

**Distorting the Corpus:
Scholarly Interaction and the Erroneous Authentication
of the Sheikh Ibada Fakes**



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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Research

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January 21, 2019

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Thesis Summary

Far too often antiquities purchased on the market without verifiable provenience information enter scholarship as authentic antiquities only to be later exposed as modern creations. When this occurs, the scholarly discourse surrounding these events tends to treat these fakes as singularities and focusses on the methods used to uncover them. Largely ignored during these discussions are the processes by which these fake antiquities were erroneously authenticated by scholars in the first place. It is this deficit in the scholarship that this thesis contributes towards.

Through a careful study of the Sheikh Ibada fakes, a group of sculptures once heralded as important examples of early 'Coptic' sculpture, this thesis explores the erroneous authentication of fake antiquities by scholars. It is demonstrated here that the methods by which scholars approached the Sheikh Ibada fakes, devoid of archaeologically recovered provenience, were highly problematic and led to the fakes being erroneously authenticated. There was a lack of what should be routine suspicion regarding the authenticity of antiquities acquired not from scientific excavation, but rather the antiquities trade. As a result, the Sheikh Ibada fakes were authenticated and entered scholarship as authentic antiquities.

Statement of Originality

I, Richard Bott, certify that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed) _____

Date: ____21/01/2019____

Acknowledgements

To say this writing this has been easy would be nothing short of a lie, and without the existence of some wonderful people this project would not have happened:

First, my supervisor, Associate Professor Malcolm Choat. You introduced me to these fakes and encouraged my interest in fakes and forgeries. Your advice (and support of my growing caffeine dependence) and willingness to talk about anything related to Cultural Heritage was greatly appreciated, and I am truly grateful to have had the privilege to work with you on this project. Dr. Diana Burton and Dr. Judy Dueling. You encouraged me to pursue my interest in fakes back at VUW, and that got me here, thank you, Dr. Rachel Yuen Collingridge, your constant enthusiasm, work ethic, and approach to the ancient world has been inspiring to be around.

Moving countries can be an isolating experience, and so I am eternally grateful to those in Sydney who took me in. Matt, Luke, and Ollie, it was always nice to see familiar faces in the library and the constant advice or friendly conversation was appreciated. Genevieve, your help ‘translating’ has been invaluable. Jasmine, you are quite *noice* (and the cupcakes were appreciated). The guys from the AA3s, although I only got through 40 minutes with you this past year has been the most enjoyable that I have spent playing (or coaching) football and that is solely because of you guys. My housemates, particularly Sam, you adopted me even though I am a Kiwi (and you never let me forget it). Finally, although I doubt they will ever read this, I would like to also extend my thanks to the surgeons, nurses, and physios at Royal North Shore Hospital. You repaired my leg and made a fairly traumatising experience bearable.

Last, but certainly not least, my friends and family back home. Ziming, your cheerleading throughout this project was second-to-none. Hannah, always knowing there was someone there to talk to and have a cup of tea with meant the world. Preston, your advice and help editing has been greatly appreciated. My brother and sister, I am infinitely proud of the people you have become, and your support and belief got me through some tough places. Theo, the Pollux to my Castor, your advice, willingness to edit (repeatedly), encouragement, and support has meant more to me than you will ever know. Dad, you introduced me to Sherlock Holmes and Indiana Jones. Finally, Mum. You have done more for me and my siblings than we will ever likely know or appreciate, thank you.

Introduction

Antiquities are links to the pasts in which they were conceived, created, used, and discarded. The portable material record of the ancient world has particular value when it can be linked with the archaeological context in which these objects were finally abandoned.¹ Yet their value is not limited to their archaeological worth. Throughout history, antiquities have been bought, sold, and collected both for their artistic beauty and the connection they provide to the great civilisations of history.² This commodification has resulted in a lucrative global antiquities trade, which grew significantly during the 20th century.³ To meet this increased demand, the looting of archaeological sites and production of fake antiquities also grew significantly.⁴ As a result, many antiquities of dubious authenticity entered the market and were purchased by museums and collectors. Many were also accepted as authentic remains of the past by scholars, and made their way into the accepted corpora of many branches of archaeology and art-history.⁵

When these fakes have been uncovered, the focus has typically been on the reasoning and methodologies behind their discovery. Often never broached are the processes that lead to them being erroneously authenticated in the first instance.⁶ This is particularly concerning because as Maxwell Anderson has noted, “it is impossible to know how many forgeries have made their way into public collections.”⁷ By focussing predominantly on the removal of fakes and forgeries scholars effectively accept that fakes will continue to feature prominently within the study of the ancient world. As such, this thesis explores the processes by which fake antiquities are allowed entry into scholarship as authentic antiquities in the first place.

In order to properly interrogate and understand the processes by which fake antiquities are erroneously authenticated by scholars and the subsequent impact this can have, this thesis takes as a case study the Sheikh Ibada fakes.⁸ The Sheikh Ibada fakes are a large group of sculptures once considered important works of Coptic art, but now accepted as fakes.⁹ At the time they were published, the majority of these sculptures were said to have been found at Sheikh Ibada, ancient

¹ Renfrew 2000, 19.

² Yates 2015, 74-75.

³ Yates 2015, 72; Bowman 2018, 64-66; Nørskov 2002b, 259.

⁴ Brodie 2002, 3; Doumas 1991, 28-29.

⁵ Muscarella 2000, 73; Doumas 1991, 28-29; Lapatin 2002; Kelker & Bruhns 2010; Bruhns & Kelker 2010.

⁶ Marlowe 2013, 101-105.

⁷ Anderson 2017, 69.

⁸ Throughout this thesis the Sheikh Ibada fakes are also referred to as ‘the Sheikh Ibada sculptures’ or simply ‘the fakes’. For background information on the Sheikh Ibada fakes, and why they are now accepted as fakes see Chapter I.2 *infra*.

⁹ For the major treatments see Vikan 1977a; Boyd & Vikan 1981, 8-9; Spanel 2001, 89; Török 2005b, 24; Severin 1995, 289-290.

Antinoë, in Upper Egypt. These sculptures were acquired by a range of prominent museums in various countries, and were subsequently published and discussed by eminent scholars.¹⁰

The Sheikh Ibada fakes have been chosen as a case study for several reasons. First, scholarship on fake antiquities is limited, and is often restricted to one or two objects.¹¹ As the Sheikh Ibada sculptures have been grouped within scholarship, they present a distinct opportunity to examine how multiple scholars have interacted with an assemblage of fakes. Second, unlike many other antiquities of questionable authenticity, the Sheikh Ibada sculptures are now widely accepted as fakes; any conclusions drawn by studying them are thus far more likely to be valid. Finally, although there have been several publications that discuss their inauthenticity, no one has yet explored how or why they were authenticated.

It should be noted here that despite the subject of the case study, this thesis is not intended to critique or expand existing thinking about art in Late antique Egypt ('Coptic Art').¹² The focus of this thesis is to examine how fake antiquities are able to enter scholarship, and the impact that this can have. To this end, scholarship on Coptic art is engaged with only as needed to provide the background for the publication of the fakes and contextualise their reception.

Chapter I situates this discussion of the Sheikh Ibada sculptures within existing literature, and provides a synthesis of the arguments which have shown them to be fakes. The following three chapters explore varying aspects of scholarly interaction with the fakes. Chapter II examines the wider environment in which the Sheikh Ibada fakes emerged and were received. The first part of this chapter examines the state of scholarship on Coptic art during the mid 20th century. This demonstrates both that no clear understanding as to what constituted 'Coptic art' had been established, and that prevailing views on art in Late Antique Egypt provided scholars with plausible narratives to account for the existence of anomalous sculptures. The role of the market in presenting the Sheikh Ibada fakes as authentic is then examined, showing that the market's willingness to operate without an open exchange of documentation allowed the fakes to appear as authentic. Moreover, because the market operated without this exchange of information, it was reliant on a bond of trust between buyer and seller which reinforced the appearance of authenticity. Thus, when the fakes surfaced, scholars were encountering antiquities which had already been effectively authenticated by the market, while the contemporary scholarly environment was one which was ill-suited to reject fakes.

Chapter III focusses on the way in which scholars applied existing methods to authenticate the Sheikh Ibada fakes, examining the interaction of scholars with documentation (provenance and provenience), and the application of connoisseurship. This discussion establishes that although

¹⁰ See Chapter I.2.

¹¹ Muscarella 2013a; Muscarella 2013b.

¹² On the problematic nature of this term and the reasons for adopting it in this thesis, See Definitions *infra*.

there were clear grounds for rejecting the Sheikh Ibada sculptures as fakes, scholars failed to do so. Instead, the possibility that the sculptures may have been fake appears never to have been considered, and their authenticity was assumed. The Sheikh Ibada fakes were ultimately authenticated because scholars failed to consider the possibility that they might be anything other than authentic.

To properly demonstrate the troubling impact that the erroneous authentication of fake antiquities by scholars can have, Chapter IV examines both the use of the Sheikh Ibada fakes as ‘authentic’ antiquities within scholarship, and the protection afforded to them because they were published. Once accepted as authentic, the Sheikh Ibada fakes contributed extensively to shaping scholarly discourse on Coptic art throughout the mid-to-late 20th century, being interpreted as key evidence in reconstructions of the art-historical landscape of Late Antique Egypt. Moreover, once they were included within publications, subsequent scholars accepted the findings of those who initially published the fakes, failing to question their authenticity. Later publications of the fakes helped to further embed them within the corpus of accepted works, and often obfuscated the market-derived nature of the fakes, making them appear more secure.

By way of conclusions, this thesis offers some suggested potential guidelines for the interaction of scholars with antiquities that may mitigate the erroneous authentication of fakes and reduce their impact on scholarship. The research presented here adds to the growing number of scholars arguing that the use within scholarship of antiquities whose collection history cannot be properly documented should be limited. Authenticity is of paramount importance when attempting to accurately reconstruct the past, yet too often assumptions as to the genuine nature of antiquities are made without sufficient investigation. Ultimately, this thesis further demonstrates the problems inherent in scholarly interaction with undocumented antiquities, showing how what should be routine suspicion regarding the authenticity of such artefacts is often lacking.

To investigate scholarly interaction with the Sheikh Ibada fakes and the subsequent impact, this thesis has relied primarily on a survey of pertinent publications featuring the fakes. Although the Sheikh Ibada fakes were also published in exhibition catalogues, due to the time and space constraints of this thesis, primacy has been given to more substantial scholarship.¹³ Among these, the works of Hans Müller, James Cooney, and Klaus Wessel feature prominently throughout the ensuing discussion: these three scholars, particularly Müller and Wessel, were those primarily responsible for introducing the fakes into the study of Coptic art.¹⁴ To further supplement the data

¹³ There were several large exhibitions during the early and mid-1960s which featured many of the Sheikh Ibada fakes and several collections of Coptic art which acquired large numbers of them. See Wessel 1962; Villa Hügel 1963; Wessel 1966. Undoubtedly the acquisition practices of museums played a role in the acceptance of the fakes. Unfortunately, this cannot be explored here, but is worthy of future study.

¹⁴ Müller’s 1960 paper ‘Grabstele eines Isismysten aus Antinoe/ Mittelägypten: eine Neuerwerbung der Ägyptischen Staatssammlung München’ was the first publication to feature the fakes. Cooney’s 1961 article ‘A Nameless Boy of

from published source, several museums were contacted for information about examples of the Sheikh Ibada fakes in their collections. Only the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Recklinghausen Ikonenmuseum, and the Princeton University Art Museum responded and provided access to their records.

Judgements of (in)authenticity can be contentious, with established scholars often disagreeing with one another and entire papers sometimes examining minute details by way of either accepting an antiquity's authenticity or condemning it to the status of a fake.¹⁵ These judgements require substantial discussion, and fall outside the immediate scope of this thesis. For this reason, no attempt is made here to either add to, or remove anything from, the current corpus of Sheikh Ibada fakes. Instead, the judgements of Thelma Thomas,¹⁶ Hans-Georg Severin,¹⁷ and Donald Spanel,¹⁸ supplemented by others,¹⁹ have been accepted here.²⁰ These scholars have produced the most in-depth technical analyses of the fakes, clearly detailing their reasons for dismissal. Moreover, and more importantly, the arguments in these works for the inauthenticity of the Sheikh Ibada sculptures have been widely accepted.²¹ Thus, the publications discussed within this thesis have been chosen because they feature fakes discussed by those listed above. When fakes are discussed specifically within this thesis, citations of the arguments of their inauthenticity have been given (where applicable).²²

There are limitations to this study that do need to be addressed. First, discussion is based primarily on published information. As valuable as these publications are, they contain only information that the author deemed pertinent. This impedes investigation, as provenance information is often not published, which makes it difficult to trace the movement of the fakes or determine who provided particular information.²³ Further, it is often unclear what sort of

Roman Egypt' was also important as a more general introduction of the Sheikh Ibada sculptures. However, Wessel's 1963 *Koptische Kunst: Die Spätantike in Ägypten* (the 1965 English translation has been used throughout this thesis) was perhaps the most influential, making use of far more fakes than Müller and Cooney did. This book would then feature prominently as a source in several important works on Coptic art, including Effenberger 1975; Zaloscer 1974; and Badawy 1978.

¹⁵ Perhaps the most notable example of this is the Getty Kouros Colloquium. A large number of experts gathered to discuss the (in)authenticity of the Getty Kouros and were unable to decide one way or the other. See Kokkou 1993.

¹⁶ Thomas 1990, 1:139-149.

¹⁷ Severin 1995.

¹⁸ Spanel 2001.

¹⁹ For example: Boyd & Vikan 1981, 8-9; Koch 1986; Gonosová & Kondoleon 1994, 394-395; Török 2005b, 24-30; Kruglov 2010. Vikan (1977a) might also be included here. However, his paper is an unpublished typescript (a copy of which I thank the author for) and so while it is invaluable for providing general arguments and background on the Sheikh Ibada fakes as a group it does not highlight specific items.

²⁰ A synthesis of the arguments against the authenticity of the Sheikh Ibada sculptures can be found in Chapter I.2 *infra*.

²¹ Spanel (2001, 93) notes that no one has defended the fakes in print. Some do still publish some of the niche stelae as authentic, but they do not address the arguments for their inauthenticity. This is discussed further in Chapter IV.2.2 *infra*.

²² Appendix A also has a list of the Sheikh Ibada fakes discussed within this thesis and citations for the arguments of inauthenticity.

²³ Brodie (2011a, 414-415) notes that one of the primary roles scholars perform to support the market is 'provenance suppression'.

reassurances the dealers who sold the fakes provided to museums. As some of the museum records that were made available demonstrate, there was information provided by dealers to accompany the fakes that was not found in either academic publications or the dealer's catalogue. Moreover, clarity is further obscured by the nature of forgery production, which in order to be profitable must remain hidden.²⁴ This obfuscation is augmented by the structure of the antiquities market, which often requires very little information to accept antiquities as legal and authentic before selling them. As such, interesting issues such as the production of the fakes and their movement pre-market will be largely ignored.²⁵ In a longer study (in terms both of word count and the time allowed for researching it), more intensive archival research conducted at the museums which purchased the fakes might allow for a more fulsome picture to be constructed. Finally, the discussion of the fakes on the market is built primarily around the presentation of fakes within dealers' catalogues. Only six catalogues could however be located during this thesis.²⁶ While there do appear to be fairly consistent trends throughout the surveyed catalogues, it is worth considering that other dealers may have dealt with the fakes differently.

Throughout this thesis numbers in boldface in brackets (i.e. **(1)**) refer to fakes listed within Appendix A. This only occurs in text, in the footnotes the full Museum name and acquisition number are given.

Definitions

Provenance and Provenience

Provenance and provenience are two of the most fundamental concepts encountered in cultural heritage discussions, yet confusion as to their exact meanings still exists, and so their usage within this thesis needs to be clarified.²⁷ In theory, the distinction between the two terms is fairly clear. Provenance can best be understood as a record of the modern ownership history of an antiquity post-discovery.²⁸ Provenience, on the other hand, refers to the geographic location in which an antiquity was found.²⁹ In practice, however, this distinction is often non-existent. Particularly within the market, although in scholarship too, provenance and provenience are often

²⁴ Tjshuis 2006, 199-200.

²⁵ There is some discussion about the movement of the Sheikh Ibada fakes before entering the Western markets in Chapter II.2.1, but this is limited by available information.

²⁶ *Ars Antiqua* 1959; *Ars Antiqua* 1960; *Ars Antiqua* 1962; Eisenberg 1960; Galerie Motte 1961; André Emmerich Gallery 1962.

²⁷ For a comprehensive discussion of the development of the two terms within scholarship see Joyce (2012).

²⁸ Barker 2012, 19-20; Joyce 2012, 49-54; Hauser-Schäublin & Kim 2016, 110-112.

²⁹ Barker 2012, 19-20; Joyce 2012, 49-54; Hauser-Schäublin & Kim 2016, 110-112.

conflated, with both understood as provenance.³⁰ This distorts and obscures the different information that each provides. Because of this frequent confusion, some scholars have suggested more distinctive terminology. Elizabeth Marlowe, for example, offers “grounded” and “ungrounded” to describe antiquities with verifiable provenience (grounded) and those without (ungrounded).³¹ Similarly, David Gill has suggested using “collecting histories” (provenance) and “archaeology” (provenience) instead.³² Although both Marlowe and Gill’s approaches have their merits, and rightly highlight the frequent lack of nuance applied when using these terms, provenance and provenience are retained here due to their more established position within scholarly discourse.

Provenance is understood within this thesis as any information pertaining to the modern, post-excavation history of an antiquity. This includes: export and import permits; records from museums and collections, detailing when an antiquity entered a collection or featured in an exhibition;³³ sales records and catalogues from dealers and auction houses; and prior ownership records (which might include labels, or markings, on an item which place it within a collection). Finally, it must be stressed that not all of the information which constitutes provenance is of equal value.³⁴

Provenience, on the other hand, is somewhat more complicated. Ideally, it is understood as a verifiable record, recovered from scientific excavation, detailing where exactly an antiquity was found during excavation, including its location within the stratigraphy and any associated finds. However, the ensuing discussion will address the use of provenience in the construction of the authenticity for the Sheikh Ibada fakes. As will be discussed, many of these sculptures were said to have been found at Sheikh Ibada, and this, though vague, was accepted as valid findspot information. Moreover, the limited archaeological explorations of the late 19th and early 20th century that uncovered Coptic material often failed to record adequately specific findspot information, and general labels, such as ‘Ahnas’, were used to identify items.³⁵ As such, provenience, like provenance, can differ in specificity and so value to a scholar.³⁶ Provenience is

³⁰ Examples of this conflation can be found in: Bell 2016, 254-255; Massy 2008, 730-731. Although not frequently considered part of the issue, one might also include the geological use of provenance, which refers to the location of the geological source of the raw materials. See Joyce 2012, 55. In papyrology, ‘provenance’ has been standardly used to refer to provenience (though sometimes referring to place of writing rather than of deposition), see, for example, Bagnall 1995, 55 and *passim*.

³¹ Marlowe 2013, 5, 44-46.

³² Gill 2010; Gill 2016, 237.

³³ Antiquities from private collection, or other museums, are often included in museum exhibitions, or entire private collections loaned to museums for display.

³⁴ Marlowe 2013, 6. Varying types of information, provided in varying ways and levels of detail, are understood as provenance.

³⁵ Gonosová 1986, 10; Torp 1969, 101. Even controlled excavations such as that of the monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes could not record accurate stratigraphy on finds because of prior disturbance of the site. This resulted in finds being assigned very general proveniences, see Winlock & Crum 1926, xxiii.

³⁶ Marlowe 2013, 6.

therefore understood in this thesis as encompassing all information pertaining to antiquity's place of discovery.

Because of their variable nature, it will be noted, when applicable, if the information supplied with the antiquity being discussed is verifiable (supported by evidence that can be confirmed independently) or not. Further, the terms 'documented' and 'undocumented' will be employed throughout this thesis for concision and clarity. 'Documented' is used here to describe antiquities which have both provenance and provenience, with the goal to allow for a clear distinction between antiquities which only have one of either provenance or provenience, and those antiquities that are accompanied by both. 'Undocumented' is used to describe antiquities for which no provenance or provenience has been supplied. Finally, 'documentation' is used to refer collectively to provenance and provenience.

Fakes and Forgeries

Within scholarship the terms 'fake' and 'forgery' are often used inconsistently. For some, these terms are interchangeable,³⁷ while for others these two terms have very nuanced differences.³⁸ Following Duncan Chappell and Kenneth Polk, 'fake' is used here to designate an object that is not what it appears to be, and was created, or passed on, with the intent to deceive.³⁹ Furthermore, as many of the Sheikh Ibada fakes are authentic pieces reworked excessively before appearing on the market, it is worth briefly addressing restoration. Restoration is a routine occurrence on the antiquities market and an important part of conservation work.⁴⁰ Yet issues arise when such a process is overly extensive, to the point where it is unclear how much of the work was actually done by the original artist.⁴¹ Typically, antiquities which have been restored to the extent that much of the original detailing has been replaced or recarved are considered fake.⁴²

³⁷ See, for example, Butcher & Gill 1993, 391.

³⁸ For example, in Durney & Proulx (2011, 122) and Passas & Proulx (2011, 57) forgery is reserved to designate an object produced as a copy of an original but passed on as the original, whereas 'fake' is used for a fabricated object made in the same 'style' as an original and passed as authentic. Charney (2016, 5), on the other hand, defines fakes as authentic objects which have been fraudulently altered to increase their value. Forgeries, according to Charney, are objects created in fraudulent imitation of an existing authentic objects. It is also acknowledged, here, that fakes and forgeries have been produced throughout history for a variety of reasons. See Rollston (2014) for an interesting examination of notable forgeries from antiquity through to modernity.

³⁹ Chappell & Polk 2009, 400-402. These definitions are grounded in legal scholarship and history. Copies might also be considered 'fakes', but only if they are presented as the original. It is recognised that this definition has its own issues. For example, misattributed works, although largely an issue for the fine art market, are authentic works in the sense that they were not created with the intention to deceive. However, they have been passed, either deliberately or accidentally, as something that they are not, and so in some sense are fakes. Furthermore, this definition, and its application within this thesis, does assume that the Sheikh Ibada fakes were created with the intent to deceive. This, although the most likely explanation for the existence of the fakes, does assume the motivations of the forgers were duplicitous, which cannot be confirmed given their identities are unknown.

⁴⁰ Kelker & Bruhns 2010, 19; Bruhns & Kelker 2010, 21. Kelker & Bruhns (2010, 17-20) have an interesting discussion about the varying ways antiquities might be fakes.

⁴¹ Chappell & Polk 2009, 405-406; Kelker & Bruhns 2010, 19; Bruhns & Kelker 2010, 21.

⁴² Severin (1995, 293) and Thomas (1990, 1:127-129), for example, classify many of the Sheikh Ibada fakes as fakes for this reason. The meaning associated with the antiquity may also have been altered by this excessive

However, it must be remembered that, as with many judgements of authenticity, deciding when a restoration is excessive to the extent that an antiquity can no longer be considered authentic is, ultimately, a subjective judgement.⁴³

‘Forgery’, on the other hand, is understood within this thesis to refer to fabricated or falsified documentation, paperwork, and writing.⁴⁴ Thus, a fabricated vase is understood to be a fake, not forged, but the fabricated ‘guarantee of authenticity’, or export permit, that accompanies it are forgeries. Furthermore, given that most documentation within the antiquities market is passed on verbally, when this information is fabricated (such as the ‘Sheikh Ibada’ provenience) it is also considered here to be forged, as it relates directly to the documented history for fakes (and often ends up being recorded) and is part of creating their façade of authenticity.

Coptic Art

The term ‘Coptic’ has been the subject of much scholarly debate in recent decades.⁴⁵ This is due in large part to the many uses of the term across a range of registers, which has led to a lack of clarity as to its meaning in art historical discourse. In a linguistic context, ‘Coptic’, is used to designate the final stage of the written form of the Egyptian language.⁴⁶ Ecclesiastically, it denotes the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt, which, while it traces its roots to the first century, began to emerge as the national Church it is today following the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE, at which Egypt split from most of the rest of Christendom.⁴⁷ By extension, it has been used (at times inaccurately and frequently anachronistically) to describe speakers of the language and/or adherents of the Church. Most importantly here, ‘Coptic’ has also been used to designate a period of Egyptian art history. This designation has, however, been fraught with inconsistencies, as scholars throughout the 20th century have been unable to agree on a suitable definition. Some have seen Coptic art solely as the art of Egyptian Christians (and in particular anti-Chalcedonian Christians), while others have interpreted it to be the art produced in the Nile valley (the *chora*)

reworking. For example, the ‘Isis with Baby Jesus’ in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Inv. 19/61), has been discussed as a fake by Severin (1995, 293-295) for this reason. This piece was originally thought to depict Isis feeding baby Horus, before being ‘Christianised’ in modernity.

⁴³ Kelker & Bruhns 2010, 19. For a recent example see the sale of ‘Salvator Mundi’ supposedly by Leonardo da Vinci, Pogrebin & Reyburn 2017.

⁴⁴ Chappell & Polk (2009, 399-400), noting 19th-century English case law which specifies that ‘forgery’ relates to *written* material, and more recent cases where people were convicted of forgery for falsifying the documentation for fakes. The term ‘forgery’ thus properly encompasses fabricated papyri and cuneiform tablets.

⁴⁵ Vivian 2002, 10; Thomas 1990, 1:4-5; Török 2005b, xxvi; Du Bourguet 1971, 9. The word ‘Coptic’, ‘Copt’, etc. is derived from the Arabic ‘*qibt*’ which was used by the Arabs to label the existing inhabitants of Egypt at the time of the conquest, which came to take on both a religious and ethnic sense in later centuries. ‘*Qibt*’ itself comes from the Greek αἰγυπτιος (Aigyptios, i.e. Egyptian), which was itself derived from the ancient Egyptian name for Memphis, *Hwt-k3-Pth* (spelling follows Török 2005b).

⁴⁶ Thomas 1992, 317; Vivian 2002, 10; Thomas 1990, 1:4-5; Török 2005b, xxvi.

⁴⁷ Kamil 2001, 1-2; Török 2005a, 11-12. For further reading on the emergence of the Coptic church see Vivian 2002.

compared to that manufactured in Alexandria.⁴⁸ Further confusing this picture is the fact that scholars have also been unable to agree on temporal bounds for Coptic art.⁴⁹ As such, many now prefer the designation ‘Late Antique Egyptian art’, or variants thereof.⁵⁰ However, given the focus of this thesis is the acceptance by scholars, and impact, of the Sheikh Ibada fakes within scholarly discourse during the mid-20th century when the term ‘Coptic art’ was very much still in use, it has been retained here following László Török.⁵¹ An exact definition of ‘Coptic art’ cannot be presented due to variances of use between scholars over time, but it refers in this thesis to the art produced in Egypt during the late Antique and early Byzantine periods (c.300-700 CE), without ethnic, religious, or confessional divides.⁵²

Sheikh Ibada and Antinoë

Many of the Sheikh Ibada fakes surfaced with a reported provenience of ‘Sheik Ibada’.⁵³ Sheikh Ibada is the Arabic name for a modern village in Middle Egypt situated near the ancient site of Antinoë, on the east bank of the Nile opposite Hermopolis (modern El Ashmunein).⁵⁴ In this thesis ‘Sheikh Ibada’, as the most commonly provided provenience for these sculptures in the scholarship, is used in specific reference to the fakes, and their reported provenience, whereas ‘Antinoë’ is used specifically in reference to the ancient site and its archaeology. Thus, although the fakes were said to come from Sheikh Ibada, they influenced scholarly notions as to the nature of artistic production at the site of Antinoë.

⁴⁸ See, for example: Morey 1942a, 78; Morey 1942b, 48-49; Cooney 1944, 36.

⁴⁹ Scholars have said Coptic art existed from the third or fourth century to the seventh or eighth centuries CE, and for some up until the 12th century. See du Bourguet 1971, 17.

⁵⁰ Török 2005b, xxv; Thomas 1990, 1:5. Thomas uses ‘early Byzantine Egyptian’ instead of Late Antique.

⁵¹ Török 2005b, xxvi-xxvii.

⁵² Török 2005a, 12; Török 2005b, xxvii; Spanel 2001, 89 n.1.

⁵³ Variant spellings include: Sheik Ibada, Sheikh Abada, Sheik Abada, Cheikh Abada.

⁵⁴ The site, named after the Emperor Hadrian’s companion Antinoos, is also commonly referred to as Antinoopolis or Antinoupolis. See Swelim 1999; Donadoni 1975.

Chapter I. Background.

Looting, Fakes, Scholarship, and The Sheikh Ibada Fakes.

I.1. Looting, Fakes, and Scholarship.

Since the 1800s states have sought to protect their cultural heritage from looters and illicit export.⁵⁵ It was not, however, until after World War II and the destructive pillaging by the Nazis that the rest of the world made initial steps to recognise the importance of, and protect, cultural heritage with the 1954 Hague Convention.⁵⁶ Despite this, it was not until the 1970 UNESCO *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* (henceforth the UNESCO Convention) that interest in cultural heritage issues filtered substantially into scholarship.⁵⁷

Thus far, the majority of the cultural heritage literature in relation to archaeology has focussed predominantly on looting and its destruction of the archaeological record.⁵⁸ The widespread and destructive nature of looting has been perhaps best highlighted by David Gill and Christopher Chippindale's influential paper examining the impact of collector desire and looting on the corpus of Cycladic figurines.⁵⁹ Gill and Chippindale found that of the roughly 1,600 figurines that were known at the time of publication only 10% had surfaced during archaeological excavation and had a secure provenience. They suggested, then, that the majority of the corpus must have been found by looters, estimating that somewhere between 11,000 and 12,000 graves had been looted to produce the known corpus.⁶⁰ Focussing on Apulian red-figure vases, Ricardo Elia has reported similar findings.⁶¹ Gill and Chippindale also discussed the 'consequences' of this looting. They highlight that because so many Cycladic figurines were not recovered from

⁵⁵ UNESCO (2018) maintains a database of the cultural heritage laws of its Member States.

⁵⁶ Manacorda 2011, 25.

⁵⁷ Nørskov 2002, 104-105. For a full commentary on the 1970 UNESCO Convention, including further contextual information for its creation, see O'Keefe 2007. This is not to say that scholars did not take an interest in cultural heritage issues before 1970, only that the majority of scholarship has been since that time. The most important of these pre-1970 publications was Coggin's (1969) paper on the illicit trafficking of pre-Columbian antiquities.

⁵⁸ See, for example: Gill & Chippindale 1993; Mackenzie 2005b; Brodie & Contreras 2012; Proulx 2013. Although these three works all take different approaches, they do so to explore looting.

⁵⁹ Gill & Chippindale 1993.

⁶⁰ Gill & Chippindale 1993, 624-625, 627. Gill & Chippindale acknowledge that this figure is skewed by fakes and the potential for figurines to be found in other non-sepulchral contexts. Looting, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s, was a well-documented issue in the Cycladic Islands. See Dumas 1991, 28.

⁶¹ Elia 2001, 150-151. Only 6.9% of known the 13,631 Apulian red-figure vases at the time of Elia's publication had a known findspot. Further, Elia then estimates, based off ratios of tombs excavated and number of vases recovered, that thousands or tens of thousands of graves must have been looted to provide the known corpus. Ratios range from 1:4-1:35 depending on the cemetery (vase:number of graves).

sanctioned excavation, their archaeological context destroyed by looting, much information about their original significance and role in Cycladic Bronze Age is lost.⁶²

The impetus behind this looting is widely considered to be the antiquities market's demand for material, with scholars such as Duncan Chappell and Kenneth Polk stating that "the demand from purchasers is the basic economic force which drives the market (and the consequent destruction of sites)."⁶³ Some, primarily market participants, have argued that looting would occur even without demand from the market,⁶⁴ or that most of the antiquities on the market are there legally.⁶⁵ However, it is difficult to sympathise with these arguments given that, as Neil Brodie has shown, many of the claims of the trade community are anecdotal, unverifiable, and often poorly contextualised.⁶⁶ Moreover, numerous studies, such as those by Vinnie Nørskov,⁶⁷ Chippindale and Gill,⁶⁸ Elia,⁶⁹ and Malcolm Bell,⁷⁰ have demonstrated that a large portion of the antiquities within the market or those in collections which have been purchased from it, have limited or no documentation. Without convincing evidence to the contrary,⁷¹ many have interpreted these findings as evidence that looted, or fake, antiquities constitute a large part of the market's supply.⁷²

Despite, however, the lack of archaeological information that accompanies undocumented antiquities, and the link between the market and looting, scholars have not infrequently employed such antiquities in their work or interacted with the market more directly.⁷³ More recently, this interaction has become the subject of intense debate, with the argument made that scholarly interaction with undocumented antiquities acquired on the market facilitates and legitimises the antiquities trade. The value of academic expertise to the market was highlighted in a 2011 study by Brodie, where he demonstrated the invaluable, and supportive, roles scholars might perform

⁶² Gill & Chippindale 1993, 624-658. These are labelled the 'material' and 'intellectual' consequences.

⁶³ Chappell & Polk 2011, 244.

⁶⁴ Ede 2006, 78-79.

⁶⁵ Ede 2006, 78-79; Boardman 2006, 37. The other popular explanatory narrative used to account for the surfacing of antiquities is that they are the result of a "chance find." This is used to justify their interaction with these antiquities and downplay the role of looting in providing material for the market. Conveniently ignored in these narratives, however, is that "chance finds" are still considered the property of the state in most countries.

⁶⁶ Brodie 2006b, 3, 7-8; Brodie 2006c, 219-222.

⁶⁷ Nørskov 2002b, 260-261.

⁶⁸ Gill & Chippindale 1993, 627; Chippindale & Gill 2000, 477.

⁶⁹ Elia 2001, 146-150.

⁷⁰ Bell 2002, 197-198.

⁷¹ As mentioned above, those who do argue to the contrary are unable to provide compelling arguments.

⁷² Bell 2002, 199; Elia 2001, 150-151.

⁷³ Nørskov (2002b, 266, 340) has discussed how Trendall had close ties to specific antiquities dealers and would ask certain dealers for photos of vases.

within the market.⁷⁴ If, as argued by Brodie, such interaction makes antiquities more valuable, this in turn makes the antiquities trade more profitable, thereby encouraging looting.⁷⁵

The other primary argument against scholarly interaction with undocumented antiquities is concerned more with the intellectual product. It is argued that antiquities without archaeological context hold less value as objects of study, and the conclusions drawn from these items are potentially problematic.⁷⁶ Colin Renfrew has argued passionately that undocumented antiquities “do not contribute to our knowledge of the past; indeed they are parasitic upon that knowledge.”⁷⁷ Whilst others are perhaps not as uncompromising as Renfrew, the limited and unsecured knowledge that unexcavated antiquities offer scholarship has been stressed by many. Marlowe, in her book examining the complex relationship between context and connoisseurship within the study of Roman art, has stressed how little is often known about works deemed seminal within a discipline and thus the questionable foundations many conclusions about antiquity are built upon.⁷⁸ Likewise in Gill and Chippindale’s aforementioned paper the unsecured conclusions many have drawn from antiquities that are without a securely recorded archaeological context are highlighted.⁷⁹ They demonstrated how, without archaeological context to inform understand, many Cycladic figurines have been received within modern aesthetic frameworks.⁸⁰ These studies have all highlighted just how important archaeological context is when attempting to reconstruct antiquity. Common throughout these works is the argument that while unexcavated antiquities might still be used within study, without proper archaeological context they are only interpreted within the confines of existing knowledge. Devoid of context, there is simply too much that remains unknown about these antiquities for them to securely offer new insight into the past. These concerns, particularly that of scholars legitimising and encouraging the illicit trade, are now reflected in the publication policies of many professional organisations.⁸¹

These concerns are not, however, universal. Many scholars, particularly those who work with textual evidence, argue that not publishing undocumented antiquities ignores their scholarly value. Objects where much information might be gleaned, independent of archaeological context, from the text are often cited as prime examples. David Owen has argued with regard to cuneiform tablets that the study of unprovenienced antiquities can offer new insights into antiquity, and that

⁷⁴ Brodie 2011a, 414–426. Scholars can establish market confidence by authenticating antiquities, establish value by identifying them, and possibly (if they are illicit) suppress information about them. See also Brodie 2011b, 129–131. This relationship is often symbiotic, with scholars being given access to new material for study or being paid for their expertise.

⁷⁵ Brodie 2011a, 413; Renfrew 2000, 74–77.

⁷⁶ See, for example: Rollston 2004, 59–70.

⁷⁷ Renfrew 2000, 22.

⁷⁸ Marlowe 2013.

⁷⁹ Gill & Chippindale 1993, 627–628 and *passim*.

⁸⁰ Gill & Chippindale 1993, 658.

⁸¹ For example, both the American Schools of Oriental Research (2015, §III.E.4) and the Archaeological Institute of America (2016, §3) have ethics policies that target the publication of unprovenienced antiquities.

not studying or publishing these works simply because they might be looted ensures that they are lost to scholarship.⁸² Likewise, John Boardman has claimed that “museums are full of objects that speak for themselves, to the public and to scholars, without knowledge of their exact provenance,”⁸³ and that certain fields, such as Numismatics or the study of Greek vases, are almost entirely dependent on the activities of collectors and scholars working with unprovenienced antiquities.⁸⁴ The prohibitive publication policies of professional organisations and academic journals noted above are condemned as “pure censorship” by Owen and Boardman.⁸⁵

Interestingly, Owen does address the role of publication in driving up the prices of antiquities, arguing that when scholars publish unprovenienced works they are already within collections and are seldom resold; on this view, scholars have little impact on the market.⁸⁶ No evidence is provided to substantiate this claim. This lack of support is unsurprising, and is mirrored in other cases, such as Boardman’s emotive, and largely anecdotal, argument in favour of academic interaction with undocumented antiquities, which has been convincingly rebuffed by Brodie.⁸⁷ Christopher Rollston has demonstrated well the dangers in interacting with undocumented textual evidence (including the potential to encounter forgeries),⁸⁸ whilst Owen’s claims that publication does little to impact the market price can be countered by the work of scholars such as Brodie and Nørskov.⁸⁹

There is, somewhat surprisingly, some agreement between both those who argue for and against the use of undocumented antiquities within scholarship. Most agree that amongst any body of such items fakes exist, although they take two varying approaches.⁹⁰ Those who argue against interaction with unexcavated antiquities claim that the innate secrecy of the trade, where these items usually first surface, facilitates the acceptance of fake antiquities.⁹¹ Those who speak in favour of such interaction, however, argue that fake antiquities can be uncovered through either science or connoisseurship.⁹² Ignored, or trivialised, is the possibility that fakes might be mistakenly authenticated.⁹³

Despite this almost universal agreement on the existence of fakes within collections of undocumented antiquities, few have responded with research examining their existence. This is

⁸² Owen 2009, 126-130.

⁸³ Boardman 2006, 39.

⁸⁴ Boardman 2006, 42-43.

⁸⁵ Boardman 2006, 40.

⁸⁶ Owen 2009, 129-130.

⁸⁷ Brodie 2007.

⁸⁸ Rollston 2004.

⁸⁹ Brodie 2011a; Nørskov 2002b, 266-269. One might also consider the recent sale by Christie’s (2018) of a hitherto unknown Qur’an palimpsest. Following the identification of the piece by Dr. Eleonore Cellard, the manuscript sold for almost six times the pre-sale price estimate.

⁹⁰ Ortiz 2006, 28-29; Chippindale and Gill 2000, 494; Brodie 2002, 3.

⁹¹ Walker Tubb & Brodie 2017, 190-191; Borodkin 1995, 383-384; Brodie 2014b, 38; Muscarella 1977, 155-169.

⁹² Boardman 2009, 121; Ortiz 2006, 28-30.

⁹³ Boardman 2009, 121; Ortiz 2006, 28-30.

not to say, however, that scholarship is unconcerned with fake antiquities. Questions relating to the authenticity of high profile items which first surface outside of archaeological excavation, usually on the market, have inspired intense debate amongst scholars. One need only examine the recent debates surrounding the authenticity of the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* papyrus (which admittedly did not surface on the market),⁹⁴ or the contentious Getty Kouros, recently removed from exhibition, to see this.⁹⁵ Scholarly inquiry in such instances has rarely extended beyond disproving authenticity, largely ignoring the processes by which scholars erroneously authenticate fakes, or the impact fakes have on scholarship.

There have nevertheless been several important contributions exploring the entry of fakes into scholarship, such as the works of Nancy Kelker and Karen Bruhns on fake Mesoamerican and Andean antiquities,⁹⁶ or the various publications looking at the erroneous authentication of fakes by Sir Arthur Evans and their impact on the study of Minoan Crete.⁹⁷ Perhaps the most in depth has been the work of Oscar Muscarella. Muscarella has written on what he refers to as “bazaar archaeology” and “forgery culture,” examining, respectively, the behaviours and mechanisms that underpin problematic scholarly interaction with antiquities which first surface on the market (many of which according to him are of questionable authenticity), and those which obstruct investigation into, or publication of, the existence of fakes.⁹⁸ Yet while Muscarella’s work on ‘forgery culture’ provides valuable insight into the behaviours which allow fakes to remain undetected, and highlights the large quantity of artefacts of dubious authenticity found within collections of Near Eastern antiquities, it is predominately based upon anecdotal evidence, making it difficult to confirm the prevalence of such behaviours. Moreover, it focusses primarily on instances where the knowledge of the existence of fakes is deliberately suppressed, not how and why they were originally authenticated and allowed to enter the existing corpus.⁹⁹ Some of these issues have however been examined in Muscarella’s work of ‘bazaar archaeology’, albeit in a somewhat limited fashion.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, substantial discussion as to the impact that fakes might have on a discipline is missing from Muscarella’s work.¹⁰¹ Finally, much like the majority of

⁹⁴ King 2014a; King 2014b; Depuydt 2014; Bernhard 2017.

⁹⁵ See Kokkou (1993) for the papers delivered at the Colloquium that was organised to try and determine the Kouros’ authenticity. Bianchi (1994) offers a brief summation of the arguments for and against authenticity.

⁹⁶ Bruhns & Kelker 2010; Kelker & Bruhns 2010. These works, however, focus predominately on the different types of fakes that have been produced. In saying this, however, these two books do address a wide variety of issues that are associated with fakes. See Knight (2018) for the recent removal of the Kouros from display.

⁹⁷ See, for example: Lapatin 2002; German 2012; Butcher & Gill 1992; Marinatos 2015, 74-106.

⁹⁸ Muscarella 2000, 1-21; Muscarella 2013a; Muscarella 2013b.

⁹⁹ Muscarella 2000. It is worth noting that many of the examples of behaviours offered by Muscarella lack citations. However, his work of bazaar archaeology does go some way to rectifying this shortcoming.

¹⁰⁰ Muscarella (2013a) does describe some of the methodological issues in certain scholars works. But these are limited to only a few scholars and only one or two objects. Ideally more scholars’ work needs to be surveyed to understand how widespread these issues are. Chapters III and IV here do this.

¹⁰¹ Muscarella (2000, 73) does mention, briefly, how scholars interpreted a group of fakes as examples from a hitherto unknown period of pre-Achaemenian art.

research examining the acceptance of fakes by Evans, Muscarella's work tends to only interrogate the work of one or two scholars.

It is evident from examining existing scholarship that further investigation into the processes by which fake antiquities are erroneously authenticated by scholars and the impact this interaction might have is required. While many have addressed scholarly interaction with undocumented and looted antiquities, and the impact of this interaction on scholarship, scholarly interaction with fake antiquities has received less attention. Among the many works which deal in passing with fakes, there are far too few which focus exclusively on them, and even fewer that seek to understand the relationship they might have with scholarship. This thesis seeks to help fill this gap.

I.2. The Sheikh Ibada fakes

One of the primary issues inhibiting work with fake antiquities is the difficulty in unmasking them.¹⁰² Moreover, fakes are typically uncovered one at a time, then often removed from display and placed into storage. That fakes are often not grouped together makes it difficult to highlight similarities between them, or to discuss them as a significant group. In this regard, the Sheikh Ibada fakes are a somewhat unique case, in which shared characteristics have been used to both group them and question their authenticity. By way of highlighting their suitability for an examination of this sort and framing the discussion which follows, a synthesis of arguments and reasoning used to dismiss the Sheikh Ibada sculptures as fakes is provided here.¹⁰³

Beginning in the late 1950s, and continuing until the 1970s, a stream of supposedly 'Coptic' sculptures began surfacing on the global antiquities market.¹⁰⁴ Variations in type notwithstanding, these sculptures were clearly linked stylistically, and the vast majority were said to have come from Sheikh Ibada (ancient Antinoë) in Middle Egypt,¹⁰⁵ despite none being recovered through archaeological excavation.¹⁰⁶ Following the surfacing of these sculptures, many

¹⁰² For example, Nørskov (2002b, 258) leaves fakes from her work on the collecting of Greek Vases arguing that to discuss fakes she would have to personally review all the vases she discusses.

¹⁰³ It should be noted that the arguments employed to dismiss the fakes are all grounded in connoisseurship (the visual analysis of a work to determine authenticity, dating, and function). Connoisseurship in the authentication of fakes is discussed in Chapter III *infra*.

¹⁰⁴ Török 2005b, 24; Gonosvá & Kondoleon 1994, 395; Spanel 2001, 89; Severin 1995, 289. It seems likely that some of the Sheikh Ibada fakes still appear on the market. At least one possible fake (due to its similarity to known fakes) were found on online auction sites during the course of this research, see Skinner Auctioneers 2010.

¹⁰⁵ Some have suggested that the fakes were made at modern Sheikh Ibada. This is based on Cooney's (1963, 42) claim that after the works were looted they were repainted in the nearby village. What evidence Cooney has for this claim is not made clear and so there is no indication that the fakes were made at Sheikh Ibada.

¹⁰⁶ Török 2005b, 24. It is widely believed that the Sheikh Ibada fakes were produced in Egypt, and this belief finds no objection here. See Spanel (2001, 94) for the most comprehensive consideration of the origins of the fakes.

were acquired by prominent museums in Europe and North America.¹⁰⁷ There was little early objection to their authenticity, with many prominent scholars, such as Müller, Cooney, and Wessel, accepting and publishing them as authentic.¹⁰⁸ The earliest noted objection to the authenticity of some of the Sheikh Ibada fakes came from Wolfgang Volbach, who refused to include 22 sculptures in the Villa Hügel exhibition believing them to be fakes.¹⁰⁹ Volbach's refusal to include these sculptures was, however, met with backlash from Peter Metz, director of the Frühchristlichbyzantinische Sammlung, Berlin-Dahlem,¹¹⁰ who suspended all his museum's loans unless the sculptures be reinstated as authentic.¹¹¹ Volbach was eventually overruled and the 22 sculptures were included within the exhibition.¹¹² The only indication of any issue with the authenticity of these sculptures was their inclusion in an *Anhang* at the back of the catalogue as opposed to the main text.¹¹³ The other scholar to display early concerns about the Sheikh Ibada sculptures was John Beckwith, in reviews of the Villa Hügel exhibition, Wessel's *Coptic Art* and Arne Effenberger's *Koptische Kunst*.¹¹⁴ However, these concerns amounted simply to Beckwith stating the Sheikh Ibada fakes appeared "strange," and that their "authenticity is doubtful."¹¹⁵ Neither Beckwith nor Volbach ever published substantially on the Sheikh Ibada fakes, or provided substantial reasoning for their suspicions.¹¹⁶

Moreover, Harrell (2004) performed a petrographic analysis of the limestone used for the fakes in the Brooklyn Museum which lends further support to the point of origin for the fakes being Egypt. This analysis found that most of the fakes are carved from limestone from the Mokattam Formation which is located within the Nile Valley, stretching from Cairo to Maghagha. Some of the fakes may have been carved from limestone formations further south of Maghagha. Furthermore, Thomas (1990, 1:129-131) and Severin (1995, 289-293), based on technical analyses, have suggested that several of the Sheikh Ibada fakes are recut works that likely originated at Oxyrhynchus and Heracleopolis Magna. It is also worth noting that a small amount of these sculptures arrived on the antiquities market with no known findspot. It is unclear why these sculptures, despite being stylistically linked with the Sheikh Ibada group, did not also feature the Sheikh Ibada provenience.

¹⁰⁷ Some of the museums include: The Brooklyn Museum, the Louvre, the Recklinghausen Ikonenmuseum, Princeton University Art Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Staatliche Ägyptischer Kunst München.

¹⁰⁸ Müller 1960; Cooney 1961; Cooney 1963; Wessel 1965.

¹⁰⁹ Severin 1995, 293-295; Spanel 2001, 92 n.24.

¹¹⁰ Now the Bode Museum under the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (discussed as the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin throughout the rest of this thesis).

¹¹¹ Metz's complaints were supposedly driven by Volbach's belief that a sculpture of Isis feeding Horus (or Jesus) was a fake. This sculpture had been recently purchased by Metz. For a superb technical analysis of the Isis sculpture as a fake see Severin 1995, 293-295. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Inv. 19/61.

¹¹² Severin 1995, 293-295; Spanel 2001, 92 n.24. According to Spanel there is a note in the archives of the Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst from Metz to Volbach, which offers an insight into the trouble caused by Volbach's refusal to include the sculpture.

¹¹³ Villa Hügel 1963, 619- 625. This Anhang is prefaced with a disclaimer: "Die im nachstehenden Anhang verzeichneten Kunstwerke sind auf Wunsch des VILLA HÜGEL e. V. in die Ausstellung aufgenommen worden. Diese Objekte sind Herrn Professor Dr. W. Fritz Volbach nicht vorgelegt und von ihm auch nicht katalogmäßig bearbeitet worden; sie wurden also ohne Zustimmung des wissenschaftlichen Leiters der Ausstellung aufgenommen. Die Angaben zu den einzelnen Katalognummern stammen von den Leihgebern selbst."

¹¹⁴ Beckwith 1963a, 290, 292; Beckwith 1977, 329.

¹¹⁵ Beckwith 1963a, 290, 292; Beckwith 1977, 329. Torp (1965, 361) might also be included. In a review of the literature and exhibitions of the early 1960s he states that increasing interest (demand) in Coptic art has led the appearance of "dubious pieces on the market." Unfortunately, it is even less clear than with Beckwith if he is referring specifically to examples of the Sheikh Ibada fakes.

¹¹⁶ Beckwith (1963b) did, however, largely excluded examples of the Sheikh Ibada fakes from his book on Coptic sculpture. He only included Dumbarton Oaks Inv. 43.6 (Dionysos in a Chariot) & Louvre Inv. E26101 (Daphne?).

The first major public denouncement of the Sheikh Ibada fakes occurred in 1977, when Gary Vikan delivered a paper identifying and dismissing many Sheikh Ibada fakes at the Third Annual Byzantine Studies Conference at Columbia University. In this paper Vikan divided the fakes into four subgroups, and discussed the technical issues which cast doubt on their authenticity.¹¹⁷ The division of the fakes into four subgroups proposed by Vikan, and adopted by Spanel, is retained here as it allows for clarity when describing the sculptures and the characteristics that mark them as fakes. Unfortunately, only the abstract for Vikan's talk has been published,¹¹⁸ and it was not until 1981 that the Sheikh Ibada fakes were mentioned properly in print with analysis provided demonstrating their dubious authenticity.¹¹⁹ Since then, however, several prominent scholars have produced important technical analyses of the sculptures, and they are now widely accepted as fakes.¹²⁰

Of the four subgroups the first, and most numerous, are the grave stelae.¹²¹ These began to appear on the market in the mid-1950s,¹²² and depict a youth, either sitting or standing, set in a niche holding grapes and a bird (i.e. **26**).¹²³ Less common are variations where the youth holds a cross, or is unframed (i.e. **31, 18**).¹²⁴ These stelae are often brightly painted and are predominately without extensive damage or weathering. As a general type, the niche stelae have authentic parallels, although these were largely unknown to scholars when the Sheikh Ibada fakes began to surface on the market (i.e. **33**).¹²⁵ The majority of these authentic parallels, however, are in significantly worse condition than those considered fake.¹²⁶ Furthermore, while some of the stelae are entirely fabricated,¹²⁷ many have been extensively recarved.¹²⁸ The reworked nature of these

¹¹⁷ Vikan 1977a. Thomas (1990, 1:127-152 (particularly 139-149)), Severin (1995), and Spanel (2001) have also produced substantial technical analyses on the Sheikh Ibada fakes. Török (2005, 24-31) offers a general overview of the Sheikh Ibada fakes.

¹¹⁸ Vikan 1977b.

¹¹⁹ Boyd & Vikan 1981, 8-9.

¹²⁰ For example: Koch 1986; Thomas 1990, 1:139-149; Severin 1995; Spanel 2001.

¹²¹ Boyd & Vikan 1981, 9.

¹²² The stelae were also the first of the fakes to be published. The earliest publications featuring them were by Müller (1960) and then Cooney (1961).

¹²³ Severin 1995, 289; Vikan 1977a.

¹²⁴ See, for example, the stele of a boy holding a cross in the Staatliche Sammlung Ägyptischer Kunst München Inv. ÄS 5529. For an unframed example see Recklinghausen, Ikonenmuseum Inv. 518.

¹²⁵ See Severin 1995, 289-293 pls. 15b-16b. The most famous of these parallels are a stele excavated by Flinders Petrie at Oxyrhynchus now in the British Museum (Inv. EA1795), and a well-preserved stele, complete with paint, now in the Nelson-Atkins Gallery of Art in Kansas (Inv. 55-42). Unfortunately, the Kansas stele appears to have been found as a result of looting. It is considered authentic as there is no evidence of extensive reworking, like the other stelae of the first subgroup. The most extensive criticism of its appearance is by Török (2005b, 124), who describes the stele as "fine, though somewhat reworked." Müller (1960, 267) was seemingly unaware of the stelae excavated prior to the Sheikh Ibada fakes appearing on the market. There were also several unpublished examples of the niche stelae at the Coptic Museum in Cairo and in the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria that were found in excavations during the 1920s.

¹²⁶ Compare British Museum Inv. EA1795 (authentic) with Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Inv. 3/59 (fake). See also Boyd & Vikan (1981, 9) and Severin (1995, 289-293).

¹²⁷ Particularly those which hold crosses; see Severin 1995, 292.

¹²⁸ Vikan 1977a. These are further discussed in Chapter IV.2.3 *infra*.

stelae is perhaps best exemplified by a stele housed in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin's collection of Byzantine sculpture (31).¹²⁹ Here, the figure's left hand has clear evidence of reworking. It is noticeably smaller than the right, and the dove held also appears to have been recarved, with an odd raised space visible above the dove, suggesting the original bird, likely damaged, once filled the above space.¹³⁰ However, in order to make the figures more complete, and thus more valuable, the bird and the figure's left hand were cut back and recarved.¹³¹ Although these recarved stelae are, at their core, original, the extensive reworking has meant much, if not all, of the original detail has been lost; as such these pieces should now be considered fake.¹³² Finally, of those stelae which were recovered from excavation, and so are definitely authentic, none hold crosses.¹³³ Thus, those Sheikh Ibada stelae which do hold crosses are without ancient parallel, and so can be dismissed as fakes.

The second group is comprised of a series of busts carved in the round or in very high relief (i.e. 21, 22).¹³⁴ This subgroup has received the least amount of attention in print, either as authentic or fake works, and, as such, requires only minimal discussion here. The closest parallels for the Sheikh Ibada busts are, according to Vikan, some porphyry portraits of the Tetrarchic period.¹³⁵ However, the similarities with the Sheikh Ibada works and the authentic portraits are limited, and the closest stylistic parallels are other fakes.¹³⁶ Moreover, damage and evidence of weathering amongst the Sheikh Ibada busts is minimal. Ultimately, the lack of an archaeologically recovered provenience for any of these busts, their pristine condition, and the unattested – except amongst other fakes – stylistic features provide sufficient reason to dismiss them as fakes.

The third subgroup contains various types of architectural ornament sculpture.¹³⁷ These works are now dismissed as fakes due to their unparalleled compositional or iconographic features, such as hand-held crosses,¹³⁸ which are unusual amongst Coptic figural sculpture and thus immediately suspicious.¹³⁹ One of the best known examples of this group is the Brooklyn Museum's *One Cured of Paralysis* (henceforth 'Brooklyn Paralytic') (3).¹⁴⁰ It is carved in the

¹²⁹ Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Inv. 3/59.

¹³⁰ Severin 1995, 293.

¹³¹ Severin 1995, 293.

¹³² Severin (1995, 293) suggests that, at most, these reworked stelae can only be used as evidence for the existence of a general type. Some still discuss these stelae (although not those with crosses) as authentic.

¹³³ Severin 1995, 292.

¹³⁴ For example: Recklinghausen Ikonenmuseum Invs. 566, 567, 547.

¹³⁵ Vikan 1977a. The most detailed denouncement of the busts occurs in Vikan's unpublished paper. They are largely ignored in the other publications discussing the Sheikh Ibada fakes. Interestingly, at least one fake porphyry portrait has been uncovered, although others are still considered authentic (this emerged after Vikan's paper). See Cook 1984.

¹³⁶ Vikan 1977a.

¹³⁷ Vikan 1977a. For the most detailed discussion of the third subgroup see Spanel 2001, 97-103. Including: friezes, capitals, tympana, niche heads, and cornices.

¹³⁸ For example: Brooklyn Museum Invs. 58.50, 63.36.

¹³⁹ Spanel 2001, 90, 102.

¹⁴⁰ Brooklyn Museum Inv. 62.44.

round, a feature which, on its own, provides cause to question its authenticity, given sculpture in the round is rare amongst Coptic art.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, the renderings of its face, supposed bed, and body are without a suitable parallel by which the historic existence of these features might be demonstrated.¹⁴² Simply, this sculpture is without a convincing antique parallel by which its authenticity might be proven.¹⁴³ These issues are far from unique amongst the sculptures which comprise this third group, or the Sheikh Ibada corpus in general: many are without a convincing ancient parallel by which their type, iconography, or composition might be shown to have existed within antiquity.¹⁴⁴

The final subgroup is comprised of rectangular plaques with unusual scenes and iconography (i.e. **7**, **13**). These plaques are often Christian in nature and have been oddly executed with nonsensical decoration.¹⁴⁵ The clothing of many of the figures is often poorly rendered and inconsistent with historical fashions, whilst the bodies are oddly proportioned.¹⁴⁶ Curiously, the architectural function of these pieces is unclear, with this type of relief unattested prior to the 1960s.¹⁴⁷ Finally, many of these plaques are carved from Nummulitic limestone which, while prevalent in Middle Egypt near ancient Antinoë, was rarely used in Coptic sculpture.¹⁴⁸ Thus, these plaques can confidently be dismissed as fakes, with the evidence for inauthenticity insurmountable.

Besides the forged provenience that accompanied many of these sculptures, the primary feature by which these works have been grouped is the rendering of the faces.¹⁴⁹ Vikan distinguished two variations of facial type. First, is that which is common amongst the grave stelae: faces are typically round, with precisely rendered hair, and are dominated by large staring eyes which were often painted.¹⁵⁰ Second are those faces most common amongst the second and third subgroups (although they also feature on some of the stelae).¹⁵¹ Like the type described above, these faces are dominated by the eyes. However, unlike those which are characteristic of the first facial type, the eyes of the second facial group are comprised of a doubly outlined eye socket, with

¹⁴¹ Spanel 2001, 90.

¹⁴² Spanel 2001, 98-99; Russman 2009, 68.

¹⁴³ The one parallel for the subject matter of this sculpture is another work also considered an example of a Sheikh Ibada fake. Spanel 2001, 98. Staatliche Sammlung Ägyptischer Kunst München Inv. ÄS 5528.

¹⁴⁴ Often the closest parallels for these works are others sculptures also accepted as fakes. See Gonosová & Kondoleon's (1994, 394-395) discussion of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts' Inv. 63.56.1. The closest comparison to this piece is Brooklyn Museum Inv. 58.80.

¹⁴⁵ Boyd & Vikan 1981, 9; Spanel 2001, 90, 103-106; Vikan 1977a.

¹⁴⁶ Boyd & Vikan 1981, 9; Spanel 2001, 103.

¹⁴⁷ Vikan 1977a; Spanel 2001 103-106

¹⁴⁸ Russmann 2009, 80-83; Spanel 2001, 90, 90 n.9-10. Several large funerary sculptures from Oxyrhynchus were carved from Nummulitic limestone, including the niche stele excavated by Petrie.

¹⁴⁹ Vikan 1977a; Spanel 2001, 89-90; Gonosová & Kondoleon 1994, 395.

¹⁵⁰ Vikan 1977a; Severin 1995, 291-292.

¹⁵¹ See Spanel 2001, 89. For example: Brooklyn Museum Invs. 58.80, 62.44, 63.36; Staatliche Ägyptischer Kunst Münch Inv. ÄS 5529.

a drilled pupil within the iris (henceforth ‘goggle eyes’).¹⁵² Furthermore, the majority of these faces feature a “foolish smile” and notched nostrils, capped by unusually rendered hairstyles unparalleled amongst authentic works of Coptic art.¹⁵³ To Vikan’s two facial types a third might be added. The faces depicted in the plaques which comprise the fourth subgroup often have bulbous eyes which protrude from the face, with drilled pupils.¹⁵⁴ These faces vary from the other two described above which are evident across the other three subgroups. It is worth noting that these facial types described here are not immediately indicative of the Sheikh Ibada group, as Spanel has noted parallels in authentic works.¹⁵⁵ However, these facial types are rare in authentic works and so the frequency with which they occur among the Sheikh Ibada group marks them as suspicious.¹⁵⁶

There are also more general indicators of dubious authenticity which span several, if not all, the subgroups. Damage to the sculptures is minimal and inconsistent with what would be expected of authentic works. Figures and, in particular, faces, which are typically considered valuable by the market, are largely undamaged. When damage does occur to the faces often the noses, which are vulnerable to breakage, are intact, with breaks and chips tending to appear on the cheeks and chins.¹⁵⁷ The issues with inconsistent damage patterns can be seen in an apparent niche head depicting Dionysos now in the Louvre (10).¹⁵⁸ Here, despite extensive visible damage to its border, which makes it difficult to be certain of the original architectural function of the piece, the valuable figure is preserved in its entirety.¹⁵⁹ Damage, when it occurs, is often restricted to the background of works with various protruding features somehow managing to remain intact.¹⁶⁰

This lack of damage to the sculptures which comprise the Sheikh Ibada group extends to the absence of a patina or evidence of weathering on many of the pieces.¹⁶¹ The absence of weathering is especially suspicious given these sculptures were carved from limestone, which deteriorates fairly quickly and means authentic sculptures often lose a substantial amount of detail.¹⁶² Yet, the level of detail visible amongst the Sheikh Ibada sculptures is unusually well-defined. In sum, what damage is present amongst the Sheikh Ibada sculptures appears odd and is

¹⁵² The term ‘goggle eyes’ was introduced by Wessel (1965, 94).

¹⁵³ Spanel 2001, 99.

¹⁵⁴ Noted by Spanel (2001, 90, 103-106) and Russmann (2009, 80-83). See Brooklyn Museum Invs. 72.10 and 77.129 for example.

¹⁵⁵ Spanel 2001, 89, 89 n.2.

¹⁵⁶ Spanel 2001, 89, 89 n.2.

¹⁵⁷ See Thomas (1990, 1:144) for further issues with the patterns of breakage.

¹⁵⁸ Louvre Inv. E26106.

¹⁵⁹ Thomas 1990, 1:133; Vikan 1977a. See Thomas (1990, 2:209-211) for full discussion of other issues associated with this piece. It seems that this fake has been extensively reworked.

¹⁶⁰ Thomas 1990, 1:144.

¹⁶¹ Thomas 1990, 1:144; Vikan 1977a; Severin 1995, 291; Parker 2016, 9.

¹⁶² Spanel 2001, 90.

not consistent with what one would expect for sculptures supposedly some 1500-1700 years old. This all suggests the damage has occurred artificially in modernity.

Habitually, Coptic sculpture was painted, and was highly dependent on this for the final overall effect.¹⁶³ This paint was typically applied over an interceding layer of gesso which was used to prepare the sculpture for paint, smoothing any issues with the stone and hiding unsightly tool marks.¹⁶⁴ However, while many of the Sheikh Ibada sculptures are painted, the paint is applied directly to the stone, not onto the expected grounding layer.¹⁶⁵ Further, this paint is also unusually well preserved and thick given the supposed age of these sculptures.¹⁶⁶ At a minimum, the issues with the application of paint indicate that the sculptures have been retouched in modernity.

There are further issues with the construction of the Sheikh Ibada sculptures that set them apart from the sculpture recovered from Oxyrhynchus and Heracleopolis Magna (modern Behnasa and Ahnas respectively). For example, the composition of the Sheikh Ibada sculptures is treated similarly irrespective of subject matter, with both pagan and Christian sculptures predominately symmetrical in composition.¹⁶⁷ Yet, the majority of sculpture from Heracleopolis Magna and Oxyrhynchus which featured pagan subject matter were asymmetrical.¹⁶⁸ Further, the drapery for the Sheikh Ibada fakes is almost entirely detailed, even amongst those which have retained their paint, through carving.¹⁶⁹ This did not typically occur amongst Coptic sculpture, where such detail was accomplished through a combination of both moulding and the use of paint.¹⁷⁰

Finally, the architectural function of many of the Sheikh Ibada sculptures is either unclear or misunderstood. As already mentioned, the relief plaques of the fourth group were typologically unattested prior to their emergence on the market.¹⁷¹ Similarly, Vikan notes in his 1977 paper that he is unsure as to the function the busts of the second subgroup supposedly performed.¹⁷² Further, many other Sheikh Ibada sculptures appear to have been created without regard to their supposed architectural function. For example, there are several niche heads within the third group, which would, if authentic, have sat atop either wall or floor niches.¹⁷³ These sculptures parallel in basic shape other niche heads recovered from both Oxyrhynchus and Ahnas.¹⁷⁴ Yet, despite parallels of type, the Sheikh Ibada variants can be dismissed as fakes, ignoring the troubling iconography,¹⁷⁵

¹⁶³ Thomas 1989, 54.

¹⁶⁴ Thomas 1989, 56.

¹⁶⁵ Severin 1995, 290-293; Boyd & Vikan 1981, 8-9; Vikan 1977a; Thomas 1990, 1:147.

¹⁶⁶ Severin 1995, 290-293; Boyd & Vikan 1981, 8-9; Vikan 1977a; Thomas 1990, 1:147.

¹⁶⁷ Thomas 1990, 1:145.

¹⁶⁸ Thomas 1990, 1:145.

¹⁶⁹ See Koch (1986, 27) for a brief discussion of the style of drapery amongst the Sheikh Ibada fakes.

¹⁷⁰ Thomas 1989, 56-57.

¹⁷¹ Spanel 2001, 106; Vikan 1977a.

¹⁷² Vikan 1977a.

¹⁷³ Thomas 1990, 1:142-143; Thomas 2000, fig.49. See, for example, Louvre Inv. 26106.

¹⁷⁴ Thomas 1990, 1:142-143.

¹⁷⁵ Often iconography is confused, bordering on nonsensical, mixing elements from various mythological scenes. See Severin (1995, 295-298) for further discussion.

due to their problematic composition. The figures depicted in these niche heads do not follow the concave background of the niches nor do they protrude either at the top or bottom. This suggests they were designed to be viewed at eye-level, not from below, or above, as one would expect based on excavated parallels.¹⁷⁶

Ultimately, while the possibility that the Sheikh Ibada fakes might be authentic cannot be completely dismissed, the weight of the cumulative evidence against their authenticity suggests they should be considered fakes. Without archaeologically recovered provenience the stylistic oddities present throughout the Sheikh Ibada corpus remain without suitable parallels which would demonstrate the existence of these features within antiquity. Simply, the degree to which the Sheikh Ibada group differs from the known corpus is too great to consider these sculptures authentic. Perhaps the most convincing reason for accepting the Sheikh Ibada sculptures as fakes is the lack of argument produced for accepting them as authentic. Although some scholars continue to publish some of the stelae as authentic, there has been no argument produced (in print at least) in favour of their authenticity.¹⁷⁷ The Sheikh Ibada fakes are seemingly universally accepted as fakes. Finally, it is worth noting that the exact size of the Sheikh Ibada group is unclear. Vikan has claimed to have found over 120 examples of the fakes, Alexander Kakovkin claims that he knows of around 30 examples, while Spanel claims that “hundreds ... appeared on the art market.”¹⁷⁸ No one has yet produced a catalogue listing all known fakes.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Thomas 1990, 1:143.

¹⁷⁷ This is addressed in discussion in Chapter IV.2.3 *infra*. Some of the fakes have featured occasionally in scholarship as authentic antiquities since widespread awareness of their dubious authenticity occurred. Yet these publications do not address the arguments for the inauthenticity of the Sheikh Ibada fakes suggesting ignorance to these issues. For example, Marchini (1999, 581 no.7.46) and Schoske (1993, 68 fig. 64) draw parallels between Brooklyn Museum Inv.62.44 (the Brooklyn Paralytic) and Staatliche Sammlung Ägyptischer Kunst München AS 5528 even after Thomas (1990, 1:149 n.184) and von Falck & Wietheger (1990, 166) denounce it as a fake.

¹⁷⁸ Vikan 1997, (unpaginated); Kakovkin 1993, 227; Spanel 2001, 89.

¹⁷⁹ See Appendix A for a list of the examples of the Sheikh Ibada fakes that are discussed individually throughout this thesis. It should be noted that this list is far from comprehensive.

Chapter II.

The Existing Environment: Scholarship and the Market

To explore properly scholars' erroneous authentication of the Sheikh Ibada fakes, the wider setting in which they emerged must first be considered. As such, this chapter explores and contextualises the conditions in which the Sheikh Ibada fakes were presented, and the environment in which the scholars who authenticated them were operating. This is achieved through an examination of the existing state of scholarship on Coptic art and an investigation of the presentation of the fakes on the market. Contemporary scholarship held problematic views about the nature of Coptic art, which meant the field was receptive to antiquities with unusual features. There was also little concern given to the technical aspects of the production of Coptic sculpture and, due to problematic excavation practices, scholars were highly dependent on antiquities supplied by the market. It will be demonstrated that the market's willingness to interact with undocumented antiquities and reliance on trust ensured that the fakes became functionally indistinguishable from other antiquities on the market. Overall, it will be argued that scholars were operating within an environment that was both well-suited to receive fakes, and one in which the authenticity of the fakes had already been established by the market.

II.1: The State of Study

Jeffrey Spier has stated that, for scholars to identify fakes, they must not only be familiar with authentic material, but also “keep pace with *current scholarly work*” (emphasis mine), which helps ensure that fakes “stand out as not belonging to the categories that the art historian has worked so hard to establish.”¹⁸⁰ His argument is strong, as it is often only small details, noticed after exhaustive study, that reveal an antiquity to be fake.¹⁸¹ Yet, as many have noted, the study of Coptic art during the early and mid-20th century was problematic:¹⁸² conclusions as to its production, consumption, and nature were often drawn without sufficient evidence.¹⁸³ This scholarship played a substantial role in the acceptance of the Sheikh Ibada fakes, as it created broad interpretive frameworks that allowed scholars to account for unparalleled antiquities. It is

¹⁸⁰ Spier 1990, 623.

¹⁸¹ See, for example: Rollston 2003, 160-173.

¹⁸² See Definitions *supra*.

¹⁸³ Török 2005b, 9-36; Thomas 1990, 1:9-60; Thomas 1989, 54-55; Thomas 1992, 317-318; Brune 1996; Thomas 2000, xvii-xxv.

therefore necessary first to understand the existing intellectual environment within which the fakes were received and erroneously authenticated. As a full discussion of the problematic development of the study of Coptic art lies beyond the scope of this thesis, particular focus is given here to the particular aspects which allowed for the authentication of the Sheikh Ibada fakes.¹⁸⁴

The early 20th century stylistic analyses and interpretations of Josef Strzygowski and Albert Gayet provided the basis for the study of Coptic art through much of the ensuing century.¹⁸⁵ With minor discrepancies, these scholars saw Coptic art as the artistic output of the native Egyptian lower-classes living in the *chora* who,¹⁸⁶ with some Hellenistic influence, produced a schematic art, rejecting most broader trends.¹⁸⁷ The stylistic analyses of these scholars, and those who followed them, were limited. Coptic art was characterised as a deterioration in technique and style from the heights of Hellenistic art towards a more primitive style, and of generally poorer quality than contemporary art from other regions around the Mediterranean.¹⁸⁸ It was also considered syncretic, taking influence from Pharaonic Egyptian, Syrian, and Greek art.¹⁸⁹ Finally, attempts during the early 20th century to develop a reliable framework by which the development of Coptic art might be studied were limited.¹⁹⁰ Instead, scholars sought to divine the social environment from which Coptic art emerged ultimately deciding that it was the result of the native Egyptians rejecting Hellenism and seeking a far more spiritual style.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁴ See Török (2005b, 9-36) and Thomas (1990, 1:9-60) for excellent overviews of the problematic early scholarship on Coptic art. Also, Thomas 1989, 54-55; Thomas 1992, 317-318; Brune 1996; Brune 1999; Thomas 2000, xvii-xxv. See the discussion in Chapter III for the use of the *Volkskunst* interpretation to explain some of the stylistic anomalies amongst the fakes, and Chapter IV for the use of the Sheikh Ibada fakes as further support for the *Volkskunst* categorisation of Coptic art.

¹⁸⁵ Gayet 1902; Strzygowski 1904. The problems of the early scholarship in Coptic art have been explored extensively; see Elsner 2002; Török 2006; Török 2005b, 12-20; Thomas 2000, xx-xxiii; Thomas 1990, 1:19-25.

¹⁸⁶ Coptic art was typically seen as separate to the 'Hellenistic' art of Alexandria. See, for example, Morey 1942a, 79.

¹⁸⁷ Morey 1942b, 59. Gayet (1902, 106-109) saw Coptic art as a deliberate rejection of Hellenistic art, while Strzygowski (1904, xvi, 33) saw Coptic art as being produced by Egyptians who had some training in the Hellenistic style, and adapted some Syrian elements, but were influenced by their Egyptian heritage.

¹⁸⁸ Strzygowski 1904, xvii; Gayet 1902, 106-109; Morey 1942b, 59; Cooney 1944, 39.

¹⁸⁹ Strzygowski 1904, xvi-xvii; Gayet 1902, 106-109. The belief in the syncretic nature of Coptic art was based on Edouard Naville's inept reading, and conflation, of stratigraphy during his excavations at the end of the 19th century at Ahnas. During these excavations, Naville uncovered six Corinthian columns decorated with crosses and, some two meters below the columns, sculpture with clear pagan iconography. Despite the distance between these finds Naville saw them as all having come from the one, Christian, building. This conflation of the stratigraphy was largely unquestioned by those working at the turn of the 20th century, and led to scholars attempting to comprehend the presence of these Classical mythological figures within a Christian church and their stylistic deviation from the aesthetic canon of Hellenistic art. See Torp (1969) for a substantial critique of Naville's excavations; for Naville's excavations see Naville, Newberry, & Fraser (1891), and Lewis (1894).

¹⁹⁰ The most extensive attempt to develop a framework by which Coptic sculpture might be dated was by Kitzinger (1938), who compared sculpture at Ahnas and Oxyrhynchus. However, Kitzinger's dating was based around sculpture that was without specific provenience and so his dating largely follows existing convention with sculpture deemed to be "softer" and thus closer to Hellenistic art was seen to be older than works deemed "harder." This chronology was challenged by Török (1990), see also Thomas (2000, xxi-xxii).

¹⁹¹ Gayet 1902, 106-109; Morey 1942b, 48-49; Török 2005b, 14-15; Török 2006, 307; Thomas 1990, 1:36. Although Strzygowski (1904, xvi, 33) rejected Gayet's 'anti-Hellenistic' reading of Coptic art, he did discuss it as un-Hellenistic.

II.1.1. *Volkskunst*

These early understandings of Coptic art were widely accepted by those working in the mid-20th century.¹⁹² Scholars then, focussing in particular on the provincality, spiritualisation, and decline supposedly evident in Coptic art, began categorising it as a *Volkskunst* (folk-art). This categorisation was properly introduced to the study of Coptic art by Hilde Zaloscer in the introduction to a 1948 catalogue.¹⁹³ It was, however, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, especially in the monographs of Klaus Wessel, Arne Effenberg, and Zaloscer that the *Volkskunst* theory was expanded and became the dominant interpretation of Coptic art.¹⁹⁴

Under the *Volkskunst* theory, scholars characterised Coptic art as the artistic expression of the native Egyptian lower-classes of rural Egypt.¹⁹⁵ It continued to be considered simplistic, schematic, decorative, and technically naïve. Moreover, ‘true’ Coptic art was considered the work of the Egyptian Christian lower classes who, seeking to visually articulate their newly adopted faith, had developed their own artistic tradition.¹⁹⁶ Following earlier scholarship, Coptic art continued to be conceptualised as syncretic in nature, with its supposedly provincial artisans borrowing and adapting iconography from Hellenistic (and sometimes Syrian) art for their own purposes.¹⁹⁷ Scholars further persisted in stressing the separation of Coptic from Hellenistic art, but made no attempt to discern stylistic criteria which might allow for such classifications to be made. That is, there was no substantial attempt made to identify style, iconography, or techniques which would allow one to identify a work as ‘Coptic’ instead of ‘Greek’.¹⁹⁸

Nevertheless, folk-art came to function almost as a stylistic term in the mid-20th century. Scholars focussed on ideas about the production of folk-art and developed stylistic ideas from these, which were then treated as intrinsic features of Coptic art.¹⁹⁹ For example, folk-art is typically seen as the product of untrained, provincial craftsmen, and can therefore be of lower quality than work produced by trained artisans.²⁰⁰ Because of this, building on the earlier idea of

¹⁹² Török 2006, 307; Török 2005b, 15, 17.

¹⁹³ Zaloscer 1948, xx-xxi. It was Dimand (1944, 54) who first used the term in relation to Coptic art. Zaloscer’s interpretation was, however, more widely adopted. For an expansive overview of the intellectual development of the *Volkskunst* view of Coptic art see Brune (1999, 37-104). For a more general introduction to the *Volkskunst* theory see Török (2005b, 9-40). For issues with the use of ‘folk-art’ in general see Congdon 1987; Delacruz 1999, 24.

¹⁹⁴ Wessel 1957, 31-32; Volbach 1963, 138; du Bourguet 1963, 125; Wessel 1965, 48, 87; Effenberg 1975, 22-23, 25-26; Zaloscer 1974, 130; Zaloscer 1991, 49.

¹⁹⁵ Török 2005a, 16; Zaloscer 1948, xx-xxi; du Bourguet 1963, 125; Torp 1965, 372.

¹⁹⁶ Zaloscer 1948, xx-xxi; Wessel 1957, 31-32; du Bourguet 1963, 126-127; Wessel 1965, 100; Thomas 1990, 1:44.

¹⁹⁷ Zaloscer 1948, xx-xxi; du Bourguet 1963, 126. This is not to say that Coptic art does not have syncretic elements, only that they probably were not as pronounced as early scholarship suggested. Török (2005b, 238-239, 270-272) has discussed some examples of syncretism within what might be understood as Coptic art. Thomas (1990, 1:136-138), however, has argued that there is no evidence of syncretism in Coptic funerary arts.

¹⁹⁸ Thomas 1990, 1:57; Torp 1965, 370, 375.

¹⁹⁹ Brune 1999, 79-80.

²⁰⁰ du Bourguet 1963, 122, 128. Such a view was particularly evident in Zaloscer’s 1974 (122, 130) book, when she uses the lack of training associated with those who produced ‘folk-art’ to explain the odd rendering of some of the Sheikh Ibada fakes. Congdon (1983, 301) has discussed how this is a common conception by those who use the term folk-art in varying contexts.

artistic decline, scholars would often label poorer quality works as examples of ‘folk-art’ and thus ‘Coptic art’.²⁰¹ This is nowhere more evident than in Wessel’s *Coptic Art*, in which he embraced wholeheartedly the *Volkskunst* interpretation.²⁰² Wessel never sufficiently defined folk-art, nor provided rigorous criteria by which he declared a piece an example of ‘folk-art’ and thus ‘Coptic’.²⁰³ Rather, his identifications are aesthetic, with antiquities of higher quality labelled Greek while those of lower quality were declared examples of a *Volkskunst* and thus Coptic.²⁰⁴ Moreover, the *Volkskunst* interpretation emphasised the provincial nature of Coptic art.²⁰⁵ Mistakes and unexpected conflation of motifs and symbols were almost expected.²⁰⁶ This dovetailed nicely with belief in the syncretic nature of Coptic art. Oddly rendered iconography could be, and was, explained as the result of clumsy attempts at combining various influences.²⁰⁷

But *Volkskunst* theory, especially as applied to Coptic art, was deeply problematic.²⁰⁸ There was no general definition as to what constituted ‘folk-art’,²⁰⁹ and the various definitions offered were vague and unfounded, such as Zaloscer’s, who simply offered the explanation that it was not the art of the powerful (*Machtkunst*).²¹⁰ Pierre du Bourguet, meanwhile, discussed *Volkskunst* as the art of the Egyptian peasantry (*fellahin*), ignoring that most of the work deemed ‘Coptic’ came from Greek metropoleis such as Heracleopolis Magna (Ahnas) or Oxyrhynchus.²¹¹ Even in broader art-historical contexts, ‘folk-art’ lacks a proper definition.²¹² Finally, and most importantly, there are no set aesthetic criteria by which a work of art might be identified as an example of folk-art, a

²⁰¹ Wessel 1965, 100; Zaloscer 1974, 122, 130; Brune 1999, 80. This, in turn, led to scholars rejecting works they perceived as being of good quality as examples of Coptic art interpreting them as ‘Greek’ works. The equation of low quality work being Coptic instead of Greek is also evident in the treatment of papyrus. Clackson (2004, 34-35) notes that some scholars in the early 20th century tended to label papyri with “poorly-executed text” as Coptic.

²⁰² Wessel 1965. The Sheikh Ibada fakes feature heavily throughout this work. Wessel’s interaction with the fakes is discussed in the following two chapters.

²⁰³ Wessel (1965, 87, 94, 100) discusses some features that are supposedly “pronounced characteristics of folk art.” Works that are highly stylised and show limited development over time. However, these characteristics are applied inconsistently throughout his work.

²⁰⁴ Wessel 1965. For issues with Wessel’s definition of Coptic art as a *Volkskunst* see Torp 1965, 374 and Török 2005b, 23.

²⁰⁵ Zaloscer 1948, xx; du Bourguet 1963, 122, 125; Wessel 1965, 134.

²⁰⁶ Zaloscer 1948, xxi; du Bourguet 1963, 126; Wessel 1965, 28-29. Gough (1974, 32) remarks that “Coptic art was eclectic, often vigorous, and *surprisingly inconsistent*” (emphasis mine).

²⁰⁷ For example, du Bourguet (1963, 122) described Coptic art as “nichts als eine Akkumulation verschiedenartigster Formen, fremde Vorbilder übernehmend oder nachahmend, meist verunstaltet und barbarisiert, mit einem auffallenden Mangel an künstlerischem Geschmack und unter völliger Ermangelung jedes ästhetischen Gefühles.” Throughout this paper du Bourguet, focussing on the spirituality of Coptic art, stresses the *Volkskunst* interpretation.

²⁰⁸ Brune 1996, Brune 1999, 17-109; Török 2005b, 40; Thomas 1990, 1:126. The use of ‘folk-art’ within the study of Coptic art was challenged sufficiently in the 1990s and subsequently fell into disuse. It was, however, also rejected by Parlasca in 1966 (203-204), although this was ignored. Surprisingly, it does still appear in some works discussing Coptic art (but it is still poorly defined). For example, Gabra (2014, 242) states that Coptic art “is perhaps best characterized as folk art” but never specifies what a folk-art is.

²⁰⁹ Even the definitions offered by Dimand (1944, 54) and Zaloscer (1948, xx-xxi), the two scholars who introduced the idea of ‘folk-art’ to the study of Coptic art, differed. Dimand refers to folk-art as art produced in the home while Zaloscer defines folk-art by negation. It was not the art of the powerful.

²¹⁰ Zaloscer 1948, xx.

²¹¹ du Bourguet 1963, 125. For further reading see Thomas 1990, 1:5; Thomas 1992, 317.

²¹² Brune 1996, 15-16; Brune 1999, 37-39; Congdon 1987, 96; Delacruz 1999, 24; Linn-Williams 2006, 13.

fact which led Karl Brune to claim that “the label ‘folk art’ has no value in art-historical analysis.”²¹³

The *Volkskunst* theory therefore provided little more than a poorly defined aesthetic framework which ultimately obfuscated more than it illuminated.²¹⁴ It created a nebulous identification of Coptic art that was grounded not in careful stylistic analysis but rather subjective opinions as to the quality of the art and a misunderstanding of the background of those who produced and consumed it.²¹⁵ Such a categorisation set no clear parameters by which a work might be deemed Coptic. Fatefully, this meant the field was receptive to works of varying quality and with unusual iconography.²¹⁶ When confronted with a supposedly Coptic work of art with unusual iconography or motifs, scholars simply could, and did,²¹⁷ assume that this was the result of provincial development, or the lack of training associated with provincial artisans.²¹⁸

II.1.2. Technical Analysis and Excavation

The issues within the field of Coptic art extended beyond the troubled *Volkskunst* interpretation; there was also limited investigation into the composition and techniques used in the production of Coptic sculpture.²¹⁹ The application of paint, for example, was of great importance for the final, overall visual effect, yet its importance was only understood in the late 20th century.²²⁰ Although some of the scholarship of the early 20th century notes the use of polychrome paint on Coptic sculpture, no attempts are made to reconstruct the effect this would have had on the final product, nor consideration as to how it would have been applied.²²¹ Moreover, the importance of the paint was apparently given so little regard that some pieces in museums were cleaned so aggressively that they lost all painted detail.²²² Similarly, there was little consideration given to

²¹³ Brune 1996, 16.

²¹⁴ Brune 1996, 26.

²¹⁵ Severin 1998, 296; Torp 1965, 375; Brune 1996, 18; Thomas 1990, 1:38, 59-59. Thomas (1992, 318-319), studying documentary papyri, has demonstrated that supposedly ‘Coptic’ funerary sculptures were made for both Christian and pagan customers (by the same artisans), and were priced outside the reaches of the lower classes. Further, the view of Coptic art being of low quality was not helped by the poor state of preservation many of the works survived in. Carved detail was lost and the works thus appeared to be of low quality. This was apparently not considered by scholars. See Thomas 1989, 58-60.

²¹⁶ Brune 1996, 20.

²¹⁷ See Chapter III discussion of connoisseurship for further discussion of the use of *Volkskunst* to account for stylistic anomalies.

²¹⁸ See discussion on the use of connoisseurship by scholars in Chapter III *infra*. du Bourguet 1971, 19; Muscarella 2013b, 889; Muscarella 2013a, 883; Muscarella 2013c, 1037. Folk-art and the inability of its creators are common narratives used to account for stylistic anomalies amongst unprovenanced antiquities.

²¹⁹ Kitzinger (1938, 201-202) does make some comments on the techniques used in the creation of Coptic art, but these are only minimal. It is possible that this ignorance of the importance of polychromy to Coptic sculpture was due to the Western tendency to associate the ancient world with pristine, white sculpture. Such misconceptions have led to the overzealous cleaning of many ancient sculptures including the Parthenon Marbles. See Bolman 2006, 11-12; St. Clair 1998, 309 and *passim*.

²²⁰ Thomas 1989; Boyd & Vikan 1981, 8-9.

²²¹ Cooney 1944, 38. For further reading see Thomas 1989, 54, 54 n.2.

²²² See Thomas (1989, 58-59) for further reading

the techniques involved in the carving and detailing of Coptic sculpture within these early works, such as the use of drills, chisels, and undercutting.²²³ The lack of interest given to the technical production of Coptic sculpture is particularly concerning when one considers that technical inconsistencies between the Sheikh Ibada fakes and authentic Coptic sculptures have served as the lynchpin of many arguments against their authenticity.²²⁴ Should there have been greater awareness of, and interest in, these technical aspects, one wonders whether the Sheikh Ibada fakes would have been quite so readily accepted.²²⁵

The early study of Coptic art was also significantly hamstrung by the lack of properly excavated and recorded antiquities. As many of the early excavators who encountered Coptic art were looking for material from earlier periods, they often excavated rapidly through the Late Antique levels, failing to record their finds adequately.²²⁶ Even those who were looking specifically for late antique remains failed to record specific proveniences.²²⁷ These problematic excavations were further impinged upon by the efforts of *sebakhin* (mud-diggers), who, while digging for fertilizer or antiquities, would often destroy unexcavated archaeological contexts, disturbing and mixing stratigraphies.²²⁸ This resulted in many of these antiquities ending up in museums without adequate (if any) documentation, often lacking even findspot information; they were often also given inadequate attention, and deteriorated rapidly.²²⁹ Scholarship was therefore reliant on unprovenienced examples, many of which surfaced first on the antiquities market.²³⁰ These market-derived antiquities, much like those excavated without proper care, were often devoid of provenience. Because of this, little attention, or importance, was given to the

²²³ There is some awareness of some technical aspects, but they are given little importance. For example, Kitzinger (1938, 185, 201) briefly describes the use of undercutting to create depth within sculpture, while du Bourguet (1971, 68) briefly describes some of the tools used. Wessel (1965) gives minimal consideration throughout his work to the technical aspects of sculpture.

²²⁴ Thomas (1990, 1:145-146) notes that the use of chisels and drills in the carving of the Sheikh Ibada fakes is inconsistent with authentic sculptures from Oxyrhynchus and Ahnas. Vikan (2016, 56-57), when examining several of the fakes, noted that the same size chisel had been used to carve many of the sculptures, despite them supposedly being separated by several centuries. This had gone unnoticed by those who published the fakes and, again, when noticed was used to argue for the inauthenticity of the fakes. See also discussion in Chapter I *supra*.

²²⁵ It is worth noting that Cooney (1963, 42) did note that some of the fakes have been repainted in modernity.

²²⁶ Kitzinger 1938, 183-184; Torp 1969, 101; Gonosová 1986, 10; Thomas 1992, 318; Török 2005b, 4-6, 11. Furthermore, deliberate excavation of late antique sites was rare.

²²⁷ Gonosová 1986, 10. Kitzinger (1938, 182) notes that even though he knows what works were excavated by Naville, there is nothing reliably recorded from the excavation that would allow a chronology to be established.

²²⁸ Torp 1969, 101; Gonosová 1986, 10; Török 2005b, 206; Thomas 1990, 1:29. Often the *sebakhin* would sell antiquities that they found whilst digging for fertilizer (*sebakh*) to dealers and museums. The mudbricks many ancient buildings were built from are very nutrient rich (often made from Nile silt) and so the earth around these sites made excellent fertilizer. It was not, however, just local farmers who would dig for *sebakh*. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries many large companies would also dig for this fertilizer. For further reading see Bailey 1999.

²²⁹ Thomas 1992, 318.

²³⁰ Torp 1969, 101; Kitzinger 1938, 183; Török 2005b, 7. Many of these antiquities were found as a result of looting. Other were found during sanctioned excavations, however, these excavations were often run by antiquities dealers who gave little importance to recording context.

archaeological context in which they were found.²³¹ As such, when the Sheikh Ibada fakes surfaced on the market without verifiable documentation, this deficit was not seen as unusual or overly problematic.²³² Moreover, the reliance of scholars on the market also meant that they were used to accepting information regarding findspots derived only from market sources.

Ultimately, there were fundamental issues in mid-20th century conceptions of Coptic art which predisposed the field to accept the Sheikh Ibada fakes. No proper art-historical analysis of the material that scholars placed under the rubric of ‘Coptic art’ was undertaken, and so no clear understanding as to what constituted Coptic art was developed. As such, scholars produced an inadequate framework against which unexcavated antiquities, such as the Sheikh Ibada fakes, might be viewed and analysed. The prevailing interpretations of Coptic art, which scholars developed without sufficient evidence, created an environment that was highly receptive to unparalleled antiquities. Coptic art was almost expected to be unparalleled, and in the *Volkskunst* interpretation scholars had an easily applied narrative which could account for any stylistic oddities. Moreover, the lack of excavated and properly recorded finds meant scholars were used to working with antiquities for which provenience was either vague (i.e. ‘Oxyrhynchus’ or ‘Sheikh Ibada’) or non-existent. This lack of adequate finds further meant that scholars were not only accustomed to interacting with the antiquities market but dependent on it for new material for study.

II.2: The Role of Western Markets in Constructing Authenticity for the Sheikh Ibada Fakes

As with many other dubious antiquities, the Sheikh Ibada fakes entered scholarship by way of the antiquities market.²³³ This should not surprise, as many have argued convincingly that the opaque nature of the market is conducive to the acceptance and sale of looted antiquities.²³⁴ A common, although rarely explored, suggestion that accompanies these arguments is that the same processes by which looted antiquities enter the market are also exploited to introduce fakes.²³⁵ This will be explored in relation to the Sheikh Ibada fakes here, especially in light of how the

²³¹ Torp 1969, 101; Török 2005b, 15 n.30. As noted by Wessel (1965, 47), this also meant there were issues in establishing an accurate chronology.

²³² See the discussion on scholarly interaction with provenience and provenance in Chapter III *infra*.

²³³ Not all fakes and forgeries enter scholarship by way of the market, however. For example, the ‘Kafkania pebble’ or Paul Coleman-Norton’s supposed Greek copy of the Latin *Opus Imperfectum in Matthaeum*. In both cases these forgeries were produced (or at least widely believed to have been produced) by the very scholars who published them. See Rollston (2014, 186-188) for an overview of Coleman-Norton’s forgery. See Palaima (2002-2003, 381) for an overview of the Kafkania pebble.

²³⁴ Bowman 2008, 233; Brodie & Renfrew 2005, 344; Elia 2001, 147-151.

²³⁵ Walker Tubb & Brodie 2017, 190-191; Borodkin 1995, 383-384; Brodie 2014b, 38; Muscarella 1977, 155-169.

market's structure and attitudes functioned in opposition to the checks and balances traditionally used to indicate, or at least suggest, authenticity.²³⁶ Further, because of market practices, hearsay became fact, and inquiry into the history of the pieces by which their inauthenticity might have been proven was impinged upon.²³⁷ It will therefore be demonstrated that the Sheikh Ibada fakes had already been deemed authentic prior to scholarly interaction.

II.2.1. The Sheikh Ibada Fakes Before the Market

While evidence documenting the movement of the Sheikh Ibada fakes through Western markets is limited, obscured both by time and the secrecy inherent to the market, information documenting how the fakes entered these markets is almost non-existent. Where evidence does exist, it is limited and circumstantial. However, in his 1995 paper 'Pseudoprotokoptika', Severin suggested that, given Egypt maintained a legally regulated trade until 1983, it is quite possible that the Sheikh Ibada fakes left Egypt by legal channels.²³⁸ The sole piece of supporting evidence for this postulation, when suggested by Severin, was that examples of the fakes were donated to the Coptic Museum in Cairo.²³⁹ Egypt's regulated trade allowed the export of sanctioned antiquities provided Egyptian museums housed comparable examples.²⁴⁰ As such, Severin suggested that those buying and selling the fakes donated examples to the museum so that export permits for other fakes would be readily granted, allowing them to leave Egypt as apparently authentic antiquities.

The only additional support that could be found for this hypothesis was an interview from 2008 with Jerome Eisenberg, who sold several fakes, in which he claims to have purchased them

²³⁶ See Chapter III for a discussion on the issues associated with scholarly interaction with unprovenanced antiquities.

²³⁷ The market's lack of transparency impedes investigation and discussion is thus hindered by limited evidence. It is also pertinent to note that not all of the examples of the Sheikh Ibada fakes discussed here ended up in scholarship. At the same time, not all fakes which ended up in scholarship have public records about their acquirement. The discussion here is centred around dealers' catalogues which could be located within public records. Further, due to the time constraints of this thesis it has unfortunately not been possible to survey museum records and archives which might offer further enlightenment. Several museums were contacted, but only the Ikonenmuseum in Recklinghausen, Princeton University Art Museum and the Brooklyn Museum responded. The records provided by these museums, while valuable and useful, were limited. Tracing the movement of fakes from production to market has unfortunately received little scholarly investigation, and would be worthy of further research.

²³⁸ Severin 1995, 292; Spanel 2001, 94. Since 1835 (with an ordinance issued by Muhammad Ali, barring the export of Egyptian antiquities) Egypt has sought to protect its cultural heritage. Egyptian Law 215 of 1951, *Sur la Protection des Antiquités*, was the primary law protecting Egyptian cultural heritage during the mid-20th century. This was then supplanted by Egyptian Law 117 of 1983 (which abolished the legal trade of antiquities within Egypt). This has since been amended by Egyptian Law 3 of 2010. For the most comprehensive commentary on Egyptian antiquities law up until 1960 see Khater (1960). For an overview of the developments in Egyptian law pertaining to the protection of antiquities see: O'Keefe & Prott 1984, 45-46; Kersel 2010, 87; Ikram 2011, 142-143; Magee 2012, 71; Dodson 2013, 498.

²³⁹ Severin 1995, 292.

²⁴⁰ Ikram 2011, 143. See Egyptian Law 215 of 1951 Articles 5, 26.

from the dealer Kammel Hammouda in Egypt and exported them legally.²⁴¹ Unfortunately, the veracity of this statement could not be confirmed, nor could it be ascertained that the supposed method by which Eisenberg acquired examples of the fakes was also how other dealers acquired the fakes.²⁴² The Brooklyn Museum, the Princeton University Museum of Art, and the Recklinghausen Ikonenmuseum do not have export papers for the Sheikh Ibada fakes in their collections,²⁴³ while Eisenberg claims that these export permits no longer exist.²⁴⁴ Should Severin's hypothesis be accurate, the fakes may have travelled a pathway in some ways analogous to that outlined by Morag Kersel for the market in Israel, in which looted antiquities can be laundered by being assigned existing registration numbers.²⁴⁵

This is not, however, the only method by which the fakes might have left Egypt legally. Under Egyptian law at the time, antiquities of the 'Christian period' could be bought and sold, even if discovered recently, provided they were not seen as being of national importance and claimed by the authorities.²⁴⁶ As such, given their supposed date, the fakes could have been presented as recently found antiquities, and provided they were not claimed allowed to be bought, sold, and exported.²⁴⁷ Finally, the possibility that the fakes were smuggled out of Egypt cannot be discounted. Smuggling, by design, is secretive and usually leaves no paper trail by which it might be confirmed or discounted. This, however, seems unlikely given the aforementioned donation of fakes to the Coptic Museum. If those responsible for the sale of the Sheikh Ibada fakes were willing to smuggle them out of Egypt, then it seems unlikely that they would also have donated them to the Coptic Museum where no profit could be made.²⁴⁸

²⁴¹ Bailey 2008. Eisenberg claims to have exported alongside the fakes 23,000 antiquities legally from Egypt between 1958 and 1965. According to Wessel (2015, 2), Hammouda, as required under Article 24 of Egyptian Law 215 of 1951, was a registered antiquities dealer. Assuming Eisenberg's statement is accurate, Hammouda is the only known Egyptian dealer to have sold the fakes. None of the other western antiquities dealers have named their sources. It is also unclear if Hammouda knowingly sold fakes.

²⁴² No other dealer who is known to have sold examples of the Sheikh Ibada fakes has claimed, in public, to have purchased them from a dealer in Egypt. It is not possible within the confines of this thesis to further explore the veracity of Eisenberg's statement: in order to have any real chance of accurately reconstructing the movement of the fakes from Egypt to the market detailed archival research would be required, which unfortunately could not be undertaken.

²⁴³ *pers. comm.* Kathy Zurek-Doule (Curatorial Assistant - Egyptian, Classical, and Ancient Near Eastern Art at the Brooklyn Museum) 18/10/2018; *pers. comm.* Eva Haustein-Bartsch (Head of the Ikonenmuseum of Recklinghausen) 29/10/2018. *pers. comm.* Michael Padgett (Curator of Ancient Art at Princeton University Art Museum) 6/12/2018.

²⁴⁴ *pers. comm.* Jerome Eisenberg 15/11/2018. "Dear Mr. Bott, Unfortunately these records are no longer available. I am 88 now and cannot help you any further. Cordially, Jerome M. Eisenberg, Ph.D."

²⁴⁵ Kersel 2006b, 161-165. Supposedly the laundering process described by Kersel was similarly used in Egypt to launder looted antiquities (when Egypt had a regulated trade), see Prott 2005, 234.

²⁴⁶ Judgements made on the value of antiquities were made by a committee, outlined under Article 14 of Egyptian Law 215 of 1951. The committee was made up of the Under Secretary of State at the Ministry of Education and Teaching (president of the committee), Director of the Coptic Museum, Director of the Museum for Islamic Art, Director-general of the Administration of Egyptian Antiquities, Controller of Fine Arts, and the Director of the Administration and Conservation of Arab Antiquities.

²⁴⁷ This would have been facilitated by the aforementioned donation of the fakes cited by Severin (1995, 262).

²⁴⁸ This assumes that the motivation for producing the Sheikh Ibada fakes was monetary. There is little evidence to argue otherwise. Parker (2016, 7-8) discusses other potential motivations for producing fakes and forgeries.

Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to trace the Sheikh Ibada fakes beyond the dealers who sold them in the US and Europe. However, Eisenberg's statement that he acquired fakes legally in Egypt and the examples in the Coptic Museum in Cairo suggests that the fakes were presented as authentic first within the Egyptian market. This provides a potential *terminus post quem* for the presentation of the fakes as authentic, suggesting that even before western dealers had encountered the fakes they were already being presented as authentic.²⁴⁹ It thus seems the legal Egyptian market provided a potential mechanism by which the fakes might have been 'laundered', and then presented within a legal setting, helping to cement their authenticity.

II.2.2. The Market's Presentation of Documentation

Despite the high prices antiquities can command and the protective features offered by documentation,²⁵⁰ the market has traditionally functioned with very little information about an antiquity's origins transmitted between seller and buyer.²⁵¹ As such, a large percentage of antiquities on the market, or within collections, have limited documentation.²⁵² This issue is further compounded by the market norm of accepted secrecy, with requests for information beyond what was originally offered considered improper.²⁵³ This institutionalised secrecy and indifference towards documentation is particularly concerning, as it is widely accepted that a significant portion of the antiquities which appear on the market are illicit.²⁵⁴ Because market participants are unwilling to enquire about the source of an antiquity and little information is usually provided by which provenance might be investigated, it becomes almost impossible to differentiate between antiquities on the market which have surfaced recently as the result of looting (or theft) and those which are legal but poorly documented.²⁵⁵ As a result of the mixed licit and illicit supply streams that feed the market, and the inability to distinguish between them, the antiquities market is often

²⁴⁹ This hypothesis assumes that the Egyptian dealers were either complicit in the deception or were laundering antiquities they believed to have been looted.

²⁵⁰ Nørskov 2002b, 291-292; Barker 2012, 19-20. Provenance can indicate that a buyer will inherit legal ownership of an antiquity and provenience can indicate authenticity.

²⁵¹ Mackenzie 2005b, 33; Nørskov 2002b, 267-268; Elia 2001, 150-151; Gill & Chippindale 1993, 627; Chippindale & Gill 2000, 477; Bell 2002, 197-198.

²⁵² Chippindale & Gill 2000, particularly 476-477.

²⁵³ Mackenzie 2011, 72-74; Mackenzie & Yates 2017, 77. Taylor (2008) cites an interview with the dealer Jerome Eisenberg, who sold several of the Sheikh Ibada fakes. Eisenberg states that he acquired the fakes from a "very reliable, very ethical" dealer in Cairo." However, he did not enquire as to where the dealer acquired the fake from as it was "against the rules of the trade at the time to ask such questions."

²⁵⁴ Elia 2001, 150-151; Gill & Chippindale 1993, 624-627; Bell 2002, 197-199; Brodie & Renfrew 2005, 344, 347.

²⁵⁵ Mackenzie 2005b, 4-5; Bowman 2008, 227-228; Mackenzie & Yates 2017, 80-82. For clarity, the antiquities that make up the market supply are often divided into three categories to distinguish their legality. 'White antiquities': those which have been acquired through legal excavation and are on the market legally. These make up a small portion of the market. 'Grey antiquities': those which were looted in the past but have been in circulation for such a substantial period of time that they are now considered legal. There are also those items which were excavated legally, but documentation has now been lost. These, too, are considered 'grey'. 'Black antiquities': those items which have been looted recently, and are definitely illegal. It has also been suggested a fourth category, fakes, might be added here, but this has yet to occur, largely because the research which has employed this division is primarily concerned with looting.

classified as a ‘grey market’.²⁵⁶ This also has significant implications for the appearance of fakes on the market. The general disregard for documentation means that fake antiquities appear functionally indistinguishable from the other poorly documented antiquities, looted or otherwise, which make up the vast majority of items on the market.²⁵⁷

This indifference towards documentation, and the varying levels to which it is displayed,²⁵⁸ is visible in the catalogues of some of the dealers who sold examples of the Sheikh Ibada fakes.²⁵⁹ In a 1960 Royal-Athena Galleries’ (RAG) catalogue there are several fakes offered for sale.²⁶⁰ The provenience for all of them is listed as Sheikh Ibada, yet no further information about their ‘discovery’ or when they first surfaced is offered.²⁶¹ The apparent security of the Sheikh Ibada provenience was reinforced by the remaining entries, which were divided by reported provenience.²⁶² Of note is a section dedicated to antiquities which had surfaced without a findspot.²⁶³ That other pieces were offered with no provenience functions as an implicit indicator of the confidence given to the reported Sheikh Ibada provenience.

Some provenance is offered in the RAG catalogue, yet it is generalised for all listed items and designed to present the sculptures as authentic, not allow customers to trace ownership. The reader is informed that items listed in the catalogue were acquired by Eisenberg over “two trips to Egypt in 1959.”²⁶⁴ There is also a more generalised declaration stating that Eisenberg made “frequent trips to Egypt and the Near East” where he purchased “archaeological antiquities at the actual sources.”²⁶⁵ These statements appear to be an effort to mitigate the lack of verifiable provenience that accompanied the sculptures, creating the appearance of an unbroken provenance chain from source to market. The claim that these items were acquired “at the actual source” is, however, disingenuous. It suggests that these antiquities were acquired directly from either

²⁵⁶ Bowman 2008, 226-228; Brodie 2012, 231. See Mackenzie & Yates (2017) for a comprehensive discussion of many ways in which the antiquities market has been categorised as a grey market.

²⁵⁷ Mackenzie 2005b, 4; Nørskov 2005b, 258-261; Chippindale & Gill 2000, especially 482.

²⁵⁸ Because the market functions with no guidelines as to how much documentation needs to accompany an antiquity on the market antiquities often appear with a wide variety of detail. See Chippindale & Gill (2000, 482) or Nørskov (2005b, 258-261) for further reading.

²⁵⁹ It is, unfortunately, not possible to uncover all the dealers who sold the Sheikh Ibada fakes. Those who are known to have sold fakes include: Royal-Athena Galleries, Nessim Cohen, Galerie Heidi Vollmoeller, Ars Antiqua, André Emmerich Gallery, Jean Roudillon, Marguerite Mallon, Galerie Kervorkian, Sotheby’s, Galerie Motte. It should be noted that the ‘invisible market’, discussed by Nørskov (2002b, 291-292), means that an unknown number of fakes could have passed from dealers to museums and collectors outside of public record, making it near impossible to trace them.

²⁶⁰ Eisenberg 1960, 10-13, 15, 25 pls.8, 10, 17 nos. 16,17,18, 20, 31. Spanel (2001, 91 n.15) lists these all as fake. pl.8 no. 20 is Brooklyn Museum Inv. 60.212.

²⁶¹ It should be noted that the records in the Brooklyn Museum for Inv. 60.212 state that the provenience of the piece is “El Sheikh Abada, according to Hammouda, the vendor in Cairo. On January 11, 1961, it was given to the Museum by Louis Beck of New York, NY, and Jerome Eisenberg of New York, NY.” *pers. comm.* Kathy Zurek-Doule 18/10/2018.

²⁶² These various proveniences are (spelling has been standardised): Sheikh Ibada, Ashmunein, Behnasa (variant of Oxyrhynchus), Various Locations, Kom Abou Billou, and Fostat and the Fayum.

²⁶³ Eisenberg 1960, 28-31 nos. 45-50. The authenticity of these unprovenienced works has not been questioned.

²⁶⁴ Eisenberg 1960, 1.

²⁶⁵ Eisenberg 1960, 40. This statement appears repeatedly on the RAG’s catalogues of the time.

excavation (illegal or otherwise) or the excavator(s), and so their ownership from the point of discovery can be traced confidently, establishing their authenticity. In reality, this statement simply meant that they were purchased within the source country, as demonstrated by Eisenberg's later statement that they were purchased from a dealer in Cairo.²⁶⁶

The Sheikh Ibada fakes in the *Ars Antiqua* (AA) catalogues are presented in much the same way. The provenience provided is vague, with only general site names offered.²⁶⁷ However, it is often presented with less certainty. A fake in the 1959 catalogue, and two in the 1960 catalogue, were listed, respectively, as "Ob aus Sheikh Abade?" and "Vermutlich aus Sheikh Abade".²⁶⁸ There is, however, no information provided as to what differentiates these antiquities from those listed without provenience and those listed with (apparently) certain findspots.²⁶⁹ Further, the ambiguous, or non-existent, provenience that accompanied some of the fakes was quite possibly considered indicative of authenticity. A lack of information regarding the history of an antiquity is often considered evidence that the work has been looted, which has become synonymous with authenticity for many of those involved in the antiquities trade.²⁷⁰

The level of provided documentation is even lower in an André Emmerich Gallery (AEG) catalogue and a Galerie Motte catalogue.²⁷¹ Here, Sheikh Ibada fakes were offered with no accompanying documentation.²⁷² That this occurred is unsurprising, given most antiquities on the market during this period were undocumented.²⁷³ It is this same reasoning that also accounts for

²⁶⁶ Taylor 2008.

²⁶⁷ *Ars Antiqua* 1960, 19 nos. 38 & 39 pl. 19; *Ars Antiqua* 1962, 8 no. 18 pl. VII. These are identified as fakes in Spanel (2001, 80 n.8). It is worth noting that there are other antiquities offered for sale within the *Ars Antiqua* catalogues that are simply listed as "Fundort unbekannt," while others are listed as "Aus Ägypten, Fundort unbekannt." For example, see *Ars Antiqua* (1960, 18-19 nos. 35, 40).

²⁶⁸ *Ars Antiqua* 1959, 10 no. 25; *Ars Antiqua* 1960, 19 nos. 38 & 39. No. 25 from the 1959 catalogue would end up in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Inv. 3/59). No. 38 from the 1960 catalogue was purchased for the Wilhelm Esch Collection, which is now in Staatliche Sammlung Ägyptischer Kunst München collection, Inv. ÄS 5529.

²⁶⁹ Comparison is made, however, with a stele from a previous sale which was "Ob aus Sheikh Abade", suggesting that this provenience has been inferred from connoisseurship. *Ars Antiqua* 1959, 10 no.25. For example, in the 1962 catalogue another fake is listed as coming from "Behnasa." *Ars Antiqua* 1962, 8 no. 18. Behnasa is the modern name for Oxyrhynchus; it is labelled as a fake by Spanel (2001, 90 n.8).

²⁷⁰ Kelker & Bruhns 2010, 50. The idea that the fakes were actually looted was prevalent amongst scholars and seems to have contributed heavily to their acceptance of the works. See Chapter III for further discussion of its prevalence in scholarship.

²⁷¹ André Emmerich Gallery 1962; Galerie Motte 1961. Spanel (2001, 91 n.15) states that all but two of the items listed in the André Emmerich Gallery catalogue are certainly fake, and the authenticity of the other two is dubious. Within the Galerie Motte (1961) catalogue (6-8 nos. 9, 16, 19-21, & 23. pls. II-IV) are identified by Spanel (2001, 91 n.15) as being Sheikh Ibada fakes.

²⁷² Whilst nothing specific is offered these antiquities are still labelled as 'Coptic' by the dealers and are thus given a very broad provenience of 'Egypt'. For further discussion of the market defining antiquities like this see Fay 2011, 451.

²⁷³ Chippindale & Gill 2000, 476-480; Nørskov 2002a, 27. The majority of the Sheikh Ibada fakes within the surveyed catalogues are without any documentation. However, due to limited evidence it is unclear if this means that the majority of the Sheikh Ibada fakes sold during the 1950s-1970s were without any documentation. Many of those fakes which ended up in the scholarship discussed in the following two chapters were said to be from 'Sheikh Ibada'. Whether this is because more dealers than can be surveyed here said the items came from Sheikh Ibada, or because scholars inferred such a findspot by connoisseurship is unclear. For example, in the archives of the Ikonenmuseum in Recklinghausen it is unclear if the Sheikh Ibada provenience for many of their fakes came from the dealers or was supplied by Wessel. *pers. comm.*, Eva Haustein-Bartsch 29/10/2018.

the fact that none of the surveyed catalogues provided any provenance for the fakes.²⁷⁴ The closest any had to provenance was the RAG's blanket statements regarding the acquisition of all listed items. This, however, does not mean that no provenance was provided, only that nothing was published. Within the records of the Brooklyn Museum there is provenance for one of their fakes, yet this is simply the name of the Egyptian dealer who sold the piece to Eisenberg.²⁷⁵ Yet this does not appear to have been the norm, as none of the other fakes in the Brooklyn Museum, Princeton University Art Museum, or Recklinghausen Ikonenmuseum has any listed provenance.²⁷⁶ Similarly, the records for two relief plaques purchased from the AEG by the Princeton University Art Museum state that both were "said to be from Sheikh Ibade."²⁷⁷ Based on museum records, it appears that the supposed provenance was provided by the AEG, although no provenance is listed.²⁷⁸ Although limited, these examples do highlight that more documentation may have been provided by dealers outside of the catalogues to help further suggest the authenticity of the Sheikh Ibada fakes.

It well worth reiterating that the Sheikh Ibada provenance was fabricated, and so the fakes could never confidently have been said to have come from the site. At best, the provided provenance could only have been, to use a market cliché, 'said to be', as presented in the AA catalogues. Despite this, Eisenberg (and likely other dealers) accepted and reported the fabricated provenance as fact. Because market participants are willing to interact with antiquities with limited documentation, it is easy for dealers, or their suppliers, to fabricate documentation *ad hoc*.²⁷⁹ The unwillingness (and inability) of market participants to investigate further means that information,²⁸⁰ such as the Sheikh Ibada provenance, is often accepted as fact. Once this information has been accepted, these antiquities appear authentic, having been effectively grounded at an archaeological site. It thus seems that, for the Sheikh Ibada fakes, and likely many

²⁷⁴ It is worth noting that the majority of the fakes surfaced before the 1970 UNESCO Convention. There was therefore no great need to demonstrate that an antiquity left a source nation legally as repatriation claims were rare and often unsuccessful. For example, Cook (1995, 181), the former Keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the British Museum, states that he, and many others, were willing to acquire anything on the global antiquities market "as long as the vendor had legal title to it, and that it was the responsibility of the countries of origin to enforce their own laws and to police their own borders." It has only been in the last decade or so (with more market states becoming party to the UNESCO Convention) that provenance is becoming more prominent on the market. However, this is often just reference to previous sales to demonstrate that an antiquity was out of a source nation prior to 1970 (or before a market nation became a signatory to the UNESCO Convention), which has become something of an ethical 'watershed' in the acquisition of antiquities. See Brodie & Renfrew 2005, 344; Lobay 2015, 467.

²⁷⁵ *pers. comm.* Kathy Zurek-Doule 18/10/2018. Inv. 60.212 was gifted to the Brooklyn Museum by Jerome Eisenberg and Louis Beck. It was said to have come from Sheikh Ibada and this information was supposedly provided by the Egyptian dealer Hammouda.

²⁷⁶ *pers. comm.* Kathy Zurek-Doule 18/10/2018; *pers. comm.* Eva Haustein-Bartsch 29/10/2018; *pers. comm.* Michael Padgett 6/12/2018.

²⁷⁷ *pers. comm.* Michael Padgett 06/12/2018. Princeton University Art Museum Inv. y1962-45 & y1962-46.

²⁷⁸ *pers. comm.* Michael Padgett 06/12/2018. Princeton University Art Museum Inv. y1962-45 & y1962-46.

²⁷⁹ Kersel 2006a, 193; Hauser-Schäublin & Kim 2016, 125.

²⁸⁰ Fincham 2007, 644. This inability to investigate the accuracy of documentation makes, according to Fincham, prosecution for cultural heritage crimes difficult.

other antiquities, the dealers who sold them ultimately decided on the security of the reported provenience. As such, unsubstantiated information became a valid part of these poorly documented antiquities' histories. Because customers accept this information as accurate, the market is then given the power to define the history of antiquities.²⁸¹

When the Sheikh Ibada fakes surfaced on the western markets, their provenience was presented in varying forms. Some were presented with an apparently certain provenience, some with a somewhat ambiguous provenience, and some with no provenience at all.²⁸² However, this information was not truly useful in either proving or disproving authenticity. None of the fakes was accompanied by verifiable provenance which could serve reliably to demonstrate the security of the provided provenience, the most secure indicator of authenticity.²⁸³ Nevertheless, that the fakes surfaced either with either unverifiable documentation or without any documentation at all could not be taken as evidence of dubious authenticity. Because the vast majority of antiquities on the market were without adequate documentation, the fakes appeared functionally indistinguishable from these other undocumented antiquities.²⁸⁴ In fact, within the surveyed catalogues, there is nothing inherently suspicious about the presentation of the documentation accompanying the fakes which could be used to isolate them from the other antiquities on offer.²⁸⁵ They appeared no different to other items within the catalogues, and so just as (in)authentic.²⁸⁶ Just as the lack of required documentation allows looted antiquities to appear licit, so too does it allow fakes to appear authentic.

II.2.3. Unique Items

One of the primary factors that determines an antiquity's market value is its distinctiveness.²⁸⁷ If an antiquity on the market is unique it becomes valuable, desired by collectors and museums.²⁸⁸ This, however, becomes problematic if the antiquity cannot be linked conclusively with a secure findspot. As is discussed further in Chapter III, unique, unprovenienced

²⁸¹ This process has been termed "relocation." Antiquities are removed from their archaeological contexts and relocated to the market, where they become defined by their geographical, cultural, or historic origins. See Geismar (2001, 26) and Fay (2011, 451-452) for further discussion.

²⁸² However, as demonstrated by the Princeton reliefs, information might have been provided that was not listed in the catalogues. *pers. comm.* Michael Padgett 06/12/2018. Princeton University Art Museum Inv. y1962-45 & y1962-46.

²⁸³ Barker 2012, 20; Fay 2011, 451-452. See Chapter III for further discussion on the use of provenance in authenticating antiquities.

²⁸⁴ Chippindale & Gill 2000, 476-480; Nørskov 2002a, 27.

²⁸⁵ Apart from the fact that excavation at Antinoë (Sheikh Ibada) has no sculpture that parallels the fakes.

²⁸⁶ Excluding, of course, their stylistic features and the fact that no sculptures similar to the Sheikh Ibada fakes had been found at Sheikh Ibada/ Antinoë in sanctioned excavation.

²⁸⁷ Yates 2015, 74; Walker Tubb & Brodie 2017, 193-194. In recent years, however, more common objects have also begun to be heavily marketed as decorative pieces.

²⁸⁸ Yates 2015, 74.

antiquities have, by definition, no parallels by which their anomalous characteristics can be shown to be authentic, which should preclude their easy acceptance.²⁸⁹

However, as is evident within several of the catalogues which featured the Sheikh Ibada fakes, dealers were well aware of the value of rarity and highlighted the individuality of an antiquity to demonstrate its desirability. In the RAG catalogue, the reader is invited to “note the very unusual decorative treatment of the hair, the first we have seen of this nature.”²⁹⁰ In another entry the reader is informed that “no parallels to this unusual medallion could be found in the known literature.”²⁹¹ The unique qualities, and thus rarity, of the fakes are also stressed in the AA catalogues. One fake is described as “sehr selten,”²⁹² while another is described as an example of the niche stelae which had only recently become known to scholars.²⁹³

The problematic nature of authenticating unique antiquities is, unsurprisingly, ignored entirely in these comments. There is no information made available, beyond the RAG’s assertion that their antiquities were purchased in 1959 in Egypt “at the actual sources,”²⁹⁴ that would indicate why the authenticity of these unique items is secure. Instead, the focus is solely on the individuality of each item, so as to make them more desirable. As will be discussed later, this worked, with the individuality of the Sheikh Ibada fakes also stressed by scholars.²⁹⁵ In this way, the market encourages the purchase of those antiquities (undocumented and unparalleled) most difficult to authenticate.

II.2.4. Market Trust

The majority of the Sheikh Ibada fakes came to museums and collectors through respected and well-established dealers.²⁹⁶ Dealers such as these function as the bridge necessary for museums and collectors to access the market and make acquisitions.²⁹⁷ Their importance is nowhere more evident than when unique antiquities with minimal, unverifiable, documentation

²⁸⁹ Gill & Chippindale 1993, 619-620.

²⁹⁰ Eisenberg 1960, 10 no. 16.

²⁹¹ Eisenberg 1960, 12 no. 20; Brooklyn Museum Inv. 60.212.

²⁹² *Ars Antiqua* 1962, 8 no. 18.

²⁹³ *Ars Antiqua* 1960, 19 no. 38.

²⁹⁴ Eisenberg 1960, 40.

²⁹⁵ See Chapter III and Chapter IV for further discussion on the unique qualities of the Sheikh Ibada fakes. For example, Bothmer & Keith (1970, 100-103) discuss the stylistic qualities of both Brooklyn Museum Inv. 62.44 and 63.36 as “unusual.” In the catalogue for the Ikonenmuseums Recklinghausen, Wessel (1962 (unpaginated)) states that “unmittelbare Parallelen sind nicht bekannt geworden” for Inv. 516. Müller (1960, 267) states that the niche stelae represent a “bisher unbekannte Richtung der Kunst.”

²⁹⁶ Examples of the Sheikh Ibada fakes are known to have been sold by: Royal-Athena Galleries, Nessim Cohen, Galerie Heidi Vollmoeller, *Ars Antiqua*, André Emmerich Gallery, Jean Roudillon, Marguerite Mallon, Galerie Kervorkian, Sotheby’s, Galerie Motte.

²⁹⁷ Kelker & Bruhns 2010, 48. Brodie & Doole (2004, 105) have noted that while museums used to acquire material directly from within source countries, during the mid to late 20th century they became more reliant on dealers for new material. In the latter half of the 20th century this relationship has become important as it allows museums to distance themselves from the illicit trade and claim ignorance if an antiquity turns out to be looted.

are offered. These antiquities present the greatest acquisition risk as their authenticity and legality cannot be ascertained from documentation.²⁹⁸ As such, access to a ‘reputable dealer’ is of the utmost importance for facilitating transactions within the market. For many, interaction with a well-known dealer qualifies as due diligence to ensure the legality of an acquisition, under the assumption that the dealer would not have acquired antiquities from dubious sources.²⁹⁹ This faith in the reputation of an established dealer also extends to the authenticity of their wares, with the market often functioning with the belief that those who sell antiquities would never sell fakes deliberately.³⁰⁰ With the market’s unwillingness to enquire further about the origin of an antiquity, this trust is then further extended to the dealer’s source.³⁰¹ Antiquities that are offered on the market by these dealers appear to other market participants as authentic.³⁰² As such, when the Sheikh Ibada fakes appeared in the galleries and catalogues of the respected dealers who sold them, they immediately appeared to the rest of the market as authentic.

The pervasiveness of this trust extends beyond the final customer’s perception of the dealer. Eisenberg has justified his acquisition of the fakes by stating that they were “obtained from Kammel Hammouda, a very reliable dealer in Cairo.”³⁰³ Evidently, Eisenberg’s perception of Hammouda meant that he believed he was protected from encountering fakes.³⁰⁴ Because of this perceived protection afforded by interacting with a supposedly reliable source, Eisenberg felt confident enough in the authenticity of the Sheikh Ibada fakes to introduce them onto the American market. By simply introducing the fakes onto the market, Eisenberg implicitly proclaimed their authenticity.

Trust, then, ultimately underpins the functioning of the market.³⁰⁵ Despite this required trust, the market’s willingness to interact with undocumented and unique antiquities means that encountering fakes is a very real risk. As such, to maintain market confidence and cultivate the necessary trust, there are various methods used by dealers to promote both the authenticity of their wares and their reputation as reliable. One such method is the use of a guarantee of authenticity,³⁰⁶

²⁹⁸ Kelker & Bruhns 2010, 49-51; Fay 2011, 451-452. Elia (2009, 248-249) refers to this as the “Myth of the Reputable Dealer.” This is also used as a justification by collectors to allow themselves to believe they have avoided buying looted antiquities.

²⁹⁹ Muscarella 1977, 160; Burnham 1975, 93; Mackenzie 2011, 72; Mackenzie 2005b, 26, 30.

³⁰⁰ Muscarella 1977, 160; Burnham 1975, 93; Gill & Chippindale 1993, 629. This is also a commonly used argument by collectors to justify not independently ensuring the legality of a recently acquired antiquity.

³⁰¹ Riggs 2010, 1151.

³⁰² Fay 2011, 451-452.

³⁰³ Quoted in Bailey 2008.

³⁰⁴ This was possibly also an effort on Eisenberg’s behalf to mitigate the negative publicity associated with selling fake antiquities, especially given Eisenberg’s (1995 216) assertion that “a single questionable or false object in a gallery’s stock is enough to damage its reputation and a few such pieces would destroy it.” This is repeated in Eisenberg (1997, 20).

³⁰⁵ This is perhaps best demonstrated by Mackenzie’s (2005b, 26, 30) study. Interviewing market-participants Mackenzie found that doing business with a trusted source was considered sufficient protection to avoid buying dubious antiquities.

³⁰⁶ Yates 2015, 72; Fay 2011, 457-458.

as is present in the AA and RAG's catalogues.³⁰⁷ Neither of these guarantees are overly informative, with no information demonstrating how the authenticity of the antiquities offered has been confirmed. These guarantees therefore offer very little actual protection for the buyer.³⁰⁸ They are simply blanket statements designed to help reinforce the apparent authenticity of the antiquities on offer, and, in doing so, reassure customers.³⁰⁹ Ultimately, the perceived security of these guarantees lies in the customer's perception of the reputation of the dealer.

Perhaps the most convincing method by which dealers attempt to ascertain authenticity is by utilising expertise.³¹⁰ This involves seeking advice from museum or university-based experts, who are seen as operating independently of the market, to authenticate undocumented antiquities.³¹¹ However, when scholarly opinion cannot be obtained, dealers may instead portray themselves as the expert, or make use of scholarly publications in an attempt to place their wares within the established art-historical framework.³¹² In the AA catalogues, various notable scholars are acknowledged for their specialist advice regarding the antiquities on offer. For example, Sir John Beazley is acknowledged for his help in attributing vases, and, more importantly here, Hans Müller is acknowledged for his help with the "Alt-Ägypten und Koptische Kunst."³¹³ Even within the AEG catalogue, where no information beyond the dating and dimensions of the objects is offered, there is still reference to academic expertise to validate the authenticity of the antiquities featured. The AEG acknowledges "Dr. Pahor Labib, Director, Coptic Museum, Cairo" for his "scholarly assistance."³¹⁴ It is unclear from the catalogues as to how much direct interaction these experts had with the antiquities on offer, and so the customer was invited to assume that all antiquities had been inspected by an expert.³¹⁵ The references to respected scholars in these catalogues both validated the authenticity of the antiquities and served to reinforce the reputation of the dealers. They were able to obtain assistance from respected experts who seem unlikely to

³⁰⁷ *Ars Antiqua* 1959, 3; *Ars Antiqua* 1960, 3; *Ars Antiqua* 1962, 3; Eisenberg 1960, i.

³⁰⁸ The *Ars Antiqua* policy gives customers eight days from receipt of their purchase to lodge a complaint, while the Royal-Athena Galleries' policy has no mention of a refund or any other means of redress.

³⁰⁹ Curiously, within the *Galerie Motte* (1961, 3) "Conditions de Vente," there is no guarantee of authenticity, nor refund available should the authenticity of the works on offer be found to be dubious. Instead, customers are expected to inspect the works prior to auction and confirm authenticity for themselves.

³¹⁰ Yates 2015, 75; Brodie 2011a, 414. Scholarly opinion can also be used to establish the quality or importance of various antiquities, which helps establish pricing.

³¹¹ Brodie 2011a, 414; Brodie 2014b, 38-39; Yates 2015, 75. Although, as Muscarella (2000, 3) and Brodie (2011a, 417) have discussed, some scholars have intimate links with the antiquities trade, and happily interact directly with dealers in return for new material to study. Moreover, Muscarella (2000, 5) discusses how at least he is aware of at least one scholar who will provide false authentications of antiquities for dealers.

³¹² Brodie 2014b, 39.

³¹³ *Ars Antiqua* 1962, 4; *Ars Antiqua* 1960, 4.

³¹⁴ André Emmerich Gallery 1962 (unpaginated). This could also be seen as further, albeit circumstantial, evidence for the legal export of the fakes. Labib as director of the Coptic Museum was one of the members of the committee which decided the value of antiquities to Egypt and granted export permits. He therefore seems unlikely to help facilitate the sale of looted items.

³¹⁵ *Ars Antiqua* 1960, 4; *Ars Antiqua* 1962, 4. With the exception of acknowledging Beazley for his help in attributing the vases (and Robert Hecht in the 1960 catalogue for his help with two specific vases), there is no mention as to how other scholarly expertise was employed.

willingly interact with suspect individuals, therefore reinforcing their own authority and trustworthiness.³¹⁶

Furthermore, scholars sometimes have close relationships with dealers, extending their expertise in return for access to new material for study.³¹⁷ Müller's involvement with the AA catalogues is evidence of such a relationship, and Müller would go on to publish one of the stelae from the 1960 catalogue.³¹⁸ While there is no explicit evidence that other scholars who published the fakes had quite so strong ties with the market, many were involved with museums and so likely had some input in the purchase of material and may also have interacted with dealers.³¹⁹ If such relationships existed, then this can only have helped foster the trust on which the market relies to function. The existence of such relationships may also have helped underpin the acceptance of the fakes as authentic. Elia and Muscarella have both commented on the unwillingness of scholars to question the authenticity of antiquities within private collections or held by dealers for fear of causing offence and losing access to unknown material.³²⁰ As such, it is entirely possible that such a relationship dynamic predisposed scholars with links to the market to compromise their objectivity and accept the fakes without question.

Dealers may also present themselves as experts. In the RAG catalogue, there is no reference to specific scholars beyond thanking "museum authorities ... in Egypt, Europe, and the United States" for their cooperation.³²¹ Instead, Eisenberg, as author, portrays himself as the expert. There is a bibliography listed towards the front of the catalogue and several of the object descriptions feature references to publications for comparisons or "interesting discussion[s]" of the stylistic type.³²² Even when the sculptures are unique, as the Sheikh Ibada fakes were, there is still reference to scholarship to demonstrate Eisenberg's familiarity with the field which, in turn, validates his belief in the authenticity of the unparalleled antiquities.³²³ Eisenberg even goes so far as to note

³¹⁶ As Brodie (2014d, 39) notes, "only the wealthiest or best-connected dealers can secure the personal attention of scholars or experts."

³¹⁷ Nørskov (2002b, 266) notes that Trendall was friends with the dealer James Ede, and would stay with him when visiting London. Brodie (2011a, 417) also discusses Trendall's close relationship with the antiquities trade. Brodie also discusses several other examples of scholars interacting with the trade.

³¹⁸ *Ars Antiqua* 1960, 19 no.38; Müller 1960, 270 fig. 4.

³¹⁹ For example: Wessel had ties to the Recklinghausen Ikonenmuseum. Cooney was employed by the Brooklyn Museum. du Bourguet was employed by the Louvre.

³²⁰ Elia 1993, 66-67; Muscarella 2000, 3, 5; Muscarella 2013b, 889-890.

³²¹ Eisenberg 1960, 1.

³²² Eisenberg 1960, 2, 3 nos. 1, 3 (It is pertinent to note, here, that these two examples have not been deemed fake). A similar invocation of expertise is employed within the *Galerie Motte* (1961, 5-6, 8) catalogue. There is a short bibliography provided and certain items are accompanied with references to the listed publications. Particularly no. 9, identified by Spanel (2001, 91 n.15) as a fake, and the cover art, No. 25 which has a reference to Müller's 1960 article. No. 25 has not been labelled a fake in any of the works thus far on the Sheikh Ibada fakes, but its similarity to many of the niche stelae that are often published as fakes does cast doubt upon its authenticity.

³²³ See, for example, Eisenberg 1960, 10-12 nos. 16, 20.

that several of the Sheikh Ibada fakes for sale have “been repainted in part with a water-soluble paint.”³²⁴

Past sales, too, could play a role. In the 1960 AA catalogue, two fakes listed as “Vermutlich aus Sheikh Abade” are accompanied with a comparative reference to another fake listed in the 1959 catalogue, and a discussion of how the fakes offered in 1960 are of a type developed from that offered in 1959.³²⁵ This reference to an earlier sale helped to validate the authenticity of those offered later,³²⁶ which become situated in the accepted artistic corpus. Moreover, by referencing a previous sale, the dealer highlights that they have not only offered similar examples prior, but that these sales have been successful. The previous antiquity had been accepted as authentic, and so the two offered in 1960 must also be authentic. Again, the dealer’s reputation is further reinforced.

For many, the suggestion that an antiquity has been looted is a powerful indicator of authenticity and is used on occasion by dealers to explain the emergence of an antiquity, justifying its lack of documentation and to demonstrate authenticity.³²⁷ As many of the scholars who published the fakes as authentic stated that they had arrived on the market as the result of looting, it would appear this narrative was also employed by those who sold the Sheikh Ibada fakes to guarantee their authenticity.³²⁸ Although no specific evidence for the market’s use of the looting narrative exists, the certainty with which scholars discussed the reliability of the provided provenience and their belief that the fakes were looted does suggest that dealers were using this narrative.³²⁹ However, even if those who sold the fakes did not explicitly state that the fakes were looted, their presentation of them certainly implied this. The unique qualities that were emphasised by dealers to make the sculptures appear valuable could only plausibly have been accounted for if the sculptures were looted.³³⁰ Moreover, the records for a stele housed in the Nelson-Atkins Gallery in Kansas state that, according to the dealer Nessim Cohen, the supposed findspot for the stele is “the chapel of the cemetery at Cheikh Abada” (35).³³¹ Given that this sculpture most was

³²⁴ Eisenberg 1960, 12 no. 18.

³²⁵ *Ars Antiqua* 1959, 10 no. 25; *Ars Antiqua* 1960, 19 no. 38.

³²⁶ Such a tactic was also employed by scholars to discuss the Sheikh Ibada sculptures. See discussion of the development of a regional school in Chapter III *infra*.

³²⁷ Chappell & Polk 2011, 245-246; Yates 2015, 76-78. Recently, photographic evidence of looting in progress, or antiquities *in situ* before being removed by looters, has been used to demonstrate authenticity. Perhaps most famously, photos were uncovered by police when they raided the warehouse of Giacomo Medici showing antiquities in various states, from recently looted all the way through to being fully restored and market ready. See Watson & Todeschini (2006, 66-68) for further reading on the Medici photos.

³²⁸ See discussion on the looting narrative by scholars in Chapter III.1.

³²⁹ It was also considered standard practice during the mid-20th century to buy and sell looted antiquities. Museums and collectors were largely ambivalent about the origin of the sculpture. See Mackenzie 2005b, 33; Cook 1995, 181.

³³⁰ There were no ongoing excavations at Antinoë when the fakes began to surface, and the suggestion that a large volume of stylistically unique sculptures were able to remain unknown in collections would have seemed implausible. Breccia excavated at Antinoë from 1935-1940, then the Institute of Papyrology in Florence in collaboration with the University of Rome would excavate there from 1965-1968. See Swelim 1999, 140; Donadoni 1975, 324.

³³¹ Nelson-Atkins Gallery n.d. Cohen also sold the Brooklyn Paralytic to the Brooklyn Museum. Interestingly, the Nelson-Atkins Gallery stele was purchased from Paul Mallon, not Cohen. The most extensive negative comment on

definitely not recovered during sanctioned archaeological excavation, the suggestion underlying this provenience must have been that it was found by looters.³³² When such a narrative is used by dealers, they imply an established relationship with looters who are able to acquire material directly from the source.³³³

Conclusion

When the Sheikh Ibada fakes appeared, they did so in an environment well-suited to receive them as authentic. The existing scholarly discourse surrounding Coptic art was problematic, with no clear criteria for designating a piece of art ‘Coptic’ having been established. Instead, scholarship functioned with an unclear interpretive framework which stressed the unskilled nature of Coptic artists. This framework was based on limited stylistic and technical analysis, and misguided beliefs about the people producing Coptic art. Moreover, the existing market structures meant that, when the fakes did surface, they appeared authentic. The market’s willingness to operate with a minimum of information meant that the Sheikh Ibada fakes could be presented with minimal documentation, appearing functionally indistinguishable from other antiquities on the market. Moreover, the unique qualities of the fakes, which should have caused concern, were rather highlighted as desirable qualities. Finally, because the market operated without an open exchange of documentation by which authenticity might be established, it was reliant on a bond of trust between buyer and seller, which established the antiquity’s authenticity for customers. The fakes were not simply presented as authentic antiquities, but antiquities whose authenticity had been validated. When the fakes emerged, therefore, they did so in a context where the market had already erroneously authenticated them, and a scholarly environment (unwittingly) receptive to fakes. As will be shown in Chapter III, this wider environment had a pronounced impact on the way scholars interacted with the Sheikh Ibada fakes.

this stele’s authenticity is by Török (2005b, 124), who describes it as “fine, though somewhat reworked.” Nelson-Atkins Gallery Inv. 55-42. Cooney (1963, 37) describes this stele as “the finest I have ever seen.” Although this stele is still considered authentic it was grouped, and discussed, with the Sheikh Ibada fakes, and so might provide insight into their sale.

³³² Some now place this sculpture’s origin at Oxyrhynchus. For example, Thomas 2000, 11 fig. 68.

³³³ Riggs 2010, 1151.

Chapter III.

The Mechanics Behind Scholarly Authentication³³⁴

In his 1977 paper, ‘Unexcavated Objects and Ancient Near Eastern Art’, Muscarella argued that the authenticity of an undocumented antiquity ultimately rests on academic judgements.³³⁵ In this light, it was scholars who were ultimately responsible for the erroneous authentication of the Sheikh Ibada fakes. As such, this chapter examines the processes that led this authentication. When attempting to determine authenticity, there are three tools available to experts: “scientific analysis, historical documentation, and visual inspection by a knowing eye – or connoisseur.”³³⁶ Following this premise, the interaction of scholars with provenance and provenience, and their application of connoisseurship is considered here. Scientific investigation, although an important tool when attempting to confirm authenticity, has been left from present discussion as it played no role in the acceptance of the Sheikh Ibada fakes as authentic, and only a minimal role in their identification as fakes.³³⁷

The following examination and discussion of the authentication of the fakes by scholars is based on published work. There is no relevant evidence outside of these publications, and so the ensuing discussion focusses on what Yates terms “authentication by proxy.”³³⁸ This functions on the premise that scholars implicitly authenticate antiquities by including them in publications.

³³⁴ It should be noted that the Sheikh Ibada fakes, having entered museum collections, were shown in several large exhibitions. Undoubtedly this also contributed to their façade of authenticity. However, to fit within the confines of this thesis, the role of museum exhibition in the authentication of the fakes has been left out. See Gill & Chippindale (1993, 614) for a brief mention of the prestige granted to antiquities which appear in exhibitions.

³³⁵ Muscarella 1977, 163.

³³⁶ O’Connor 2004, 6. See also Vitello 2010, 26-29.

³³⁷ Vikan (2016, 55) claims that when ultraviolet light is shone on the figures it demonstrated a continuity on the surface of the figures that one would not expect if they were indeed ancient. However, many sculptures undergo some form of restoration, including recarving, before being sold. This would also show up under ultraviolet light, meaning such exploration cannot be used to dismiss sculptures as fake. Petrographic analysis of some of the Sheikh Ibada corpus has occurred in an effort to determine the origin of the stone used to construct the fakes. This analysis has shown that the limestone used is of the same type used in antiquity and so cannot prove the sculptures are fake. See Harrell (2004) for further reading. Middleton & Bradley (1989) have also looked at Egyptian limestone sculpture, although not the Sheikh Ibada fakes. They found that the petrographic analysis of the limestone could be used to determine a general point of origin, although this does not necessarily help date the stone or carving. Scientific analysis does have its place in the identification of fakes, however, its applicability is determined by the type of material. Thermoluminescence, for example, can be used to date pottery. Radiocarbon dating can be used to date papyrus and other objects made from organic materials. Raman spectroscopy and X-Ray Fluorescence can be used to determine the composition of ink and pigments, which is useful in determining whether the materials used in a text or painting are period-appropriate. It is worth mentioning, however, that even in instances when scientific testing can be applied it is far from perfect, and can be beaten. At best, science can simply show that the materials used are not modern. See Rollston (2003, 182-191), Muscarella (2013d), Kelker & Bruhns (2010, 27-30); Bruhns & Kelker (2010, 27-32); and Spier (1990) for useful overviews of the role of scientific testing, and the associated issues, in confirming authenticity.

³³⁸ Yates 2015, 75.

Furthermore, the wide-spread acceptance of the fakes, as well as the sheer number of sculptures that appeared, means that not every fake within the chosen publications can be discussed.³³⁹ Discussion will therefore focus on examples chosen to be as representative as possible.

It is argued here that there were clear indicators of the inauthenticity of the Sheikh Ibada fakes that were noted but ignored by scholars. The fakes had no secure findspot that would demonstrate their authenticity, and connoisseurship identified clear inconsistencies which should have precluded their authentication. Scholars, in accepting the authenticity of the pieces, overlooked these warning signs; these fundamental issues in scholarly methods allowed the fakes to enter the corpus of Coptic art. Suspicion which should be routine is often lacking when scholars interact with antiquities recovered outside of sanctioned excavation, and independent assessment of the authenticity of unprovenanced antiquities is either not usual, or arguments for authenticity are not presented in the text.

III.1. Documentation and the Sheikh Ibada Fakes

III.1.1. Documentation in the Authentication of Antiquities

Documentation should be of the utmost importance for those who interact with antiquities. Provenance, amounting to an ownership history, allows the movement of an antiquity to be traced which can then be used to indicate the legal status of the item.³⁴⁰ Moreover, some consider the existence of provenance as suggestive of authenticity. A long provenance, in particular, establishes a chain of connoisseurship that imbues an antiquity with a sense of authenticity.³⁴¹ Antiquities with a substantial provenance are considered to have been ‘filtered by taste’, with poorer quality antiquities removed from circulation, and those of higher quality continuing to be bought and sold.³⁴² Furthermore, provenance can be suggestive of authenticity if it demonstrates an antiquity was in a collection prior to a period when fakes of a particular type entered the market, or if it includes guarantees of authenticity from dealers, auction houses, or academics.³⁴³

Provenance is not, however, a fool-proof guarantor of authenticity. Provenanced antiquities, even those with a substantial ownership history, are often revealed as fakes.³⁴⁴

³³⁹ For example, almost a third of the illustrated examples in Wessel’s 1965 *Coptic Art* have since been labelled fakes.

³⁴⁰ Barker 2012, 19-20.

³⁴¹ Renfrew 1991, 164; Yates 2015, 72, 75; Barker 2012, 20.

³⁴² Brodie 2014a, 440.

³⁴³ Yates 2015, 75-76.

³⁴⁴ For example, Lawergren (2000) argues that the Metropolitan Museum’s Cycladic “Harpist” figurine acquired in 1947 is likely a fake. Lapatin (2002, esp. 187) argues that the Boston Goddess, acquired in 1914, is, in all likelihood, a fake. Higgins (1967, liv) states that amongst the Tanagra figures there is a class of mythological scenes which emerged during the latter stages of the 19th century all of which are fake. Gill & Chippindale (1993, 619)

Furthermore, provenance is often forged, with varying degrees of effort,³⁴⁵ to give both fake and looted antiquities the appearance of legitimacy and authenticity.³⁴⁶ This inability of provenance to function properly as an indicator of authenticity stems from the willingness of the market and scholars to both acquire unexcavated antiquities and accept unverified (if not unverifiable) information.

Provenience, on the other hand, functions as the most secure indicator of authenticity.³⁴⁷ Because verifiable provenience can only truly derive from controlled excavation, where finds are recorded and thoroughly documented, it functions as the surest indicator of authenticity.³⁴⁸ However, information which appears at first to be provenience is not always indicative of authenticity. It, too, can be forged,³⁴⁹ made possible by the acceptance of unsubstantiated provenience (i.e. Sheikh Ibada) by the market and scholars working with market-derived antiquities.³⁵⁰ Such provenience is easily created and hardly verifiable.³⁵¹ Further, it appears enticing to scholars as, even without specific archaeological context, it allows an antiquity to be

challenged Renfrew's (1991, 164) assertion that two Cycladic figurines (both the unusual 'harp player' type) with provenance before 1838 must be authentic, due to the length of the provenance history. It is worth noting that the authenticity of these figurines is still disputed and Renfrew's (1991, 164) earlier argument for their authenticity was repeated in Renfrew, Marthari, & Boyd (2016, 121). A child's sarcophagus in the Victoria University of Wellington's Classics Museum has provenance documentation, including photographs, that place it in Oslo in the 1930s (hearsay traces it back to Rome in 1922). Its decoration and inscription, was shown by Ahrens, Pomeroy, & Deuling (2008) to be modern.

³⁴⁵ Fabricated provenance can be as simple as a dealer saying that an antiquity is from an "old collection," or it can involve fabricated documents, including export permits, expert reports, and aged labels. See Mackenzie 2005b, 36; Sladen 2010; Brodie 2014c, 4-9.

³⁴⁶ For example, the contentious Getty Kouros, believed by many to be a fake, was accompanied by forged provenance, including a letter from a famous archaeologist which seemingly validated its authenticity. The Sevso Treasure, widely accepted as being looted from Hungary, was accompanied by forged provenance to indicate its legality. This included a forged Lebanese export permit. Similarly, a cuneiform tablet in the Museum of Ancient Cultures at Macquarie University, which has since been shown to be fake, was accompanied by substantial provenance including a Certificate of Authenticity. Macquarie University 2017; Sladen 2010; Brodie 2014c, 4-9; Lapatin 2000, 44; True 1993, 13; Yates 2015, 76.

³⁴⁷ Butcher & Gill 1993, 393; Fay 2011, 451; Yates 2015, 75. Gill & Chippindale 1993, 617-618.

³⁴⁸ Fay 2011, 451; Barker 2012, 19-20; Lapatin 2000, 43. That is, unless, the site is salted with fakes prior to being 'uncovered'. Bruhns & Kelker (2010, 48) describe a ploy where forgers take clients on looting trips and lead them to an 'undiscovered' tomb (which has been previously filled with fakes) for the client to find antiquities in situ. A similar ploy is described by Meyer (1973, 111-112), except in Meyer's version the forger actually constructed a tomb to lead potential buyers to. Further, as Marlowe (2013, 3) notes, some antiquities may be uncovered during construction. Although their context might be destroyed, their authenticity is likely certain.

³⁴⁹ Provenience is forged for numerous reasons. To give antiquities the appearance of authenticity, to make them more valuable by linking them with a famous site, or to obscure where they actually came from are a few such reasons.

³⁵⁰ Muscarella 2013e; Butcher & Gill 1994, 390-394; Gil & Chippindale 1993, 629.

³⁵¹ Provenience recovered from an archaeological site can also be fabricated. This, however, typically requires professional collusion. For example, the 'Kafkania pebble', which was supposedly uncovered during archaeological excavation. It is now thought to be merely a practical joke, given it was 'discovered' on the first of April and the inscription appears to be the name of one of the excavators and his son. For the initial publication of the pebble see Arapogiannai, Rambach, & Godart 1999. For the many issues with the pebble and clear arguments demonstrating it is a forgery see Palaima 2002-2003, 381.

assigned to a site, placing it within a cultural and art-historical sphere which may aid in its assessment.³⁵²

For provenience to function as an indicator of authenticity, it must be accompanied by a comprehensive provenance demonstrating an unbroken link between excavation and the present-day.³⁵³ That is, provenience is only a true indicator of authenticity if it can be established that the antiquity was definitely excavated at the reported site. When a verifiable link cannot be established between site and antiquity, such information amounts simply to hearsay, and has no value in demonstrating authenticity.³⁵⁴ However, such investigation may not always be possible, as the antiquities market has historically operated with very little documentary transparency.³⁵⁵ When documentation is uncritically accepted, the protective features of provenance and provenience cease to function properly. This facilitates the acceptance of forged evidence which, in turn, contributes to the appearance of legitimacy for antiquities that have been looted or faked.

III.1.2. The Value of Documentation and the Sheikh Ibada Fakes

Those who initially published the Sheikh Ibada fakes as authentic almost unanimously accepted and included the fabricated Sheikh Ibada provenience.³⁵⁶ In these publications, scholars were open about the sources of the sculptures and their provenience.³⁵⁷ Cooney, Wessel, Müller, and others all noted that the sculptures had first surfaced outside of legitimate excavation on the market.³⁵⁸ What they ignored, however, was the fact that the site of Antinoë had been the subject

³⁵² cf. Discussion of connoisseurship *infra*. Brodie & Contreras (2012, 21) suggest that dealers assign looted antiquities to known sites, effectively creating a provenience, so as to increase interest and reinforce the appearance of authenticity. See also Muscarella 2013e, 982; Gill & Chippindale 1993, 629.

³⁵³ Barker 2012, 20-21.

³⁵⁴ Gill 2017, 193.

³⁵⁵ Mackenzie 2005a, 254; Mackenzie 2005b, 32-47; Fincham 2007, 644.

³⁵⁶ Müller 1960, 267; Wessel 1965, 92; Cooney 1961, 1; Cooney 1963, 37; Jones 1961, 53; Parlasca 1966, 204. This contrasts with what was seen in the catalogues surveyed in Chapter II, where most of fakes were presented without any form of documentation. It should be noted, however, that it does appear that some of the fakes were accompanied with provenience when sold, but that this was not listed in the catalogues. Two fake relief plaques in the Princeton University Art Museum (Invs. y1962-45, y1962-46), for example, were purchased from the André Emmerich Gallery. No provenience was listed in the catalogue, but museum records do list the pieces as being “said to be from Sheikh Ibade.” This suggests that the provenience for the pieces was provided by the dealer, but not provided in the catalogue. *pers. comm.* Michael Padgett 6/12/2018. Whether or not they were passed on to museums with limited documentation could not be ascertained given the time constraints of this thesis, as a more detailed study of archival information would be required.

³⁵⁷ Muscarella (2013a, 882) has discussed how scholars who publish antiquities acquired on the market often obscure the fact that the market was the source of the antiquity and any associated information. See also, Muscarella 1977, 163; Gill & Chippindale 1993, 629.

³⁵⁸ Müller 1960, 267; Wessel 1965, 92; Cooney 1961, 1; Cooney 1963, 37. Other scholars, such as Jones (1961, 53), Parlasca (1966, 204) and Turnure (1963, 46), also addressed the fact that the Sheikh Ibada fakes were not found during the course of sanctioned excavation. However, the works of Müller, Cooney, and Wessel were often cited in these, and other, publications containing the fakes.

of ongoing excavation (albeit intermittently) since Gayet began exploration there in 1895.³⁵⁹ Those excavations, however, had uncovered no sculpture which paralleled the fakes (nor has any been found since). There was therefore no archaeological evidence to support scholars' belief that the Sheikh Ibada fakes were found at the site, only the second-hand reports of the dealers.³⁶⁰ Despite this, the provenience for the fakes was presented by scholars as reliable, with none taking issue with it,³⁶¹ and it was widely accepted that they had been found at Sheikh Ibada (Antinoë).³⁶²

It would be easy to suggest that, because of the market's indifference toward documentation, and the reliance of scholars on the market, those who erroneously authenticated the fakes were insufficiently aware of the value of documentation, which led to the uncritical acceptance of the Sheikh Ibada provenience. Such an argument, however, would not only be too simplistic and dismissive, but ignore the comments and observations of those who published the fakes. For example, Cooney noted that, without specific archaeological context "one can now only speculate on how these sculptures were used,"³⁶³ and that because "many are so coarse and maladroit it is at first difficult to accept them as ancient."³⁶⁴ Likewise, James Turnure stated that, because a relief was without archaeological context "its meaning is probably lost forever" (12).³⁶⁵ Wessel, highlighting that the fakes were not recovered from excavation, stated that "without question[ing] the source of this sudden supply – no fakes have been established up till now, and, as far as I know, Coptic sculpture in stone as a whole has not yet been faked ... – we will just gratefully avail ourselves of it."³⁶⁶ Evidently, he was aware that the Sheikh Ibada fakes were not recovered from excavation, which would have secured their authenticity,³⁶⁷ and so their

³⁵⁹ Swelim 1999, 140; Donadoni 1975, 324. Even before Gayet's excavations there are early records, such as those in the *Description de l'Égypte*, see Jomard 1818, ch.15.

³⁶⁰ See discussion of the use of connoisseurship by scholars *infra*. Thomas (1990, 1:140-141) examined Gayet's original excavation notes and found nothing to suggest that the Sheikh Ibada fakes could have plausibly been found at the site.

³⁶¹ The one possible exception, here, is Turnure (1963) who discusses a relief originally published by Jones (1961, 53-55). Jones had originally stated that the relief (Princeton Art Museum Inv. y1962-46) was said to be from Sheikh Ibada, but Turnure's publication, despite acknowledging Jones' original publication, makes no mention of the reported Sheikh Ibada provenience. However, she does not refute it in the text either.

³⁶² Müller 1960, 267; Wessel 1965, 92; Cooney 1961, 1; Cooney 1963, 37; Jones 1961, 53; Parlasca 1966, 204; Badawy 1978, 146-152; Elbern 1973, 262; Zaloscer 1974, 119; Zaloscer 1991, 101, 103. Whence the dealers received the provenience from is unclear. As mentioned previously, the records in the Brooklyn Museum mention that the provenience was provided by Hammouda. But this provenance only accompanies one of the fakes, and there were no other records elsewhere of the provenience for any other of the fakes being provided by anyone other than the dealer who provided the piece. Its widespread use would suggest that it came from the person, or people, responsible for introducing the fakes onto the Egyptian market.

³⁶³ Cooney 1961, 3-4.

³⁶⁴ Cooney 1963, 37. Cooney never, however, explains why he has accepted them as authentic.

³⁶⁵ Turnure 1963, 46. Spanel (2001, 105 n.69) labels this relief fake. Princeton Art Museum Inv. y1962-46.

³⁶⁶ Wessel 1965, 92. Due to an apparent syntactical error in the translation the original 1963 German text was consulted for clarity, it reads: "Ohne zu fragen, woher diese plötzliche Schwemme kommt-, fälschungen sind bislang noch nicht festgestellt, wie überhaupt koptische Plastik in Stein bisher m. W. noch nicht gefälscht wurde, das wird wohl erst, kommen, weil sie jetzt so en vogue geraten ist-, wollen wir sie dankbar ausschöpfen." Wessel 1963, 97.

³⁶⁷ During the period the fakes began to surface there was no excavation occurring at Antinoë. Breccia excavated at Antinoë from 1935-1940, then the Institute of Papyrology in Florence in collaboration with the University of Rome

authenticity could be questioned. As such, the authenticity of the current examples required at least a passing reference, if only in light of his own expertise. Moreover, the value of provenience in establishing authenticity and the issues with accepting market-provided provenience were recognised within archaeology well before the Sheikh Ibada fakes began surfacing.³⁶⁸ It seems, then, that those who published the fakes as authentic were aware of the value of verifiable provenience recovered from excavation, and the issues that arise without it. But this did not prevent them from accepting the Sheikh Ibada provenience and treating the fakes as authentic. This appears to have occurred as a result of two factors: first, the belief that the sculptures were looted; secondly, trust invested in antiquities dealers.³⁶⁹

Looting as an explanatory narrative for the appearance of fakes is not uncommon, having been used previously by, for example, Sir Arthur Evans, to account for the appearance of the “Boston Goddess” and place its findspot at Knossos.³⁷⁰ Similarly, Cooney, Frances Jones, and Wessel used a looting narrative to explain the appearance of the Sheikh Ibada fakes and support the supposed provenience.³⁷¹ The belief that the fakes were looted made the Sheikh Ibada provenience plausible. Cooney, for example, highlighted that the site has been “severely looted in recent years” and argued that the looters must have found an unknown cemetery.³⁷² This postulation of an unknown grave site, at a site known to have been looted,³⁷³ created a believable narrative that accounted for both the unknown style and iconography of the Sheikh Ibada fakes and their appearance on the market.³⁷⁴

would excavate there from 1965-1968. Wessel’s seminal work on Coptic art was published in 1963 (the English translation was published in 1965). See Swelim 1999, 140; Donadoni 1975, 324.

³⁶⁸ See, for example: Casson 1927, 298-299; Steindorff 1947, 53.

³⁶⁹ One might also consider faith in their own ability to use connoisseurship. This is discussed further *infra*.

³⁷⁰ Evans 1930, 440. Evans believed that many of his workmen at Knossos engaged in looting around the site and used this logic to place several ‘Minoan’ statuettes at Knossos. See Lapatin (2001, 36), Lapatin (2002, 21), and Butcher & Gill (1993) for further reading. Muscarella (2013e, 960) reports that a chance find, followed by looting, was used to explain the surfacing of ‘Ziwiye Treasure’. Bruhns & Kelker (2010, 47-48) describe the looting narrative used by forgers to effectively authenticate their fakes. Gill & Chippindale (1993, 629) discuss how the “Keros Hoard,” a name given to a group of Cycladic figurines supposedly all looted from Keros, might be used to give fakes an air of legitimacy. Getz-Gentle (2008, 112), however, argues for the purity of the Keros Hoard, because she is not aware of dealers inserting fakes (a very poor argument indeed). See also Renfrew (2008) on the problematic use of the “Keros Hoard” label by dealers, and its acceptance by scholars.

³⁷¹ Wessel 1965, 92; Cooney 1961, 1; Cooney 1963, 37, 45; Jones 1962, 53. Cooney (1963, 37) explicitly states that “a sanctuary or cemetery ... has been discovered and plundered.” Jones (1962, 53) is less explicit, but it is still evident that he accepts the sculptures to have been looted: “Coptic sculpture has been coming from Sheikh Ibada.” With no report of sanctioned excavation, he must surely have accepted looters as the supposed source. Interestingly, none of those who published the fakes attributed their surfacing to a “chance find,” which if not reported was treated as looting under Egyptian Law. All surveyed publications of the Sheikh Ibada fakes from the early 1960s highlight the recent surfacing of the Sheikh Ibada fakes. It thus seems likely that all who published them believed them to be have been looted. See Elia (2009, 245-248) for a discussion on the use of “chance find” argument by market participants.

³⁷² Cooney 1963, 37, 45. See also, Cooney 1965, 304.

³⁷³ Thompson (1981, 48) claims that soon after Gayet’s death material from Antinoë began appearing on the market, and that Gayet’s excavations drew the attention of looters.

³⁷⁴ Cooney (1961, 1) claims that looters “uncovered a cemetery of an unusual and special sort,” and that this is where the niche stelae came from. This belief was likely further strengthened by the field’s early reliance on the

The looting narrative also strengthened the appearance of the fakes' authenticity. If looted, an antiquity must necessarily be an authentic artefact from an archaeological site.³⁷⁵ The suggestion that an unprovenienced antiquity is looted and thus authentic is well recognised and, as a result, is often used by those who sell illicit antiquities to dismiss the possibility that they are selling fakes.³⁷⁶ Yet the suggestion that the fakes were looted was equally without evidence. The very nature of looting as clandestine excavation means that the discovery of any antiquity is typically not recorded.³⁷⁷ The belief that the fakes were looted was therefore either scholarly conjecture or encouraged by dealers.³⁷⁸ Either way, there can have been no proof, apart from word of mouth, to substantiate these claims, and by extension the authenticity of the sculptures.

More recently several scholars have stressed the absence of any provenance accompanying the Sheikh Ibada fakes.³⁷⁹ This is, however, is not strictly accurate. To some extent a chain of provenance, albeit either forged or imagined, was given to, or perceived by, those who published the fakes. As discussed, scholars believed the fakes to have been recently looted, then acquired by Egyptian dealers who sold them to dealers in the US and Europe, before they were purchased by museums and collectors.³⁸⁰ Thus, an apparent chain of ownership and movement existed. Crucial to this ersatz provenance was the belief that the sculptures were looted, which created an apparent link between the reported findspot and the market. That it was nevertheless accepted is unsurprising given the willingness of market participants to accept antiquities with limited or no documentation.³⁸¹ While the provenance of the Sheikh Ibada fakes features minimally in any of the literature in which they were authenticated, that some form of ownership history could be distinguished does appear to have helped support the belief that the sculptures were authentic and the reported provenience accurate.³⁸² Furthermore, that an unknown grave site had been found and looted was the only realistic explanation for existence of the fakes as authentic.³⁸³

efforts of the *sebakhin* for material, as discussed in Chapter II.1.2 *supra*. For further discussion on the use of the Sheikh Ibada provenience to recognise a regional artistic variation see discussion *infra*.

³⁷⁵ Chappell & Polk 2011, 245. The definition of looting here follows Mackenzie (2005b, 4): "Any illegal excavation of antiquities or their illegal removal from sites or structures to which they are attached or properly belong. Illegal, of course, by the law which governs individuals at the time of excavation; always the *lex situs* (the law of the State where the object is when looted)."

³⁷⁶ Brodie & Contreras 2012, 21; Chippindale & Gill 2000, 489. Occasionally looters do keep records of their 'excavations'. One such example in the looting of Bubon in Northern Lycia in the late 1960s where notebooks were kept by the looters.

³⁷⁷ Passas & Prolux 2011, 59; Yates 2015, 76-77. More recently, photos of antiquities being looted, covered in dirt, or in pieces pre-restoration are used to show buyers that the items are authentic

³⁷⁸ As discussed in Chapter II.2.4 it is unclear who exactly supplied the looting narrative. It seems likely, however, that whoever the last person to sell the fakes knowing they were fake introduced this narrative. See Spanel (2001, 96) for the various suggestions about the possible creators of the fakes.

³⁷⁹ Spanel 2001, 90; Vikan 1977a.

³⁸⁰ For example: Cooney 1963, 37-39; Jones 1962, 53.

³⁸¹ Mackenzie 2005a, 253-255.

³⁸² Unfortunately, it has not been possible to undertake an extensive examination of museum acquisition records due to the restrictions of the thesis.

³⁸³ The likelihood of such a large quantity of stylistically unique antiquities having resided unknown in a 'private collection' for any period of time would have been simply implausible. A 'private' or 'old' collection is a common

Ultimately, the belief that the Sheikh Ibada fakes were looted functioned as a narrative which rationalised the lack of verifiable documentation accompanying the fakes. It functioned as what Elia would call “a creation myth,”³⁸⁴ presenting a plausible scenario which explained how and where the sculptures were found.³⁸⁵ Looting operated as both a proxy for archaeological excavation, and a stage within a provenance chain, which allowed the fakes to be traced from ‘excavation’ to market. Scholars accepted that they could not know more about the origins of the fakes because they had not been recovered through sanctioned excavation, but still accepted the reported provenience. But the suggestion that an antiquity was looted cannot realistically be considered an indicator of authenticity, nor a justified link with a proposed site, as it cannot be proven to be accurate.

Linked to this acceptance of the Sheikh Ibada provenience (and the looting narrative) was the culture of trust within the market.³⁸⁶ That the Sheikh Ibada provenience was provided by the dealers was not considered problematic; some scholars made specific reference to the market as the source of the information to justify their acceptance of it.³⁸⁷ Klaus Parlasca’s statement is instructive: “Nach Informationen, die in Fachkreisen als zuverlässig gelten, sollen sie aus Antinoopolis (Sheik Abadeh) stammen.”³⁸⁸ However, just as the idea that the fakes were looted failed to support the fabricated provenience, so too did faith in the reputation of the dealers.³⁸⁹ This belief in the credibility of the dealers runs against the supposed method of discovery.³⁹⁰ It assumes too high a level of transparency, trust, and honesty in what is a clandestine and illicit activity: looting.³⁹¹ By trusting the dealers, scholars assumed the reliability of those who supplied them, despite not being able to trace the documentation of the antiquities past the market.³⁹² Because the

narrative constructed by which antiquities of dubious origins, looted or faked, might be given a provenance. See Elia (2009, 244-245) and Brodie (2006b, 4-7) for discussions on the possible sources of antiquities for the market.

³⁸⁴ Elia 2009, 245.

³⁸⁵ As Melikian (1961, 71) notes, a looting narrative affords fake antiquities anonymity which allows them to appear authentic.

³⁸⁶ To accept that the provenience provided by dealers was accurate while acknowledging that the fakes had been looted suggests that scholars believed that the dealers had trustworthy connections with the looters (or a trustworthy intermediary) which meant these claims could be accepted.

³⁸⁷ Cooney 1963, 37; Wessel 1965, 92; Parlasca 1966, 204-205; Elbern 1978, 130.

³⁸⁸ Parlasca 1966, 204-205. Cooney (1963, 37) states that “reportedly, and *doubtless reliably*, they all come from Sheikh Ibada in Upper Egypt.” (emphasis mine).

³⁸⁹ Some antiquities dealers have been shown to be duplicitous about where an antiquity came from. According to Brodie & Contreras (2012, 21), some antiquities dealers say antiquities are from famous sites so as to increase value and reinforce the appearance of authenticity. Kersel (2006, 161-163) discusses how dealers in Israel reassign registration numbers to legitimise looted antiquities. Hoving (1993, 338-339) suggested Robert Hecht reassigned provenance to make the Euphronios Krater appear legal. Finally, Frederick Schultz, the former president of the National Association of Dealers in Ancient, Oriental and Primitive Art, along with Jonathan Tokeley-Parry, created a fictitious collection so as to legitimise looted antiquities, providing them with a false provenance. See *United States v Schultz* 2003, 6; Gerstenblith 2002.

³⁹⁰ Cooney (1961, 1; 1963, 37) in particular claims that the sculptures were found as a result of looters.

³⁹¹ Riggs 2010, 1151.

³⁹² The exception here is Inv. 60.212 of the Brooklyn Museum where Eisenberg supplied the name of the Egyptian dealer from whom he purchased it. Yet this makes the supplied provenience no more reliable than if Eisenberg had

dealers were seen as reputable, scholars felt confident in both the accuracy of the information and therefore the authenticity of the antiquities. Yet, as the Sheikh Ibada fakes clearly demonstrate, interacting with reputable dealers cannot ensure the authenticity of antiquities which surface outside of excavation.³⁹³

Müller's acceptance of the Sheikh Ibada provenience bears further consideration. In his 1960 publication identifying the niche stelae of Sheikh Ibada, he states that "Nach ersten Angaben stammten sie aus der Nähe des Dorfes Schech Abade ... und diese Herkunftsangabe hat sich inzwischen bestätigt."³⁹⁴ This is particularly noteworthy as one of the fakes Müller published in this paper as "aus Antinoë" was listed in the 1960 AA catalogue, on which Müller consulted, as "Vermutlich aus Sheikh Abade."³⁹⁵ Müller, however, offers no additional information to indicate why he is now certain of the provided provenience. Given that it could not have been archaeological evidence, one must assume that the certainty has arisen from other fakes surfacing on the market with a more confidently provided provenience.³⁹⁶ In fact, it appears that, even when the Sheikh Ibada fakes were published with less certain provenience, this was a result of how the market offered the information, not the qualms of scholars.³⁹⁷

Finally, even had the Sheikh Ibada provenience been rejected as unsubstantiated, this would not necessarily have had any bearing on the perceived authenticity of the fakes. While provenience can prove authenticity, its absence cannot prove inauthenticity.³⁹⁸ Documentation is forged to legitimise both looted and fake antiquities, and so while the detection of forged documentation suggests that an antiquity is of questionable origin, it does not indicate the nature

given it himself. The piece can still not be shown to have come from excavation. *pers. comm.* Kathy Zurek-Doule 18/10/2018.

³⁹³ The dealers who sold the fakes were all well-established: Royal-Athena Galleries, Nessim Cohen, Galerie Heidi Vollmoeller, Ars Antiqua, André Emmerich Gallery, Jean Roudillon, Marguerite Mallon, Galerie Kervorkian, Sotheby's, Galerie Motte.

³⁹⁴ Müller 1960, 267.

³⁹⁵ Ars Antiqua 1960, 19 no.38; Müller 1960, 270 fig. 4.

³⁹⁶ Such as those within the Royal-Athena Galleries' catalogue. See Chapter II.2 for further discussion on the varying degrees of certainty with which dealers reported the provenience of the Sheikh Ibada fakes.

³⁹⁷ For example, a fake offered in the Galerie Motte (1961, 7 pl. ii no. 19) catalogue is listed without any provenience. Wessel (1965, 39 pl. 46) discusses the same fragment as of "uncertain origin, but which its style clearly points to Antinoë." Wessel has obviously accepted the provenience as provided by the market, non-existent. Moreover, when other scholars discuss the origin of other Sheikh Ibada sculptures with less certainty ('said to be' or 'reportedly') their issue is not with Antinoë/ Sheikh Ibada as a source. Du Bourguet (1971, 41, 98) publishes a fragment of a niche depicting Dionysos as from "Sheikh Abade (?)," yet he later discusses the "stelae found at Antinoë." Similarly, when discussing two Sheikh Ibada sculptures acquired by the Princeton University Art Museum, Jones notes that "Coptic sculpture has been coming from Sheikh Ibada... The Museum has acquired two reliefs which are reported to be from there." Like Du Bourguet, this suggests that Jones has accepted Sheikh Ibada (Antinoë) as the source of the Sheikh Ibada sculptures. Any hesitations about the provenience of the Princeton reliefs were not due to the suitability of Sheikh Ibada as a source (despite the lack of excavated examples recovered from there).

³⁹⁸ It is worth noting that in rare instances tracing provenance can, however, uncover that an item is a fake. One such example is the infamous *Gospel of Jesus' Wife*. In this instance the work of Sabar (2016) found that the owner also appeared to have fabricated the text of the fragment of papyrus. See Bernhard (2017) and Depuydt (2014) for an overview of the textual issues with the fragment.

of that origin.³⁹⁹ Such an issue is evident in a 1978 paper by Parlasca where he seeks to reattribute many of the Sheikh Ibada stelae to Oxyrhynchus.⁴⁰⁰ Despite being aware of the fabricated nature of the Sheikh Ibada provenience, and even that there were other fakes amongst the Sheikh Ibada corpus, Parlasca still considers several other fakes authentic, although without the Sheikh Ibada provenience.⁴⁰¹ He does not consider that the fabricated provenience may have been originally used to legitimise other fakes which still remain in the corpus. Instead, he treats it as a moniker designed to obscure the true origin of antiquities he appears to believe were looted.⁴⁰² Moreover, there were those fakes that surfaced without any provenience. Of these, some were placed at Sheikh Ibada on the basis of stylistic affinity,⁴⁰³ while others were simply discussed as unprovenienced.⁴⁰⁴ None had its authenticity questioned. Although a lack of verifiable documentation cannot prove inauthenticity, it can, and should, indicate that an antiquity's authenticity is less than secure, and so needs to be addressed.

When the Sheikh Ibada fakes surfaced, they were accompanied by minimal documentation, with most simply said to have come from Sheikh Ibada. This provenience was not, however, recovered from excavation, a fact of which scholars were well aware. Nevertheless, they accepted it as reliable, and none questioned its veracity, or the sculptures' authenticity. This lack of critical inquiry was encouraged by the belief that the sculptures had been looted, and reinforced by the trust that underpins many transactions within the market. The fact that the existence of the fakes could be traced no further than the market was ignored by all who published the fakes. Further, that the dealers who sold the fakes to museums were considered reliable was interpreted by scholars as sufficient evidence to justify accepting the provenience and the sculptures. In doing so, they transformed market hearsay to historical fact. Sheikh Ibada became a valid findspot for sculpture in the 'Sheikh Ibada style', and the fakes now had a provenience verified by scholars: they were authentic.

³⁹⁹ Lapatin 2000, 44.

⁴⁰⁰ Parlasca 1978. Parlasca, for example, discussed the Brooklyn Paralytic as authentic. See also, Turnure 1963. There were potentially other factors that influenced Parlasca's continued acceptance of the fakes, these are discussed in Chapter III.2 *infra*.

⁴⁰¹ Parlasca 1978, 117*(163)-120*(166). See also Parlasca 2007, 94-95.

⁴⁰² Parlasca 1978, 117*(163)-120*(166). See also Parlasca 2007, 94-95.

⁴⁰³ For example, Galerie Motte (1961, 7 pl. II no. 19) sold a fake niche fragment depicting a boy with wings (angel?) without documentation. Wessel (1965, 39 pl. 46), however, acknowledges that it is without provenience documentation but suggests it came from Sheikh Ibada based on stylistic features. See discussion of the creation of a regional variation by scholars *infra*.

⁴⁰⁴ Turnure 1963, 46. Curiously, Jones (1962, 53) discusses the Princeton relief plaque (Inv. y1962-46) as reportedly having come from Sheikh Ibada, but Turnure discusses it without context. This perhaps suggests that he did not trust the dealer derived nature of the provenience. Although, he did not reject it outright either.

III.2. The (Mis)Application of Connoisseurship and the Sheikh Ibada Fakes

III.2.1. Connoisseurship and Authentication

When antiquities surface outside of archaeological excavation, and their survival since antiquity is not vouchsafed by this ultimate proof,⁴⁰⁵ the primary method available to scholars by which they can assess these items is connoisseurship.⁴⁰⁶ Here, connoisseurship is understood as the use of visual analysis to authenticate, interpret, and attribute an object to a particular time period and culture based on its stylistic and formal qualities.⁴⁰⁷ The application of connoisseurship to authenticate or identify unknown antiquities functions on the premise that there are stylistic criteria which allow items to be compared and contrasted.⁴⁰⁸ These criteria are the various stylistic and formal features, such as motifs, techniques, shape, composition and other iconography that have been identified within the accepted corpus.⁴⁰⁹ It is the visibility of these criteria within an unknown work that are used to infer dating, purpose, potential place of manufacture, and, of course, authenticity.⁴¹⁰ As such, the reliability of the corpus against which unknown examples are compared is of the utmost importance. This comparative corpus should be built around antiquities uncovered in the process of scientific excavation, as they alone offer secure contextual information and are almost certainly all authentic.

Ideally, connoisseurship is controlled by some significant limitations. When antiquities appear in collections, or on the market, without verifiable provenience, they can only be understood through connoisseurship, and thus only within the confines of existing knowledge, and cannot reliably challenge or expand current thinking.⁴¹¹ Moreover, given that these antiquities are

⁴⁰⁵ Gill & Chippindale 1993, 658; Fay 2011, 451. There are of course also issues in determining the role these items played in antiquity.

⁴⁰⁶ Simpson 2005, 28; Marlowe 2013, 55. For an overview of the history of the development of connoisseurship see: Sutton 2004; Scallen 2004, 27-38. More recently connoisseurship has drawn the disdain of some archaeologists due to its link with the market. See Sparkes 1996, 142.

⁴⁰⁷ Muscarella 2018, 83; Marlowe 2013, 4; Neer 2005, 3; Simpson 2005, 29; Baker 2012, 22; Arrington 2017, 24; Spier 1990, 623; Renfrew 2000, 22; Lapatin 2000, 45. One might also attempt to identify a geographic location, although without provenience information this is far more difficult. It might be possible to place an antiquity within a regional style, although determining a specific location is essentially impossible once an item is removed from its archaeological context. Scientific analysis of material (i.e. petrographic analysis) might also help place an antiquity within a rough geographic location. Chippindale & Gill (2000, 468-469) would call this definition of connoisseurship “interpretation by affinity.”

⁴⁰⁸ Neer 2005, 19.

⁴⁰⁹ Neer 2005, 3, 19; Muscarella 1977, 165; Muscarella 2018, 83; Marlowe 2013, 4; Simpson 2005, 29; Baker 2012, 22; Arrington 2017, 24; Spier 1990, 623; Renfrew 2000, 22; Lapatin 2000, 45. An analysis of text, if present, might also be included here.

⁴¹⁰ However, as Marlowe (2013, 85) notes, this functions on the assumption that these criteria are restricted to a particular time period and culture.

⁴¹¹ Gill & Chippindale 1993, 658; Chippindale & Gill 2000, 504-505; Marlowe 2013, 85. This approach excludes the possibility of unique antiquities by necessity. As Lapatin (2000, 46) notes, the application of connoisseurship is

without provenience, any stylistic incongruities that isolate them from the accepted corpus become unintelligible, and should remain questionable until comparable examples are found during the course of an official excavation.⁴¹² Unprovenienced antiquities that are without secure comparanda should become an impasse for scholars.⁴¹³ Connoisseurship cannot reliably authenticate such antiquities, and so they remain stylistically unattested and, by implication, not demonstrably ancient. This premise forms the foundation of authentication by connoisseurship, and must be upheld for connoisseurship to function as a viable method of inquiry.

III.2.2. Circumventing Connoisseurship

Those who ultimately identified the Sheikh Ibada sculptures as fakes did so through the application of connoisseurship.⁴¹⁴ For example, Vikan noted inconsistencies in the damage patterns these sculptures has sustained and the existence of stylistic traits throughout the corpus which are either rare or non-existent in the wider body of Coptic art.⁴¹⁵ Severin highlighted that, of the niche stelae recovered from excavation at Oxyrhynchus, none is holding a cross, and so the Sheikh Ibada stelae with crosses are entirely unparalleled.⁴¹⁶ Through close study of material excavated at Oxyrhynchus and Ahnas, Thomas noted that the fakes do not follow, amongst other things, compositional conventions.⁴¹⁷ Because these sculptures are without verifiable provenience, the anomalies present amongst the Sheikh Ibada sculptures separate them from the wider corpus of Coptic art. As such, the Sheikh Ibada sculptures, unparalleled in style and form, could not be shown convincingly to be authentic and have therefore been dismissed as fakes.

Yet many of the same anomalies which have been used to dismiss the Sheikh Ibada fakes were noted by those who published them as authentic.⁴¹⁸ Turnure, for example, struggled to identify and explain a relief's "puzzling iconography."⁴¹⁹ He highlighted the unparalleled iconography and the unusual rendering of the figures, noting the apparently unique iconography impedes understanding (12).⁴²⁰ He then, however, rejects the idea that the relief could be unique, arguing that "originality of this nature was unusual," but offers no suitable antecedents or parallels

impinged by the lack of material that has survived from antiquity. It is entirely possible that a unique item is genuine, but without archaeological context it cannot be shown to be authentic.

⁴¹² Chippindale & Gill 2000, 504-505; Muscarella 2013a, 886.

⁴¹³ Simpson 2005, 31.

⁴¹⁴ The arguments for dismissing the fakes have summarised in Chapter I.2 *supra*. Also crucial to exposing the Sheikh Ibada fakes was questioning the validity of the provenience.

⁴¹⁵ Vikan 1977a; Vikan 2016, 54-55.

⁴¹⁶ Severin 1995, 292.

⁴¹⁷ Thomas 1990, 1:145.

⁴¹⁸ Those who published the fakes as authentic gave little regard to the more technical aspects of Coptic sculpture.

⁴¹⁹ Turnure 1963, 45. Princeton Art Museum Inv. y1962-46.

⁴²⁰ Turnure 1963, 45-46, 47. Török (2005b, 25) argues that the odd rendering of one of the figures is likely a misunderstanding of a break in the original the forger was imitating. What the inspiration might be, however, is unclear.

within the field of Coptic sculpture.⁴²¹ Similarly, Cooney highlighted issues in identifying the Brooklyn Paralytic due to its unique iconography (3).⁴²² He stresses its unique composition, suggesting that, because of the lack of parallels, the sculpture's form "must be credited as an Upper Egyptian development."⁴²³ Yet, besides the Sheikh Ibada provenience, Cooney offers no evidence to support the existence of this type of sculptural composition within Upper Egypt. That scholars were unable to find parallels for the forms, motifs, and compositions of the fakes within the wider corpus of Coptic art should have, following the limitations of connoisseurship, led them to at least consider the possibility that these works were fakes.⁴²⁴ There was, however, no consideration in print of the potential inauthenticity of the Sheikh Ibada fakes by those who published them as authentic.⁴²⁵

Instead, narratives and contexts were created to explain these unparalleled features, circumventing the limitations of connoisseurship.⁴²⁶ Turnure argued that the unique iconography of the aforementioned relief plaque can be best understood as a depiction of a group of saints rewarding a martyr.⁴²⁷ Yet the process behind this analysis is problematic. It is grounded not in comparison with other examples of Coptic sculpture, but rather in textual evidence, which, while perhaps able to explain the narrative content of the relief, does nothing to demonstrate the antiquity of the iconography.⁴²⁸ Turnure's attempts to compare this relief with other examples of art are unconvincing, and he was unable to find a suitable comparandum.⁴²⁹ To account for this, he suggested that the lack of direct comparanda is due to the "schism between the Egyptian and Orthodox churches," which led to the native Egyptians seeking their own artistic expression, a speculative assertion which crudely maps theological disputes onto creative behaviours.⁴³⁰ Cooney engaged in similar behaviour to account for the existence of the Brooklyn Paralytic. He rationalised the figure's nudity, rare in Coptic art, by arguing that it served as a symbolic representation of the rite of baptism.⁴³¹ Further, in identifying the figure as that of the healed

⁴²¹ Turnure 1963, 55.

⁴²² Cooney 1963, 40-47.

⁴²³ Cooney 1963, 42-44. Cooney suggests that the sculpture depicts the biblical tale of the paralytic healed by Jesus Christ. He then, however, notes that all other depictions of this miracle involve the paralytic walking with the bed across either his shoulders or back, not first lifting the bed.

⁴²⁴ Muscarella 2013a, 885-887; Chippindale & Gill 2000, 504-505; Marlowe 2013, 85-86; Lapatin 2000, 45-46; Butcher & Gill 1993, 396. It must be noted that this logic does preclude the possibility of unique antiquities. However, as Muscarella has highlighted when antiquities surface without archaeological context it is only those which have provenienced comparisons that can be shown to be authentic.

⁴²⁵ The closest anyone comes to considering the authenticity of the Sheikh Ibada sculptures is Wessel's aforementioned comment.

⁴²⁶ This behaviour is not simply restricted to the field of Coptic art. See Muscarella 2013a, 885; Muscarella 2013b, 892; Simpson 2017; Simpson 2005.

⁴²⁷ Turnure 1963, 57.

⁴²⁸ Turnure 1963, 48-50.

⁴²⁹ Turnure 1963, 50-55.

⁴³⁰ Turnure 1963, 55.

⁴³¹ Cooney 1963, 45. Cooney suggests "that he is nude as having just emerged from baptism by immersion."

paralytic, Cooney plausibly explains the odd rendering of the body, suggesting that it has been depicted in such a way so as to emphasise the poor health of the subject.⁴³² Although he makes reference to the subject matter being found in other examples of Coptic art, he used none of these to strengthen his identification. Instead, he explained its unique composition by comparison with pharaonic art, citing parallels with the god Shu, stating that “Christian artists seem to have been entirely willing... to take over details from pagan monuments.”⁴³³ By focussing on the supposed syncretic nature of Coptic art,⁴³⁴ Cooney rationalised the iconography and composition of the sculpture.⁴³⁵

This reference to the supposedly syncretic nature of Coptic was far from unique. Many who published the fakes leaned on problematic prior scholarship to create plausible art-historical contexts which could explain the stylistic anomalies amongst the Sheikh Ibada fakes.⁴³⁶ For instance, in his discussion of a supposed funerary bust, which he struggled to date due to its unique stylistic features,⁴³⁷ Wessel describes the stylistic issues as displaying “pronounced characteristics of folk art.”⁴³⁸ A similar explanation was also posited by Zaloscer to account for the odd stylistic features of the relief discussed by Turnure, which Zaloscer attributed to the efforts of an unskilled artisan.⁴³⁹ She went on to argue that the inconsistencies and perceived low quality of Coptic works could best be explained by the *Volkskunst* interpretation.⁴⁴⁰ The circular logic that underpins this explanation – those who produced Coptic art were untrained so therefore mistakes and anomalies are indicative of their art – glosses over the stylistic issues with the sculptures which should have been considered problematic. This use of prior scholarship created plausible explanations for the existence of these unparalleled features that meant they were still viewed as authentic works.

The physical condition of the fakes received less interest in the initial publications than their unusual iconography or compositions. Yet here too issues exist. Many of the fakes ‘survived’

⁴³² Cooney 1963, 42. This explanation for the odd rendering of the stomach is repeated in both Zaloscer (1974, 119) and Badawy (1978, 152). Yet Spanel (2001, 99) correctly highlights that because stylistically that rendering of the stomach is unparalleled it is indeed problematic.

⁴³³ Cooney 1963, 44.

⁴³⁴ See discussion in Chapter II on the problematic prior scholarship.

⁴³⁵ See Thomas (1990, 1:136-138) for further reading on the pervasiveness of the supposed syncretic nature of Coptic art used to account for mistakes in fakes.

⁴³⁶ The troubled state of scholarship in Coptic art during this time is discussed briefly in Chapter II.1.

⁴³⁷ Wessel 1965, 87.

⁴³⁸ Wessel 1965, 87. While not specifically mentioning ‘folk-art’ Turnure (1963, 46, 48) does seem to accept the associated connotations describing the Princeton relief as having been rendered with “a certain naïve logic,” and that to understand the unique iconography one must “keep in mind the traditional conservatism and parochial attitude of the fellahin.” With Turnure offering no provenience, it would appear that he is making rather large assumptions about the person who supposedly produced the relief and using these assumptions to account for the iconography.

⁴³⁹ Zaloscer 1974, 122. Jones (1962, 54-55) suggests that the iconography for this relief is unusual because “strange things happened to classical scenes under Coptic hands.” She further suggests that the relief might depict a variant telling of the ‘Judgement of Paris’ where Athena wins because “to the Christian mind, the goddess of wisdom was undoubtedly more deserving than Aphrodite or Hera.”

⁴⁴⁰ Zaloscer 1974, 130.

in remarkable condition, given their supposed age and material.⁴⁴¹ But this was noted only in passing, if at all.⁴⁴² Cooney observed that the paint covering many of the fakes is modern, yet did not further consider the condition of the sculptures.⁴⁴³ Only Parlasca seemingly realised the unlikelihood of a large quantity of sculpture surviving in such good condition. Yet, instead of questioning whether the sculptures might be modern fakes, or at least recarved, he instead posited that they were found in an underground burial site, which ensured their preservation.⁴⁴⁴

It would be easy to assume that the acceptance of the fakes was grounded in the acceptance of the provided ‘provenience’.⁴⁴⁵ Because scholars were willing to accept Sheikh Ibada as their source, the fakes were treated with the certainty granted to excavated antiquities, and this allowed the stylistic anomalies of the fakes to be discussed as genuine products of Late Antique Egypt.⁴⁴⁶ Although this undoubtedly played a role, it does not account for those fakes which surfaced without a claimed provenience. In his discussion of a relief depicting either sirens or nereids wearing crosses, Wessel stressed that, due to a lack of documented comparative examples, he could not attribute the relief to a specific site.⁴⁴⁷ Nonetheless, drawing again on the supposedly syncretic nature of Coptic art, he highlighted that pagan iconography was often adopted by the Egyptian Christians.⁴⁴⁸ Yet even he remained unsatisfied, noting that he is unaware of any other reliefs depicting pagan imagery that has been so overtly Christianised. Ultimately, however, he still accepted the relief as authentic. That this relief had no link to antiquity, either by secure comparison or even a market-provided provenience, was unimportant. Rather, it appears that scholars, placing their trust in either the reputation of the dealer or their own expertise, proceeded with the absolute assumption of authenticity.

Attempts to explain the conditions in which antiquities with unique iconography were produced are an important part of scholarship. However, such analysis can only be a valid method of inquiry after the authenticity of an antiquity has been established. The constructed contexts discussed above far from exhaust those employed to account for the troubled iconography and composition of the Sheikh Ibada fakes, but well illustrate the approach many scholars took towards

⁴⁴¹ See Thomas (1990, 1:143-146) for a discussion of the variant types of limestone used and problematic damage patterns of the Sheikh Ibada fakes. See Spanel (2001, 90) for the use of Nummulitic limestone amongst the fakes. Nummulitic limestone was rarely used in authentic Coptic sculpture.

⁴⁴² Wessel (1965, 93) notes that all the niche stelae were painted. Müller (1960, 267) highlights that the paint of the stelae survived intact.

⁴⁴³ Cooney 1963, 42. As discussed in Chapter II, Eisenberg (1960, 12 no.18) also notes in the Royal-Athena Galleries’ catalogue that several of the pieces have been repainted in modernity.

⁴⁴⁴ Parlasca 1966, 205.

⁴⁴⁵ See discussion about scholarly interaction with provenance and provenience *supra*.

⁴⁴⁶ The only reliable method by which unique items can be authenticated is if they are recovered through scientific excavation. See, for example, Lapatin (2000, 46) and Marlowe (2013, 85-86) on the so-called Charioteer of Mozia, a unique sculpture which, because recovered through excavation, forced scholars to reconsider ideas around stylistic consistency and development within Greek sculpture.

⁴⁴⁷ Wessel 1962, (unpaginated) Inv. 508. This relief is also discussed in Wessel (1965, 39 pl. 44).

⁴⁴⁸ Wessel 1962, (unpaginated) Inv. 508.

these sculptures. Correctly, scholars identified the sculptures as unparalleled in their composition, subject matter, and iconography. The limitations of connoisseurship should have led scholars to either dismiss the sculptures as fakes or set them aside until comparisons were found during excavation. Instead, they were understood within problematic art-historical contexts which emerged in part from the poor contemporary understanding of Coptic art. This in turn allowed scholars to categorise these anomalies as genuine features of Coptic art.

III.2.3. The Creation of a Regional Style⁴⁴⁹

The other method by which these items were assessed was the ‘recognition’ of a regional Sheikh Ibada style and the establishment of a self-contained corpus. This was a result of the wide acceptance of the Sheikh Ibada provenience,⁴⁵⁰ which then allowed the unparalleled stylistic features, characteristic of the Sheikh Ibada fakes, to be explained as a regional style differing from the known corpus of Coptic art.⁴⁵¹ In turn, this meant that various Sheikh Ibada fakes could be compared to one another, instead of the existing corpus of Coptic sculpture, strengthening the appearance of their authenticity. Stylistic anomalies could then be discussed, not as unparalleled, but rather in the context of a hitherto unknown regional tradition.⁴⁵²

The establishment of a supposed regional artistic tradition is perhaps most evident in the acceptance of the niche stelae. These stelae were largely novel to scholars of the mid-20th century, and were identified by Müller as belonging to “Isismysten,” deceased devotees of the goddess Isis.⁴⁵³ For Müller, these stelae were a unique style of sculpture that had been uncovered recently at Sheikh Ibada, and had only become known to him, and other scholars, on the market.⁴⁵⁴ That several of these stelae had surfaced within quick succession of one another, all with the reported Sheikh Ibada provenience and visibly related stylistically, was taken as evidence of their authenticity and the reliability of the provenience.⁴⁵⁵ Müller also compared the apparently pagan

⁴⁴⁹ The creation of a regional style could easily be seen as another narrative constructed by scholars to account for the unique iconography amongst the Sheikh Ibada fakes, and such a discussion would be warranted. However, due to its widespread acceptance and use to discuss, and thus authenticate, other examples of the Sheikh Ibada fakes that emerged without the Sheikh Ibada label, it is discussed separately here.

⁴⁵⁰ For example: Cooney 1961, 1; Wessel 1962, (in order of appearance within catalogue) Invs. 511, 514, 518, 516, 517, 502, 508, 519, 521, 515 (unpaginated); Cooney 1963, 37, 45; Wessel 1965, 92; Parlasca 1966, 204-205; Du Bourguet 1971, 98; Zaloscer 1974, 116-118. Parlasca (1978, 163-164) would eventually reject the Sheikh Ibada provenience, and some of the fakes (although he does not specify which ones), but continued to discuss other fakes as authentic. It is worth noting that Parlasca’s rejection of the Sheikh Ibada provenience occurred after Vikan’s (1977) paper was delivered denouncing the Sheikh Ibada fakes.

⁴⁵¹ Spanel 2001, 89-92; Vikan 1977a.

⁴⁵² Müller 1960, 267.

⁴⁵³ The niche stelae, or at least some of the supposed pagan variants, do have extant authentic parallels. See Severin (1995, 289-290) for a discussion of these and why the Sheikh Ibada variants can still be dismissed as fakes. Müller (1960) was seemingly ignorant of these when he published the Sheikh Ibada stelae.

⁴⁵⁴ Müller 1960, 267. Cooney (1961, 5), however, does make mention of the stelae excavated by Petrie at Oxyrhynchus, which is now in the British Museum (Inv. EA1795).

⁴⁵⁵ Müller (1960, 267) never makes specific mention of the authenticity of the stelae. He does, however, argue that because a decent quantity of the stelae had surfaced within quick succession of one another, all with the same

stelae stylistically to the famous mummy portraits of Antinoë, which seemingly offered further support for their authenticity and veracity of the provenience, as they seemed to demonstrate features of the same artistic tradition.⁴⁵⁶ That he knew of no extant sculptural comparisons was of little apparent concern. With these stelae identified, Müller then discussed the rarer, Christian variants, which are entirely unparalleled in Coptic art (31),⁴⁵⁷ as a natural stylistic development from the pagan stelae.⁴⁵⁸

Müller's identification of the stelae, and belief that they were stylistically unique to Sheikh Ibada, won wide acceptance. As the earliest publication of the fakes, this created a template which others applied to identify, and attribute to Sheikh Ibada, sculptures with similar stylistic features.⁴⁵⁹ From these comparisons, motifs and stylistic peculiarities common among the Sheikh Ibada fakes, yet rare in genuine works of Coptic sculpture, became seen as identifying features of Sheikh Ibada sculpture and (perversely) taken as evidence for their authenticity.⁴⁶⁰ Some of the more notable features were the 'goggle eyes', 'hand crosses', and the rendering of the noses and mouths.⁴⁶¹ The existence of these features allowed the sculptures to be easily grouped and discussed collectively. Cooney, for example, stated that he was informed that the Brooklyn Paralytic was found alongside two other sculptures.⁴⁶² He then argued on stylistic grounds that this must be accurate, and two sculptures, now in Berlin, must have originally stood either side of the Brooklyn Paralytic and been made in the same workshop.⁴⁶³ He was (likely) right on both accounts, missing only that their history was rather shorter than he assumed.⁴⁶⁴ Parlasca, meanwhile, highlighted the relative uniformity of the carving on the niche stelae as evidence that they came from a single site,

provenience, that they could be grouped, and their iconography discussed collectively. Similar logic was also employed by Parlasca (1966, 205) to argue that the stelae must have all come from a single site. That this site might be a modern forger's workshop was not considered. Fakes have often been used as evidence for the authenticity of other fakes. See, for example, Lapatin 2002, 174-175.

⁴⁵⁶ Müller 1960, 268. The similarities between the mummy portraits and the Sheikh Ibada niche stelae were often highlighted, and, as a result, the stelae were seen as evidence of a development in funerary practices at Antinoë. See Parlasca 1966, 205-206; Wessel 1965, 93; and Effenberger 1975, 146. It is quite possible that deliberate similarities did exist between the stelae and the mummy portraits. Kelker & Bruhns (2010, 18-19) have discussed how forgers often base their forgeries off authentic items in another medium.

⁴⁵⁷ Severin (1995, 292) demonstrates that none of the extant authentic parallels, recovered from sanctioned excavation, have any overt Christian iconography.

⁴⁵⁸ Müller 1960, 270; Nussbaum 1964, 260-261; Wessel 1965, 94.

⁴⁵⁹ Cooney 1961; Nussbaum 1964, 260; Wessel 1965, 93-94; Du Bourguet 1971, 98; Effenberger 1975, 141, 144-148.

⁴⁶⁰ It is worth highlighting that comparison between the Sheikh Ibada fakes to validate the unusual stylistic qualities of the works was not grounded solely in those reportedly from Sheikh Ibada. Take the aforementioned relief plaque depicting either sirens or nereids, for example. Although Wessel notes that its iconography and composition is unique, he does highlight similarities between the rendering of the eyes with another relief plate supposedly depicting the 'Ascension of Jesus'. Neither of these plaques were said to be from Sheikh Ibada. See Wessel 1962, (unpaginated) Invs. 502 (Ascension of Jesus), 508 (sirens or nereids).

⁴⁶¹ Wessel 1965, 94, 144; Nussbaum 1964; Effenberger 1975, 145-146.

⁴⁶² Cooney 1963, 45.

⁴⁶³ Cooney 1963, 45.

⁴⁶⁴ Cooney's assertion that the three sculptures were part of the same display was challenged on stylistic grounds by Elbern (1978, (129)83*-(130)84).

seemingly validating the Sheikh Ibada provenience.⁴⁶⁵ That these sculptures are unparalleled stylistically in the wider corpus of Coptic art was, apparently, unimportant. The mere existence of parallels, even devoid of archaeologically recovered provenience, created the appearance of consistency amongst the sculptures, “an internal coherence” making the attributions of the sculptures, and thus their authenticity, appear secure.⁴⁶⁶ What was not considered, at least in print, was the possibility that this workshop might have been modern.

Furthermore, in ‘discovering’ this regional style, scholars were able to link and discuss other fakes which had surfaced with no connection to Sheikh Ibada with those that had. In doing so, these sculptures effectively gained a provenience, further bolstering the appearance of their authenticity. For example, Wessel suggests that a relief panel depicting two faces and a cross, which had surfaced without any findspot information, was likely from Sheikh Ibada (17). This attribution is based on the rendering of both faces, which Wessel compared to a bust of a female and several of the Christian niche stelae.⁴⁶⁷ All of these comparative examples, and the relief, are now considered fakes: the only difference between them and the relief is that they surfaced with the dealer-provided Sheikh Ibada provenience.⁴⁶⁸ Similarly, in the 1966 catalogue for an exhibition of Coptic art at the National Museum of Krakow, Wessel claims that a sculpture can be attributed to Sheikh Ibada due to the presence of a ‘hand cross’ which is stylistically linked to the site.⁴⁶⁹ The presence of a cross – rare in authentic Coptic figural sculpture, but common among the Sheikh Ibada fakes – no longer functioned as an example of unusual iconography. Now it could be used to identify pieces from Sheikh Ibada.⁴⁷⁰

In highlighting the similarities between the Sheikh Ibada fakes, scholars created a *prima facie* argument in favour of their authenticity – the existence of parallels. The stylistic anomalies which isolated the pieces from the known corpus seemed simply to be the result of a hitherto unknown regional school, and as a result were not technically unique and therefore unproblematic. However, the attributions of these items, based on comparison with other fakes, were baseless. None of the comparanda had an archaeologically recovered provenience.⁴⁷¹ Those who employed

⁴⁶⁵ Parlasca 1966, 205.

⁴⁶⁶ Ebitz 1988, 210. See Marlowe (2013, 84-89) for a discussion on circular logic within connoisseurship.

⁴⁶⁷ Wessel 1962, unpaginated Inv. 517. Wessel links this piece with Inv. 516 in the same catalogue and Nos. 38 and 39 from the 1960 *Ars Antiqua* catalogue.

⁴⁶⁸ It should be noted that the provenience for Nos. 38 and 39 from the *Ars Antiqua* catalogue was “Vermutlich Sheikh Abade.”

⁴⁶⁹ Wessel 1966, 18 no. 21. “ze wnętrza pochodzi z Antinoe (Schêch Abâde), bowiem krzyże ręczne o tu użytej formie były tam znane”: “that the niche comes from Antinoe (Sheikh Ibada), because the hand crosses of the form used here were known there.” Wessel (1966, 30-31) also attributes an unprovenienced grave stela to Sheikh Ibada due to stylistic similarities with other supposed grave stelae which surfaced with the Sheikh Ibada provenience. All are now considered fakes and part of the Sheikh Ibada corpus.

⁴⁷⁰ See Spanel (2001, 102) for a brief discussion of the ‘button cross’, which was a reoccurring motif amongst the Sheikh Ibada fakes, but rare within Coptic art. Nussbaum (1964) produced an article discussing the “handkreuzes” based heavily around the Sheikh Ibada niche stelae holding crosses.

⁴⁷¹ See Gill & Chippindale (1993, 617-618) for similar issues in the authentication of Cycladic figurines.

other fakes to validate the authenticity of the items they were discussing failed to critically evaluate the reliability of their comparative corpus. The previously published fakes, therefore, appeared all the more secure as they became further embedded in scholarly discourse, becoming (in effect) evidence for their own authenticity.

Although the use of a comparative corpus to identify and authenticate unknown antiquities is, at its core, the basic premise of connoisseurship, the recognition and acceptance of the Sheikh Ibada style highlights the fragility of authentication by comparison. The existence of comparable examples at first seemed to suggest the authenticity of undocumented antiquities. However, critical consideration of comparanda is required to ensure their reliability. In discussing the Sheikh Ibada sculptures in relation to one another and highlighting the similarities between the pieces, the appearance of a reliable, authentic corpus was created. This, in turn, seemingly authenticated all other items which were discussed, or identified, using this misleading corpus. In reality, however, the reliability and authenticity of the Sheikh Ibada corpus was unfounded, constructed using antiquities that, due to their unique stylistic characteristics and lack of verifiable provenience, were not demonstrably authentic.

Conclusion

Even in the initial publications of the Sheikh Ibada fakes sufficient issues were noted to warrant the questioning of their authenticity. This, however, did not occur, and the fakes were published as authentic. This resulted from a lack of what should have been routine suspicion among scholars when encountering antiquities that are without archaeologically recovered provenience. These early publications highlighted that none of the pieces had come from sanctioned excavations, but had first surfaced on the market. As such, none had a verifiable provenience which could guarantee their authenticity. At the same time, scholars noted many stylistic incongruities that alienated the Sheikh Ibada fakes from the wider corpus of Coptic sculpture. Instead of being considered problematic, scholars instead viewed these oddities as “puzzles in identification.”⁴⁷² Yet the limitations of connoisseurship dictate that these incongruities, appearing as they did on undocumented pieces, should have led to the conclusion that the Sheikh Ibada sculptures were of spurious authenticity. Without properly provenienced comparanda, there were no indicators by which the authenticity of these antiquities might have been demonstrated. Those who published the fakes made no attempt, at least in print, to establish independently of market hearsay the authenticity of the Sheikh Ibada fakes. Instead, they put their

⁴⁷² Jones 1961, 53.

faith in the reputation of the dealers, and perhaps their own ability to determine authenticity, and constructed narratives and contexts (often derived from existing scholarship, such as the *Volkskunst* theory) which explained the stylistic incongruities of the sculptures as well as their recent appearance. This blithe treatment resulted in many fakes entering the corpus of Coptic art, with significant implications for scholarship, as will be discussed in Chapter IV.

Chapter IV.

Consequences of Authentication:⁴⁷³

Distorted Scholarship and the Protection of Fakes

In Gill and Chippindale's 1993 article examining the impact of collecting on the Cycladic archaeological record, they identified several consequences stemming from the desire of collectors and museums to own Cycladic figurines.⁴⁷⁴ Many of these are linked to the loss or corruption of knowledge that occurs when antiquities first surface outside of archaeological record. They further highlighted that the uncertainty created by the large number of undocumented antiquities also opens the door to fakes.⁴⁷⁵ Like looted antiquities removed from their archaeological context, fake antiquities also have the ability to corrupt understandings of the past. However, while a looted antiquity represents knowledge lost or misinterpreted, a fake antiquity represents false knowledge entirely.

As demonstrated in Chapter III, the methods by which scholars interacted with the Sheikh Ibada fakes were problematic, and resulted in many fakes being accepted as authentic. This chapter examines and highlights the subsequent consequences of this interaction, showing how the erroneous authentication of fake antiquities can distort the corpus and thereby interpretations of the past. As will be argued, once these items enter scholarly literature, they become protected and embedded within the accepted corpus, appearing functionally indistinguishable from other works. Subsequent scholars inherit this corpus, often accepting attributions without first checking their validity. In doing so, erroneously authenticated antiquities can continue masquerading as authentic. To rectify the scholarship that employed the Sheikh Ibada fakes lies beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, this chapter demonstrates that the mistaken authentication of fake antiquities can, and does, have a pronounced impact upon scholarship that influences not only those who authenticate fakes but also subsequent members of the discipline. Fakes can become crucial pieces of evidence for reconstructions of the past, and thereby undermining our understanding of it.

⁴⁷³ There are many consequences that stem from the acceptance of fake antiquities as authentic that are not discussed here due to either a lack of available evidence or because of the constraints of this thesis. For example, financial loss, prominence within museums, or loss of reputation are not considered here.

⁴⁷⁴ Gill & Chippindale 1993.

⁴⁷⁵ Gill & Chippindale 1993, 615-621.

IV.1. The Fakes in Scholarship

Many of the publications in which the Sheikh Ibada fakes were published (and so authenticated) were important works on Coptic art.⁴⁷⁶ As a result, these publications presented arguments based on flawed evidence. The fakes therefore had a pronounced impact on scholarly discourse during the mid-20th century, becoming seen as significant works of Coptic sculpture; Antinoë, by association with the fakes, was viewed as an important centre of Coptic sculpture. In Wessel's influential *Coptic Art* alone,⁴⁷⁷ roughly one-third of the sculptures illustrated are now counted among the Sheikh Ibada fakes.⁴⁷⁸ Unsurprisingly, they play a prominent role in his conclusions, particularly in his attempts to explain the emergence and development of Coptic art.⁴⁷⁹ In Arne Effenberger's 1975 *Koptische Kunst*, the Sheikh Ibada fakes likewise feature prominently in his explanation of the development of Coptic art.⁴⁸⁰ Even in du Bourguet's *Coptic Art*, where the Sheikh Ibada sculptures play a less prominent role, the niche stelae and a relief depicting a Dionysian figure still feature notably in his discussion of the development of the stylised human form within Coptic art.⁴⁸¹

IV.1.1. Development of Scholarship on Coptic Art

The central role that the Sheikh Ibada fakes were able to take in mid-20th century scholarship was due largely to the consistent provenience that accompanied them and their seeming ability to provide new evidence in support of the existing interpretations of Coptic art.⁴⁸² Because the Sheikh Ibada provenience had been accepted by scholars, the sculptures were viewed as a geographically unified corpus. This made them a valuable resource, as they were then considered a large, unified group of sculpture, an unusual and so desirable occurrence in Coptic art.⁴⁸³ Because many of them could be linked either stylistically or by type,⁴⁸⁴ a chronology was

⁴⁷⁶ Müller 1960; Wessel 1963 (translation 1965); Zaloscer 1974; Effenberger 1975; Badawy 1978. The Sheikh Ibada fakes are also included with Beckwith (1963b) and du Bourguet (1967, translation 1971) although to a lesser extent.

⁴⁷⁷ Vikan (2016, 55) refers to Wessel's book as "the definitive book on Coptic art" during the mid to late 20th century.

⁴⁷⁸ Török 2005b, 29 n.105. Török identifies pls. III, 7, 8, 11, 18, 20, 30, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 59, 61, 69, 73, 76, 77, 90, 91, 96, 97, 98, as fakes. He misses pl. V noted as being heavily reworked by von Falck (1966a, 75) and labelled a fake by Gonosová & Kondoleon (1994, 394 n.2), and pl. 40, listed as a fake in Thomas (1990, 1:128-129 n.163, 2:206-208) and Spanel (2001, 92 n.23).

⁴⁷⁹ Wessel 1965, 133-135. Torp (1965, 374) highlights some of the issues Wessel had in aligning his views on the development of Coptic art from the Hellenistic tradition with his belief that Coptic art was also a spontaneously developed folk-art.

⁴⁸⁰ Effenberger 1975, 144-146; Török 2005b, 30.

⁴⁸¹ du Bourguet 1971, 95-96, 98.

⁴⁸² Török 2005b, 26-27.

⁴⁸³ Boyd & Vikan 1981, 8-9; Wessel 1965, 92, 129. As already discussed, early study into Coptic art was hamstrung by a lack of properly conducted and recorded excavations. This resulted in many of the known examples of Coptic art ending up in museums with very little, if any, provenience.

⁴⁸⁴ See discussion of the development of a regional style used in authentication in Chapter III *supra*.

also discerned based on stylistic variation with the ‘corpus’, and grounded in the prevailing views of Coptic art.⁴⁸⁵

When the fakes were entering scholarship, Coptic art was seen as simplistic, highly stylised, and Christian.⁴⁸⁶ Based on this paradigm, scholars tended to date antiquities that were seen as more schematic later, while those seen as more naturalistic were dated earlier.⁴⁸⁷ The Sheikh Ibada fakes well fit this paradigm, as those featuring overt Christian iconography also tending to have more stylised features.⁴⁸⁸ Effenberger, therefore, argued that the ‘pagan’ niche stelae, which were seen as more naturalistic,⁴⁸⁹ were produced during the “Wende von der spätantik-ägyptischen zur koptischen Kunst.”⁴⁹⁰ On the other hand, those stelae (and other sculptures) which featured more schematic features, such as the ‘goggle eyes’, were dated later and were seen as evidence of the movement of Coptic art towards abstraction.⁴⁹¹

Further, the acceptance of the Sheikh Ibada (or Antinoë) provenience meant that the fakes were thought to have come from a provincial Greek town.⁴⁹² This, combined with the constructed chronology, was perceived as being of great value to scholars. These factors meant the Sheikh Ibada fakes were seen as evidence allowing the development of Coptic art from that of Greek provincial art to be mapped.⁴⁹³ For example, the apparent realism of the body of the Brooklyn Paralytic, contrasted with its schematic face, was considered evidence for the development of Coptic art out of the Hellenistic tradition.⁴⁹⁴ Notably, Wessel used the fakes prominently to trace the development and emergence of Coptic art over several centuries.⁴⁹⁵ The Sheikh Ibada fakes became for Wessel the “Piltdown man” (in more than one way) of Coptic art,⁴⁹⁶ the evidence required to overcome what he had earlier referred to as “the seemingly unbridgeable gulf between the degenerating Greek provincial art and the developing Coptic-Christian art.”⁴⁹⁷ Moreover,

⁴⁸⁵ Effenberger 1975, 146; Badawy 1978, 149.

⁴⁸⁶ Chapter II.1; Thomas 1990, 1:38. It must be remembered that Christian iconography was, however, rare amongst Coptic sculpture. Following Naville’s excavations the syncretic nature of Coptic art was stressed, with scholars viewing Coptic artisans as assigning new (Christian) meaning to pagan iconography.

⁴⁸⁷ Torp 1965, 365. As discussed in Chapter II.1, there was a distinct lack of well excavated antiquities.

⁴⁸⁸ For example: Ägyptischer Kunst, München Inv. ÄS 5529; Brooklyn Museum Inv. 63.36; Brooklyn Museum Inv. 58.80.

⁴⁸⁹ Although these stelae were still seen by scholars as somewhat schematic, they were not as heavily stylised as those with the ‘goggle eyes’. Cf. Recklinghausen Ikonenmuseum Inv. 511 with Staatliche Sammlung Ägyptischer Kunst, München. Inv. ÄS 5529.

⁴⁹⁰ Effenberger 1975, 140. Effenberger puts these stelae in the second half of the third century CE. As does Wessel (1965, 92-93), while Müller (1960, 267) also suggests they may carry into the early fourth century. Part of the dating for these stelae was their similarity to the mummy portraits of Antinoë.

⁴⁹¹ Müller 1960, 269-270; Wessel 1965, 92-4; Effenberger 1975, 141-147; Badawy 1978, 149. This is particularly prevalent amongst the niche stelae. The overtly Christian sculptures (the ones holding crosses) were interpreted as having developed from the seated figures holding grapes and a bird.

⁴⁹² Badawy 1978, 146-149; Wessel 1965, 92.

⁴⁹³ Wessel 1965, 129-135; Effenberger 1975, 140-144.

⁴⁹⁴ Cooney 1963, 42, 45; Badawy 1978, 152; Zaloscer 1974, 118-119.

⁴⁹⁵ Wessel 1965, 133, traversing the fourth century to the sixth century CE.

⁴⁹⁶ For a complete overview of the Piltdown man see Weiner 1955.

⁴⁹⁷ Wessel 1965, 100.

because the Sheikh Ibada fakes supposedly demonstrated the emergence of Coptic art, they were used as examples of art from the developmental ‘Proto-Coptic’ period (c. third to the fifth century CE).⁴⁹⁸ This, being a poorly attested period, helped cement the scholarly value of the fakes as they were seen as much needed evidence.⁴⁹⁹ Moreover, contextualising the fakes in a poorly attested period had the added benefit of making their existence, and the lack of secure comparanda, more believable.⁵⁰⁰

Used in this way, the fakes, in turn, helped to reinforce the prevailing, and troubled, interpretations of Coptic art that had developed during the early and mid 20th century.⁵⁰¹ That this occurred is unsurprising, as without archaeological context, antiquities, either faked or looted, can do little to change and develop preconceptions about the past.⁵⁰² Instead, these items are understood within the existing analytical framework.⁵⁰³ Because of this, the fakes, once incorrectly authenticated and interpreted using this framework, offered falsified testimony for its accuracy. F. Rofail Farag uses the relief depicting either sirens or nereids (14) as evidence for the existence of religious and iconographic syncretism within Coptic art,⁵⁰⁴ the same argument used earlier by Wessel to explain the relief’s unique composition and iconography.⁵⁰⁵ Likewise, Effenberger also employed the fakes as evidence to further support the notion of Coptic art as syncretic, claiming that Christian meaning was assigned to the pagan iconography of the niche stelae.⁵⁰⁶ In a similar fashion, Wessel uses a bust of a female, the stylistic anomalies of which he had earlier accounted for using the *Volkskunst* theory, and a stylistically related Christian stele as evidence for the timelessness of folk-art and thus the accuracy of the *Volkskunst* interpretation of Coptic art.⁵⁰⁷ Yet what went unnoticed amongst scholars was that the fakes only offered support for these theories because they fit prior expectations. The support the fakes offered was not grounded in reliable, excavated evidence, or even in secure comparative analysis. Rather, because the fakes had been authenticated within the existing art-historical paradigm constructed upon these theories (such as Coptic art as a *Volkskunst*), they necessarily supported it. Because the fakes reinforced the very

⁴⁹⁸ du Bourguet 1971, 95-96, 98; Badawy 1978, 146-152. Du Bourguet places the ‘Proto-Coptic’ period at the end of the third century until the mid-fourth century CE. Badawy extends this period from the third century until the fifth (sometimes into the sixth) century CE.

⁴⁹⁹ Cooney 1941, 8. Turnure (1963, 46, 48), for example, stresses the “incomplete picture we have” of Coptic art when attempting to identify Princeton Museum’s Inv. y1962-46.

⁵⁰⁰ Muscarella (2000, 73) discusses a similar phenomenon occurring in scholarship on Median art. Fake antiquities began surfacing purporting to be examples of Median art, yet when their authenticity was challenged on the basis that they were unparalleled scholars instead placed them as examples of an early unknown period.

⁵⁰¹ See Chapter II *supra*.

⁵⁰² Marlowe 2013, 85; Chippindale & Gill 2000, 504-505.

⁵⁰³ Marlowe 2013, 85; Chippindale & Gill 2000, 504-505.

⁵⁰⁴ See also Effenberger 1975, 144-146.

⁵⁰⁵ Farag 1976/1977, 32-33; Wessel 1962, (unpaginated) Inv. 508. Wessel (1965, 39 pl.44) would later discuss this relief in his book on Coptic art. (Recklinghausen Ikonenmuseum Inv. 508).

⁵⁰⁶ Effenberger 1975, 151-152.

⁵⁰⁷ Wessel 1965, 87, 94. pl. III (Recklinghausen Ikonenmuseum Inv. 516) and pl. 76 (Munich, Staatliche Ägyptischer Kunst Inv. ÄS 5529). See also: Zaloscer 1974, 130.

theories used to authenticate them, their own status seemed that much more secure. Such circular logic underpins much scholarly interaction using unprovenanced and fake antiquities.⁵⁰⁸ It is, unfortunately, not possible to determine whether these theories would have existed for as long as they did were it not for the support of the Sheikh Ibada fakes. However, the prominent use of the fakes as evidence is hard to ignore, as is the length of time these theories were in vogue.⁵⁰⁹

IV.1.2. Perceptions of Antinoë

The Sheikh Ibada fakes were stylistically novel, which should have led to their authenticity being questioned.⁵¹⁰ When this did not occur, however, and the fakes entered scholarly discourse, their novelty made them valuable, presenting scholars with new motifs, styles, and information by which their understanding of Coptic art could be furthered.⁵¹¹ Scholars celebrated this novelty: Müller describes the so-called “Isismysten” as evidence of a “bisher unbekannte Richtung der Kunst,”⁵¹² while Cooney labelled the Brooklyn Paralytic (3) “the most important Christian sculpture to come out of Egypt in this century,”⁵¹³ a view which won wide acceptance.⁵¹⁴ This celebrated novelty, combined with the uncritical acceptance of the Sheikh Ibada (Antinoë) provenience, contributed to a distorted understanding of the art-historical landscape of ancient Antinoë. Excavations, both subsequent and prior to the emergence of the Sheikh Ibada fakes, have uncovered limited sculpture at the site, and certainly nothing that parallels the fakes.⁵¹⁵ Despite this lack of excavated evidence, Antinoë, because of the associated fakes, came to feature prominently within discussions of Coptic sculpture as an important centre of sculptural

⁵⁰⁸ Marlowe 2013, 84-89; Chippindale & Gill 2000, 504-505.

⁵⁰⁹ Török (2005b, 40) places the majority’s rejection of the *Volkskunst* view within the 1990s. See, for example, Brune 1996. It is also during this period where many other notions surrounding Coptic art, such as its supposedly syncretic nature, were challenged repeatedly in the literature. Parlasca (1966, 203) did reject the *Volkskunst* interpretation of Coptic art as early as 1966, although this was not widely accepted or acknowledged.

⁵¹⁰ See the discussion of connoisseurship in Chapter III.

⁵¹¹ Such treatment of unprovenanced antiquities is typical of Muscarella’s “bazaar archaeology” (2013a, 889).

⁵¹² Müller 1960, 267.

⁵¹³ Cooney 1963, 42-44 (Brooklyn Museum Inv. 62.44).

⁵¹⁴ Badawy 1978, 152; Zaloscer 1974, 118-119.

⁵¹⁵ Gayet 1897. While Gayet did publish some of his excavations at Antinoë, much of his work went unpublished. For a detailed reconstruction and collation of Gayet’s excavations from 1895-1914 see Calament 2005a and Calament 2005b, whose work is based on both published and unpublished sources. For the more recent, and ongoing, excavations under Pintaudi, see Pintaudi 2008, Pintaudi 2014a, and Pintaudi 2017. There were also excavations during the 20th century, although these were often interrupted. See Fluck (2013, 86-89) for an overview of these sporadic excavations and the major finds. See also O’Connell (2014) for the 1913/1914 Egypt Exploration Fund’s excavation at Antinoë. Some sculpture (much of it architectural) has been found at Antinoë, although nothing that resembles the Sheikh Ibada fakes. See for example Calament 2005a, 6, 35, 42; Severin 2014. It is worth noting that, based on excavations, Antinoë is particularly famous for its papyri, textiles, mummies, and mummy masks. Van Minnen (2007, 218) even says that “the greatest variety of literature seems to come from this city [Antinoë] not Oxyrhynchus.” Finally, it is worth noting that looting still occurs at Antinoë. See Pintaudi (2014b) for the most detailed account of recent looting. See also, Abd El Salm 2018, 25; Grossman 2011, 88; Grossman 2012, 75.

development.⁵¹⁶ In Badawy's survey of Coptic art, for example, Antinoë is discussed as one of the important centres for Proto-Coptic sculpture with reference only to the Sheikh Ibada fakes.⁵¹⁷ This was not unusual: publications of the mid-20th century which discuss Antinoë as an important centre for the production of Coptic sculpture all do so solely with reference to the Sheikh Ibada fakes.⁵¹⁸ Wessel, entirely because of the fakes, describes Antinoë as "the most important ... of known centres of late antique Greek provincial art on the Nile."⁵¹⁹ Moreover, because the fakes varied stylistically from the known corpus, they were considered evidence for a regional variation of sculptural development specific to Antinoë.⁵²⁰ Largely unknown sculptural types, such as the niche stelae or relief plaques,⁵²¹ were therefore introduced to the study of Coptic art as part of this regional style. Further, features such as the 'goggle eyes' or 'hand cross', which isolated the Sheikh Ibada fakes from the known corpus, were seen as typical features of the art of Antinoë.⁵²² The nature of artistic production at Antinoë was thereby distorted:⁵²³ despite the lack of verifiable evidence, it was considered an important centre in the production and development of Coptic sculpture, complete with its own sculptural conventions. The misapplication of connoisseurship discussed prior not only failed to remove the fakes from circulation, but also led to the construction of an artistic tradition which distorted assessments of the art-historical landscape of Late Antique Egypt. Previously, as a result of excavated evidence, Oxyrhynchus and Ahnas were seen as the two primary centres of sculptural development in fourth–fifth century CE Egypt,⁵²⁴ driven by the erroneous authentication of the fakes, Antinoë was now included within this list.

Because the provenience was accepted as fact, several of those who discussed the fakes in publication began to speculate on the nature of the population at Antinoë. Considering the fakes evidence charting the development of Coptic art, Wessel was able to posit that "the craftsmen ...

⁵¹⁶ Cooney (1963, 45) on the basis of the Brooklyn Paralytic (Brooklyn Museum Inv. 62.44), and the many niche stelae, refers to the "obviously important sites of that area." Wessel (1965, 92, 133) saw the sheer volume of fakes that supposedly came from Sheikh Ibada as an invaluable source for study. Müller (1960) saw the niche grave stelae as important evidence for an unknown Coptic sculptural style. See also: Elbern 1967, 237; Badawy 1978, 146.

⁵¹⁷ Badawy 1978, 146-152. Oxyrhynchus and Ahnas (Heracleopolis Magna) typically feature alongside Sheikh Ibada as the other main centres of sculpture during the 4th and 5th centuries CE. Following Kitzinger's (1938) linear development, du Bourguet (1971, 78), Badawy (1978, 146), and Beckwith (1963b, 20) also align several of the Sheikh Ibada fakes with Kitzinger's 'soft-style'.

⁵¹⁸ Badawy 1978, 146-152; Effenberger 1975, 140-152; Wessel 1965, 92-97, 127-134.

⁵¹⁹ Wessel 1965, 129.

⁵²⁰ As discussed in Chapter III, scholars saw the similarities amongst the Sheikh Ibada fakes as evidence of a regional school, which allowed the fakes to be discussed in relation to one another.

⁵²¹ There were very few examples of niche stelae within scholarship prior to the emergence of the Sheikh Ibada fakes. Petrie (1925, pl. XLV.10) had excavated one at Oxyrhynchus but this was not widely published. Severin (1995, 290) discusses the few known examples of niche stelae recovered from excavation by Petrie and then Breccia. Severin also discusses some stelae found by Breccia but were never published.

⁵²² As discussed in Chapter III, these features were also used to assign fakes to Antinoë/Sheikh Ibada. Wessel (1965, 134), for example, discusses the presence of the cross as a feature of the art of Antinoë once "Christianity had taken over this former stronghold of paganism."

⁵²³ Parlasca (1966, 204-206) suggests that the similarities between the stelae and the mummy portraits of Antinoë are evidence of a contemporaneous artistic trend at the site.

⁵²⁴ Kitzinger 1938, 181-182, 188 and *passim*. There were also significant (but problematic) excavations at Bawit and Saqqara. See Török 2005b, 11.

were very probably Greeks from Antinoë who had already become ‘Coptic’ in a social sense, and as a logical consequence of this, culturally also.”⁵²⁵ Further, because Müller’s identification of the stelae, combined with the link with Sheikh Ibada, was widely accepted, several scholars began hypothesising about burial practices at Antinoë, potential connections with other cities, and also the religious nature of the population.⁵²⁶ Wessel, on the basis of these stelae, suggested a change in burial practices at Antinoë, arguing that “the Greeks of Antinoë departed from the custom of mummy burial.”⁵²⁷ This was then accepted, and reiterated, by Effenberger.⁵²⁸ Cooney and Parlasca, however, both argued that the stelae were found in an unknown cemetery, and that the burial practices at Sheikh Ibada must have been similar to those at Oxyrhynchus, where Petrie uncovered a similar figure.⁵²⁹ Finally, Zaloscer suggested a potential religious link between Antinoë and the Fayum based on the similarities between the Sheikh Ibada niche stelae and some mummy portraits from the Fayum.⁵³⁰ Coherent as these suggestions were, none was grounded in reliable, excavated data. Rather, they rest on foundations built by the authentication of fake antiquities and the uncritical acceptance of the forged Sheikh Ibada provenience.

IV.1.3. The Question of Authenticity

The impact of the acceptance of the Sheikh Ibada fakes by scholars extends beyond distorted views of ancient Antinoë and falsely supported theories. As has been noted by those who have uncovered the fakes, many of them are heavily reworked authentic sculptures.⁵³¹ Prior to the emergence of the Sheikh Ibada fakes (with their unique stylistic qualities) on the market, many of these reworked sculptures that emerged from Egypt were fairly faithful to their original design.⁵³² However, following the acceptance of the Sheikh Ibada style by scholars and its popularity on the market,⁵³³ more of the re-carved sculptures that surfaced were made to imitate the Sheikh Ibada corpus stylistically.⁵³⁴ In accepting the Sheikh Ibada fakes, with their unique stylistic features, the

⁵²⁵ Wessel 1965, 134.

⁵²⁶ Müller 1960. For example: Cooney 1961, 2-3; Cooney 1963, 39-42; Wessel 1965, 92-93; du Bourguet 1971, 98; Effenberger 1975, 141-144; Badawy 1978, 149. Furthermore, the existence of these stelae, particularly the seated boy type, was unattested prior to 1958. They were interpreted as a previously unknown style of sculpture native to Sheikh Ibada.

⁵²⁷ Wessel 1965, 92-93.

⁵²⁸ Effenberger 1975, 146.

⁵²⁹ Cooney 1961, 1, 5; Parlasca 1966, 204-206; Petrie 1925, pl. XLV.10. Parlasca seems unaware of Petrie’s find during his Oxyrhynchus excavations when suggesting how the niche stelae must have featured within funerary settings, although Cooney’s suggestion for the burial practices at Sheikh Ibada are based on Petrie’s excavations.

⁵³⁰ Zaloscer 1974, 116-117. Parlasca (1966, 206) suggests a developmental link between the mummy portraits of Sheikh Ibada and the niche stelae based on similar renderings of the faces.

⁵³¹ Vikan 1977a; Thomas 1990, 1:127-149; Severin 1995, 289-295.

⁵³² Thomas 1990, 1:135-136.

⁵³³ Evidenced by the notable museums which acquired them. For example, the Louvre, the Brooklyn Museum, the Ikonenmuseum in Recklinghausen, and the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

⁵³⁴ Thomas 1990, 1:135-136: Thomas suggests that this change in style is evidence that the forgers were creating fakes to match scholarly expectations. However, this cannot be proven, and it is also possible that the forgers simply adopted a style which had been shown to be attractive on the market.

scholars responsible created a valuable aesthetic model with which authentic sculptures were then re-carved to conform.⁵³⁵ As a result, the individual characteristics of many of these sculptures, which previously had simply been sharpened or subject to “overzealous cleaning,” are lost.⁵³⁶ These sculptures, looted from throughout Egypt, therefore lost what might have been significant and regional characteristics.⁵³⁷ The acceptance of the Sheikh Ibada fakes therefore contributed not only to the distortion of scholarship but also the destruction of knowledge.

Even after the Sheikh Ibada fakes were widely accepted as fakes, they continued to impact scholarly discourse, albeit less severely. Because the fakes had been so widely accepted and employed in the support of problematic theories, their existence often needs to be addressed simply so they can be dismissed.⁵³⁸ Thomas, for example, in her doctoral dissertation examining niche decorations in Late Antique Egyptian tombs, spent a significant portion of her second chapter discussing the many issues with the Sheikh Ibada fakes and other reworked niche decorations simply to explain why she has left them from her typologies.⁵³⁹ Fortunately, the argument that the Sheikh Ibada fakes are of spurious authenticity has been widely accepted since Vikan’s paper and Thomas’ dissertation, and there have been only limited instances where examples of the Sheikh Ibada fakes have been published as authentic since.⁵⁴⁰

The failure of scholars to question the authenticity of the Sheikh Ibada fakes when they first surfaced allowed the fakes to undermine scholarly discourse. Because they had been authenticated, they became objects for study that could be employed to better understand Coptic art. They were interpreted as evidence for the link between provincial Greek art in Egypt and the emergence of Coptic art and used as support for problematic beliefs about the nature of Coptic art and the people producing it. Furthermore, because the forged Sheikh Ibada provenience was accepted, assumptions were made about the nature of artistic production and the people of Antinoë.

⁵³⁵ Vikan (1977a) states that amongst the fakes he examined there were reworked sculptures across three of the four groups, with only the plaques being all modern fakes. Museums and collectors also contributed to making the pieces valuable.

⁵³⁶ Thomas 1990, 1:130.

⁵³⁷ Vikan 1977a; Thomas (1990, 1:129-136, 141) has argued, based on the shape of several pieces, the Daphne (?) and Dionysos owned by the Louvre (Invs. E26104 and E26106 respectively), were likely from Heracleopolis Magna (Ahnas) originally; Severin (1995, 293) has suggested that Oxyrhynchus is the most likely point of origin for the niche stelae; von Falck 1996b, 30, 30 n.5.

⁵³⁸ Wiseman 1984, 74.

⁵³⁹ Thomas 1990, 1:127-149.

⁵⁴⁰ Spänel 2001, 93. When examples of the Sheikh Ibada fakes have been published they have largely been confined to museum exhibition catalogues, although some have continued to feature in more academic works. Some fakes have appeared in: Schoske 1993, 68 fig. 64 (Staatliche Sammlung Ägyptischer Kunst München Inv. ÄS 5528); Török 1990, 477 fig. 70 (Louvre Inv. E26106); Neyret 1991, 1758 (Louvre Inv. E26104); Boncenne 1991, 1760 (Louvre Inv. E26106. Also, features the Dumbarton Oaks’ Dionysus); Schneider 1998, 162-163 figs. 250-251 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden Invs. 1962/8.2 and 1961/9.1); Marchini 1999, 581 no.7.46 (Staatliche Sammlung Ägyptischer Kunst München Inv. ÄS 5528); Dunand & Lichtenberg 1995, 3258-3259 (Recklinghausen Ikonenmuseum Inv. 589). Fluck & Finneiser 2009, 32 no.11 (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Inv. 3/59); Schneider & Raven 1981, 152 fig. 161 (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden Inv. 1961/9.1); Naureth 1983, 342-343 (Brooklyn Museum Inv. 62.44).

The conclusions reached as a result of interacting with these fakes, having no relation to reliable evidence, are baseless. This is the great danger in using erroneously authenticated fake antiquities within scholarship: they have the potential to distort understandings of the past.

IV.2. The Maintenance of Authenticity

IV.2.1 The Development of a Consensus

Several scholars have commented on the validation and esteem given to antiquities that appear on the market after they are incorporated within scholarship.⁵⁴¹ The inclusion of these antiquities, or the increased understanding of a particular type of item that results from study, is seen to impact directly market demand.⁵⁴² This validation and esteem that stems from inclusion within publication is not, however, linked simply to supporting the market. From the late 1950s, when the first Sheikh Ibada fakes surfaced, until Vikan's 1977 paper (and for many, beyond this), the authenticity of the fakes remained largely uncontested, and those who continued to publish the fakes as authentic did so without considering further their (in)authenticity. As demonstrated in Chapter III, the initial publications of the Sheikh Ibada sculptures highlighted sufficient issues with the pieces and the provided provenience to justify dismissing them as fakes.⁵⁴³ This, however, did not occur. In subsequent publications these issues remained unexplored, and the sculptures and provenience continued to be accepted as authentic.⁵⁴⁴ This practice of accepting without question the work of previous scholars has been described by Lester Grabbe as the result of the development of a "consensus."⁵⁴⁵ Once the fakes were included within scholarship, they became protected as

⁵⁴¹ Nørskov 2002b, 266-267; Brodie 2011a; Yates 2015, 75.

⁵⁴² Brodie 2011a; Yates 2015, 75. Nørskov (2002b, 266-267) attributes the increased demand and sale of Apulian red-figure vases to a greater understanding of the type that arose from the work of Trendall & Cambitoglou (1978 & 1983).

⁵⁴³ Müller 1960, 267; Cooney 1961, 1; Wessel 1965, 92; Cooney 1963, 37. All of these authors discuss the provenience as having come from the market, or at least suggest it, only to dismiss this being problematic and go on to treat the provenience as fact.

⁵⁴⁴ For example: Badawy 1978, 146; Effenberger 1975, 140-146; du Bourguet 1971, 98; Zaloscer 1974, 116-119. These scholars all accepted the Sheikh Ibada fakes as they were presented by Wessel (1965), Müller (1960), and Cooney (1961; 1963) citing these scholars' interpretations as evidence. It is worth mentioning that Parlasca (1978, 117*(163), 120*(166)) rejects the Sheikh Ibada provenience and some of the fakes, but still talks of others as authentic. Moreover, the fakes were considered authentic even amongst those who challenged the conclusions drawn by the earlier scholars using the fakes as evidence. Farag (1976/1977) challenges the conclusions reached by Wessel in his 1963 book. Yet does not question the authenticity of the sculptures. Two of the nine examples (Farag's figs. 5 and 6) discussed by Farag are now classified as fakes (although only fig. 6 is an classed as a Sheikh Ibada fake). Fig. 7 is also problematic. See Kruglov (2010, 7) for a brief synopsis of the issues with the *Martyrdom of St. Thecla* (fig. 7 in Farag 1976/1977, 33).

⁵⁴⁵ Grabbe 2011. A consensus, as the name suggests, is an accepted theory, view, or, in this case, corpus that a field of study largely accepts without question. It often forms following a respected academics work. This is particularly evident with the Sheikh Ibada fakes. For example, Spanel (2001, 91 n.17) credits Müller, and his 1960 paper, for largely ensuring that the niche stelae and the Sheikh Ibada provenience were accepted and remained unquestioned for many years. See Grabbe (2011) for an overview of the formation of a consensus and issues with this.

part of this consensus, with later scholars willing to place their faith in the judgements and attributions of those before them instead of re-examining the authenticity of the Sheikh Ibada fakes.⁵⁴⁶ In doing so, these publications proceeded to embed the fakes further within the corpus of authentic works, reinforcing the appearance of authenticity through sheer repetition.⁵⁴⁷

The development of this consensus was aided by the approach many scholars seem to take to documentation over time. Marlowe, discussing the Metropolitan Museum's supposed statue of Trebonianus Gallus, demonstrated that its provenience,⁵⁴⁸ often presented as secure, came from a unsecured source.⁵⁴⁹ Despite one of the first publications of the statue indicating that the provenience was unsecured, and probably fictitious, this caution was ignored by later scholars.⁵⁵⁰ In a similar fashion, many of the later publications of the Sheikh Ibada fakes came to ignore the market-derived nature of the sculptures and provenience despite it being noted by those who initially published them.⁵⁵¹ Badawy, Zaloscer, and Effenberger, for example, frequently cite the works of Wessel, Cooney, and Müller, all of whom discussed the sculptures' market origin.⁵⁵² Yet these later publications make no mention of the market-derived nature of the sculptures, and all report the Sheikh Ibada provenience as a certainty.⁵⁵³ It would seem that the reliability of the market that was emphasised by those who initially published the fakes was accepted by these later scholars. The trust subsequently placed in the initial publications meant that the provenience became treated as fact.⁵⁵⁴ There were no attempts within these publications to justify its reliability, with this having been done in the initial publications.⁵⁵⁵ However, in removing any mention of the market, these later scholars changed the nature of the Sheikh Ibada provenience. There was now no indication that the fakes had surfaced outside of sanctioned excavation. The fakes and their provenience appeared secure, and the only way by which their market origin might be seen is by reference to the initial publications. This was far from unusual within the study of Coptic art. For example, in a 1938 article Ernst Kitzinger noted that many works of Coptic sculpture came from

⁵⁴⁶ Cf. Marlowe's (2013, 99-100) discussion of the Lupa Capitolina.

⁵⁴⁷ Marlowe 2015, 148, 154-155. Muscarella 2013e, 969. Evidently not all scholars do abdicate this responsibility, for if they did far fewer fakes would ever be uncovered.

⁵⁴⁸ Pearson 2018, 35; Marlowe 2015, 147. The statue is said to have been found near the church of San Giovanni in Laterano, in Rome.

⁵⁴⁹ Marlowe 2015. Marlowe's suspicion of the statue's provenience has been challenged recently by Pearson (2018).

⁵⁵⁰ Marlowe 2015, 147-149.

⁵⁵¹ See discussion of scholarly interaction with provenience and provenance in Chapter III *supra*. These initial publications typically stressed the reliability of the source.

⁵⁵² Zaloscer 1974, 117, 119; Effenberger 1975, 141-147; Badawy 1978, 149.

⁵⁵³ Badawy 1978, 146-152; Effenberger 1975, 140-147; Zaloscer 1974, 10, 116-119; Zaloscer 1991, 101, 103. The closest Badawy (1978, 149) gets to addressing the market as the source for these sculptures is when he mentions that some are of "doubtful authenticity" yet he never states why this is. Curiously, Effenberger (1975, 151 pl. 25) does highlight the market origin of at least one sculpture. However, this is not a Sheikh Ibada piece. Why he does not also do this for the Sheikh Ibada fakes is unclear. He also highlights (rightly) that the provenience for this piece is uncertain, but still does not question the Sheikh Ibada provenience.

⁵⁵⁴ Spanel 2001, 91 n.17.

⁵⁵⁵ See Chapter III *supra*. Although common, this trend was not universal. Elbern (1978, (128)82*) notes the market-derived nature of the Sheikh Ibada provenience.

the market and so “their provenance is not always absolutely certain.”⁵⁵⁶ He then discussed two such sculptures, suggesting that, on stylistic grounds, they probably came from Ahnas. However, because they came from the market, he continued to present them without a definite provenience.⁵⁵⁷ In several subsequent publications, however, Kitzinger’s caution is ignored and the hypothesised Ahnas origin is accepted and presented as fact.⁵⁵⁸ As such, once the fakes had entered scholarly discourse they came to appear functionally indistinguishable from many other authentic examples of Coptic art.

The continued uncritical acceptance of the Sheikh Ibada fakes and their associated provenience by subsequent scholars is particularly concerning when one considers that interpretations of the past vary and develop over time, and even contemporary scholars may reject the ideas which contributed to others erroneously authenticating fakes. For example, the belief that Coptic art was a *Volkskunst* was particularly prevalent amongst those responsible for, and contributed to, the authentication of the Sheikh Ibada fakes.⁵⁵⁹ Parlasca, however, despite rejecting the *Volkskunst* interpretation of Coptic art, continued to accept several Sheikh Ibada fakes as authentic.⁵⁶⁰ Similarly, Victor Elbern rejected Cooney’s belief that two Berlin reliefs (27, 28) were likely from the same workshop as the Brooklyn Paralytic (3), arguing that stylistically they varied significantly enough that they were unlikely to have been created together. Yet, despite removing the only stylistic comparisons used by Cooney in his discussion of the Brooklyn Paralytic, Elbern finds no cause to investigate further the authenticity of the sculpture, nor the Berlin reliefs.⁵⁶¹ It appears, then, that once fake antiquities are authenticated, scholars are willing to reevaluate and question the wider interpretations of the pieces, but not the works themselves.

Even those who were aware of fakes within the corpus still often failed to critically evaluate other antiquities that they worked with, some of which were later demonstrated to be fake. Beckwith, for example, included two fakes within his own book despite his issues with the fakes in the Villa Hügel exhibition and Wessel’s book.⁵⁶² Elbern, after writing an article arguing that some wooden and stone carvings reportedly from Sheikh Ibada were fake, still published several

⁵⁵⁶ Kitzinger 1938, 183. Provenance is used by Kitzinger to mean findspot (provenience).

⁵⁵⁷ Kitzinger 1938, pl. LXVII 1, 2. (Coptic Museum, Cairo Invs. 7285 and 44068). Thomas (1990, 2:135-137) traces the several suggested proveniences assigned to Coptic Museum Inv. 7285. Ahnas, Sohag, and the Fayum.

⁵⁵⁸ Wessel (1965, 42 fig. 39) simply lists the Aphrodite as coming “from Ahnas.” This is repeated by Badawy (1978, 144 fig. 3.51), du Bourguet (1971, 24), and Thomas (2000, fig 58).

⁵⁵⁹ See, for example: Wessel 1965, 87, 94; Zaloscer 1974, 122, 130; Effenbergger 1975, 22-25, 140-141.

⁵⁶⁰ Parlasca 1966, 203; Parlasca 1978, 115*(161).

⁵⁶¹ Elbern 1978, 83*(129)-84*(130) pl. 7a, 7b; Cooney 1963, 45.

⁵⁶² Beckwith 1963b, 19-20 figs. 59 (Dumbarton Oaks Inv. 43.6), 61 (Louvre Inv. E26106). The Dumbarton Oaks’ sculpture is not typically classified as a Sheikh Ibada fake, but according to Thomas (1990, 1:134-135) it was the first sculpture to appear in the style of the Sheikh Ibada fakes. For his review of the exhibition and Wessel’s book see Beckwith 1963a, 290, 292. It is evident from his review that Beckwith was aware of Volbach’s views on the authenticity of some of the antiquities in the exhibition. Whether knowledge of these views influenced Beckwith’s viewing of the sculptures and thus his assessment of them is, however, unclear.

other Sheikh Ibada fakes as authentic.⁵⁶³ Badawy notes that some of the ‘Isismysten’ are of “doubtful authenticity,” but never demonstrated why he suspects this, nor why he considered the ones he discussed authentic.⁵⁶⁴ Finally, Parlasca, despite being aware that the Sheikh Ibada provenience was forged and that there were fakes within the Sheikh Ibada corpus, still discussed the Brooklyn Paralytic as authentic, even removing the troubled Sheikh Ibada provenience.⁵⁶⁵ These scholars made no attempt within their publications to justify the authenticity of the works they deemed authentic. Evidently, the existence of known fakes within the accepted corpus, or associated with the Sheikh Ibada provenience, was not considered sufficient cause to question the authenticity of other sculptures similarly presented. Further, with the exception of Parlasca, all accepted the Sheikh Ibada provenience without question.⁵⁶⁶ It appears, therefore, that without prior concern causing scholars to critically analyse specific antiquities they are willing to accept the consensus attributions and authentications of other fakes. The trust expected when presenting items without verifiable proveniences is given by subsequent scholars. In doing so, fakes are allowed to remain part of scholarly discourse, with scholars seemingly willing to uncritically accept past attributions as accurate.

The publication of the Sheikh Ibada fakes also appears to have effectively created a double standard that limited the effectiveness of the early objections to their authenticity. As discussed, the Sheikh Ibada fakes were authenticated with minimal evidence to suggest their authenticity. Despite this, the early objections of Volbach and Beckwith, although limited, were never addressed in those publications which continued to treat the fakes as authentic. Even those who were almost certainly aware of these objections ignored them.⁵⁶⁷ It was only after comprehensive technical analyses of the sculptures were undertaken that they were widely accepted as fakes.⁵⁶⁸ The simple fact the fakes had been published as authentic seems to have been considered sufficient evidence of their authenticity despite no attempt to actually demonstrate authenticity having been

⁵⁶³ For the fake reliefs see Elbern 1967. For the publications featuring the Sheikh Ibada fakes see: Elbern 1966, 37 n.55; Elbern 1973, 262 fig. 81; Elbern 1978, 82*(128)-85*(131) pls. 5, 6a, 7a, 7b, and 8a. 8b also appears highly suspicious.

⁵⁶⁴ Badawy 1978, 149. Given Badawy’s book came out after Vikan’s 1977 talk on the Sheikh Ibada fakes it could be that he is referring to Vikan’s talk. Unfortunately, this cannot be clarified.

⁵⁶⁵ Parlasca 1978, (166) 120* pl. 46. The Brooklyn Paralytic (Brooklyn Museum Inv. 62.44) is listed without any information about its findspot. It is worth noting that Parlasca assigns niche stelae (which, due to their extensive reworkings, some believe to be fake) that originally were listed as coming from Sheikh Ibada as having come from Oxyrhynchus. The removal of the provenience suggests he believed the Brooklyn Paralytic to have been looted.

⁵⁶⁶ Beckwith 1963b, 20; Badawy 1978, 146-152. Elbern (1978, (128)82*) notes that the Sheikh Ibada fakes have come from the market but considers the sources reliable.

⁵⁶⁷ Cooney (1963, 47 n.6) discusses two fakes as stylistic comparisons to the Brooklyn Paralytic. These were both listed in the *Anhang* at the back of the Villa Hügel (1963, 619-625) catalogue which is prefaced with a disclaimer stating the Volbach did not approve these objects for the exhibition. Cooney must have been aware of this as he cites them as having been published in the catalogue. Likewise, Elbern worked in the Berlin-Dahlem (now the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin), which housed the fakes and so was likely aware of Volbach’s objections.

⁵⁶⁸ Vikan 1977a; Thomas 1990, 1:127-152; Severin 1995; Spanel 2001; Koch 1986.

made. This is not uncommon, with the onus of proof typically placed on those who wish to disprove the authenticity of a problematic antiquity rather than on those who view it as authentic.⁵⁶⁹

Although problematic, it is unsurprising that the burden of proof typically lies with those wishing to prove inauthenticity. When a consensus is established, the nature of scholarship is such that scholars are often expected to accept it without proper evaluation each time they make use of it.⁵⁷⁰ In his review of Beckwith's *Coptic Sculpture 300-1300*, Cooney, ignoring Beckwith's already printed issues with the fakes (either out of ignorance or disagreement), chastised Beckwith for overlooking the Sheikh Ibada fakes in his discussion.⁵⁷¹ Instead, Cooney suggested that Beckwith's arguments would have found sufficient support if he has used the fakes as evidence. Further, sometimes those who wish to challenge the authenticity of an item are challenged outside of scholarly discourse by those who have accepted items as authentic.⁵⁷² Where the Sheikh Ibada fakes are concerned, there are at least two instances where attempted suppression occurred. First is the aforementioned dispute that followed Volbach's rejection of 22 objects for the 1963 Villa Hgel exhibition on the grounds that he believed them to be fake.⁵⁷³ In response to Volbach's objections, Metz, director of the Frhchristlichbyzantinische Sammlung, Berlin-Dahlem,⁵⁷⁴ suspended his museum's loans to the exhibition unless the items which Volbach considered fakes were included as authentic.⁵⁷⁵ No attempt was seemingly made by Metz to demonstrate the authenticity of the objects he wished to be included. Instead, he sought to disrupt the exhibition. Secondly, Vikan reported a reprimand that he received from Elbern when he suggested that the Skulpturengalerie's collection may contain examples of the Sheikh Ibada fakes, and was warned that he should be careful about labelling objects as fakes.⁵⁷⁶ It is, unfortunately, unclear if these are the only examples where individuals challenging the authenticity of the Sheikh Ibada fakes were met with resistance on a personal rather than scholarly level.

⁵⁶⁹ For example, Mendenhall (1971, 101-102) after having the authenticity of several supposedly Philistine inscriptions he believed to be authentic questioned states "those who perpetuate the rumours have the obligation of common decency to produce the evidence concerning those alleged forgeries if in fact they do exist." The inscriptions Mendenhall published was convincingly shown to be fake by Naveh (1982). See Rollston (2003, 142-145) for an overview of the 'Hebron documents'.

⁵⁷⁰ Grabbe 2011, 84; Marlowe 2013, 101; Muscarella 2013c, 1038. Marlowe further highlights that many antiquities in Roman art are shielded because they are considered central works, even though many are unique and unprovenienced.

⁵⁷¹ Cooney 1965, 304.

⁵⁷² Muscarella (2000, 2-4) offers several anecdotes regarding the attempted suppression of publications, or scholars, which sought to challenge the authenticity of previously established antiquities

⁵⁷³ Severin 1995, 293-295; Spanel 2001, 92 n.24. See Chapter I.2 *supra*.

⁵⁷⁴ See Chapter I.2.

⁵⁷⁵ Severin 1995, 293-295; Spanel 2001, 92 n.24.

⁵⁷⁶ Vikan 2016, 56-57. Now the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. It should be noted that Vikan's "scolding" is presented in an autobiography, not an academic work.

IV.2.2. The Fakes in Later Scholarship

The difficulty in removing the Sheikh Ibada fakes from the accepted corpus has been further aggravated by those who have shifted, or obscured, aspects of questionable antiquities' pasts which might cast their authenticity in doubt. As discussed, when the fakes first began appearing on the market, the Sheikh Ibada provenience was readily accepted. More recently, however, it has been seen as cause to consider more carefully the authenticity of sculptures said to come from the site.⁵⁷⁷ Yet some sculptures, primarily the niche stelae, which originally appeared with the Sheikh Ibada provenience are now listed either without any indication of a findspot or with a different location entirely.⁵⁷⁸ Martin von Falck pointed out that many antiquities in European and American collections have fabricated provenances, or proveniences, so as to hide their looted nature.⁵⁷⁹ He further discussed the once large corpus of 'Sheikh Ibada' sculptures as having been heavily reduced "bis gegen Null," as many of the pieces are fakes.⁵⁸⁰ Despite this awareness of the prevalence of the Sheikh Ibada fakes, von Falck goes on to discuss several niche stelae that were once attributed to Sheikh Ibada as examples of "Behnasa-Skulpturen."⁵⁸¹ There is no indication in the discussion that these sculptures were once attributed to Sheikh Ibada, that some consider these pieces to be fakes, or that the reduction in sculptures attributed to this site might also be due to scholars reassigning the sculptures, as he and Parlasca have done.⁵⁸² In discussing these sculptures as authentic, but not including that they were once from Sheikh Ibada and linked with the fakes, an important part of the sculptures' history was suppressed. Insight into their modern reception is obstructed, a link which, if publicised, might give others cause to more carefully investigate the authenticity of these pieces.

For wide acceptance of the denouncement of fakes both knowledge of the scholarship denouncing them and agreement with the conclusions reached is required. While ignorance, either deliberate or otherwise, appears to be behind the publication of other Sheikh Ibada fakes,⁵⁸³ the continued acceptance of the niche stelae appears to stem largely from the sharp dichotomy between

⁵⁷⁷ Thomas 1990, 1:139; Vikan 1977a.

⁵⁷⁸ von Falck 1996b, 30 n.5; von Falck, Fluck, & Haustein-Bartsch 1996, 16 no.8, 29 no.21. Gill & Chippindale (1993, 621-622) and Chippindale & Gill (2000, 486-487) would refer to this as a "drifting provenance" or "drifting findspots."

⁵⁷⁹ von Falck 1996b, 29-30.

⁵⁸⁰ von Falck 1996b, 30 n.3.

⁵⁸¹ von Falck 1996b, 30, 30 n.5. Recklinghausen Inv. 511 & 514 (Wessel 1962, unpaginated). In Wessel (1965, 93, 99 fig. V). Recklinghausen 511 is discussed in von Falck (1966a, 75) as having been extensively reworked. Gonosová & Kondoleon (1994, 394 n.2) label Recklinghausen Inv. 511 a fake. To his credit, von Falck does indicate that the term "Behnasa-Skulpturen" is used as a stylistic term, not one indicating provenience.

⁵⁸² von Falck (1996b, 29) cites Parlasca's 1978 article as the basis of the el-Behnasa (*Oxyrhynchus*) style which he identifies with these sculptures. It is important to note that von Falck does not attribute these sculptures to *Oxyrhynchus*, but rather groups them stylistically. Although, on the basis of this stylistic grouping others have assigned the "Isismysten" stelae to *Oxyrhynchus*. See Staatliche Museen zu Berlin 2017 Inv. 3/59.

⁵⁸³ Thomas (1990, 1:149 n.184) and von Falck & Wietheger (1990, 166) denounces the Brooklyn Paralytic as a fake (Brooklyn Museum Inv. 62.44). Yet Marchini (1999, 581 no.7.46) and Schoske (1993, 68 fig. 64) appear ignorant of this and draw parallels between it and Staatliche Sammlung Ägyptischer Kunst München ÄS 5528.

fake and authentic with which many operate.⁵⁸⁴ This is particularly problematic when dealing with antiquities which have been recarved, or excessively restored, as these antiquities are neither wholly fake, nor properly authentic. In light of this, some have suggested specific terminology to identify these works.⁵⁸⁵ Unfortunately, such terminology has not yet filtered into mainstream discourse, and so scholars maintain the old dichotomy. The difficulties caused by this lack of nuanced terminology are evident in some of the more recent publications, such as the catalogue that accompanied the Brooklyn Museum's 'Unearthing the Truth: Egypt's Pagan and Coptic Sculpture' exhibition.⁵⁸⁶ In this catalogue, sculptures were categorised as either fake or authentic. This resulted in a stele depicting a standing youth being presented as authentic, despite the entry for it noting it had been heavily recarved and could have been included as a fake. Instead, the museum asks "the reader disregard the altered features as far as possible."⁵⁸⁷ With no justification for its acceptance as authentic provided, the reader is simply invited to assume that the re-carving must largely conform with the original design.⁵⁸⁸ Similarly, von Falck notes that many of the niche stelae, while presenting them as authentic, have been subject to modern re-carving and repainting.⁵⁸⁹ These reworked items present a particularly vexing issue for scholars as, without more nuanced terminology, both those who argue for and against authenticity may be considered correct.⁵⁹⁰

Finally, it is worth noting that many of those who still consider some of the fakes to be authentic tend to be individuals associated with the museums that house them.⁵⁹¹ For example, Cäcilia Fluck is employed by the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin,⁵⁹² while von Falck has published part of the Recklinghausen Ikonenmuseum collection.⁵⁹³ While decisions as to how much re-carving, or 'restoration', has impinged on the authenticity of an antiquity is ultimately subjective,

⁵⁸⁴ It is worth noting that the stelae with figures holding crosses do not feature within works where other stelae are presented as authentic. It appears that there is universal agreement as to the inauthenticity of these stelae. In saying this, however, Dunand & Lichtenberg (1995, 3258-3259) discuss the existence of Christian niche stelae on the basis of some fakes in the Ikonenmuseum collection (Inv. 589). Török (2005b, 30 n.107) indicates that this is a fake.

⁵⁸⁵ According to Kruglov (2010, 3) some German scholars have suggested using the term "verfälschte Stücke" (faked works) to differentiate recarved, or overly restored antiquities, from works which are entirely modern creations.

⁵⁸⁶ Russman 2009. See Kruglov (2010) for a review of the exhibition.

⁵⁸⁷ Russman 2009, 46-47 no. 14 (Brooklyn Museum Inv. 58.129).

⁵⁸⁸ Kruglov (2010, 4 and *passim*) highlights how a lack of available information regarding the decision to label an item 'fake' or 'authentic' was a common issue during this exhibition.

⁵⁸⁹ von Falck 1996b, 32.

⁵⁹⁰ Anderson 2017, 68. Severin (1995, 293) suggests that these reworked antiquities can only be used as further evidence of the existence of a general type of antiquity because of the loss of individual detail. Short of ignoring these items entirely, this is perhaps the most sensible approach.

⁵⁹¹ There are some exceptions, however. For example, Parlasca, who published a chapter in 2007 where he maintained that the 'Sheikh Ibada stelae' were from Oxyrhynchus (i.e. they were authentic). However, he had previously published the stelae (in 1978) as authentic so still perhaps had a professional interest in maintaining their authenticity.

⁵⁹² Fluck 2013.

⁵⁹³ von Falck, Fluck, & Haustein-Bartsch 1996. Further, Haustein-Bartsch was at the Recklinghausen Ikonenmuseum (she has recently retired). *pers. comm*, Eva Haustein-Bartsch 29/10/2018.

these individuals have, because of their connections to museums, a vested interest in maintaining the integrity, and size, of the collections which cannot be ignored. The degree to which this relationship has impacted their views is unfortunately unclear. However, both Elia and Muscarella have suggested scholars might feel “a debt of gratitude” towards museums, or collectors, which can impact their objectivity.⁵⁹⁴ According to Muscarella and Elia, this “debt” can lead to scholars to deliberately not publishing fakes within collections they work on so as to not offend the museum or owner.⁵⁹⁵ This, however, does not seem to occur with the Sheikh Ibada fakes. Rather, those who have published pieces more recently seemingly trivialise the degree to which recarving has altered the original condition, and thus authenticity, of a piece.⁵⁹⁶ As these individuals are dealing with works which have already entered collections as authentic antiquities, it would be interesting to see if these scholars would employ the same rhetoric if encountering similarly reworked antiquities outside of an associated and established collection.

Once fake antiquities have been authenticated and included in scholarship they are afforded a degree of protection. Scholars, it seems, place their trust with the abilities of those before them, assuming they correctly determined authenticity. As a result, fake antiquities are allowed to continue masquerading as authentic, protected from critical inquiry by these scholarly norms. Yet, when, as the Sheikh Ibada fakes were, antiquities with questionable pasts are employed in scholarship this practice only serves to embed these items further within scholarly discourse making them both more important and their authenticity appear more secure.

Conclusion.

The erroneous authentication of the Sheikh Ibada fakes had significant consequences on the field of Coptic art. Their authentication presented them not simply as objects of the past but also as objects through which the past might be understood. As a result, they entered scholarly discourse and became notable examples of Proto-Coptic art, featuring prominently in some of the

⁵⁹⁴ Elia 1993, 67-68; Muscarella 2000, 3-4. Elia, in his review of Renfrew’s *The Cycladic Spirit*, highlights the absence of discussion as to the possibility of fakes within the Goulandris Collection. He argues that because fake Cycladic figurines were so prominent during the decades in which the Goulandris Collection was being formed, and the collecting practices of the Goulandris (buying without provenience), there are probably fakes throughout the collection. Muscarella, on the other hand, notes similar behaviour in his discussion of ‘forgery culture’. Muscarella’s examples are, however, anecdotal and do not typically include named examples.

⁵⁹⁵ Scholars might also ignore in print the possibility of fakes existing in a collection. According to Elia (1993, 68) it is this debt of gratitude that stops Renfrew (1991) and Doumas (1991) from addressing potential fakes within the Goulandris Collection.

⁵⁹⁶ Fluck (2017), for example, notes that the painting, carved drapery, and some of the bird found on a stela housed in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Inv. 3/59) is modern. Whereas Severin (1995, 292-293) argues that the entire body of this niche stele has been reworked, as has its face, the entire bird (and the hand holding it), and the paint is also modern.

most important works on Coptic art of the mid-20th century.⁵⁹⁷ Within these publications, the Sheikh Ibada fakes were considered of paramount importance to scholars in explaining the development and emergence of Coptic art in provincial Egypt. Authenticated within a troubled paradigm, the fakes offered further support for the accuracy of the prevailing interpretations and theories by which Coptic art was understood during this period. Moreover, the novelty of the fakes was interpreted as evidence of a previously unknown regional artistic tradition at Antinoë during the fourth and fifth centuries CE, and subsequent insight into the nature of the population. Ultimately, because these discussions made use of fabricated evidence, any conclusions reached as a result are undermined, and need either be dismissed or, at least, re-examined.

Furthermore, in examining those publications produced after the emergence of the fakes, one finds a concerning lack of critical evaluation of prior scholars' interaction with the fakes. Subsequent scholars were willing to accept the attributions of those who had already authenticated the fakes without first questioning why they had been accepted as authentic. The Sheikh Ibada provenience, noted in earlier publications (although still presented as accurate) to have been provided by the market became a certainty. Once the Sheikh Ibada fakes entered academic discourse, their authenticity became protected as part of a consensus. The protective nature of this consensus was such that even scholars who were aware that fakes existed within the corpus were willing to interact with other erroneously authenticated fakes without critically considering their authenticity. In doing so, however, the fakes were further embedded in scholarship and their authenticity appeared ever more secure. What becomes evident in examining these subsequent publications is that the same lack of routine suspicion that characterized the acceptance of the fakes continued after their true nature had been revealed. In this way, the authentication of fake antiquities has long-lived and persistent implications for the discipline.

⁵⁹⁷ Wessel 1965; Effenberger 1975; Zaloscer 1974; Badawy 1978. To a lesser extent the fakes also featured in du Bourguet 1971.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined how fake antiquities can come to be erroneously authenticated by scholars and the subsequent impact that this can have on a discipline, taking as a case study the fake sculptures said to come from Sheikh Ibada. This began with an overview of the environment in which the fakes surfaced.⁵⁹⁸ An examination of the scholarly discourse of the mid-20th century demonstrated that existing notions about Coptic art were problematic: there was no clear understanding as to what constituted ‘Coptic art’, with limited stylistic and technical analysis, resulting in an unclear interpretive framework. This was followed by a consideration of the presentation of the fakes on the market, which demonstrated that the market’s willingness to operate without an open exchange of information allowed the Sheikh Ibada fakes to be presented as authentic. Moreover, because the market largely operated without documentation, it was reliant on a bond of trust between buyer and seller, which formed a guarantee of the antiquity’s authenticity for customers. Thus, when the fakes emerged, scholars were operating within an environment in which the market had in effect already erroneously authenticated them, while the contemporary scholarly environment was one which was (unwittingly) receptive to fakes.

Having contextualised the surfacing of the fakes, it was necessary to examine how scholars interacted with them.⁵⁹⁹ Exploring the methods available to scholars for the authentication of antiquities involved an analysis both of scholars’ interaction with the documentation provided by the market and their application of connoisseurship in the early publications of the fakes. It was shown that scholars were well aware that the fakes had not surfaced during sanctioned excavation, and yet were still willing to accept as fact the Sheikh Ibada provenience provided by the market. Moreover, as a result of connoisseurship, scholars correctly noted that the fakes did not conform to the existing corpus of Coptic art. Despite these discrepancies, no one who examined the fakes found cause to question their authenticity. Instead, authenticity was assumed and contexts were constructed to account for the unique stylistic features, which included the creation of a self-contained comparative corpus. Ultimately, there was a lack of what should be routine suspicion amongst scholars when encountering antiquities which were not found during sanctioned excavation.

By way of closing the analysis, the consequences of the erroneous authentication of the fakes were explored. A survey of the use of the fakes within scholarship demonstrated that, because they had been authenticated, they came to be seen as valuable examples of Proto-Coptic sculpture, which allowed scholars to chart the development of Coptic art. Moreover, despite the

⁵⁹⁸ See Chapter II.

⁵⁹⁹ See Chapters III and IV.

absence of verifiable provenience, the fakes led scholars to perceive erroneously an artistic tradition specific to Antinoë. The Sheikh Ibada fakes thus had a profound role in shaping discourse on Coptic art during the mid-20th century. Further, it was demonstrated how, once fake antiquities are authenticated, they become protected, with scholars willing to accept the attributions of those before them without critically considering the validity of their judgements. In doing so, the authenticity of the fakes became ever more secure, with subsequent scholars reporting the provenience of the fakes with unwarranted certainty, omitting notice of their market-derived nature that was often included in the initial publications.

This thesis has demonstrated that there are fundamental issues with the ways scholars interact with undocumented antiquities which lead to fakes being erroneously authenticated. Worryingly, the issues identified here were not restricted to one of two scholars: rather, the authenticity of the Sheikh Ibada sculptures was widely accepted within the field. There was a consistent lack of suspicion among scholars, both those who initially published the fakes and later members of the discipline. The fact these issues were so wide-spread and significant demonstrates the necessity for the rigorous ethical and publication practices adopted by a number of professional organisations which attempt to alter the attitudes of their members towards undocumented antiquities.⁶⁰⁰ These policies, and others like them,⁶⁰¹ have been adopted as greater awareness of the prevalence of looting and the associated damage to the archaeological record has arisen. However, while these policies call for greater transparency regarding the origins of antiquities, they do not always call for open and frank discussions about authenticity.⁶⁰² The salutary story of the Sheikh Ibada fakes indicates that this lack of focus given to authenticity is concerning, and suggests that it would be beneficial to insist that those who wish to publish undocumented antiquities be required to first present arguments in favour of authenticity. Such discussion would encourage others to consider carefully the authenticity of these undocumented antiquities, and may lead to fakes being uncovered earlier, preferably before they have been published and certainly before they have been used to support wide-ranging theories, as the sculptures examined here were.

⁶⁰⁰ Renfrew (2000, 77-88) and Brodie & Renfrew (2005) have discussed the changing attitudes, or lack thereof, towards undocumented antiquities since 1970. For example, both the American Schools of Oriental Research (2015, §III.E.4) and the American Institute of Archaeology (2016, §3) have ethics policies stipulating that they will not serve as the initial place of publication for antiquities that cannot be shown to have been outside of their country of origin prior to either December 30, 1973 (AIA) or April 24, 1972 (ASOR), or have left legally since.

⁶⁰¹ Brodie & Renfrew (2005, 351-353) discuss the '1970 rule' where 1970 (year of the UNESCO Convention) has become something of an ethical watershed in the acquisition and publication of undocumented antiquities. Anything that was outside of its country of origin prior to 1970 is seen as 'good' while those after that date must be accompanied by legal export documentation. The AIA and ASOR policies are variations on this rule.

⁶⁰² The ASOR policy does ask that "authors of publications or presentations should be transparent when introducing data of uncertain reliability to the realm of public knowledge, particularly when research and publication involves artifacts that lack an archaeological findspot or that are illegally exported." American Schools of Oriental Research 2015, §III.E.2.

Any such requirement to demonstrate authenticity needs to encompass antiquities which have surfaced recently as well as those which have been in circulation for a substantial time,⁶⁰³ as a long provenance history is no guarantor of authenticity. Moreover, when investigating authenticity, the validity of the comparanda needs to also be considered, lest fakes authenticate fakes. The authenticity of unprovenienced antiquities is a subject that needs to be constantly revisited as technology and knowledge advance.⁶⁰⁴ Scholars nevertheless need to be mindful not to let the discussion of authenticity trivialise concerns about the legality of an antiquity, or the accuracy and specificity of its documented history.⁶⁰⁵ At the same time, such concerns cannot be allowed to obscure the issue of authenticity. All three of these issues are crucial points to consider when deciding on the scholarly value of an antiquity.

At the most basic level, the Sheikh Ibada fakes were able to enter and impact scholarship because scholars were willing to interact with antiquities that surfaced outside of sanctioned excavations. Many have already recommended that primacy in scholarship go to those antiquities with a verifiable provenience.⁶⁰⁶ As the authenticity of securely provenienced antiquities is the most certain, conclusions drawn from working with these antiquities are the most reliable.⁶⁰⁷ The findings of this thesis further support this argument. The Sheikh Ibada fakes would never have been allowed to enter scholarship as they did if scholars had refused to work with them for the simple fact they were not recovered during excavation. However, a blanket rejection of unprovenienced antiquities is unlikely ever to occur, given the steadfast belief of some as to their value, and the central role they have taken within many branches of archaeology and ancient art history.⁶⁰⁸ Despite these factors, the case of the Sheikh Ibada fakes makes clear the damage which can be done when scholarship is constructed on the basis of unprovenienced antiquities. As such, it is highly desirable that reconstructions of the past based on undocumented material be limited, or even avoided altogether if possible.⁶⁰⁹ Although it might be impossible to prevent fakes from being authenticated erroneously while unprovenienced antiquities continue to enter and form part

⁶⁰³ It is acknowledged that recently surfaced antiquities are unlikely to be published, but there are exceptions in the ASOR and AIA policies which do allow them to be published. For example the ASOR policy stipulates that due to excessive looting, the fact they can be easily authenticated (not that it stipulates that they have to be), and the fact that the text can provide information without archaeological context, that cuneiform tablets can be published even if suspected of being looted. Moreover, it further allows items that have surfaced recently to be published if the purpose of the publication is to publish them as a fake or to highlight the destruction of archaeological context.

⁶⁰⁴ For example, the authenticity of the Praeneste Fibula (which has potentially the earliest known Latin inscription) has been constantly debated since it first surfaced in 1887, with views shifting over time as technology and new knowledge offer further insight. For a recent discussion of the various arguments that have been presented see Tikkanen 2012, 23-28.

⁶⁰⁵ Marlowe (2013, 105) suggests that concerns about legality or authenticity can “obscure the deeper epistemological issues inherent in ungrounded [(i.e. unprovenienced)] antiquities.”

⁶⁰⁶ Rollston 2004, 75; Marlowe 2013, 121; Renfrew 2000, 22; Chippindale & Gill 2000, 504.

⁶⁰⁷ They also have valuable contextual information which allows for far more accurate conclusions to be drawn.

⁶⁰⁸ Gill & Chippindale 1993, 622-624; Marlow 2013, 101.

⁶⁰⁹ Ideally this would also involve revisiting some foundational theories within particular disciplines if they were constructed with undocumented antiquities.

of the data set, ensuring that provenienced antiquities are given primacy would at least mitigate the damage fakes can do to a discipline.

Furthermore, far greater transparency is required both when publishing antiquities, *and* when using them in analysis. Many of the published fakes were simply presented as being ‘from Sheikh Ibada’, particularly after they had been initially published. Scholars ignored the fact that the fakes had come from the market, and also often failed to note when they had surfaced. In doing so, they gave these sculptures a more secure appearance than was warranted by their documentation. Those who did highlight that the fakes had come from the market argued that their provenience was accurate because they had come from a ‘reliable’ source, yet never identified this source. Presenting the fakes in such a way obstructed independent investigation into their origins. Antiquities, both those which are found during sanctioned excavations, and those that surface on the market or in collections, need to be published with full and comprehensive histories of their ownership, identifying when and where an antiquity first surfaced, and, if it has a findspot, how this is known.⁶¹⁰ This allows for far greater clarity and certainty within scholarship.

Finally, as the Sheikh Ibada fakes demonstrate, authenticity sits on a spectrum. There are antiquities which are entirely authentic, those which are most definitely fake, and those which sit somewhere in between. Unfortunately, there is no standardised view on how to best interpret recarved or overly restored antiquities, which can lead to inconsistencies within the literature, depending on how reliable one deems the reworking to be. As such, it would be highly beneficial, and offer far greater clarity, to introduce a scale of authenticity into scholarship. Rollston has already suggested scholars employ a labelling system so that they might identify how certain they are about an item’s authenticity and provenance.⁶¹¹ While this system does not address the possibility of reworked antiquities, it does provide a useful starting point, and if adapted and adopted would allow for far greater transparency within scholarship.

Had such a system existed and been used when the sculptures examined here came to light, the Sheikh Ibada fakes may not have had the significant impact on scholarship chronicled here. Ultimately, this thesis has provided a further demonstration of the issues that emerge when scholars willingly work with undocumented antiquities sourced from the market. Authenticity is of paramount importance when attempting to understand the past, yet without provenience, authenticity cannot be certain. As long as scholars persist in working with antiquities that surface outside of excavation, the potential for fakes to inform their work will continue to exist.

⁶¹⁰ For example: it is known from excavation, inferred from connoisseurship, or provided by the market.

⁶¹¹ Rollston 2004, 73-79. Rollston proposes two separate yet related systems. One to identify in an antiquity is unprovenienced (he suggests either using the symbol ‘Ø’ or [non-prov]) and a four-point scale to identify how certain authenticity is.

Appendix A.

Sheikh Ibada fakes in Museums

This is far from a comprehensive list of all examples of the Sheikh Ibada fakes (Gary Vikan claims to have uncovered at least 120 as of 1977, however, he never published all the fakes he uncovered). Rather, this is a list of all examples of the Sheikh Ibada fakes that are housed within museums which are mentioned within this thesis (as well as some additional sculptures). They are listed, here, according to the institution which houses them. These institutions are listed alphabetically, while the fakes are listed numerically by acquisition number. Furthermore, there are citations to publications which have discussed these items as fakes (although not those which listed them as authentic).

There has been no attempt to add previously unknown examples of the Sheikh Ibada fakes to this list, as this would ideally be undertaken in person, which was simply not possible within the confines of this thesis. Rather, this list is based off the decisions of other scholars. It is the most complete list of the Sheikh Ibada fakes compiled in print thus far, and, hopefully, will provide a firm starting point for further research into the Sheikh Ibada fakes.⁶¹²

Where possible, the provenance (meaning here ownership history) of the pieces has also been included. This, however, is often not public record and has been difficult to track down, and when found only ever goes back to the dealer. Likewise, provenience information has only been offered for British Museum Inv. EA1795 because it is the only sculpture listed here that was found during the course of sanctioned excavation.

‘Inv.’ – is used to designate the acquisition number for an item at its respective institution. The numbers in boldface to the left of the acquisition numbers are for in-text referencing.

Brooklyn Museum.

1) Inv. 58.80: Holy Wisdom (?).

Provenience: Once said to come from Sheikh Ibada.

Provenience: Purchased in 1958 from Marguerite Mallon.

Thomas 1990, 2:100-102.

Spanel 2001, 102-103.

Russmann 2009, 64-65.

2) Inv. 60.212: Roundel with Human Head.

Provenience: Once said to come from Sheikh Ibada.

Provenience: Donated to the museum in 1961 by Jerome Eisenberg and Louis Beck. Eisenberg claims to have acquired this piece from Kamel Hammouda, a dealer from Cairo.

Spanel 2001, 99-100.

Russmann 2009, 66-67.

3) Inv. 62.44: One Cured of Paralysis (Brooklyn Paralytic).

Provenience: Once said to come from Sheikh Ibada.

Provenience: Purchased from Nessim Cohen, no date given.

⁶¹² Ideally, this list will be expanded in the future to include as much provenance information as is possible, and a far more complete list of the fakes. However, this requires dedicated archival research which was simply not possible during this thesis.

Spanel 2001, 97-99.
Török 2005b, 26.
Russmann 2009, 68-69.

4) Inv. 63.36: Standing Woman.

Provenience: Once said to come from Sheikh Ibada.
Provenance: Purchased in 1963 from the André Emmerich Gallery.
Spanel 2001, 100-102.
Russmann 2009, 70-71.

5) Inv. 68.153: Arch with a Female Figure.

Provenance: Purchased in 1968 from Jean Roudillon in Paris, France.
Russmann 2009, 76-77.

6) Inv. 72.10: Three Busts on a Capital.

Provenance: Purchased in 1972 from the André Emmerich Gallery.
Spanel 2001, 105-106.
Russmann 2009, 80-81.

7) Inv. 77.129: The Holy Family (?).

Provenance: Originally purchased on the antiquities market. Given to the museum by a Mrs. Kaplan in 1977.
Spanel 2001, 103-105.
Russmann 2009, 82-83.

Dumbarton Oaks.

8) Inv. 43.6: Dionysos in a Chariot.*

Provenience:
Thomas 1990, 1:134-135, 2:230-232.

* This is not typically included within the corpus of Sheikh Ibada fakes, but has been included in this list as, according to Thomas, it is the earliest recarved antiquity to surface featuring stylistic similarities to other Sheikh Ibada fakes.

The Louvre.

9) Inv. E26104 (AC 107): Daphne (?).

Provenience: Once said to come from Sheikh Ibada.
Thomas 1990, 2:206-208.
Spanel 2001, 92 n.23.

10) Inv. E26106 (AC 122): Dionysos Among Grapevines.

Provenience: Once said to come from Sheikh Ibada.
Thomas 1990, 2:209-211.
Spanel 2001, 92 n.23.

Princeton Art Museum.

11) Inv. y1962-45: Helena Discovering the True Cross.

Provenience: Once said to come from Sheikh Ibada.

Spanel 2001, 90 n.8.

- 12) Inv. y1962-46: Judgement of Paris/ Thetis Presenting Armor to Achilles
Provenience: Once said to come from Sheikh Ibada.
Spanel 2001, 90 n.8.

Recklinghausen Ikonenmuseum.

- 13) Inv. 502: Relief Plaque with the Ascension.
Spanel 2001, 90 n.8.
Török 2005b, 28.
- 14) Inv. 508: Relief Plate with Sirens (or Nereids).
Török 2005b, 28.
- 15) Inv. 511: Grave Stele with Seated Boy.
Provenance: Purchased in 1955 from Heidi Vollmoeller Gallery in Zurich, Switzerland.
von Falck 1996b, 29.
- 16) Inv. 516: Bust of a Woman.
Provenance: Purchased in 1955 from Heidi Vollmoeller Gallery in Zurich, Switzerland.
Spanel 2001, 93 n.28.
Török 2005b, 29, 29 n.106.
- 17) Inv. 517: Relief Plaque with Two Busts and a Cross.
Spanel 2001, 93 n.28.
Török 2005b, 29 n.105.
- 18) Inv. 518: Unframed Niche Stele of a Boy.
Török 2005b, 29 n.105.
- 19) Inv. 521: Pilaster Capital.
Török 2005b, 29 n.105.
- 20) Inv. 526: Pilaster Capital.
Török 2005b, 25-26, 26 n.79.
- 21) Inv. 547: Bust.
Spanel 2001, 89 n.4.
- 22) Inv. 566: Bust.
Spanel 2001, 89 n.4.
- 23) Inv. 567: Bust.
Spanel 2001, 89 n.4.
- 24) Inv. 589: Grave Stele with Boy Wearing Cross.
Török 2005b, 30 n.107.

Rijksmuseum van Oudheden.

- 25) Inv. F 1962/8.2: Relief Block with Nile Goddess and Crocodile.
Spanel 2001, 93 n.29.
Török 2005b, 26.

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

- 26) Inv. 3/59: Stele of a Boy.
Provenance: Listed in the 1959 *Ars Antiqua* catalogue. No. 25.
Severin 1995, 292-293.
- 27) Inv. 5/62: Naked Boy Holding Cross in Left Hand, Grapes in Right Hand.
Spanel 2001, 98-99 n.52.
- 28) Inv. 6/62: Naked Boy Holding Cross in Right Hand.
Spanel 2001, 98-99 n.52.
- 29) Inv. 19/61: Enthroned Isis with the Horus Child.
Severin 1995, 293-295.

Staatliche Ägyptischer Kunst München.

- 30) Inv. ÄS 5528: Kneeling Youth (Similar to the Brooklyn Museum's *One Cured of Paralysis*).
Spanel 2001, 93 n.29, 98 n.51.
- 31) Inv. ÄS 5529: (Formerly in the Wilhelm Esch collection) Niche Stele of a boy holding a cross.
Provenance: Listed within the 1960 *Ars Antiqua* catalogue. No. 38.
Török 2005b, 27 n.89.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

- 32) Inv. 63.56.1: Stone Lunette (Similar to the Brooklyn Museum Inv. 58.80).
Gonosová & Kondoleon 1994, 394-395.
Spanel 2001, 102-103.

AUTHENTIC EXAMPLES.

British Museum.

- 33) Inv. EA1795.
Provenance: Excavated by Flinders Petrie.
Provenience: Tomb 20, Oxyrhynchus. Excavated by Flinders Petrie (1925, pl. XLV.10).

Brooklyn Museum.

- 34) Inv. 58.129.*

Russman 2009, 46-47 no.14.

*this piece is heavily recarved but labelled authentic by Russman.

Nelson-Atkins Gallery.

35) Inv. 55-42: Niche Stele with Standing Boy.

Provenance: Purchased from Paul Mallon in 1955.

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