, 1949), 45; Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth*, 53.

¹⁴⁴Dever, “Archaeology in Israel Today: a Summation and Critique,” *Recent Excavations in Israel: Studies in Iron Age Archaeology* 49 (1989): 145.

¹⁴⁵While Petrie was not formally educated as an archaeologist, he worked professionally as a field archaeologist. Although much can be said for the process of professionalizing archaeology, it is important to recognize that most professional archaeologists have little field-work experience. As Kenyon pointed out, writing a thesis, does not provide practical training in excavating or documenting a site.

¹⁴⁶Dever also made the inflammatory claim that the esteemed Albright was an orientalist, not an archaeologist. Albright was compared negatively with contemporary American archaeologists, which is surprising as archaeology in North America was hardly a professional discipline during the 1920s. The fact that Albright called himself an orientalist, while true, was not key to Dever’s argument, yet it gave rise to indignation among Albright’s adherents, thus detracting from Dever’s thesis; Dever, “The Impact of the New Archaeology,” 24; Moorey, *A Century of Biblical Archaeology*, 67.

¹⁴⁷Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth*, 39, 215; Kenyon, *Beginning in Archaeology*, 11.

¹⁴⁸Amihai Mazar writes that “between 1970 and 1980, when archaeological activity in Israel reached its peak, 288 seasons of excavation were conducted, of which 200 (69%) are still unpublished and 56 (19%) only partially published.” This leaves only 12% of excavations in the 1970s with final publications; one might argue that 88% of the information accessed has been destroyed, while only 12% is preserved for future generations. As Dever admitted, one may “wax eloquent about the possibilities of the ‘new archaeology,’ but it all comes to nothing if the material cannot be synthesized and published.” Amihai Mazar, “The Archaeological Agenda in Israel: Past Sins and Future Atonement,” in *The Problem of Unpublished Excavations: Proceedings of a Conference Organized by the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus and the*

Anastasios G. Leventis Foundation Nicosia, 25-26 November, 1999, eds. Sophocles Hadjisavvas and Vassos Karageorghis (Nicosia: The Department of Antiquities, Cyprus and the Anastasios G. Leventis Foundation, 2000), 25; Dever, "The Impact of the 'New Archaeology,'" 20.

¹⁴⁹Dever, "The Impact of the 'New Archaeology,'" 17.

¹⁵⁰Pitt Rivers, *Excavations on Cranborne Chase*, vol. 1, xvii.

¹⁵¹Institute of Archaeology, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 6.

¹⁵²Institute of Archaeology, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 6.

¹⁵³His influence was further diminished by his failure to emulate the standard set by Petrie with regard to prompt publication of the material uncovered.

¹⁵⁴Marie Berducou, "Introduction to Archaeological Conservation," in *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, eds. Nicholas Stanley Price, M. Kirby Talley Jr., and Alessandra Melicco Vaccaro (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 1996), 250.

¹⁵⁵Neville Agnew, "Introduction," in *Of the Past, for the Future: Integrating Archaeology and Conservation*, eds. Neville Agnew and Janet Bridgland (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2006), 1.

¹⁵⁶Giorgio Buccellati, "Conservation qua Archaeology at Tell Mozan/Urkish," in *Of the Past, for the Future: Integrating Archaeology and Conservation*, eds. Neville Agnew and Janet Bridgland (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2006), 74.

¹⁵⁷Frank Matero, "Making Archaeological Sites: Conservation as Interpretation of an Excavated Past," in *Of the Past, for the Future: Integrating Archaeology and Conservation*, eds. Neville Agnew and Janet Bridgland (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2006), 61.

¹⁵⁸Neville Agnew, "Introduction," 3.

¹⁵⁹Stanley Price, "Excavation and Conservation," 1.

¹⁶⁰Petrie, *Methods and Aims in Archaeology*, 182.

¹⁶¹Stanley Price, "Excavation and Conservation," 2.

¹⁶²Petrie, *Methods and Aims in Archaeology*, 7.