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Archaeology in Palestine: The Life and Death of Albert Glock

Katherine Lamie

Abstract: This paper provides a critical examination of the dynamic connection between archaeological research and programs of political and religious agendas in Israel and Palestine. This examination contributes to recent discipline-wide discussions concerning the powerful impact of archaeological research in areas of political and religious turmoil. The first section of this paper notes the absence of an Islamic counterpart to Biblical archaeology. While there is no archaeology that attempts to prove literal interpretations of the Qur'an, the rather complex archaeology advanced by Albert Glock (1984; 1994; 1995) serves to meet the needs of marginalized Palestinian villagers. Yet Glock's experience with the intellectual pitfalls of Biblical archaeology prevents him from constructing an archaeology that reproduces its tradition of exclusion and unexamined bias. Lastly, contrasting Glock's violent and untimely death with Ian Hodder's (1998) calculated statesmanship at Çatalhöyük reveals the potency of archaeological research and the associated risks.

Introduction

Following the postprocessual critique in archaeology, studies of the impact of ethnicity, nationalism, cultural identity, and politics on the discipline of archaeology and archaeological research have become increasingly common (e.g. Meskell 1998a; Kohl and Fawcett 1995). In the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, in particular, these sociopolitical factors have an impact on archaeology. Moreover, the political implications of archaeological research in this region affect daily life and have led to deadly consequences (Meskell 1998b). However, while Lynn Meskell's (1998a) groundbreaking edited volume *Archaeology Under Fire* only contains case studies from the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern, it does not include a detailed discussion of archaeology in Israel or Palestine (see Petersen 2005:859). This oversight becomes all the more curious considering Mortimer Wheeler's assertion that in Palestine "more sins have probably been committed in the name of archaeology than on any commensurate portion of the earth's surface" (in Glock 1995:49). By

addressing the sociopolitical ramifications of archaeological research in Israel and Palestine, this paper fills this conspicuous oversight.

First, this examination endeavors to account for the absence of an Islamic counterpart to Biblical archaeology. Interestingly, an archaeology that attempts to prove literal interpretations of the Qur'an and other Islamic texts has not developed in response to centuries of Biblical archaeology in the Middle East. The second part of this paper concerns the two main programs of archaeology that prioritize Islamic research. While Timothy Insoll's (1999; 2001a) Islamic archaeology focuses on identifying ethnicity and studying regional variation in cultural diffusion, Albert Glock's archaeology (1984; 1994; 1995) of Palestinian villages arises out of Glock's dissatisfaction with Biblical archaeology. However, Glock's (1984; 1994; 1995) research does not mimic the unchecked biases of Biblical archaeology; Glock aims to construct an archaeology that studies Palestinian daily life through time without discounting the apparent ethnic and religious diversity of this complex region. Furthermore, an investigation of Glock's murder in the West Bank reveals the intimate connection between archaeology and politics in the Middle East. In contrasting the circumstances surrounding Glock's death with Ian Hodder's (1998) reflections on his own precarious role as archaeologist at Çatalhöyük, this paper encourages all archaeologists to consider how their research affects sociopolitical agendas.

Biblical Archaeology

Insoll - (2001b) designates Biblical archaeology as an archaeology of proof that discounts contradictory evidence in its aim to reify the Bible. Biblical archaeology, at its worst, is defined by stereotypical pseudo-scientific treasure hunts for the Holy Grail, Noah's ark, or Jesus' tomb. More scholarly Biblical archaeology research, undertaken in university settings, is still inherently biased in site selection and relies on assumptive, rigid interpretations (Glock 1995).

Like Zainab Bahrani's (1998) discussion of imaginative geography in Mesopotamia, archaeology of the so-called Holy Land reinforced earlier Western geographic constructions. For example, in regards to "Jerusalem, the Holy Land's focal point, the physical city came to be totally overshadowed by an idealized version that bore little resemblance to the original; the sacred geography became stylized and symbolic, existing in a realm of spiritual meaning" (Fox 2001:49). Medieval holy pilgrimages and networks of holy landmarks necessitated the discovery of numerous sacred relics and artifacts (Fox

2001). Important ancient pagan sites in the Holy Land were seamlessly incorporated into Christian legend. However, in the nineteenth century these primitive, idiosyncratic designations were reformed with real scientific study; Fox asserts that “nineteenth-century Biblical archaeology was an attempt to impose the Reformation on how Christians saw the Holy Land” (2001:51). Biblical archaeology prioritized the literal interpretation of Biblical text and methodological rigor, which gave the pursuit an air of historic and scientific credibility through the physicality of Biblical remains (Fox 2001).

The archaeology of the Middle East has been dominated by a Biblical archaeology agenda since archaeology was first introduced to Palestine in 1865 through the London-based Palestine Exploration Fund (Glock 1995). Biblical archaeologists paid no attention to Islamic archaeological sites and have simply destroyed them to get to the more important Biblical layers (Glock 1995). Furthermore, Biblical archaeologists continue to attribute archaeological data to certain ethnic groups without sufficient evidence. This includes all the archaeological sites in the mountainous West Bank region that date from 1200 to 600 BCE interpreted as “Israelite”, even though ethnic markers are not clear in the archaeological record (Glock 1995).

While the more orthodox Jewish religious communities have not relied on archaeological proof for their beliefs (see Fox 2001), Biblical archaeology has been used to further Zionist political principles. Zionist philosophy, which was most famously espoused in the late nineteenth century by Herzl, advocated the resettlement of the historical Jewish homeland and the creation of a Jewish state in the Holy Land (Fox 2001). Consequently, Zionist archaeology is more closely related to the nation-building politics of the Israeli state than an archaeology of religious proof.

Eleazar Sukenik, the discoverer of the Dead Sea Scrolls, declared that archaeology is of the utmost importance to the Zionist cause in his 1948 address to the Israel Exploration Society:

Here in the east there is only one people, the Jewish people, that has a connection to the past and to the antiquities that are being discovered every day. The archaeological reality instils [sic] a feeling in the heart of the individual and the public that every inch of this country is ours and it is our obligation to defend and to fight for it. This science is our spiritual weapon and an important buttress for the State in its path to the future [in Fox 2001:77].

Coincidentally, the Dead Sea Scrolls were found on the same day that the United Nations declared Israel a state in 1948. An even more ambitious archaeological undertaking, 'Operation Scroll', was organized in 1991. Under Operation Scroll, Israeli archaeologists began a systematic search for ancient artifacts in an area around Jericho that was going to be returned to Palestinian rule (Fox 2001; footnote in Glock 1994:70). In addition, Israeli forces have confiscated Palestinian cultural resources, including private and public libraries and museum collections, and destroyed Palestinian villages in order to substantiate the Israeli cause (Glock 1994). Zionist archaeology legitimizes the Jewish state of Israel through selective archaeological pursuits, calculated interpretations, and the destruction of the Palestinian past.

Islamic Archaeology

An archaeology that uses the methods and theory of Biblical archaeology yet focused on proving the Qur'an seemingly does not exist. Literal interpretations of the Qur'an or unique historical events depicted in Islamic texts have not been a topic of archaeological investigations. Biblical archaeology does not seem to have any Islamic correlate.

Insoll (2001b) and Andrew Petersen (2005) both notice the lack of any Islamic archaeology compared with Biblical archaeology and explain this discrepancy by alluding to the differences in Christian and Muslim faith. Insoll (2001b) notes that other religions use archaeology as a tool to legitimize faith, but no other religion uses the discipline of archaeology to the same degree as Biblical groups. With regard to a complete lack of Islamic archaeology, however, Insoll states that the Qur'an:

has apparently not been the object of similarly focused, dedicated, archaeological studies, one reason being, as this author has noted elsewhere, that from a Muslim believer's perspective, 'the truth is already revealed and material culture, and therefore archaeology, cannot confirm or deny the faith of believers [2001b:14].

While Zionist archaeologists use archaeology to provide evidence for the past Jewish occupation of Palestine, "the Palestinians have seldom used archaeology as a way of countering Israeli/Zionist claims, preferring to focus instead on living culture" (Petersen 2005:859).

Although empirical studies have not been used to prove Islamic religious narratives, Islamic political leaders who recognize that

archaeology is used as an effective tool by Biblical and Zionist archaeologists might react by destroying non-Islamic sites. There are no Islamic archaeologists battling Biblical archaeologists with their own pseudo-scientific tactics, yet some Islamic political leaders have been accused of destroying non-Islamic archaeological sites. For example, Turkish powers in northern Cyprus have undermined Cypriot archaeology by making the archaeological record inaccessible to archaeologists and by condoning the systematic looting of archaeological sites and the destruction of cultural materials (Knapp and Antoniadou 1998). A similar overt Islamic reaction to Biblical archaeological sites in Palestine, however, would most likely not be tolerated by the vigilant Israeli Antiquities Authority. Yet wary Palestinian villagers may combat Biblical archaeologists in more covert ways.

Instead of an Islamic counterpart to Biblical archaeology, I identified two forms of archaeology that prioritize Islamic research, not including prevalent art history studies in Iran and Iraq (see Vernoit 1997). The first, Insoll's (1999; 2001a; 2003) archaeology of Islam, focuses on ethnic and religious indicators in the archaeological record. Insoll's work aims to balance the pervasive Islamic "structural code" or the "immutable elements of Muslim faith" with regional diversity (2001a:124, 125). He formalizes Islamic categories of archaeological evidence; mosque architectural components, Muslim burials, indicators of Muslim diet taboos, and collective evidence of Muslim traditional domestic and community environments can effectively identify Muslim communities in the archaeological record and gauge regional variation through time with regard to religious ideals and actual lifestyle choices (Insoll 2001a:125-139). Also, in *The Archaeology of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Insoll (2003) investigates regional differences in the spread of Islam and archaeological evidence concerning the religious conversion of local peoples.

In contrast, a second archaeology with Islamic research goals was developed by Glock (1984; 1994; 1995), a sharp critic of Biblical archaeology. He used ethnoarchaeology, historical archaeology, studies of site formation processes, and multidisciplinary approaches to focus on the cultural continuity of the Palestinian village. Glock's agenda for a Palestinian archaeology addresses many of the pervasive biases in Biblical archaeology, yet he aspires to construct a "qualitatively better archaeology" that does not use an "equally political intent" (1994: 83-84) to deface Jewish heritage.

Glock's Archaeology as Cultural Survival

Glock first visited the Middle East in 1962 as a Lutheran missionary and minister and an aspiring Biblical archaeologist. Through his work at Tell Ta'annek, the Biblical site of Taanach, he became the director of the Albright Institute for archaeology in 1978 (Fox 2001). However, Glock became increasingly disillusioned with the strong biases inherent in Biblical archaeology and spent most of his seventeen year residency, until his death in 1992, in Jerusalem and the West Bank. He helped to create the Archaeology Institute at Birzeit University, a Palestinian university, and to develop an archaeology that would address Palestinian cultural continuity and the polyethnic history of Palestine (Fox 2001).

Despite the long-lasting political and religious ramifications of the creation of Israel, Glock remained a dedicated educator at the controversial Birzeit University, keeping the newly founded Archaeology Institute open, in secret, for research and classes when the Israeli forces periodically closed the university during and after the *intifada*, the 1987 Palestinian uprising (Fox 2001). His research efforts were directed at exposing Biblical archaeology's flaws and creating a local archaeology that would address the neglected (i.e. not Biblical) prehistory and history of the geographic area of Palestine. Archaeology of the Middle East, he argued, cannot adequately study the history of Palestine until it is freed from the pervasive "Biblical myth" (Glock 1995: 55). Academic Biblical archaeologists develop research designs concerning Biblical studies and interpret Palestinian cultural history as "a low culture entirely dependent on cultural imports" characterized by Biblical epics of conquest and settlement (Glock 1994:81; 1995). In contrast, Glock fashioned an archaeology that would focus on the rest of the Palestinian past, including 1,300 years of Muslim settlement, and therefore develop a more authentic archaeological picture of this region.

Glock's contention that "(t)he villages of Palestine are ignored and thus the real character of Palestine has yet to be studied (1994:78)" reveals his archaeological agenda. Glock (1985) constructed a problem-oriented archaeology aimed at discovering the Palestinian past, not an archaeological opposition to Biblical archaeology. Glock (1985) explains how he catered scholarly traditions to the needs of Palestinian communities. Archaeology, Glock (1994) asserts, is not relegated to the study of the riches of the past. In particular, historical archaeology allowed him to focus on the recent past, including the remains of Palestinian refugee camps and Ottoman villages and critically evaluate written materials (Glock 1994; also Fox 2001).

Glock spent the final months of his life carefully researching historic documents and photographs concerning the 418 Palestinian villages that were destroyed during the creation of the state of Israel and the associated violence (Fox 2001). This politically sensitive documentation was published in a book after his death (Glock and Khalidi 1992).

Glock's ethnohistory and ethnoarchaeology programs tied living people to the cultural traditions preserved in the archaeological record and would therefore help to develop and test hypotheses concerning those assumptive and prolific ethnic indicators within Biblical archaeology theory. Moreover, studies of formation processes helped Glock interpret the construction of Middle Eastern tells, or mounds developed from the remains of continuous settlement over millennia and centuries. Glock's multidisciplinary outlook put anthropologists, historians, architects, and photographers to work alongside archaeologists. Glock (1994) aimed to investigate the aspects of the past that "are still alive in traditional village settlement patterns, architecture of domestic and public buildings, subsistence systems, and social organization" (80). This archaeology would help Palestinians engage with their past and continue their cultural traditions into the future, despite decades of political and social upheaval.

Glock's Murder

Albert Glock was murdered on January 19, 1992. After working at the Birzeit University Archaeology Institute sorting pottery, he stopped by the house of a close female colleague, yet never made it to her front door. From the front garden, concealed from the road, a young man wearing a black and white *kaffiyah* head scarf and dressed in a dark jacket, jeans, and white tennis shoes shot Dr. Glock three times (Fox 2001). The evidence surrounding the murder does not unequivocally incriminate Palestinian or Israeli suspects. While some argue that Glock's archaeological agenda of Palestinian cultural continuity prompted Israeli militants to murder, others argue that Islamic fundamentalists and local villagers in Palestine could have murdered him in reaction to Western academic and social ideals and tumultuous university politics (Fox 2001). Furthermore, some individuals argue that the Palestinians were framed by Israelis who actually committed the murder, while others argue that the Israelis were framed by the Palestinians who wanted international attention paid to the destruction of their own past and could only do so through the murder of their own steward of the past (Fox 2001). Whether or not

Dr. Glock's murder is ever definitively solved, the accusations made by all sides of the conflict reveal the volatility of archaeology in Palestine.

Interestingly, after Glock's murder a rumor began that he was on the cusp of a great archaeological discovery at the city of Nablus and that the Israeli forces had to kill him before he revealed the historic illegitimacy of the Jewish state. However, Glock never dug at Nablus (Fox 2001). Many other less sensational theories also blame Israeli culprits and emphasize the political potency of Glock's archaeological work (Fox 2001). Glock's archaeological research on cultural continuity had the potential to empower local villagers in land claim issues. His interest in the material remains of the Palestinian refugee experience (see Glock 1994) and his soon to be published book documenting the destruction of Palestinian villages were probably deemed a calculated threat to the legitimacy of the state of Israel (Fox 2001).

Others blame Islamic fundamentalists and local Palestinians for Glock's murder. Glock's once favored teaching assistant, research partner, and close female colleague, Maya al-Farabi, was negatively viewed by many radical Muslims (Fox 2001). After his death, slanderous rumors circulated concerning Glock's affair with this much younger archaeologist (Fox 2001). Meanwhile, an internal dispute at Birzeit University in 1991 pitted an adamant Glock against the appointment of one of his former students, a local Palestinian, to a university position. Glock argued that this former teaching assistant of his was not qualified for the job to the chagrin of university administration and other faculty. These incidents led some local Palestinians to believe that Glock was murdered because he carelessly disregarded local cultural and religious prescriptions and discounted local scholars (Fox 2001).

Beyond university politics, however, Glock's archaeological work was met with much disapproval and suspicion from the very Palestinian villagers he was aiming to help. Glock realized he was an outsider in the community, yet he recognized and understood the local perspective of his mysterious ethnoarchaeological studies:

Since only officials seeking to extend governmental control (local or foreign!) enter a house to ask the kinds of questions ethnoarchaeologists ask, to measure, and to take pictures, it is little wonder that there is reluctance to entertain such study in some parts of the Middle East [1985:468].

His unpopularity with Palestinian villagers seemed to stem from the secrecy of his work and his lack of public relations. If he had revealed

the political ramifications of his work triumphantly to the Palestinians, the Israeli forces would have severely limited his work and/or cancelled his visa. However, because his true intentions were muddled and only rumored, he was met with suspicion from the local community.

A study of Glock's archaeological research and murder affords a newfound understanding of Hodder's archaeological statesmanship and stewardship. Hodder's (1998) use of "thick description" to investigate the conflicting interpretations of the site of Çatalhöyük in Turkey reveals how the site directly informs serious political debates. Locally, clashes between ideas of Islamic fundamentalism, women's rights, and global heritage define the site's interpretation. Hodder (1998) finds himself in a unique, uncomfortable position; he does not know how to handle the influx of interpretations and is nervous about the strain on local politics.

Glock, however, was more socially aloof and less of a political strategist when it came to archaeological interpretations. He focused too much on archaeology and not enough on public relations; he called the Israeli police on Palestinian villagers who were looting archaeological sites, continued his close platonic relations with his female colleague in a strict Islamic community, and vehemently opposed the appointment of a local scholar at the Birzeit Archaeology Institute (Fox 2001). One scholar explains,

[Glock] was afraid that publicity would attract the wrong type of interest: he was aware of the nationalistic significance of the work they were doing, yet if it attracted too much attention his freedom to keep doing it could be endangered, by Israeli authorities who saw it as dangerous, or by Palestinians who saw it as too important a matter to be left in the hands of a foreigner [Fox 2001:128].

Regardless, Glock's failed archaeological balancing act impacts all future archaeological research in the Middle East.

Conclusions

Based on this research, it is evident that there is no distinct Islamic archaeology counterpart to Biblical archaeology. The creation of an Islamic archaeology that challenges Biblical archaeology would be equally unscholarly and hampered by political and religious bias. Glock's archaeology seems to be a unique development, a complex archaeology, and not a direct application of a Western archaeological model on Middle Eastern research interests. By recognizing the biases

inherent in all forms of Biblical archaeology and his own archaeological agenda, Glock understood the political implications of his work and attempted to preserve the Palestinian past for the Palestinian people. Furthermore, Hodder's (1998) insightful description of archaeology at Çatalhöyük gives context to Glock's life and death. By reflecting on their own work, archaeologists become aware of, responsible for, and engaged with the omnipresent political and social effects of their research (Meskell 1998b).

This examination of politics and archaeology in Palestine supplements current discourse yet in no way provides a comprehensive analysis of such a complex state of affairs. All scholarly discussions of the connection between politics and archaeology in general must address programs of research in Israel and Palestine.

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