

April 2001



STOP THE ART THIEVES!

School violence:
a worldwide
affair

Putting embryos
on the
assembly line

The environment:
a new trade
weapon?

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Focus

Stop the art thieves!

Enough is enough. The destruction of Afghanistan's Buddha statues, the longtime cultural despoiling of Indians in the Americas and the systematic plundering of Mali's archaeological treasures are running up against an increasingly resolved opposition. State control of the market, the return of pieces acquired by museums through questionable means and a flurry of personal initiatives point to a steadily rising awareness that world heritage is indeed universal.

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Violence

UNESCO's Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura described the Taleban's blasting of the Buddhas of Bamiyan as "a crime against culture." But alongside this act just about unmatched by its ostentatious nature, a steady wave of more clandestine archaeological plundering is going on, and it's robbing us of our universal heritage. Fortunately, protection, both at an individual and institutional level, is gaining ground (focus, pp. 16-37). Violence is also rife in schools, which are sometimes the source of the problem. As a recent international conference underlined, no continent or culture is spared by the phenomenon (pp. 10-13). Our photo spread this month turns to Liberia, a country torn by the extreme violence of civil war, where child soldiers are trying to put a haunting past behind them on the playing field (pp. 4-9).

Ethics

The cloning of embryos is sparking a virulent debate. Should they be instrumentalized to serve as "spare parts" for treating disease? And if so, how will we deal with their commercialization (pp. 38-40)? Fierce debate divides North and South over the environment, with developing countries arguing that the quest to protect our resources merely masks a new form of imperialism (pp. 41-43). Alain Senderens, one of France's star chefs, takes the debate straight to the palate: in an age when poor diets are the lot of the greatest number, he stands by his refined dishes, created for an elite (pp. 47-51). Havana's best cigars might also be for the elite only, but we travel to the Viñales Valley, where farmers tend to some of the world's finest tobacco leaves (pp. 14-15).

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The only way is up.

Healing on the playing field

PHOTOS BY TIM HETHERINGTON, TEXT BY LUCÍA IGLESIAS KUNTZ

TIM HETHERINGTON IS A BRITISH PHOTOGRAPHER. LUCÍA IGLESIAS KUNTZ IS A *UNESCO COURIER* JOURNALIST

To youngsters in Liberia, football isn't just a game. It's the chance to forget a murderous civil war and dream of a better life, symbolized by the revered homeboy, "Mister George"

George Weah has come a long way: from Monrovia, where he and his 13 brothers and sisters were brought up by their grandmother, to the World Player of the Year award and the big European leagues of France, Italy and England, where he has scored 150 goals in more than 300 matches. It has been a spectacular journey. As a boy, he dreamed of becoming another Pele. Now, 15 years after he left his country, thousands of Liberian youngsters dream of becoming another George Weah.

But it was tough at first. "Every day we'd play from morning 'til night," he says. "We didn't have a coach, so we made it up as we went along, warming up and running around together. We all chipped in what we could to buy kit and footballs"

These days, George has a gold watch and drives a Mercedes. He's also very generous. More than once, he has dipped in his pocket to bail out the indebted Liberian football federation or pay for equipment. As well as playing, he is also the national team's coach and sponsor. He knows he is an icon in Africa, but that does not bother him. "It's normal for kids to have heroes," he says.

Liberia's passion for football returned only recently. Until four years ago, the country was engulfed in a murderous civil war—one of Africa's bloodiest conflicts—that between 1990 and 1997 killed 150,000 people and forced nearly half the population either to flee or become refugees in their own country (see box).

During those years, young Liberians had other battles to wage, not with footballs but with guns, avenging their parents or siblings and fighting as child-soldiers. Today, erstwhile factional rivals wear the same team shirts, are equal before the ball and equally fervent about the game. Thanks to television, they follow every detail of championships in Europe and Latin America. Everybody knows who Brazilian striker Ronaldo is and how many goals "Mister George" has scored for Olympique de Marseilles this season.

Every game involving the national team is a big event. Sometimes there are 20,000 more people watching the match than the Monrovia stadium officially has room for. "Women and children come too," says Weah. "They make up about half the crowd." Sometimes the

© Kim Hetherington/Network/Rapho, Paris



All that football needs—a ball, a bit of space and children.

Far from the bright lights of the stadium, people kick balls around on waste ground, in village squares and on beaches where rusting warships are relics of a not so distant past

Healing on the playing field



Fans crowd the net at half-time during a local match.

© Kim Hetherington/Network/Rapho, Paris

police have to intervene. But when Liberia wins—and they have, recently, notched up surprising victories against Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone—people take to the streets to celebrate and children wait hours at the players' entrance in search of autographs.

But Liberians' love affair with football is not just fan worship. Everyone plays the game. Far from the bright lights of the stadium and the world of million-dollar contracts, people kick balls around on waste ground, in village squares and on beaches where rusting warships are relics of a not so distant past. Few of these amateurs have runners or money to buy a decent ball. They just want to play.

In a poor country without jobs or basic facilities, football may not be the best or only cure but it's one way forward. Weah firmly believes it can make a difference: "I'm no politician," he says, "but when people have problems, even in countries at war, their quarrels can be solved on the playing field. We've seen that a lot."

One of football's countless legends is that years ago, warring Nigeria and Biafra called a truce one day just so they could see Pele play. And someone as unconventional as the French writer Albert Camus, who was once goalkeeper for the Algiers University team, wrote that "everything I know about morality I owe to football."

Weah, Africa's all-time greatest footballer, puts it this way: "To achieve something, you've got to want it. You mustn't take drugs and you've got to work hard and concentrate." Perhaps some of these children, fans of teams with names like Invincible Eleven and Young Survivors, have what it takes. But with their youthful energy and sturdy legs, what they certainly have is a thirst for a better life, just like the boy from Monrovia who dreamt of being Pele. ■

WEAH: THE GOLDEN TOUCH

Born in Monrovia, Liberia, on October 1, 1966

Height: 1m 85cm

Weight: 83kg

Footballing career

Liberia: Young Survivors (1983-84), Bongrange Bongmine (1984-85), Mighty Barole (1985-86), Invincible Eleven (1986-87)

Cameroon: Tonnerre de Yaoundé (1987-88)

France: AS Monaco (1988-92), Paris Saint-Germain (1992-95)

Italy: AC Milan (1995-January 2000)

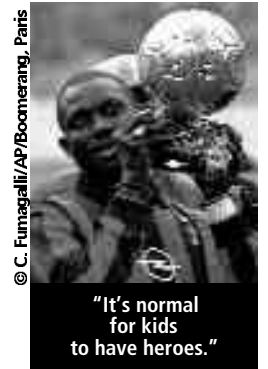
England: Chelsea (January-June 200), Manchester City (July-October 2000)

France: Olympique de Marseilles (October 2000-)

Honours

Cameroon league title (1988), French league title (1994), three French Cups (1991, 1993, 1995), French League Cup (1995), two Italian league titles (1996 and 1999), English FA Cup (2000), FIFA World Player of the Year Award (1995), two African Golden Balls (1989 and 1994)

Scored 150 goals in official European matches.



© C. Fumagalli/AP/Boomerang, Paris

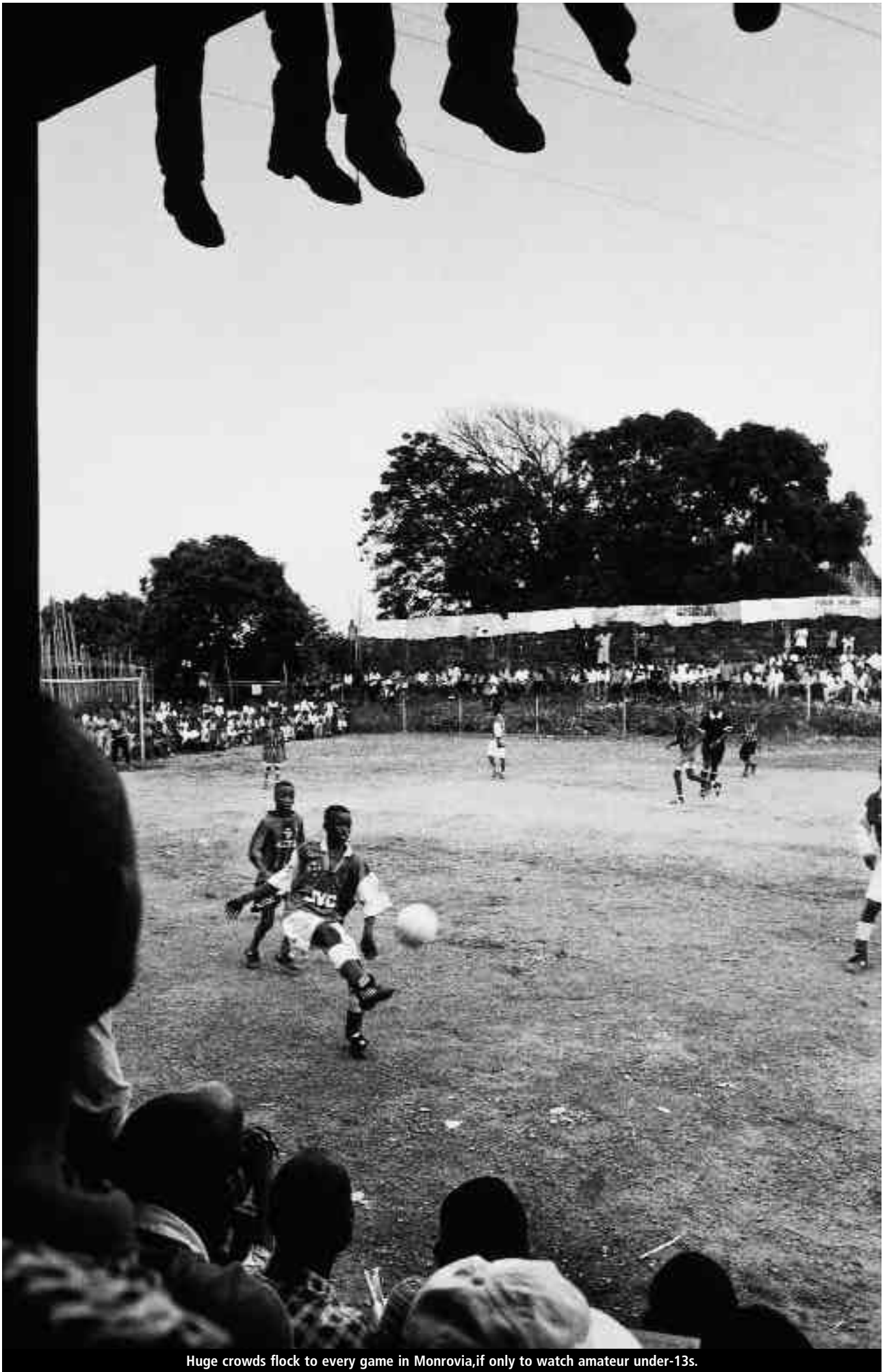
"It's normal for kids to have heroes."



Players from the Millennium Stars youth team file onto the pitch.



Tickets can be expensive. Some make do with a view through the bamboo.



Huge crowds flock to every game in Monrovia, if only to watch amateur under-13s.

Healing on the playing field

Liberia factfile:

Population: 3 million
 Surface area: 111,400 sq. km
 Life expectancy: 47 years
 Adult illiteracy rate: 49%
 GNP per capita: \$150-200

Sources: *World Bank and The Economist Intelligence Unit*

Key dates:

1847: Foundation of the Free and Independent Republic of Liberia.

1980: President William Tolbert assassinated in a military coup headed by Samuel Doe, who becomes the country's president and military chief.

1990: Rebel forces from Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia and the Independent Patriotic Front headed by Prince Johnson begin an armed revolt in the north of the country and advance towards the south, where they engage in battle in Monrovia against the forces of President Doe. Doe is killed in September.

In November, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) secures a ceasefire between the two rebel factions and the government, dispatches a peace-

keeping force to the country and appoints a provisional government headed by Amos Sawyer. Charles Taylor declares himself president, as does Harry Moniba, second in command in Doe's defunct government.

1991: Taylor, Johnson and the commander in chief of Liberia's armed forces sign the terms of a second ceasefire. In October, Taylor agrees to a deal that would enable

ECOWAS forces to disarm his troops and call a general election. In spite of this, new armed groups emerge and conflict continues.

1992: The UN Security Council decrees an arms embargo and pledges its support for ECOWAS.

July 1993: Peace talks begin in Geneva. Despite the signature of a fresh peace accord, the war continues.

August 1995: The eleventh peace accord is signed, to no avail.

1996: All factions agree to an unconditional ceasefire, which is followed by a peace treaty.

1997: The war finishes. A total of 150,000 people have been killed and a million displaced since the start of the conflict. Disarmament begins and refugees return. ECOWAS peacekeepers in the ECOMOG force remain in the country. Charles Taylor is elected president by a landslide.

2001: As yet unscheduled presidential elections due to take place.



War over—play resumes.

Violence in schools: a world w

In all countries, schools are magnets for strife in society. Dealing with these tensions calls for extreme caution, for fear of making matters worse

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OF VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

Violence in schools is a worldwide problem: it exists in rich and poor countries alike. It's chiefly a male phenomenon, hitting a peak when boys turn 16 years old in some countries and 13 in others. Experts agree at least on one point: this violence cannot be pinned to a single cause. Instead, they point to complex

patterns linked to family situations, socio-economic conditions and teaching methods.

Tackling segregation

But these are just indicators and do not justify any deterministic explanations. When researchers say that 10 to 20 percent of risk factors are linked to single-parent families, this suggests that 80 to 90 percent of such families are not the source of any violence. A child from a black slum area with a teenage mother or a father in

jail will not automatically be violent! Likewise, experts say there is a "hard core" of violent children—about five percent of the total. But in comparing several schools in similar problem French neighbourhoods, I've found that this figure can vary between one and 11 percent. The school itself can be an aggravating factor, through high staff turnover or "ghetto classes" to which poorly-performing students are relegated. These "hard core" groups, then, cannot be deemed "inalterable." On the contrary, something can be done about them.

VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS: A WORLDWIDE AFFAIR

Blame the system

Violence in schools of Francophone Africa doesn't come from the pupils, but from the system itself, says a Burkinabé expert

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Lord, I don't want to go to school any more.

Please, I beg you, take me away from it.

This "Prayer of a Small Black Child," written in the 1950s by the Guadeloupean author Guy Tirolien, remains sadly relevant in black Africa, where schools heap violence upon children from day one.

In Burkina Faso, for example, children have to switch from their mother tongue to a foreign one—French—without the slightest psychological adjustment. From October 1 in the year they turn seven, children are forbidden from speaking vernacular languages—such as Mooré, Peuhl or Dioula—at school. They learn how to read and write

in a foreign tongue, through stories about French villages with their church bells and lessons that will teach them more about Paris than Ouagadougou, their country's capital. Humiliating punishment, such as being forced to wear a donkey's skull around one's neck with a sign reading "Donkey, speak French!" only reinforces the sense that school is a place rife with conflict.

The school timetable is another source of stress. The few teachers who have the intelligence and courage to allow a break at nine in the morning—so that children who take animals out to pasture at 5am can rest and have a snack—are criticized for not respecting the official 10:30 pause.

For the African child, society as a whole—including the village and the fields, especially during the harvest season—are invaluable occasions for socialization and non-formal education. But as soon as they enter a classroom, learning from one's peers in the village is over. There is no reward or value attached to helping one another,

respecting one's elders or the pride of belonging to a family or clan for whose well-being no sacrifice is too great. Instead the child is encouraged to adopt a competitive attitude and a brazen individualism that leads to de-personalization, sometimes even to alienation.

Passive resistance

For the moment, we only see school violence on television. Here in Africa, the issue is the other way round. The classic school, created by the French colonial rulers, is an act of violence against the child, and against Burkinabé society itself. Our society did not produce this school: it was imposed on us with the clear intention of conquering our people.

Mission accomplished? The classic school system that has become entrenched in Africa has fashioned a new kind of person, the "townie." This new breed lives alongside those shaped by traditional value-systems, those who refuse to be won over. Schools are the first to

wide affair

Should they simply be expelled, as some advocate? Such a measure would only make their segregation and sense of exclusion worse. And they are, after all, at the root of the whole problem. The solution lies partly in developing customized projects, but most importantly, in strengthening economic and social participation.

To put an end to school violence, we need a well-established state with the means to compensate for inequalities, a state that tries to re-establish diversity in neighbourhoods and schools, one that

does not give up on the notion of justice for children, as some are demanding.

Passing the torch

We should also try to lift schools out of their fortresses, so they do not become the symbol of a society that excludes people. Projects in the Netherlands, Brazil and the United States have shown that schools can be vibrant places that provide social, medical and cultural services to a neighbourhood.

In the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, for example, there is a vocational school

where elderly craftsmen teach their skills to teenagers. Such contact between generations can offer a very valuable social education. "It takes a village to educate a child," goes an African proverb. Let's make an effort to seek out these opportunities, even in the most heartless cities. ■

1. *Co-organizer with Catherine Blaya of the first International Conference on Violence in Schools and Public Policies, held at UNESCO headquarters from March 5-7, 2000.*



In a Ougadougou school: a worthwhile sacrifice for families?

© Eric Congo/Gamma, Paris

schools to serve all the country's children. Nearly two-thirds of Burkinabé children have no access to modern schools and 80 percent of adults can't read or write. But even when children do go to school, passive resistance is apparent, with some parents in the north and north-east of the country pulling them out. For rural people, sending a child to school entails a cultural and economic sacrifice for the family.

Relevance and respect

Those children who are out of the reach of modern schools survive by the strength of their numbers and the traditional structures that continue to govern all aspects of

most people's lives in Burkina Faso.

We should not indulge in nostalgia, but confront the situation head on, before the violence that schools inflict on children spurs pupils to resort to violence. All the seeds of violence are in the system — discrimination, corporal punishment, humiliation and sexist clichés in textbooks.

Introducing vernacular languages at school and using them to teach various subjects is one way forward. Another is to revise curricula regularly so that it remains relevant, and to adapt the school calendar to the needs of daily life. Why not, for example, plan holidays to accommodate a child's initiation rituals, the passage into adulthood?

The classic school is not the final word. Alternatives exist. By critically taking into account, at every level of schooling, a child's traditional and family education, we will help to establish a non-violent school system in Burkina Faso and elsewhere in Africa. ■

blame for this rift. In this conflict between two approaches, the traditional education system still holds sway.

Of course, there are not enough

VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS: A WORLDWIDE AFFAIR

Karate-trained teachers lose a round

Unprecedented violence among young people is sweeping Japan. Some see it as a reaction to an earlier crackdown, but Yodji Morita, a sociologist from Osaka City University, criticizes the reliance on force

INTERVIEW BY
PHILIPPE DEMENET

UNESCO COURIER JOURNALIST

Japanese society is facing what you've called an outbreak of "unpredictable violence" by high school students. Could you explain?

It started in 1998 when, in the first incident of its kind since the end of World War II, a teacher was stabbed to death by a 14-year-old boy. Then a schoolboy who belonged to a gang stole about \$200,000 and a 17-year-old hijacked a bus, killing the woman he had taken hostage. Another youth, who had been bullied, battered two fellow-pupils with a baseball bat before going home and killing his own mother. We had 22 incidents like this between 1998 and 2000.

How has the public reacted?

With shock and fear. Parents feel they no longer understand their own

children. But this isn't the first time there's been violence in or around schools. There was another wave of it in the 1980s, which the government cracked down on by hiring teachers who were skilled at karate, judo or kendo. The aim was to put pressure on unruly pupils, who mostly operated in gangs, so that classes could go on in peace.

Did this include using force?

Corporal punishment used to be common throughout Japanese society. But after World War II, the government put an end to it. So officially, such punishment is forbidden, but in fact such methods were used in schools in the 1980s, after children had received warnings.

Did it have any effect?

It set up a vicious circle: the repressive atmosphere only increased the sense of frustration and stress felt by difficult children, and tension built up. The repressed feelings exploded with

an ever greater violence, and the state cracked down again. Also, the "normal" children began to see this strong-fisted policy as the example that had to be followed. It was strictly applied (with teachers even searching school bags and confiscating snacks), until it finally became unbearable. On the surface, calm has been reestablished. But since 1990, there's been an increase in physical and psychological bullying, especially among girls, along with extortion and truancy.

And all this in an education system that puts children under great pressure...

The pressure doesn't come from the schools, but from the parents. In Japan, we have no natural resources, so producing skilled labour is our only source of wealth. For parents eager to see their offspring succeed, education is an investment. Furthermore, a strong sense of hierarchy is established in the school from early on, with children divided into the talented and the not so talented.

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In Tokyo, an exam crash course is relayed to the headmaster's office. In Kyoto, young boys who cracked study in a juvenile detention centre.

But unlike in many industrialized countries, family and community ties are still very strong. Do they help to reduce the violence?

Compared with other rich countries, our crime rate is very low, as is school

violence. That's why the 1998 outbreak was such a shock. It was seen as a sign of impending social change. In the past, you had to be self-effacing and melt into the group. Modern Japan is becoming more individualistic.

What can people running the schools do?

Respect the children by giving them a sense of responsibility. Encourage them to help each other in new ways. This is what current educational reforms are aiming at. ■

VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS: A WORLDWIDE AFFAIR

South Africa: beyond exclusion

During the apartheid era, township schools were sites of violent political struggle. Today, they are all too often at the mercy of criminal activity. The answers lie with society as a whole, not just the school

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dealt drugs at school," "Pupil shot for cell phone," "Depression might have led to suicide of 11-year-old boy," "Students seek revenge for teacher killing." This is just a sampling of a few recent headlines in South African newspapers. Youth gangs are intruding into the schools of vulnerable communities, using them as markets for drugs, alcohol, weapons and young girls, who are being abducted and raped.

No effective strategy for preventing violence in schools can be developed unless we understand the legacy of apartheid. Under this regime, young black high school children were the barometer of systematic marginalization and powerlessness.

The education system was designed as a means of colonial control, and deliberately aimed at preparing students to be no more than "hewers of wood and drawers of water" to service the affluent white-owned industry. The school was oppressive, but it also became a site of highly politicized struggle, a vehicle through which young black people could assert their stake and role in society. Many youths established an alternative subculture in which the rites of passage and means of acquiring status were often premised on proving themselves through direct involvement in violence. It was noble to be on the wrong side of illegitimate laws. Violence was socially approved in the name of liberation: the heroes of the day were young men who carried guns and fought.

Although many of these youngsters

who had grown up on the streets returned to school during the transition to democracy, the snail's pace of transformation meant that little or nothing had actually changed in the classroom. The poor or non-existent facilities, the under-qualified teachers and the virtual failure of racial integration stood as powerful symbols of ongoing marginalization. So it is no surprise that violence continues. In lieu of the political resistance movement, marginalized, frustrated youth found an alternative place of belonging and social cohesion within criminal youth gangs.

These gangs might only form a small

Students must be listened to: they know exactly where crimes are taking place.

hard core, but they are teaching us a hard lesson: we must rebuild the social fabric so decimated by our Apartheid past. Schools provide a vital point of access to young people who are both the primary perpetrators and victims of violence today. The school is also a contested terrain, precisely because of the fine line separating youth at risk inside the classroom and those whose criminality has been consolidated on the other side of the fence. It is a very fine line, drawn in the dusty sand of township life. Crime prevention strategies frequently fail to recognize how easily this line may be crossed.

Our first initiatives began as a trauma

management programme in Soweto schools, helping teachers identify and assist those children who might, for instance, be victims of domestic violence. This did not happen easily: teachers are often reluctant to take on issues of school safety and violence prevention. They have to be empowered through proper training and know where to refer troubled children. From this narrow focus on trauma, we have developed a more all-encompassing strategy to prevent school violence. One of most important lessons we have learned is that students must be listened to: they know exactly where crimes are taking place within and outside the school, and often suggest practical solutions, such as putting up lighting here or cutting the grass in a nearby field.

Going beyond security concerns, we have stressed the community's role in reducing violence. We have set up safety teams involving teachers, students, parents, civic organizations and other local actors, and built better relationships with the local police. We have encouraged schools in dangerous areas to link with one another. At a broader level, we have spearheaded multimedia projects, notably several TV drama series on human rights, racism and violence in schools, which are aired at prime time. Taking stock of this holistic approach, the government has recently tuned into these and other grassroots initiatives to tackle school crime more effectively. The idea is not to fence off the school, but to build bridges with communities and recreate a sense of belonging in society. ■

Lost in the smoke of time

The Viñales Valley, near the western tip of Cuba, is a magical landscape of hills and caves where life centres on growing tobacco. A Cuban writer recalls discovering this World Heritage site through books well before setting foot there



© G. Sioen/Rapho, Paris

Tobacco requires careful attention: some say the plants grow best when farmers talk to them.

REINA MARÍA RODRÍGUEZ

CUBAN POET AND NOVELIST, AUTHOR OF *LA FOTO DEL INVERNADERO* (CASA DE LAS AMERICAS PRIZE, 1998) AND *TE DARÉ DE COMER COMO A LOS PÁJAROS* (LA HABANA, LETRAS CUBANAS 2000).

The Viñales Valley has been on UNESCO's World Heritage List since November 1999 as a cultural landscape enriched by traditional farm and village architecture. Old-fashioned farming methods are still used in Viñales, notably to grow tobacco. The local population is an ethnic mix that illustrates the cultural development of the Caribbean and Cuba in particular.

Source: Report of the 23rd session of the World Heritage Committee, in Marrakesh, Morocco, 4 December 1999.

On the west side of the Cordillera de Guaniguanico, at the foot of the Sierra de los Órganos, lies a region of limestone outcrops known as *mogotes*. These huge round-topped hummocks rising out of the ground emerged from the sea more than two million years ago and were formed during the Jurassic period. Born in the vicissitudes of history, the land still bears the marks of preci-

pices, chasms and seams carved out by erosion.

Tobacco grows in the valley—strange red leaves almost starved by the salty soil but brought to life by permanent sunshine.

I always dreamed of the Viñales Valley but never ventured there. In school I could touch the lush tobacco leaves pictured in textbooks and see the



caterpillars that live off them, slowly and avidly taking on the aroma of tobacco before devouring the plant. My life was that of the concrete city, though the sensation left by dew on my hand was so strong that I still recall it as if it were real. The leaf, bright and green like a child, turns a deep toasted brown before it is smelt, chewed or burnt, becoming like time itself and ending up, in old age, as wisps of smoke.

Farmers, most of whom came from the Canary Islands, arrived around 1800 and began cultivating tobacco across the region, which is commonly known as the Vuelta Abajo. Two hundred years later, tobacco is still the lifeblood of the Viñales Valley, which produces 661,000 quintals of it every year. Only the best leaves get sent to Havana, where hundreds of workers called *torcedores* and *anilladores* handroll them into cigars. Cuba produces 65 million cigars a year, packed in cedarwood boxes and exported to the entire world.

Growing tobacco calls for patience. Some even say that the plant grows better if you speak to it. Once the seeds are sown (between October and December), the moment to reap and pack is of critical importance, marking all the difference between acidity, sourness or waste-product.

The valley is like its tobacco—discreet, thrifty and tranquil, stuck in the same serene pocket of time as its villagers.

People who have never been to the Viñales Valley, in the Cuban province of Piñar del Río, should know that it boasts a unique variety of plant and animal life, some of it in danger of extinction, such as the cork palm, the agave, the macusey hembra, the alligator oak and the dragon tree. Unaccustomed to the ways of civilization and to music unlike their own songs, the valley's birds also come in a kaleidoscope of species, with names as evocative as the pine-forest grass quit, the mockingbird and the tofí.

Exploring caves to the tune of haunting tales

It was here that the Guanajatabey Indians built their primitive homes in caves hollowed out of the limestone *mogotes*, where relics of this nomadic people have been found along with fossils of Pleistocene mammals embedded in the rock. Deep inside the caves,

albino fish swim and butterfly bats flit.

Some caverns, such as the Cueva del Indio, rediscovered in 1920, have close to four kilometres of underground streams which can be explored in a small dinghy so long as you don't mind listening to all the scary tales the peasant guides love to recount.

As the streams slowly work through the limestone and mix with the *mogote* clay falling from above, they become solutions of minerals and coppery earth, both of which are then deposited on the roofs and walls of the caves, turning the surfaces ochre milky green, rendering the scenery all the more mysterious.

We are only 150 kilometres from Havana, but millions of years away.

Where Nature invites painters to take place

Returning to Viñales is a bit like returning to a museum. A silence hangs over it, a mysterious calm that dwells in the early morning mist. In Viñales village we visit

a church built in the last century with sombre pews that have been repaired countless times. The musty odour mingles with the smell of warmed-up food. Heavy rainfall in the wet season has spoiled the splendid facades of the houses, which now look like faded mosaics.

And Cuban hands, always touching and caressing things, cherishing the past, have worn out the fine wooden railings at the front of the houses. As in every village in my country, Viñales also has a central square—a byword for order amid confusion.

Four kilometres from the village, on one side of the *Dos Hermanas* (Two Sisters) *mogote*, stands the Mural of Prehistory, a impressive 120-metre high fresco painted by Cuban artist Leovigildo González, disciple of the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera. Depicted are the animals and other creatures that lived in the valley in prehistoric times



© Ermínio Papetti/On Location/Hemisphere/Paris

The Mural of Prehistory by artist Leovigildo González.

People who have not read the poem of José Lezama Lima (1912-76), *Bajo el arco de Viñales* (Beneath the arch of Viñales), or have never seen the paintings of Cuban artist Domingo Ramos or contemplated the Mural of Prehistory, should know that this valley, which rose from the bottom of the ocean near the western tip of the island, is above all a place of art, a site where Nature provides the frame and waits for the painter to be seated.

But how does one take leave of the valley? Through its cliffs, its hollows? Through the passage in a *mogote* and its columns of gentle stalagmites? Through the long line of big-belly palm trees with their fiery plumes lit by summer? Through its chattering streams full of blind fish? Through the echoes of cockfights left in an old sugar factory? Or through a cheap painting on the yellow wall of a restaurant somewhere in Havana's tourist district? Which path home is best? ■

Stop the

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T

he destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan has sparked worldwide indignation (pp. 24-25). In committing this act, the Taliban violated a rule that is now proving universal, namely that works of the past belong to all humanity. As such, this heritage must be protected, first and foremost because it sheds light on our origins and constitutes the building blocks of our identities.

For these same reasons, the plundering of treasures from any civilization, exacerbated by the illicit art market, has become unacceptable. Lyndel Prott, head of UNESCO's cultural heritage division, chronicles the rise of this awareness (pp. 18-21).

A flurry of initiatives is proof of this new outlook. Mali (pp. 26-27) is striving to involve villagers in protecting the country's heritage, just as Peruvian archaeologist Walter Alva has successfully done at the Sipán archaeological site (pp. 34-35). In the United States, museums are returning symbolically charged artefacts to Native Indians, their rightful owners (pp. 28-29). On the law enforcement front, European police are boosting their co-operation (pp.30-31).

Thanks to investigations by the hard-nosed Turkish journalist Özgen Acar, we know that works laundered by mafia-ridden networks can end up in some of the world's most prestigious museums (pp. 36-37). In deciding to return to Italy three prized archaeological pieces of questionable provenance, the California-based Getty Museum stands as a pioneer (pp. 32-33). Slowly but surely, big players on the art scene are changing their ways.

Dossier coordinated by Michel Bessières, Lucía Iglesias Kuntz and Jasmina Šopova, UNESCO Courier journalists.



art thieves!

O P I N I O N

A SKEWED BATTLE

BY ANG CHOLEAN

DIRECTOR OF THE CAMBODIAN AUTHORITY FOR THE PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT OF ANGKOR AND THE REGION OF SIEM REAP

Everyone in Cambodia is aware that the country's national heritage must be safeguarded. Financial and human resources, however, are sorely lacking, and achievements fall far short of intentions.

To date, the greatest progress has been made in protecting the site of Angkor and the heritage of Siem Reap province. Since UNESCO put Angkor on the World Heritage List in 1992 and Cambodia passed a heritage protection act in 1996, several steps have been taken. These include dividing the area into five protection zones, creating a special agency for the protection of heritage and setting up a governmental authority (Apsara) to manage heritage throughout the province. In theory at least, we have legal instruments to help us manage the site.

But we must not delude ourselves. Looting and pillaging have not been completely wiped out in the Angkor archaeological park. In the rest of Siem Reap province, plundering sometimes takes on dramatic proportions. Public opinion focuses only on major sites. But how many small brick and sandstone temples are being damaged forever! A case in point is the Roluos region, 15 kilometres from Angkor: all the "minor" sites have been looted.

Besides vandalism, another kind of

damage is threatening the site's sacred value. Recently, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee sounded the alarm when karaoke bars were built in an area that theoretically enjoys the highest degree of protection. This phenomenon is directly linked to the growing number of visitors, which is increasing much faster than the development of tourist infrastructures. New buildings must not only meet visitors' needs, but also respect the nature of this site, where the sacred character of the monuments and village life are one and the same.

And what about the rest of Cambodia, which is not lucky enough to receive support, like Angkor, from an international co-ordination committee (ICC) or benefit from the same protection measures? Here again, attention is focused only on major sites. But Cambodia is strewn with archaeological remains, and few have escaped illegal excavations. I'll mention just one case, the necropolis in the village of Snay, which was openly and publicly plundered.

Fine crafts and the know-how they require are not safe either. There is a thriving market for antique silks, looms, tobacco-cutting boards, traditional lutes and old copper utensils. Even more serious is the fate of manuscripts made of wads of

latania trees, which some antique dealers cut up to maximize their profits. Antique ceramics are openly sold in shops in Phnom Penh and along the Thai border. It is true that many Cambodian antique dealers sincerely believe that only stone items are protected by the law.

Does this mean that the royal government is looking the other way? Of course not. But Cambodia, which has been devastated by a long period of war and revolution, needs time to re-establish the rule of law. And, without seeming overly pessimistic, it must be acknowledged that the country has been overwhelmed by the problem.

In short, there is a long way to go. Cambodia cannot cope with the plundering of its art and artefacts without international cooperation. The problem's source lies upstream, in the demand from Japan and above all, western countries. Pieces of Khmer art taken out of the country illegally have been known to surface in prestigious museums around the world. The agreement signed two years ago by the United States and the royal government to limit imports of Khmer art works is important. It is a step forward that should be emulated by other countries. ■

1. THE COST OF LOOTING

“Indiana Jones has no future”

Even though the plundering goes on, a collector who purchases a piece with dubious provenance can no longer live with a clear conscience, says Lyndel Prott, director of Unesco’s Cultural Heritage Division

INTERVIEW BY MICHEL BESSIÈRES

UNESCO COURIER JOURNALIST



Up for grabs: in Bogota, a public sale of looted pre-Colombian ceramics.

© Hans-Jürgen Burkard Bilderberg/Studio X, Paris

baroli of southern Italy are ransacking archaeological sites with earth-moving equipment. Treasure hunters equipped with metal detectors in Icklingham, Great Britain, have unearthed Roman bronzes, which were sold to a private collector in the United States. In Central America, they have electric generators and circular saws to steal Mayan stele. In China, underwater sites off the Xisha islands are attacked with dynamite. Devastated cemeteries in Jordan, mutilated idols in Nepal and wrecked Buddhist stupas in Pakistan attest to the scope of demand in the northern countries.

How would you explain the growth of the art market in the northern countries?

It’s a combination of factors. In the United States, nearly a decade of steady growth has given a new impetus to speculation on art. Furthermore, major museum exhibitions have introduced long-overlooked cultures to the public: collectors are increasingly numerous and their interest is diversifying. More generally, cultural consumption occupies a preponderant place in the economy.

Would you like to see this market regulated?

UNESCO encourages the movement of art works provided they have a determined provenance. What we’re fighting against is the illicit trade, which requires calling certain traditions into question. If you sell a piece of land or a car, the buyer asks you for a deed or registration papers. That’s not the case with cultural property. It’s an exception.

Where does that come from?

An aura of prestige surrounds the art market, where people think it would be unseemly to question collectors’ integrity. The confidentiality of transactions is still the rule. For generations up to the 1990s, diplomats acquired and unlawfully exported important works. That kind of behaviour supposedly reflected their interest in culture. At the same time, INTERPOL has told us that operations against drug trafficking have led to the seizure of several hundred paintings. In criminal circles, art is a nameless, reliable means of payment which keeps its value over long periods.

Despite all that, you say mentalities are changing.

Owning stolen works will soon be as objectionable as wearing fur or smoking in public,” the American magazine *Art & Auction* wrote recently. Do you agree?

It’s true that the climate is changing. Moreover, it’s not just a simple matter of saying the right thing. More and more, looting is seen as morally indefensible.

And yet, the plundering goes on.

Sometimes it’s even getting worse. This is the case in countries destabilized by war, such as Afghanistan, of course—where pillaging takes place on a massive scale in addition to destruction—but also in Cambodia and Iraq. Bas-reliefs from Sennacherib’s palace in Nineveh have been turning up in western countries for several years.

What’s more, looters are acting on a large scale because of the technical means they’re using. The *tom-*

Today, this reality no longer goes unnoticed. The media report on looting and illicit trade. And rightly so, because these deeds fill us with outrage. A collector who purchases a piece with a questionable provenance can no longer live with a really clear conscience. What's more, a series of steps has been taken to curtail trafficking. Individuals, institutions, national minorities and States are the driving forces behind these initiatives. At this level, the main instrument in the fight against looting is the 1970 Convention drafted by UNESCO (see box).

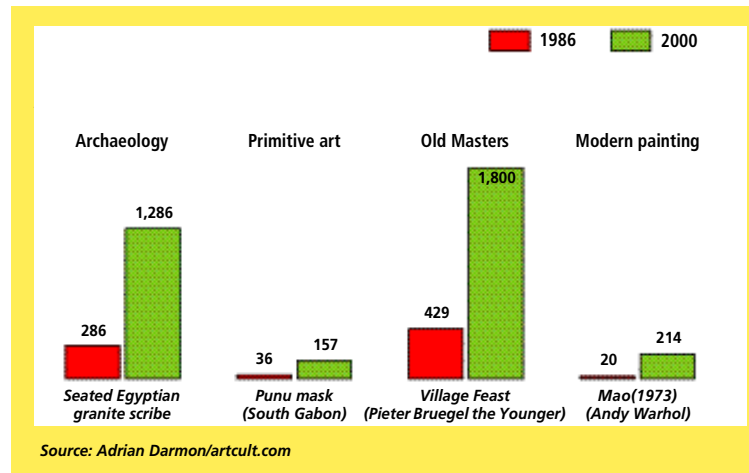
Is the Convention enough to cope with the problem?

It has gone a long way to help change mentalities. In the early 1970s museum curators would say, "Our job consists of putting together the most beautiful collections possible. UNESCO should be helping us instead of putting obstacles in our way." Today, very few curators see things that way. Most museums have adopted the code of conduct drafted by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), which cooperates closely with UNESCO. It requires the museum not to acquire, or display pieces without good provenance.

Sometimes, museums also ask us for information on the provenance of a certain piece they would like to acquire. This notably happened when we sent out specific warnings with regard to pieces from Cambodia, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Has public opinion also changed?

Yes. In the 1980s, the media challenged the "Indiana Jones" mentality, unscrupulous hunting for treasures of all kinds, by explaining the problems looting creates for the countries concerned. At the same



time, non-governmental organizations have decided to react. I'm especially thinking of the Berne Declaration, a Swiss NGO that manages educational and economic projects in the southern countries. This group saw the extent to which looting has become a cause of cultural alienation for people living in the countries where it is ongoing. So it published first-hand accounts of the human consequences of cultural heritage loss. In Switzerland, a major art-market country, a change in attitude has been observed since these steps were taken. We're still in this stage; many countries are acknowledging that looting is not just somebody else's problem.

Have opinion campaigns linked to the restitution of property looted by the Nazis helped raise people's awareness?

Yes, of course. In the 1980s, public opinion realized

THREE CASES THAT SHOOK THE ART WORLD

1981. Sotheby's announced the "Sevso treasure" auction. The value of this Roman silverware service, a prime example of late Roman style, is put at \$10 million. But the Lebanese export certificates were forgeries, and the treasure was seized in New York. The investigation laid the blame on Sotheby's.

Today, the origins of the Sevso treasure remain unknown. None of the countries claiming the silver, including Lebanon, Hungary and Croatia, has been able to prove that it may have been looted from their territory. The investigation was abandoned, and the treasure was given back to its English owner.

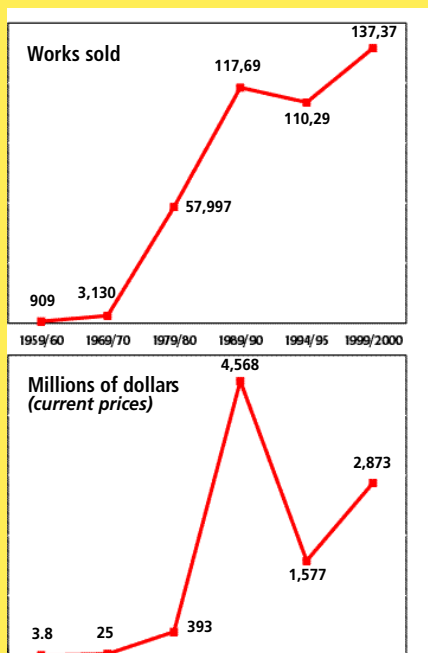
1990. During the Biennale des Antiquaires show in Paris, French law enforcement officers seized a painting by the 17th-century Dutch master Franz Hals from the stand of New York's Newhouse Galleries. The work came from the outstanding collection formed in the 19th-century by an Alsatian Jew, Adolphe Schloss. In 1943, the Nazis, assisted by the French police, seized the collection. Half was recovered in 1945. After that, the Franz Hals work, one of the missing paintings, was sold at auction four times (by both Sotheby's and

Christie's) without raising the slightest question about its provenance, even when it was accompanied by the comment, "Schloss collection, stolen by the Nazis." Accused of receiving stolen goods, the American gallery owner Adam Williams must appear in a French court in May 2001: a first in the trafficking of art works.

2000. In April 2000, the French press revealed that three Nok sculptures from looted sites in Nigeria were on display at the Louvre's new "first arts" museum. Stéphane Martin, the museum's director, justifies the 2.5-million-franc (\$357,000) purchase. "We knew perfectly well under what conditions they had left Nigeria," he says. "They're still masterpieces. It's better to show them to the public than to leave them in a cellar." Martin says that the Louvre and the Nigerian government signed an agreement authorizing the purchase. But in November, Lord Colin Renfrew, director of Cambridge University's McDonald archaeological institute, accused France of trafficking. Then, Nigeria's ambassador to France, Edward Abiodun Aina, said, "there is no agreement on the acquisition of these pieces," clearing the way for a restitution request. ■

1. THE COST OF LOOTING

World art market trends (From August to July the following year)



Source: Art Sales Index Ltd.

the scope of the looting. It resulted from a huge injustice and could no longer go unnoticed. This has worked in our favour: if art dealers and museums had adopted the principles set down by the UNESCO Convention, they never would have reached that point, because the illegal origin of many of the works concerned was known. From that point on, if the rules of restitution must be applied to Europe, they are good for the rest of the world as well.

Do art dealers agree to these principles?

Some professionals are changing. In Great Britain, art dealers have taken part in an interministerial committee which recommended, after completing its work, that the United Kingdom join the 1970 Convention. In Switzerland, the market's reputation has been marred by the retention of cultural—or other—property looted during the Second World War. Faced with the rise of public awareness, dealers have seen where their interests lie. And they don't rule out that the country will join the UNESCO Convention.

Historically, the creation of collections responds to a desire for knowledge of past civilizations. In your eyes, is this concern still legitimate?

Yes, but today we have greater respect for cultural

THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST MARKET REGULATION

The interchange of cultural property among nations increases the knowledge of the civilization of Man and enriches the cultural life of all peoples..." says the preamble of the 1970 Convention. Advocates of controlling the market are not opposed to the movement of cultural property. They are against illicit trade, which involves pieces of undetermined provenance. This crucial point made, here's why their adversaries' arguments do not stand up upon close examination.

Only the market gives works value. Without a market, heritage is neglected.

Wrong. Many pieces without any commercial value are of primordial interest to archaeologists. For example, simple shipboards analyzed via dendrochronology (the study of the growth rings of trees), are used to date shipwrecks. Moreover, fluctuation in sales prices often bear no relationship to a work's aesthetic qualities or historic interest. For example, a price surge sometimes leads to a spate of forgeries followed by total depreciation. Today, the prices of Daum and Gallé Art Nouveau vases have fallen to an all-time low.

The defenders of heritage encourage a nationalist reaction against a more universal conception of culture.

Each country should be entitled to keep a representative ensemble of its heritage, which is an integral part of its identity. This principle does not call into question the free movement of works with a lawful provenance, nor does it violate the universalistic conception of culture in any way. Furthermore, archaeological looting is a form of theft, so it is legitimate for countries to combat it: those still rich with archaeological sites, such as Turkey, Italy and Greece, or those that have lost almost everything, such as the Samoa islands,

Bangladesh and Mali.

Because of political instability or the corruption of elites, some countries are incapable of preserving their heritage. The pieces are better off in the collections of northern countries.

After a rash of thefts from several museums in Nigeria last year, Frank Willett, a highly regarded Scottish expert on that country, urged collectors not to reconstitute pieces that resurface on the market and accused the authorities of complicity in the robberies. The argument is not lacking in merit, but it overlooks an essential part of the problem. Trafficking, and the corruption that it implies, exists to meet demand. There is a market of course, but what's most important, is its tradition of confidentiality, against which the advocates of control are campaigning. The solution: museums and private collectors with unscrupulous acquisitions policies could invest the same sums to fund official archaeological excavations. For example, the U.S.-based Packard Foundation has earmarked \$5 million for archaeological research in Zeugma, Turkey, helping to prevent the looting that has plagued this great site of Roman mosaics until now.

What entitles archaeologists to prevent poverty-stricken farmers from looting their ancestors' graves if that enables them to feed their families?

Looting does not feed the looters. Several years ago, an Indian farmer sold a freshly-exhumed idol to a local middleman for 12 pounds sterling (\$7.50). Three years later, the same item was sold at a London auction for 300 000 pounds sterling (\$188,000). On the contrary, maintaining a site constitutes an economic resource for local populations. ■

THE 1970 CONVENTION

The UNESCO Convention on "the means of prohibiting and preventing the illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property" culminated a long period of rising awareness. As early as 1921, the Sèvres treaty was the first attempt to control the movement of archaeological pieces in the Middle East.

When many countries around the world acceded to independence in the 1960s, the former colonies wanted to obtain the restitution of their heritage, or at least to stop the looting. Nigeria, China and Indonesia were very active. So was Greece, which had undergone plundering for over a century.

Today, the 91 states that are parties to the Convention agree to oppose the import, export and transfer of stolen cultural property and to the principle of their restitution. They also agree to impose rules on museums and dealers to wipe out trafficking.

For a long time, the main art-market countries have expressed their misgivings about the Convention. Among them, the United States was the first signatory, but not until 1983.

A second convention was planned to overcome their reluctance. The document was drafted by Unidroit, the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law, an independent intergovernmental organization whose purpose is to standardize the private law of states in various fields. When this instrument was finalized in 1995, many countries complained that it was even more restrictive, and began taking the necessary steps to sign the 1970 Convention.

France ratified the Convention in 1997. Belgium and Switzerland, two of the leading art-market nations, are among the 13 countries on the verge of joining. Great Britain and Japan are reviewing the terms of their ratification.

The Convention is not retroactive, so it cannot be used to settle past disputes, such as the disagreement between Greece and Great Britain over the Elgin marbles. To resolve more recent conflicts, the 1970 Convention has set up an intergovernmental committee for the return of cultural property to its country of origin, which acts as a mediator. For example, the

diversity. Aside from items produced by other cultures, we're also interested in their approach, their perception of the world. The United States, New Zealand and Australia, which share a colonial past, have ended up understanding that they must involve ethnic minorities in the management of their collections, by not exhibiting certain sacred pieces or by respecting customs. Acquisitions linked to colonialism, based on an aesthetic appreciation, but which ignore the damage, the uprooting caused to the other culture, are being questioned.

What can the source countries do to curb trafficking?

Estimates put the share of looted pieces that are recovered at five to ten percent. Not more. It's obvious

that those countries bear the main responsibility for protection. Around the world, we bring countries together in regional workshops, first of all to help them set up networks between law enforcement agents, customs officers and museum curators. When they don't work together, their efforts are less effective. We also turn to consultants who help to improve national laws. And we help these countries draw up inventories. Recently we held a workshop in Viet Nam. The city of Hanoi alone boasts over 700 pagodas and temples housing thousands of valuable pieces. Most of them have not been inventoried. A Chinese expert gave a talk that got the undivided attention of listeners. Viet Nam is opening up to tourism, he explained. You should adopt methods of control before it's too late. China went through the same experience and, in a few years, looting reached a scale that nobody could have foretold.

But can looting be stopped? People living in impoverished rural areas have an immediate economic interest in excavating.

Yes, they do. But once again, the trend can be reversed. In Peru, for example, where tomb-raiding was rampant, Walter Alva's initiative has changed things (see p. 30). He sat down with the Indians and explained, "These are your ancestors." We're doing all we can to help raise awareness. As soon as the local population is convinced of the importance of cultural heritage, they become a site's best curators. ■



<http://www.unesco.org/culture>

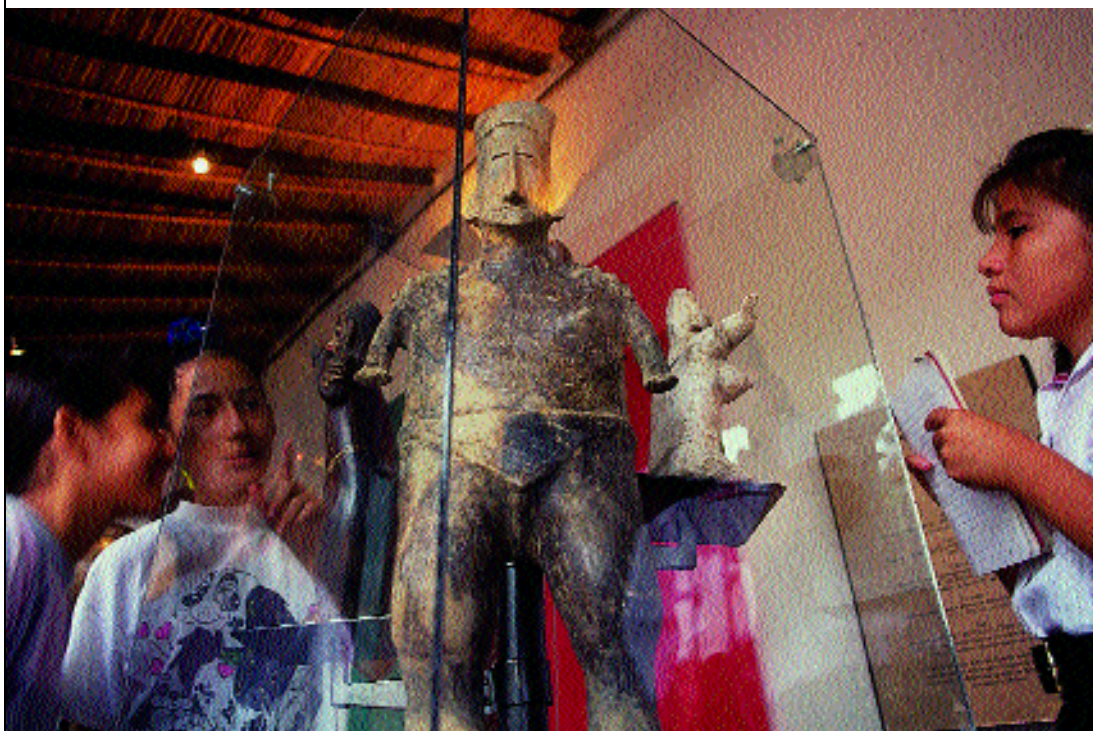
<http://www.icom.org>

<http://www.artloss.com>



In May 1945, American GIs seized Old Master paintings from Hermann Goering's loot.

1. THE COST OF LOOTING



In Colombia, students glean clues on their heritage during a visit to the Cucuta archaeological museum.

© Jeremy Horner/Panos Pictures, London

Stealing the past from under our feet

Driven by an insatiable demand for artefacts, looters are all too often beating archaeologists to ancient sites and snatching our only chance to understand bygone cultures

JENNY DOOLE

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Because archaeologists don't know where it lies, a major Mayan city in the jungle of Guatemala has simply been nicknamed "Site Q." The site obviously exists, since sections of wall carvings from its temple pyramids have been recognized in private collections and museums around the world. But such pieces are not enough to reconstruct a culture. In those that left no written traces, like the trading society that flourished in Mali some 1,000 years ago, the loss is all the more acute, since archaeology offers our only chance to understand the past (see p. 26). According to estimates, nearly half of Mali's ancient sites have been looted for their beautiful terracotta statues: history is literally disappearing from beneath the people's feet.

Since ancient times, tombs have been robbed and cultural heritage destroyed by treasure hunters. In recent decades, however, demand for collectable and saleable artefacts has become insatiable, and looting of the world's archaeological record has rea-

ched epidemic proportions. Developments in technology and communication, combined with sophisticated smuggling networks, have made modern looting an awesomely efficient, global industry. Whole sites are destroyed to recover select items that fetch vast sums in the West, where they may be valued as objects of art, financial investments or interior design.

But antiquities are worth more than this: when properly excavated they offer a window on history. Archaeological sites are a non-renewable resource: they can only be dug once, and the opportunity must be wisely used. When an object is looted, irreplaceable details of its provenance (where it was found) and context (what it was found with) are lost. Such details are crucial if we are to glean information about times past. Looters in South America have described throwing dozens of ancient mummies over cliffs when cutting them open reveals no silver or gold. In doing so, they discard important sources of historical information, like *quipu*, the knotted strings which the Inca used to record official accounts. Many other materials deemed worthless by looters, such as bones, broken pottery, perishable organic remains and the soil itself, offer invaluable clues on entire cul-

tures. Constantly improving scientific techniques are further enhancing our understanding. Analysis of ancient teeth, for instance, can tell us where individuals spent their childhood, while other human remains can reveal the ingredients of their diets. Shattered skulls can be reconstructed so that we can look into the faces of our ancestors, while DNA studies can establish their relationships with each other and ourselves. Analysis of residues on apparently unremarkable pots proves what and how people were cooking, brewing or manufacturing. With access to undisturbed contexts, archaeologists also gain insights into broader questions relevant to our past, such as when humans first settled down to cultivate the land. Shadows of shard marks have been uncovered in carefully excavated soils from very early contexts, complemented by studies of ancient plant remains. Such details might also be relevant to our future: in England, studies of marine remains in the River Ouse, for instance, have tracked pollution levels over the past 1,900 years.

When we only have unprovenanced material to study, our understanding of ancient peoples is limited and distorted: Peru's pre-Inca Moche culture is a case in point. For decades, scholars struggled to comprehend this advanced civilization on the basis of "art" objects which appeared on the market, orphaned from their past. Then, in 1987, looters broke into a tomb in a massive mud-brick pyramid at Sipán. Archaeologists were alerted and, for the first time, were able to examine an undisturbed royal Moche burial site. This single excavation transformed our entire understanding of the culture. Furthermore, contextual evidence proved that previously known, but unprovenanced, objects had been misunderstood and could now be re-interpreted, even identified as fakes.

When looters swipe an entire site

Similar problems face scholars studying the distinctive white marble figurines found in bronze age graves in the Cyclades Islands, Greece. Some 1,600 figurines are known, but only about 150 have a secure archaeological provenance. Since it is impossible to date marble by scientific means, experts are unable to rule out the possibility that a considerable number may be fakes, produced in the last 30 years to feed booming demand. This further obscures attempts to make sense of these extraordinary objects.

It is impossible to tell how much information is being lost. One study suggests that Italian *tombaroli* must loot nine tombs to recover one Apulian vase (more than 4,000 have surfaced, unprovenanced, since 1980). At Wanborough (England), looters came at night with metal detectors and trucks and removed much of the site of a Roman temple—soil and all—to excavate at their leisure. In some cases, whole cultures are only known to looters. Guatemala's "Site Q" is one example. Similarly, outstanding formative pots

from an unknown culture in the mountainous Marañon River region of Peru are today offered for sale in Europe. They are beautiful, but we have no idea of their true historic significance, or of the information lost during their retrieval. This, rather than ownership issues, is the archaeologists' main concern.

Attracting tourist dollars with buried riches

Ownership issues, however, are of prime importance to governments, most of whom impose some form of sovereign claim over archaeological material, making illegal excavation, or removal abroad, a crime. Many archaeologically rich countries are economically poor. Expending valuable resources to police cultural heritage is impossible, but they often recognize archaeology, and the understanding of the past it can provide, as a source of national identity and pride, as well as a much-needed economic resource. Lebanon recently inventoried vast numbers of antiquities and sites looted during years of civil war, noting that its rich archaeological heritage is comparable to other Arab nations' oil resources in terms of potential tourist income.

In rare cases where recently looted material is repatriated, authorities are increasingly aware of the value of returning it to regional museums, preferably created with local people, for whom looting is often a way of life and essential source of family income. At Sipán, for instance, a new museum has been built quite near the site, which has now become a tourist attraction (see p. 30). Cafés and souvenir shops have sprung up. More money is generated in tourist dollars, for whole communities, than the individual looters could have dreamt of. Museums like this are more than sources of pride and revenue: they are crucial educational tools for both locals and tourists. At the opening of the European Union-assisted museum at Cambodia's Angkor Borei, local people reacted with awe, fascination and sometimes devotion. Younger people said they had never seen such sculptures (antiquities in war-torn Cambodia have been thoroughly ransacked in recent years and local museums are uncommon), nor realized their town's importance.

Therein lies our most powerful weapon against modern looting: increased awareness that people's cultural heritage is worth more, in every sense, than the usually paltry sums it fetches when sold to local middlemen, or huge amounts it raises in auction rooms in the West. The monetary value of the illicit trade in art and antiquities—including other categories of badly looted material like religious art (frescoes, mosaics and icons from orthodox churches and sacred statues from oriental temples and shrines), ethnographic and tribal objects, and fine art—is estimated at billions of dollars. But when an object is looted, almost everyone is poorer for it. ■



Forever gone from Angkor.

© P. Aventure/Gamma, Paris

2. SAVING OUR TREASURES

Afghan heritage: time for exile?

Despite unanimous indignation, the Taliban destroyed the statues of Bamiyan. The international community now has the responsibility to save what it still can

MICHAEL BARRY

LECTURER AT THE SORBONNE'S INSTITUTE OF IRANIAN STUDIES, UNESCO CONSULTANT FOR AFGHAN CULTURAL HERITAGE, TRANSLATOR OF A MYSTICAL MEDIEVAL PERSIAN NOVEL, *LE PAVILLON DES SEPT PRINCESSES* (GALLIMARD).

In times of war and instability, the cultural heritage of these countries was exposed to severe destruction and robbery. We can only conclude that peace and stability are the fundamental factors for preserving and protecting heritage.

Kassaye Begashaw, head of the Ethiopian Centre for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage

On February 26, 2001, Mullah Omar, the Taliban's self-proclaimed emir, ordered the destruction of all figurative monuments and art works on Afghan soil. This unprecedented step touched off a unanimous international reaction.

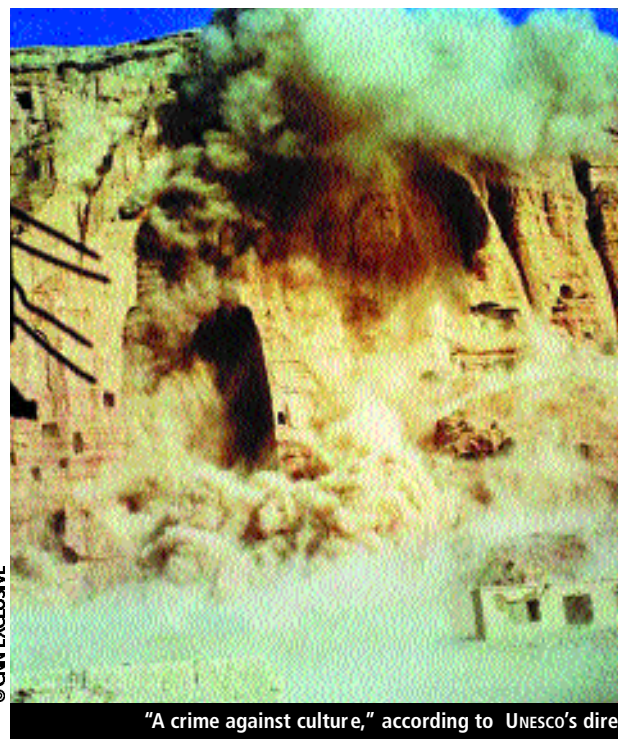
Why such an outcry? Why has it fallen on deaf ears? If the Taliban regime had helped to ease the plight of Afghanistan's people in one area or another, I think their iconoclastic wrath would not have sparked such an uproar. Of course, the cultural vandalism has mobilized public opinion. But in this specific case, worldwide indignation was fueled by concern about all the hardships imposed on the Afghan people before crystallizing over the issue of heritage.

Since the Taliban's 1996 seizure of power in Kabul, the regime's unfathomable scorn for the Afghan people has taken many shapes. First, discrimination against the Shiite minority. Then requiring women to wear netted chadors and outlawing school for girls upwards of eight years old. Hundreds of thousands drought-stricken farmers have been forced to leave their land and homes, while poppies are grown in the eastern and southern parts of the country. One single feature sets the destruction of the heritage apart from such other acts of violence: this time, the message is addressed to the international community, and it has been heard.

Investing statues with fearful powers

In 1989, a few weeks after Soviet troops pulled out of Afghanistan, a group of Hezb-i-Islami fighters ransacked the Buddhist monastery of Hadda in the eastern part of the country and destroyed its outstanding art works without sparking any international reaction. These same fighters, who have since joined the Taliban, laid the groundwork for further destruction based on ideological motives.

Mullah Omar's edict gives a formal underpinning to these acts. It demonstrates more than a theoretical scorn for the culture of other commu-



"A crime against culture," according to UNESCO's director

nities, especially Buddhist culture: the Taliban's rejection is so radical that they want to wipe it out because they still invest the statues with magical, malevolent and fearful powers

The earliest depictions of the Buddha occurred in present-day Afghanistan. And since the artists of the first-to fifth-century Gandhara civilization were influenced by Hellenistic sculpture, they gave him the face of Apollo. Japan, Sri Lanka, China, Burma, South Korea and Thailand view Afghanistan as the Athens of Buddhism.

Later, during the 15th century, Herat, in western Afghanistan, was the Florence of Muslim painting. Several centuries earlier, advocates and adversaries argued over whether Islam permitted the depiction of human figures. The caliphate of Damascus settled the dispute, forbidding the depiction of God, but authorizing the portrayal of princes and their

UNESCO KEEPS THE PRESSURE ON

From the Taliban's first threats against part of their country's heritage, UNESCO either spearheaded or relayed most of the international initiatives to "reverse this move into absurdity undertaken by the authorities in Kabul," in the words of Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura.

UNESCO's chief dispatched a special envoy in an effort to urge the Taliban authorities to reconsider the decision to destroy their country's pre-Islamic and Buddhist cultural heritage. He also called an emergency meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to discuss joint action. While mobilizing political and religious leaders, UNESCO also launched an international petition calling on Afghan officials to halt the destruction and resume dialogue. The confirmation of the destruction of the Bamiyan statues—depictions of Buddha that are exceptional for both their size and age—must not soften international pressure on the Afghan regime. ■

For more details on the petition and on UNESCO's special fund:

<http://www.unesco.org/opi2/afghan-crisis/>

power.

The miniatures and illuminated manuscripts that flourished at the court of Herat were heirs to that tradition and determined the canons of the genre, which spread from Istanbul to Agra in the 18th century. Most of these masterpieces were taken to Persia after the kingdom's annexation in 1510, while others accompanied Kabul's Timuride princes, cousins of the Herat court, when they conquered India and set up the Moghul dynasty there. The latest figurative illuminated manuscripts kept in a library north of Kabul were burned after 1996. Moving this heritage outside its area of origin sometimes has positive effects!

Making inventories of plundered collections

In the 20th century, all Muslim countries, without exception, like all other states, adopted the principle that preserving and enhancing archaeological heritage is vital for building a modern nation and represents a base for cultural identity. As all the European powers did after Pompeii's discovery in the 18th century, they turned their backs on the holy terror that works of a foreign religious tradition had inspired until then. The archaeological past had to be preserved as a basis for knowledge, independent of the religious charge it had originally carried.

In 1919, an independent Afghanistan invited archaeologists—first French, then Italian, Russian, Japanese, American and, more recently, British and Indian—to undertake excavations, and to train Afghan counterparts in return for agreements on distributing the finds. In 1979, the war put an end to these exchanges. Yet it was not until after the Soviet withdrawal that the threat to heritage reached an alarming intensity, as I can attest.

In autumn 1994, I walked into a Kabul museum at the same time as General Massoud's troops. For two years, a faction independent of the central government had controlled the quarter. The building had been damaged by rocket fire and the collections plundered out of sheer greed. Massoud agreed to place a cordon of troops around the museum and guarantee its protection. Within 24 hours, Carla Grissmann, a member of Spach (Society for the Protection of the Afghan Cultural Heritage, based in Peshawar), started an inventory of the remaining collections

The same year, Afghan archaeologists told me

they were worried. They said that the Rabbani and Massoud government in Kabul would soon fall, and that when Islamic extremists entered the capital, they might destroy the collections. This emergency situation prompted Najibullah Popal, the museum's curator, to suggest creating a temporary storehouse in a distant country. I consulted with diplomatic representations and organizations for the protection of Afghanistan's cultural heritage. Unfortunately, none of them took action.

Foreign invitations

Since then, several projects in the same vein have seen the light of day. Paul Bucherer-Dietschi, a Swiss collector of Afghan manuscripts, says that the Taliban as well as Rabbani asked him to house what was left of Afghanistan's heritage in his museum in Bubendorf (Basel canton). After Mullah Omar's *fatwâ*, the Metropolitan Museum of New York offered to house the pieces that had been spared. If the move is still possible, and whatever the destination chosen, it should occur under the supervision of a supranational authority. UNESCO would be the most legitimate choice.

During the 1937 siege of Madrid, Spain's republican government asked Switzerland to give the Prado collections asylum. They were not returned to Spain until after the Second World War. The circumstances in Afghanistan are different, but the intensity of the crisis is comparable. That is why the notion that cultural heritage belongs to all humanity must replace the idea of national cultural heritage. Otherwise, we must accept that Afghanistan's pre-Islamic and Muslim art will vanish. ■



Director-general.



2. SAVING OUR TREASURES

Mali: when farmers become curators

For 20 years, Mali has been waging a war on the archaeological plundering that plagues the country. Everyone has followed the president to the front lines

SAMUEL SIDIBE

DIRECTOR OF THE MALI'S NATIONAL MUSEUM

though looting is a long way from being wiped out.

The story goes back to the 1970s. Before that, most of the trade in art works involved wooden statuettes and masks, which were the only items with an aesthetic and commercial value in the west. Then, looting started to grow at a dramatic pace. Mali, with Nigeria and Niger, has become one of the West African countries whose archaeological heritage has been hardest hit by illicit trafficking. A 1989 study by the Bamako Institute of Social Sciences says that 17 percent of the 834 sites listed in Mali's Dogon country have been targets of large-scale looting, of which two percent have been lost forever for research.

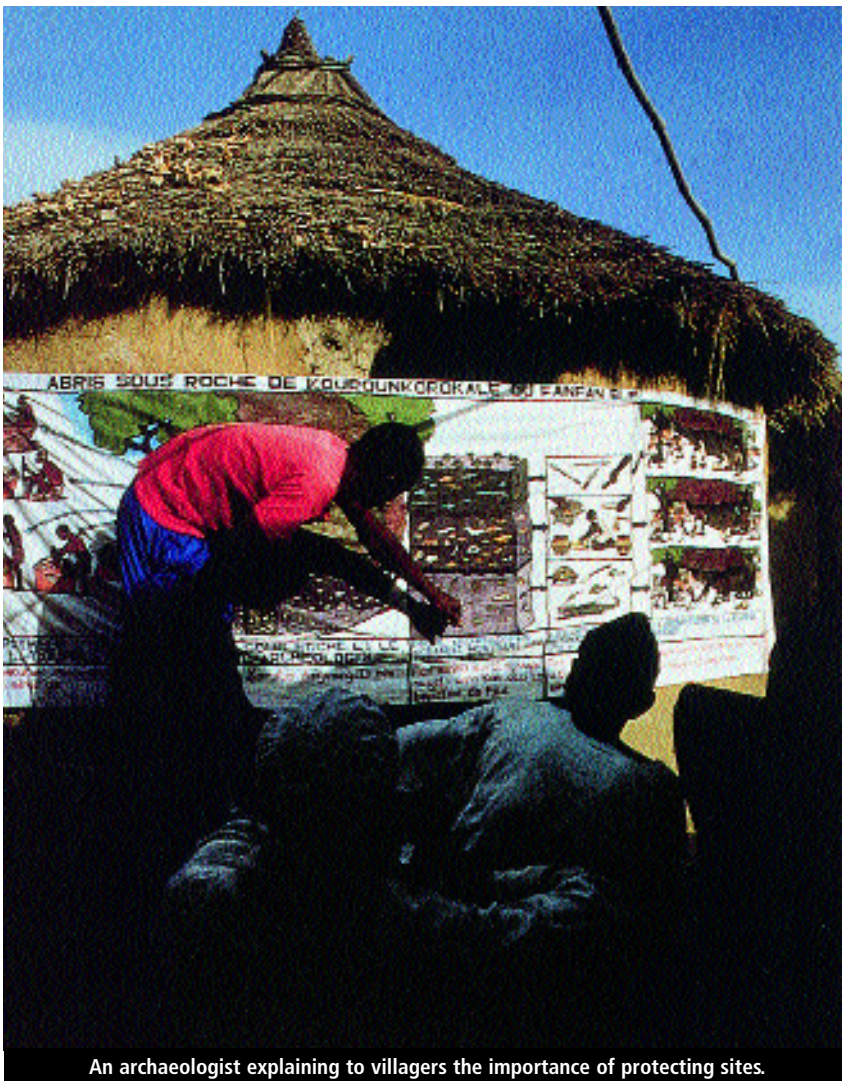
Ancient cultures shrouded in mystery

In the inner Niger delta, hundreds of "Djenné" terracotta statuettes, named after a city¹ near Jenné-Jeno, have been scattered among private collections and museums around the world. The famous "Bankoni" statuettes, which are named after a village in Bamako's suburbs, share the same fate. The priceless bronze figurines from the Méma sites, in the Ségou region, have fared no better.

The genius of Mali's ancient oral civilizations was chiefly expressed in statuary, one of our most precious sources of information about the past. For example, one of the few statuettes found during a scientific archaeological excavation of the Jenné-Jeno site has revealed that earlier inhabitants buried their dead in large earthenware jars and practised other animist traditions. But we still know little about the Bankoni, except that their civilization flourished in the 14th and 15th centuries. Looters were the first to discover all these sites. As a result, the ancient art-producing cultures remain shrouded in mystery, despite the high number of pieces sold on the art market.

This market is basically supplied by so-called antique dealers who in turn are supplied by their own networks of looters: farmers or organized gangs. The antiques are exported to France, the United States and above all Belgium, a hub of illicit trade.

Early on, Mali's officials realized how serious the situation was. Under the impetus of the country's current president, Alpha Oumar Konaré (head of the national historic and ethnographic heritage



An archaeologist explaining to villagers the importance of protecting sites.

© Dr. Kevin MacDonald, London

Today, the archaeological site of Jenné-Jeno is no longer looted. Not far from there, the villagers of Nombori have even founded their own museum. And they're not alone. In the Mopti region, the inhabitants of Fombori have taken the same initiative. People who could have been tempted by looting to improve their difficult lot have become curators! These few startling examples go to show that Mali's efforts over the past two decades have paid off, even

division from 1976 to 1978, minister of culture from 1978 to 1980), a legal framework was set up allowing for an effective campaign against looting and trafficking. A series of laws was passed, starting in 1985. Two years later, Mali ratified the 1970 UNESCO Convention (see p. 21).

International co-operation: the missing link?

The next step lay in raising public awareness. Several meetings bringing together 50 to 100 people from all walks of life were held, especially in areas most beset by the problem. These gatherings provided an opportunity to explain the new laws and how important archaeological sites are to our national history and cultural identity. It was not always easy. The rural population, victims of repeated droughts since 1974, sometimes turned to looting as a way to survive and did not always accept or understand our approach. But we persevered. In 1993, we took a new step by setting up cultural missions in Bandiagara, Djenné and Timbuktu. Their purpose: to continue raising people's awareness and encourage them to get involved in protecting their heritage. Near Djenné and Tenenkou, for example, villagers recently staged a play and held a temporary exhibition about heritage. Some have even volunteered with the police to guard archaeological sites.

In cities, the media helped the campaign along by running many articles on the subject. During a 1994 exhibition on the "Niger Valleys" held at the National Museum, many visitors discovered the extraordinary richness of our archaeological heritage and the dangers that threaten it. Mali has not hesitated to arrest, prosecute and imprison some lawbreakers, which also sends out a message to our citizens on how serious the scourge of looting and trafficking is.

But the nationwide campaign has its limits, so long as foreign demand remains strong. International co-operation is a must. In the framework of the 1970 UNESCO Convention, Mali and the United States signed an agreement in 1997 restricting the illicit import of the Niger Valley's archaeological heritage and of items from the *tellem* caves of Bandiagara². This accord is the only one of its kind in all of Africa. Mali would like to establish bilateral co-operation with other importer countries, such as France, which has already joined the UNESCO Convention, and Switzerland and Belgium, when they ratify it.

As far as professional co-operation goes, Mali took part in the regional workshops held by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in Arusha in 1993, Bamako in 1994 and Kinshasa in 1995, which brought together museum professionals, law enforcement agents and customs officers. In 1997, we also participated in the international workshop in Amsterdam, aimed at



strengthening solidarity between source and importer countries. The ICOM's Red List was drafted during that meeting (see box).

International solidarity is more than critical to curb illicit trade, develop archaeological research and set up education programmes. The weakness of financial and human resources in a country like ours, which is confronted with tremendous challenges such as poverty, prevent us from implementing all the programmes necessary to stop the looting. Rich nations must say no to selfishness. The heritage of poor countries deserves as much respect as that of the wealthy ones. The battle is far from won. ■

1. *Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1988.*
2. *The cliffs of Bandiagara (Dogon country) were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1989.*

The return of a work of art or record to the country which created it enables a people to recover part of their memory and identity, and proves that the long dialogue between civilizations . . . is still continuing.

Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, former Director-General of UNESCO (1921-)

THE RED LIST: SOUNDING THE ALARM

The International Council of Museums (ICOM), an NGO with close ties to UNESCO, has drawn up a Red List featuring eight categories of African archaeological items which are particularly threatened by looting. These include Nok terracotta; terracotta and bronzes from Ife; Esie stone statues (Nigeria); terracotta, bronzes and pottery of the Niger Valley (Mali); terracotta, statuettes, bronzes, potteries and stone statues from the Bura sites (Niger and Burkina Faso); stone statues from the north of Burkina Faso; terracotta from the north of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire; terracotta and bronzes known as Sao (Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria).

"These objects are among the cultural goods most affected by looting and theft. . . . An appeal is therefore being made to museums, auction houses, art dealers and collectors to stop buying them," says the organization. The Red List gives the provenance of items in each category, information on their physical characteristics as well as the national and international legislation protecting them. ■

2. SAVING OUR TREASURES

Homecoming for the totem poles

A spirit of mutual respect has grown between Native Americans and U.S. museums thanks to a law enabling tribes to repatriate the artefacts and remains of their distant ancestors

STEPHEN KINZER

JOURNALIST FOR THE *NEW YORK TIMES*

On a cold afternoon a little more than a year ago, members of several Tlingit Indian clans in southeastern Alaska gathered for an emotional ceremony that few of them had ever dared to imagine. An intricately carved wooden beaver that plays a central role in their history and culture was coming home after an absence of nearly a century.

This carving once graced the prow of a war canoe that ferried supplies to these clans in the wake of a bombardment of their communities by the United States Navy in 1881. One clan member, acting on his own, later sold it to a travelling collector, and it disappeared.

In 1998, a clan elder was visiting a storeroom at the American Museum of Natural History in New York when, he later recalled, he heard an "inner voice" calling him to one shelf. When he found the shelf, he was astonished to see the wooden beaver staring out at him.

Under the provisions of a sweeping law enacted 10 years ago, Tlingit clans asked the museum to return the carving, and museum officials complied. "The day it came back, the

whole village was at the dock," said Leonard John, a clan member who helped arrange the return. "People were crying and weeping. This is not just art to us," John continued. "It's something far deeper, something with a healing and spiritual aspect. When our artefacts were scattered across America, they left a void. We lost our honour and our value system. We were overwhelmed by social problems like suicide and alcoholism. Now that they're coming back, people look at them and feel their honour and their self-respect returning as well. There are still a lot of festering wounds, but the process of healing has begun."

The law under which the beaver prow was repatriated, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, was signed by President George Bush in November 1990 after years of discussion among scientists, museum curators and Indian groups. It seeks to reconcile two profoundly different value

systems, one based on the primacy of reason and science and the other revolving around spiritual and religious values.

Under the law, every museum and federal agency that owns Native American artefacts or remains must compile an inventory of its holdings, identify them by tribal origin, and notify existing tribes of objects that appear to come from that tribe's tradition. U.S. museums hold the remains of an estimated 500,000 Indians as well as millions of artefacts. Since the repatriation law was enacted, according to the National Park Service, they have returned about 20,000 sets of human remains and more than 385,000 objects.

Specialists say this number is misleadingly high because it includes every bead and pottery shard found in an Indian grave. But among them are also hundreds of important and beautiful artefacts that have been prizes in museum collections.

"Some people argue that this is religion trying to assert itself over science, but we don't see it that way," said Keith Kintigh, president of the Society for American Archaeology. "Our position is that there are Native American rights, but that science

and research are also legitimate. They have to be balanced. That's exactly what the law tries to do, and I think it's been pretty successful.

"Take these beautiful pottery vessels that were interred with Indians a thousand years ago," Kintigh said. "On the one hand, there are people who think those objects should be underground beside the people they were buried with. But most museums with Indian collections display funerary objects. They're enormous cultural achievements and have a lot to tell us. In many cases, they've even been used as models for the revival and continuation of traditional artistic styles."

Since the law was passed, tribal officials have held countless meetings with curators, who have generally learned to view objects in their collections in a new way. Indians have also conceded that it is sometimes best to leave their artefacts in collections where they

**"The day the carving
came back, people were
crying and weeping.
This is not just
art to us."**

can be seen and appreciated. In a few cases, they have allowed museums to keep sacred objects on the condition that they be handled in special ways. Some must be kept out of public view, others must only be displayed facing in a particular direction, and still others must be sprinkled regularly with substances like chopped tobacco or corn pollen.

The Field Museum in Chicago, which has one of the country's richest collections of Indian artefacts, has returned about a dozen in recent years. It is now preparing to repatriate one of its prizes, a towering totem pole depicting an eagle, a thunderbird and a bear, to the

Indian cemeteries that are uncovered during floods or road-building that they do not have enough energy left to deal with objects that are safe in museum vaults. Some objects that tribes would like to claim have been treated with chemical preservatives, including arsenic, that make them toxic and unsuitable for ceremonial use.

Another problem has been raised by some Indian leaders who maintain that all objects from non-European cultures in North America belong in the hands of Indians. The 1990 law, however, rejects that so-called "pan-Indian" argument. It requires that the claimant tribe prove it is a "lineal descendant" of the tribe from which the artefacts or remains came.

As a result of this provision, the law has served some tribes better than others. Southwestern tribes like the Hopi and Navajo, for example, have maintained cultural continuity over centuries and therefore have strong claims to objects in museum collections. Others, including many in the eastern U.S. that were decimated by waves of European settlement, have more trouble proving their descent from tribes that existed long ago.

Another major conflict remains over efforts by some tribes to recover remains that are many thousands of years old and that scientists say should be studied for vital clues about the history of human migration to the American continent. But many curators have come to agree that Indians have a right to recover their sacred artefacts and the bones of those they can legitimately claim as ancestors.

This kind of change in perception represents the law's greatest contribution, according to experts like Rick West, a Cheyenne Indian and curator of the Smithsonian Institute's National Museum of the American Indian in New York City, widely considered to be the finest in the world. The museum has returned about 2,000 objects to Indian tribes across the U.S., in Canada and in several Latin American countries.

"As institutions of culture, museums that house these materials have a vital interest in buttressing those cultures and supporting them into the future," West said, adding that "this process has directly benefited museums themselves. Even a collection as great as ours is very spottily documented, and through this process of repatriation we've had people from native communities visiting our collection who can inevitably tell us a great deal about objects that are not subject to repatriation.

"When the law was first enacted in 1990 there was practically hysteria in some parts of the museum community about what was going to happen," West continued. "Now most of that has faded away. Both sides have been deliberate and thoughtful, and it has ended up benefiting both the native and museum communities. This is not just words. It has real impact." ■



The Smithsonian's exemplary Museum of the American Indian.

© Tom Grady/REA, Paris

Cape Fox tribe in Alaska. The pole was taken from an abandoned village in 1899. "It was never the intent of the legislation to bring in trucks and haul away museum collections," said Jonathan Haas, a curator at the Field Museum. "It was intended to provide a mechanism for the return of a very small number of very important pieces that never should have been taken from their place of origin in the first place."

The repatriation process has not proceeded without problems. Many Indian tribes do not have the financial resources to organize claims for sacred objects. Others are so preoccupied with protecting

One of the two Buddhas of solid gold found in the Emperor's bedroom (of the summer palace in Beijing) . . . was for Napoleon III. The other fell to the share of the English. . . . We were the victors and therefore all objects of value belonged to our nation.

Count d'Herisson, commander of the Anglo-French forces in China (1839-1898)

2. SAVING OUR TREASURES

For that stolen Vermeer, follow the art squad

Italy was the first country to set up a special police squad to crack down on art trafficking. Its investigators go as far afield as Jamaica to pursue art traffickers, and serve as a model across Europe

FABIO ISMAN

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT FOR THE ROME-BASED
NEWSPAPER *IL MESSAGGERO*

He contacted the Italian police, who identified the suspect as an infamous trafficker. His phone was tapped, and he was arrested in front of a London gallery carrying the painting under his arm.

Conforti follows up with the story of 29 paintings (including a Perugino) that were stolen in 1987 from the municipal picture gallery in Bettona, a village near Perugia, in central Italy. The investigation required the participation of law enforcement officers from six countries on three continents. The trail led them all the way to Kingston, Jamaica, where they arrested a former Jamaican senator, who was sentenced to two years' hard labour. The 29 paintings suffered no damage.

On the heels of a Van Gogh

The *carabinieri* also join investigations initiated on foreign soil. In 1986, an armoured car was robbed in Dublin. It was carrying 18 paintings belonging to an Irish collector, including a Vermeer, a Goya and a Rubens, with an estimated worth of 50 million pounds sterling (\$33.3 million). "That theft," says Conforti, "once again led us to drug trafficking and money-laundering circuits in offshore areas such as Antigua, in the Caribbean, and the Isle of Man, in Great Britain." The Turkish police found one of the paintings in Istanbul in 1990. Their English counterparts recovered three others, which had been moved to London. Four—including the Goya and the Vermeer—were pawned in return for a loan to a diamond dealer and deposited in a Luxembourg bank. The *carabinieri* found them while investigating a money-laundering scheme. Three paintings, including the Rubens, are still missing.

Set up in 1969, the art trafficking squad is the oldest of its kind in Europe. Its creation was largely spurred by the scope of looting in a country with tremendous archaeological and artistic wealth. The *carabinieri* have recorded over 630,000 thefts in the past 30 years, and their investigations have



A proud General Conforti (left) with antique vases recovered in 1995.

"Each time we've found works abroad, which number 8,000 so far, international police cooperation was essential," says General Roberto Conforti. To make his point, the head of the *carabinieri* squad specialized in protecting artistic heritage tells the story of the *Virgin*, painted by Benozzo Gozzoli (1420-1479).

In 1995, the painting was stolen from the Pieve di Calci, a church near Pisa, and vanished into thin air. One day, a detective from Scotland Yard who had infiltrated a drug ring thought he'd found a suspect.

enabled them to find 180,000 art works and 360,000 archaeological objects. "Forty percent of the stolen art works are taken from private collections and churches," one police officer explains. "In churches, paintings are not the only items that are stolen. Objects from mass are very popular. Counterfeiters recycle benches, which are then used to stretch the canvas of fake paintings. Analyzing the wood is used as proof that it's several centuries old."

The art trafficking squad is growing: its 145-strong force will soon increase to 185, spread out in 11 cities. "We're neither archaeologists, nor art historians. We've had just a few months' training in those fields," says Conforti. "We're senior investigators, and we consult with the cultural affairs ministry when we need an expert opinion." The squad manages the world's biggest Internet-accessible databank: it includes 1,100,000 stolen art works, of which 300,000 are outside Italy's borders.

Over the past few years, European countries have joined the international UNESCO and UNIDROIT conventions, making it easier for police to cooperate with each other across borders. Italy has often been held up as an example. France has set up a similar, although smaller structure, while Spain is poised to follow suit. Before Great Britain joined the 1970 Convention on March 14, 2001, the issue stirred a national debate, during which Conforti was invited to explain his point of view before the House of Lords—a first for an Italian military officer.

Italy's example is a model beyond the European Union. "We've trained a Hungarian team," says one law enforcement officer. "The Iranians and Palestinians have asked if they can take our courses. In Bangkok recently, the 11th session of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Restitution and Return Committee adopted our recommendation to outlaw Internet auction sales of archaeological pieces."

Although it is impossible to count the thefts of archeological pieces from illegal excavations, their estimated number is falling in Italy because of better surveillance methods. "Each year, our police recover 30,000 items, enough to fill a whole museum," says the same officer. "But elsewhere, the looting is getting worse. Archeological thieves are setting their sights on Libya, Lebanon and Cyprus."

The *carabinieri's* operations sometimes lead to spectacular successes when it comes to both Old Master and modern paintings. It took them just one month to recover two Van Gogh paintings (*The Gardener* and *Woman from Arles*) and a Cézanne (*Cabanon de Jourdain*, the last work the artist painted before his death), which were stolen from the national gallery of modern art in Rome. "We're not always so successful," says Conforti. "I won't be satisfied until we find Caravaggio's *Nativity*, which was stolen in Palermo in 1969. We don't believe the painting has been destroyed, but we fear it's in the hands of the mafia." ■

**"Each year,
our police recover
30,000 items,
enough to fill
a whole museum."**

The illegal traffic in cultural property is such a cancer and evil in our country that it is only equalled by the traffic in drugs. It is a borderless network which does not cease in the face of criminal action and methods.

***Alberto Massa,
Peruvian foreign affairs
minister***

MICHEL HUCORNE*: BELGIUM'S WAKE-UP CALL

For a long time, Belgium has had everything it takes to succeed in the highly lucrative African art trade. Dealers like the country's ideal location in the middle of Europe, long-standing links with Africa, first-rate specialists, smooth-running distribution channels—and inefficient police controls due to a legal vacuum.

Nigeria and Mali are unsuccessfully trying to protect their terracotta sculptures, Burkina Faso its stone statuettes, the people living on the shores of Lake Chad their miniatures. Oddly, although it is illegal to export these works from Africa, it is lawful to import them into Belgium, which has no laws against the practice.

Brussels used to boast about this outstanding situation. Until very recently, speculation on the finest examples of Nok statuary was in full swing in the city, and well-informed collectors on a narrow downtown street examined rare pieces stolen from the Kinshasa Museum after the fall of the Mobutu regime.

However, a story that never should have affected Belgium sent shock waves through the little kingdom. In April 2000, the Paris

daily newspaper *Libération* disclosed that the new museum of first arts at the Louvre had acquired two Nok statuettes from Nigeria with an illicit provenance. At first, this was an affair between France and Africa. But soon it was learned that the statuettes had transited through Brussels. At the end of the same year, a report by RTBF, Belgium's public television network, showed the workings of the Brussels market, sparking a public outcry. A senator, François Roelants du Vivier, questioned the government. After 30 years of indifference, which encouraged unbridled trade, officials finally decided to ratify the UNESCO Convention.

In explaining why it had taken so long to do so, the ministry of foreign affairs pointed to institutional complexities. First, he explained, the federal system has to decide which authority has competence in this area. "I wouldn't say," the minister replied to the senator, "that [this wait-and-see attitude] was the best decision our country ever made." ■

* Director of the "Nok in stock" TV documentary made for RTBF

2. SAVING OUR TREASURES

The Getty's *mea culpa*

Breaking with its freewheeling past, the well-endowed California museum is abiding to a new credo: no more dubious acquisitions, and a commitment to protecting the world's archaeological heritage

MARK ROSE

MANAGING EDITOR OF THE MAGAZINE *ARCHAEOLOGY*

Marion True, the antiquities curator of the prestigious J. Paul Getty Museum, was sitting in the audience of a conference in Viterbo (Italy) when an Italian local heritage official fired the claim: one of the museum's prize pieces, a fifth-century BC drinking cup, had been looted from Cerveteri, in the ancient area of Latium. Decorated with scenes of the Trojan War, the cup, known as a *kylix*, bore the signatures of the potter Euphronios and the painter Onesimos.

That was in 1997. Two years later, on February 5, 1999, True chaperoned three antiquities, including the *kylix*, back to Italy. All three had been stolen and found their way into the Getty's 50,000-strong antiquities collection in Malibu, California. One was purchased in 1982 from a European dealer who told the Getty it had long been in England. In fact, it had been published in 1958 as part of a private collection in Italy. The last, a youth head, came from the New York collectors Lawrence and Barbara Fleischman, and had been taken from an excavation storeroom in Venosa.

Since taking her post at the Getty in 1986, True has had the unenviable job of dealing with many controversial purchases made by her predecessors, not to mention the museum's reputation of turning a blind eye on the problematic origins of high-priced antiquities. In 1988, American dealer Peg Goldberg confidently offered the Getty sixth-century Byzantine mosaics stolen from the Panagía Kanakariá church in Cyprus for \$20 million. True declined, however, and reported the matter to the head of Cyprus' department of antiquities. The mosaics were eventually returned. Still, as recently as 1994, Boston University's Murray McClellan chastized the museum for its "flagrant disregard" of the American Association of Museums' code of ethics.

One of the most embarrassing legacies of the Getty's freewheeling past is the statue of a *kouros*, a naked youth, supposedly from the sixth century BC. It was bought from a Swiss dealer in 1983 for a reported \$7 to \$9 million. A letter accompa-



Fragments of the drinking cup signed by the potter E

nying it, supposedly written by German scholar Ernst Langlotz in 1952, placed the statue in a Swiss collection. This letter is a forgery; it bears a postal code that came into use only in the 1970s. In 1990, an art historian compared the Getty's *kouros* to a torso allegedly made in Rome in 1985 by an Italian forger. The Getty acquired the torso, made its own comparison, and could not decide if the *kouros* was genuine or not. To this day, the enigma continues.

Staying clear of costly court cases

With these thorns in its side, the Getty announced in 1995 that it was turning a new leaf, "with an interest in channeling our resources in new directions," wrote True in a press release. "We will be directing energies toward sponsoring international conservation, education, and research projects that will lead to exhibitions and publications, as well as exchanges and long-term loans of important works of antiquity from museums here and abroad." The Getty also announced a major shift in its acquisitions policy, which True described in *The Art Newspaper*: "Now we would only consider buying from an established collection that is known to the world, so that we do not have the issue of undocumented provenance."

Was the Getty reacting to a change in tide? Over the years, organizations such as the Archaeological Institute of America have been unrelenting in their criticism of the most egregious museums, collectors and dealers. Public opinion surveys reveal strong support for protecting cultural heritage worldwide, while active source countries —



uphronios, which the Getty returned to Italy in 1999.

including Turkey, Italy, Greece and China — have started pursuing high-profile cases in the U.S. As a result, museums are thinking twice about acquisitions that may come with costly liabilities.

But according to some observers, the Getty's new policy was seriously flawed. As Ricardo Elia commented in *Archaeology*, "The term 'well-documented provenance' refers to an object's ownership history [more exactly, the history of possession] and should not be confused with archaeological 'provenance,' the findspot of an object. The Getty's new policy, in fact, does not require proof that an object has been removed from its country of origin through legal means; it simply requires that an established record of possession be documented before November 1995. While the policy should prevent the acquisition of antiquities looted or smuggled after this date, it allows the museum to acquire pieces that were illegally removed before it."

The lure of priceless collections

True's most controversial moves involve the Fleischman collection, some 300 Bronze Age, Greek, Roman, and Etruscan antiquities, valued at \$80 million in 1996. It was exhibited at the Getty and at the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1994 and 1995. Was the November 1995 date chosen by the

museum with an eye toward the Fleischman collection acquisition? Why not 1970, the date of the UNESCO Convention, or 1983, the date of the Convention's implementing legislation in the United States? True says that no agreement or understanding existed concerning the eventual donation of the collection to the Getty. "This acquisition," she told *The Art Newspaper* in 1996, "is in line with exactly what we said we would do." According to her, the Getty even turned down some objects the Fleischmans bought after the 1994-1995 exhibition.

Even if there was no prior agreement, this acquisition shows the limitations of the Getty's new policy. Was the Fleischman collection "established" and do the objects from it have a "well-documented provenance?" The youth's head that True escorted back certainly did: the storeroom in Venosa from which it was stolen. But that may only be the tip of the iceberg. In a revealing analysis, researchers from the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology found that 92 percent of the catalogue entries had no findspot, and 70 percent of the objects had become publicly known in the exhibition.

Waiting for the trickle-down effect

Despite these reservations, the Getty can no longer be labelled the voracious acquirer it was in the past. Moreover, its considerable resources are to be directed in constructive ways, including site conservation. Even if it does accept collections like the Fleischmans', there is at least a 1995 cut-off date. Also, True has a track record of co-operating in repatriation questions.

Has the Getty's change in attitude caught on in other American museums? The Metropolitan Museum in New York has yet to return a hoard of third-century BC silver vessels despite convincing evidence they were looted from Morgantina in Sicily. Boston's Museum of Fine Arts has rejected recent claims made in 1998 by Mali for terracotta sculptures and Guatemala for Mayan vases. Most disappointing was Harvard's Arthur M. Sackler Museum's acquisition in the mid-1990s of Greek vase fragments and coins with dubious backgrounds, despite a 1971 policy that Harvard would no longer accept such items "by purchase, bequest, or gift."

But the picture is not everywhere bleak. In late 1998, for example, the Denver Art Museum voluntarily returned a Maya wooden lintel from the site of El Zotz in Guatemala. Dated to ca. AD 550-650, it was stolen between 1966 and 1968 and purchased by the museum in 1973. "When we gathered all of the information surrounding the lintel's acquisition," said the museum's director Lewis Sharp, "returning it was simply the right thing to do." ■

The motives which induced me to carry out this operation in Greece proceeded entirely from the wish to secure for Great Britain, and hence for Europe as a whole, the best possible knowledge, and the means of improving it, through the most outstanding works.

Lord Elgin, British diplomat (1766-1841)

2. SAVING OUR TREASURES

The proud descendants of the Lord of Sipán

As the current guardian of the tomb of the Lord of Sipán—the biggest archaeological find in Latin America in recent decades—Peruvian archaeologist Walter Alva explains how the village of Lambayeque has profited from a treasure miraculously saved from looters and international smugglers

INTERVIEW BY ASBEL LÓPEZ

UNESCO COURIER JOURNALIST

How was the Lord of Sipán discovered?

When our team reached the site on February 25, 1987, it was already being extensively pillaged by grave-robbers, who had stripped pieces of gold from one tomb. Local people had taken control of the monument, and in the grip of a kind of gold-fever, were trying to break into other tombs in search of more precious metals. If we hadn't done anything, the site would have very quickly been totally destroyed, as has already occurred in many other sites like Vicus, Lomanegra, Frías and the Valley of Jequetepeque. Peru was then in a serious economic and moral crisis. People thought it was crazy for the police to protect an archaeological treasure that they believed was their rightful property. The situation was very tense, and the only way to save the monument was either to mount a heavy police guard or turn it into an archaeological site, which is what we eventually did.

What financial backing did you have at the start?

Very little. Three hundred dollars from a local foundation, government assistance to hire 20 labourers and, somewhat later, money from a brewery. Hiring the labourers not only meant the site could be cleaned up, but also eased the tension with local people by giving them work. One grave-robber died in a clash with police as the monument was being repossessed.

Was there any help from abroad?

We received aid from the Heinz Foundation and from National Geographic in mid-1987 when we were certain that it was a very important find. The main tomb of the Lord of Sipán contained a body wrapped in hundreds of copper, gold and silver objects that were part of the funeral hoard.



Walter Alva: cultivating local pride.

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Moche culture

a course in metal conservation to Latin American technicians. We have been entirely self-sufficient since 1998, which goes to show how international aid creates a lasting momentum.

The United States has managed to recover and return to Peru various items stolen previously from a tomb in Sipán. How important is that help?

It's crucial. In 1987, a gang of smugglers tried to sell one of the ornaments for \$1.6 million in a scandal involving several diplomats. Luckily, the United States restricted the import of pieces from the Lord of Sipán's tomb in 1990. This law could only be extended once, but after it finally expired a memorandum of understanding was signed in 1998 covering not only items from Sipán, but also almost all the Peruvian heritage currently held in the United States. I think all countries should have agreements like that: it's the only way to close ranks against these crimes, which affect so many countries with an extraordinary past but a troubled present. It's also a matter of respect. Just as we respect human rights, self-determination, sovereignty and the environment, so we should place the protection of people's heritage on the world's list of priorities.

Has the hostility of the village changed?

A lot. Right from the start we tried hard to regain their trust. We allowed about 6,000 people in the region to visit the site, for example. They could witness the public and national importance of the dig, which was carried out exclusively by Peruvians and whose discoveries belonged to the Peruvian nation—and not to a bunch of grave-robbers.

Are the local people happy with its effect on their lives?

There's no way of course that the discovery will solve the economic crisis, but we have managed to get the Lambayeque region on the tourist circuit. Local people are getting their self-respect back and now feel proud of being descendants of the Moche culture, which has generated such admiration around the world. *National Geographic* has devoted reports to the site and foreign television stations from Japan, Australia, the United States and Chile have filmed it. There are now colleges, universities, restaurants and shops named after the Lord of Sipán. The name has entered the language and enhanced the region's identity. People have been able to see for themselves the very positive effects of the discovery and the archaeological project to save it.

How is work going on the new museum?

It's more than a museum. We want to make it into a centre that can act as a magnet for cultural, tourist and scientific development in the



Comic strips tell the story of Sipán and guard against looting.

© Proyecto Tumbas Reales de Sipán

region. It should be open by the end of this year. There'll be 3,000 square metres of exhibits, incorporating the latest innovations in museum presentation and situated on seven hectares of land alongside laboratories and botanical gardens. We want it to be "the" Peruvian museum of the millennium. ■



www.telefonica.com.pe/sipan/hallazgo.htm

DESERT GLORY: THE STORY OF THE MOCHES



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A death mask.

Around a thousand years before the Incas, between the first and seventh centuries A.D., the Moches occupied a 600-kilometre wide band of desert off the northern coast of Peru, sandwiched by the Pacific Ocean and the Andes. Only a civilization with highly developed technical resources could have survived in one of the world's most arid regions. The Moches achieved this feat by developing a complex network of irrigation canals supplying

water to double the amount of land now cultivated in the same valleys. Divided into small dominions ruled by autocratic lords, the Moches built giant adobe buildings in the shape of truncated pyramids, the most outstanding example of which is the 35-metre high Huaca del Sol. They also engaged in pioneering metal production, particularly with copper, and established sophisticated textile workshops. The discovery in 1987 of the tomb close to the town of Sipán belonging to a dignitary in one of the Moches' royal families has enabled researchers to learn much more about a hitherto largely unknown civilization. ■

2. SAVING OUR TREASURES

“We have to change the buyer’s attitude”

Turkish investigative journalist Özgen Acar has spent thirty years trailing art smugglers. His findings have brought prestigious foreign museums to court and treasures back home

INTERVIEW BY MICHEL BESSIÈRES

UNESCO COURIER JOURNALIST



As a journalist, you have uncovered several art smuggling affairs. How did you first get involved?

I studied economics and political science at university. Archaeology is a hobby. In July 1970, Peter Hopkirk, the *Sunday Times* correspondent, came to Turkey. He was investigating a lead about the smuggling of an important treasure dating back to the sixth century BC, from the reign of the last Lydian king, Croesus. We worked together on this issue. The treasure had been purchased by the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met), then hidden in steel safes in the museum’s basement. If an internationally famous institution such as the Met was working in

tandem with smugglers, this deserved media attention. As a result, I began more detailed investigations.

The Lydian hoard was returned to Turkey in 1993. What took so long?

First, the secrecy surrounding the Met intensified. Meanwhile, I continued to meet with villagers and local officials in the region of the former Lydian kingdom. I didn’t spend 16 years reporting on it, I just investigated and collected evidence. If I had written on the topic, the Met would have postponed putting the treasure on show. But they had to exhibit it sooner or later because some wealthy people had paid around \$1.7 million between 1966 and 1968 to secure the purchase of these pieces. The Met finally exhibited 50 of the 350 pieces in the summer of 1984. I saw

them myself and having determined that they matched my rough descriptions, I continued my investigations until 1986, when I published my findings in the Turkish newspaper I work for. The Turkish government brought a suit against the museum in the New York Federal Court. Six years later, the Met was forced to return the treasure.

Your investigations shed light on the inner workings of a smuggling network.

Four farmers had found the treasure in a tumulus [a tomb in a mound] in the province of Usak. They sold it in Izmir to Ali Bayırlar, a prominent smuggler, who later sold it to the owner of a New York antique gallery, John J. Klejman. Learning that these villagers had made money from the treasure, neighbouring villagers decided to try their luck. Around this time, two tumuli were stripped of their frescoes and these were also sent to New York. I should stress that I’m still angry with the curator of the Greek and Roman Department, Dietrich von Bothmer, who bought the treasure for the Met. But if he hadn’t purchased the entire collection, it would have proved impossible to bring the pieces together again.

Have Western museums and private collectors generally been as reluctant as the Met to return stolen artefacts?

In the 1980s, the Antalya police caught a ring of smugglers. They had dug up a hoard of Greek coins from the fifth century BC in Elmali. The Elmali hoard was so important that it was later called the “Treasure of the Century.” There were 1,900 silver coins missing. I traced them to Edip Telli and Fuat Üzülmöz, two respected art dealers in Munich until my stories broke. They had links to Nevzat Telli in London, who was involved in drug and antiquity smuggling beside his textile business. The police and public prosecutors in these countries, however, made no arrests, stating that “trading in antiquities was not a crime in their countries.” I concluded that the hoard was in the possession of William Koch, one of the wealthiest 400 people in the U.S. Again, legal action went on for 10

Digging for the truth.

years, until Koch, realizing he would lose the case, returned the hoard to Turkey.

You have worked on many other cases since then...

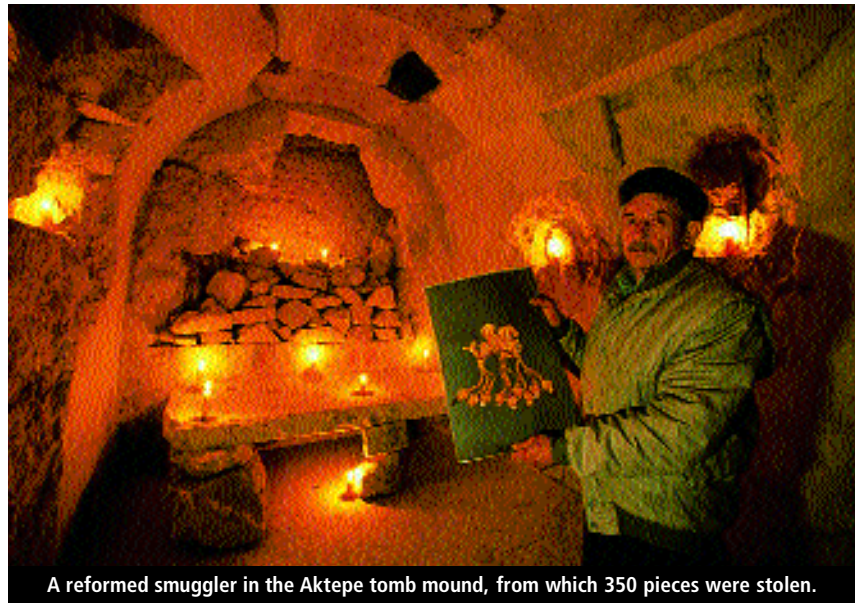
Yes, and I won't be out of business any time soon. Turkey's heritage is under threat, just as it is in Greece, Cyprus, Iraq, Syria, Iran, India, Cambodia or China. There are more ancient Greek cities in Turkey than in Greece, and more Roman ones than in Rome. The country has 50,000 villages, but 70,000 pre-Islamic sites. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to assess accurately the monetary value of illegal art trade. A major cultural foundation in New York calculated that in 1989, Americans spent approximately \$5 billion on works of art the previous year. Two billion dollars of this was spent on smuggled, stolen or fake works of art. The total value of artefacts smuggled from Turkey was estimated to run between \$300 and 400 million. Only two or three million, not even one percent, went to the Turkish looters.

From your experience, what are the most effective ways to prevent smuggling?

First of all, we have to change the buyer's attitude. Court cases won by Turkey have discouraged museums and collectors from buying smuggled works. They don't want the inconvenience of a court case, having their names in the newspapers and losing money. The Met paid \$1.7 million for their collection and Koch \$3.5 million for his. They spent at least twice as much as this on legal expenses. Secondly, Turkey should make agreements with museums in the purchasing countries. "Don't buy smuggled works—I'll send you exhibitions on loan every three or four years." As a matter of fact, Turkey has sent as many as 35 exhibitions abroad in the last 15 years. The third step is to expose the smuggling mafia with their international connections, and put them out of business. Edip Telli, for example, has had to quit the smuggling business. His brother in London was imprisoned for heroin smuggling. Several respected antiquity dealers in the U.S. lost confidence in their business partners when they realized that they were, in fact, dealing with smugglers.

Some of the artefacts you helped return to Turkey are Lydian, Greek and Roman. Are they really part of Turkey's heritage?

All those artefacts were made in Anatolia. Does the Euphronios Vase in the Met belong to the Italians or the Greeks? It certainly doesn't belong to the Americans. The craftsmen who made it were Greek, but it's part of Italian history. Instead of thinking about national ownership, we need to consider ownership and protection in the name of all humanity. Artefacts taken from Troy are now found in 42 different museums all over the world. I don't know how many are held in private collections. How is it possible for



A reformed smuggler in the Aktepe tomb mound, from which 350 pieces were stolen.

© Patrick Aventurier/Gamma, Paris

a scholar to travel to all those 42 museums? If they were exhibited in a museum near the ancient city of Troy, everyone would benefit from it.

You have also done some work in Cyprus.

I helped to uncover the smuggling of frescoes and mosaics from Byzantine churches. Once again, they are the common property of mankind. My articles about a Turkish smuggler helped the Greek Cypriot Administration to secure the return of artefacts from Indianapolis to Southern Cyprus. In London, I found two Korans that had been stolen from a Turkish foundation on the Greek island of Rhodes. They were sent back. I also came across Mycenaean gold treasure in a New York gallery. I talked to diplomats from the Greek embassy in Washington and advised them on the best way to secure their return without incurring legal expenses.

What are you currently investigating?

I've been working on the "Weary Hercules" statue, half of which is in the Antalya Museum [Turkey] while the other half is in the hands of private collectors. Unfortunately, Bill Clinton, before leaving office, made Ms Shelby White, a co-owner of the statue, a member of the official advisory group on preventing plundering. I'm also covering the efforts of Turkish authorities to ensure the return of six gold pieces from the Croesus treasure, now held by a gallery in France.

Have you ever been threatened?

Yes, I've received many threats by telephone. Once they even tried to kidnap me when I was on summer holiday. I've been thrown out of many New York galleries because they thought I was an undercover agent of the Turkish government. I have also been taken to court on several occasions in Turkey. ■

I trust that future conquerors will learn . . . not to plunder cities they capture and take advantage of the distress of other peoples to adorn their homelands.

Polybius, Greek

Putting embryos on the assembly line

By creating embryos through cloning, we may also find a treasure trove for treating disease. But in the rush to profit, we may sell short the very stuff that makes us human, a sense of dignity.

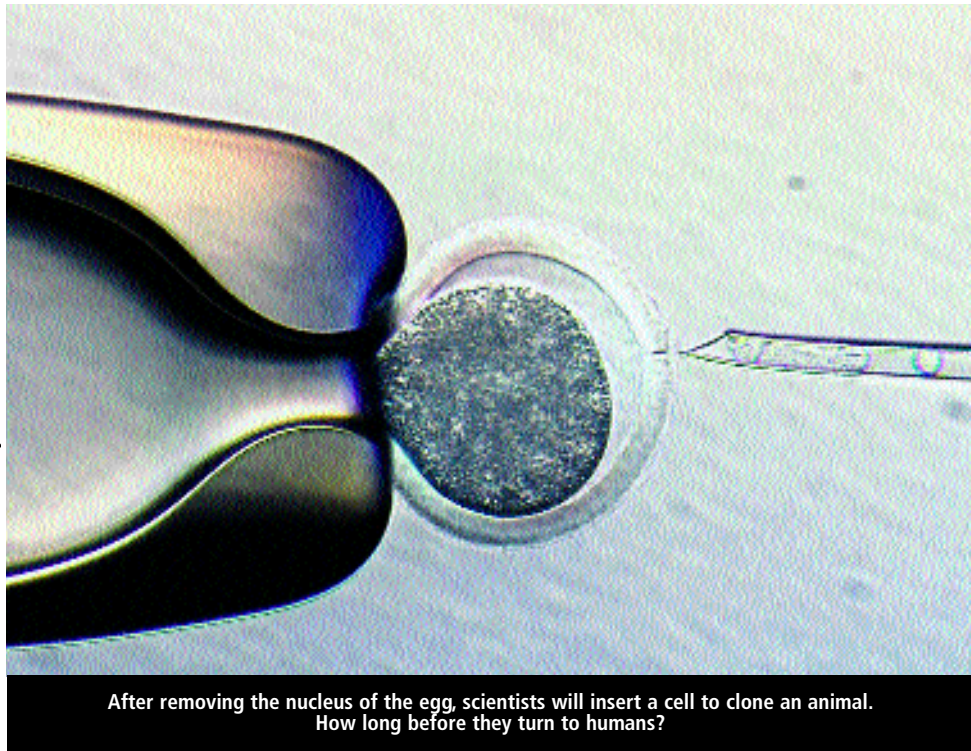
AMY OTCHET

UNESCO COURIER JOURNALIST

A theoretical speck in a Petri dish has a veritable mob straining for a better view across the industrialized world and beyond: men and women in white coats and religious robes jostle beside parliamentary lords, scruffy environmentalists and patients trembling with Parkinson's disease. The mystery in question is none other than the human embryo cloned à la Dolly. The aim is not to produce people. Through "therapeutic" cloning, scientists would create embryos to harvest stem cells, which may hold the key to treating a wide range of disease. But like most passionate debates, the real issue—commercialization—sits quietly in the background of the emotional din.

Human respect or cellular sludge?

The debate erupted across the industrially advanced world on January 22nd, when Britain became the first European country to legalize the creation of cloned human embryos. Members of the European Parliament almost immediately expressed their shock and condemned the decision. Yet in many ways the new law is a logical extension of rules dating back over a decade. Since 1990, UK researchers could create and use embryos for limited research purposes, namely to treat infertility and detect birth defects. The new law widens the field of study to include stem cells, which experts say could revolutionize medicine, offering the possibility of transplants to treat scores of illnesses from Parkinson's disease to diabetes (see box). No one has yet applied for a license to



© K. Jones-Texas AM University/Liaison/Gamma, Paris

After removing the nucleus of the egg, scientists will insert a cell to clone an animal. How long before they turn to humans?

perform such experiments, according to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, which will carefully screen each request. No other uses of cloning would be allowed and a new law has been promised to explicitly ban reproductive cloning.

As expected, the most rigid opposition has come from the Catholic Church, which considers the embryo to be a living person from the moment of conception. Cloning aside, even research involving "spare" embryos (created for infertility treatments but not used) is condemned because it is morally wrong to use a person for the benefit of someone else.

At the opposite end of the spectrum lie the hardcore utilitarians of science and business, who are generally astute enough not to announce their politically incorrect views: namely that the embryo is just another batch of cellular sludge that can and should be used like any other biological resource in the pursuit

of medical research.

Somewhere between these two poles lies the famous middle ground, for which there is no clear road map but a general principle: respect for human dignity, a touchstone of French and European law. "The very fact of being human automatically entails the right to a certain respect or dignity. It is what separates us from other animals," says Noëlle Lenoir, president of the European Group on Ethics and justice on the French Constitutional Court. The seeds of this notion rest in the major monotheistic religions, says Lenoir, but the principle effectively took root in international law following the Second World War and the eugenic brutality of the Nazis.

Finding biological clues

The embryo is not legally considered a person but rather "a human being in the true sense of the word, meaning it exists and its nature is human," according

to Bernard Mathieu, a French professor at the Sorbonne. This protects the embryo from being reduced to a commercial resource without intruding upon a woman's right to protect her health and control her fertility. Such an understanding of human dignity underlies the decision by many European countries to strictly limit or prohibit embryo research in general.

But the UK's green light to therapeutic cloning reflects a very different interpretation of the same principle, according to Alastair Campbell, a professor and member of the UK expert committee which recommended that Parliament approve the research. The traditional categories of vocabulary for distinguishing between respect for human life and that of persons are too clumsy, says Campbell. Instead, he turns to biology for clues in defining ethical limits. Basically, the embryo is treated with increasing moral seriousness or protection as it develops. This is why it is forbidden to experiment on any embryo—cloned or not—after 14 days, when the "primitive streak" or the first signs of an emerging nervous system appear.

A lurking trade in stem cells

Dr Donald Bruce of the Church of Scotland reluctantly agrees that certain forms of research may be justified on

"spare" embryos. However, the recent UK decision crosses a major ethical threshold, says the director of the Church's Society, Religion and Technology Project. "Instead of treating embryos as a whole," says Bruce, "we now see them as a source of parts." The UK has moved from a policy of "no and less"—which only permits the use of embryos when there are no alternatives for understand-

**While it is politically
risky to claim
the embryo itself,
there are plenty
of backdoors to exert
control over it.**

ding very serious problems—to a "yes, provided" approach—which opens the floodgates provided that certain conditions are met.

There is also a practical side to this ethical dilemma. Imagine that we do take the cloning route to harvest stem cells: doctors would require at least one egg, but probably a dozen or more, to treat each patient. Hence Bruce's recommendation that research should explore

all the options before embarking upon therapeutic cloning (see box).

Not only is the recent UK decision too wide for critics, but it could lead to the slippery slope of reproductive cloning—whereby people are created by cloning. British law clearly forbids this scientifically remote possibility, yet the problem ultimately lies in the globalized medical community, says Bruce. Sects, businessmen and more recently a group of maverick scientists have trumpeted their intentions to clone people, despite the extraordinary risks of deformity. What will prevent them from setting up shop in a genetic safe haven, a country where bioethical legislation doesn't apply or exist?

But in the shadows of these theoretical discussions lurks the largest threat: the future trade in embryos and stem cells. Every expert cited in this paper, including Prof. Campbell who supports the research, has joined a host of others deeply concerned about commercialization. In particular, there appear to be too many loopholes in patent rules, especially in the U.S. but also in Europe and industrialized countries like Australia, Canada and Japan.

Consider the genesis of Dolly the sheep, who was born in 1996 at the Roslin Institute in Scotland. An American company, Geron, bought the commercial arm of the institute and received a license

HOW TO CLONE À LA DOLLY

Therapeutic" or adult DNA cloning are just nice ways of referring to the fabrication of human embryos by somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT), which is how that famous sheep Dolly was created. SCNT involves a few basic steps. First, take a human egg and remove the nucleus (which contains its DNA or genetic material) and insert a single healthy cell of a patient. Then pass an electric current to fuse the two and the egg acts as if it was fertilized. You now have a tiny ball of cells which some like to refer to as a pre-embryo. But this is just another euphemism used to calm public fear. That little cluster is indeed an embryo and could theoretically grow into the patient's clone *if* it were implanted into a woman's uterus and *if* all went well. Note the *ifs*, for as Dolly and her ilk remind us, the chances of actually producing a healthy human clone are extremely remote. But this may be beside the point, for the embryos in question will be destroyed within 14 days, when the first signs of neural development appear. Why go to so much trouble? Between the fifth and seventh day after fertilization, a batch of 20 to 30 cells appear that are worth gold for scientists and patients

suffering from a wide range of degenerative diseases and conditions. Embryonic stem cells (ES cells) have the potential to develop into any kind of cell in the human body. Although there are several kinds and sources of stem cells—such as those found in the bone marrow of adults—none so far seem to have the malleability of ES cells, which can also be kept and grown in laboratories for long periods of time. The great hope is that researchers will learn to direct ES cells into becoming any part of the body—cells, tissue or maybe even organs—required by a patient. For example, someone suffering from heart disease might be able to "grow" genetically identical cardiac tissue in a laboratory that could then be transplanted with little risk of rejection.

Yet there may be alternative routes to the same goal. Researchers at PPL Therapeutics, which is part of the team that produced Dolly, recently announced that they were able to transform adult skin cells back into stem cells and then into beating heart cells. This type of work might initially require embryo research but in the long term it could offer a way out of cloning. ■

to two UK patents that shocked many in Europe and the U.S. The first patent basically covered the cloning technique and the second the covered “products” of that process. This can be read to mean that Geron owns products like cloned human embryos in the early stage of development.

European doublespeak

Geron then sent a similar set of applications to the European Patent Office (EPO), which initially approved them before striking off the right to human embryos upon a second reading, according to Christoph Then, a genetic

which is meant to balance ethical and commercial concerns. On the one hand, “processes for human cloning” are not considered patentable, nor are “uses of human embryos for industrial or commercial purposes.” Nevertheless, a company can control (receive a patent for) “an element isolated from the human body or otherwise produced by means of a technical process.” This is a dazzling bit of doublespeak, but don’t believe anyone who tries to tell you exactly what it means. Instead look to recent trends in gene patenting for key clues as to what we might expect in the near future.

In theory, patents are supposed

ding straight for the human embryo via therapeutic cloning. According to Then of Greenpeace, the number of patent applications directed at human embryos is dramatically increasing. Last year, two biotech companies, from Australia and the U.S., applied for and received a European patent on cloned human and animal embryos as well as mixed species embryos from pigs and humans. But after a major public uproar stoked in Germany by Greenpeace, the Munich-based EPO said it was a “mistake” and the companies admitted they had gone too far and promised not to include human embryos in their patents anywhere in the world.

While it is politically risky to claim the embryo itself, there are plenty of backdoors to exert control over it. A company may receive broad powers over simply retrieving embryonic stem cells or culturing and guiding them in a particular direction. This is not to suggest that such feats don’t require ingenuity. Yet depending upon the scope of the patent awarded, we could see a re-run of the same abusive pay-per-view approach taken with genes.

More than just a sum

So far only four countries have implemented the patent directive. France and Germany have both expressed opposition and the Netherlands, supported by Italy and Norway, has challenged the directive in Europe’s Court of Justice. Outside of officialdom, groups like Greenpeace are turning on the pressure to reopen the negotiations.

This is usually the point where journalists and experts sign off with a vague but earnest call for public debate. But the exchange is already underway—in the media, religious halls, universities and the corridors of hospitals, where doctors, patients and the families speak and think quietly. This appears to be a step forward, yet there is a new trend among some scientists and bioethicists to denigrate this kind of discussion, especially if it reaches an emotional timbre. Opposition is ascribed to “confusion” over the issues and to the damage done by the false but pervasive belief that “we are the sum of our genes.” Genes are just molecules and early embryos are microscopic balls of cells. Yet they both hold an iconic power which stems not from confusion, but a gut instinct to respect human dignity. ■



Wearing Tony Blair masks, activists protest cloning outside a European Union summit in December 2000.

© Patrick Gardin/AP/Boomerang, Paris

research expert for Greenpeace Germany. The decision marks a step in the right direction, says Then. But it also reflects the split personality of the European Union: while liberalizing trade rules to compete with the U.S. biotech market, it tries to squat the moral high ground of genetic research to serve as a beacon for the rest of the world.

So we find strong principled statements ringing in the European Parliament and proud reminders of the Union’s Charter, which prohibits “making the human body and its parts as such a source of financial gain.” Yet at the same time, member states are supposed to be integrating a very controversial directive on genetic patenting,

to reward inventions, not just the discovery of elements already existing in nature. You can, however, be awarded a patent for developing a novel use for an element, like a gene. But look at the human genome—the genetic map of our species—and you’ll find a trail of lawyers scurrying for a patent almost every time a scientist, or rather a computer, suspects a gene may be lurking. They cannot even fully identify it, let alone understand its function, yet they claim it as their own. This basically means that anyone else who looks to use that gene to develop a new drug or to treat a related disease must pay for the view.

This same commercial race is hea-

Saving the planet: imperialism in a green garb?

Developing countries feel that protecting the world's resources is just another way for rich nations to retain the upper hand in the international trade game

SHIRAZ SIDHVA

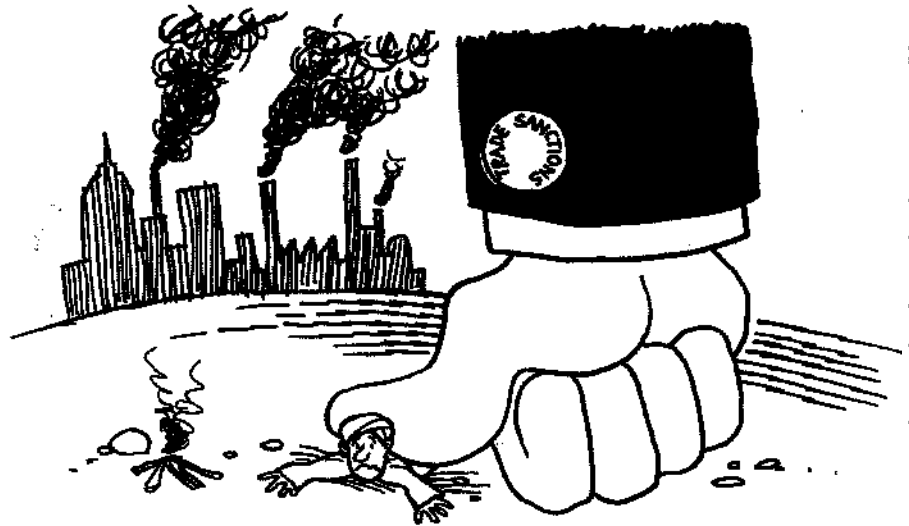
UNESCO COURIER JOURNALIST

For nearly a decade, international efforts to address global environmental concerns have been frustrated by a deep rift in perceptions between rich and poor countries. Economists and environmentalists in developing nations argue that the agenda for environmental negotiations is almost exclusively driven by the North. Under the pretext of saving the planet, they say, the industrialized world is wielding a new brand of dominance, "eco-imperialism."

Developing countries like India and China continue to resist global environmental protocols, like the 1989 Montreal Accord to cut the production of CFC gases (used for example in refrigerators) by 50 percent, or the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), part of the climate change negotiations initiated under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. "These are viewed as instruments to make the Third World pay for damages caused primarily by the North," says Indian environmentalist Vandana Shiva. India and China account for two percent of CFC consumption, while the United States consumes 29 percent. "This 'eco-imperialism' undermines national sovereignty, while generating new costs for those once marginalized by colonialism," claims Shiva.

The spectre of imperialism is likely to vitiate the next round of climate change talks in Bonn (Germany) this July, when policymakers finalize the terms on which the CDM will be implemented. Negotiated by industrialized countries to gain some flexibility in meeting the emission reduction targets pledged in Kyoto, few issues in recent environmental diplomacy are proving as contentious.

Critics say the mechanism is the latest in a string of attempts to dominate poor



© Rustam Vania/Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi

countries, which are being virtually "bribed" so that rich nations can continue business as usual. By financing forestry schemes and other energy-efficient projects, industrialized countries could exploit the mechanism to avoid reducing their own greenhouse gases. Environmentalists fear this could turn the Amazon and other primeval forests into "carbon sinks" to absorb pollution, but with side effects which disregard the developmental needs of southern countries.

Lopsided negotiations

"The Northern bias continues to dominate discussion of the global climatic crisis," explains Shiva. "The threat to the atmospheric commons has been building over centuries, mainly because of industrial activity in the North. Yet discussions seem to focus more on developing countries: the North refuses to assume extra responsibility for cleaning up the atmosphere. No wonder the Third World cries foul when it is asked to share the costs."

"The whole effort to bring about ecological change is very one-sided," says

Chow Kee, who represents Malaysia at the climate negotiations. "The developed countries don't want to give up their extravagant lifestyles, but plan to curtail our development."

Beyond negotiations on climate, efforts to link environmental concerns to trade are sparking more allegations of imperialism. "There is an attempt by rich countries to stunt the growth of developing nations like India, and we are fighting it tooth and nail," says Pramod Mahajan, India's minister for information technology. "They are practising protectionism under the garb of environmental protection." Economists argue that sanctions could spell further economic marginalization for developing countries, which often lack the means to set up expensive quality-control systems.

The 1989 Basel Convention, for instance, imposed restrictions on trade in scrap metals and recyclable materials, claiming they were hazardous to the environment. Economists say it prohibits poor countries from competing in the lucrative world market for computer parts, scrap metals, and recyclable products. ▶

Other examples of trade restrictions are cited. In the early 1990s, Malaysia and Indonesia fought to overturn an eco-labelling law introduced by Austria ostensibly to safeguard the Asian rain forests. Austria refused to import timber that was not from sustainably managed forests, but no such curbs existed for wood from temperate areas. The protectionist flavour of the measure was overt, and Austria eventually revoked it.

In other trade-environment disputes over the last decade, the United States has been accused of protectionism in banning the import of Mexican tuna because dolphins were getting ensnared and killed in nets meant for the fish. Shrimp from India, Pakistan, Thailand and Malaysia, which paid no heed to sea-turtle protection, were similarly banned in 1996. The sanctions may have been motivated by a desire to protect dolphins and turtles, but the poorer countries claimed that they were a pretext for suppressing competition in the global fish market.

A green agenda to stop growth?

Deepak Lal, professor of international development studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, cites these examples when he describes the green movement as “the new secular religion.” He says “green imperialists” are a new avatar of the “white man’s burden,” set to impose their values on the world.

According to Lal, rules restricting trade through the Basel Convention or attempts to ban genetically modified foods are designed to exclude poorer countries from world markets. “I look upon the green agenda as ultimately trying to stop growth in the Third World. And that means condemning three-quarters of the world’s population to continuing poverty.”

Other voices in the South, however, argue that environmental controls like the CDM are not all bad. Developing countries, say experts, will receive \$5 to \$17 billion to fund climate-friendly technologies. “The CDM gives us an opportunity to invest in projects that promote sustainable development. If incidentally they also reduce emissions, we shouldn’t quarrel with the fact,” says Dr R.K. Pachauri, of the Tata Energy Research Institute, New Delhi. “As sovereign nations, we should be confident

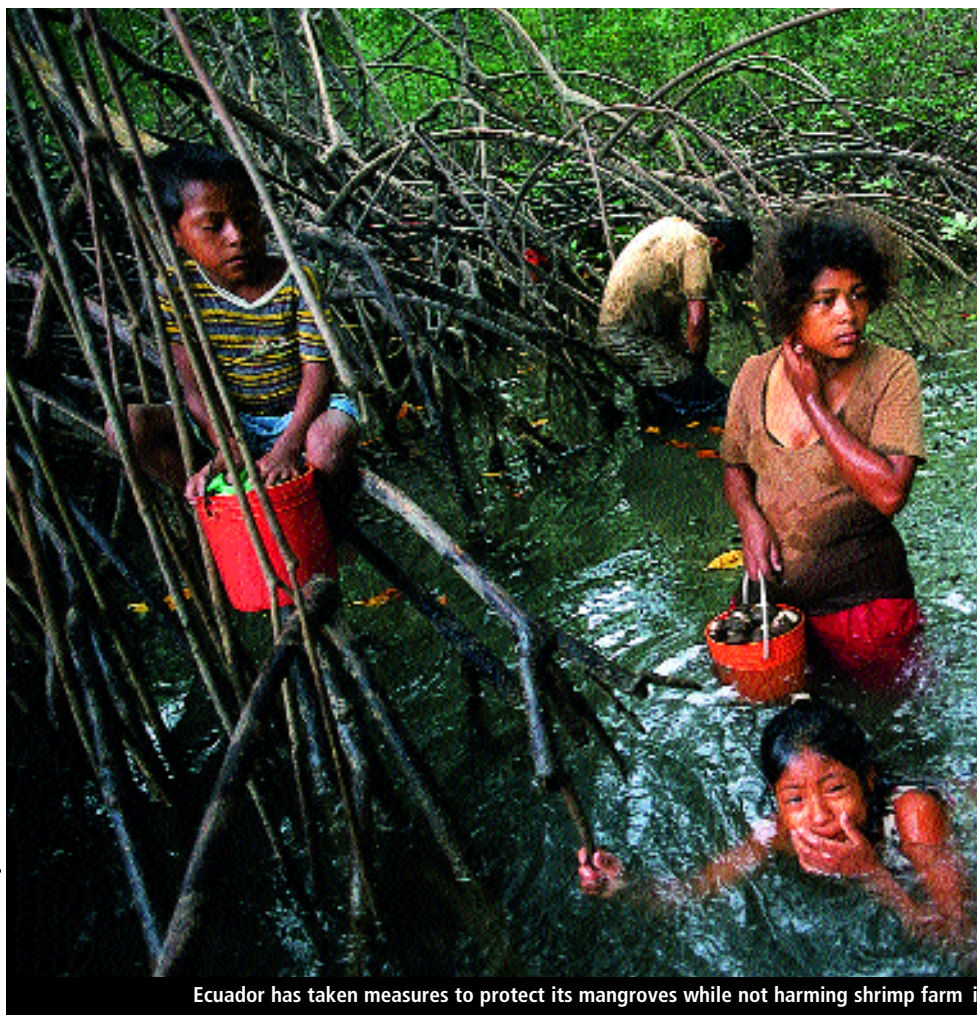
about choosing projects, like renewable energy projects, that we would in any case want to invest in.”

The rules of the CDM have yet to be established, and Pachauri urges developing countries not to squander the chance to influence their formulation.

But Anil Agarwal, director of the Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment, insists that the CDM has

saders could impart useful technologies, he writes in the *Times of India*. “Instead of rejecting wholesale what green imperialists say, we need to extract what is of value, and reject the dross.”

Though the die are loaded against developing countries during negotiations, part of the fault lies with them, say experts. “The North is aggressive and assertive about what it wants, and comes



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Ecuador has taken measures to protect its mangroves while not harming shrimp farm

neglected the concerns of poor countries. “The CDM still begs the long-term question about when and how developing countries will take on commitments of their own to reduce emissions”

Not all experts in developing countries, however, shun global environmental controls. Indian economist and newspaper editor Swaminathan S. Aiyar argues that there is “much to be learnt from the rest of the world.” Like British colonial rule, which brought with it some desirable elements like democracy, civil and gender rights to India, the new cru-

well-prepared to negotiations,” laments Agarwal. “Developing countries are comparatively disorganized and unclear about their objectives.”

The environment, Pachauri explains, is a low priority for politicians in developing countries. Lack of cooperation between these nations is another handicap. A dearth of resources and language barriers come in the way. But as developing countries know, they will be hardest hit by global warming. In the end, counsels Agarwal, it is up to them to devise ways to protect our common future. ■

SAVING THE PLANET: IMPERIALISM IN A GREEN GARB?

“Getting into the other’s shoes”

Ecuador’s former environment minister Yolanda Kakabadse once said that “my heart is in conservation, but my head tells me I must be fair to my country.” Today, as head of the World Conservation Union*, she calls for a better understanding between North and South

INTERVIEW BY SHIRAZ SIDHVA

UNESCO COURIER JOURNALIST



ng, a lifeline for many communities.

Do you believe that the current environmental agenda is increasingly driven by rich countries?

A majority of industrialized countries are more active than developing ones in international debates. For one, they have the means: it’s so costly to participate that you often find a huge team of highly technical people from developed countries and few representatives from developing ones. Recent debates on climate change and biodiversity have been clear signs that some countries in the South might not have the capacity to enter all the technical debates.

Do you believe that countries like Ecuador are targets of eco-imperialism?

I think the term is overrated. I’m not sure we’re sending out the right message with it. There are clearly signs of developed countries trying to impose on others. But on the other hand, developing countries have gained a lot of information about environmental protection over the past decade through these negotiations. There is obviously an interest on everyone’s part to see that the natural resources and the environment of the planet are dealt with. And most of these resources are concentrated in the tropical areas, where many developing countries are.

It’s not just a North-South issue: sometimes I see signs of “imperialism” within our own countries, when a sector or group tries to impose a management pattern or policy.

As an activist, you campaigned against shrimp farming and had to defend that industry when you were a minister (1998-2000). How did you reconcile that?

Is it fair to tell Ecuador not to harvest shrimps—a major export—because the mangroves are an important eco-system, or should the answer be to explore whether it is possible to harvest shrimps and protect mangroves at the same time? I’m absolutely convinced that you can do both, at least in the case of shrimps. You just move the shrimp pools a little further back from the mangroves and achieve the two goals.

Did you actually manage to do that?

We did in some places, but the majority of the pools had already been built where the mangroves were. It was not just the industry that was to blame: it’s only in the past decade that people in the North and South have become aware of the importance of mangrove conservation.

How would you have reacted if other countries had sought to impose a trade ban on certain products from Ecuador?

I would be totally against trade sanctions. We destroyed the mangroves without

realizing their value. To come 30 years later and blame us for doing something wrong is not the right attitude. Instead we should come up with a way to stop environmental damage while enhancing the capacity of a country like Ecuador to produce goods for the world market.

Has the relationship between North and South evolved on environmental issues?

There is a better understanding in the North that imposing solutions won’t take us anywhere, that teamwork is essential. The South, meanwhile, has realized that it does hold some decision-making power. Developed countries certainly have a better appreciation of poor countries’ concerns, partly because more information is available. The building of partnerships between the two sides has also increased.

Do you believe that conflicting interests over the conventions currently being formulated can be resolved?

The big challenge is how to strike a balance between conservation and development—sustainable development. That is what we must fight for. Also, there’s no process in the world that doesn’t involve conflict. Conflicts aren’t necessarily bad, they arise from differences of opinion based on different cultures, expectations, backgrounds, drives and ambitions. We have to invest in generating the capacity worldwide to manage these conflicts and understand each other’s points of view better.

What would you advise both sides to do?

You have to understand the other culture, and both sides must do this by getting into the other’s shoes, which entails looking at values, needs and conditions within any culture. That would improve the relationships of different continents and countries dramatically. ■

* The World Conservation Union (IUCN) is an umbrella organization of nearly a thousand NGOs, based in Gland (Switzerland). <http://www.iucn.org>

Africa: the radio scene tells all

Radio, the most widely used medium in Africa, can only flourish on democratic soil, which helps to explain why private stations are thriving in the west and not in the centre of the continent

EYOUM NGANGUË

CAMEROONIAN JOURNALIST

Chad has only six private radio stations, while Mali boasts 100... What explains this tremendous disparity? The two countries are similar on several counts. They are the same size (a little over 1,200,000 square kilometres), and neither has access to the sea. Both were French colonies and lived through long years of military dictatorship after achieving independence in 1960. And last year, they ranked among the world's poorest countries, with a per capita income of \$261 for Mali and \$240 for Chad.

"An unfavourable political environment and socio-cultural factors" slow down the development of radio pluralism, says Gilbert Maoundodji, director of *FM Liberté*, Chad's second independent radio station, launched last year. "The people who govern here have not yet completely assimilated the values of collective action, freedom, tolerance and democracy. That sets up a roadblock to initiative."

A country's political context rubs off on its airwaves. Mali, which held free elections in 1992 and has set up democratic institutions that function reasonably well, launched its first private radio station in March 1991. *Radio Bamakan* paved the way for a host of others, including *Radio Liberté*, *Radio Kayira* and *Klédu FM*.

In early 1993, Chad settled for a parody of a "national conference," generally intended as a broad policy consultation. Yet it only strengthened the power of President Idriss Déby, who took the reins through armed force. As a result, even religious stations found it difficult to make a breakthrough. The first Catholic station, *La Voix du Paysan* ("Voice of the peasants"), started broad-



On the job for *Radio Ndeke Luka*, in the Central African Republic.

© Ph. Dahinden/Horodelle Foundation, Lausanne

casting in 1996. The lay station *Dja FM* followed suit only three years later. Other stations, including *FM Liberté*, *Radio Brakos*, and the brand new *Duji Lokar FM* ("Morning Star") came later. And plans for a private weekly radio station, *L'Observateur*, are on the verge of fruition.

Confiscating equipment "needing repair"

Chad's example is emblematic of Central Africa as a whole, which seemed to have a lead over its western neighbours when *Africa N°1*, the first and only French-language pan-African radio station, began broadcasting in Gabon in 1980. But since African states began turning to democracy in the early 1990s, West Africa has witnessed an explosion of independent radio stations: their number has soared to over 400. In Central Africa, however, private investment in broadcasting remains minimal. Chronic instability has set the region ten years back. Most countries there, inclu-

ding the Central African Republic and the Republic of the Congo, are beleaguered by simmering armed conflicts, if not all-out war, as in Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

In the eastern part of the DRC, for example, rebels have confiscated the few private radio stations that existed before the August 1998 war. *Radio Muungano's* transmitter was taken to Uganda in October 2000 on the pretext that it needed repairs, and to date has not been returned. When they don't control programme content, insurgent groups simply do away with the equipment. The government's methods are just as drastic. In September 2000, *Radio Télévision Kin Malébo* (RTKM) was nationalized outright and three private television networks closed down. Only religious radio stations are allowed to broadcast, as long as they steer clear of politics.

In countries at peace, such as Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Cameroon, the brakes on pluralism are often

intitutional. Since 1990, when a law on broadcasting freedom was passed, the Cameroon government has used all kinds of subterfuge to prevent the emergence of private radio, with the exception of rural and community stations launched by UNESCO or the Intergovernmental Francophone Agency.

For example, Radio France Internationale (RFI), which broadcasts throughout Africa, could not be received on FM in Yaoundé until February this year. "We had been in contact with Cameroon since 1992, as part of a cooperation agreement to include RFI in the national radio station's technical structure," says Hugues Salord, RFI's director for international affairs. "But we were unable to clinch the deal until the decree of April 3, 2000, which benefited not only RFI, but Africa N°1, the BBC, and other local private radio stations"

It took ten years for the decree to be signed, but the obstacles remain. Officials have increased administrative complications, imposed very short application deadlines (four months) and demanded exorbitant fees for operating licenses—\$15,400 in a country where a civil servant's average monthly salary is \$120. Most of the proposed projects were therefore eliminated, and one of the stations that had operated until then on an experimental basis, *Radio Soleil*, had to stop broadcasting in June 2000.

The art of bureaucratic subversion

As a free medium which reaches a wider population than print, partly because of broadcasting in local dialects, partly because of high illiteracy rates, radio arouses the mistrust and hostility of political leaders. Hence their inclination to maintain a government monopoly on broadcasting to foil an independent media that is often virulent and close to the opposition. The airwaves are strategically important for politicians, who will go to great lengths to control them by any means. For example, on February 22, 1994, Gabonese army tanks destroyed the facilities of *Radio Liberté*. The government later claimed it was because the opposition was using the station as a propaganda mouthpiece!

"*Radio Liberté*? It was the devil's radio... The army and security services...

destroyed their facilities. We've returned to the normal game of democracy since," wrote Gabon's president, Omar Bongo, in his recently published book, *Blanc comme Nègre*.

Bongo's comments illustrate the demonization of free radio in Central Africa. The ghost of Rwanda's *Radio Télévision des Mille Collines* (RTLM), which played a key role in mobilizing the killers who perpetrated the 1994 genocide, still haunts the region. Today, political leaders disinclined to accept broadcasting freedom point to it as an

As soon as a radio station strays from the official line, it is suspected of inciting rebellion or tribal hatred

example, conveniently forgetting that RTLM was initially close to the Kigali government. The result: as soon as a radio station strays from the official line, it is suspected of inciting rebellion or tribal hatred. Equatorial Guinea has taken drastic steps to avoid that risk: not a single private radio station has been allowed on its soil!

Besides political factors, the weakness of civil society has clearly helped slow down the growth of independent radio in Central Africa. Local NGOs

and grassroots organizations are not involved enough in national political debate. This results in indifference on the part of donors likely to help set up radio stations, especially by training staff and supplying equipment. "I obtained a frequency last year, but can't afford to purchase equipment," says Begoto Oulatar, director of *N'Djamena Bihédo*, Chad's most famous newspaper, which is now branching onto the airwaves.

Economic woes also prevent private radio from gaining a foothold in central Africa. Public networks receive the lion's share of advertising, the only source of income for independent radio, which cannot count on user fees. To stay out of trouble, businesses avoid advertising on stations with a reputation of being hostile to the government. Take the case of Gabon's *Radio Soleil*, which rose from the ashes of *Radio Liberté* and was suspended five times in four years. During a 1999 Yaoundé conference on pluralist media, Makaga Virginus, a station representative, explained companies' reluctance to invest on its airwaves: "we were not subservient enough to the central government, which has very close ties to the business world."

Electronic inroads to state monopolies

But there are reasons to be optimistic about the future of radio in Africa. New technology is making equipment lighter, smaller and less expensive. Direct access to information on the Internet will probably prompt officials to



In Central Africa, independent radio lags ten years behind the western part of the continent.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE AND TOGO: GOING THEIR OWN WAY

Unlike neighbouring countries in West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo have followed the same itinerary as the nations of Central Africa: a bumpy transition to democracy, a venomous social climate and the lack of political will to liberalize broadcasting or to apply existing laws.

In 1993, Côte d'Ivoire allocated FM frequencies to just five radio stations, of which four were foreign (RFI, BBC, Africa N°1 and *Nostalgie*) and one was close to the government. Since then, only diocesan radio stations have been allowed to operate. Licenses have been granted only since 1998 (52 at last count), and under very strict conditions.

They are only allowed to broadcast within a 10-kilometre radius and cannot air political programmes. Advertising can only come from local companies. With regulations like these, it is no wonder that private radio is

developing extremely slowly.

In Togo, the law on broadcasting liberalization was ratified on November 30, 1990, but the regulatory body has not granted a single definitive license. This means that existing private radio stations are broadcasting illegally. Initiatives such as *Kanal FM*, founded in August 1997, and *Nana FM*, launched at the big Lomé market in August 1999, are trying to develop without daring to venture into the area of political information.

Legal vagueness allows Togo's government to boast about so-called radio pluralism while keeping a tight grip on private stations, to the dismay of the Togolese Organization of Independent Radio and Television, which is campaigning for a clarification of the status of private radio stations in Lomé. ■

loosen their grip. And there is likely to be a change of mentality with the slow but steady influx of foreign radio networks such as RFI, the BBC and Voice of America, which may end up softening political rigidity.

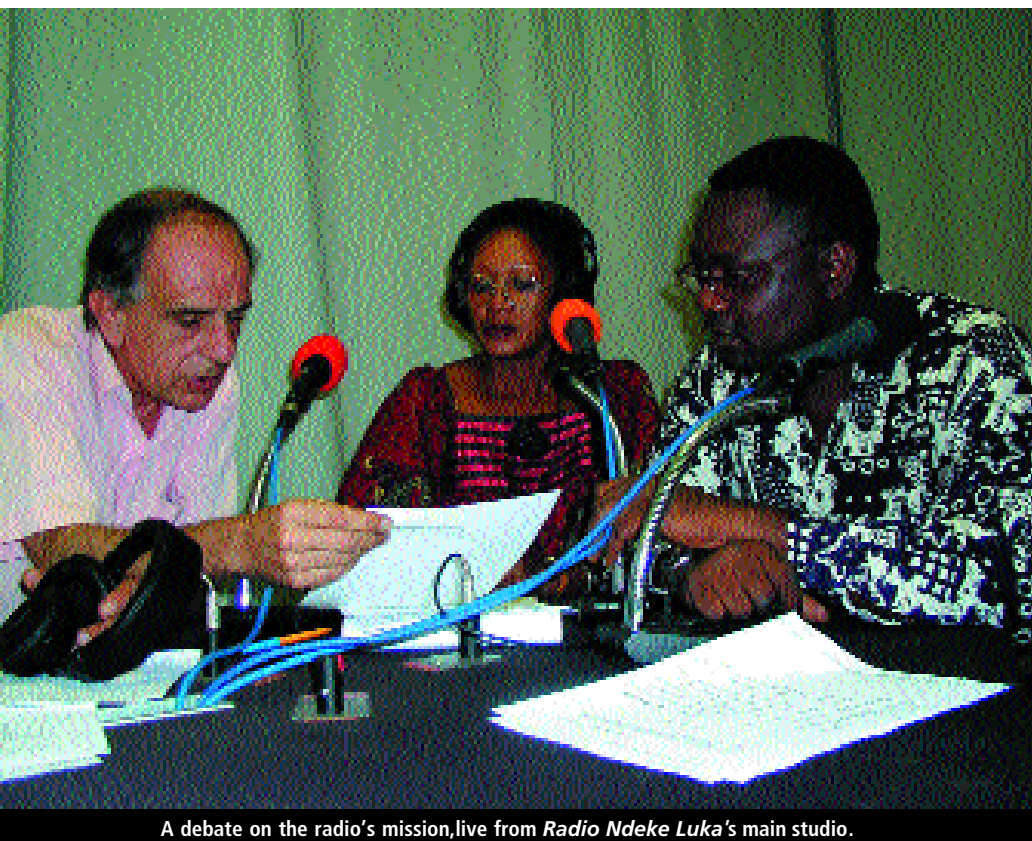
Local radio stations created by international and non-governmental organizations, such as the Central African Republic's *Radio Ndeke Luka*, (heir to the United Nations radio in Bangui), or Burundi's *RSF-Bonesah FM* (founded by veterans of Radio Umwizero, an initiative of the Association for Humanitarian Action), will also help along the

process. Worldwide groups like the Panos Institute, the Research and Technology Exchange Group (Gret), the Hironnelle Foundation and Search for Common Ground, which have contributed to radio pluralism in West Africa, are beginning to focus on Central Africa.

The audiovisual landscape is changing in most countries. A case in point is Cameroon, where the TV Max private television network, founded in August 2000, was barely two months old when the public network adjusted its programmes to compete! Why don't private radio stations do the same? If the

area acquired a network of groups and NGOs working to promote independent radio, there is hope that Central Africa would soon catch up with its neighbours in the west.

The 2001 *Free Frequencies* festival, an initiative of Kinshasa's *Réveil FM* (from March 19 to 22), was a step in the right direction. It brought together several Central African operators and has already laid the groundwork for a regional organization to defend the rights of private radio. ■



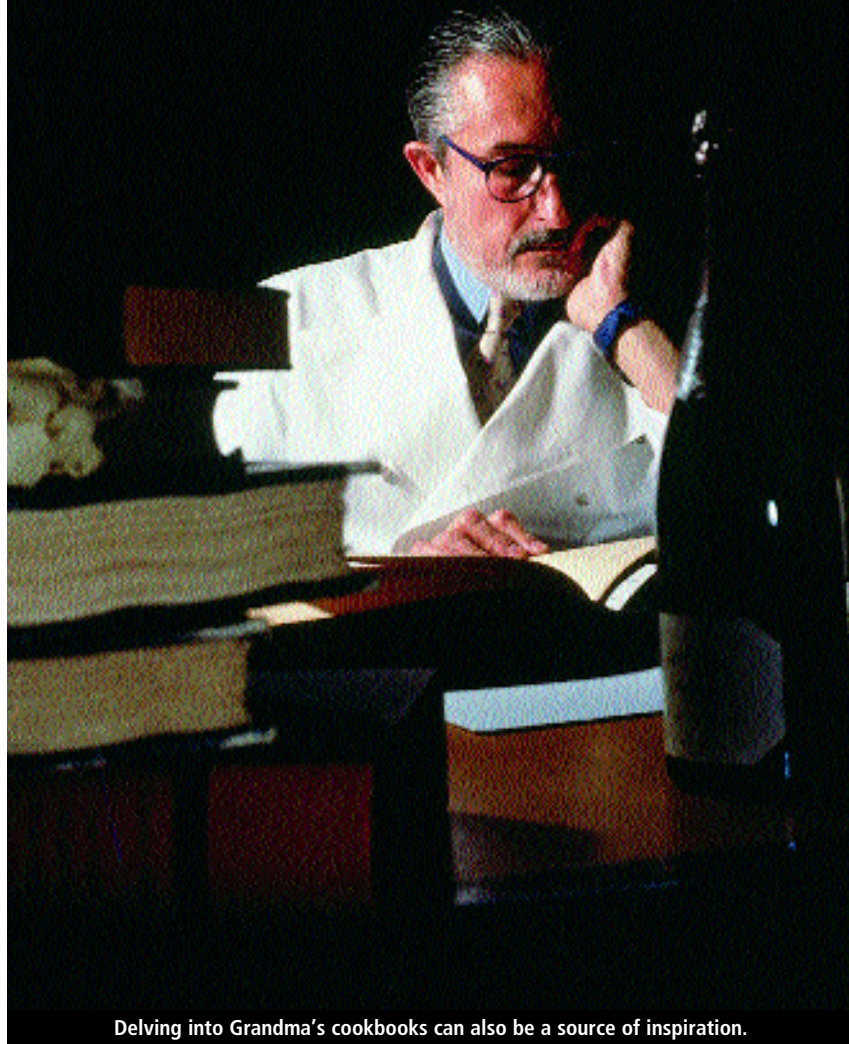
A debate on the radio's mission, live from *Radio Ndeke Luka*'s main studio.



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- Panos Institute
9 White Lion St, London N1 9PD, UK
Web: <http://www.panos.org.uk>
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211-213, rue La Fayette, 75010 Paris, France
Web: <http://www.gret.org>
- Hironnelle Foundation
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Web: <http://www.sfcg.org>

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Alain Senderens



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Delving into Grandma's cookbooks can also be a source of inspiration.

Cooking in a crossfire

Alain Senderens, one of France's top chefs, creates dishes for a cosmopolitan elite, but worries that the dwindling of true homemade cooking is slowly killing off our tastebuds

Is cuisine becoming globalized, like everything else?

It's commonplace to say that we're living in a multicultural society, in which everything is interconnected. What's more, the transportation

revolution is a fact. So globalizing currents are running through cuisine, just as they are through all other sectors of every society. But cooking is not becoming globalized, if by globalization you mean imposing a single model everywhere around the world.

In Antiquity, Pliny the Elder wrote that Greek gourmets travelled around the Mediterranean basin to sample the freshest products at their prime, rather than have them shipped to Greece. But of course those goods were already travelling. Today, we get perfectly fresh produce from Japan and Australia. Another example: in New York's Little Italy, you can find better-quality Italian products than those that are widely available in Italy itself. In the United States, pizza is the best-selling dish. In France, it's couscous.

So you're opening your cuisine up to the world?

I draw tremendous inspiration from Asian cuisine. In 1978, I became the first chef to introduce soy sauce into gourmet cooking, and, by the way, a food critic ripped me to shreds. In 1978, I spent two months in China to study Chinese cuisine: it has some very fine things but is still highly conservative. Thai cuisine, on the other hand, inspires me a lot because it's very hot and spicy. I've just put tempura, a typically Japanese way of preparing fried foods, on my menu. I would never have done that 10 or 20 years ago. But I've concocted my own version by adding in some curry

* Since 1978, Alain Senderens, 61, has been among the 20 or so great chefs that restaurant guides rank in cooking's elite. In 1985, he took over Lucas Carton's restaurant on the Place de la Madeleine in Paris, where he honed his specialty, "creative cooking." The business has 68 full-time employees, including 24 cooks, and serves approximately 60 lunches and slightly more dinners every day, at a price that can easily exceed 1,000 francs (\$150) per person.

Alain Senderens has written many cookbooks, and he is also the author of *Proust - La cuisine retrouvée* ("Proust, cuisine regained"), published by Chêne, 1991, a gourmet's view of the French literary masterpiece.



"Can a three-star French restaurant get away with serving an American wine?"

and serving it with Condrieu, a white wine from the Rhône valley.

Recently, a quarrel between some great French chefs pitted the advocates of openness to the world against the defenders of tradition. You were firmly on the side of the former.

At the time, I made a comparison with Picasso. Imagine seeing his works when the debate over them was in full swing. Some people would have said, "he's not a great painter, he's inspired by African art." The argument in cooking is exactly the same. They say all our products and recipes must remain French! It's unbelievable!

But how far should cultural mixing go?

I specialize in creating dishes to marry with my favourite wines. Many vintners outside France are willing to pay me to put their wine on the menu and invent a dish to go with it. I haven't done that yet for two reasons. First, I haven't found any outstanding wines, such as American ones for example. You might ask, what makes a great wine? That's a highly subjective notion. Wines from the New World are very powerful, very concentrated, and a little heavy, whereas I like delicate, elegant wines as feminine as lace, ones that make me want to have another glass. I wouldn't say there aren't any great wines outside France, but they're scarce and certainly very expensive. Second, and this is essential, I'm faced with a dilemma: can a three-star *French* restaurant get away with serving an *American* wine?

Aren't the great chefs creating a cuisine that would satisfy "world taste"? Would a Brazilian, an American, a Japanese, an African and a Frenchman appreciate your dishes in the same way?

Yes and no. Let's go back to painting. An enlightened—and wealthy—art lover travels to all the art capitals, opening up to a host of styles. That's what my clientele is like. They are a tiny

minority you meet in very few places.

I believe in gastronomic meridians. Paris, like New York, Los Angeles and perhaps London, is exceptional because its cuisine is universal. Anyone can enjoy quality dishes from their own culture. But everywhere else, including in major French cities, a kind of regional protectionism lives on.

To answer your question, I'm convinced that there are some French dishes a Korean or a Japanese person wouldn't like. Classicism is omnipresent outside our very tiny minority, because even when we travel, we yearn for our roots and want to return to them. That's why there's no globalization of taste: it'll take at least a hundred years before that happens. It's one of the things that changes the slowest. And please don't talk to me about the wave of McDonald's: in a capital city like Paris, they account for less than five percent of the restaurant trade and people go to them mainly because that's all they can afford.

And yet "traditional" cooking is dying out.

Yes, except for a few pockets of resistance, what's called "bourgeois cuisine" or "la cuisine du terroir" is

giving up ground, quite simply because women's roles are changing in our societies. When they come home from work in the evening, they don't have time to prepare a veal stew for the family, so they buy ready-made dishes. Sales of those kinds of products are soaring by about 45 percent a year at the super-market chain I work for. Far, very far from the cuisine of the great chefs, cuisine has gone from the home realm to industry. That's a serious problem.

Why?

In the years to come, I'm afraid there will be a loss of taste. Our generation had a culinary history, a family cooking. As children, we already knew something about cuisine. Today, the overwhelming majority of the population doesn't have that knowledge. They're willing, or doomed, to eat anything.

If somebody earns the minimum wage, has one or two children in school, and has the rent to pay, what's left to buy food? They're doomed to the bottom of the market, to standardized, uniform products that marketing people have designed to be sold in hundreds of millions of copies, packed with artificial flavours to bring down the price. We're

THE ARK OF TASTE

Noah saved animals from the flood on his ark. In 1996, the Italian-based NGO Slow Food* created the Ark of Taste to "protect the small purveyors of fine food from the deluge of industrial standardization; to ensure the survival of endangered animal breeds, cheeses, edible herbs, cereals and fruit; to spread the teaching of taste..." There are only around 20 *mora romagnola* pigs left to make delicious hams; only a few hectares of Sciacchetrà vines in Liguria that produce one of Italy's finest sweet wines. A rich, complex, non-industrial, unwritten heritage, fashioned over the centuries by traditional know-how, is becoming extinct. It is infinitely fragile: if a single element—either an ingredient or a technique—in the production cycle is missing, the whole product disappears.

The Ark of Taste has a committee of journalists, teachers and researchers working to revive, list and publicize these threatened treasures. The main purpose is not to lock these riches up in some kind of museum, but to bring them back to life. "Praesidia" have been set up to revive old trades, and to produce and market quality products. The end goal: "to protect biodiversity and the right to taste." Slow Food includes 92 such groups; the first one outside Italy rescued a species of Peruvian pig. ■

*Slow food, whose motto is, "For the defence of and the right to pleasure," has an Internet site: www.slowfood.com



"First you eat with the eye, then comes the touch in your mouth, the smell, and lastly the taste"

frozen food! Even fire, with all its symbolism, has changed. For centuries, we cooked with charcoal, and later, gas. Then electricity came along. The flame, the symbol of male sexuality, fell out of use just when women were asserting sexual equality. That's an extraordinary phenomenon. And today's vacuum packing could evoke voyages to the stars. It's enough to turn you into a philosopher.

Once it was said you could judge top chefs by how well they used leftovers. Today's great chefs take pride in keeping nothing from one meal to the next. Haven't they gone from economy to wastefulness?

We work mornings for lunch and afternoons for dinner. We do everything over twice a day, including baking the bread. We do haute cuisine, like designers who do haute couture, and God knows there's plenty of waste in the latter... Our clientele expects the best because we're very expensive, so we go all out. But 100 years ago, the

finest products were for the best houses only, the average person didn't eat the same things. You can outlaw luxury and Rolls Royces and only make Minis, but is it democratic to bring everybody down to the same level in society, without even leaving them the chance to dream?

So nouvelle cuisine has become a luxury.

There are gastronomic moments, just as you don't go to the opera or to a museum every day, or read a literary masterpiece every night. In my view they're more powerful than all the others because haute cuisine includes all the other arts. A painting appeals to the sense of sight, music to hearing, although the beat may sometimes make you want to move. In gastronomy, first you eat with the eye, then comes the sense of touch in your mouth, the sense of smell and, lastly the sense of taste. The sensation is all-encompassing.

So cuisine has risen to the rank of the eighth art?

No, because it's always brought down to a minor art. When I ask intellectuals to explain why, they say that cuisine is ephemeral, the work is des-

troyed. But today we have recipes so precise that ingredients are measured to the last gram. They can be identically reproduced the same way as a piece of music on a record.

Another problem is that most people cannot intellectually analyze cooking the way they would painting or literature. They don't have the vocabulary to describe what gives them pleasure or not. Instead, they just settle for saying "it's good" or "it's not good." From that moment, the product, the wine, the dish, dies a quiet death, for nothing. There's a lack of culinary culture.

You claim the status of an artist, even going so far as wanting to patent your recipes.

To me, everything that's classic belongs in the public domain. But today manufacturers make dishes based on my latest recipes. I don't think that's fair. As soon as a journalist has an excellent meal at my restaurant, everybody tries to copy me without even knowing how to, and consequently often do a bad job. Obtaining intellectual property rights is the necessary condition for making sure the recipe is correctly repeated and the dish keeps its origi-

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nality.
But a painting or a film can be admired by millions of people, whereas your dishes are accessible only to a tiny minority.

Yes and no, because I also carry out a social mission. The great chefs have their ready-to-cook meals just as the

resigned to revealing its contradictions.” My profession and my family culture make me a man of the past, but I also try to be part of our times. We’re going through a transition period, the birth of a new civilization and the end of the one that has ruled for 2,000 years. Unfortu-



“As children, we already knew something about cuisine.”

© Robert Doisneau/Rapho, Paris

great designers have their ready-to-wear lines. The vacuum-packed meals that I make for a major distributor are an example. Of course, they can’t be compared with what I do in my restaurant. But on the other hand, it would be difficult for someone at home to produce such good value for money, because they cost between 18 and 30 French francs (\$2.50 and \$4.50). I give the pleasure of taste back to those who no longer have time to cook.

Do you agree with the saying “you are what you eat”?

The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss is even more specific than Goethe, who supposedly coined the phrase. He asserts that “a society’s cuisine subconsciously translates its structure, unless, without knowing it, it is

nately, we only have words, ideas and our past culture, which are insufficient for imagining the world of tomorrow. That contrast probably explains why, like many people today, I’m in an awkward position, especially since, one or two years ago, a customer told me, “Monsieur Senderens, when the Romans started erecting statues of their cooks, everything started going downhill very fast for them...” ■

INTERVIEW BY RENÉ LEFORT

DIRECTOR OF THE *UNESCO COURIER*

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