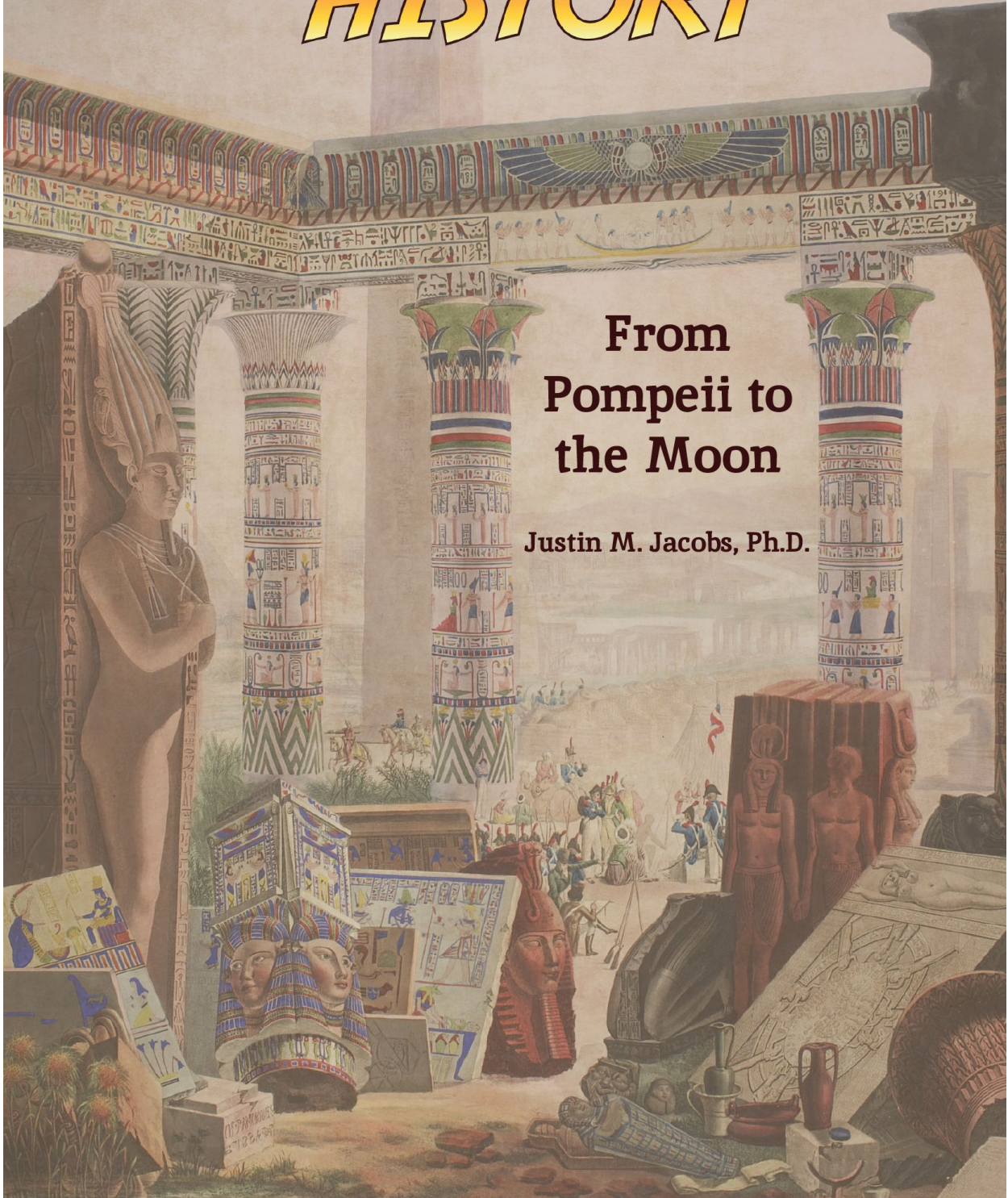


INDIANA JONES IN HISTORY

From
Pompeii to
the Moon

Justin M. Jacobs, Ph.D.



CHAPTER FOUR

The Age of Discontent

Once upon a time, everybody was happy. European diplomats, travelers, and hydrologists-turned-circus performers came to Egypt in search of wondrous curiosities, and wondrous curiosities they found. The people who lived in and around these objects and structures, both commoner and highborn, were generally indifferent to their fate. If they thought about them at all, they tended to do so in strictly utilitarian terms, regarding them as a source of fertilizer to be tapped or an abode of malevolent spirits to be avoided. When they began to see white men from distant lands spend an inordinate amount of time, energy, and money in repeated attempts to remove these items, many locals began to suspect that they might contain gold or other precious metals inside. For why else would the Europeans treat such intrinsically worthless ruins with so much care and respect? When gold failed to emerge, most of the locals proved eager and willing to grab their fair share of the foreigner's purse. For the peasants, this meant the provision of labor—digging, hauling, carrying, and sifting—in exchange for market, or sometimes higher-than-market wages. For local elites, this meant the receipt of various exotic luxury goods (e.g., pistols, watches, liquor) along with a certain measure of social prestige derived from his duties as host to a “great”—i.e., resourceful—man from distant lands.

As for the Europeans? They were happiest of all. And well they should be. For in these early years, they almost always got what they had come for: aesthetically imposing adornments for museums and mansions back home. Of course, it wasn't always as rosy as portrayed here. Wages for the local peasants could be lower than market rate, and disappeared

entirely if the local official decided to invoke the obligations of *corvée* labor instead. And the foreign explorer himself could sometimes be a nuisance, be it through unreasonable demands for logistical accommodations, an insistence on wandering into strategically sensitive areas, or unwelcome meddling—conscious or otherwise—into local concerns of every sort. Occasionally, too, the attitudes of the locals toward an appropriated artifact went far beyond belief in a harmless sprite or devil trapped inside. Sometimes they rose to the level of associating its removal with a devastating curse, one that stopped the rain or brought locusts to the fields. And if the result was famine or any other sort of hardship, then the foreigner had best tuck tail and run.

On the whole, however, most expeditions and excavations were successful precisely because they offered what was regarded at the time as a fair and equal exchange, in which benefits for both sides outweighed the negatives. In other words, items that held little value to one party but great value to another were taken by the latter in exchange for something the former valued far more than what had been taken. We first encountered this concept in chapter 2, through reference to the so-called “compensations of plunder” that aptly characterized the activities of Elgin in Athens and Belzoni in Egypt. From the perspective of the historical Indiana Jones, then, we might posit the existence of something called the Age of Content. The Age of Content comes about when the following three conditions have been met. First, the local inhabitants of any given place must exhibit a perceived cultural disconnect toward the ruins and antiquities in their midst. In other words, they must not regard these things as so sacred or precious that the loss of them would constitute a grievous blow to their core group identity. Second, there must be another group of people who perceive these same ruins and antiquities in exactly the opposite way, that is, as representative of some core value or idea integral to their own cultural identity. Third, and most important, the group that wants to remove these objects must be able and willing to compensate the locals, both elite and commoner, for any hardships, inconveniences, or curses that may result from their removal.

When all three of these conditions are met, each party to the transaction will tend to view their involvement in a favorable light, with a minimum of tensions. With the exception of China, to be discussed in chapter 5, the earliest archaeological expeditions carried out by Europeans almost always met these three conditions. As we have seen, European intellectuals since the Renaissance had posited a direct cultural link between themselves and the Greeks and Romans. This meant that when Lord Elgin went to Athens, he perceived a direct cultural link between himself and the civilization represented by the Parthenon marbles. Just as important as Elgin's perception of cultural continuity with the Greeks, however, was the Ottoman perception of cultural discontinuity with the same. Had Elgin attempted to remove a similar object from the façade of an ancient Islamic mosque, he would have been thwarted at every turn. This is because the artifact in question would have been perceived by the locals as culturally continuous with the core precepts of their group identity, and thus unsuitable for any form of compensation.

The Age of Content, then, requires that one party to the archaeological transaction—generally the one with deeper pockets—perceives a legacy of cultural continuity with the object to be removed, while the other party—often poor and desirous of improving its material livelihood—perceives a legacy of cultural discontinuity. This will ensure the absence of volatile ideological frictions, leaving only pragmatic and logistical concerns to be addressed, usually through financial or diplomatic inducements. Conversely, the Age of *Discontent* comes about when two or more parties to the transaction both perceive in the object to be removed a legacy of cultural continuity with themselves, one felt so strongly as to negate the allure of any form of compensation. The result will be ideological friction, with both sides digging in their heels in response to a perceived existential threat to their most cherished group identity.

So when and how did such ideological frictions arise in the Ottoman Empire, where the majority of European excavations took place? As noted in the previous chapter, once the hieroglyphs were unlocked, ancient Egypt was invited into the club

of Western civilization, as forbears to the Greeks. Even before that, though, some measure of fraternal awe and respect for those who built the pyramids had inspired many Europeans and Americans to lay claim to the stone monuments of the pharaohs, irrespective of any imagined association with the Greeks. And so long as the contemporary inhabitants of Egypt subscribed to a different set of views toward the civilization of the pharaohs than did the Westerners, the Age of Content would continue. After all, neither side posed an existential threat to the other. But the moment anyone in Egypt began to share the Western view of the pharaohs, one of the three conditions noted above would cease to obtain. At that point, the Age of Discontent begins.

So what *did* the modern Egyptians think about the ancient Egyptians? After all, we cannot determine when *content* turned to *discontent* unless we know what the people of the Ottoman Empire thought about the antiquities in their midst before the Europeans came along. Of course, we already know that they often believed such things to be haunted by local sprites, devils, and *jinn*s (genies), be they in Athens or in Luxor. (Recall, too, that many Europeans during this time also believed in the miraculous healing powers of ground-up mummy dust!) But there was more than just mere superstition. Throughout Muslims lands, by far the most widely digested discourse regarding the ancient Egyptians was that of “Moses versus Pharaoh.” This story, integral to the scriptural traditions of Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike, constituted the one and only ideological lens through which most subjects of the Ottoman Empire would have viewed the pyramids, obelisks, and ruins of the pharaohs.

In the Quran, the encounter between Moses and Pharaoh is narrated in much the same way as it appears in the Hebrew and Christian bibles. Moses is sent by God to secure the release of the Israelites from Egypt. “Pharaoh,” who remains unnamed and thus representative of all pharaohs, dismisses the signs of God as mere magic and sorcery, and insists on his own divinity instead. “I am not aware of any other lord of yours but myself,” he tells Moses. After God sends down a series of devastating plagues upon Pharaoh and his subjects, he at last relents and

grants the Israelites their freedom, before once again changing his mind and pursuing them to the Red Sea. With God's help, Moses parts the sea for the Israelites and sends it crashing back down upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians. The moral of the story? Pharaoh is a uniquely Egyptian example of the arrogance of one who rejects God's sovereignty. By extension, the Pharaonic ruins stand as testament to the fate of those who defy God when He reveals Himself. For most Muslims, then, Pharaoh was the embodiment of what was known as *jahiliyya*: the pre-Islamic age of ignorance, paganism, tribalism, hedonism, and indulgence. In other words, to look upon the material ruins of the pharaohs with favor was to pass a positive judgment upon one who defies God.

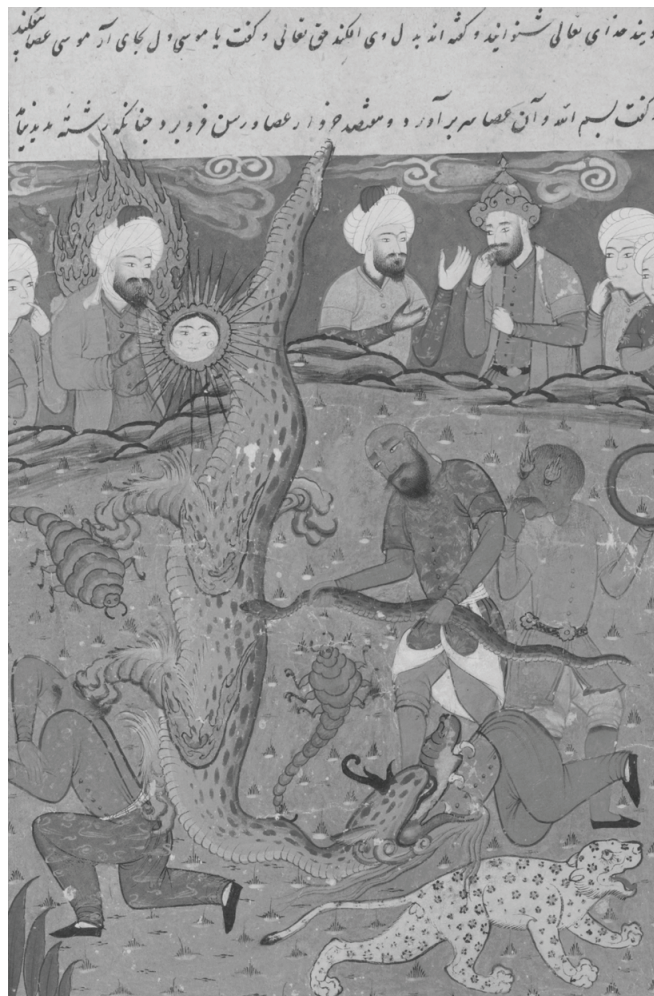


Figure 4.1. Moses vs. Pharaoh. In this sixteenth-century illustrated Persian manuscript, the staff of Moses is turned into a dragon that devours Pharaoh's men, as a demonstration of God's power.

Any Muslim who had ever attended services at a mosque or listened to his elders preach the Islamic gospel would have been familiar with this story, be they male or female, rich or poor, literate or illiterate. It is hard to imagine any association more negative than that conjured up by the willfully repeated heresies of Pharaoh. That the word “pharaoh” came to be virtually synonymous with that of “heathen” is apparent in the preface to one of the oldest surviving Arabic manuscripts of the *Arabian Nights*, dated to fourteenth-century Syria. Before Princess Shahrazad tells even a single one of her famous tales, the reader is regaled with a heartfelt prayer to Allah:

Praise be to God, the Beneficent King, the Creator of the world and man, who raised the heavens without pillars and spread out the earth as a place of rest and erected the mountains as props and made the water flow from the hard rock and destroyed the race of Thamud, ‘Ad, and Pharaoh of the vast domain. I praise Him the Supreme Lord for His guidance, and I thank Him for His infinite grace.

This is not the *Arabian Nights* of Lady Duff’s imagination, as seen in the previous chapter. The Syrian version, filled with shocking violence and raunchy sex, is made pious and respectable through a ritual condemnation of three of the most famous unbelievers in the Islamic world: two blasphemous tribes from the Arabian peninsula (Thamud and ‘Ad)—and Pharaoh.

The biblical story of Moses versus Pharaoh was what the Muslim masses consumed. If they knew only one thing about the pyramids and obelisks—or indeed, about any pre-Islamic ruin or artifact—that was it: the men who built them were pagan heretics who had defied God. As such, there was only one lesson to be gained from contemplation of their ruins: the dire fate which awaits all unbelievers. Though literate Muslim elites put some more meat on these rhetorical bones, occasionally adding an element of awe and wonder, they did not alter the basic message. In 1251, Jamal al-Din al-Idrisi, a traveler from the Abbasid Caliphate, offered praise to God for creating “those imposing signs”—the pyramids—that, “even if silent, speak

with the worthiest lessons for consideration.” What lessons might those be? That Muslims “must travel the Earth and see what happened to those who disbelieved.” Al-Idrisi was convinced that the pyramids existed for a reason. After all, had not the Companions of the Prophet seen fit to spare them during the Muslim conquest of the Middle East? They must have done so deliberately, “as a sign to teach a lesson to those who would consider, and a reminder to every seeker of knowledge.”

To every pious Muslim, the pre-Islamic ruins were a warning. And so long as Muslims of every class and stripe believed this to be true, there was little chance of ideological conflict between themselves and the Europeans, who viewed them either as wondrous curiosities or as a prelude to the Greeks. This was the Age of Content. The Age of Discontent began when Ottoman elites exchanged Moses vs. Pharaoh for the narrative of Western civilization peddled by European elites. In the process, both parties left the Muslim masses—who continued to subsist on Moses vs. Pharaoh—behind. The shift in ideological tectonics began in 1835. For it was in that year that Muhammad Ali, the *pasha* of Egypt who had once shown such keen interest in Belzoni’s hydraulic pump, issued a momentous decree. “Foreigners are destroying ancient edifices, extracting stones and other worked objects, and transporting them to foreign countries,” he proclaimed. “If this continues, it is clear that soon no more ancient monuments will remain in Egypt.” Aware that European countries had museums in which to preserve and display such objects, Ali promised to do the same in Egypt. “The government has judged it appropriate to forbid the export abroad of antiquities found in the ancient edifices of Egypt and to designate in the capital a place to serve as a depot. It has decided to display them for travelers who visit the country, to forbid the destruction of ancient edifices in Upper Egypt, and to spend the greatest possible care on their safekeeping.”

These were grand words, and they yielded an even grander promise: antiquity laws on paper and museums on the ground. Yet neither promise was fulfilled during Muhammad Ali’s lifetime. Why? There are two main reasons. First, the Egyptian masses continued to view the ancient monuments through the lens of pragmatic neutrality or Quranic hostility, and

they would do so for many decades to come. This meant that they had very little incentive to obey the *pasha's* decree. Yusuf Hekekyan, an Armenian advisor born in Constantinople but educated in Europe, lamented the “accumulated dust and filth of [Egypt’s] modern inhabitants,” who “build their miserable huts” on the “spacious roofs” of the ruins. Second, Europeans and Americans continued to pay top dollar to anyone willing to assist them in the removal of antiquities from Egypt. And since Egypt was a relatively poor agrarian country whose leaders desired above all to industrialize along European lines, this created an incentive to trade one thing for the other. And so they did, as part of the continuing saga of the compensations of plunder. For the remainder of the century, obelisk after obelisk would be gifted by the *pasha* and his descendants to various Western powers, in hopes of currying diplomatic favor that could later be spent on wars, loans, or infrastructure.

In light of all this, the 1835 decree represented less a sincere conviction in the Western view of the Egyptian past and more a cynical manipulation of Western discourse for other, less obvious purposes. Muhammad Ali wanted the Europeans to think that he shared their “enlightened” views on history and culture, but he was still at heart a politician in search of wealth

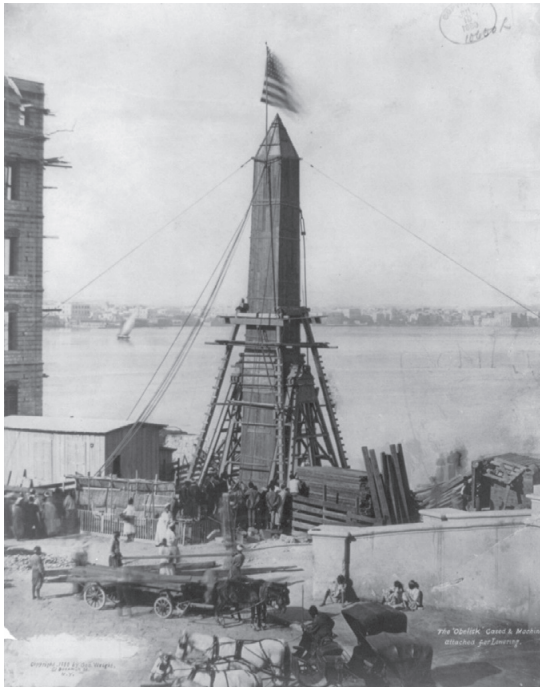


Figure 4.2. An obelisk in Central Park.

In 1877, in a classic example of the continued allure of the “compensations of plunder,” Ismail Pasha, hoping to receive valuable diplomatic capital in return, willingly gifted one of three “Cleopatra’s Needles” from its millennia-long perch in Alexandria to the United States of America.

and power. Wealth and power, however, were not born out of museums; museums were born out of wealth and power. To someone like Ali, intent on keeping foreign armies at bay and struggling to squeeze every ounce of productivity out of his agricultural economic base, the construction of a museum must have seemed an unimaginable luxury to underwrite. Instead, lip service to the contrary notwithstanding, the *pasha* authorized the construction of eighteen saltpeter factories to be built in the vicinity of ruins, with the ninth pylon of a temple at Karnak dynamited to obtain blocks for one of the factories. Ali even oversaw the quarrying of some of the casing stones on one of the Giza pyramids in order to build a portion of his Alabaster Mosque in Cairo. Hekekyan, writing in his diary in the years after the 1835 decree, lamented the complete and utter lack of enforcement throughout the country. “Would to God every temple could be transported to England and France by some fairy enchanter,” he wrote, “and some stringent measures taken to preserve them in Egypt.”

So the first substitution of a Western discourse for Moses vs. Pharaoh proved little more than window dressing. While the *pasha* may have been curious about the discipline of Egyptology and its associated institutions, he was not a committed believer. And yet, cynically or not, Muhammad Ali had planted a seed—and future generations of Ottoman officials would do much more to bring it to fruition. In 1858, less than ten years after Ali’s death, his son, Said, who had gone to school in Paris and received the bulk of his education in French, oversaw the establishment of an Antiquities Service in Cairo. He then hired a Frenchman, Auguste Mariette, to run it. Mariette and the Antiquities Service were granted exclusive excavation rights throughout Egypt, a steamboat, and the right to mobilize up to seven thousand men for *corvée* labor on any dig—all on behalf of the government. One French observer, however, was skeptical of Mariette’s status. “For better or for worse,” he wrote, “Mariette Bey is part of the vice-regal household, on a level with the head of the stables and the chief black eunuque. One has an Egyptologist in the way that one’s forbears had an astrologist, a master of parades, awkwardly placed between the fool and the physician.”

Were Mariette and the Egyptian Antiquities Service mere institutional ornaments, paid to promote the enlightenment of the *pasha* but unable to fulfill any of their own professed ideals? This would seem to be an overly harsh assessment. Though perennially understaffed and underfunded, Mariette did make real progress on several fronts, usually with the blessing of the *pasha*. For the first time, anyone who wanted to excavate in Egypt had to agree to a standardized set of regulations overseen by Mariette, with the expectation that a representative sample of any finds would be retained for Cairo. Eventually, what was once a gentleman's agreement would evolve into the legal stipulation of *partage*, which decreed an equal 50/50 division of spoils between the Egyptian government and the archaeologist, with any unique finds going to Cairo. Mariette was also free to reprimand Said—and his successor, Ismail—each time they felt the urge to give away another obelisk as a form of diplomatic capital. In this way, the archaeological “black eunuque” of Cairo insisted on being much more than



Figure 4.3. Auguste Mariette, Director of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, 1858–1881.

a pretty adornment to the *pasha's* court. In addition, Mariette also trained the first generation of Egyptian archaeologists, ensuring the perpetuation of Egyptology in indigenous guise.

By far the most visible fruit of Mariette's efforts, however, was the establishment of the Bulaq Museum. Opened to the public in 1863, the Bulaq Museum, named after the Cairo neighborhood in which it was located, was the first of its kind in Egypt. At long last, Mariette had a permanent scholarly institution into which he could place the archaeological proceeds of government efforts in the field. Inside the museum, Mariette made no attempt to construct any sort of grand historical narrative about the history of Egypt. Instead, working on the assumption that Egyptian visitors to the museum would be too unsophisticated to grasp any higher purpose in the displays, Mariette and his curators hearkened back to the aesthetics of a *wunderkammer*: a hodgepodge arrangement of visually striking artifacts that aimed to please the eye more than the mind. Nevertheless, the very existence of a government-funded museum in the nation's capital was testament enough to a very real truth. That is, in spite of their inevitable shortcomings, the Bulaq Museum, along with its companion Antiquities Service, were representative of a permanent institutional commitment by the Egyptian government to the same field of scholarly inquiry once claimed exclusively by Westerners. Among literate Egyptian elites who participated in the government, Moses vs. Pharaoh had finally been laid to rest.

In Constantinople, similar developments were underway. As early as 1846, Sultan Abdulmejid I decreed the establishment of a new museum inside the Hagia Irene, a Greek Orthodox Church. In 1869 it was renamed the Imperial Ottoman Museum. Inside one could stroll among ancient weapons of the Ottoman armies as well as specimens of Greek art. The goal was to impress European visitors, not the sultan's mostly Muslim subjects, who would have to wait another two decades before any Islamic artifacts were deemed worthy of inclusion. Perhaps the most striking display in this museum was a collection of mannequins built to resemble the Janissaries, an elite military corps only recently abolished by the sultan's father, Mahmud II. The idea for the mannequins likely came

from a visit to London in 1837 by an Ottoman official who saw some of Madame Tussaud's figures on display. The mannequins in Constantinople, however, were intended to deliver a carefully tailored message to European visitors: we, too, are a dynamic and progressive people. The Janissary mannequins were intended to prove that the Turks were capable of evolving beyond their own outdated institutions of rule, while simultaneously preserving a carbon copy of these abolished relics in an educational display. By such means, the Ottomans hoped to counter the European charge that all Orientals were mired in stagnation and incapable of change.

And indeed, at least one European visitor to the Imperial Ottoman Museum left with his horizons broadened. "It is only twenty-seven years since the massacre of the Janissaries took place," he said, "yet it seems as though it were a hundred, so radical is the change that has been worked. The old national forms have been destroyed, and almost contemporary costumes have become historical antiquities." This was precisely the message Ottoman officials hoped to project. "Until now," wrote one of these officials, "Europeans have used various means to take the antiquities of our country away, and they did this because they did not see an inclination toward this in us. For a long time this desire has been awakened among Ottomans and recently even a law was passed concerning antiquities. Since the foundation of the Imperial Museum is the greatest example of this, we can now hope that the Europeans will change their opinions about us."

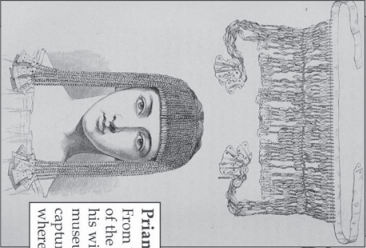
But did they? In the more than three decades since Muhammad Ali's famous 1835 decree, Ottoman elites had come a long way in their attempt to mimic the Western mode of engagement with the pre-Islamic antiquities of their land. In the process, they had paid little attention to the ideological disposition of their own Muslim subjects, most of who rightly viewed the holdings of both the Bulaq Museum and the Imperial Ottoman Museum as utterly irrelevant to their lives. But was this kowtowing to Western cultural standards enough? Would the Europeans begin to adhere to the logic of their own discourse and cede the archaeological proceeds of Ottoman lands to Ottoman museums? After all, the mass

Reorienting the Orient, 1846-1877

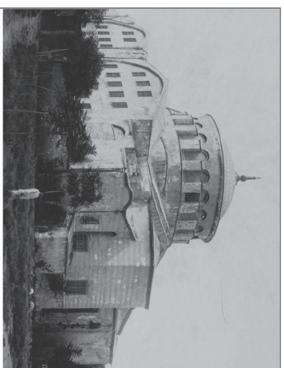
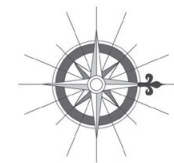
MOSCOW

Berlin

Path of Priam's Treasure



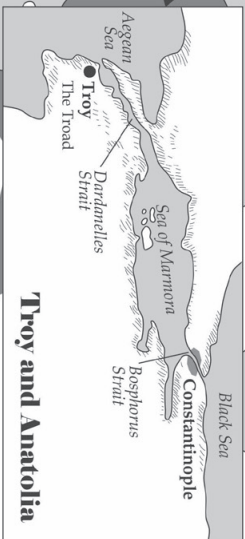
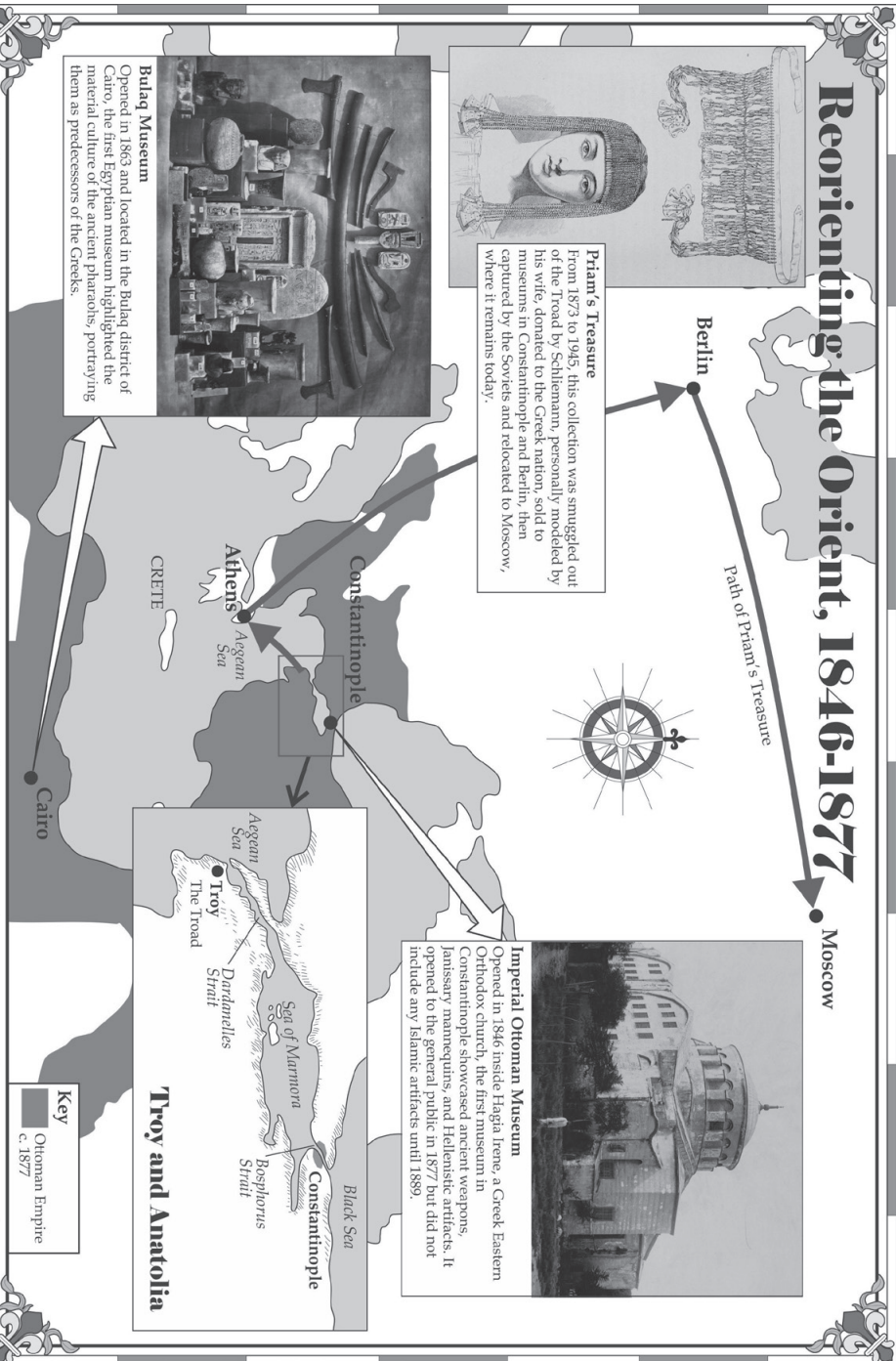
Priam's Treasure
From 1873 to 1945, this collection was smuggled out of the Troad by Schliemann, personally modeled by his wife, donated to the Greek nation, sold to museums in Constantinople and Berlin, then captured by the Soviets and relocated to Moscow, where it remains today.



Imperial Ottoman Museum
Opened in 1846 inside Hagia Irene, a Greek Eastern Orthodox church, the first museum in Constantinople showcased ancient weapons, janissary mannequins, and Hellenistic artifacts. It opened to the general public in 1877 but did not include any Islamic artifacts until 1889.



Bulag Museum
Opened in 1863 and located in the Bulag district of Cairo, the first Egyptian museum highlighted the material culture of the ancient pharaohs, portraying them as predecessors of the Greeks.



Key
■ Ottoman Empire
c. 1877

exodus of Near Eastern antiquities to European lands had previously been predicated on the near total absence of any visible care or concern for such things among the Ottomans, both highborn and low. Now, with the establishment of Western-style museums and Western-style antiquities services in Constantinople and Cairo—all run by Western or Western-educated Ottoman scholars—accusations of neglect and indifference among Ottoman elites began to ring hollow. For Ottoman elites, both in word and deed, were now *Western-ized* elites—and Westerners found it increasingly hard to pretend otherwise.

And yet pretend they still did. In order to understand just how blind most Westerners could be to the changes wrought by reformist Ottoman circles, we need look no further than Heinrich Schliemann. Born into a poor German family in 1822, Schliemann left home at a young age and learned the



Figure 4.5. Heinrich Schliemann, the promoter of Troy.

trade of a merchant. Eventually, he made his way to San Francisco, where he made a small fortune selling shovels and picks to prospectors during the California Gold Rush. His wealth then further multiplied as a military contractor for the Russian government during the Crimean War. By middle age, Schliemann was fabulously rich. But one thing he continued to lack: respect. For his was “new money,” utterly bereft of name, legacy, and tradition. So Schliemann decided to do what overnight tycoons have done since time immemorial: launder crudely acquired money into social respectability by investing in cultural pursuits. Of those available to him, Schliemann chose the most reliable avenue: the ancient Greeks.

In the decades following the literary excoriation of Lord Elgin and his marbles, public sympathy for the plight of modern Greece had reached a fever pitch throughout Europe and America. As we have seen, few of these sympathizers identified in any way with the actual Greece of the present; when they talked of Greece, what they really meant was ancient Greece. The ugly warts and mongrel demographics of modern Greece were explained away by reference to the Turks, whose “oriental despotism” had resulted in the dilution and stagnation of the once noble Greek spirit. Now it fell to the West, the reincarnation of that spirit in modern guise, to revive and rescue the Greeks from the Ottoman menace. This Euro-American fantasy was embodied in a sculpture known as *The Greek Slave*. First carved by the American sculptor Hiram Powers in 1844, *The Greek Slave* showcased a nude woman, chained at the wrists, said to be captured by the Turks during the Greek war of independence and sold at a slave market in Constantinople. A cross and locket hung from her hand, one representing Christian piety and the other fidelity to her Greek homeland.

Exhibited at fairs and galleries across Europe and America and sold in replica form to consumers both rich and poor, *The Greek Slave* was the single most popular and well-known statue in the nineteenth century. In its romanticized view of Greece, its demonization of the Turks, and foregrounding of a Christian identity in Ottoman lands, *The Greek Slave* echoed both popular and scholarly narratives about the history of Western civilization then in vogue throughout Europe and

North America. Only those who contributed to the preferred narrative of Western civilization were to be celebrated, and only Westerners were qualified to identify the most worthy contributors to that civilization. “Probably,” wrote Jacob Flanders, the elusive protagonist in Virginia Woolf’s modernist novel *Jacob’s Room*, “we are the only people in the world who know what the Greeks meant.” By “we,” of course, Woolf was referring to someone like Jacob, a privileged British boy educated at Cambridge and reared to regard the world as his oyster.

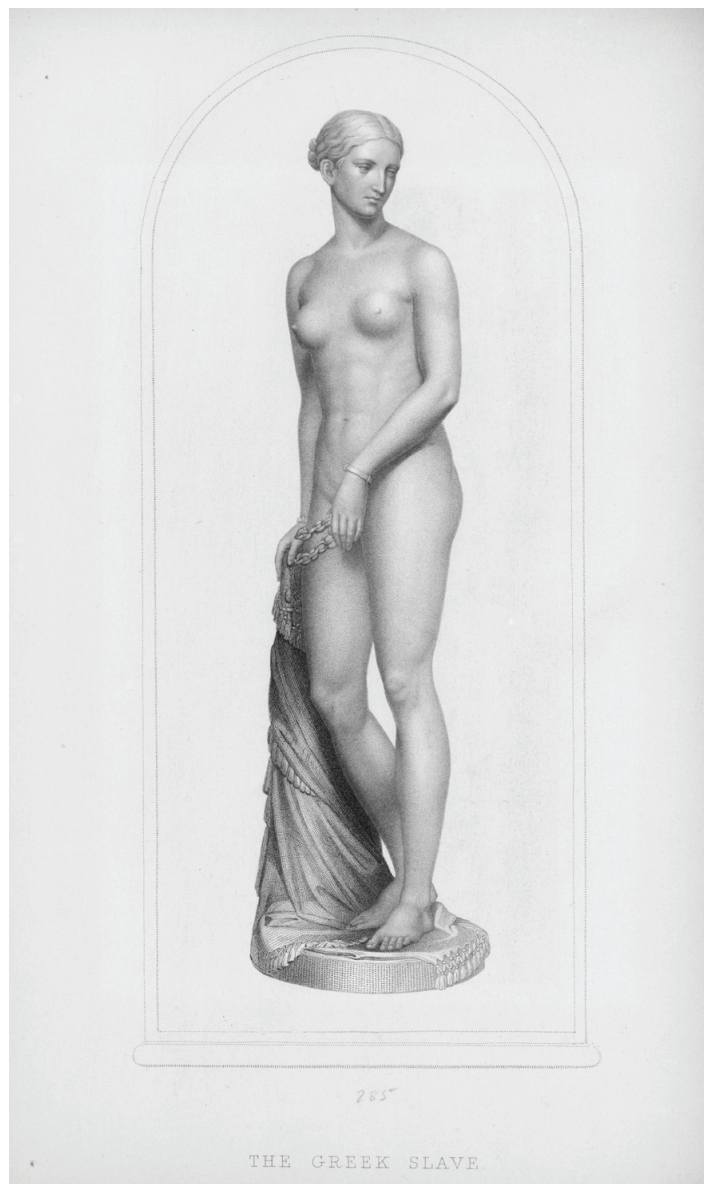


Figure 4.6. Hiram Powers’ *The Greek Slave*.

In order to earn the respect of his newfound peers, Schliemann needed more than just money. He needed culture. And the ancient Greeks could provide that culture in spades. In 1859, Schliemann wrote in his diary that he “yearned to travel and visit Greece.” Not just any Greece, however. The Greece of Schliemann’s imagination, later mythologized via a childhood memory of a drunken miller reciting the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in Greek, was accessible only “with Homer and Thucydides in hand.” In 1864, at the ripe age of forty-two, Schliemann retired from active business life and embarked on a world tour. During one of his stints in the eastern Mediterranean, he decided to visit the straits of western Anatolia, just across the Aegean Sea from Greece. On European maps, the westernmost part of Anatolia was known as the Troad—after the fabled city of Troy—and the adjacent peninsula just to the north, framing the maritime approach to Constantinople, as the Dardanelles. It was here that he met Frank Calvert.

Calvert was a British expatriate whose family had long provided consular services for the Dardanelles region of the Ottoman Empire on behalf of several different countries. (Prior to the twentieth century, this was a common arrangement in many parts of the world.) More importantly, he also fancied himself an amateur archaeologist, and delighted in giving guided tours of the surrounding countryside to European and American visitors en route to Constantinople. By the time he met Schliemann, Calvert had already amassed a respectable collection of antiquities unearthed during the course of his own modest excavations. Not surprisingly, they were nearly all collected with an eye toward highlighting the ancient Greek presence in Anatolia. For, much like Schliemann and most other educated Western elites of his day, Calvert had the remarkable ability to cast his gaze over Ottoman lands and see nothing but Greeks, Romans, and Christians. And among them, one site loomed larger than any other: Troy.

Troy was the setting for the legendary Trojan War, of Homeric fame. The bravery, cowardice, and strategies of its assorted heroes and villains—Achilles, Agamemnon, Helen, Paris, Hector, Priam, and Odysseus—had been immortalized in poetic verse for more than two thousand years. Every European

and American schoolboy was familiar with the broad outlines of the tale, and most educated Western elites could recite lengthy passages by heart. But was there any truth to the story? Had Troy actually existed? Both then and today, most scholars have cast doubt on the historical fidelity of Homer's epic poem, preferring to view it as a legendary embellishment of what was likely a confusing mix of real and unreal events, peoples, and places. Calvert and Schliemann, however, unencumbered by any professional training in history or archaeology, chose to believe in the Trojan War as an actual historical event, its participants as actual flesh-and-blood humans, and Troy as an actual place. For them, Achilles and Agamemnon were real people, and the Trojan Horse had actually been used to penetrate the walls of the city during the siege.

Up until 1868, the year he met Schliemann, Calvert had financed all of his own excavations in the Troad. But Calvert was running out of money, and his family fortunes had recently taken a sharp turn for the worse. Schliemann saw in Calvert a vulnerable target, someone who had gotten close to Troy but could not get any closer. The wealthy German—now an American citizen by virtue of marriage—offered to continue Calvert's excavations at his own expense. For some years,

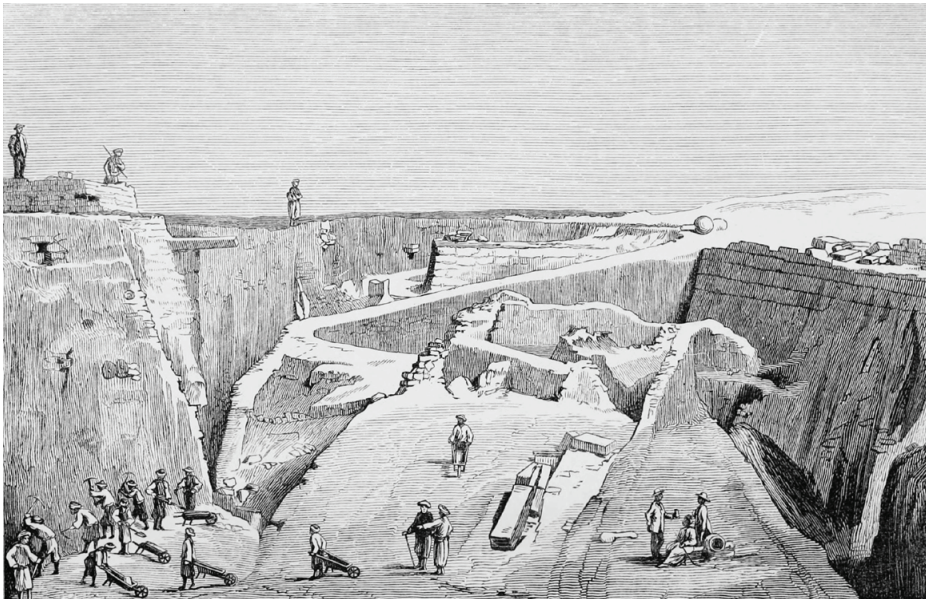


Figure 4.7. Excavating Troy.

Calvert had been digging into an earthen mound at a site in Hisarlik, on land he had purchased from its previous Turkish owners for precisely this purpose. Now Schliemann took over, hiring a team of local laborers to excavate down to the bedrock. The discovery of some Bronze Age pottery, jewelry, and building foundations encouraged Schliemann to expand the scope of his dig into a neighboring mound that lay on the property of a local Turkish landlord. When the landlord rebuffed Schliemann's offer to purchase it, he decided to dig anyway, despite his lack of either a *firman* to dig or title to the land.

With every layer of sediment his men removed, Schliemann instantly declared the recovery of something that he claimed bore a direct connection to the events narrated in the *Iliad*. In 1873, he produced his most spectacular find yet: a collection of gold, utensils, goblets, weaponry, and jewelry that he touted as "Priam's Treasure," named after the legendary king of Troy. With the gift of a salesman, Schliemann announced this find in dramatic fashion by publishing a picture of his wife adorned in "the jewels of Helen." Needless to say, this was not in line with standard archaeological practices of the day. Far more serious was the response of the Ottoman government, which learned of the existence of Priam's Treasure for the first time upon publication in a foreign newspaper of the infamous photograph of a bejeweled Mrs. Schliemann. Naturally, Constantinople had some pointed questions for Schliemann. For instance, where was his *firman*? Did he have a title to the land he was digging up? And how had Priam's Treasure managed to pass through Ottoman customs?

The answers to the questions would be very distressing indeed. For Schliemann had neither *firman* nor deed, and his method for removing his finds from Ottoman lands was dishonest in the extreme: by smuggling them out via bribes to choice members of the customs house. This was an intolerable affront to the dignity of Westernized Ottoman elites. After all, Schliemann knew that Constantinople was home to the Imperial Ottoman Museum, and that this museum—in accordance with the wishes of its Western and Westernized curators—privileged the display of Greek antiquities precisely such as those found by Schliemann. He also knew that the

Ottomans had their own antiquities service, also run by Western and Westernized scholars. And finally, he knew all too well that the Ottomans now had laws on the books prohibiting the export of antiquities abroad. What, then, inspired him to disregard the ubiquitous signs of Ottoman reform in the fields of archaeology and museum management?

As it turns out, deeply ingrained attitudes of Western superiority and Oriental incompetence died hard. Simply put, Schliemann looked upon Westernized Ottoman institutions with scarcely concealed scorn. He was backed in this belief by one of the American consuls in the region, who, in the midst of all the uproar, gave Schliemann emboldening advice. "It would be worse than throwing away the articles which you have discovered," he wrote, "to permit any part of them to go into the absurd collection of rubbish which the Turks call their 'Museum.'" Rather than hand his finds over to "ignorant barbarians," Schliemann was advised to remain faithful to the dictates of a "man of science." That meant one of two things: either smuggle the artifacts abroad to a Western museum or rebury them on site. Because the Turks were still deemed incapable of understanding Western science, only Schliemann was fit to determine the fate of his discoveries at Hisarlik.

The Turks thought otherwise. Before long, the Ottoman government cracked down on Schliemann's dig and tossed the corrupt customs officials into jail. Schliemann, hoping to stave off Ottoman hostility, now duly applied for his belated *firman*. Not surprisingly, the application was rejected. In addition, a local Turkish *pasha* was induced to purchase all the land upon which Schliemann was digging—later donating it to the state—thus ensuring that all legal niceties were on Constantinople's side. Schliemann, backed into a corner, responded by "donating" Priam's Treasure to the "Greek nation" and attempting to elicit sympathy for his actions in the international court of public sympathy. The Ottomans, preferring to use the actual courts of international diplomacy, moved to file a formal lawsuit in Athens for the recovery of Priam's Treasure. Much to Schliemann's surprise, the Greek state, far more interested in maintaining positive relations with its Ottoman neighbor than in waxing nostalgic over an

indeterminate pile of jewels, honored the Ottoman lawsuit and ordered the confiscation of the golden diadems. But Schliemann was one step ahead of them, having skipped town with the treasure just as the Greek state moved to freeze all his assets in the country.

Faced with the stark disconnect between the *realpolitik* concerns of the modern Greek state of today versus the imagined virtues of the ancient Greek nation, Schliemann decided to seek a rapprochement with Constantinople. Of course, he had no intention of relinquishing Priam's Treasure. After all, that was his ticket to social and intellectual respectability among the old moneyed elites. On the contrary, he continued to display the treasure throughout the globe for various social occasions and public lectures, before finally donating it to the Royal Museum of Berlin, where the Soviets found it in 1945 (it now resides in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow). Where Schliemann was willing to cede ground was in his financial ledgers. This took the form of monetary compensation for the missing treasures and artifacts, along with a negotiation of new terms for the operations at Hisarlik. In the end, the Ottomans accepted a one-time payment of £2,000 in exchange for dropping any and all claims to Priam's Treasure. Schliemann also agreed to a barter sharing arrangement for any future proceeds to emerge from the site, all of which would continue to be funded by Schliemann rather than by Constantinople.

We might call this "the Schliemann precedent." What it meant was simple: money still talked. Even after the Ottomans had aped Western institutions, discourse, and personnel to perfection, the global imbalance of wealth and power still dictated the terms of all geopolitical interactions between states. Certainly in a legal sense, and almost just as certainly in a moral sense, Schliemann was in the wrong on nearly every possible score of the Troy affair. The Ottomans were in the right. And yet none of that mattered. All that mattered was that Schliemann had the money and means necessary to do as he wished. Because the Ottomans were still militarily weak and economically backward, customs officials could still be bribed and the sultan could still be induced to accept a cash settlement for the archaeological proceeds of his realm. After all, this was the only

form of compensation he could hope to obtain. The Greeks had respected the Ottoman lawsuit, but would the Germans do so, too? And if the Germans did, what about the United States or France? Sooner or later, a wealthy European man who parroted the familiar yet outdated discourses of Western science and Oriental stagnation would manage to find safe haven somewhere from the growing reach of the Ottomans.

For their part, the Ottomans took away a valuable lesson from this latter-day Trojan War. Museums, antiquities services, and laws on paper were all fine and well, but they meant little when push came to shove. In the end, Europeans and Americans, despite their righteous words about science, preservation, and education, had no intention of leveling the playing field on their own. The Ottomans could practice their own science, preserve their own artifacts, and educate their own subjects, and still the Westerners would find a way to circumvent these new roadblocks and continue to take art and artifacts back to their own countries. In the face of a resourceful and determined Western foe, the Ottomans, enlightened or otherwise, would lose every time. To redress merely the cultural imbalance between the two sides—museums, personnel, and export laws—was not enough. The excavations at Troy had demonstrated that all too clearly. Somehow, the Ottomans would need to find a way to raise the stakes of non-compliance for Western archaeologists and the consular officials who enabled them. Unfortunately for the Ottomans and so many other peoples throughout the world, an opportunity to do so would not come about until the advent of World War I. That is the subject of chapter 6, when the Age of Discontent gives way to the Age of Confrontation.

In the meantime, however, “Schliemann’s precedent” would continue to set the tone for nearly all interactions between Western explorers and Middle Eastern governments for another forty years. And yet the kerfuffle at Troy did initiate one important change in the way things were done. Perhaps the Ottomans couldn’t last the full twelve rounds in a bout with the West. But their willingness to step into the ring was no longer in doubt. Moreover, they had managed to land some impressive blows, none more so than the successful lawsuit

against Schliemann in Greece, heretofore a cherished refuge for the German-American tycoon. In the end, Schliemann got what he wanted, but it was an ugly victory, bereft of both honor and dignity. Neither side clamored for a rematch. But how was one to be avoided? The answer lies in the rather swift embrace by both parties of the face-saving arrangement of *partage*. The idea of *partage*—a French word meaning “division,” “partition,” or “sharing”—was that each vested party in an excavation would receive an equal share of the material proceeds. Usually this meant 50/50: half for the host government and its museums and half for the foreign archaeologist and his sponsoring institutions back home. (If the excavated land was owned by a third party, then the ratio would be 33/33/33.) In theory, the host government was supposed to decide which artifacts went into which pile, reserving the most precious and unique items for itself. In reality, the same forces that led to the Schliemann precedent continued to ensure that foreigners nearly always took home the best pile.

Regardless of the continued perpetuation of such slights, both real and perceived, most Ottoman elites continued to hold Western archaeologists and their consular allies in relatively high regard. After all, they remained united by social, cultural, political, and financial ties that were just as strong, if not stronger, than those they held with their own, mostly Muslim subjects. Both Western elites and Westernized Ottoman elites were committed to the preservation and veneration of artifacts from the pre-Islamic past throughout the Near and Middle East. This commitment was designed to validate and celebrate their collective identity as “modern” and “scientific,” in direct opposition to the “backward” and “unenlightened” masses over whom they ruled. Much as in Europe, the educated elites of Cairo and Constantinople did not look upon their lower-class brethren with detached indifference. More often than not, they looked upon them with a missionary zeal, hoping to transform them—kicking and screaming, if need be—into ideological mirror images of themselves.

In order to accomplish this, the *pasha* and the sultan needed the help of Western elites. And on this front, they got it. The Ottoman and Egyptian antiquities services stood as the most

prominent symbols of this social and cultural alliance. Both services bore deep imprints of the Western scholarly agenda. The one in Constantinople was run at first by a German archaeologist, before a pioneering French-educated Ottoman scholar by the name of Osman Hamdi Bey succeeded him in 1881. The Egyptian service, however, was headed by an unbroken succession of Frenchmen for nearly a century, from Auguste Mariette in 1858 to Étienne Drioton in 1952. (A revolution that year ended both the Albanian dynastic line of Muhammad Ali and the French monopoly of the directorship of the Antiquities Service.) Be they Turkish, Egyptian, German, or French, however, all these directors peddled essentially the same ideological line regarding the antiquities of the Near East: the only antiquities worth preserving were those claimed for the narrative of Western civilization.

As heirs to this intellectual tradition, most of us are familiar with its general contours today, via repeated exposure to textbooks, mass media, and museum exhibits. By contrast, however, most of the illiterate and poverty stricken Muslim commoners of Egypt and Turkey were not even vaguely aware of the Western historical narrative that had been imposed upon their lands. (The lone exceptions, of course, being those who worked in the tourist industry as guides, interpreters, or escorts for foreigners). As a result, in the decades after the Schliemann affair, the Westernized elites of Egypt made a concerted effort to foist upon their own subjects the Western version of Egyptian history to which they themselves subscribed. With the Antiquities Service playing a leading role, the age of the pharaohs soon assumed a visible prominence in the public sphere. As part of this initiative, the Westernized elites of Cairo went to great lengths to adorn new government buildings in the artistic motifs of ancient Egypt and to disseminate the iconography of pyramids and obelisks throughout public spaces, most notably in postal stamps and street names. We call this phenomenon *secular pharaonism*. One of the most prominent examples can be seen in the Cairo train station, through which the majority of Egyptians will pass at one time or another. Not only does the very name of the station itself—Ramses Station—pay tribute to an ancient pharaoh, but the

halls inside are bedecked in a painstakingly reconstructed pharaonic décor, one that would make Ramses himself blush.

From the 1920s onward, secular pharaonism was official government policy, infused throughout publicly funded institutions and spaces. Before long, it gave rise to another movement, this time outside government auspices, known as *literary pharaonism*. Inspired by the Western vision for a modern identity intertwined with the pharaonic past, Egyptian writers and directors proceeded to weave mummies, pharaohs, and pyramids into their novels and films. For the first time, they produced Arabic literature and screenplays featuring plot lines and dramatic themes drawn from the Egyptomania pulp fiction craze of the Victorian era. In order to appeal to a radically different domestic audience, however, these themes were reworked to reflect the concerns of an educated Egyptian elite. For instance, when mummies come back to life in Western stories, they do so in order to take revenge on all of mankind, without regard to race or creed (though they may make an exception for gender). In twentieth-century Egyptian versions, however, the mummies chase only foreigners, leaving their “descendants”—modern Egyptians—free to run the country on their own.

Patriotic mummies made for good theater. So, too, did the lives of the pharaohs themselves. Naguib Mahfouz, the most famous proponent of literary pharaonism whose work would earn him the Nobel Prize late in life, attempted to turn the history of ancient Egypt into an allegory for the plight of modern Egypt. Mahfouz lamented the “hollow Pharaonic anthems” of government-led secular pharaonism, “which provoke in us only a superficial zeal because they do not emanate from a genuine connection between ancient Egypt and us.” Mahfouz took it upon himself to forge just such a genuine connection. He called for ancient Egyptian texts to be translated into modern Arabic, and for “images of ancient Egyptian life, in all of their shades, to be drawn in the Arabic language, that a strong bond be forged between ancient Egyptian monuments and youths at every stage of their development.” More specifically, he demanded that the “lives of Ahmose, Tutmose, Ramses, Nefertiti and others like

them be within the grasp of every school child and advanced student and for ancient Egyptian myths to come alive in nurseries.” One of his more famous novels, *Kifah Tiba (The Struggle for Thebes)*, published in 1944, made every effort to fulfill this promise. The plot narrates in fictional guise the overthrow of “foreign” Hyksos rule in Egypt by a “native” pharaoh in the fifteenth century B.C. The expelled Hyksos, a light-skinned nomadic race from the Middle East, were thinly veiled representations of either the Turks (Ottomans) or the Europeans, whose imperialist rule is resisted and defeated by the “rightful” rulers of Egypt: the pharaohs.

Despite his best efforts, Mahfouz failed to plant the seeds of a pharaonic craze among the masses of Egypt. His reception of the Nobel Prize in 1988 was premised mostly on his later work, not that of literary pharaonism, which was plagued by poor sales and lukewarm receptions. Nor could the promoters of secular pharaonism, despite a huge investment of government resources, claim much success in the hearts and minds of the Egyptian people. Why? After all, the notion that Egypt should base its modern identity on its ancient past took fertile root among Western minds well over two hundred years ago, and has been further embraced ever since. What, then, can account for the starkly different reception this idea encountered among Egyptian audiences? Part of the answer can be found in the degree of political and economic prosperity associated with the ruling elite of modern Egypt. Generally speaking, politicians who preside over an era of economic and political progress will find it much easier to disseminate their associated ideological programs among their subjects. This is because most people, wont to confuse correlation with causation, will view the arrival of “good times” as the direct product of human agency; that is, the ideas and beliefs of their rulers. By contrast, those who preside over “bad times”—i.e., political humiliation and economic stagnation—will find it difficult to combat the perception among the masses that the ruling ideology of the governing elite is to blame.

In other words, when the king or president of Egypt drapes himself in the rhetorical and aesthetic regalia of Ramses II, he had better succeed in reclaiming at least a slice of the imagined

glory of that age for the benefit of his people. Otherwise, the luster of both current and ancient rulers will suffer. The author of an opinion piece published in an Arabic-language newspaper in 1932 captured this logic quite well when he observed how “the Pharaoh rising from the tomb would be shocked by the lowly state of his countrymen under foreign domination.” A similar analogy could have been made for nearly every Middle Eastern state of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from Egypt to Iran. As a result, Western ideas about the roles of history and culture in the Middle East failed to resonate among the Muslim commoners, because they did not present a credible plan for the improvement of their economic livelihood. In their place, a far more familiar and accessible idea continued to hold its ground: Moses vs. Pharaoh. If Ramses II could not save Egypt, then perhaps the Prophet and his Companions could. Among the Muslim masses, the Quran continued to evince an appeal unmatched by that peddled by the more secular and Westernized elites. After all, one did not have to be wealthy or educated in order to access Quranic teachings. Thus, while the rulers of Egypt attempted to confirm their worth by sending their sons to Oxford and vacationing in Mediterranean villas, their subjects needed only to walk into the nearest mosque for confirmation of their purpose in life. Here, through the promise of eternal salvation to all, they could obtain the social equality and economic liberation denied them in life.

It was an attractive premise, made all the more attractive for the fact that it could not be disproven by any worldly setbacks—for all true accounting took place in the afterlife. In 1928, a man named Hasan al-Banna took this message and used it to recruit followers into a new grassroots organization: the Muslim Brotherhood. According to al-Banna, the Brotherhood promised to reverse the political and economic humiliation visited upon his Egyptian brethren over the past century. Al-Banna gave talks at factories and labor camps, where he saw the suffering of Egyptians first hand. “We are weary of this life of humiliation and restriction,” they told him. “We see that the Arabs and the Muslims have no status and no dignity. They are mere hirelings belonging to the foreigners.” According to al-Banna, more than sixty

percent of the Egyptian populace lived below the subsistence level, a moral stain that he placed squarely on the shoulders of the secular Westernized elite. By 1932, al-Banna moved his recruiting efforts from the British-dominated Suez Canal zone into Cairo itself. It was there that he discovered a rallying cry that transcended the boundaries of Egypt and appealed to Muslims throughout the Middle East: Palestine. Membership in the Brotherhood ballooned, drawing the attention and ire of the political status quo. As a result, throughout the 1930s and 40s, the Brotherhood faced intermittent bans on its participation in national politics.

Al-Banna's views on history and culture were a direct refutation of those promoted by the Westernized rulers of Egypt. Though he claimed to be "interested" in the age of the pharaohs and "welcomed" study of their scientific accomplishments, he vowed to "resist with all our strength the program that seeks to re-create ancient Egypt after God gave Egypt the teachings of Islam and provided her with honor and glory beyond the



Figure 4.8. Hasan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood.

ancient past.” More specifically, it was the honor and glory of the Islamic caliphates that he sought to re-create in the present, for they had risen to power after God rescued his followers from “the filth of paganism, the rubbish of polytheism, and the habits of the pagan age.” Al-Banna’s vision for Egypt’s relationship with its past was one that hearkened back to the medieval Quranic discourse encountered earlier in this chapter: a few wondrous curiosities overshadowed by the moral lessons of Moses vs. Pharaoh. In the end, the pharaohs were pagans, forever disqualified as role models for a Muslim nation.

In working toward his goals, Hasan al-Banna did not advocate the use of violence, and he deplored the tactics of the terrorist. Not everyone agreed with him, however, and in 1949, al-Banna himself was shot and killed as he left a youth group gathering. More radical leaders then took over his movement, including a man by the name of Sayyid Qutb. Qutb, once an avid consumer of secular and literary pharaonism, later came to reject these projects after a disillusioning course of study at Stanford. Upon his return to Egypt, Qutb warned his followers that the age of *jahiliyya*—pre-Islamic heathen ignorance—had once again taken over the world, and that the materialistic West and its “running dogs” in the Middle East were to blame. Though a failed assassination plot led to Qutb’s execution in 1966, his strident influence has lived on: one of his brother’s followers later became a key mentor to Osama bin Laden and was instrumental in the rise of the terrorist organization al-Qaeda.

More generally, it is remarkable to see how the ideas and concepts that once animated the activities of the historical Indiana Jones continue to emerge in the present-day politics of the Middle East. After all, it was Western archaeologists and scholars who played a leading role in the rehabilitation and celebration of the once long-forgotten pharaohs. Not everyone in Egypt was appreciative of their efforts, however. The clearest demonstration of this came in 1981, with the assassination of the Egyptian president Anwar Sadat. The gunmen were Islamic fundamentalists serving in his military, inspired in part by Sadat’s conclusion of a treaty with Israel. Any such treaty, of course, would come at the expense of Palestine,

whose welfare had long served as the most reliable rallying cry for the Muslim Brotherhood and its sympathizers. Most revealing, however, were the words shouted at the scene of the attack by one of the assailants: “I have killed Pharaoh!” It is difficult to imagine a more direct—and chilling—refutation of the secular Western agenda once peddled by the historical Indiana Jones throughout the Middle East. Indiana Jones may be long gone, but “Pharaoh” is still used as a pejorative label for any Muslim who follows in his ideological footsteps.

Most recently, during the Egyptian elections of 2012, the Muslim Brotherhood succeeded in capturing the majority of the popular vote. Less than a year after its candidate for president took office, however, a military coup returned a more secular politician to power, one with many years of experience in British and American institutions. The battle of Moses vs. Pharaoh continues, with casualties on both sides. The West tends to back Pharaoh in all his Middle Eastern incarnations, while the Muslim masses tend to back his more fundamentalist rivals. And yet neither has proven capable of replicating the “honor and glory” of their promised golden ages. The secular Westernized clique has repeatedly failed to re-create the imagined prosperity of the ancient Egyptian pharaohs, much as the fundamentalists have repeatedly failed to re-create the imagined prosperity of the ancient Islamic caliphs.

Indiana Jones is gone. The Age of Discontent, however, lives on.

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