

*'Archaeology Is Not a Science, It's a Vendetta'***Boston's Golden Hoard Stirs a Tempest**

By Alfred Friendly

LONDON (WP)—The astonishing acquisition of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts—22 pounds of solid gold, very ancient, Near Eastern artifacts—is beautiful, dazzling, fascinating and unique.

And, in the opinion of archaeologists here, academically valueless.

The British experts are, in general, outraged at the museum's acceptance of the gold hoard because neither the donor, Boston broker Landon T. Clay, nor the museum itself will disclose the origin in anything but the most general terms, useless for scholarly purposes.

Accordingly, experts here feel it is:

- Of no value in advancing the scientific knowledge about the peoples, skills and culture of the makers;

- An invitation to every country in the Eastern Mediterranean to penalize future archaeological expeditions out of anger that the treasure may have been illegally smuggled from their shores;

- A misleading hodge-podge of incongruous objects, some remote from others by a factor of a thousand years and a thousand miles, which, presented as if a single find, dreadfully confuses instead of enlightens.

The treasure, consisting of 137 pieces of 18-karat gold jewelry, is only the fourth such assemblage to come to light. The first was the greatest, the treasure of Troy discovered by Heinrich Schliemann in 1873, displayed in Berlin, seized by the Russians in World War II and since lost.

The second was the so-called Dorak Treasure, viewed and sketched only by the British excavator James Mellaart, in 1958 in Izmir, Turkey. It too has disappeared and Mr. Mellaart, very probably the victim of a frame-up, has been barred ever since from continuing work in Turkey.

The third was a collection obtained by the University of Pennsylvania, also the subject of controversy because of inadequate knowledge of its origin.

Turned Down?

The Boston Museum collection was purchased by Mr. Clay for a figure reported in excess of \$100,000. It—or something very much like it—is believed to have been offered for sale here, in Berlin and in Switzerland, but turned down, again for lack of information about the provenance.

It is said to have been offered in the United States by owners in Zurich. It was seen and its importance recognized by Dr. Emily Vermuele, of Harvard University, one of the most respected and learned figures in American archaeological circles.

She described the treasure to American

archaeologists at their last annual meeting at the turn of the year. She categorically denied that it was the Dorak find—as has Mr. Mellaart on the basis of photographs shown to him here—and would say only that it came from a tomb in the "Eastern Mediterranean." That could be anywhere from Syria to Sicily. Some of the objects themselves, however—such as the golden spirals on bracelets and studs—are reminiscent of work as far east as Mesopotamia.

In giving only the most general and inclusive clue as to origin, Dr. Vermuele and the museum doubtless thought to avoid angering any particular country in the area. All of them, of course, have strict prohibitions against the unauthorized exports of antiquities.

In fact, however, the too-general explanation may raise suspicions in all of them, it is felt here, with the result that it will be even harder than it is now—and it is dreadfully difficult already—for Western archaeological expeditions to obtain licenses to excavate.

The Rumor

In British circles, the rumor is insistent almost to the point of certainty that the hoard came from Turkey—from Cilicia, to be exact, the ancient province on the southeast coast. Of all nations, Turkey is the most sensitive about the smuggling of its treasures, being the most vulnerable as well as the most xenophobic and, in modern times, the most sinned against.

Without knowledge of either the location or the circumstances of the find, the materials therefrom—however lovely to look at—are useless to a scholar, telling him nothing.

From the finest piece in the collection, a solid gold cylinder seal most exquisitely crafted, quite a bit can be ascertained, however. It is obviously Egyptian and appears to have belonged to an official at the courts of two Fifth Dynasty pharaohs ruling between 2497 and 2450 B.C. The implication is that it provides a clue to the date of the other material.

That, however, is a very flimsy or dubious implication. No proof—only someone's word—is adduced that the seal was found in the alleged tomb collection.

Even if it had been, it would mean nothing, for as early as the third millennium there were "antique collectors"—men of wealth or stature who had foreign rarities, coming to their possession by very long trading paths, buried with their funeral goods.

Moreover, it is as near certain as anything can be in the present state of knowledge that the lion-headed bracelet is an Iron Age product and not, as the rest of the collection is supposed to be, from the Bronze Age. That is, the bracelet is similar to material made in the Near

East in about the eighth or ninth centuries B.C.

Most of the rest of the collection—bracelets, studs, necklaces, pendants, etc.—cannot be precisely dated either. To judge from other finds made over the years, most of these pieces are from the early or late Bronze Ages, as asserted, but very much the same sort of jewelry has since been found in Iron Age troves.

The suspicion here is strong that the items were not found in a single trove, but were assembled from many sources by modern dealers.

There is the outside chance—not probable but not to be ruled out entirely—that one or more of the items is faked. There are no scientific tests that can resolve the question, one way or the other.

Perhaps the dim view that the British archaeologists take of the Boston Museum's acquisition should be discounted. They have based their judgment mostly on the photographs alone—unless what was offered a few years ago to the British Museum, and rejected by it, was the same thing. Further, as the quotation from the dean of British archaeologists, "Archaeology is not a science, it's a vendetta," makes clear, the practitioners of the science are not noted for their goodwill one toward another.

Finally, it must be repeated that the scholarliness and integrity of Dr. Vermuele weigh heavily to validate the worth and integrity of the collection. She may well possess all the facts that would convert what is now an object of dubiety into something as valuable to archaeological knowledge and as pure as the very gold of which it is comprised—but she may be stopped for the time being from disclosing them.

Yet, as matters now stand, one is kept wondering just what the hell those beautiful things really are.

'Grotesque Forgery'

ATHENS, Feb. 9 (NYT).—A top Greek expert on prehistoric antiquity has branded as a forgery the 137-piece gold treasure, said to be 4,000 years old, that has been put on display at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Spyridon Marinatos, inspector general of Greece's Archaeological Services, after studying published pictures of main objects in the collection, said in an interview: "In my humble, personal opinion, this is a grotesque forgery."

Cornelius Vermuele, curator of classical arts at the Boston Museum, replied:

"I have a great admiration for Professor Marinatos. My respect for him as a scholar is unbounded.

"I respectfully feel that when he has had an opportunity to examine the find at the Boston Museum, he will concur that whatever the origins of the jewelry, wherever it was found, it is not a forgery."

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