

# Palestinian Archaeology: Knowledge, Awareness and Cultural Heritage

GHATTAS J. SAYEJ

*West-Agder County Council, Kristiansand, Norway*

Cultural heritage in many parts of the world is seen as cultural treasure and as a non-renewable resource. When cultural heritage management is controlled by a national entity and well-planned, then historical buildings, archaeological sites, and artefacts are protected and valued. They become national resources that contribute to increasing historical knowledge, community pride and tourism. However, ideology and politics can undercut the importance of such cultural heritage, particularly if politics is used as a pretext to justify occupation and land confiscation. Archaeological remains in Palestine constitute an enormous resource for human knowledge that have been left in the ground by a wide range of ethnic, national and religious groups. This vast wealth has created a dilemma for archaeologists, who continue to struggle to create a successful means of managing and protecting the resources adequately. The situation has been exacerbated by political and religious motivations, most particularly since the establishment of the State of Israel.

This paper will present a brief history of archaeological research in Palestine, followed by an argument that emphasises the importance of archaeologists engaging local residents in order to build awareness of the material cultural heritage where they live. Archaeologists can join with local communities to create a sense of pride and curation, so that residents act as allies in the battle to protect cultural heritage. Examples from Norway will be presented in order to highlight the effectiveness and necessity of building awareness in local communities. This same approach could be a model for a similar alliance among Palestinian communities. Well-planned efforts can lead to greater protection of cultural heritage by involving local government authorities, archaeological and heritage professionals and residents of local communities. Awareness of the significance of cultural heritage must be cultivated and is a major factor in motivating local residents to protect cultural heritage. In the end, I will argue for a Palestinian archaeological entity that transcends ideological concerns over archaeological materials, and emphasises the protection of archaeological materials as universal heritage. I will also express the necessity of focusing on common goals and achievements rather than on competition over power and funding.

# الآثار الفلسطينية: معرفة ووعي وإرث حضاري

غطاس جريس صايح

*محافظة غرب اجدر، كريستيانساند، النرويج*

يعتبر الموروث الحضاري في معظم دول العالم ركيزة مهمة يستند عليها في رسم الأطر السياسية، والاجتماعية، والتاريخية، والاقتصادية. وعندما يكون هذا الموروث في جوهر الفلسفة الوطنية، ويتم التعامل معه ضمن تخطيط إداري منظم، فإن الموروث الثقافي الثابت والمنقول سيحظى بالاهتمام على المستويين الرسمي والشعبي. ويساهم الموروث الأثري في زيادة الوعي الوطني لدى الشعوب، وفي دعم الاقتصاد المحلي، وذلك باعتباره أداة أساسية لتشجيع السياحة. وتعتبر فلسطين احد دول العالم المميزة، وذلك لاحتوائها على عدد كبير من المواقع والمعالم التاريخية والأثرية التي تعبر عن تنوع حضاري، وديني، واثني، وسياسي. وقد جذب هذا الموروث منذ العصور الوسطى عدد كبير من الرحالة، والمستكشفين، وعلماء الآثار للبحث والدراسة. وقد استغلت نتائج معظم الأعمال الأثرية الميدانية في إعادة بناء تاريخ فلسطين الحضاري بنظرة توراتية ساهمت في تكريس الاحتلال ومصادرة الأراضي من أصحابها الأصليين.

في هذه الورقة، سوف يتم عرض الموروث الثقافي الفلسطيني في إطاره الزماني والمكاني، وأهم العقبات التي تواجهه والتي من المحتمل أن تؤدي إلى تشويبه بشكل كبير خلال مدة قصيرة نسبياً. ومن ثم يتم التركيز على موضوع الوعي بأهمية وقيمة التراث الثقافي، ودوره في حماية وإسناد الموروث بكل عناصره. وكحالة دراسية، سوف يتم استخدام بعض الأمثلة من النرويج، لإبراز مدى أهمية الوعي المحلي في حماية التراث الحضاري. ويتصف الإرث الحضاري في النرويج بأنه يخضع إلى تخطيط شامل تشترك فيه السلطات الحكومية والمجتمعات المحلية، ويتم الحفاظ عليه من الجهات الرسمية بتفاعل كبير من قبل كافة الفئات المجتمعية. وسوف تخلص هذه الورقة إلى خلق حالة من الوعي لدى الشعب الفلسطيني لتؤدي إلى حماية وصيانة هذا الموروث بعيداً عن التعصب الأيدولوجي والاختلافات الشخصية والمنافسة على الدعم المادي.

## **Introduction**

Wheeler was among the leaders in criticizing the methodology of excavations in Palestine, specifically the absence of accurate stratigraphic methodology. He described Palestine by saying that it is the country where “more sins have probably been committed in the name of archaeology than any commensurate portion of the earth’s surface” (Wheeler, 1955: 16). The influence of imperial and colonial collecting practices, biblical archaeology, and nationalistic (Israeli) archaeology shaped both archaeological practice and theory in Palestine (Silberman, 1982; Trigger, 1984; see also Oestigaard, 2007). These practices never focused on creating a sense of connection and investment by the local residents in the archaeological heritage in, around and on top of which they lived and farmed. Local awareness of cultural heritage simply did not develop for the vast majority of population, for a range of reasons.

In this paper, I intend to present a brief history of archaeological research in Palestine. Secondly, I will shed a light on how cultivating awareness among a local population can contribute to the protection of cultural heritage. Some examples will be presented from my current work in Southern Norway, including discussion of features that could easily be implemented in Palestine.

## **Archaeological research in Palestine: A brief history**

### ***Archaeology in Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel***

Archaeological investigations in Palestine, “the Holy Land”, began as early as the 19th century, as Western scholars sought to confirm the historicity of the Bible and later on, to establish connections for the Jews to the land. The British were most prominent in this regard. The Palestine Exploration Fund was established in 1865 - the oldest archaeological organization in the world<sup>1</sup> - specifically for the study of Palestinian history and archaeology. The goal of this exploration was obviously to collect as much information as possible about the composition of the Bible and uncover the Judeo-Christian roots of the Holy Land through archaeology (Al-Houdalieh, 2009: 3; Anfinset, 2003: 2; De Cesari, 2008: 76-77; Maisels, 1998: 7). These activities coincided with the growing interests of American and other European missions to Palestine, and as a result, foreign activities in the fields of archaeology were initiated. The Americans established the American Palestine Exploration Society in 1870, which was then renamed the American Schools for Oriental Research (ASOR) in 1900. France founded the French School for Biblical Studies in 1882, and the Germans established the German Society of Oriental Research in 1898. The British expanded their institutional presence in Palestine by establishing the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem in 1912. These institutions have supported, sponsored and conducted much of the archaeological fieldwork carried out in Palestine over the years. Their research and publications aimed to strengthen the role of the Biblical perspective in the rewriting of the history of Palestine (Al-Houdalieh, 2009: 3; see also De Cesari, 2008: 77), without taking into consideration the cultural heritage of those who still lived in the Holy Land.

To a certain degree they succeeded in doing so, and those efforts culminated in the British army occupation of Palestine after World War I. A new and complex phase in the history of the country began with British Mandate rule, which extended until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. During this Mandate, many excavations were conducted and a chronology was developed in which periods were named after ethnic groups and cultural-

religious phenomena described in the Bible (Silberman, 1998: 16). Accordingly, the country's material culture was selectively documented and was used in defense of the version of the past desired by western Christians and Jewish Zionists, and later to justify the establishment of the State of Israel in Palestine (Glock, 1994: 71; see also Gopher *et al.*, 2002: 191-193).

During the British Mandate era there was a Department of Antiquities in Palestine, but there was no serious effort by the British Authorities to train and encourage Palestinian archaeologists to manage the vast archaeological heritage resources that were known. By contrast, the Mandate Authority encouraged and facilitated the creation of a Jewish national home and supported the efforts of as many Jewish archaeologists as possible (Glock, 1994: 74-76; 1995: 48-54). This led to an imbalance between Palestinians and Jewish immigrants, with the latter using archaeology as a tool to justify their claims to the land and thereby to justify its confiscation from the Palestinians.

Within the context described above, archaeological activities provided a platform not only for archaeologists, but also for historians, clergymen, adventurers and treasure-seekers, who plundered the country of its antiquities and exhibited them in either European and American museums, or in private collections (Al-Houdalieh, 2009: 4; see also Kersel, 2006). These activities also produced an enormous amount of publications, particularly among biblical archaeologists who formed a platform for their successors to build upon after the founding of the State of Israel.

### ***Israeli archaeology***

Biblical archaeology flourished with the establishment of the State of Israel. Many Israeli archaeologists focused specifically on the stratigraphic levels that were related to the presence of Israelites and Jews in Palestine. Many of these investigations were biased to the extent that when a multi-layered site was uncovered, the tendency was to expose only material from the biblical period, while material from other layers and periods was more or less ignored (Elon, 1997: 38).

During the 1950s, archaeology practically became a national cult and popular movement, reflecting a fanatical quest to create the common history of a national state which had citizens from all over the world (Elon, 1997: 41-43; see also Oestigaard, 2007). A link between new settlers and the ancestral land was reaffirmed and sites became symbols of national pride and unity in political, religious and military strategies (Trigger, 1984: 358-359 and 1986: 6; Silberman, 1989 and 1998). Archaeology was openly acknowledged in Israel to be nationalistic (Bar-Yosef and Mazar, 1982: 310, 322). This was well attested by excavations at sites such as Masada, where finds were presented as the outcome of a heroic moment in Jewish history (Anderson, 1998: 466-467). Masada was interpreted as a symbol of national freedom, based on a selective interpretation of the archaeological and historical material. According to Gopher *et al.* (2002: 192), "... archaeology became a national hobby and a tool for enhancing social solidarity between immigrants from all corners of the globe."

Israel is also part of the Christian Holy Land. The consequent interest of theological institutions created another stream of enthusiastic excavators (i.e. biblical archaeologists), such that Israel became one of the most extensively excavated countries on the planet, especially in proportion to its size (Gopher *et al.*, 2002: 192). Accordingly, Israeli archaeology is not only nationalist, but also both a symbiotic partner and successor of Biblical archaeology.

Archaeology has also been misused as a weapon in support of the current occupation of the West Bank and Gaza (e.g. Trigger, 1989: 183-184). Since the 1970s, successive Israeli governments have tried to maintain control and sovereignty over the West Bank, which had once constituted an integral part of the biblical and historical Land of Israel (Newman, 1985: 193). A significant role in this has been played by settler organisations, such as Gush Emunim, by excavating archaeological sites identified with important ancient Israelite locations from the Iron Age. One example is the settlement of Khirbet Seilun Shilo, 2 km northeast of Turmus Aya, which was first set up as a temporary archaeological camp (Shahak and Mezvinsky, 1999: 56), and now is one of the largest Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Several other settlements have also been established in the proximity of archaeological sites. The ancient name *Beth El* was given to the new Israeli settlement near the Palestinian village of Betin (north of Ramallah). This is not only a large residential settlement, but also a huge army base and the headquarters of the Israeli army and civil administration for the entire West Bank.

After the 1967 war and the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip,<sup>2</sup> the Israeli army created an archaeological office headed by army personnel (The Staff Officer for Archaeology of the Civil Administration of Judea and Samaria), to control all archaeological sites and activities in the occupied territories. Numerous archaeological investigations have been conducted from 1967 until today, in violation of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Hague Convention of 1954, under the pretext of salvage excavations. Land has been confiscated from its Palestinian owners in the name of archaeology, because the antiquities law allows the state to expropriate land containing historical sites. The Jordanian Provisional Antiquities Law no. 12 of 1967, Article 5, Paragraph D (which was used by the Israelis) reads as follows: "The Government may expropriate or buy any land or antiquity if it is in the interest of the Department to expropriate or buy it." The Israeli Antiquities Law of 1978 (Law 885), Chapter 8 reads as follows: "An antiquity site whose expropriation is necessary, in his opinion, for the purposes of preservation or research... or to facilitate excavations therein" (see Glock, 1994: 78-79).

Even now, some Israeli archaeologists who work in Palestine pay attention to certain layers at some archaeological sites and neglect or destroy others. I have witnessed this pattern during my involvement at the 1993 and 1994 seasons of excavations at the site of Nabi Samuel, north of Jerusalem. In the northern part of the site, thick layers of almost 1000 years of Islamic remains were bulldozed in order to uncover the Crusader era stable area. In the south-eastern part of the site, the same approach was applied. Substantial layers containing almost 2000 years of Islamic and Christian remains were bulldozed, in order to reach the pre-Christian levels before the excavation's budget ran out.

In and around Old Jerusalem the situation is even worse. A right-wing Jewish settler organization called Elad controls most of the archaeological excavations in the old city including Silwan area. This organization is led by ex-Israeli commando David Be'eri, and has the backing of the Israeli Prime Minister's office, the municipality of Jerusalem, and the vaunted Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA). The organization's aim is best expressed in a religious website's 2007 interview with development director Doron Speilman. He gestures toward Silwan and says: "Our goal is to turn all this land you see behind you into Jewish hands" (McGirk, 2010).<sup>3</sup>

Some Israeli archaeologists have not been interested in preserving the complete cultural heritage of Palestine as a record for all humanity and instead have focused only on those re-

mains relevant to Jewish history and tradition. Because the perceived audience and funders live elsewhere, there has been no concerted effort to raise awareness of the archaeological remains and their importance among local communities. On the contrary, Israeli archaeologists have used archaeology as a tool for proving the right of the Jews to the land. In many cases Palestinian requests for permission to build have been denied and properties have often been confiscated in the name of archaeology. It is hardly surprising that local communities have begun to relate archaeology with occupation and land confiscation, and some members of these communities have started looting archaeological sites which might be associated with Jewish claims to the land. In this way they hope that they can erase or reduce some portion of the claims on which the occupation has been founded (Yahya, forthcoming). Regrettably, they have instead eliminated part of their own past (Kersel, 2006: 64; see also Abu el-Haj, 1998: 255). Other sites have been looted and/or destroyed because they were seen to be obstructing a Palestinian's right to exercise ownership, especially in those cases when the authorities have prohibited construction which is part of the natural growth of villages, in order to protect archaeological remains.

### **Palestinian archaeologists**

There were no prominent Palestinian archaeologists during the Ottoman era (1514-1917), and only a few during the Mandate period. Material published by Palestinians in both the *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* (JPOS) and *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine* (QDAP) show that there were some trained Palestinians, but not enough to tackle the immense job. The situation worsened after the establishment of the State of Israel, due to the turmoil resulting from the influx of refugees and the lack of local academic institutions (Glock, 1994: 77). Prior to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994, Palestinians feared Israeli and other foreign archaeologists and did their best to either hide or destroy movable objects and archaeological sites, since the occupying government could expropriate them. These issues created a gap between archaeology as a science and Palestinians as a nation. Awareness of the importance of the archaeological remains as Palestinian cultural heritage or as World Heritage simply never developed because the majority of the population could not see the importance of cultural heritage either as our shared human past or as a store of future and past national wealth. Infrastructure to support the protection of ancient sites and funding to support the rehabilitation of archaeological sites were absent. At most, only a handful of Palestinians have visited any of the abundant archaeological sites which are located near to their own houses.

During the last two decades however, a new generation of Palestinian archaeologists has emerged and is beginning to succeed in fostering awareness, spreading knowledge, and protecting and preserving archaeological sites (e.g. Yahya, 2005 and 2008). There has been an increase in cultural awareness because of these efforts. Many people have a positive feeling about the establishment of the Palestinian Antiquities Authority, which is directed by a Palestinian archaeologist, and this has motivated land-owners to respect archaeological sites more than before. Some even cooperate with the Authority to protect them. Nevertheless, cultural awareness cannot be sustained unless an infrastructure is created. Currently there are 13 Palestinian universities and of these, only five offer or have offered undergraduate programmes in Archaeology (see Al-Houdaleih, 2009). In the following, I will discuss the current state of archaeology in Palestine.

### ***The first Palestinian Institute of Archaeology (BirZeit University)***

In 1977, the late Professor Albert Glock established the first Palestinian Department of Archaeology at BirZeit University, and in 1987 this became the Palestinian Institute of Archaeology. Glock was an American archaeologist who spent the last 22 years of his life in Palestine. He directed this institute until his tragic murder in 1992 by an unknown assassin in the town of BirZeit.<sup>4</sup> Almost all current Palestinian archaeologists have graduated from this institute; and Glock was thus involved in creating the infrastructure for a Palestinian archaeological entity. Unfortunately, the Institute survived for only a decade after his tragic death due to lack of funds and bad management. Until recently, only a few archaeology courses were taught at BirZeit within the History Department, and archaeology degrees were no longer awarded. However, the administration of the university has recently begun to re-establish the institute. Dr. Mahmud al-Hawari has been invited to take a position there, and is leading the rebuilding effort. This is an exciting and necessary step that will greatly assist in the development of the future archaeological infrastructure of the nation.

### ***The first Islamic Institute of Archaeology in Palestine (Al-Quds University)***

In the early 1990s, Dr. Yasmin Zahran and Dr. Marwan Abu Khalaf, a former student of Albert Glock, together with other Palestinian archaeologists, established the Higher Institute of Islamic Archaeology in Jerusalem at al-Quds University. These scholars recognized the lack of local institutions in which young Palestinians could be trained to conduct research that focused on the Islamic periods. Dozens of Palestinians graduated from this institute with Masters Degrees in Islamic studies. In the second half of the 1990s, a new Department of Archaeology was established at the university, and by 2000 the original minor in archaeology was expanded into a full undergraduate programme. This is the only department in Palestine which offers a university degree in archaeology (Al-Houdalieh, 2009).

The other three universities which offer archaeology programmes are Al-Najah National University, The Islamic University of Gaza and Hebron University (Al-Houdalieh, 2009). These academic institutions, along with the individuals who teach and study there, are part of an effort to enrich Palestinian cultural identity by spreading cultural awareness in which understanding the past and protecting the cultural heritage of the country figure prominently.

### ***The Palestinian Department of Antiquities***

The Palestinian Department of Antiquities was established in 1994 after the Oslo Accords between the Palestinians and the Israelis. This department inherited the very difficult situation created by more than thirty years of Israeli oversight of archaeological work in Palestine (since 1967). Israel's Staff Officer for Archaeology in the Civil Administration of Judea and Samaria and his staff functioned until 1994 as the *de facto* department of antiquities in the entire West Bank. Thousands of permits of a non-salvage nature were given to Israeli and foreign archaeologists during this period.<sup>5</sup> According to the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian territories were divided into three different areas, namely Area A; fully controlled by the Palestinian Authority (3%), Area B (23%); jointly controlled by Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and Area C (74%); which is fully controlled by Israel. Area A includes only the main cities of the West Bank and Gaza excluding East Jerusalem; Area B includes almost all the inhabited villages; and Area C includes the rest of the Palestinian territories which are either uninhabited or which include marginal villages or Israeli settlements (Tveit, 2005:

610-615; see also De Cesari, 2008: 44, 114-121). The Oslo Accords allowed Palestinians to take administrative control over most of the archaeological and cultural heritage sites within Areas A and B, whereas archaeological sites in Area C (74%) remained under the control of Israel (including Jerusalem). Palestinian archaeologists thus became *de facto* prohibited from officially monitoring the archaeological and cultural heritage located within Area C. The Israeli Staff Officer for Archaeology, Dr. Yitzhak Magen, still maintains complete custodianship over the archaeological material from Area C. The Staff Officer for Archaeology is appointed by the Ministry of Education to control all Israeli excavations within the West Bank, without effective oversight or approval by Israel Antiquities Authority. He conducts surveys and excavations as if the cultural heritage of Palestine was his personal property (Sauders, 2008: 10-11).

As described above, the Palestinian Department of Antiquities has struggled to deal with this new organisation of territorial control, oversight and laws. They were tasked with the protecting of an enormous number of archaeological sites, conducting salvage excavations, preventing looting, and spreading awareness about the value and need to preserve ancient sites. These were not easy tasks. Inadequate funding<sup>6</sup> and a lack of trained archaeologists in the region have severely curtailed the pace of improvement. A positive development occurred in mid-2002 when the joint of the Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage was established. This department is a combination of the Antiquities Department at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and Cultural Heritage Department at the Ministry of Culture. The aim of this dual entity is to combine efforts to manage the cultural heritage of Palestine on a national level (Taha, 2004: 31), and to present it as a source of national wealth. This new configuration of governmental institutions has a greater chance of leading to the development of a solid, strong and professional entity whose focus is the protection and promotion of cultural heritage. The new body is apparently better staffed and has improved access to resources. It is hoped that this will lead to improved protection of cultural heritage and an increased awareness among local residents of the importance and relevance of cultural heritage. This is especially important in the villages and less populated areas, where looting and the careless destruction of cultural heritage remains extremely common. More cooperation between non-governmental and governmental institutions is also necessary and desirable.

### ***Non-Governmental Institutions***

In addition to the Palestinian Authority's Department of Antiquities, several non-governmental institutions dealing with cultural heritage also have been established. Two prominent organizations are The Palestinian Association for Cultural Exchange (PACE) and the Centre for Architectural Conservation (RIWAQ). These institutions contribute to the protection and development of Palestinian cultural heritage. For instance, PACE has been involved in preserving and protecting archaeological and historical sites, as well as in creating a new generation of Palestinian tour guides (Yahya, 2005 and 2008; see also De Cesari, 2008: 131-132). PACE has also worked to develop a sense of cultural awareness and investment in the archaeological remains in and around local communities, most especially at ancient sites that have well-known associations with the biblical narrative, such as Betin (which is equated with biblical Bethel) and el-Jib (biblical Gibeon).

The establishment of the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage, the development of an educational infrastructure for archaeological training, and the activities of cultural heritage NGOs are a reflection of the presence and efforts of the increasing num-

ber of capable Palestinian archaeologists. These men and women are now part of an effort aimed at research, public education and cultural heritage protection. An enormous amount of work remains to be done in order to develop a greater sense of connection between the local people and the innumerable archaeological sites located in Palestine. Achievement of this goal requires intensive coordination among the academic, governmental and non-governmental organizations. This collaboration is important because each plays a distinct role in this process.

However, the Palestinian archaeological community also has some negative sides which should be addressed. Apart from the burden of Israeli civil and military occupation, the Palestinian archaeological community suffers internal conflicts between the NGOs and the official governmental organization. The latter depends almost totally on foreign aid and considers the NGOs to be fundamental competitors (De Cesari, 2008: 56-58). The Department of Antiquities has therefore either directly or indirectly prevented some of the NGOs' activities by refusing them permissions, and even using the Palestinian police force to stop them (Yahya, pers. com.; see also De Cesari, 2008: 173-174). Such actions no doubt hinder the activities of the NGOs and to a degree backfire by aiding in the destruction of cultural heritage. If the members of the Palestinian archaeological community can forget their own personal and political interests and concentrate instead on achieving positive common results for the benefit of the entire community, then a solid Palestinian archaeological entity will result.

It is particularly important for the official government organization to reserve a role for the other organizations and to create space for their work. In the current conditions, the protection of Palestinian cultural and archaeological remains cannot be managed as a "one-institution show". There are legitimate reasons for all to work in concert. In the current political climate, certain kinds of aid and grants flow more easily to the NGOs which have no direct link to the Palestinian Authority. Additionally, these organizations have long and deep ties within the community and a demonstrated record of successful, beneficial work in support of cultural heritage preservation.

In many places archaeology is not used (or is no longer used) as a tool to prove one group's right to land over another. Archaeological remains are seen as a part of national wealth and as non-renewable heritage resources. Even in such places, it has been necessary for a similar coalition of public-private actors to join together in order to create a framework for and awareness of cultural heritage protection. In the next part of this paper I will present two examples of these processes working in southern Norway. These involved the counties of Farsund (Lista) and Lindesnes (Spangereid).

## **The role of public awareness in protecting cultural heritage in southern Norway**

### ***Lista region - Farsund County***

Lista is located along the southern coast of Norway. It has a flat and fertile landscape punctuated by archaeological sites. People have been attracted to this region since the Mesolithic period (Stylegar, 2007: 9), and the area therefore has a prominent place in Norwegian archaeology. Dozens of archaeological sites have been discovered during the past century and enormous numbers of artefacts and sites have been identified and collected by members of

the public. Archaeologists have attempted to identify and protect various archaeological locations, including the many that are on privately held land. Consequently, conflicts had arisen where landlords considered archaeologists to be an obstacle to their interests and development plans. Sometimes, movable ancient objects were confiscated or building plans scuttled because of the presence of archaeological remains. Mistrust and tension developed between the two groups, with unfortunate results: Archaeological objects and sites were destroyed or looted. Local inhabitants did not cooperate with archaeologists or with anyone related to archaeology (Sayej, 2010).

The situation has changed for the better during the last decade as a result of a concerted effort at public engagement by archaeologists. Archaeologists from West-Agder County Council (hereinafter VAF archaeologists) held open meetings with local communities and they invested in a campaign to explain the importance of cultural heritage so that the local people became aware of the significance of the resources buried beneath their towns, farms and villages. As a major part of this campaign, VAF archaeologists also conducted programs at schools and taught pupils about the various archaeological periods. Students learned about and experienced the daily life of a Stone Age family (including flint knapping, hunting, gathering and food making).

These efforts led to improved opportunities for open dialogue between both sides. Local residents became more aware of their cultural heritage and started cooperating with archaeologists. Landlords began to call archaeologists to seek advice about protection and utilisation of the areas surrounding archaeological sites located on their properties, and to come and investigate areas that might be of interest, such as burial-mounds and monumental barrows. When archaeologists examined these areas, they often found sites that had not been known or surveyed previously. In many cases locals brought objects that they had collected from their land while ploughing, building, or "looting" in order to show these objects to archaeologists. Dozens of objects from the Stone Age to the Middle Ages were gathered in this way. Many of these objects are now in the Oslo or Lista Museums. Other objects are still held in private collections, but VAF archaeologists know about them because people are not afraid to make them known. It has been possible to photograph and document many of these objects and to trace their place of origin and register them in the national digital archive *Askeladden*.

The current situation is a great improvement over the former. However, it has taken a while to develop and has required changes in attitude and practice by both the public and by those officials tasked with the protection of cultural heritage. According to the Norwegian Cultural Heritage Act of 1978 §12, all movable objects older than 1537 are the property of the State (Omland, 2008), and as state representatives VAF archaeologists should confiscate and deliver these objects to the respective museum. Well then what should archaeologists do? On one hand, if they confiscate these objects they will renew the feeling of ill will and distrust and, thereby lose access to private collections. On the other hand, if they do not do so, they are not doing their job properly according to law!

A pragmatic solution addresses both public and private interests and benefits all. An open dialogue with land owners, residents and their children through schools encourages them to show the archaeologists the objects in their possession. Independent efforts at dialogue and compromise are subsequently used as inducements to encourage the citizens to deliver these materials voluntarily to a museum. Those who have done so have been given a sort of diploma or certificate from the authority as a "thanks for your effort". In some cases,

where the value of the object is high, financial compensation has been offered. This policy has worked better than expected. A large number of movable objects have been delivered to the authority and many discussions about protecting non-movable objects have ensued. In recent years, a number of agreements with landowners have facilitated restoration of certain burial-mounds on their properties. In 2008 alone, as many as 10 burial-mounds were restored. A decade ago, such an outcome would have been inconceivable (Sayej, 2010).

### ***Spangereid region - Lindesnes County***

The central portion of Spangereid is an oasis of burial-mounds that largely date to the Viking Age. People have used this area to dispose of waste, keep animals, and store and park vehicles. These people did not understand the importance of this area and they viewed archaeology as an obstacle to development and an infringement of their exclusive right to use their property. In the past decade however, the situation has changed as an intensive campaign of awareness and mutual understanding has been waged by archaeologists in the local community (Sayej, 2010).

A group of elderly retired people started working voluntarily in the burial mound areas, contributing many hours of intensive work. Bushes, rubbish and unnecessary objects have been removed. This retired group of elderly residents is still active and continues to protect the area as a part of their feeling of connectedness to the region. In addition, VAF archaeologists, in cooperation with the local municipality, have put up ten new archaeological signs. These signs include up-to-date information about the history and archaeology of the region, and they are placed near the archaeological sites. The centre of Spangereid now looks like a national park and everyone in the neighbourhood is proud of it.

Landowners have also tried to make a profit from the archaeology of the region by building a centre called Viking Land. This local attraction includes a Viking village with camping sites, a souvenir shop, a restaurant and a Viking farm with plenty of activities for both children and adults. This centre attracts tourists from Norway and overseas and has a positive impact on the local economy of the region (Sayej, 2010).

In both these cases, a level of mistrust had existed between archaeologists and landowners. This situation existed largely because these two groups had not engaged in a constructive discussion about the ways that their agenda could overlap. Landowners considered archaeologists to be an obstacle to their interests and development plans. Archaeologists considered the owners to be interlopers who were degrading the national cultural inheritance. In such an environment, it is easy to understand that a conversation about intersecting stakeholder interests needed to develop. Once this began to occur, the results were positive. Both sides recognized the needs and realities of the other and created an informal framework to work within the official legal structure. There are lessons here for archaeologists in other countries, including a future state of Palestine.

### **Concluding remarks**

Awareness of the value of national cultural heritage has increased among Palestinians during the past two decades. Degrees in archaeology have been awarded (e.g. al-Quds university), private museums have been set up (e.g. the museum of Artas near Bethlehem), collections of regional costumes have been exhibited (e. g. the work of Maha el-Saqa in

Beth-Jala), and historical buildings have been preserved (e.g. the work of RIWAQ, al-Funun, the Bethlehem 2000 project (see also Focus, 2004). All these institutions are working in support of a Palestinian cultural identity in which an understanding of the past and the protection of cultural heritage figure prominently. Increased cooperation between governmental, academic, and non-governmental organisations will be required to facilitate achieving an additional common goal, namely the protection of the entire cultural heritage of Palestine, not only as Palestinian, but also as universal heritage. Cooperation and coordination with foreign institutions and other relevant bodies are also necessary to realize this goal. At present, the trajectory of professional Palestinian archaeology is already in alignment with Glock's position that "Palestinian archaeology should acknowledge the poly-ethnic nature of Palestinian cultural history" (Glock, 1994: 83-84). Palestinian archaeologists deal in an unbiased manner with all of the cultural heritage of Palestine as part of their inheritance, regardless of its temporal, religious or ethnic origin (e.g., Prehistoric, Jewish, Christian, or Muslim). However, the situation in the broader public is not so well developed. Looting occurs for a range of reasons, including economic ones (poverty, lack of jobs, incentives from dealers), a desire to destroy remains that are considered valuable to the Israeli national project lack of proper authority (the divisions of the Palestinian territories into Area A, B and C), and development interests.

Accordingly, it is of great importance to argue for a Palestinian archaeological entity that transcends ideological concerns over archaeological materials, and emphasizes on the protection of archaeological materials as a universal heritage. Awareness is the key factor in protecting cultural heritage. Palestinian archaeologists need to facilitate awareness, community-based education, school outreach programs, and informal dialogue with local inhabitants. Palestinian archaeologists must invest in creating a new generation of people who see archaeological remains as a part of their own identity and who protect them as their own property would be protected. Signs that include up-to-date and unbiased information should also be prepared and placed near the various archaeological sites as dependable way of spreading knowledge and awareness. Archaeological remains do not belong to one ethnic group or to one specific religion. On the contrary, they represent all of those who have lived in this part of the world since the first human occupation. These remains are the cultural heritage of the Palestinians and once a state is established, they will officially become the national cultural heritage of the State of Palestine. Archaeologists need to spread the message to each Palestinian family that archaeology and cultural heritage remains deserve protection because they comprise a past and future treasure that will be inherited by our children and by our future nation state. When we reach this goal, then we have succeeded. In the meantime, a much greater sense of public-private Palestinian and foreign collaboration should be developed so that all efforts jointly work toward this common goal.

The Norwegian case studies demonstrate a way forward that could be implemented in Palestine with the current resources and structures. Palestinian archaeologists need to hold innumerable open meetings for local communities (adults and children), and arrange open days at the archaeological sites closest to each respective community, particularly those who live in the arid areas and in Area C, where most of the destruction and looting occurs. Once local communities connect their history and existence with the nearby archaeological site, then a more positive outcome can be achieved. However, such efforts require fundamental changes in attitude and practice on both sides, i.e. local communities and professionals. An open dialogue with local communities encourages them to deliver "looted" materials voluntarily to the national body. As a part of compensation and encouragements, the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage should give in return a sort of diploma in

recognition of their service or even financial compensation. This policy has worked in many parts of the world such as in the UK and Norway, and I am quite sure it will work also in Palestine.

Those officials tasked with the protection of cultural heritage should also encourage land-owners to make a profit from the archaeology and cultural heritage of the region by building souvenir shops, restaurants, motels, hotels and cultural houses, for example. Such activities have beneficial factors which strengthen the relationship between the past and the present and create job opportunities for generations to come. If this happens, the dark side of the story will become brighter.

Some non-governmental organizations such as PACE have actually developed model programs along these lines in local communities such as Betin, al-Jib and many other places in the northern part of the West Bank (for further information see De Cesari, 2008: 148-157). These models have succeeded in building a certain level of community support and in creating awareness among local residents. But these efforts are difficult to sustain and impossible to expand without additional funding. More trained personnel are needed to sustain the greater level of community involvement that they seek to build.

It is essential for the non-governmental organizations (e.g. PACE, RIWAQ) that already employ features of the Norwegian model to be better supported by international and internal funding, and through cooperation with the official Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage. This is vital, particularly when in many cases NGOs perform governmental task though they are non-governmental organizations (De Cesari, 2008: 163). A steadier funding base is required to implement the proposed reforms which, ideally, would be established within or in close coordination with an official governmental structure. Additionally, external funding agencies should fund cultural heritage protection efforts more aggressively, as an investment in developing Palestinian capacity by promoting economic and future tourism growth in Palestine, which will ultimately assist in stabilizing livelihoods and improving health, education, and infrastructure.

In sum, the above-mentioned tasks cannot be achieved without solid cooperation, not only with foreign organizations, but also with our own various organizations. We should not consider each other as competitors for funding and power, but as a necessary partners to achieve our common goal, of protecting the cultural heritage of Palestine as universal heritage.

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## Notes

- 1 For further information, see the webpage of The Palestine Exploration Fund: <http://www.pef.org.uk>
- 2 The Gaza Strip is beyond the scope of this paper.
- 3 A detailed discussion of the illegal Israeli archaeological activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is beyond the scope of this paper, but such activities are well described by Greenberg and Keinan (2007 and 2009).
- 4 For more information about his life see Fox (2001).

- 5 For details of sites surveyed or excavated by Israel in the West Bank and East Jerusalem since 1967 see: <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/wbarc/>
- 6 The Palestinian Authority organizations, including the Department of Antiquities, depend almost entirely on international funding.

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