UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

'We make the diamond shine'

Archaeological communities in Quseir, Egypt

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the relationship between archaeology, archaeologists and a local community in Quseir, Egypt. Undertaken as part of the Community Archaeology Project at Quseir, a unique project that is endeavouring to challenge traditional archaeological approaches in Egypt, it forms one component of the wider archaeological investigation of Quseir al-Qadim, a Roman and Mamluk port on the Red Sea coast. The research presented here explores the role of the past in the present, whilst demonstrating the potential benefits inherent in collaborative archaeological practice.

The data upon which this thesis is based are drawn from 170 interviews conducted with both local residents and archaeologists in the city of Quseir; the disparate themes addressed being those most prevalent within the interviews themselves. In part one I discuss the development of community archaeology in the 1970s, highlighting the role of indigenous communities' critiques of the discipline and situating a community oriented approach within the broader field of socio-political analysis in archaeology. I reflect upon the various methodological, political and ethical issues raised by undertaking research of this nature, and argue for the incorporation of alternative perceptions of the past into the archaeological canon. In part two, I demonstrate the richer texture of an archaeological narrative that incorporates the oral history of local communities, before examining the role of the past in

the construction of contemporary community identity within Quseir, an identity that is simultaneously archaeological, historical and folkloric. I conclude by critically examining the development of heritage tourism in Quseir.

This thesis complements the work of scholars of both community archaeology and socio-political analysis in archaeology. It nevertheless goes further, demonstrating the potentials of collaborative archaeological practice to generate research questions of interest and relevance to all parties, whilst providing a unique insight into attitudes towards the past in the present.

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Many of the ideas found within this thesis have developed from conversations with other members of the Community Archaeology Project at Quseir. I am especially grateful to James Phillips for our long discussions on the history of Quseir, and for his company on our many wanderings around the city in search of historic buildings. Thanks must also go to Alistair Jones for sharing my interest in the folklore of Quseir and to Amer Aldo Mohammed, Diaa and Mohammed for their enthusiasm and support of the research presented here.

Members of the archaeological team investigating the ancient past of Quseir al-Qadim have also proved immensely supportive of both my research and the Community Archaeology Project more generally. Special thanks must go to the co-director's Professor David Peacock, Dr Lucy Blue and Nick Bradford, for their intellectual and logistical support during fieldwork, and to Rebecca Bridgman, Dr Dionisius Agius and Lucy Blue for discussing their particular research interests with me. Julian Whitewright, archaeological illustrator and member of the excavation team produced two illustrations found within chapter six of this thesis. Thank you to all those involved in the investigation of Quseir al-Qadim for making the research process such an enjoyable one.

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For general emotional, intellectual and (occasionally) physical support I would like to thank my friends and family who have been so patient throughout the last few years. They are too numerous to name, but I am especially thankful to Luanne (for everything), Brenda, Eileen and Kate. This thesis would, however, not have been possible without my supervisor, Dr Stephanie Moser. I will be forever grateful to her for offering me the opportunity to undertake the research presented here, but also for her unstinting support, encouragement and tireless editing. Many of the ideas presented within with this thesis developed out of discussions with Steph; without her belief in this research, the final product would have been much poorer.

It would not be right to begin this thesis without offering my sincere thanks to all those in Quseir who gave so freely of their time to sit with me and discuss the issues contained within; I hope you will not be disappointed with the results. Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to the memory of a man who always saw the best in the people he loved. *From your boy.*

INTRODUCTION

The past unalive in the present is not history
Henry Glassie, *Passing the time in Ballymenone*, (1982:196).

This is a thesis about communities, both archaeological and non archaeological. More specifically, it examines the interplay between archaeology, archaeologists and a local community in Quseir, Egypt. It addresses perceptions of the past and constructions of identity, whilst demonstrating the potential benefits inherent in collaborative archaeological practice. In short, it examines the past that is alive in the present.[1]

The city of Quseir is located on the Red Sea coast of the Eastern desert, some 600 kilometres south of Cairo and 150 kilometres east of the Nile valley (figure 1). It is a city that is in transition, with local residents and international agencies drawing upon the rich tapestry of the past to construct a new identity for Quseir as a city of heritage, the antithesis of the newer tourist/ industrial based economies of the Red Sea – Hurghada, Safaga, and Marsa Alam.[2] They certainly have a diverse history upon which to draw: some nine kilometres north of the modern city lay the remains of Quseir al-Qadim, a Roman and Mamluk (Medieval Islamic) port of major international archaeological significance (figure 2). Excavated partially by a team from the University of Chicago in the late 1970s (see Whitcomb & Johnson 1979, 1982), the site has subsequently been investigated by the University of Southampton, UK. Begun in the spring of 1999, five seasons of excavation attest to the grandeur of the region's ancient past.

The research presented here is part of a unique project that is endeavouring to challenge traditional archaeological approaches in Egypt. An integral component of the wider archaeological investigations at Quseir al-Qadim, the Community Archaeology Project at Quseir was established by Stephanie Moser in 1998 and now includes ten team members, both residents of Quseir and Europeans. The project is founded upon the premise that it is no longer acceptable for archaeologists to reap the material and intellectual benefits of another society's past, without that society being involved and able to benefit equally from

Figure 1. Location map of Quseir.

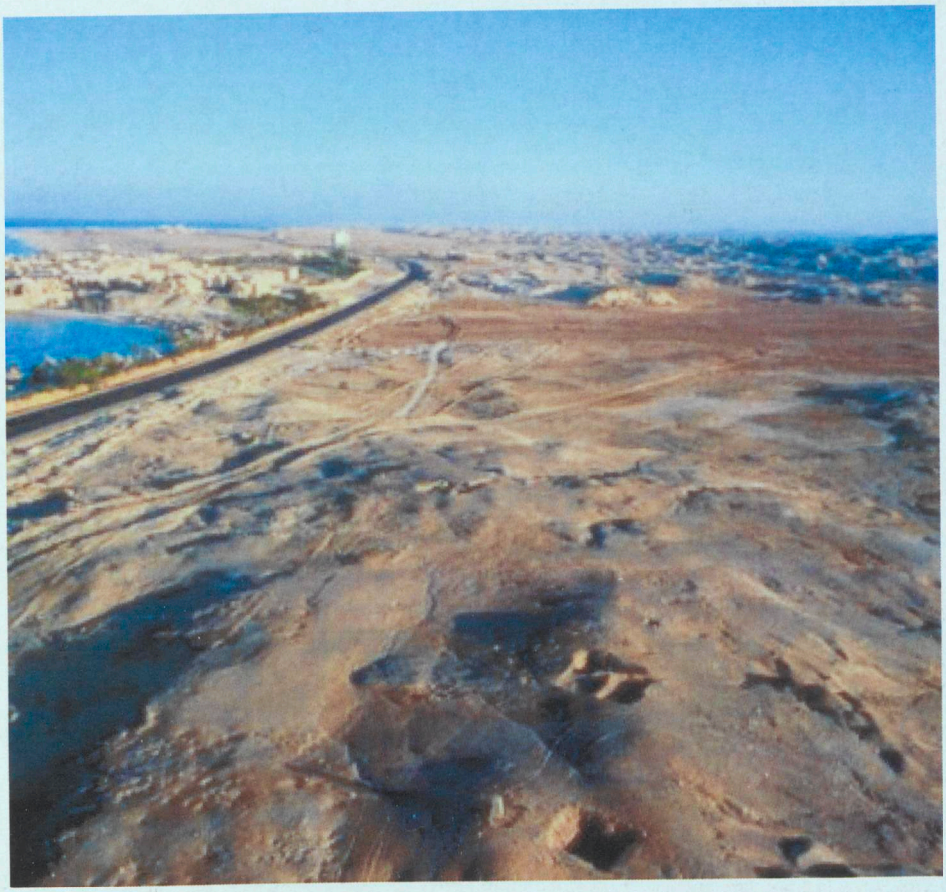

Figure 2. Quseir al-Qadim from the air.

the endeavour (see Moser *et al* 2002:221; and chapter one). This thesis forms a central part of one aspect of the project – the interviews and oral history programme – and as such is based almost exclusively upon interviews conducted with both residents of Quseir and the archaeological team.

These interviews have been conducted over a number of field seasons. Since that first February in 1999, I have been fortunate enough to spend some twenty-seven weeks in the city, including three seasons of primary data collection (2000-2001) and a further three as both a member of the Community Archaeology Project and of the archaeological team more generally. Four of these weeks were spent in the luxurious confines of two of the city's hotels; the remainder in the often surreal environment of the archaeological desert camp.

It is nevertheless important to emphasise that, though this thesis is based upon interview data, it is not an ethnographic study. I seek to examine the role of the past in the present; I do not attempt to discuss the city of Quseir more generally, nor have I utilised many of the methodological techniques that makes ethnography so unique – participant observation, for example (see chapter two). The disparate themes and topics covered within this thesis do, however, reflect themes prevalent throughout the interviews themselves: the role of the past in the construction of identity, the potential role of archaeology in consolidating heritage tourism in Quseir, and the interplay between archaeological and non archaeological perceptions of the past.

Any project conducted in collaboration with members of a local community becomes, out of necessity, interdisciplinary. The themes raised throughout the interviews conducted in Quseir have demanded that I become acquainted with the work of scholars in many fields, including anthropology, sociology, history, nationalism, colonial/ post-colonial discourse, folklore, tourism, heritage studies and cognitive psychology. It is hoped that I have at least done justice to each of these disciplines; it is not possible, however, to become an expert in all.

Perhaps as a result of these forays, and in an effort to embrace the true spirit of heterogeneity and eclecticism, this thesis does not draw upon one single theoretical tradition. Rather, I have sought inspiration from a variety of scholars, touching upon many theories but landing on none, rooting my discussion not so much in the abstract validity of theory, but in the 'reality' of Quseir.[3] That may sound un-academic; I believe it is liberating. I do not seek to deny the usefulness of theory – indeed, much of what follows will be theoretically informed. I simply resist the temptation to place this thesis within one specific theoretical framework.

Ironically, this position may appear to be somewhat post-modernist (see Mercer 1990:56). Yet I take issue with a post-modern project that seeks to deny the contemporary existence of meta-narratives whilst thousands die daily as a result of the master narratives of state, religion, imperialism and social progress.[4] We have a duty, as academics, to locate our studies in the present realities of the world, not the often surreal environments of the

Western academy.[5] Postmodernism has perhaps created the conditions in which the academy has been prepared to listen to other voices, to recognise the rights of others in the investigation of the past, but the other voices were always there.

In adopting this position, I differ markedly from the post-colonial theorist Homi Bhaba's (1994:19) impassioned plea for a 'commitment to theory':

> There is a damaging and self-defeating assumption that theory is necessarily the elite language of the socially and culturally privileged. It is said that the place of the academic critic is inevitably within the Euro-centric archives of an imperialist or neo-colonial West...Must we always polarise in order to polemicise?...Is our only way out of such dualism the espousal of an implacable oppositionality or the invention of an originary counter-myth of radical purity? Must the project of our liberationist aesthetics be forever part of a totalising Utopian vision of Being and History that seeks to transcend the contradictions and ambivalences that constitute the very structure of human subjectivity and its systems of cultural representation?

I would argue, however, that my position allows us to recognise 'contradictions and ambivalences' without reducing people – and how they interact with their past – to neat philosophical models. Very few of us live our lives consciously as post-modernists or phenomenonologists. To suggest otherwise, to endeavour to categorise thoughts, actions and feelings solely in terms of theoretical frameworks, replicates the asymmetry of colonialism through the construction of intellectual authority and contributes, in Quseir at least, to the process of orientalism described so eloquently by Edward Said (1978).

It is nevertheless important to emphasise that throughout this thesis I do not attempt to 'speak for' the people of Quseir. Though I include many extracts from interviews, the analysis itself (unless otherwise indicated) is my own.[6] As Spivak (1993:70) suggests, "the theoretician does not represent (speak for) oppressed groups".[7] For this reason too, I endeavour to avoid synthesising the words of interviewees whenever possible. Though accounts that have been written from the perspective of the 'other' are often intriguing, challenging the assumptions of the reader, it is perhaps questionable whether such an approach is truly ethical. Carmel Schrire's *Digging through darkness* (1995), for example, is at times a fascinating account of the author's efforts to situate herself within her own research,

but can she really write from the perspective of an indigenous southern African woman who has undergone centuries of the most brutal oppression? Similarly, whilst Matthew Kneale's award winning novel *English Passengers* (2000) is both sensitive to Aboriginal history and a joy to read, can a white, British male realistically write an account of Australian Aboriginal interactions with colonists from an indigenous perspective?[8] Ultimately, we cannot write from any perspective than our own.

Indeed, to a great extent this thesis negates the oft stated post-processual aim of achieving multi-vocality in archaeology. Incorporating interview extracts into this research project serves to contextualise the study more fully. It does not, however, provide 'others' with a forum to speak for themselves. Though I quote verbatim from interview extracts as often as possible, everything is still mediated by me: I choose what to include and what not, I choose, sometimes unconsciously, statements that support my arguments. I have tried to do this as transparently as possible – when there are dissenting voices, I have included them in the text. But it is still my text and my narrative; I am always in the privileged position of narrator. As Joyce (2002:102) suggests, "having other voices in the text does create greater heteroglossia, as these speakers say things in their own dialects. But it is questionable whether it introduces polyphony".

Perhaps polyphony could be achieved by simply presenting the reader with interview extracts without analysis, comment, or editing. I recognise that within the confines of a PhD, the need to fulfil certain criteria makes such an approach impossible. Furthermore, it would still be my text, mediating the discussion through the selection of transcripts for inclusion, even through the questions asked in the original interview. This is problematic, it is not necessarily fatal – there comes a time when we have to stop theorising and start *doing*. Perhaps, then, it will become part of a future project. For the purposes of this thesis, though, I have endeavoured to problematise my privileged position by situating myself firmly within the text (see chapter two).

The research presented here is thus divided into two parts; *Community archaeologies* and *Archaeological communities*. Part one, *Community archaeologies*, is primarily theoretical and methodological in orientation, highlighting the various theoretical positions adopted and

introducing the reader to the methodological tools that facilitated data collection in Quseir itself. In chapter one I situate my research within the wider archaeological discipline, examining the main trends of socio-political analysis in archaeology and outlining the development of community archaeology approaches. Next, I define and problematise key terms that recur with great frequency throughout this thesis: local, community and identity. I conclude the chapter with a more detailed discussion of the Community Archaeology Project at Quseir. In chapter two, I focus upon the research process itself, examining the various methodological and ethical issues raised by undertaking work of this nature and highlighting the obstacles that had to be overcome before research in Quseir could commence. Perhaps the biggest of these was my inability to speak Arabic.

It may be possible to argue that attaining a certain level of fluency in Arabic would have been beneficial to my research in Quseir from the outset. One critical factor, however, encouraged me to begin this thesis without delay: I was presented with the opportunity to undertake this research in the spring of 1999, as the first layers of sand and salt were peeled away from Quseir al-Qadim by the archaeological team. This was a unique opportunity to examine the potential impact of archaeology, its role, status and meaning in a local community *as the excavation progressed.* Since then, I have endeavoured to attain at least an adequate grasp of the nuances and complexities of the Arabic language, both through lessons in the UK and by spending time in Egypt itself. The research presented here has nevertheless been primarily undertaken in collaboration with a number of interpreters, individuals who have undoubtedly influenced the direction and the texture of this thesis. For this reason, a substantial part of chapter two is devoted to the discussion of the advantages and disadvantages inherent in conducting interviews through an intermediary.

In chapter three, I turn my attention toward the often contentious question of the role of alternative perceptions of the past in the archaeological discipline, focusing especially upon the folklore of archaeological sites. Drawing upon the work of scholars of folklore, archaeology and anthropology, I suggest that a sensitive analysis of archaeological folklore is essential if we are to understand how the past is experienced, how it is negotiated and understood in the present. I conclude by examining the potential of archaeological folklore to construct contemporary community identities. This chapter complements those that have

gone before, whilst contextualising many of the arguments presented in subsequent chapters, principally chapter six.[9]

Part two of this thesis, *Archaeological communities,* is primarily focused upon Quseir itself. Based upon interviews conducted with local residents, it examines the perceived impact of archaeological investigation at Quseir al-Qadim and explores the role of the past in the construction of a unique identity for the city. Chapter four is thus a discussion of the history of Quseir, from the ancient to the modern, demonstrating the potentially richer texture of an archaeological narrative that incorporates the oral history of a local community.

In chapter five, I nevertheless pose the question 'Just how important are archaeological interpretations/ perceptions of the past in Quseir?' Through an analysis of interview transcripts, I suggest that though the *presence* of an archaeological investigation in the city may have a significant impact upon the construction of identity within Quseir, archaeological interpretations are often of less importance than the tangible reality of the archaeology itself. Detailed archaeological analyses may ultimately serve only to reinforce the strong sense of historical awareness already prevalent within Quseir.

The physical presence of Quseir al-Qadim is also central to the construction of archaeological folklore, the focus of chapter six. In this chapter I introduce the reader to the folklore of Quseir al-Qadim, suggesting that at present the perceived relationship between the ancient port and the city of Quseir is frequently articulated through folkloric perceptions of the past. In doing so, I demonstrate the central role of folklore in the construction of archaeological knowledge in Quseir. Finally, I argue that though the folklore of Quseir al-Qadim may be categorised as 'oral traditions', at least part of their ability to construct meaning resides in the visual elements of the tale – key scenes, icons and motifs that connect the past with the present.

All these chapters focus upon the role of archaeology in the present of Quseir. Yet for many interviewees, the potential of the archaeological investigation at Quseir al-Qadim to generate heritage tourism and thus future economic development is paramount. In the final chapter of this thesis, chapter seven, I therefore discuss the development of heritage based tourism

within the city, critically examining the vision of Quseir's heritage promoted by the various local, national and international bodies currently active within the city. I conclude with a discussion of the perceived role of Quseir al-Qadim in the designation of Quseir as a heritage tourist destination *par excellence.*

Given the scope of this research project, it has nevertheless been impossible to address as many things here as I would have wished. In essence this thesis forms an introduction to an ongoing research project, an introduction that deals with the essentials, and one that allows both myself and others to address intriguing research questions in the future. There was not the space here, for example, to incorporate all the competing narratives of Quseir al-Qadim into one multi-layered biography of the site. Instead, given the contentious nature of the use of alternative perceptions of the past in archaeology, it was deemed necessary to include a detailed theoretical chapter examining the potentials of archaeological folklore, thereby facilitating the construction of such a narrative in the future.

Nor is this the place to discuss the history of archaeology in Egypt *per se*, and its development as a colonial project for the British and the French, and later as a nationalist discourse for the Egyptian government and Egyptian Egyptologists; that has been done more eloquently elsewhere (e.g. Reid 1985, 1997, 2002; Mitchell 1991, 2001; Haikal 2000).[10] The reader must, however, note the colonial context of archaeology in Egypt, from the publication of the *Description de l'Egypte*, the race to transcribe the Rosetta Stone, to Carter, Carnarvon and Tutankhamen. Little has changed in the century that has passed since Carter first began to scrabble around the valleys close to Luxor: though Egyptian Egyptologists and the Egyptian authorities now retain control of those artefacts unearthed by archaeologists (Moser *et al* 2002:222), the vast majority of archaeological excavations are still conducted by Western archaeological teams in a manner that has remained largely unchanged for some 150 years. This thesis, and the Community Archaeology Project more generally, offers an alternative, demonstrating the potential richness of archaeological narratives and investigations constructed/ conducted through collaborative investigative practice.

[1] The research presented here has been conducted entirely during my period of registration as a post-graduate research student at the University of Southampton. None of the chapters contained within have been published in their entirety elsewhere. An edited of version of chapter seven is, however, to be published in a forthcoming volume edited by Kamran Asdar Ali and Martina Rieker devoted to tourism in the southern Mediterranean (as yet untitled); parts of chapters three and six in the forthcoming *Envisioning the past*, edited by Moser and Smiles and published by Blackwells. A brief synopsis of this research was presented in the Community Archaeology Project's contribution to *World Archaeology* (Moser *et al* 2002). Unless otherwise indicated, all the work presented herein is my own.

[2] Hurghada, a collection of kitsch tourist villages developed in the 1980s is some 160 kilometres north of Quseir; Safaga, the major Hadj and industrial port of the Red Sea, eighty kilometres to the north. The new diving resort of Marsa Alam is presently being developed some 100 kilometres to the south of Quseir.

[3] I admit that I still have a fondness for the clarity and lucidity of Roland Barthes, even though people tell me he is excessively structuralist/Marxist/French. I find his emphasis on the social construction of meaning stimulating in a way that I do not find in the often impenetrable writings of some of his contemporaries.

[4] This thesis is being written at a time when the 'allied' forces have 'liberated' Iraq. The hostilities, to use President Bush's phrase, have 'ceased', yet daily we hear about new deaths on each side of the conflict.

[5] The impact of much postmodernist discourse is lessened by the impenetrability of its prose. As Chris Gosden states, citing David Walcott: "It convinces one that Onan was a Frenchman" (Walcott 1989:141; cited in Gosden 1999:197). Homi Bhabha's discussion of the theories of Lacan and Derrida, for example, uses the same, often obtuse language found within their original texts (e.g. 1994:57-60; cf. Bhabha's discussion of Fanon 1994:60-65). Given that Bhabha emphasises the political and interventionist aspects of his work, this is somewhat disappointing (Loomba 1993:308). A similar critique of the language of archaeological theory and its role in disenfranchising non archaeologists (and perhaps, we might add, some archaeologists) has been presented by Downer (1997:29).

[6] Throughout this thesis, interview extracts are referenced in the following manner: Int. n for an interview undertaken in the first field season, Int. 2.n for the second season, Int. 3.n for the third. Whenever lengthy extracts are included,

I: refers to the interviewee
DG: to the author

On several occasions, the interpreters with which I collaborated took a more active role in the interview process than the term interpreter would suggest (see chapter two). In these instances

M: refers to Mohammed Saleh
DA: to Diaa Abdul Aziz Gad.

All the extracts are quoted verbatim.

[7] See also Said (1984) on the 'permission to narrate'.

[8] It must be emphasised that neither Schrire (1995) nor Kneale (2000) claim to fully 'understand' southern African or Australian Aboriginal culture.

[9] Much consideration (and some consternation) has been devoted to the appropriate position of this chapter within the wider thesis. Originally situated in part two and acting as an introductory chapter to my discussion of the archaeological folklore of Quseir al-Qadim, it disrupted the flow begun by chapter four, taking the emphasis away from Quseir itself.

[10] Though see chapter five for a discussion of local, national and international perceptions of the Egyptian past.

PART ONE

Community archaeologies

CHAPTER ONE

Archaeological communities?

Community archaeology, socio-politics and archaeological theory

Memory… is like a country remembering its history: the past was never just the past, it was what made the present able to live with itself.

Julian Barnes *England, England* (1998:6)

Over the previous two decades, the socio-political analysis of archaeological research has become increasingly recognised as a legitimate area of academic research. Indeed, following the landmark publication of Gero, Lacey and Blakey's *The socio-politics of archaeology* (1983), an ever burgeoning volume of literature has been devoted to the study of socio-politics within the discipline (e.g. Gero 1985; McBryde 1985; Pinsky & Wylie 1989; Atkinson *et al* 1996; Graves-Brown *et al* 1996; Meskell 1998). Socio-politics is not, however, one unified sub-field of the discipline: it has many facets, including the analysis of nationalism in the development of archaeology, the ownership of the past and the retention of archaeological artefacts by museums and institutions, the manipulation of the past in the present, the relationship between archaeology and modern political movements, the representation of archaeology in modern media and the interplay between archaeological interpretations and alternative perceptions of the past.[1] This list is by no means exhaustive, and perhaps many are beginning to recognise that in reality *all* archaeology is socially and politically motivated. Yet out of this montage of diverse, competing interests has emerged a mode of archaeological practice that touches upon all the facets of socio-political discourse in modern archaeology – 'indigenous', 'post-colonial' and 'community' archaeologies.

In essence, community archaeology is an approach to archaeological investigation that incorporates a range of different strategies designed to facilitate collaboration with local communities in the investigation and interpretation of the past (Moser *et al* 2002:220). It is not, however, merely a methodological or ethical issue, but stems from the belief that incorporating other voices into the interpretation of the past results in better archaeological research. As such, it does not simply advocate 'contact' or 'consultation',

the passive process of simply telling others what is going to be done, but *collaboration* with local communities at every stage of the research process. Throughout this chapter, I discuss the potentials of this approach in Quseir, examining the impact of the Community Archaeology Project and attitudes towards the development of the project, both within the city itself and within the archaeological team investigating the Roman and Mamluk ports of Quseir al-Qadim. I also define several key terms and concepts that recur throughout this thesis: local, community and identity. I begin, however, with a brief discussion of the development of community based projects within the broader sphere of socio-politics and archaeology.

The development of community archaeology

The concepts of 'Indigenous', 'Post-colonial' and 'Community' archaeology developed as a result of political action by indigenous communities. Indeed, it has been suggested that in Australia

> the most radical changes in attitude...in recent years have come about as a direct result of pressure from Aboriginal groups, campaigning not only for land rights, but also for the right to control their own culture and have some input into, as well as feedback from, research projects (Vinnicombe 1995:96).

Moser's discussion of the 'Aboriginalisation' of Australian archaeology demonstrates most fully the development of Australian archaeology in a climate of Aboriginal political activism (1995*a*). She describes the radical changes in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in the 1970s, emphasising the role of indigenous critique in forcing archaeologists to consider the living population of Australia, and thus situating their research within the realities of the contemporary political world: "at an early stage in its formation as a discipline, Australian archaeologists were addressing the impact of their research on Aboriginal people" (Moser 1995*a*:156-7). Subsequent state and federal legislation has made it increasingly difficult for archaeologists to ignore Aboriginal communities, at least whilst undertaking prehistoric archaeological research (Moser 1995*a*; Clarke 2002:250). Though there is understandably still some residual tension between archaeologists and indigenous groups in Australia (see Field *et al* 2000; Greer *et al* 2002:267), the pioneering research of individuals such as Colin Pardoe in the 1980s and early 1990s demonstrated the potential benefits of community led projects to an

archaeological discipline that is prepared not simply to consult, but to collaborate (e.g. Pardoe 1985, 1990, 1991).

At approximately the same time as indigenous critiques were beginning to reshape Australian archaeology, Native American groups in the United States became increasingly vociferous in their demands for the right to control research into their own past. Integral to this movement was the writing of Vine Deloria Jr, a Standing Rock Sioux Indian scholar whose confrontational, biting style acted as a powerful challenge to social scientists of all disciplines. In his seminal *Custer died for your sins: An Indian manifesto* (1969), Deloria demanded self-determination, emphasising Native American communities' right to reject research projects that had little or no worth for the community (see also Grobsmith 1997:41). Unfortunately, though Deloria laboured to convince archaeologists that the pasts they were intent on recovering were the living heritage of living peoples, archaeology was slow to heed the message. In a climate of increasing scientism and objectivism, it would take the discipline a further twenty five years to truly understand what all the fuss was about (McGuire 1997:77).

In reality, the greatest changes within archaeology in the US have arisen as a direct result of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990, imposed externally onto the discipline by US congress, forcing archaeology and institutions to recognise the rights of Native American communities' in the investigation of their past.[2] Legislation has nevertheless tended to err on the side of restricting investigation rather than mandating collaboration, thus causing a certain amount of resentment on all sides (see Meighan 1996; contributions to Biolsi and Zimmerman 1997). Furthermore, professional organisations have primarily advocated 'feedback' of information as a means of meeting the requirements of federal legislation, falling short of recommending direct involvement in the research process (e.g. Healy 1984; McMannamon 2000).

Somewhat paradoxically, the increasingly complex heritage and cultural resource management (CRM) legislation in the US may have hindered the development of community based archaeological practice. Truly innovative community archaeology projects must be inspired from a research passion, a belief in the possibilities and potentials of the research, not from necessity or legal obligation. Indeed, the most

pioneering projects that have arisen out of the United States have emerged from historical, plantation archaeology, a sub field of the discipline largely unfettered by legal mandates (e.g. McDavid 1997, 1999, 2002). It is noticeable, for example, in the papers collected by Swidler *et al* (1997) that it is Native American communities who are most vociferous in foregrounding collaboration in research projects, as opposed to mere consultation.[3] This is most poignantly highlighted by Reba Fuller:

> As a spokesperson for the Central Sierra Me-Wuk Cultural and Historic Preservation Committee, I still wonder to what degree would professional archaeologists work with the native people had federal and state laws not required their involvement? (1997*a*:148).

Despite this, the research conducted by Rose Kluth and Kathy Munnell on the Leech Lake Reservation does highlight the potentials for collaborative practice within the NAGPRA framework for a discipline prepared to accept the challenge; a project in which the needs of both the Native American community and archaeologists were met equally, and where traditional practices were incorporated into the investigation and interpretation of an indigenous site (see Kluth and Munnell 1997; also Fuller 1997*b*).

Socio-politics and archaeological theory

Unfortunately, the paradigm shifts that shook the foundations of Australian archaeology in the early 1970s and, to a lesser extent, the US throughout the 1980s have not yet had sufficient impact in Europe, or more specifically, Britain. Socio-political analyses in Britain – and perhaps theoretical Anglo-American archaeology more generally – has predominantly focused upon the construction of archaeological knowledge. As Moser (1995*b*:7) has highlighted, despite the calls for the construction of a social archaeology, it is the construction of social theory that has been the main focus of post-processual archaeology.

This is frustrating. Though post-processual archaeology espoused a commitment to 'emancipatory ends' (Wylie 1989:95), in reality the majority of its most prominent practitioners have become embroiled in the very theoretical and methodological debates that it so vehemently criticised processual archaeology for. Two decades on, we are still waiting for the revolution.

This is perhaps most evident in Tilley's *Archaeology as socio-political action in the present* (1989) – the very title of which would lead one to conclude that what follows will be a discussion of the role of archaeology on modern society, further supported by his pertinent question '[i]s doing archaeology like playing the fiddle whilst Rome burns?' Unfortunately, this theme is not developed. What we are offered instead is the occasional token statement ("changing the nature of archaeology will filter through and have an effect on other areas, especially through interaction between professional archaeologists and the public" [1989:115]), amidst a thinly disguised critique of the positivist nature of processual archaeology. Can archaeology really be made "practically relevant to the present" (1989:112), as it is claimed, through a discussion of 'Biologising the social', 'Rationalising the economic' or 'Developing a critical approach to texts'? I would suggest not.[4] As we shall see below, community archaeology projects may ultimately tell us far more about the construction and dissemination of archaeological knowledge.

When British and European authors have moved beyond methodological disputes, they have predominantly concerned themselves with nationalism, politics, cultural identity, ethnicity and archaeology (see for example Kohl and Fawcett 1995*a*; Atkinson *et al* 1996; Diaz-Andreu and Champion 1996; Graves-Brown *et al* 1996; Jones 1997; cf. Faulkener 2000). Given the spectre of nationalism that has dominated the history and development of the continent in the last 200 years, this is perhaps unsurprising. The majority of these often sensitive, astute analyses are largely historical, focusing upon grand meta-narratives and the political manipulation of archaeology at state level (e.g. Arnold 1990; Dietler 1994; Arnold & Hassman 1995; Lillios 1995; cf. the regional analysis of Sommer 2000).

Highlighting both the negative and positive uses of archaeology – for it has been and can be used positively (see Kohl and Fawcett 1995*b*; Trigger 1989, 1995) – was a necessary and important step in the development of a more politically self-aware, reflexive discipline. There is, however, a need to move beyond that. No longer is it necessary to simply demonstrate the political nature of archaeology, as it was perhaps ten years ago. We need now to build upon these historical studies, to re-contextualise them in the present, lest we be fooled into the assumption that they are of little immediate relevance to modern archaeological discourse.

With the notable exception of Faulkner's (2000) passionate plea for an 'archaeology from below' and his collaborative Sedgefield Historical and Archaeological Research Project, community archaeology has received scant attention in Britain. At least in part, this is explicable by the perceived lack of a vociferous community challenging the hegemony of archaeology. Archaeology, as we know, is a fundamentally Western science, given kudos and credence by large swathes of the public who have their thirst for the past satiated by the astonishing amount of archaeology in the British media. When challenges to academic hegemony have occurred, they have largely emanated from groups that are easily dismissed as 'fringe' – neo-Pagans and Druids, for example (see Wallis 2003) – and therefore of little consequence, rather than groups and communities whose claim to the past is perceived to be a strong as 'our own'.[5] Though the theoretical and philosophical climate provided by post-processualism and postmodernism has certainly provided the right conditions for community archaeology projects to develop, many of us, particularly perhaps the middle classes in which archaeology prospers, would struggle to define a community in Britain – or perhaps more specifically, in England (see also Gosden 2001:257). As Jeremy Paxman suggests in his illuminating portrait of all things English, "the English have not spent a great deal of time defining themselves because they haven't needed to" (1999:23).

When researchers have concentrated upon archaeology in the present, they have largely ignored Anglo-American and European archaeology, focusing instead upon those states that have become pariahs in the Western world (e.g.; Falkenhausen 1995 on China; Nelson 1995 on Korea; Bahrani 1998 on Iraq; Naccache 1998 on Iran). When this is combined with the vilification of such countries in the media (see Said 1997), practitioners are again encouraged to regard socio-political analysis as relevant only to a critique of the development of archaeology in the non Western world. Given the developments in Australian archaeology discussed above, this is particularly frustrating.

Unfortunately, this is further emphasised by the few European studies that have attempted to analyse the socio-political implications of archaeological research in the modern Western world. Many of the papers in Meskell (1998), for example, offer little substantive analysis of data, relying largely on personal recollections, reminisces and anecdotes. Though, as I shall argue later, it is necessary to situate oneself within ones own research context, this should not be done at the expense of analyses, or indeed data

collection, as some have attempted (e.g. Hodder 1998; cf. Clarke 2002). It is highly unlikely that the archaeological community would tolerate a lack of data if, for example, a researcher were examining taphonomy or agriculture in the Neolithic. Why, then, is it deemed acceptable by some in socio-political analyses? Though many in the discipline would now accept the need for socio-political research we still do not demand the same levels of methodologically rigorous analysis, undermining it as a project and contributing to the perception that it can be done as a distraction, a welcome break from the rigours of more intellectually challenging, 'real' archaeology.

In stark contrast to this is the work of Gero (1989) and Meehan (1995), both of whom support their arguments with data methodically collected and analysed (Meehan's is a synthesis of earlier research). A more recent example can be seen in the work of Field *et al* at Cuddie Springs (Field *et al* 2000), where a considerable effort has been made to discover the attitude of the local community toward archaeologists, excavation, liaison and consultation (see Field *et al* 2000:39-42; also contributions to Marshall 2002*a*). Though their research focuses largely upon attitudes toward the archaeologists (there is no mention of involvement in the interpretation process), the approach is a necessary and refreshing one. All three studies demonstrate the potential benefits of socio-political research that has a solid empirical basis.

With these notable exceptions, when archaeologists have attempted to outline guidelines for a more self-aware archaeological *practice* they have invariably been far from successful. The approach taken by Ian Hodder, for example, in *Always momentary, fluid and flexible: towards a reflexive excavation methodology* (1997) has left him open to accusations of theoretical self indulgence. As Hassan suggests, "he misses the point of politically and morally committed archaeology, which is that our research ought to address issues relevant to the prosperity and well-being of mankind" (1997:1021). This is disappointing. Handled properly, such analyses can play a major role in the creation of a more socially relevant archaeology, a discipline that is more integrated into the communities within which it operates. Instead, both Tilley (1989) and Hodder (1997) present us with sweeping criticisms of present practice, over intellectualising the process of change and offering very little in its place. Is it not somewhat ironic that the pasts that are now so fashionable amongst theoretical archaeologists are the same pasts called for by indigenous communities in Australia and the US over thirty years ago? We need now

to move beyond philosophising – and not just in areas where there is a vociferous local community – to work practically *as well as* theoretically to ensure the creation of a more socially and politically sensitive archaeological discipline, and one in which multiple voices and concerns can be heard.

To this end, the Community Archaeology Project at Quseir (CAPQ) is in the process of developing a research methodology that will facilitate community collaboration at every stage of the research process in Quseir (see below). The project has provided us with the opportunity to gain access to alternative perspectives and interpretations of Quseir al-Qadim, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the site, and its status within the community, than would be possible through more traditional archaeological approaches alone. This is crucial: despite the recognition that local communities should be active in the construction of histories (e.g. Handsman and Leone 1989; see also contributions to McDavid and Babson 1997; contributions to Biolsi and Zimmerman 1997), there has as yet been little detailed analysis of perceptions of the past and heritage amongst local communities. This research project endeavours to undertake such an analysis, focusing upon both 'alternative' and 'archaeological' constrictions of the past in Quseir, the perceived benefits of archaeology in the present, its exploitation in the future, and the construction of a shared sense of community identity through appeals to the past. Such an analysis is essential if we are to recognise and maximise the intellectual and social benefits of research conducted in collaboration with a local community.

In contrast to many of the analyses undertaken previously (whether socio-political or of community based projects), I have been provided with opportunity to examine the interplay between archaeology, perceptions of heritage and the local community whilst an archaeological investigation is in progress. In this, I endeavour to build upon the research of Gero, Meehan and Field discussed above, as well as the anthropological study undertaken by David Shankland at Çatalhöyük (1996; 1999).

This does, however, have both advantages and disadvantages. Whilst it has been possible for me to collect a vast amount of data that would not be so easily accessible retrospectively (see chapter two), it is not possible to adequately assess the long-term success or otherwise of the CAPQ within the time frame imposed upon this thesis. The reader will also look in vain for a single argument running through my discussions of

archaeology in Quseir. I perceive this to be a strength: the discussion of the potential exploitation of the past in the construction of a 'heritage-based' identity for the city endeavours to reflect the contradictory and competing voices within Quseir, the diversity of perceptions of the past within a modern, cosmopolitan city. Perhaps this makes the project more 'real'. Dissension and competing voices have the potential to be lost in retrospective analyses, as memories blur, conflicts are forgotten and events that were once fiercely debated take their course.

Yet is it feasible to talk about the construction of identity, particularly in a post-colonial context such as Egypt? Both Fanon (1961, 1986) and Césaire (1983), post-colonial intellectuals, argue that the concept of identity is a tool of the oppressors, imposed upon disparate peoples to justify subjugation: 'the black soul is a white man's artefact' (Fanon 1986). This was certainly true in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, when racial and ethnic stereotypes were promulgated to vindicate colonial expansion and oppression of non European peoples. Said nevertheless maintains that this process exists today, manifest in the West's construction of the Orient and Orientals – intellectual, political and cultural discourse articulating the East, from the West (1978).[6] In Said's terms, knowledge of Egypt *is power* over Egypt (1978:32). Deloria (1969) too argued that only a researcher who is deeply embedded within a community can produce work that is both relevant to that community and not colonial in nature, and even then, given disciplinary histories and traditions, it is perhaps impossible not to incorporate residual colonial behaviours into our exhaustively researched methodologies.

I would argue, however, that my approach is a valid one. I do not attempt to construct an identity for Quseir, but seek to analyse the role of the past in the construction of identity at a time when the city is actively repositioning itself to meet the needs of a developing tourist industry (see chapters four and seven). Jankowski (1997) and Hassan (1998) have previously highlighted the importance of appeals to the past in the construction of an Egyptian national identity, both pre- and post-revolution; Reid (1997; 2002) documenting the role of indigenous Egyptologists in this process. My research shifts the gaze to a local level, documenting the potential impact of an archaeological investigation on a community that has continually redefined itself (see especially chapter seven). Given this, I would argue that a discussion of the construction of identity in Quseir through appeals to a shared past is not only necessary, but vital. In adopting this

position, I nevertheless recognise that the concepts 'community' and 'identity' are not ontologically given, but historically and culturally constructed (see Said 1989:225, and below).

Throughout my research, I also draw inspiration from those within archaeology that have attempted to challenge elitism within the discipline.[7] By engaging with non-archaeological communities, we can begin to counteract the very real danger of archaeology becoming obsolete and self-serving. As Wylie has suggested:

> ...the institutions within which histories are constructed must be reshaped to ensure that they are inclusive of, and responsive to, the needs and histories of those whose history is at issue....history should be "undertaken for the people"...[there is a] need to construct the present histories in an idiom that "resonates" with – that is accessible to and engaging of – its popular audience (1995:267).

One such history was constructed by Janet Spector through her feminist archaeology at Little Rapids, where she demonstrated the potential of an archaeology that appeals to a diverse range of interest groups and communities (1993; see also Marshall 2002*b*). For Spector, as for Clarke later (2002), a community oriented approach developed out of a personal response to fieldwork, an emotional and intellectual engagement with a research context that went beyond that mandated by more traditional archaeological practices, yet resulted in powerful and stimulating publications. It is not insignificant that the vast majority of those researchers cited above are women, many of whom have played fundamental roles in the development of feminist archaeologies (e.g. Gero 1985, 1991; Spector 1991, 1993; Wylie 1991; Moser 1995*b*).

Given the intellectual strength of Wylie, Spector, McDavid and Clarke's work, it is somewhat surprising that Marshall, in her recent introduction to a *World archaeology* volume devoted to the subject of community archaeology, distinguishes between an archaeology which seeks to investigate the past in collaboration with local communities, and academic research potential:

> community archaeology can be extremely time consuming, deeply frustrating, humbling and challenging in unanticipated ways – but it is also rewarding in ways that transcend narrow academic accolades (2002*b*:218; see also Crosby 2002:363).

Though I sympathise with her sentiments, these two areas – high quality academic research and research that benefits others – are not, and never have been, mutually exclusive.

Yet for the research potential of community archaeology to be recognised there is a pressing need to revise our terminology. Dorothy Lippert, for example, uses the term 'penance' (1997:127) when urging archaeologists to collaborate with indigenous communities, whilst at the recent Fifth World Archaeological Congress in Washington DC (2003) the mantra 'it is our moral duty' was repeated with alarming alacrity. For me, 'moral duty' simply replicates the asymmetry of colonialism, representing archaeologists as benevolent and paternal, high minded individuals concerned for the welfare of voiceless communities. Though I do not suggest that anyone using the term is guilty of such motives, its continued use serves the interest of no one.

Furthermore, though many of the sessions at WAC5 were undoubtedly stimulating, there was a frustrating tendency towards self-flagellation. I participated in two sessions at the congress, both of which were dominated by vociferous, well argued critiques of the discipline and present archaeological practice. These critiques, though, often remained largely theoretical. There was little recognition that in many parts of the world archaeologists *are* engaging with local communities and undertaking research not too dissimilar to that advocated (e.g. Clarke 1994, 2002; McDavid 1997ff; Moser *et al* 2002). As Zimmerman notes (1997:52), science is no longer sacrosanct: communities do indeed have the right to research, interpret and present the past in their own terms, and to use that past for their own aspirations – whether those aspirations are spiritual, religious or economic. I would question, however, whether emphasising 'moral duty' or endeavouring to adopt the 'moral high ground' is the best way to convince our more sceptical archaeological colleagues of the benefits and necessity of community archaeology projects. This will be achieved only through demonstrating that archaeological investigations embedded within communities generate stimulating research questions, and ultimately leads to better research – not least, as this research project endeavours to demonstrate, a deeper understanding of the interplay between past and present (see also Franklin 1997; Moser *et al* 2002).

Identity, identities; community, communities; local, localities. Some brief notes on terminology

Throughout the previous section, I provided the reader with a brief review of socio-political analysis and the development of community archaeology, highlighting the main trends and demonstrating the contribution of my research project to this genre. Before we progress with this thesis it is necessary, however, to define several key concepts and terms to which I shall continually refer: local, community and identity.

Locating the local

> *The worldwide does not abolish the local, however much it might want to*
>
> Henri Lefebvre, *The production of space* (1991:86).

It is suggested by the historians Driver and Samuel that there is a pressing need to rethink the notion of place. They ask:

> If [in the postmodern world] conventional notions of place have been destabilised, what are the alternatives? Can we understand the identity of places in less bounded, more open-ended ways? Can we write local histories which acknowledge that places are not so much singular points as constellations, the products of all sorts of social relations which cut across particular locations in a multiplicity of ways?...Such questions arise not simply within projects of local history, but within all these varieties of writing concerned with places and their pasts (1995:vi).

It would thus appear that my use of the term 'local' in reference to a local community requires further definition – indeed, Urry (1995:71) argues that the very terms 'local' and 'locality' are as much theoretical constructs as any of the other words we use in our semantically rigorous analyses. In essence, I use the term to refer to a specific place, Quseir (figure 1.1). Throughout this thesis, I shall argue that Quseir and the area that surrounds it, including the archaeological site of Quseir al-Qadim, has a significant impact upon the way people perceive themselves in relation to other parts of Egypt. In doing so, I draw inspiration from Harvey's claim (1989:295-6) that as space decreases, as barriers are broken down through media, travel and commercialisation, the importance

Figure 1.1 Quseir from the air.

of place, somewhat paradoxically, increases (see also Massey 1994; Ahmed & Shore 1995; Urry 1995:23). In a world of increasing globalisation, of the 'global village', the 'local' has become more essential than ever in governing our interactions with the world around us.

That is not to say, of course, that Quseir is a totally bounded, isolated entity, anymore than Southampton, Kuala Lumpur or New York. Appadurai (1990) has highlighted most eloquently the processes through which information, culture, ideologies and people flow across boundaries, whether national or local.[8] This is not the time, or indeed the 'place', however, to examine in detail the position of Quseir within this framework – to perform

such an analysis adequately is beyond the scope of this thesis both logistically and in terms of brevity. My discussion of the development of heritage tourism in chapter seven nevertheless recognises the impact of the global on the local.

My use of the phrase 'local community' therefore refers solely to people who live within, or close to, the modern city of Quseir. I recognise that this definition is inherently limiting – it excludes, for example, discussion with individuals who have recently left the city and yet maintain strong links. Why should the opinions, thoughts, reflections and ideas of someone who has lived within the area for only a few months be given more weight that an individual who has spent twenty years in one location, only to move on more recently? Gosden (2001:257), however, poses an equally important question: does length of familial residence in an area give an individual *more* of a voice than a new resident? Certainly within Quseir, endeavouring to address that question is problematic. Given the numbers of economic migrants that flocked to the city from the nineteenth century onwards (see chapter four), what is the 'original' local community? This study endeavours to examine the role of archaeology within a local community, based solely upon location of residence.

Community or communities?

Geography matters; it makes people who they are
Jeremy Paxman, *The English. A portrait of a people* (1999:3)

Throughout this thesis, I shall also continually refer to the 'community'. For the purposes of this research project, I define community as the group of individuals that live within the city of Quseir. An active interest in the investigation of the past is therefore *not* a prerequisite for membership of this community. As we shall see later, archaeological research at Quseir al-Qadim has the potential to impact upon a diverse range of people, whether they wish to be involved in the process or not.

Paul Gilroy, in his analysis of race and culture in the Britain of the 1980s, *There ain't no black in the Union Jack*, argues that the term community implies a sense of cohesion, one that may be developed through a common interest in a shared locale: "collective identities spoken through 'race', community and locality are...powerful means to co-

ordinate action and create solidarity" (1987:247). As Gilroy's use of the word 'create' suggests, communities are never 'authentic' or 'genuine', but imagined by the people within them (see Anderson 1983) – a mental construct that can be (though need not be) manifested in a locality (Cohen 1985).

I do not however suggest that there is a *single community* of Quseir, whether constructed through appeals to the past or residence in/ affiliation with a shared locality. Communities are not simply constructed upon internal similarities, but also internal difference (Hall 1990); identities, whether national, local, artistic or individual, are multi-faceted (Guibernau 1996). There is no single homogenous community; Quseir is not a utopian ideal. So whilst I believe that it is possible to talk about the community of Quseir, we must recognise that there are multiple, intersecting identity constructs within that community – Islam itself acts as a 'communal identity marker' (Kandiyoti 1993:384), as does gender, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and economic status.

Emphasising difference and heterogeneity also serves to highlight the problem of essentialism – the perceiving of communities as unified wholes, minimising diversity and contesting voices (Rutherford 1990:10; Mercer 1990:57).[9] Indeed, there is a very real risk that a project of this nature will fall into the trap of essentialising the community, a trap I have endeavoured to avoid by highlighting dissenting voices whenever they are present. By recognising difference and diversity, by critiquing the notion of homogeneity within a community, I believe we can reasonably retain the use of the term as a concept.

It is also important to recognise that neither the community of Quseir nor the archaeological community that establishes a temporary presence in the desert environs are segregated from one another. In this, we can perhaps draw from Homi Bhabha's notion of 'hybridity' (e.g. 1994): we work alongside each other for six hours a day, sharing experiences and drawing from one another, constructing an alternative, 'archaeological community', the physical reality of which may last only a few months, but whose impact may have greater longevity for all concerned. The effect of this archaeological community on my own research will become apparent in chapter two.

Constructing community identities

Recognising heterogeneity does, however, raise an interesting question: how do individuals ever come to form a community? Perhaps the most obvious means is through self-ascription, the claim by an individual to be a member of a particular community, group or society. That claim nevertheless has to be reaffirmed by others: Barth (1969), though discussing ethnicity, argued that the membership of a particular group has to identify *itself* as constituting a community that is distinguishable from others (see also Jones 1997).[10] I could claim to be a member of an Inuit community, a musical community or a literary community for example, but my lack of participation within those communities, my lack of knowledge of the cultural codes and symbols used by those communities, and the lack of recognition on the part of others that I am a member of those communities, would render any such claim untenable.[11] As Friedman suggests, "there would seem to be a growing scepticism if not disbelief in our identifications, while 'they' are busy identifying themselves" (Friedman 1992:846).

It is nevertheless argued by Homi Bhabha (1986), among others, that for a community to exist it must be constructed in relation to an 'Otherness'. Throughout this thesis I shall demonstrate, sometimes explicitly, at other times less so, that the community of Quseir has frequently positioned itself in opposition to other locations in Egypt (the cities of Hurghada, Luxor, Cairo and Aswan for example), often based consciously on perceptions of the past. For Bhabha (1994), the twin notions of pedagogy and performance are essential to the formation of a national community identity founded upon recognition of the other, and both are equally applicable at a more local level. 'Pedagogy' consists of discourses (media, speech and propaganda, for example) through which a community constructs itself (1994:142); 'performance' the performing of a community identity within particular contexts and encounters with others (1994:145; see also Mitchell 2001). Identities are never ontologically given, but continually constructed, reconstructed and performed (Bhabha 1986). Within any community, people are at once 'pedagogical objects and performative subjects' (Bhabha 1994:151).

We have seen from the studies devoted to archaeology, nationalism and the formation of nation states that the past too plays an important role in identity constructs (e.g. Kohl & Fawcett 1995*a*). Yet this is often grounded not so much in the archaeology of the past,

"but in the *re-telling* of the past" (Hall 1990:224; emphasis in original). As we shall see below, this process is visible in Quseir through a shared, oft repeated awareness of the antiquity of the region, folklore and oral tradition, and perhaps most especially through attempts to re-orient Quseir as a heritage tourism destination – heritage always invokes identity (Diaz-Andreu & Champion 1996; Lowenthal 1998; Graham *et al* 2000:62). Kandiyoti (1993:378) describes this process in relation to the construction of a nationalist discourse as 'the Janus-faced quality' of identity, the construction of a new identity, affirmed in the past. An identity based upon the past, like all other identities is nevertheless not fixed, but in a constant state of flux. Depending upon how a community, an individual or a nation wishes to position itself, different pasts will be called upon, different pasts to constitute different presents (Hall 1990; Rutherford 1990; Appadurai 1990). Identity is never a finished product (Bhabha 1986; 1994:51): an English identity, a French identity, a sexual or an ethnic identity will be constantly re-negotiated through time as other elements are absorbed or rejected.

The power of the past to construct identities is highlighted most forcefully by Richard M. Begay. Writing in a volume dedicated to the construction of dialogue between Native Americans and archaeologists, he states:

> The discipline of anthropology has defined the Navajo as "Athabascan". Our children are taught in schools that we as a people came across the Bering Strait, and that we only settled our homelands in the 1500s. We do not want our children to be taught history as you believe it – it will destroy the very fabric of the Navajo people. We must interpret the past from our own perspective (1997:166).

Throughout this section, I have outlined several key terms and theoretical concepts that recur throughout this thesis. I have suggested that place, otherness and a shared sense of history are essential in the construction and maintenance of community identity, themes that will be examined in greater depth in subsequent chapters. For the remainder of this chapter, I briefly discuss the Community Archaeology Project at Quseir (CAPQ), examining the potentials of community archaeology within Quseir and perceptions of the project itself.

The Community Archaeology Project at Quseir

The Community Archaeology Project at Quseir was established by Stephanie Moser in 1998. One component of the wider archaeological investigation undertaken at Quseir al-Qadim, the project is unique for an excavation in Egypt and now comprises ten team members (figure 1.2; 1.3; 1.4) – both European based archaeologists and Quseir representatives, including one full time employee (Lamya Nasser el-Nemr). The singularity of this approach within the country is highlighted by an Egyptian archaeologist:

> I think that what the project is doing here is great...I will talk with the manager [of the Antiquities Service] in Qena and see if other excavations can make like the work here. Some excavations are far from other people, but they can always make videos and show them to people (Int. 4).[12]

Essentially, the CAPQ is based upon the premise that

> [i]t is no longer acceptable for archaeologists to reap the material and intellectual benefits of another society's heritage without that society being involved and allowed to benefit equally from the endeavour. We endorse the general goal of 'community archaeology' to replace the traditional colonial model of archaeological practice with a socially and politically self-conscious mode of research, aiming ultimately to incorporate different cultural perspectives in the interpretation of the past (Moser *et al* 2002:221).

In adopting this approach, it differs markedly from the 'public' or 'outreach archaeology' advocated by other researchers (e.g. Edwards-Ingram 1997; Franklin 1997; Gibb 1997; McManamon 2000). Edwards-Ingram (1997) and Francis McManamon (2000), for example, emphasise the need to present the results of archaeological investigations to local communities in a clear and concise manner – a necessary and important step if the discipline is to avoid social isolation. Their vision is, however, still one way: archaeologists as educators of a passive, docile community. Both Potter (1991) and Gibb (1997) go further, urging archaeologists to "take control over the presentation of data and ideas" (Gibb 1997:62) to a local community. The archaeologist is thus imbued with complete authority, the hegemonic power relationship between the discipline and local communities reinforced. Downer exposes this process at work in archaeologist's traditional interactions with Native American communities, the belief that "if we could

Figure 1.2 Members of the Community archaeology team. From left to right: Darren Glazier, Susan Ballard, Mohammed Saleh Mousa, Stephanie Moser, Lamya Nasser el-Nemr.

Figure 1.3 James Phillips, a project member.

Figure 1.4 Diaa Abdul Aziz Gad (foreground), a member of the Community archaeology team.

just get Indians to see how important our work is and how it has benefited them directly, then they will stop bothering us" (1997:25). For some, the solution is clearly the re-education of the archaeologically uninformed.

In contrast, a community archaeology approach is not solely concerned with making the results of an investigation more intelligible. Rather, it stipulates that local communities should play an active role in an archaeological investigation from the outset.[13] The need for community inspired archaeological research is highlighted in Quseir:

> First, the intense interest has to be from us, we have to focus, we have to make it, we have to start it. The second thing which is good is that you are giving us good assistance, good help. The initiative has to be focused from here though, from ourselves (Int. 3.15).

The emphasis on collaboration in the research process mirrors closely the concept of stewardship outlined by Zimmerman (1995) in response to the SAA's publication of their Principles of Archaeological Ethics: if we recognise that there are a number of different, equally valid interest groups involved in the exposition and 'protection' of the past, then we must also recognise that "all people are stewards of the past" (Zimmerman 1995:66). Archaeologists are amongst these stewards, but their role is not primary (McGuire 1997:84).

There does nevertheless appear to be a tendency amongst some archaeologists advocating this type of research to emphasise the potential benefits of collaboration, without outlining how it can be achieved (e.g. some contributions to Swidler *et al* 1997; some in Marshall 2002*a*). One of the primary research objectives of the CA project has therefore been to develop a methodological framework for undertaking this type of archaeological investigation. Based upon research in Quseir itself, we have identified seven key components that we suggest might form the basis of a community archaeology approach:

- Communication and collaboration
- Employment and training
- Public presentation
- Interviews and oral history
- Education

- Photographic and video archive
- Community controlled merchandising

We have outlined the rationale behind these components elsewhere (see Moser *et al* 2002); this is not the place for repetition. However, it is important to emphasise here that in our vision of community archaeology, listening is as important as speaking. No longer can archaeologists simply inform local communities of their discoveries, or indeed of the future exploitation of their cultural resource (Swidler *et al* 1997:18; Moser *et al* 2002:224). The interviews and oral history programme, of which my research forms the central part, has been fundamental in constructing a dialogue between residents of Quseir, the community archaeology project, and the excavation team more generally. As we shall see, the interviewees have also provided us with the opportunity to recover perceptions of heritage within the area, and to examine how they relate to established archaeological notions of particular sites. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, they provide residents with the opportunity to shape the direction of the research, and to discuss potential strategies for maximising the social, cultural and economic exploitation of Quseir al-Qadim as a heritage site.

The project works in partnership with the Quseir Heritage Preservation Society (hereafter Quseir Heritage), a non-governmental organisation established by local residents designed to facilitate the protection and preservation of the city's historical resources (see chapter seven). It also has close links with teachers employed by the Learning Development of Quseir (LDC), established with the financial backing of the Peder Seger Wallenberg Charitable Trust and managed jointly by the Swedish based Carpe Vitam educational consultancy and the Red Crescent. The LDC was intially designed to offer wider educational access to the city through the provision of special needs, IT and English programmes. Unfortunately, attendance and the number of courses offered to residents have steadily declined, and large numbers of the teachers have been forced to seek employment elsewhere.

One of the ultimate aims of the Community Archaeology Project is the construction of a heritage centre in collaboration with Quseir Heritage. This centre will present the results of the excavation at Quseir al-Qadim and function as a place where cultural and historical information of relevance to local residents will be presented (see Moser *et al*

2002:234-6 for a more detailed discussion of the aims of the heritage centre). The benefits of the interview programme are already apparent in the lengthy discussions concerning the contents and themes of the heritage centre. Throughout the interviews, for example, it became apparent that not only would people wish to see the results of the excavations presented, but also the history and development of the modern city and oral traditions:

> We would like the excavations and what happened with the fishing and the phosphate in the museum. Everything should be in there. We have to show other people about the history, about our country and the city" (Int. 15).[14]

As Biolsi and Zimmerman have highlighted (1997:10), in any community based project it is essential that members of that community retain authority over representations of their history. In Quseir, the exhibits themselves will be designed by both the team and local residents, incorporating archaeological perceptions of the past and oral history and folklore collected during the interviews. In essence, the proposed heritage centre is based upon the principle that that we will assist in the creation of a resource that has meaning and relevance to people in Quseir (Moser 1999:3). As Clayton Fredericksen suggests (2002:289), communities whose pasts are under investigation have the right to have their own histories presented, as well as the past of the archaeologists.

It is nevertheless important to emphasise that things are not always as halcyon as they may appear. The Community Archaeology Project is an experiment, and one that we could not be sure would prove fruitful – there is no legal mandate for this type of archaeology in Egypt, nor is there any tradition of collaboration with communities amongst archaeologists and Egyptologists working within the country. It is also true that working within a local community can often be frustrating, as well as stimulating: on several occasions we have suggested proposals that we believed would be extremely positive, only for them to be rejected by members of the local community. Throughout the interview programme, for example, it was extremely difficult to conduct interviews with women (see chapter two). The realities of the situation were made clear on a number of occasions: though the research was regarded as both necessary and welcome, in Egypt unmarried young men simply do not fraternise with unrelated women. It is essential that the beliefs, customs and traditions of others come before research concerns; it is too late for us to hide behind the 'scientific imperative' (White Deer 1997).

I do not suggest that we should allow our research to suffer, methodologically or analytically, simply that in such instances it is important that all parties negotiate to reach a solution deemed acceptable to all.

The necessity of such negotiations is highlighted by a brief examination of the education component of the CAPQ, conducted in collaboration with the local education authority, teachers and the LDC. Initially, preliminary education packs were created for use in the classrooms of Quseir, and several visits were made to local schools in which students were introduced to archaeology and archaeological techniques. It nevertheless took two years for us to become aware that neither the teachers nor the local authority welcomed this approach, that it was allowed to continue simply out of politeness. We have since retained those components of the original programme that were welcomed by the local community – the site visits, for example (figure 1.5; 1.6) – but the education programme is now run primarily by local teachers whilst we continue to negotiate as to the nature of any possible partnership.

That is not to say, however, that community archaeology is perceived as a luxury within Quseir, as an idiosyncrasy of Western archaeologists, but rather as a necessity:

- It is for our country, so you should communicate with people (Int. 28)
- We *must* know everything (Int. 24)
- If you don't talk to people, then it will mean nothing to them. We already know about these places, that there is archaeology there, so if you don't talk to people then it doesn't make any difference for us (Int. 34).
- You, for example, as an intelligent man with an education, you carry a responsibility. You have to work with some of the people who have an education here, so that they can explain it to the other people (Int. 3.8)

This emphasis on *responsibility,* evident in the statement above, is crucial. If archaeology wishes to avoid becoming meaningless in the twenty-first century, then we have a responsibility to local communities *and the discipline itself* to ensure that the questions we ask, and the pasts we construct, are of interest and relevance to all.

Indeed, an important by-product of the CAPQ appears to have been the creation of a more interactive, dialectical relationship between the archaeological team and the local community, and not just those employed at Quseir al-Qadim:

Figure 1.5 Students on a tour of Quseir al-Qadim.

Figure 1.6 Project member Eman Mohammed Attia demonstrates the project's website to a group of students.

- [This approach] is right because the excavations are conducted with people here in Egypt...I don't mind the excavations because you are working under the authority of the Egyptian people, you are dealing with them, so I don't mind (Int. 32).
- It was strange for us at the beginning to see you working without so much control. Normally an excavation is very controlled – you're not allowed into the area. Your approach is something new, and this makes me very interested (Int. 2.2).
- I think the whole city feels that the excavation is a great thing, because they know all about it and you all talk to people – they note this, and feel that you all want to make things good and try to help people, rather than just collect things. It is very important that you talk with people here, because if you make an excavation without talking to people then it will mean nothing. It would be useless...but people trust you all now, because they see that you are not trying to hide anything from them (Int. 21).

It is clear that collaborative research with local communities can also foster respect between groups and individuals from different cultures, challenging preconceived and media led notions on all sides. Though this may appear to be something of a spurious point, given the current context of Anglo-American/ Middle East relations, I believe it is vital. Following a long discussion about the relative merits of Egyptian and English loose leaf tea, I asked one interviewee:

> DG: Would you prefer to see the project at Quseir al-Qadim being run by Egyptians?
>
> I: Together. Not just Egyptians, not just Europeans. Different cultures, working together. I speak English, but not the same as you. You speak Arabic, but it's not the same as me (Int. 3.3).

Similarly, in response to a question concerning how increased collaboration between archaeologists and local residents could be achieved, one interviewee replied

> I: I think just by respecting our culture, and we all already respect your culture. I think that this will make our co-operation very good. I think Egyptians and especially Quseir people are so kind, and I think you must have noticed this (Int. 3.27).

The potential benefits of community archaeology do not, however, end there. As we shall see in later chapters, investigations can often gain access to resources and local knowledge that would not be recoverable through traditional archaeological methods alone. This does not apply only to oral history and archaeological folklore, but also to

the discovery of additional archaeological sites within the region. One interviewee, for example, stated:

> If you need any help and assistance then just let me know – anytime you can come here [interviewee's family meeting place] and find a lot of people who will be very helpful to you...there is a place that I would like to show you in the mountains if you are interested? (Int. 14)

Three days later, myself and two colleagues were driven some two hours into the desert to a gorge close to a waterhole, the surrounding mountains of which were adorned with Bedouin rock carvings. The gorge was not on any of the caravan routes through the desert, nor has the art ever been surveyed, recorded or analysed, archaeologically or anthropologically. Two members of the archaeological team were also taken by local excavators on a tour of a mosque to examine the spatial layout of Islamic buildings, a tour that challenged their initial interpretations of several Mamluk deposits. It is extremely unlikely that either of these visits would have been possible without community involvement in the investigation process. Similarly, excavators and specialists have been assisted in the identification of small finds (particularly those of religious significance) by both individuals visiting the camp and members of the local community employed on site (Moser *et al* 2002:243).

The recognition of the potentials of community collaboration to have a positive impact on the interpretative process has resulted in a shift in attitude towards the CAPQ amongst the archaeological team itself: whilst it is true that at the project's inception some were unsure of its objectives, it would now appear to receive enthusiastic support from the vast majority involved in the excavation. Whilst community archaeology projects encourage individuals to recognise the importance of the past (both archaeological and non archaeological) for non archaeologists, they also facilitate deeper, richer understandings of the archaeology itself.

The benefits of increased collaboration are also deemed to be high amongst the residents of Quseir. Though the perceived social, cultural and economic impact of both the excavation and the Community Archaeology Project will be addressed in subsequent chapters, the project is also seen as fundamental in providing access to new skills:

- To start with we can have assistance from other countries, but it would be better if we bring these people to Egypt...and [they can] start to teach us how to run such projects. Then we can do it ourselves (Int. 3.20).
- This project will have a benefit in Quseir; to know about our history and see these old things...you are saving our society. We want to make an excavation too...we want to do it like you, and to learn to make our own excavations (Int. 2.5).

It is interesting to note that the two extracts cited above are taken from the later field seasons. In the first field season, though we as a project were keen to stress collaboration in the research programme itself, the vast majority of interviewees emphasised the importance of archaeologists providing information:

- The archaeologists have a very good affect on the people in the city because they tell us about our heritage and everything about the past (Int. 25).
- I would like to know more information...it is our culture, so of course I want to know about it. Every time that you find something new I want to know about what happened, where you found it (Int. 16).

It is of course extremely important to provide people with regular updates on the progress of a project, whether through plain language reports, exhibitions or interview programmes (see Moser *et al* 2002:230ff), yet it is only one component of the project itself. This emphasis on information, rather than full engagement in the research process, may well be explicable in terms of the uniqueness of the project in Egypt. At the risk of oversimplification, many local communities are simply not used to the idea of archaeologists, so adept at promoting themselves as *the* stewards of the past, requesting input into research programmes. In contrast, perhaps due to the increased visibility and awareness of the project in the city, many later interviewees not only welcomed collaborative research, but demanded it:

> We have to start by ourselves. Everyone could do something to improve things here. We choose one of us to become our writer. He can collect this information and make it in a simple way to the people so that they can understand it. And a scientific people like you, Darren, can write in a scientific way for scientific people. We can try to collect all the stories and then we come together as a filter and discuss things in our group. We have to make a group. We can have a meeting every week, everyone will look at different and when we come together everyone has news to tell and we can discuss it together. In the end, we make the diamond shine (Int. 3.8)

Despite these positive appraisals, potentially problematic aspects of the Community Archaeology Project have been highlighted by the sociologist Liz Taylor. Writing in a forthcoming volume devoted to tourism in the Middle East, Taylor suggests that

> archaeology's concern with 'the site' and community archaeology's concern with 'heritage' seem here to converge into a particular rendering of history, a rendering which encourages local people to locate their roots in the past of the ancient city (Taylor n.d.)

As we shall see later (chapter four), there could have been no migration between Quseir al-Qadim and the modern city. This does not, however, negate the possibility of there being a perceived relationship, a perceived link between the two ports, in the manner that some in Britain perceive a connection between themselves and Stonehenge. This relationship is apparent in both historical sources and the vast majority of interviews conducted to date (see chapters four, five and six). So whilst it is certainly true that the perceived relationship between the residents of Quseir and the site itself makes the Community Archaeology Project more tenable, perhaps even more essential, I would hesitate to suggest that we actively encourage "local people to locate their roots in the ancient city". It is my belief that the project's representations of the past – all of which have been produced jointly with Quseir Heritage – reflect attitudes already prevalent in Quseir. This will be examined in greater detail in later chapters.

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[1] See for example Diaz-Andreu & Champion (1996) on nationalism; McBryde (1985) on ownership; Arnold (1990) on the manipulation of the past for political purposes; Moser (1998) on visual representations in archaeology; Wallis (2003) on the interplay between archaeological interpretations and alternative perceptions of the past.

[2] And initially resisted by some members of the archaeological community in the US – e.g. Goldstein and Kintigh (1990). For further discussion see Zimmerman (1997:49-51).

[3] Robert L. Brooks suggests that the situation might be more realistically appraised by substituting the phrase 'consultation with Native American communities' for 'contact with communities' (1997:214).

[4] I am reminded of a line from Dumas' classic novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*: "He looked up with the satisfied air of a man who thinks he has made a discovery when he has commented on someone else's" (Dumas 1996[1844-5]:77).

[5] Though the recent events at Seahenge, a timber circle uncovered by shifting sands at Holme-next-the-sea in Norfolk, Britain, do provide an interesting example of collaboration between some sectors of the local community and neo-Pagan groups. Both parties campaigned to prevent the removal of the henge from the shore, an endeavour that ultimately proved unsuccessful. It is to be hoped, however, that the vociferous protests from both the local community and neo-Pagan groups has encouraged English Heritage to recognise the rights of others in both the interpretation and presentation of the past (see comments from David Miles, chief archaeologist of English Heritage, in Wallis & Lymer [2001:105-125]).

[6] Though some have critiqued Said's model for its homogenisation of the West (e.g. Ahmad 1992; Porter 1993).

[7] The irony of so doing whilst endeavouring to gain an academic qualification is not lost on me.

[8] His 'ethnoscape, finanscape, technoscape, mediascape and ideoscape'. Appadurai argues that these flows are then 'indigenised' within each context – appropriated and made relevant in each different situation.

[9] A letter to the British newspaper *The Guardian* from the *Southall Black Sisters* succinctly summarises the problems inherent in essentialising cultures: "the Labour party is prepared to abandon the principle of equality where black women are concerned. Instead they deliver us into the hands of male, conservative and religious forces within our communities who deny us our right to live as we please" (cited in Weeks 1990:94).

[10] Though see Banks (1996) for a critique of Barth and primordialism.

[11] I can, however, claim to be a member of a particular football community through my support of Tottenham Hotspur FC. I affirm my status as a member of that community through my answers to certain questions regarding which team I support, through wearing club clothing, through knowledge of certain club symbols, phrases and songs, and an awareness of the history of the club.

[12] For a detailed discussion of interview methodology see chapter two.

[13] See Faulkner (2000) for a discussion of the benefits of this in relation to the excavation of sites in Britain.

[14] To this end, a research project has recently been completed by Alistair Jones (2003), creating a methodology for the display of folklore collected within Quseir in the heritage centre.

CHAPTER TWO

'It was strange for us at the beginning to see you working without so much control'.[1]

The research process in Quseir

This is a research project that focuses upon the interplay between archaeology, heritage and perceptions of the past within a local community. It is about interaction and collaboration, and the potentials of the past in the present, exploring the role of history and heritage in contemporary constructions of identity. Naturally, the majority of information and primary data required to conduct such an analysis is not available in the present literature. It was therefore decided that a programme of interviews would be undertaken with both residents of Quseir and members of the archaeological team.[2] Throughout this chapter, I discuss the various methodological techniques considered, before describing the process of data collection itself. Given the unique nature of this research, I devote a considerable amount of discussion to the issues raised by the research process in Quseir, presenting a critique of the interviews themselves and highlighting the themes addressed within each interview. Finally, I introduce the reader to the dataset and describe the process of data analysis.

Interviews and interview structure

The interviews conducted in Quseir were essentially 'unstructured' or 'semi-structured' in nature (see Breakwell 1990:78; Wengraf 1992; Barriball 1994). A number of themes were covered (see below), though the precise questions and the order in which they were addressed differed from interview to interview. Whilst a more structured, survey approach ensures that all topics are covered in detail and produces data that can be easily quantified, the greater flexibility afforded by the unstructured interview facilitates the introduction of themes considered to be of most importance to the interviewee, as well as to the researcher (Breakwell 1990:78). This was considered essential to the success of the research project: as McCracken (1988:40) highlights, it is impossible to ascertain prior to the analysis of data what is and what is not relevant to the study.

Qualitative or quantitative?

From the outset, it was necessary to decide whether I would look for data that was qualitative or quantitative in nature. The differences between the two approaches have been succinctly defined by McCracken:

> the quantitative researcher uses a lens that brings a narrow strip of the field of vision into very precise focus. The qualitative researcher uses a lens that permits a much less precise vision of a much broader strip (1988:16).

A qualitative approach is designed to give access to *what* people think about certain questions and why they think it; a quantitative *how many* people think it. Given the nature of my research, it was decided that a qualitative approach to both data collection and analysis would prove the most beneficial.

A quantitative approach is nevertheless useful if we wish to maximise the potential visual impact of our results – it is more difficult to present adequately the results of a qualitative research project. It was tempting therefore to consider an approach that combined both qualitative and quantitative methods. This was, however, rejected: it was not feasible to construct a sampling strategy that would facilitate a quantitative analysis capable of withstanding closer scrutiny. As a result of this, the reader will look in vain for graphs that succinctly summarise the research findings contained within this thesis. Instead, I include extracts from the interviews themselves – some brief, others of considerable length. This not only renders the interview process at least partially transparent, but also provides others with the opportunity to intellectually and emotionally engage with the subject in a way that is not possible through a line graph or Venn diagram, no matter how many colours are used.

I would suggest, however, that the decision to qualitatively analyse the interviews does not preclude me from making statements that may be perceived as in some way quantitative. It is argued by Overholser (1986) that it is not legitimate to speak of qualitative research data in terms such as 'most', 'some' or 'all of the interviewees'. This is certainly the case if the number of interviews conducted, or the number of interviewees is small; I have, however, conducted interviews with considerably more people than the eight deemed adequate by McCracken (1988:17; see below).[3] It is important to my analysis to make such statements, whilst recognising that they do not

constitute a statistical approach; they are merely useful in highlighting certain themes that are prevalent throughout the interviews. When an opinion is held by only one, or a relatively small number of interviewees, this is explicitly stated in the text.

The combination of unstructured interviews and qualitative research nevertheless makes the construction of specific questions problematic - the interviewer cannot be certain what questions will arise during the interview itself. It was therefore essential to conduct research into question phraseology in an effort to minimise bias caused by the introduction of assumptive, overly complex or leading questions that were 'adlibbed' during the interview itself (e.g. Spradley 1979; Bateson 1984; Breakwell 1990). Due to the unstructured nature of the interviews, however, it is possible that on occasion questions may have been introduced that would be considered methodologically unsound. When doubt is present, the question, as well as the interviewees answer is quoted in full. Such an approach allows the reader to decide for themselves the validity of both the question, and the answer.

Methodological approach and interview theory

The methodological approaches taken within these interviews are essentially interdisciplinary, drawing upon the best and most suitable interview methods from a variety of complementary disciplines, principally sociology and anthropology.

It is possible to characterise the interviews conducted in Quseir as an example of an 'action research interview', a genre that endeavours to generate discussion, rather than simple description (Breakwell 1990:71). Not only were the interviews concerned with ascertaining perceptions of heritage in a local community and the manner in which the archaeological investigation of the past is perceived in the present, they were also intended to generate discussion concerning the potential benefits of greater interaction between archaeologists and local residents.

The techniques employed in the interviews nevertheless draw primarily upon the 'long interview' format. Described by McCracken as "one of the most powerful techniques in the qualitative methodology" (1988:7), the long interview adopts the anthropological approach of situating information in a fuller social and cultural context, whilst allowing

the interviewer to introduce 'survey type' questions regarding occupation, age, education etc. Though the data acquired from the inclusion of these survey questions is not considered to be rigorous enough to sustain a quantitative analysis, the long interview "achieve[s] crucial qualitative objectives within a manageable methodological context" (McCracken 1988:11).

I have not, however, chosen to adopt all the methods of the long interview. Both Brenner (1985) and McCracken (1988), argue that the distribution of a questionnaire prior to the actual interview is essential to the success of the technique, ensuring that the interviewee is aware of the topics that are to be covered and the order in which they will appear. Such an approach was not considered appropriate in Quseir: the construction of an adequate questionnaire is problematic if it requires translation (both linguistically and cross-culturally), whilst its success is dependent upon a certain level of literacy in the interviewee – something that cannot be taken for granted amongst the older generation of Quseir. The use of a questionnaire in advance of the interview also increases the likelihood of receiving formulaic answers and constrains interviewees to the topics contained in the questionnaire itself, something that I wished to avoid. Perhaps most importantly, however, this approach was deemed to be culturally inappropriate in Quseir. A questionnaire is by its very nature more detached than one-to-one interviews, and thus potentially enhances the perception that interviewees are little more than 'data' to the researcher.

The interviews also draw heavily upon ethnographic methodology and theory, specifically the 'strategic research genre' which advocates the continual refining of the interview format to include themes that become prevalent during the data collection process itself (see Spradley 1979). Indeed, the adoption of a strategic research methodology, combined with the flexibility of the unstructured interview, has greatly changed the nature of this research project. Prior to my first field season, I was somewhat naïvely confident of the themes that I wished to cover, believing that they would form the core of the thesis itself. I could not have been more wrong. I was keen to discuss the socio-political implications of white, Western archaeologists excavating in a third world country, a topic that for many appeared to be of little or no consequence. Instead, though we clearly shared an interest in the perception of heritage in Quseir, people consistently returned to the twin subjects of folklore and the role of the past in future economic development, neither one

of which had figured prominently in the numerous research plans that I had produced to date. This emphasis is reflected in the content of this thesis, and I believe it is better as a result. Research should lead us to question, not confirm, our assumptions (see Crapanzano 1980:xiv).

Nevertheless, given the practical constraints within which I was working, it was not possible – perhaps even desirable – to adopt a wholly ethnographic approach. In the majority of instances, for example, I was able to conduct only one interview with each individual. In addition, working with the relatively small number of interviewees proscribed for an ethnographic analysis would, I believe, negate one of the main tenets of the Community Archaeology Project – communication and collaboration (see Moser *at al* 2002:229-232) – and would not have provided adequate data for this research project.

The research experience

We take notes, we make journeys: emptiness! emptiness! We become scholars, archaeologists, historians, doctors, cobblers, people of taste. What is the good of all that? Where is the heart, the verve, the sap? Where to start from? Where to go?

Gustave Flaubert, *Flaubert in Egypt* (1850 [1996]:198-9).

One of the most important methodological tools drawn upon in the production of this thesis was my personal experiences and reactions to the project, both at home and abroad. Rosemary Joyce, in her recent pioneering study *The languages of archaeology* (2002), demonstrates that all archaeological research begins with story telling and discussion, the multiple voices of the research process hidden in the final publication (2002:15). It is hoped that the inclusion of both my personal reactions to the research process and my discussions with others may go some way to answering Joyce's plea for the restoration of lost narrative complexity within the discipline (see 2002:92). Similarly, Spivak (1993:70) too argues that researchers and academics have traditionally rendered themselves invisible in their representations and discussions of other communities. By locating myself as narrator within the text, I endeavour to highlight the problems inherent in the production of research of this nature – the danger of presenting myself as *the*

authoritative voice on Quseir – problematising my privileged position as author, whilst recognising that it cannot be overcome.

It must be stressed, however, that this is not merely the ultimate in self-reflexivity – archaeological theory gone mad. Both anthropology and sociology have long recognised the role of the self-as-instrument (Crapanzano 1980; contributions to Clifford & Marcus 1986; Marcus & Fischer 1986; McCracken 1988; Ahmed & Shore 1995), arguing that research can only be conducted thoroughly if the investigator draws on her/his own intellectual and emotional experiences during data collection (McCracken 1988:18). Throughout all three field seasons a diary was completed at the end of each day. This constituted not merely a review of the data collected, but my own experiences, my own feelings: we respond emotionally as well as intellectually to data. My perspectives changed constantly throughout my time in Quseir, not just intellectually, though that is important, but personally as I became more comfortable with my surroundings. To omit this from the analysis removes the research from the context in which it was conducted and constructs a cold, unattached product, vastly different from the reality in which it was produced. Archaeologist's interactions with the communities within which they work are inevitably personal. Removing the personal serves only to freeze the analysis in a chosen moment (see Crapanzano 1980:135).[4]

Data collection

Three field seasons of primary data collection have been conducted in Quseir: February-April 2000 (seven weeks), September 2000 (two weeks) and March-April 2001 (five weeks). Field seasons one and three were conducted during the excavation of Quseir al-Qadim; season two whilst the excavation team were not present. This was ostensibly designed to ascertain the extent of the interest in the excavation of Quseir al-Qadim in the absence of the archaeological team. Prior to the first season, two weeks were spent in the city (March 1999) assessing both the feasibility and the potentials of the research. Since the completion of the final season of data collection I have returned to Quseir on three different occasions, as both a member of the Community Archaeology Project and the excavation team, totalling a further ten weeks. Though no formal interviews occurred during these additional seasons, they provided further opportunities to discuss the progress of the research and its findings with local residents.

The importance of these additional seasons cannot be overestimated – it was refreshing to be able to engage in conversations without thinking solely in terms of 'data collection'. Perhaps unconsciously, many burgeoning friendships were cemented during this period, as individuals became less 'people that I've interviewed', and more people that I could sit and converse with over tea, coffee and sheeshas. That is not too say that I ever envisaged interviewees merely as data – simply that, at least to begin with, I was never totally comfortable with the relationship between myself as interviewer and with others as interviewees. Doing justice to how both my intellectual and personal feelings transformed during this period is difficult; the most straightforward way of describing it is that the data collected became less abstract, less theoretical. It was no longer easy to separate the words of individuals from the individuals themselves. In short, the interviews, and by extension this research project, became peopled.

My decision to refer to interviewees within this project by number (Int. 1-59 for the first field season; 2.n for the second season; 3.n for the third) has therefore become increasingly problematic to me as the work has progressed. With hindsight it appears contradictory to my aims, dehumanising both the past and the present of Quseir. I have nevertheless chosen to persist with this method for a number of reasons. Initially, I had intended to include short biographies of everyone interviewed as an appendix, biographies that would contextualise the study and allow both myself and the reader to draw patterns in the data in terms of gender, age, occupation, religion etc. Yet I also wished to encourage people to talk with candour about certain issues – issues that may or may not involve support or critique of the local, regional and national authorities, multi-national corporations, archaeology, or archaeologists. Furthermore, many interviewees initially believed that I was working in conjunction with the Egyptian government: why else would I be asking so many questions? Though it was possible to swiftly allay these fears, it was decided that for the interview programme to succeed, the interviews themselves had to be undertaken on the proviso that they remained anonymous. Several interviewees also requested to conduct certain parts of the interview 'off-tape' – particularly when discussing political or economic issues. This was always respected, and no information disclosed in this manner has made its way directly into this thesis.

Perhaps the use of pseudonyms might have been more appropriate. A pseudonym would, though, still reveal the gender of the interviewee, and is therefore potentially problematic for individuals who might be more easily distinguished – those who work in the tourist industry, for example. Given the religious derivation of many Egyptian names, there was also the very real possibility of causing offence through the choosing of an inappropriate pseudonym, whilst the sheer size of the database made assigning each interviewee a different name an almost impossible task.

Of equal contention to some may be my decision to refer to those interviewed for this research project as 'interviewees'. Marilyn Bentz (1997:131), for example, argues that the term 'interviewee' suggests a lack of interpretative contribution to the research programme. Though it is certainly true that 'interviewee' implies a rigidly defined relationship between parties, I would suggest that in an interview an individual has the freedom to discuss matters of interest and relevance to them. Both 'informant' and 'consultant' were considered, but deemed inappropriate: 'consultant' implies a financial relationship, whilst 'informant' carries negative connotations acquired during anthropology's colonial era – a passive conduit of information. The traditional association of the term with ethnography was also considered problematic, and something that I wished to avoid. Though there are some (largely methodological) similarities, this research project is *not* an ethnography.

Before any interviews could commence, however, it was essential that I discuss research potentials and methodologies with local residents, relevant organisations and representatives of the civic authorities. As Grobsmith (1997:37) highlights, work of this nature must have some accountability to a local community if it is to retain both credibility and meaning (see also White Deer 1997). In Quseir, this was achieved through several meetings with Adel Aiesh and Farid Mansour of Quseir Heritage (manager and chairman respectively), and brief discussions with the Mayor of Quseir, General Mohammed Amin. Throughout these meetings, we discussed the relevance of the research, potential discussion themes and strategies for data collection. Only after these had been agreed by all parties was it deemed possible to begin the process of data collection.

Having relatively little useful knowledge of Arabic, it was essential that I find an interpreter, an individual that the Community Archaeology Project could employ to act as translator and intermediary during the interviews themselves. In the first field season, this role was filled on a part-time basis by Diaa Abdul Aziz Gad (figure 2.1) and Eman Mohammed Attia; the former a male computer teacher at the LDC, the latter a female English teacher. Both spoke excellent English. As a result of their increased workload at the LDC, neither Diaa nor Eman were able to continue in their role in the second field season, the positions filled instead by Lamya Nasser el-Nemr and Hannen Shazly, two unemployed female graduates. Unfortunately, their English was not as fluent as either Diaa or Eman's, so a conscious decision was taken in the second season to conduct interviews with residents who spoke English – teachers and hotel employees, for example. In the final season Mohammed Saleh Mousa (figure 2.2) was employed by the project, a university graduate and qualified English teacher. The employment of all the interpreters was arranged through Quseir Heritage; all were briefed extensively on the nature of the research and the aims of the CAPQ prior to the onset of data collection.

Despite the numbers of interpreters used throughout the three field season, the vast majority of the interviews were conducted with Diaa and Mohammed, colleagues whose assistance went beyond mere translation, offering advice on cultural customs and etiquette and ensuring that my own behaviour was appropriate at all times. In reality, the term 'interpreter' does not do justice to the role played by Diaa and Mohammed, suggesting a non-productive role in the research project and the interviews themselves. I prefer the term 'collaborator': it was in a very real sense a collaborative effort (see below). There are nevertheless a number of problems inherent in conducting interviews through a third person, and these will be addressed below.

For the majority of interviews in Quseir a 'quasi-random' sampling strategy was adopted (see Breakwell 1990), approaching people either in coffee shops or the street and asking if they would be willing to discuss the site and its excavation with us. This format worked well, perhaps as a result of the inherently social nature of Quseir society: there is a strong 'coffee-shop culture' in Quseir, where men (gender intentional) with free time will meet in one of the numerous coffee shops found throughout the city, to socialise, watch soap operas or football, listen to music, play backgammon and dominoes or engage in political debates. It is not unusual in this situation for people who had

Figure 2.1 Diaa Abdul Aziz Gad (centre).

Figure 2.2 Mohammed Saleh Mousa and Darren Glazier.

previously been strangers to begin a conversation, and we were fortunate to be able to take advantage of this process – we met with only eleven refusals during the three field seasons, all of whom cited a lack of time as the reason for their refusal; in a number of other instances individuals were willing to arrange a later date for the interview. Five interviewees requested repeat interviews, all of which were completed. During field seasons two and three this strategy was combined with a number of pre-arranged interviews, thus facilitating the 'targeting' of specific groups who were not represented in the data collected previously, including settled Bedouin and Coptic Christians.

It is perhaps in keeping with the nature of a PhD to suggest that this process of data collection was long and arduous: as Gosden (1999:59) highlights, a thesis essentially compresses the disordered, chaotic nature of fieldwork into a lucid linear narrative. Long, yes, but arduous? No. That would come later. My time in Quseir has certainly been somewhat chaotic, despite my best intentions, though in a curious way that has added to the research project. Indeed, apart from the very real danger that my life has been shortened considerably by the excessive quantities of nicotine, caffeine and sugar inhaled and imbibed, the process was immensely enjoyable. As my colleagues worked in trenches, I sat in coffee shops and conversed, became embroiled in discussions and debates, gazed at the Red Sea and got taken to points of historical interest around the city. I sat in people's homes, eating and drinking, or in quiet contemplation with people on the beach, in bazaars and occasionally in the desert itself. I shared a wealth of experiences with people, and these have undoubtedly shaped this project.

That is not to downplay the seriousness of the research itself, its methodological rigour, nor indeed to suggest that everything was straightforward. There were of course times when my presence, especially in certain, less tourist-oriented coffee shops, made people uncomfortable. On only one occasion, however, did these tensions become evident: during an interview in the first field season, we were constantly interrupted by a man who was unhappy at both my presence within the coffee shop, and the interviewees themselves for talking to me. A heated confrontation between the interviewees and the other gentleman ensued, the situation eventually diffused by Diaa explaining the nature and philosophy of my research. The gentleman himself was later interviewed in the third field season at his own request. Despite this incident, the interview process was one that I enjoyed immensely and I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to undertake

my research in this manner. I hope that at least part of my enjoyment is reflected in this final thesis; all too often the excitement, enjoyment and above all, the thrill of research is missing in academic texts.

It is nevertheless true that my eagerness during the initial phases of data collection may have had a detrimental effect, leading to a lack of restraint in the earliest interviews: encouraging interviewees to discuss matters further that they may have had little interest in or were uncomfortable with, perhaps even to seeing interviewees as potential mines of information. I remember vividly, for example, constantly urging Eman to set up a meeting with her father, a man who I had been told knew many interesting stories about Quseir al-Qadim. I did meet him, and we have subsequently become friends, but at least to begin with it was a relationship built upon research potential. Terry Pratchett's fictitious creation the Witch Nanny Ogg highlights the potential dangers of such over eagerness:

> A lady from the Ankh-Morpork Folk Dance and Song Society came up here one summer and came to see me about what old folk customs and fertility rituals and similar that we might have here in Lancre. Well, there's only one fertility ritual that I knows of and that's the one that comes nat'raly but she says, no, there's got to be loads of folk stuff hanging on because I am writing a book and will give you this handsome silver dollar my good woman.
>
> Well of course, a dollar is not to be sneezed at so next morning I was able to give her as much folklore as she could carry away. Of course, I didn't tell her much of the *real* stuff...'cos she wouldn't get it right...but all the same its amazing what you can remember after a couple of pints (2000:165).

Thankfully, my naïvety began to wane throughout the first field season as I became more comfortable in the city and with the research itself.

It was Vincent Crapanzano (1980:138) who first suggested that all ethnographic experiences, often in spite of the ethnographer, are human experiences and the same is undoubtedly true of my time in Quseir. It would be patronising to people in the city and to the reader to suggest that everyone I encountered whilst undertaking my research I grew to like. There were many people that I would have loved to have worked with closer, but was not able to engage with on a personal level, and I am sure that the situations were reversed. Reading back through the transcripts now, it would appear that

in a minority of interviews there was no 'spark' between myself and the interviewee, and these interviews are much the poorer for that lack. Again, these interviews are mostly earlier ones, conducted in the initial stages of the first field season. Later, I was to discover, just as Grobsmith (1997:40) did, that the more I gave of myself in the interviews, the more I dropped the façade of intellectual and institutional isolationism, the more I gave free reign to my curiosity, then the better the interviews themselves.

Building relationships with people nevertheless takes time, and, given my desire to interview as diverse a range of people as possible, it was impossible to build as strong a personal relationship with every interviewee as I did with a few. Wax (1997:55) notes that building up any kind of relationship in the field is often difficult, as both archaeologists and anthropologists have a "hit and run relationship [with communities]...here today, gone tomorrow". This was a problem that we endeavoured to overcome within the Community Archaeology Project by returning to the city as often as possible, especially when the excavation team was absent (see Moser *et al* 2002:232). Though economic and practical constraints meant that long stays were not always possible, I attempted to maximise the amount of time that I spent in the city itself, whether just sitting in a coffee shop and reading a book, wandering around and looking at the sights, or conducting interviews. The Mayor of the city himself specifically commented upon the visibility of the team in the city, the success of the strategy in breaking down barriers highlighted by one interviewee:

> DG: Do you think we make enough effort to respect Egyptian and Quseir customs whilst we are working here?
>
> I: Yes, I do personally and I think that goes for most of Quseir people as well. I haven't met all of you, but most people that I have met I do feel that.
>
> [Mohammed breaks in momentarily]: Let me say something here. You have noticed whilst the two of you were talking that I was speaking with the man over there. He was asking about you, Darren – what you are doing, about your work, OK. These are the kind of guys that if they were offended, they would not ask about you. A lot of people do the same...yesterday I met a friend who said that he had been speaking to you.
>
> I: People know you now, they have seen you before. If you went to any place in the world, people would notice you as a foreigner at first and wonder what you were doing. But after a while you would be fine (Int. 3.27).

On a more practical note, the interviews were recorded onto audio cassettes via a *Sony* micro cassette recorder. This was essential: it is impossible to record adequately by hand everything that is said during an interview. Furthermore, to do so increases the risk of translating the interviewee's responses into imagery readily accessible to the interviewer (Breakwell 1990:80) – a problem compounded when the interview is conducted through an interpreter – whilst minimising the amount of time available to formulate further questions on topics that arise during the interview itself. Information was therefore recorded by hand only when interviewees stated that they were uncomfortable with the tape recorder. This was the case in only one interview, Int. 3.17. It has now become a necessity to carry my tape recorder at all times – as our profile within the city has increased, so too has the number of people that wish to discuss Quseir al-Qadim or the progress of the project unsolicited (see also Moser *at al* 2002:231).

The interviews themselves were conducted with individuals and with groups of two or more. Breakwell (1990:75) highlights a number of advantages and disadvantages inherent in the group interview: though they are undoubtedly useful in highlighting diversity of opinion and tend to discourage formulaic responses, they are open to domination from forthright individuals and increase the potential for interruptions that may lead to the cessation of a particular statement. It was expected that this might be exaggerated in Egypt, a country with a marked social hierarchy. Group interviews were therefore only undertaken with peer groups, identified as such by Mohammed or Diaa, whilst on each occasion the interpreter specified the individual talking. The sizes of the groups varied considerably – the majority were composed of only two or three individuals, the largest ten (Int. 14). The sheer size of the group in interview 14 made both transcription and analysis unwieldy and was therefore not attempted again.

With hindsight, I would suggest that the most successful interviews were those undertaken with individuals. Interviewees appear to be more relaxed and more discursive when not in large groups, and this is clearly reflected in the quality of the interview data gathered. Furthermore, I would disagree with Breakwell's contention that group interviews discourage formulaic responses – in many of the group interviews conducted, the opinions of the strongest interviewee were generally agreed with by the majority. Though there are naturally some exceptions (especially in the third field

season), I would recommend restricting interviews to groups of two or less for anyone proposing to undertake a similar research project, at least within the context of Quseir.

During the field seasons, the interview tapes were reviewed every two days. This has a number of advantages: it ensures the quality of recording is maintained and highlights possible themes for inclusion in subsequent interviews, whilst facilitating what Glaser and Strauss (1965) describe as 'constant comparisons'. The process of data collection is thus combined with preliminary analysis (McCracken 1988:48). From a methodological perspective, such reviews were especially useful when conducted with interpreters. In field season one, for example, Diaa and I would review the tapes together, discussing the interview process as much as the conversations within the interviews themselves. It became clear during these reviews that in the earliest stages of the project both of us were somewhat unfamiliar with our task – I reiterating the same questions, Diaa often summarising a two or three minute conversation into a succinct, two line précis. Following the first review, we were able to adapt our techniques, improving the quality of the interview and ensuring that the process became less formulaic.

A review of the tapes was not conducted with interpreters in field seasons two or three. This was largely due to time constraints; Hannen and Lamya in field season two and Mohammed in field season three all had other work commitments. Mohammed and I would nevertheless discuss the progress of the research daily, a process that in reality involved far more input from Mohammed than from myself. Mohammed would tell me which questions he felt were working and which were difficult to translate (either linguistically or in cultural terms); which aspects of the interviews, and the Community Archaeology Project he considered successful, and which were not. A brief example drawn from one of our 'de-briefings' will illustrate the point:

> M: To be totally honest, conducting interviews works better if people have something to look at. This time we had the [plain language] report, so that was good. Next time I would like to see something that people can touch.
>
> DG: What sort of thing do you mean?
>
> M: Something related to the site itself...maybe examples of the T-shirts that you intend to make. For three years now you've been coming to Quseir without really any results.
>
> DG: I think we have got results!

M: Yes, I know we have results, but the people themselves don't yet see those results. The museum is not there yet.

DG: The end result will be the heritage centre, but it does take time.

M: I know it takes time, so we have to give them something else to show for our efforts. This time it was the report, which was something good, really. You must have noticed the effect of the report on people. Next time it must be something different.

With Mohammed, the research became in every sense a collaborative process, and this thesis would be vastly different, weaker even, were it not for his friendship, support and often his criticism. As a result of this exchange, I wrote an open letter to all the interviewees, detailing the findings of the research to date, and highlighting areas of future research. This letter was printed in the plain language report of 2002.[5]

Diaa, Mohammed and Darren too: self-reflexivity in the interview process

There is no method of data collection that is entirely free from faults. This is particularly true of unstructured interviews conducted outside of the researchers own context, where the danger of introducing leading questions is compounded by the inherent social and cultural biases of both interviewer and the interviewee (Breakwell 1990:83). We might expect these problems to be accentuated by my research in Egypt, which was almost entirely conducted through intermediaries.

In the first field season, Diaa and I had a curious relationship. We worked closely, spending four or five hours a day together; we became friends – we still are – but we both took different things from our relationship. Diaa provided me with contacts, and an introduction to a society that was alien from my own. To a certain extent, my presence and research in Quseir was mediated by my association with archaeology – a discipline that, at the risk of over-generalisation, still engenders respect in Egypt. As part of a highly visible archaeological team, I was never 'alone' or 'neutral', but initially at least my presence was also rationalised through Diaa. Diaa too benefited from our relationship, and not just economically: he was new to Quseir, having moved to the city from Ras Gharib (approximately 250 kilometres north of Quseir) only a couple of months previously. Our collaboration gave Diaa the opportunity to learn more about his new home, to meet people and, by extension, increase his own position and visibility

within the city. Following the completion of the first field season, Diaa suggested that the most positive aspect of the process for him was the construction of a new network of acquaintances.

Throughout that season, Diaa provided me with a safety blanket. I was an outsider in the city, with little useful knowledge of Arabic beyond exchanging pleasantries, burdened by my own feelings of post-colonial guilt – feelings that have since matured and been transformed into more positive emotions through closer collaboration in the city, but ones that at the time were significant nonetheless. In the first few weeks, I was daunted by the enormity of the task that I had undertaken and, at least during the earliest interviews, I hid behind Diaa. Diaa allowed me to maintain a façade of 'distance'. Questions went through him, the answers returned in the same manner – the relationship between myself and the interviewees mediated by a third party. Though the themes covered within the interviews were often the same as those addressed later, reading back through the initial transcripts they appear colder somehow, and more detached.

Thankfully, this did not last forever. As I became more confident, more comfortable in interview situations, these feelings began to subside. At the same time my relationship with both Diaa and interviewees changed; questions were directed towards the interviewees themselves, and the interviews became more open, more conversational. But Diaa was still there to hide behind if necessary.

In truth, Diaa and I used one another. Though on a personal level we have become close friends, it is fair to say that Diaa was never hugely interested in the research process itself. For Diaa, as he often admitted, the opportunity to meet people and the additional income provided by his participation in the project were irresistible, the driving force behind his involvement. That may appear overly critical, but it is not meant to be – too often perhaps we forget that others are less enthused by our work than we are ourselves. It is certainly true, however, that my experiences with Diaa had an impact upon my research – an impact that is unquantifiable, but significant nonetheless.

By the end of the first field season both Diaa and myself were more accomplished in our roles. Yet the interviews conducted in field seasons two and three were generally of better quality than those in the first season, in terms of both the data collected and the

'naturalness' of the interviews themselves. This may in part be explicable by my increased familiarity with the interview process, perhaps the interviewees themselves were more comfortable as a result of the project's visibility within the city. It was also, I believe, because of Mohammed.

Mohammed has a passion for the past, the present and the future of Quseir. He cares deeply about the city, the archaeological investigation and the Community Archaeology Project, and as a result played a far more active role in the interviews themselves. Indeed, Mohammed's role in the interviews went far further than would be proscribed by anthropological and social science research methodologies, initiating dialogue, discussion and debate, introducing his own interests into the interviews and encouraging others to question their assumptions. This may be seen by some as problematic; I do not believe that to be the case. It is unrealistic, not to say unproductive and unethical, to expect an individual to function as little more than a translation program, particularly in a collaborative research project of this nature. The results, in terms of data, are certainly far more revealing than many of the more 'traditional' interviews. The following extract is taken from interview 3.15, during a discussion on the potential impact of tourism on the region. The interview was conducted in English in a coffee shop and was subsequently joined by an earlier interviewee, 3.9. Though it is a somewhat lengthy transcript, it illustrates the fundamental role played by Mohammed in the interview process:

> I: When they opened the Mövenpick, everybody said 'Oh things will change, it will affect Quseir, it will be offensive'. But after all these years, Quseir is still the same place – I think there is no change. The only slight change that you can find is the increase in the number of people, but the people themselves have not changed. Only small things have entered from tourists and from other people who come from other cities, but we still fish like that man going to his boat [points to a man rowing in the harbour]. I think if this man had changed, and instead of working in the sea was going to the coffee shop to watch a film or a movie, then of course there would be change. But you can see it. I myself when I was a child maybe 10 years ago noticed this man [the fisherman], and he is still there until now...so the changes that are happening are not affecting those who think about themselves. They live their own lives.
>
> [Int 3.9 is trying to interject – Mohammed asks him to wait]
>
> Look at this beach - in Alexandria and Port Said and other beaches in Egypt you will find everybody there swimming in bikinis. But until now in Quseir, although it has been affected by tourism, you won't find girls in bikinis. All these tourist

villages are occupied by foreign people who come to have the summer here, and the citizens of Quseir have no objection to that.

Int 3.9: You say that there is no change in Quseir, but I will ask a very small question: five or ten years ago, would you find the same number of girls or women who come here every night and sit here and have drinks? Maybe with their families or friends or others? No. So how can it be that there is no change? There is change at a very deep level.

I: But they are not from Quseir.

Int 3.9: No, no, no. They are from Quseir.

I: No.

Int 3.9: They are residents of Quseir. Yesterday I have seen many, many people. Some of my relatives were here yesterday. Everything has changed.

I: No.

Int 3.9: 30% of the houses in Quseir have satellite television now. A few years ago it was forbidden for children to see a certain kind of movie on the television, Egyptian television. Now 30% or more have satellite. Open channels.

DG: But how much of these things – of women sitting on the beach for example –is a result of watching TV, how much of tourism?

Int 3.9: It's probably a result of TV, opening minds and more freedom from their parents, their families. I don't say it is good, I don't say it is bad. On one side it is good, on another it is bad, but I still say it happened. In general there are many changes. If my sister insisted on taking the cover off her hair, I wouldn't say no. You know why? Because she has experienced outside, been to Hurghada, seen many changes in Quseir. So she will ask me 'Why not? Everybody does this now'.

M: What do you think Darren?

DG: It is difficult for me to say because I wasn't here five or ten years ago.

M: OK, I will ask all of you this. Hurghada and Quseir. Are they the same?

Int 3.9: Different.

M: In what way?

Int 3.9: Hurghada was like a bomb, a time bomb because they started tourism in Hurghada…before Hurghada was nothing, but Quseir before was a city, with people, traditions, many things. So when you go to a place that has a civilisation and tradition, a system, a society – something organised – then I guess the effect will be slower.

M: So the changes here are slow?

Int 3.9: Slow, but still change.

Scenarios such as these were common throughout the third field season. The interviews became more discursive, more dialogic, with interviewees asking questions and generating discussions. They became a two, three, four, sometimes five way process:

DG: Does Quseir have a future other than tourism?

I: I'll ask you this question. What do you think of Quseir? What is your opinion of what we have made of this city?

M: You have an outsiders perspective, so what are your thoughts on what you have seen?

DG: I think that this place and its location is beautiful, it's peaceful and calm and its a great place for people to come on holiday. But I also think that if it becomes *just* a tourist city, it will lose some of its charm...but this is just my opinion.

I: I want to know what you think would work to make people come to Quseir?

DG: I think people would come anyway because of what Quseir has now, the coral, the sea, the desert - the weather is perfect. I think it's probably advertising more than anything, letting people know that this place is here.

I: Yes, but I also want you to make this big museum, where we can put the antiquities from Q-al-Q, from ancient Egypt, from any place. This will make the tourists come here, to see this museum.

DG: What impact will more tourists coming to Quseir have on the city?

I: I think people want the tourists to come here, visit our city and give money, everything.

M: So it would not be a negative effect, changing the tradition of Quseir itself?

I: No, no, no. I think the tourists will come here and see us and our cities, our fishing, our harbour, go shopping – everything. But this question I should ask you. You come from England, so what would the tourists like? (Int. 3.30).

This more discursive style of interview was, I believe, more beneficial in terms of the research itself – it was certainly more enjoyable for all concerned. Relevant topics were covered (see below), but discussions ranged freely around them. This does, however,

enhance the risk that vagaries and biases will be introduced into the data in the form of leading questions. Again, when this suspicion is apparent, both question and response are quoted within the text.

There are, nevertheless, several more mundane methodological issues raised by conducting interviews through an interpreter. Given my still fairly poor understanding of the complexities of the Arabic language, it is impossible for me to be certain that the questions are phrased in the same manner as originally asked, or even if the language allows for the question to be translated adequately – though this was at least partially overcome by both Diaa and Mohammed informing me when questions made little sense. Nor have I been able to ascertain the extent to which each interpreter altered the original answers, putting his or her own interpretations upon them. Indeed, my failure to attain an adequate grasp of both spoken and written Arabic prior to the onset of this research may be seen by some as problematic, necessitating the use of interpreters and increasing the risk of 'orientalising' Quseir through restricting access to other resources (works published in Arabic for example). In reality, though, it may never be possible to understand the subtleties of the interviews conducted in the city, the nuances in the conversation, simply because I am not part of that culture – every culture or society will use different concepts and symbols in their language, symbols that are difficult to translate cross-culturally.

Indeed, I would suggest that the benefits of working with an interpreter far outweigh the negatives. All the interpreters that I worked alongside facilitated access to different sectors of Quseir society, introduced new themes into the interviews and acted as mediators between myself and the interviewees. On a number of different occasions, Mohammed especially ensured that embarrassing situations did not arise, gently ushering me in a different direction when he deemed a question inappropriate or liable to cause offence – particularly on issues surrounding religion. No amount of reading can ever make you as adequately acquainted with a culture as one who lives it. If I was proficient enough in Arabic to conduct the interviews without the aid of an interpreter, I believe this research project would be poorer for the lack of collaboration.

The interviews

Throughout the three field seasons, interviews were conducted with members of the local community (including Quseir residents and hotel employees), the archaeological team (both Luxor based and European members) and a small number of tourists.

Interviews with members of the local community

The interviews conducted with members of the local community centred around four very general themes:

- The past
- Quseir al-Qadim
- The excavations and excavators
- The future

The first of these, *The past*, included questions designed to discover levels of interest in the past and perceptions of the importance of Quseir's history within the city. This theme was commonly introduced with the simple question 'Are you interested in history?' before discussing issues that arose from individual answers (e.g. 'What period of the past is most important to you? To Quseir? To Egypt, culturally and/ or economically?').

The second, *Quseir al-Qadim*, was ostensibly designed to discover the depth of local knowledge of the site and its 'status' in Quseir. It was this theme that produced the richest data. Included in this section were questions relating to the history of the site, folklore and activities carried out at Quseir al-Qadim in recent memory. It was rarely necessary to artificially introduce this theme into the interview.

The third section discussed the present excavations, addressing issues such as attitudes toward the excavations in Quseir, community involvement in the investigation process

and public access to archaeological information. This theme was usually prefaced by the question 'Have you heard about the current excavations at Quseir al-Qadim?'

The final section, *The future*, focused upon the perceived future of Quseir, and what role, if any, the past will play in the development of the city. The question of which or who's past was also raised in this section – the past of the archaeologists or more traditional perceptions?

These four themes provided the basic structure of the interviews throughout all three seasons of data collection. It was possible, however, to place a different emphasis on them in each field season. So, for example, as the analysis of interviews undertaken in seasons one and two provoked interesting questions regarding the perceived potential of Quseir al-Qadim to generate heritage tourism within the city, a conscious decision was taken to explore the fourth theme – *The future* – in greater depth in field season three.

Interviews with the European based archaeological team

During the first field season interviews were also conducted with all European based members of the archaeological team.[6] These adopted the same theoretical and methodological framework as those conducted with local residents, and were designed to assess the perceived benefits (or otherwise) of increased community involvement in archaeological research. Given the importance and significance of the data gathered during interviews with members of the local community, a conscious decision has been taken to exclude these from this research project – a decision justified by subsequent chapters. As they formed a central part of my research in the first field season, it is nevertheless essential to highlight the main themes covered in each:

- The archaeological impact
- The politics of archaeology
- Perceptions of the past

The first of these, *The archaeological impact*, was designed to question how far the interviewees felt it necessary for archaeologists to consider the impact of their work on non archaeologists, focusing especially upon the wider role of archaeology in the

community. Also included within this section were more specific questions relating to Quseir, including perceptions of the Community Archaeology Project and reactions toward increased community involvement in archaeological investigations.

The second theme, *Archaeology and politics*, addressed the personal reaction of individuals to excavating in Egypt – a non Western, Islamic country. The final theme, *Perceptions of the past*, gave the interviewees the opportunity to outline their views on the role of alternative perceptions of the past and their place within the archaeological discipline.

The sheer volume of data recorded in Quseir meant that it was not practicable to conduct repeat interviews with every member of the archaeological team. In season three, for example, only two further interviews were conducted with European archaeologists. This is unfortunate: it would have been extremely interesting to analyse how individual perceptions changed as the excavation progressed. It is nevertheless hoped that the data collected in the first field season will form the basis of a future research project.

Interviews with the Luxor based archaeological team

The interviews conducted with the Luxor based members of the archaeological team (figure 2.3) were essentially a combination of the two formats discussed above. Additional questions were nevertheless introduced, focusing upon the interaction between the Luxor, Quseir and European teams and attitudes toward foreign based teams undertaking archaeological investigations in Egypt. These interviews yielded a unique combination of archaeological/ non-archaeological perceptions of the past.

Interviews with tourists

A small number of interviews with tourists were undertaken in the first and third field seasons, principally examining reasons for choosing Quseir as a holiday destination. Reactions to the city itself and levels of interest in the history of the region were also discussed.

Figure 2.3 Raffai, *Raais* (foreman) of the Luxor based archaeological team.

Figure 2.4. Quseir residents employed on site. From left to right: Mr Halifa, Mr Ali, Ibrahim, Mr Ramadam and Sayed.

The data and the analysis process

The interviews undertaken in all three field seasons constitute a database of 101 interview transcripts. As many of these were conducted with groups of two or more, the total database comprises discussions with 170 individuals, represented in table 1.

Interviewees	*Numbers*
Male residents of Quseir (incl. hotel employees)	108
Male residents of Quseir employed on site	12
Female residents of Quseir	9
Archaeologists from Luxor	7
European based archaeologists	25
Tourists	9
Total	170

Table 1. The interview sample

For cultural reasons it was not possible to interview as many women as would be desirable for a representative sample. Naturally this increases the risk of denying heterogeneity within the city through the presentation of an extremely male-dominated account. Unfortunately, given my own sex and the nature of Egyptian society, little could be done to prevent this; only to make it transparent. Owing to the paucity of interviews conducted with women, it was therefore not considered appropriate to analyse the data for disjuncture on the basis of gender. For the purposes of the Community Archaeology Project it may nevertheless prove beneficial for a similar programme of interviews to be undertaken by a female researcher, thus facilitating the construction of a more diverse database – of particular importance perhaps in the development and selection of themes for inclusion in the Heritage Centre.

The age of the interviewees also varied considerably. Given the qualitative nature of the research, however, exact ages have little bearing on the data. Only when an approximate age was considered certain (e.g. with the staff of the Learning Development Centre, the majority of whom may be considered to be of the 'younger generation') was it

incorporated into the analysis. Despite this, many interviewees offered their age. Of those that did, the oldest was 104 (Int. 12), the youngest 16 (Int. 3.28).

A variety of different locations were utilised for the interviews themselves, represented in table 2:

Location of interviews	*Number conducted*
Coffee shops	42
Hotels and guesthouses	17
Private homes and family meeting places	15
Site and camp	10
Offices and schools	6
Shops and bazaars	10
Other	1
Total	101

Table 2. Location of interviews.

This range reflects the different occupations of all those interviewed, including retired phosphate workers, fishermen, government employees, teachers, hotel employees, tour guides, shop workers and bazaar owners, builders, and individuals who are presently unemployed.

The interviews themselves varied greatly in length; the shortest lasting just fifteen minutes, the longest some two and a half hours. This reflected the time available to each interviewee: the shortest interviews were with members of the local community employed on site, conducted during work hours (figure 2.4). These interviews were abandoned after three attempts, and subsequent interviews with Quseir based excavators were undertaken after work, in the city itself. In contrast, the lengthiest interviews (in terms of time taken) were completed with individuals in coffee shops or at home, those with time to relax – the longest was conducted during and after dinner with the male members of a family resident in Quseir (Int. 14). The length of many of these interviews has resulted in the construction of a database that incorporates approximately eighty-five

hours of tape, totalling 192,768 words when transcribed. Individual interviews range in length from just 295 words (Int.48) to 7895 words (Int.2), the vast majority between 2000 and 3500.

Transcription

The transcription process is a long and arduous one (unfortunately, I too was destined to undertake a laborious task) – one hour of tape takes approximately ten hours to transcribe. This was exaggerated by the quality of recording on a minority of the tapes, especially if ambient noise in the form of traffic, conversation or music was also recorded. Procedures were, however, implemented in field seasons two and three to reduce the impact of background interference by placing the tape recorder next to the interviewer and the interpreter, rather than in between all three of us as was previously the case. Despite the length of time involved, the transcription of each interview is crucial: failure to transcribe an interview results in a significant loss of information (Breakwell 1990:85).

The transcripts are stored as individual files within the computer, separated into each season of collection. These constitute the master copy of the data and as such contain no notes. Notes are made only on the printed versions of the transcripts or in the electronic database (see below). In order to protect anonymity, these files do not contain the names of the interviewees, though relevant personal information such as age, occupation and gender is recorded. The names are however, kept separately, thus enabling me to contact individuals if anything appears unclear. To date, this has not been necessary.

Analysis of transcripts

Initially, the printed transcripts were compared with field notes taken following the completion of each interview. This facilitated the inclusion of themes and statements that had become apparent/ were offered after the interview had finished, as well as factors such as the general attitude of the interviewee throughout the interview (i.e. positive or negative), physical actions of the interviewee, the reactions and involvement of others during the interview and a description of the location in which the interview was conducted. This situated each interview within its own context.

A rudimentary content analysis of each transcript was subsequently performed (essentially several re-readings of each interview), highlighting several themes that recur throughout. Extracts relating to these themes were then copied into a database constructed in *Microsoft Access*.

An electronic database

The database contains extracts from each interview, divided into eight main themes:

- *Attitude toward excavation*: including extracts that demonstrate an awareness of the excavation of Quseir al-Qadim, levels of interest in the investigation and positive or negative statements towards both the excavation and the archaeological team.
- *Community collaboration and interaction*: incorporating extracts that discuss the benefits of community involvement for both parties, those that demonstrate a desire or otherwise for increased community involvement in the excavation, and comments on the Community Archaeology Project itself.
- *Future development*: the perceived role of the excavation and the site itself in the future economic, social and cultural development of Quseir. This category also includes attitudes toward the tourist industry in Quseir.
- *Folklore*: of or pertaining to Quseir al-Qadim, the modern city or archaeological sites in the surrounding area.
- *Historical awareness*: the broadest category, containing all statements that demonstrate an awareness of the historic nature of the area, regardless of depth of knowledge.
- *Local knowledge*: a more detailed discussion of the history of Quseir al-Qadim and modern Quseir, regardless of archaeological/ historical 'accuracy'.
- *Museum*: including the location of the proposed Heritage Centre, attitudes toward the centre, suggested themes for inclusion, display strategies and the design of the centre.
- *Pride and prestige*: demonstrations of what we might simplistically term 'pride' in the historic nature of the area and perceived prestige in the excavation of Quseir al-Qadim. This theme is closely linked to *Future development*, *Attitude toward the excavation* and *Museum*.

These themes are those that recur with most frequency in the transcripts themselves. They are, nevertheless, arbitrary and many of the excerpts fall into two, often more, of the categories. As a result of this, it is difficult to base an analysis on these categories alone; the themes are used only to highlight areas that must be taken into consideration. The database program does, however, allow me to add new categories when necessary and to record a number of categories per interview, thus avoiding the temptation to force extracts into a theme that may not be appropriate. Each extract is accompanied by a number of notes that document the location of the interview, the occupation of the interviewee (e.g. hotel employee, Luxor based archaeologist), the original interview number and any further relevant information.

It is important to emphasise that this database is a tool to aid analysis; it is not intended to act as an interpretative device in and of itself. To use it as such would be to distort the data – the unstructured nature of the interviews and the data collected (in qualitative form) is not conducive to rigorous statistical analysis, one of the main interpretative functions of a database. It is nevertheless suggested by McCracken that the construction of such a database

> represents a great act of reduction. It removes from consideration all parts of the transcript that have not given rise to an observation, and leaves the investigator with a much simpler record...The original transcript is now only consulted when some special point must be clarified (1988:47)

This is problematic. In a qualitative analysis, no part of an interview should be considered irrelevant; everything within it gives the interview context. Pauses can be significant, physical actions revealing; what is left unsaid is often of equal importance. By 'reducing' the data set such factors are overlooked.

In reality, I found myself returning to the original interview transcripts regularly. As the thesis evolved, new questions arose, new points of interest that, though often included within the electronic database, were difficult to address within my prescribed themes. Indeed, as the research progressed I began to find the themes themselves limiting: though I was aware that they were arbitrary – I had after all, created them myself – they still seemed to delineate my thinking, pushing me towards conclusions that would perhaps be difficult to support when read within the context of the entire interview. The electronic database essentially became a tool that facilitated the search for pertinent

quotes when a strong theme was already apparent, such as folklore. It was less useful when discussing more controversial subjects in which diverse opinions were voiced – the development of heritage tourism, for example. Though the writing of this thesis has therefore become a longer, more drawn out and often more laborious task, it is hoped that my decision to give primacy to the full transcripts provides it with a richer, deeper texture.

Throughout this chapter, I have reviewed the various methodologies employed in the collection of data for this thesis and described the process of data collection and analysis itself. I have argued that the approaches adopted throughout the interviews conducted in Quseir have contributed to the construction of a rich and diverse database, a deeper and more meaningful database than would have been achievable using more traditional social science methodologies (e.g. the questionnaire, the survey) and one that facilitates the discussion of themes considered relevant by all parties. It is hoped that the success of this approach will become apparent in the texture of chapters presented in part two of this thesis. In the next chapter, the final chapter of part one, I turn my attention toward the often contentious question of the place of alternative perceptions within the archaeological discipline, examining the delicate interplay between archaeology and folklore. Given my use of folklore in subsequent chapters, such a discussion is both necessary and timely.

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[1] Int. 2.2

[2] Edited transcripts of interviews are attached to this thesis.

[3] Though imposing restrictions on the number of interviewees may, ironically, be seen as something of a quantitative approach.

[4] Many of the paragraphs included within this chapter are personal reactions to the research process throughout the period of data collection, either recorded at the time or with the benefit of hindsight. Looking back at them now, and having just re-read Crapanzano's *Tuhami: Portrait of a Moroccan* (1980), I see that we shared many of the same experiences. Perhaps this is a result of the at least superficial similarity of our research. Whatever the case, any similarities between the experiences recounted here, and those found within *Tuhami* are coincidental, unless explicitly referenced within the main text.

[5] The Community Archaeology project at Quseir produces an annual plain language report, reporting the results of the season's excavation to the local community in a format that is devoid of archaeological/ academic jargon. Initially these were produced by European based team members, translated into Arabic and published bi-lingually (e.g. Glazier 1999; Phillips 2000, 2001). The reports are now compiled by Lamya Nasser and published in Arabic. See Moser *et al* (2002:230) for further discussion.

[6] During this field season, I was also interviewed by a colleague from the archaeological team. This was ostensibly designed to give me the opportunity to reflect upon the interview methodologies to date, a process that proved extremely beneficial: it was eye-opening to see things from the interviewee's perspective, to recognise the need to allow individuals the time to formulate responses to questions. In

short, it helped me to realise that in an interview situation, the interviewee, as well as the researcher, can feel under pressure 'to perform'.

CHAPTER THREE

Lords and Ladies, sprites and scholars.

The curious tale of folklore and archaeology

Let's not get lost in archaeology – a widespread and fatal tendency, I think, of the coming generation

Gustave Flaubert, in a letter to Louis Bouilhet (1850 [1996]:211)

In the previous chapter I reflected upon research methodologies in Quseir, introducing the reader to the interview process and highlighting the range of themes addressed. In this chapter, the final chapter of part one, I re-orient the focus toward a discussion of the role of archaeological folklore within the discipline. In the context of Quseir, such a discussion is not only beneficial, but vital: throughout the interviews conducted in the city, a great deal of local archaeological knowledge was articulated in terms that we would describe as folkloric. As several interviewees suggested, any exploration of Quseir al-Qadim must include all ways of knowing the past, whether archaeological, historical, mythic or folkloric (e.g. Int. 24; Int. 41).

In a later chapter, chapter six, I argue that the archaeological folklore of Quseir al-Qadim contributes to the construction of a unique identity for the modern city of Quseir through the constant repetition of archaeological/ historical motifs. Given the contentious nature of the use of folklore in archaeological analyses, however, it is necessary to outline in some detail the potential benefits for an archaeological discipline that is prepared to consider folklore as an alternative perception of the past. I make no apologies for investigating the subject in such detail: the relationship between archaeology and folklore has been too long overlooked by the discipline yet, given the primacy of archaeological folklore in Quseir, it is a relationship that must be debated. This debate has recently begun in earnest (see for example pioneering contributions to Schmidt & Patterson 1995; Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999*a*; Wallis & Lymer 2001); it must be continued if we are to understand how the past is experienced, how it is negotiated and understood in the present.

...Stories are important.

People think that stories are shaped by people. In fact, it is the other way around.

Stories exist independently of their players. If you know that, the knowledge is power.

Stories, great flapping ribbons of shaped space-time, have been blowing and uncoiling around the universe since the beginning of time. And they have evolved. The weakest have died and the strongest have survived and they have grown fat on the re-telling...stories, twisting and blowing through the darkness.

And their very existence overlays a faint but insistent pattern on the chaos that is history. Stories etch grooves deep enough for people to follow in the same way that water follows certain paths down a mountain side. And every time fresh actors tread the path of the story, the groove runs deeper.

This is called the theory of narrative causality and it means that a story, once started, takes a shape. It picks up all the other workings of that story that have ever been...

Stories don't care who takes part in them. All that matters is that the story gets told, that the story repeats...

Once upon a time...

Terry Pratchett, *Witches abroad* (1992:8-9)

The latter half of the twentieth century witnessed a rapid increase in the popularity of New Age philosophies and spiritualism. The middle classes of the industrialised world appropriated and romanticised the worldview of indigenous groups and ancient societies, unconsciously, perhaps, plundering and de-contextualising philosophical and spiritual beliefs in support of a burgeoning consumer industry. Yet folklore has remained curiously distinct, forever associated, in the British imagination at least, with a lost rural way of life; a parochial, local, and therefore largely sinister tradition. Too context specific for a society caught up in the fervour of globalisation, the folklore of the world has become trivialised, its reputation as an academic tool diminished.[1]

Within this chapter, I suggest that this marginalisation is based upon a fundamental misunderstanding of what folklore represents. I examine the concept of folklore, analysing its relationship to both society in general and archaeology in particular, before

highlighting the potentials of archaeological folklore to aid understanding of how the past is experienced in the present.[2] I conclude by examining the role of archaeological folklore in the construction of contemporary identities: as we shall see, folkloric symbolism constructs identity in subtle, often complex ways.

I do not, however, wish to become embroiled in a semantic debate regarding the use of the term 'folklore'. The term itself is encumbered by a number of morally and politically dubious connotations, to such an extent that some colleagues have suggested that I avoid the discussion of folklore altogether, despite its prevalence in modern Quseir. Still others have advocated the use of alternative phrases such as 'oral tradition' or 'local knowledge'; I do not believe that this constitutes a solution. The word must be problematised, as I endeavour to do below, not masked behind a façade of respectability that allows scholars to use folkloric materials unimpeded. I argue that a responsible, mature archaeological discipline must be able to consider multiple perceptions of the past, including folklore. By doing so, by recognising the role of the folklore of archaeological sites in local communities, we may go some way to bridging the gap that has developed between archaeologists and the communities in which we study.[3]

The nature of folklore

The importance of oral testimony may lie not in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism, and desire emerge

Alessandro Portelli, *What makes oral history different* (1998:68)

Folklore is a misunderstood phenomenon. Unfortunately, as a concept, it is also notoriously difficult to define: as late as the 1960s there remained "no widespread agreement amongst folklorists about what folklore is" (Dundes 1965:1) and, at least to a certain extent, this remains the case today. Much of the debate revolves around the controversial notion of 'oral transmission' – the central criterion for many antiquarian folklorists and a defining characteristic for some scholars in the present (e.g. Propp 1984). Others have argued that this reduces all communication in non-literate societies to folklore, claiming that oral tradition, though an important component, does not constitute folklore in and of itself (e.g. Dundes 1965).

The definition offered by Ó Giolláin highlights at least the diverse uses of folklore within modern societies:

> 'Folklore' is both subject matter and critical discourse, amateur enthusiasm and academic discipline, residual agrarian culture and the popular urban culture of the present; it is both conservative anti-modernist and radical counter-culture, the sphere of dilettantish provincial intellectuals and of committed nation builders, transmitted by word of mouth in intimate settings and negotiated electronically in the public domain (2000:1).

This definition is nevertheless limited by its failure to address the intricacies of the subject, what folklore actually *is*.

Others have attempted to define folklore as the preserve of the poor, the lower echelons of society unacquainted with 'high culture'. This misnomer was propagated by folklorists in the nineteenth century (e.g. Gomme 1890) and retains prominence today, principally in the Marxist analysis of Vladimir Propp and his followers (e.g. Liberman 1984). Indeed, it is suggested by Propp that "from a historical perspective, the entire creative output of peoples is folklore...[but] folklore is first and foremost the art of the oppressed classes, the peasants and workers" (1984:4-5). Though from a Marxist perspective this position is hardly surprising, it is a myth that has become curiously pervasive in modern society. Such statements fail to recognise that folklore is a product of all social strata: as Dundes (1984) demonstrates in his illuminating discussion of scatology and anality in German folklore, folkloric motifs are ubiquitous in society, from the 'rural masses' to the 'cultural elite'.

Perhaps the most useful definition in archaeological terms is that offered by Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf (1999*b*). They suggest:

> we wish our definition to be as broad as possible, to include not only traditional oral literature and rituals, but also all material culture, social customs and artistic performances associated with a group of people. This broad definition follows the ideas of contemporary folklorists who recognise that all groups of people maintain many different kinds of traditions and define themselves through these traditions (1999*b*:6)

It is the last line that is most useful for my analysis, the recognition that folklore, 'customs' and 'traditions' contribute to constructions of shared identity (see for example

Dundes 1965, 1984). Though the definition proffered by Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf is therefore undoubtedly useful for archaeologists, it too is limited by its failure to take into account concepts central to the development and transmission of folklore such as change, diversity and context.

Despite this emphasis upon the role of folklore in constructions of group identity, there has long been a tendency in society to perceive of folklore as 'dead' or at the very least static (Thompson 1966:226). However, as Opie and Opie (1980:68) demonstrate, folklore is not a phenomenon that is in decline – it ages, and some parts are forgotten, but it also grows and adapts to changing contexts (see also Propp 1984:8). Nowhere is this more evident than in modern Britain: not so long ago Elves were feared, dreaded. Now – thanks in no small part to Disney and Coca Cola – they are Santa's little helpers. In contrast, many Pagans in contemporary Britain regard Elves as Wights of the land, creatures that may be engaged with for spiritual purposes.[4] We believe horseshoes bring good luck; less than 200 years ago they were placed over doorways to avert evil.[5] Folklore *is* modern culture.

It is this very organic, dynamic aspect that makes folklore relevant to a study of the past. Archaeological sites are not dead when they fall into disuse; they are not re-awakened by their subsequent archaeological investigation. They are organic creatures, constantly re-used, re-negotiated and absorbed into different communities over time. It is no coincidence that a great deal of folklore is associated with archaeological sites (see for example Champion & Cooney 1999; Layton 1999).

Silbury hill, for example, a Neolithic monument in Wiltshire, England, is reputed to have been formed by the Devil dropping a spade full of earth that he planned to deposit on the nearby town of Devizes. Other traditions suggest that the Devil intended to destroy Avebury itself, raging at its religious ceremonies, but was halted by the prayers of priests, forcing him to drop the earth at the point where Silbury hill now stands.[6] It is too naïve to suggest that these traditions are merely attempts to explain the physical residue of the past by an uneducated rural population. Oral traditions, folklore, or alternative histories are statements about the world that transmit information from individual to individual, incorporating new experiences into existing frameworks of knowledge (Anyon *et al* 1997:78; see also Greer *et al* 2002). The presence of archaeological folklore demonstrates

that a site is significant enough to be incorporated into a community's view of the past and, by implication, themselves.

Ironically, it may be this very relationship between folklore and archaeological sites that has led some to perceive it as 'dead' – rooted in the past, subjective and unscientific, and thus of little or no relevance to contemporary society or archaeological study. And yet, as Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf (1999*b*) suggest, if modern archaeology is concerned with how events were experienced, interpreted and remembered in both the past *and the present*, then folklore is a valuable resource. The analysis of archaeological folklore is essential if we are to understand how sites are negotiated within different communities, yet it remains academically marginalised (Symonds 1999:112).

This may in part be due to the difficulty in ascertaining how folklore originates. In reality, it develops for many different reasons in different contexts: what is true in north Yorkshire may not also be true in Quseir. It is certainly true that it can be adopted, manipulated or perhaps even invented for particular reasons – a political agenda, entertainment or even economic interests (Liberman 1984; Propp 1984:126; Gazin-Schwartz & Holtorf 1999*b*:12).

Nowhere is the economic and political importance of folklore more evident than in Egypt. Would the tomb of Tutankhamen have attained such stellar international status without its curse? 'The curse of the Pharaohs' is perhaps the most famous of all the folklore that surrounds Egyptian and – somewhat ironically - British archaeology, yet it is probable that it was pure invention, fuelled by the British press following the death of Carnarvon. Carter himself asserted that there was no curse to be found above the tomb as is indeed common in other crypts in the Valley of the Kings (Carter & Mace 1977).[7] It is undeniable that there were a number of deaths within the archaeological team (see Vandenberg 1975; Stone 1993), yet the majority of these were elderly men, working in unsanitary conditions without the protection offered by modern medicine. Indeed, it was suggested by Adamson, a guard at the original excavation, that rumours of a curse were initially circulated by Carnarvon to deter would-be thieves (Stone 1993), deemed by the financier to be a practical policy in a society where folklore is deeply ingrained (see chapter six). Curiously, Carter, the man who retained a substantial amount of artefacts for his own collection, died peacefully seventeen years later. This fact is, however, largely

overlooked and 'the curse of the Pharaohs/Mummies tomb' has taken root, instantly becoming as ancient as the tombs themselves.

As a result of this, it is difficult to know which features of folklore are 'old' and which are recent inventions. Ultimately, this does not matter: it is what people consider ancient or traditional that gives folklore meaning (Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999*b*:14). This naturally causes problems for archaeology, a discipline devoted to 'authenticating' the past. For Edward Lane, the chronicler of much Egyptian folklore in the early nineteenth century, authenticity and antiquity were irrelevant, "for in treating of superstitions, we have more to do with opinion than facts" (Lane 1836:300).[8]

Nevertheless, it has been argued that the status of folklore amongst the archaeological (and indeed the historical) community is at least partly due to the delusion that

> if folklore did not arise from actual historical situations then clearly folklore was unreliable for the study of history and history was irrelevant to the study of folklore (Joyner 1989:11).

Whilst it could indeed be argued that folklore does not present us with a reliable, authentic past, the same is also true of archaeology. Both subjects simply present the past as interpreted in the present (Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999*b*:5). Though there are of course things that we can be certain about archaeologically (we can, for example, state categorically that Quseir al-Qadim articulated Rome's trade with the Indian Ocean), our hypotheses are still constructed in the present. As Symonds (1999:115) suggests, it is somewhat ironic that folklore can be dismissed as inauthentic by a discipline that has happily de-contextualised modern ethnographies in an attempt to reconstruct the prehistoric past.

Yet the dichotomy between archaeology and folklore becomes less problematic if we distinguish, as Larry Zimmerman (1997) does, between archaeology as a profession and archaeology as a way of knowing. If archaeology is a profession, with the emphasis upon developer led excavation, then there can be no room for alternative histories, alternative perceptions of the past, within the archaeological project. If, however, archaeology is perceived as a way of knowing, a means of interpreting the past based upon tangible material remains then the boundaries become blurred: "archaeology does not seek or determine truth about the past...archaeology is a tool that helps people construct – not

reconstruct – the past" (Zimmerman 1997:53). As the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1971) demonstrates, folklore too is simply an alternative way of constructing the world (see also Layton 1999).

Archaeology, folklore and society

I suggested above that, despite popular perception, folklore is pervasive in modern society. There is no known culture that does not incorporate folklore into their worldview (Bascom 1953). We need only look to the popularity of certain folktales in modern Britain, for example – the legend of Robin Hood has become naturalised, has effectively become history. And yet why is the folklore of Robin Hood acceptable in contemporary Britain, and not other folktales? Why are investigations into the burial place of King Arthur and the whereabouts of his *legendary* round table deemed legitimate (particularly by the media) and not the fairy forts of Wiltshire and Dorset?

Perhaps the most obvious explanation is that these folktales focus upon people, historical figures that can be proved to exist.[9] In contrast, much of the folklore that surrounds archaeological monuments world-wide may be considered supernatural – tales of ghosts, demons, sprites or elves – creatures that modern, 'rational' society insists do not exist. Many of the myths and legends that have grown up around these historical figures are, however, just that, myth. Though they are often recognised as mythic, legendary or folkloric, they are still widely recounted in modern Britain.[10] What is the Lady of the Lake if not a supernatural being? A fish? I would suggest not.

I argue that we accept the legendary figures of Robin Hood and King Arthur simply because they are heroic.[11] Like St. George, they have immense symbolic power; they embody an ideal, the essence of British (read English) society, at once stately, fearless, charitable and righteous. In short, the quintessential English gentleman[12] – timeless, yet interwoven into the fabric of the English nation. Yet they also have another value to modern society as the progenitors of tourist industry, an industry that both exploits and perpetuates the myth. It is clearly possible to analyse these mythic characters and their appropriation by different generations to gain insights into contemporary English

identity, to assess how the modern English nation perceives of itself.[13] Why then can we not use other types of folkloric evidence in more specific, localised contexts?

I suggest that if folklore does not transcend its context, then it becomes romanticised, to be re-told only as 'fairy tales', as children's stories.[14] Nowhere is this more apparent than in the sanitised European version of *Arabian nights* which, in the original *A thousand nights and a night*, contains enough sex and violence to make Hugh Heffner or David Cronenburg blanch. In the West it has become at best children's fiction (*Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*) and, at worst, pantomime (*Aladdin*).

Perhaps as a result of this, the use of folklore in archaeology is generally regarded as the preserve of the 'fringe', of those who dabble in archaeology as a spiritual or mystical quest, suitable only for those members of a lay audience who delight in the 'pseudo-archaeology' of Von Daniken and Hancock *et al* (see Denning 1999). Indeed, it is suggested by Roger Echo-Hawk (1997:92) that at least part of the reluctance of archaeologists to accept folklore stems from its appropriation by pseudo-archaeologists and their presentation of unverifiable oral traditions (often stretching back through millennia) as fact. As a result of this misuse, folklore is perceived to be on the 'popular side' of the dichotomy between academic/ non academic (and therefore wrong) understandings of the archaeological past (Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999*b*:18).

Given the pervasive nature of folklore in both Western and non-industrial societies, this is somewhat surprising. As Blake suggests, archaeologists,

> tutored in the notion of cultural diversity for some time now...are used to insisting on the notions of multiculturalism and inclusion. However, the local life of monuments would seem to have no place in the modern archaeological project. The result has been for archaeologists to acknowledge the abstract 'validity' of these perspectives but to ignore them entirely in practice. This is unfortunate, as how people of the present live through these monuments informs the structures' meaningful constitution in the past (1999:230).

Multivocality is a defining feature of folklore. As archaeologists, we pay lip service to the inclusion of other voices, yet too often ignore them in practice, to the detriment of the site, the local community and the discipline itself. Although archaeology must be about

examining human activity in the past, testing theories against archaeological data, we do, as Brown and Bowen suggest "diminish the monument, and ourselves as part of creative humanity, if we ignore the factors that make one monument distinct from another of the same age and type" (1999:260).

Dangerous liaisons? A tale of two disciplines

The classicist and medievalist, anthropologist and psychologist, historian and archaeologist, literary scholar and philologist, as well as the parson, the doctor and the schoolmaster, found stimulus and reward in the methods of folklore

Richard M. Dorson, *The British folklorists*, (1968:1)

Throughout the previous section I suggested that folklore has been misunderstood by archaeologists, resulting in its marginalisation within the Anglo-American archaeological tradition. In this section, I demonstrate that the process of marginalisation occurred only recently, arguing that folklore and archaeology developed in tandem as mutually dependent disciplines. I conclude with a brief discussion of the motives behind the separation of folklore and archaeology.

Creation myths

Though it may not be apparent in the plethora of texts devoted to the history of the discipline, archaeology and folklore share a common heritage, both tracing their ancestry back to the antiquarians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (see Gazin-Schwartz & Holtorf 1999*b*:7). In Britain, for example, William Camden collated a great deal of folklore whilst on his archaeological travels, published in 1607 as *Remaines of a Greater Worke*, an appendage to his seminal *Britannia.* In *Britannia* itself, archaeological observations are often interspersed with folktales: his description of a barrow in Kent outlines in some depth oral traditions relating to the monument, collected by Camden from local residents.[15]

Aubrey too recorded and faithfully transcribed a huge volume of folklore concurrently with his archaeological researches (e.g. *Miscellanies* 1696) and George Gomme's *Handbook*

of the folklore society contains many examples of the fastidiousness of Aubrey's work (e.g. 1890:17). Indeed, Aubrey's sensitive discussion of folklore appears somewhat advanced for his time, highlighting the importance of local tradition in the analysis of archaeology and pioneering the interweaving of archaeological and non archaeological narratives: "I know that some will nauseate these old Fables, but I doe profess to regard them as the most considerable pieces of antiquity I collect" ([sic] cited in Dorson 1968:7). It is also interesting to note that William Stukeley, regarded by many as instrumental in laying "the foundations of modern understanding of British field monuments" (Bahn 1996:46) is recognised as the father of modern Druidry, the Great Arch-Druid Chyndonax (see Sebastion 2001:126).

The relationship between archaeology and folklore did not, however, end with these early antiquarian pioneers. In the eighteenth century Francis Grose, described by Dorson as the most "complete antiquary" of his age (1968:26) founded *The antiquarian repertory*, a journal devoted to the study of both disciplines, whilst John Brand, a folklore scholar, became a Fellow and resident secretary of the Society of Antiquaries - a position that he held until his death in 1784 (see Dorson 1968:13). Thus, from their humble beginnings, British archaeology and folklore were inextricably entwined, a process mirrored throughout much of northern Europe.[16]

It has nevertheless been argued by some that a shift in the relationship between archaeology and folklore occurred in the latter half of the nineteenth century as the two struggled to define themselves as academic disciplines (e.g. Gazin-Schwartz & Holtorf 1999*b*). As folklore became increasingly concerned with the classification, description and analysis of different folk genres (Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999*b*:10), archaeology attempted to distance itself from its erstwhile partner, establishing itself as *the* objective science of the past. Though this would appear to be logical, it is not entirely supported by the evidence. The eminent British archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans, for example, published a discussion of the folklore of the Rollright stones (Oxfordshire) in the 1895 edition of the journal *Folklore* prior to his now famous reconstruction's at Knossos. Indeed, this argument appears untenable when we examine the membership of the Folklore Society in the late nineteenth century.

George Gomme's *Handbook of the Folklore society* (1890) reads like a 'who's who' of both archaeology and anthropology. In 1890, the Folklore society listed as vice presidents Pitt-Rivers, John Lubbock and Edward Tylor and, as a council member, John Frazer. These men were immensely powerful; a political and academic clique that oversaw the formation of two disciplines. Many cite Pitt-Rivers as the father of modern archaeological practice, Lubbock's *Prehistoric times* as the foundation of British prehistoric archaeology, Tylor and Frazer as the founders of modern anthropology.[17] In the United States, Frank Hamilton Cushing combined the roles of folklorist, archaeologist and ethnographer during his tenure at the Bureau of American Ethnology in the late nineteenth century (see Gosden 1999:43-5), whilst in Germany, France and Italy folklore developed alongside ethnology; the latter devoted to the study of non European cultures, the former the 'peasant' cultures of Europe (Ó Giolláin 2000). Was folklore destined to play a major role in the consolidation of both archaeology and anthropology as serious academic disciplines?

It is certainly true that folklorists in the nineteenth and, to a certain extent, the twentieth century perceived folklore to be a means of understanding the archaeological past. Gomme, for example, argued that folkloric analysis was essential if scholars were to gain an insight into the "prehistoric past of nations" (1890:1), defining folktales as "relics of an unrecorded past" (1890:1) – a significant comment when we recognise that his handbook was commissioned, approved and revised by the illustrious committee members outlined above.

Propp, too, suggests that much of what we know as folklore today originated in prehistory, urging archaeology and folklore to combine in the search for the prehistoric origin of folkloric motifs (e.g.1984). This is hardly surprising, as Propp's position as a prominent Soviet scholar during both the Second World War period ensured that he adhered rigidly to the evolutionary stages devised by Morgan and refined by Engels. Others have nevertheless followed – Alves, for example, argues that the analysis of folklore in the context of Iberian rock art reveals "reminisces of an ancestral past [that has] prevailed in parts of Europe" (2001:72).

Similarly, it has been suggested that the prominence of folklore within Egyptian society is a direct result of the emergence of the folktale in the pre-dynastic period. In 1852 de

Rouge translated a New Kingdom papyrus that closely resembles tales found within *The book of the thousand nights and a night*, and throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century Middle Kingdom papyri were recovered that appeared to contain many folkloric motifs (see Dorson 1980). Budge (1931) went further, attempting to classify Egyptian folktales into those of pagan (ancient), Coptic or Muslim origin, thus leading Dorson to proclaim that "no country offers the opportunity to trace folklore links to antiquity as Egypt does" (1980:ix).

This is controversial. Although I advocate the use of folklore in archaeology, I do not believe that it is possible, perhaps even fruitful, to trace the origins of folklore to prehistory. Even if it is proved to be so, it can only confirm that people in the past also developed folktales, something that was perhaps never open to doubt. As we have seen above, folklore is a dynamic concept, transforming as society transforms, as meanings are lost and new ones acquired.

I contend that folkloric analysis in archaeology is essential to an understanding of the present, not the past. For the purposes of my analysis, I would suggest that it is only possible to trace folklore back some 150 years – and then only tentatively. This allows for the recognition that some of the folklore recounted by elders in the city may have been passed on to them when they themselves were children, whilst avoiding the pitfalls inherent in proclaiming a long history for a specific folkloric motif. This is not, however, entirely relevant. Whether the folklore that is prevalent in Quseir today was also recounted in the nineteenth century is neither here nor there. It is the fact that these folktales are prominent today that makes them useful for those of us wishing to examine the interplay between archaeology and alternative perceptions of the past in the present.[18]

"A good Saxon compound": folklore, archaeology and nationalism

I demonstrated above that the development of both archaeology and folklore owed much to the same men. Throughout this section, I argue that they also share a somewhat more sinister past, as a nationalist discourse in both the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For the purposes of this research project, such a discussion is essential: if we are to use folklore in our analysis then we must problematise it and render its dubious

past transparent. I nevertheless conclude by suggesting that the manner in which folklore has been used in the past should not preclude its use in the present.

It is difficult to refute the claim made by Alan Dundes that the term 'folklore' carries a host of nationalistic connotations (1965). Its originator, William Thoms, writing under the moniker of Ambrose Merton (see Dundes 1965:4) argued in a letter to the *Athenaeum* that 'folklore' was "a good Saxon compound...*the lore of the people*" (1846:862; emphasis in original). Both the tone of the letter and its content reveal the nationalist implications of Thoms' 'folklore', highlighting the similarities between the folktales of England and Germany:

> the connection between the *folklore* of England...and that of Germany is so intimate that...communications will probably serve to enrich some future edition of Grimm's Mythology (1846:862; emphasis in original).

Thoms' intentions are clear. The Grimm brothers hypothesised that if the folklore of Germany could be proved to exist in other parts of Europe, it would provide compelling evidence in support of theories that proclaimed the prehistoric migration of a 'superior Aryan race' (see Dorson 1968:393). Others followed – the Scottish folklorist J.F. Campbell, for example, also attempted to incorporate the folklore of the Scottish highlands into the racial doctrines of the brothers Grimm (Symonds 1999:110). The eagerness with which both Thoms and Campbell sought to demonstrate perceived similarities in the folklore of England, Scotland and Germany is indicative of the desire to place their respective countries at the pinnacle of the racial hierarchy, at a time when the origins and characteristics of race were fiercely debated by science.

The explicit use of folklore as a nationalist discourse continued into the twentieth century. Archaeology, a nationalist project from its inception (see Diaz-Andreu & Champion 1996), swiftly became embroiled, evident in Halle and Schmidt's (2001) passionate discussion of European prehistoric research between 1933 and 1945, which highlights the role of *volkish* archaeology and folklore proper in the extreme nationalist theories of Kossina *et al.* Indeed, the National Socialist regime in Germany made a concerted effort to manipulate folkloric 'evidence' for racial and prejudicial purposes (Kamenetsky 1972; Dundes 1984:3), whilst both the fascist regime in Italy and the Vichy government in France used folklore to justify their ideologies (see Simeone 1978; Cuisenier & Segalen 1986; Ó Giolláin 2000:84). During one of the most horrific periods

in the history of continental Europe, both folklore and archaeology would be deeply implicated in the quest for lebensraum, the annexation of 'Germanic' countries, anti-Semitism and anti-Romany policies, forced labour and genocide.

In the light of this, some have characterised folklore as inherently and dangerously racist (e.g. Halle & Schmidt 2001). It is undeniable that both archaeology and folklore have been used to 'justify' acts of abhorrent and unspeakable evil. But can we feasibly reject evidence based simply upon the manner in which it was manipulated in the past? To disregard evidence, or even disciplines, simply because of the manner in which they have been appropriated in the past is unreasonable. If we are to follow that path, then the position of archaeology too appears untenable. As we have seen so often before, both folklore and archaeology reflect the ideological and political values of those who use them. Kossina analysed ceramics and doubtless wielded a trowel, yet these have not been demonised; the Manson family appropriated the Beatles *Helter-Skelter*, but that does not make the song, or indeed the singers, evil.

I do not condone the use of folklore to identify 'folk groups' or 'folk cultures' in the past, nor do I attempt to define the 'racial characteristics' of Quseir – or indeed Egypt – through its folklore. Indeed, I would vehemently and vociferously oppose any scholar who attempted such an analysis. Rather, I seek to examine attitudes toward the past in the present, to understand how the past is negotiated by communities. In the context of Quseir, the analysis of folklore is therefore not only unavoidable, but essential.[19]

The outsider

> *For long the concerns of...historians and folklorists have been separated, as if the study of virtually all aspects of folklore...was considered something less than respectable...despite the fact that very original research has been done by scholars with the expertise and breadth to incorporate folklore study into a wider disciplinary framework*
>
> K. Snell, *Rural history and folklore studies: towards new forms of association.* (1989:218)

I suggested above that the present split between archaeology and folklore in British academia could not have occurred in the latter stages of the nineteenth century. It may nevertheless be possible to discern the beginnings of this rift in the first half of the

twentieth century, when the interpretative supremacy acquired by archaeologists separated the discipline from local communities, reducing the role of the lay person to that of mere informant, an object for passive education (Burström 1999:43). No longer was the cultural life of the monument considered a valid part of its history.

Somewhat ironically, this rupture may in part be due to the antiquarian origins of the subject. Perceived of as the domain of the amateur intellectual and individual scholar, folklore appears to have become marginalised in British academia as disciplines became institutionalised in the twentieth century (Dorson 1976; Ó Giolláin 2000). Folklore as a field of study developed during the industrial revolution, a time when the academic and cultural elite were endeavouring to understand the 'nature' and traditions of the newly emergent urban poor (Ó Giolláin 2000:10). The emphasis placed upon tradition served to remind the lower strata of society of what they had lost through increased urbanisation and mechanisation, reinforcing their 'traditional' place in society and thus reducing the potential for civil unrest or – worse – social climbing. The impact of the First World War on the British psyche and the rise of social and political protest groups made such a position untenable.

That is not to say, however, that folklore was dismissed by every archaeologist in the post war period. Leslie Grinsell, in his *Ancient burial mounds of England* (1936:chapter five), evaluates the folklore of prehistoric barrows, dividing his analysis into folklore that may derive from the Neolithic/ Bronze age through to the present (see also Fleure 1931). Similarly, Aubrey Burl in his later survey of the stone circles of the British Isles (1976) catalogues all relevant information regarding each monument, whether archaeological, historical or folkloric. It is significant that both these scholars are prehistorians, devoting their academic lives to the study of monuments that have become imbued with astonishing amounts of archaeological folklore.[20] Yet, despite these exceptions, the vast majority of archaeological investigations conducted in the twentieth century took no account of archaeological folklore. It would appear that the analysis of folklore was no longer to be considered an integral part of the archaeological canon.

Interestingly, the marginalisation of folklore as an academic discipline in Britain was not mirrored throughout much of the rest of Europe. In Ireland and Sweden, Germany and Italy, folklore developed in tandem with the newly emergent discipline of ethnology (Ó

Giolláin 2000:10-11). Ó Giolláin attributes this trend to the greater influence of Romanticism within these countries, and, within Ireland and central and eastern European states, perceived economic, social and political disparities – it is perhaps no coincidence that the first chair of folklore studies was established in Helsinki in 1898 (Thomson 1946:430). Dismissing folklore as 'backward' or 'primitive' would therefore serve only to emphasise their own marginalised position within Europe (Ó Giolláin 2000:31). In contrast, the colonial powerhouse of Britain had no need for folklore any longer: their gaze went beyond Europe to their colonies, their ideological needs already served in that context by anthropology (Ó Giolláin 2000:49).

It may even be possible to perceive a final rupture in the relationship in the aftermath of the Second World War, when both archaeology and anthropology sought a scapegoat for their involvement in National Socialist atrocities and colonial discourse more broadly. It is certainly true that a scapegoat was needed to avoid both disciplines suffering an equally ignominious demise. It is unlikely, however, that it will ever be possible to define a single moment when archaeologists turned their back on folklore. The divorce was a gradual one, spurred, perhaps, by the events outlined above but not reliant upon them, occurring for a myriad of reasons in a variety of places.

Whenever the split first transpired, it would appear that the two disciplines had become very much distinct by the early 1950s, at least in Anglo-American archaeology. William Bascom, then president of the American folklore society, asserted that "neither physical anthropology, nor prehistory or archaeology have any direct relationship to folklore" (1953:283). Given the close association between the American Folklore Society and academic anthropology at least up until the 1940s in the United States (see Stocking 1996:98ff), such a position is somewhat surprising. Yet there was certainly no room for folklore in the processual movement that gathered pace within archaeology in the early 1960s, only myth in the strict, structuralist sense. The relationship between folklore, oral history and archaeology in the United States is succinctly summarised by Allan S. Downer:

> In the early days of American archaeology, archaeologists sometimes worked closely with Indians. Native American oral traditions were viewed as valid sources of information about at least some aspects of the archaeological records being explored. But throughout the early part of this [the twentieth] century this

> attitude gradually changed. Native American oral traditions were increasingly viewed as, at best, unreliable sources evidence about the past. In many cases, they were viewed as being nothing more than a collection of "just-so stories" that were often of anthropological (i.e., ethnographic and ethnological) interest in their own right but provided no reliable factual information about the past (1997:29).[21]

Though the foundation of the Folklore Society in 1878 was at least partly based upon the premise that archaeology and folklore would remain intricately entwined, the two have, in most instances, become increasingly distant since the middle of the twentieth century. Only recently have a minority of archaeological scholars recognised that folklore, a discipline whose professed aim is to understand the meaning, significance and transmission of oral traditions, could have a profound impact upon the way we practice archaeology (e.g. contributions to Schmidt & Patterson 1995; contributions to Gazin-Schwartz & Holtorf 1999*a*; contributions to Wallis & Lymer 2001). At the same time, we have become increasingly aware of the need for a dialogue between practitioners of the discipline and the local communities within which we study. Perhaps the study of the monuments in the present, the recognition of the role that they play in the everyday life of a community – often in the form of folklore – can initiate that dialogue.

Different ways of seeing? Folklore and the modern archaeological mission

It was suggested above that archaeology and folklore are simply different ways of reconstructing the past in the present – neither one more valid than the other (see also contributions to Gazin-Schwartz & Holtorf 1999*a*). In this section, I highlight the manner in which they differ, the different angles of the lens if you will, demonstrating how the sensitive incorporation of folklore will enhance modern archaeological practice. I conclude by discussing the role of folklore in the construction of group identities.

History, meaning and cultural value

> *Folklore should...be studied as a 'conception of the world and life' implicit to a large extent in determinate (in time and space) strata of society...This conception of the world*

is not elaborated... [i]n fact, it is only in folklore that one finds surviving evidence, adulterated and mutilated, of the majority of these conceptions

Antonio Gramsci, *Prison notebooks* (1971:191)

It is suggested by Anyon *et al* that both oral tradition and archaeology are palimpsests of history: oral traditions contain cultural knowledge at a variety of levels of signification (1997:79). Quseir al-Qadim is not simply a Roman or Mamluk harbour, it is also a harbour of cultural value and cultural meaning, of meaning generated within the landscape over generations. Through folklore, a more holistic understanding of the meaning, status and importance of the site for a local community becomes possible.

But is it the duty of archaeologists to produce holistic understandings of the past – life histories of sites and monuments, from their moment of manufacture to the present day?[22] It is of course vital that we understand the meaning and function of a site at its moment of construction, but we must also recognise its potential to appeal to different generations. It will never be possible to produce a 'total site biography', a complete history that encompasses every major moment in the site's existence. Yet, as Champion and Cooney (1999:205) suggest, the presence of folkloric traditions at archaeological sites demonstrates an accumulation of meaning through time (see also Anyon *et al* 1997:79).

This call for the recognition of the importance of archaeological sites in the present is of course not particularly radical. Anybody who has analysed the political use and misuse of archaeological remains in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has already contributed to this task, as have those who look critically at the current climate of heritage management. It is the use of folklore to fill gaps in these life histories that may be seen as the radical departure here, yet one that I believe essential if we are to uncover the contemporary meaning of monuments within specific, localised contexts. Through the analysis of archaeological folklore we can begin to assess the manner in which knowledge of the past is both constructed and consumed.[23]

It is somewhat curious, therefore, that in the modern archaeological climate, where we are encouraged to look critically at the role of archaeology in constructions of identity, archaeological folklore has been largely overlooked.[24] Perhaps it is a result of the primacy given to the formation of national identity; perhaps it is the tendency amongst many

archaeologists to disregard folklore per se. Whatever the case, archaeology as a discipline has suffered from the failure of its practitioners to consider all lines of evidence.

Folklore and identity

> *'See here, Cassaubon, why are you so interested in my life?'*
> *'Because you make it sound like a folktale, and folktales are part of the collective imagination.'*
> *'Good point'.*
>
> Belbo to Cassaubon, in Umberto Eco's *Foucault's pendulum* (1989:494)

Folklorists themselves have long emphasised the potential of folklore to construct identity. Indeed, the historian of Irish folklore, Diarmuid Ó Giolláin has argued that "folklore is of ideological importance and has often provided a reservoir of symbols for identity politics" (2000:1).

It is widely recognised that cultural meanings organise and regulate social practices and conduct. Cultural discourses create, shape and legitimate distinctions between nations, regions, genders, sexualities and ethnic groupings; our knowledge of the world is constructed through the negotiation of cultural symbols which shape the way we interact with others (Barthes 1993*a*; Hall 1997; see also chapter one). This too has long been the central tenet of folkloric analysis in anthropology (e.g. Dundes 1965, 1984; Clark 1969; Honko 1986) – the recognition that any group, whether a community in Egypt, a football team or an academic institution will have their own set of traditions through which they construct a sense of shared identity – the talisman, the replica shirt and the old school tie.

Central to this folkloric exposition of identity has been the acknowledgement of the role of folklore in the construction of nations. Honko (1986) suggests that folklore takes on a broader meaning within nation states, that folkloric traditions construct a collective sense of identity from within. As we have seen above, this was especially the case in nations that felt economically, politically and academically isolated within the Europe of the late nineteenth, early twentieth century: folklore scholarship facilitated the creation of a 'national text', a corpus of national folklore emoting 'memories' of a unified, idyllic past (Annttonen 1993).

Ó Giolláin, in his *Locating Irish folklore* (2000; chapter three), highlights this process in a number of European countries. The French Académie Celtique, for example, was established in 1804 with the directive to collect and collate the nation's folklore and thus demonstrate the cultural and political unity of the republic (see also Belmont 1995). Similarly, the British government collected the folklore of Ireland throughout the early part of the nineteenth century in an effort to acquaint themselves with Irish customs and tradition, and therefore provide more effective governance; later, Irish intellectuals would champion national folktales as a means of 'de-Anglicising Ireland' (Ó Giolláin 2000:109). It is important to recognise, however, that this is not simply a historical phenomenon: following the dissolution of the USSR, newly sovereign states sought to reconstruct unique national identities, a process achieved in Estonia through a combination of both folklore and archaeology (see Poikalainen 1995).

Yet it has been argued that this process was not mirrored – could not be mirrored – within Egypt. George Young, writing critically of the Egyptian independence movements of the early twentieth century, argued that the national movements of Turkey, Greece and Ireland "began with a renaissance of the national language, legends and literature...but modern Egypt has no language, no literature, no legends of its own" (Young 1927:x). Though the colonial subtext of this statement is clear, it is also patently false – the late President of Egypt, General Anwar Sadat, speaks of absorbing the 'traditions of the land' as a child through the stories of his Mother and Grandmother (1978). Indeed, the Centre for Folklore in the Ministry of Culture in Cairo (CFMC) was inaugurated in 1958 with the grand remit to gather data on all the aspects of folk life in Egypt, resulting in the publication of Hassan El-Shamy's *Folktales of Egypt* (1980) which endeavours to classify and categorise the folktales of Lower Egypt and the Delta.[25] It is perhaps no coincidence that the CFMC was established at precisely the same time as the state was attempting to resurrect 'traditional' cultural values through the architecture of Fathy's New Gurna.[26]

In reality, folklore is a perfect media for the construction of identity. As Alessandro Portelli suggests (1998:68), the essence of any oral testimony, including folklore, lies not in its relation to 'facts' or 'truths', but in its symbolism, its interaction with imagination. Folklore does not reflect a social reality directly, but constructs meaning through associations, symbols and motifs; "we look in vain for an existential reality behind a

folklore reality" (Propp 1984:10). As such, it contributes to the formation of national identities in a myriad of different ways, from myths of national origin, the formation and maintenance of icons and heroes, or the promulgation of a folklore based heritage industry. Yet it also functions at a more local level; tales of cities, towns and villages outdoing one another, tales that emphasise the historic nature of a locality and tales that highlight continuity within the landscape through their incorporation of local landmarks.

In contrast to the national level, however, folklore is rarely collected in a local community (unless by researchers), it is rarely consciously or explicitly used to construct an identity. It is performed by people within that specific social and cultural setting – only when it is spoken, when it is remembered, when it is performed and consumed does it construct identity. Folklore at a local level has no innate longevity, it is not recorded in epic poems or works of legend that a scholar or nationalist can return to one day to resurrect and recreate a once imagined community. Its imagined community, in Anderson's terms (1983), is not constructed through print or capitalism, but through repetition. In a local context, folklore exists only as long as it is spoken, only as long as it is remembered; it is recreated each time the tale is told.

Conclusion

I suggested above that a responsible, mature discipline must be willing to incorporate all ways of knowing the past into archaeological investigations, including folklore. Indeed, these two, seemingly disparate approaches are not as incompatible as they may at first appear; both construct knowledge based upon the material residue of the past. Perhaps the incorporation of folklore into the archaeological canon could enable post-processual archaeology to achieve at least two of its oft professed aims – the inclusion of multiple histories and the exploration of how knowledge of the past is constructed in the present. It is certainly true that a sensitive analysis of folklore may provide us with insights into the process of identity formation based upon appeals to a shared, common past.[27]

Yet despite the pioneering work on folklore and identity outlined above, comparatively little attention has been given to the role of archaeological folklore in constructing more localised identities – particularly within modern archaeology. Whilst some scholars have highlighted the *potential* of folklore to construct community identity, analysis has been

restricted to such statements as "collective identities are often connected with the folklore of archaeological sites...[t]his is very evident at the level of villages where the inhabitants are proud of 'their' monuments" (Gazin-Schwartz & Holtorf 1999*b*:17; see also Voss 1987). In part two of this thesis, I therefore endeavour to build upon such statements, before taking them further introducing the reader to the archaeological folklore of Quseir al-Qadim in chapter six and exploring its role in the construction of an identity based upon appeals to a shared past. The first part of this thesis has nevertheless been restricted to highlighting for the reader the various theoretical and methodological tools that form the basis of this thesis. It is time now, however, for us to turn our attention towards both Quseir, and Quseir al-Qadim.

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[1] It is interesting to note that the genuine, scholarly studies of folklore that do make it to print are often shelved under the broad and misleading title of 'Esoteric' or 'Mind. Body and spirit.

[2] I use the term archaeological folklore to refer to any folklore directly related to an archaeological site.

[3] It, must, however, be stressed that I do not look for meanings, for archaeological 'truths' in the folklore, but at understanding how people interact with archaeology, what impact that it has on the community of Quseir. I do not suggest that the folklore at Quseir al-Qadim will ever 'mark the spot', but I do believe that it can give us valuable insights into how the site is negotiated, how it is understood, in the present.

[4] R.J. Wallis, pers. comm.

[5] *Brewer's book of myth and legend* lists two possible origins for this ritual. First, since Mars (the god of Iron) was the enemy of Saturn (the god of witches), iron could keep evil - in whatever form - away. Second, legend suggests that the Devil requested St. Dunstan, a notable farrier, to shoe his cloven hoof. Dunstan tied the devil to the wall and carried out the task with such ferocity that the Devil begged him to stop – the farrier doing so only on the condition that he never again enters premises where a horseshoe is displayed. An alternative to both these hypotheses may be found by examining the peculiar position occupied by the blacksmith and iron in many societies. Indeed, in Egypt iron was commonly believed to ward off evil spirits and demons – Lane suggests that it was not uncommon for an individual to shout "Iron, thou unlucky" to ward off Jinn (1836:284; see also chapter six below for a discussion of Jinn at Quseir al-Qadim).

[6] See Bord and Bord (1978) for a synopsis of folklore relating to archaeological sites in Britain.

[7] The curse 'found' above the tomb was reputed to be *Death shall come to him who touches the tomb* or *Death shall slay with wings whoever disturbs the peace of the Pharaohs*, both phrases reported in the British press (Stone 1993). The latter is favoured by Phillip Vandenberg in his intriguing, if somewhat sensationalist, *The curse of the Pharaohs* (1975).

[8] For a discussion of Lane's contribution to the study of folklore in Egypt see chapter six.

[9] It is certainly true that an outlaw named Robin Hood existed, though historians differ on dates. Much of the folklore that surrounds him does, however, appear to be a combination of folktales from various parts of the country, united in one folkloric character. The tale of Jack of Legs, for example, recorded by Grose in Kent in the eighteenth century (see Dorson 1968), contains many of the elements that we would today associate with *The Prince of Thieves*

[10] It is perhaps important to distinguish between myth, legend and folklore. A 'myth' is generally recognised as something that attempts to explain the nature of the world (either nature or society), whilst 'legend' tends to refer to a tale that may have had a historic basis but is now recounted in an epic manner, using long, detailed narratives. Folklore can be both of these, and neither. All of the examples

cited in the main text – Robin Hood, King Arthur and St. George may be seen as simultaneously folkloric, mythic and legendary.

[11] Much of what we accept as the myth of King Arthur was penned by Roger Lancelyn Green as mythic fiction. This does not, however, preclude it from being categorised as folklore. The legend of King Arthur was constructed before it became entrenched in literature.

[12] Gender intentional.

[13] It is important to emphasise at this juncture that I do not suggest that the folklore of Quseir al-Qadim necessarily provides insights into historical constructions of identity in Quseir. Robert Layton (1999:30) highlights certain problems inherent in treating folklore, myth and legend as historical documents, not least that myths are often *inversions* of social structures/ identities. My analysis of the archaeological folklore of Quseir al-Qadim is restricted to the present. I make no claims that the same meanings can be inferred historically.

[14] In present archaeological climate, it seems only fair to highlight that fairies themselves have suffered from the use of this term, conjuring up as it does romantic imagery of small, friendly creatures with wings. Previously it was believed that fairies were capricious, capable of benevolent acts but generally feared for their cruelty.

[15] See Dorson (1968) for detailed biographical sketches of the leading antiquarian folklorists.

[16] See Burström (1999) for a discussion of the parallel development of archaeology and folklore in Sweden.

[17] See Gosden (1999) for a detailed discussion of the parallel development of anthropology and archaeology in both Britain and the United States.

[18] I do not, however, wish to totally condemn the use of folklore to interpret the archaeological past. It may indeed be possible to analyse folklore to gain an understanding of archaeological and historical monuments if that folklore is *contemporaneous with the construction or use of the monument.* So, for example, folklore may be a valuable tool in the analysis of rock art if it was recorded at a time when the art was still 'in use', difficult though that may be to ascertain. Though such an approach would not be unproblematic – at the very least we would have to examine who recorded the folklore and for what purpose – a cautious and sensitive reading of the text in conjunction with the art may prove beneficial.

[19] See chapter six.

[20] See for example Bord and Bord (1974, 1976) for a survey of the folklore of British prehistoric monuments.

[21] Though several legal mandates for historic preservation – including NAGPRA – now require archaeologists in the US to incorporate Native American oral traditions into their research, or to liaise with scholars of oral tradition (Anyon *et al* 1997:84; Echo-Hawk 1997:89)

[22] See Holtorf (1998) for a discussion of the importance of constructing 'life-histories' of archaeological sites.

[23] This process at Quseir al-Qadim will be examined in more detail in chapter six.

[24] Though see Shankland (1996) for an anthropological approach to folklore and identity.

[25] The problems inherent in this approach will be discussed in chapter six.

[26] For a detailed discussion of the perceived role of New Gurna in the revival of 'traditional' Egyptian customs see Mitchell (2001) and chapter seven below.

[27] There are, however, a number of other ways that the incorporation of folklore into the archaeological canon will aid the discipline, including the examination of contemporary political realities (e.g. Champion & Cooney 1999), the inclusion of alternative ethical and aesthetic values (e.g. Layton 1999; Blake 1999) and the reunification of anthropology and archaeology (e.g. Shankland 1996, 1999). These are not, however, our concern here.

PART TWO

Archaeological communities

CHAPTER FOUR

'Quseir is like a small girl sleeping...a small girl, beautiful and sleeping'[1]

A history of the ports of Quseir and Quseir al-Qadim

Given the nature of my research, it is necessary to examine in some detail the social, cultural and historical background of Quseir if it is to be adequately contextualised. In this chapter, I therefore introduce the reader to the city of Quseir, before undertaking a survey of the history of the region, both ancient and modern. Yet this chapter is not simply another introductory chapter; it is also a data led chapter in and of itself. Whilst a substantial proportion of this history is based upon historical literature/ documentation and a preliminary survey of architectural remains in the city, I also incorporate oral history collected during my research in Quseir. If both history and archaeology are subjective disciplines, as we know them to be, then oral history must form an important component of any historical analysis. No longer can we afford to simply regurgitate the accounts of European historians or travellers; we must also recognise history as it is perceived and experienced by those who live it.[2]

This chapter will demonstrate the benefits of interweaving archaeological, historical, and local knowledge into a single account, emphasising the potential of oral history to provide information that would be inaccessible to archaeologists using traditional research methodologies alone.[3] What it does not include, however, is a discussion of the folklore of Quseir al-Qadim. This is not an attempt to privilege modern, scientific ways of knowing the past over others. Rather, given the sheer volume of folklore collected during my research, I have decided to examine folkloric perceptions of the past separately, in chapter six. It is nevertheless hoped that combining these narratives, incorporating archaeological histories, oral histories and folklore into a multi-layered biography of Quseir al-Qadim will form a central core of a future, exciting research project.[4]

Archaeology is actually in a unique position to construct these multi-layered narratives – and not only through the involvement of committed community archaeology projects. It is a rare case indeed for a British run project on foreign soil, close to a community, not to employ local residents on site (figure 4.1). What better place for the dissolution of the interface between archaeology and oral history than the site itself? As Rosemary Joyce suggests in her study of disciplinary language, "the dialogic nature of archaeology is a *strength* that should be highlighted" (2002:10; my emphasis).

The history constructed here nevertheless remains a very Eurocentric one, much of it derived from the accounts of Western writers, travellers, novelists and scholars. This is, alas, unavoidable – the great majority of the historical texts that discuss Quseir are European. The poignancy of this situation was underlined in one interview by a relative of the late historian (and resident) of Quseir, Kamal el-Din Hussein Hamam. In response to a question concerning potential plans to translate his histories for a tourist market, he replied:

> The funny thing is he used to say that he wouldn't translate any of his books because most of the information had come from foreign books anyway – he just wanted to give the information to Egyptians. If you look in any of his books he tells you where he got his information from. All of these books are from foreigners, and until the last day of his life he said that he didn't want to translate them. Do you know he spoke 7 languages? Spanish, Portuguese, English, French, Italian, German and Arabic - many languages. So he could translate them himself, but he didn't because he wanted to give them to the Egyptians. I asked him why he had not written in other languages; he said that the greatest tragedy was that they were already written in other languages, but none in Arabic. So no, it is not necessary to translate them (Int. 3.20)[5]

The city of Quseir

The city of Quseir is located on the Red Sea coast of the Eastern desert, Egypt, 600 kilometres south of Cairo and 150 kilometres east of the Nile valley. At present, two international airports serve the city, one situated close to the modern tourist town of Hurghada, 140 kilometres to the north, the other the newly opened airport of Marsa Alam, some 50 kilometres to the south. Both ferry an ever increasing number of international tourists to the diving resorts of Hurghada, Safaga, Quseir and Marsa Alam.

Figure 4.1 Hassan, a local resident employed on site.

Figure 4.2 The Red Sea Phosphate Company.

It may be possible to argue that the arrival of the Red Sea Phosphate Company, an Italian mining company, in 1916 instigated yet another period of prosperity and decline that has so characterised the long and often turbulent history of the region.[6] Granted concessions for mining in the mountains of the surrounding desert, the company established facilities in Quseir designed to both refine phosphate and transport the product around the world (figure 4.2).

The presence of the Phosphate Company breathed new life into Quseir, a city devastated by the gradual decline in sea trade in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Providing much needed employment for the residents of Quseir, thousands of economic migrants flocked to the city from Upper Egypt and beyond:

> Many people came from other towns to work and live here...The Phosphate Company made it a town. Before it was fishing, nothing else. The Phosphate Company made us important and gave us money. There were many jobs made in Quseir by the Phosphate Company (Int. 2.4).

As well as revitalising the city itself, the company also established a small satellite town within the desert, close to the mines themselves, known locally as the 'City for the workers of the Phosphate Company' (Int. 3.12). The city is now a ghost town, left to the dogs, the snakes and the scorpions, to archaeologists on rented mountain bikes, and to tourists who pay large sums to visit the town on camel, horse or quad bike.

The influx of people that followed the arrival of the Phosphate Company has contributed to the diverse, cosmopolitan nature of the modern city. As the sociologist Liz Taylor highlights (n.d; see also Int. 3.26), the city council is composed of representatives of a number of different groups – Nubians; Ababda Bedouin; migrants from the Hajjaz, the Nile Valley and Suez – each comprising a significant proportion of the modern population of 21,000 people.[7] This mix of peoples is celebrated by one interviewee:

> Egypt itself is like the United Nations – there is no one in Egypt who can say that they are 'pure Egyptian'. Look at people's faces, everyone is completely different. In Egypt there are Romans, people from the Mediterranean, some from India, and most from Arabic countries. And we have learned to live together in Quseir...trouble never happens here (Int.3.8).

The cosmopolitan nature of Quseir is reflected in the number of shrines in the city dedicated to Sheikhs and Saints from both northern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula (Int. 19; Salama n.d.).

So great was the volume of economic migrants to the city that one interviewee suggested that only fifty families claim Quseir as their 'ancestral home', settlers from Saudi Arabia who established a trading community in the city several centuries ago (Int. 3.15 – a member of one of the families). Despite this, the vast majority of interviewees do appear to share a strong sense of what can loosely be described as a 'Quseir identity'. In reply to a question on family origins two interviewees responded:

- My family, my father, is originally from Aswan. My mother is originally from a place close to Alexandria, beside Siwa. But they are living here in Quseir for about forty years. All of my brothers have been born here, so we are from Quseir now, from the Red Sea (Int. 2.2).

- I: The 50 families that were originally here in Quseir are not found all in one place, they're scattered all over the city. So as children we have grown up in the traditions of Quseir, we have the same community thinking.

  DG: So there is not a split as such? In London, for example, we have Chinatown; in Southampton we have large Muslim or Sikh communities that generally live close together. Is there the same concentration here?

  I: No, there is no focus here. Even the Christians and the Muslims live next to each other. In my street there is a Christian man who has lived there with his family for generations, and we share in each others feasts, in celebrations. I have another house which we rent to a Christian man.

  DG: So people that move to Quseir adopt the traditions of Quseir, rather than coming in with the attitudes or traditions of Luxor, for example, and attempting to change the city?

  I: Yes, absolutely. I know that you would like to ask about 'What makes Quseir like this?' I myself don't know, but Quseir is still like this and I would love to keep it like this, reserve it for all of us (Int. 3.16).

Another interviewee suggested:

> I was born here, I live here. My father and my grandfathers and their grandfathers were born here, my sisters – everyone. I learned here. When I went away from here I felt sick without my country. I feel relaxed here (Int. 21).

Similar statements recur with great frequency throughout the interviews conducted in Quseir.

It would be too simplistic, however, to suggest that such attitudes are shared by all. Some individuals do sense a tension between longer term residents of Quseir and modern migrants:

> I consider myself to be from Qena, because there are a few problems between people from Qena and Quseir...[tensions arising from a local election campaign in which a relatively recent migrant from Qena lost out to a more visible Quseir resident]...I'm proud when I say I'm from Qena, because Upper Egyptian men are strong and have a good character. But sometimes I do feel proud of Quseir as well. I was born here, my identity card says I am from Quseir, and I do feel proud of Quseir when I see something good here, or when something important in terms of the government or construction comes to the city. Then I will say that I am proud of Quseir. But when I see bad things...then I'm from Qena (Int. 3.26).

It is therefore important to stress that Quseir is not a homogenous community (see also chapter one). I do not believe, however, that this negates the possibility of investigating perceptions of the past and heritage in the modern city, nor indeed the Community Archaeology Project itself. It is certainly true that there a number of different, vociferous interest groups in Quseir, yet it is interesting to note that this is not represented clearly in the interview data. The history of Quseir appears to be significant to all the interviewees (including Int. 3.26), regardless of familial 'origins'.

The increase in population that followed the arrival of the Phosphate Company is reflected in the design of the modern city. Approaching Quseir from the north, on the road that leads the traveller directly into the historic core, one is confronted by what seems in essence to be little more than a large village. Yet the development continues behind the sweeping main street, hidden from view, sprawling into the desert unchecked – a chaotic, disordered admixture of modern apartment blocks and slum housing (cf. figure 4.3). The 'phosphate village' itself clusters around the factory, a curious mélange of ramshackle huts and grand Italianate villas. Though the boundary between the phosphate village and the rest of the city is no longer well defined, it was once self-contained, including mosques, the opulent Catholic church of Santa Barbara[8] (figure 4.5), a school for the children of employees (in which they were taught both Egyptian and Italian history [Int. 41]) and administrative buildings. The contrast between the houses

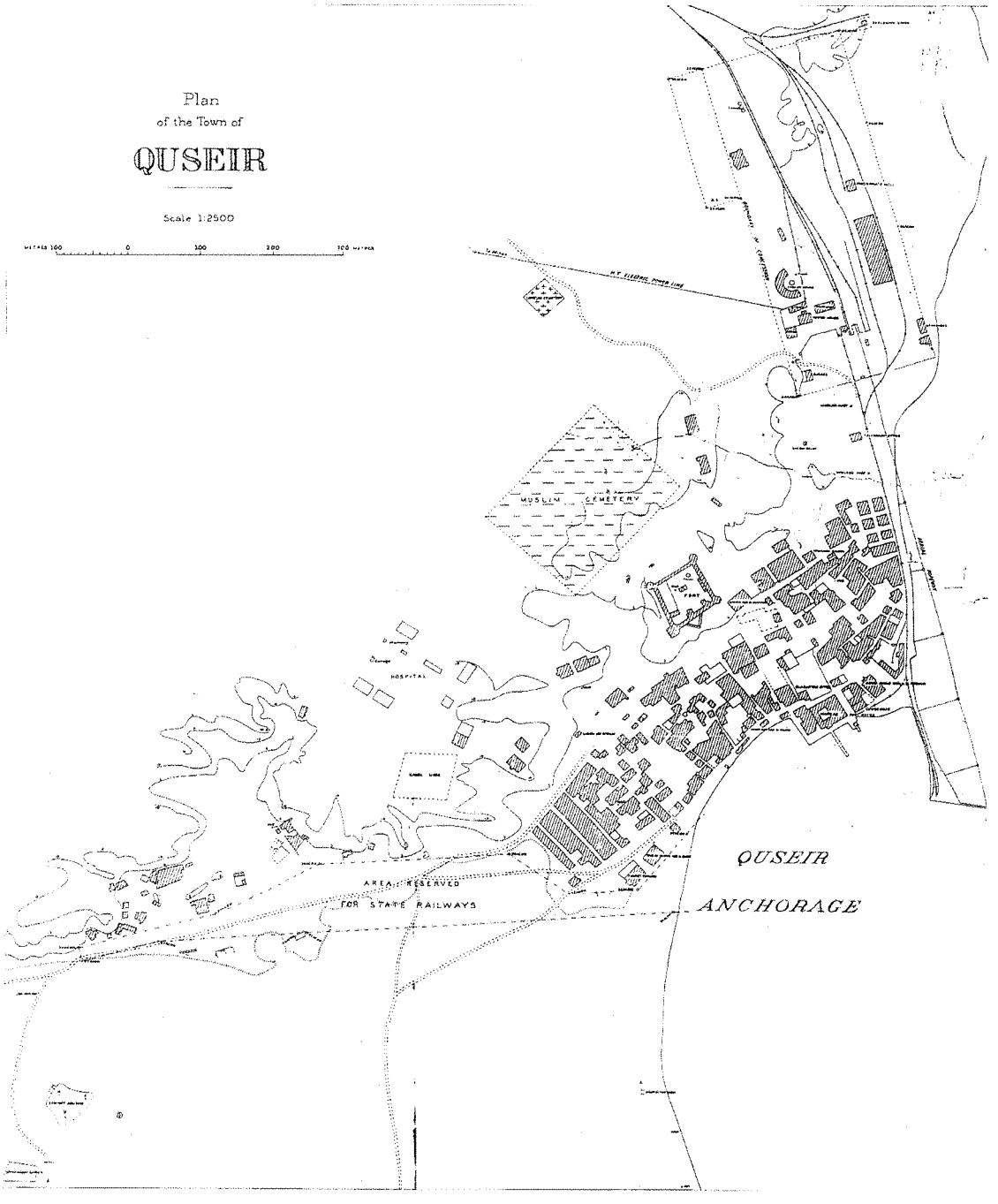

Figure 4.3 'Plan of the town of Quseir'. Produced by the Survey of Egypt, 1931. The buildings of the Phosphate Company dominate the top right of the image. The blank areas to the left of the map were developed from the 1950s onwards.

Figure 4.4 The phosphate village.

Figure 4.5 The church of Santa Barbara

Figure 4.6 An Italianate villa within the phosphate factory compound.

of the employees and the grandeur of the Italianate villas of the owners and managers is marked (figure 4.6); such juxtapositions are not uncommon in Quseir, where those who have accrued great wealth through the oil industry (e.g. Interviewees 13, 20) contrast sharply with the poverty of the vast majority.

The city itself huddles around the northern edge of a wide, sweeping bay, at a large break in the coral reef that runs southwards from Sinai along the east African coast. The vibrant, cool blue waters of the Red Sea are the lifeblood of Quseir, the imposing mountains of the Eastern desert that surround the city to the south, the north and the west contribute to a sense of seclusion. So isolated and barren is the surrounding region that one early nineteenth century European traveller was forced to conclude that "Cosseir [sic] is neither good for man nor beast" (Elwood 1830:268), whilst several interviewees suggested that a military commission to Quseir was little more than a thinly disguised punishment (e.g. Int. 3.15).[9] Yet for centuries the area has attracted people to it, the lure of the natural harbour and its location immediately opposite a bend in the Nile compensating them for the hardships of the Eastern desert with the promise of trade and wealth.

With the high levels of employment offered by the Phosphate Company, the city of Quseir flourished, becoming once more the vibrant centre of the Red Sea. Phosphate production, however, decreased dramatically throughout the 1980s as both environmental concerns and the possibility of utilising deeper, more northerly harbours led to the transfer of operations to nearby Hamrawein and Safaga (see Saler and Heli 1997; Taylor n.d.). By the early 1990s, the refining of phosphate in Quseir had effectively ceased; once again, Quseir witnessed a sudden decline of almost equal magnitude to its ascent. With no major employer to support an ever burgeoning population, an increasing number of the younger generation fled the city of their birth, seeking employment in Hurghada, the Nile valley, Sinai and Cairo itself (e.g. Int. 5; Int. 37).

The opening of the Mövenpick in 1995, a luxury tourist resort situated immediately opposite Quseir al-Qadim, has initiated yet another upward turn in the economy of Quseir (figure 4.7). Previously the city was served by two hotels, the Sea Princess, essentially a backpackers hostel, and the now defunct Fanadir. Another influx of

economic migrants has begun, this time from the Nile valley and Sinai, as those with experience in the tourist industry flock to Quseir. Though the present tourist industry in Quseir caters almost exclusively for groups of European divers, taking advantage of the unique reef that extends the length of the Red Sea coast, the management of the various hotels (e.g. Int. 3.13) recognise the need to provide their guests with a viable alternative to diving and desert safaris if Quseir is to consolidate its position as luxurious holiday destination. The answer is believed to lie in a unique blend of nature and heritage tourism (see chapter seven).

Quseir al-Qadim, from the past to the present

Some nine kilometres north of the modern city, immediately opposite the Mövenpick, lie the remains of an ancient settlement. Sitting atop a windswept mound of approximately ten hectares in area and bordered on its eastern extent by the Red Sea, its southern and western by a now silted lagoon, its current appellation – Quseir al-Qadim (old Quseir) – was acquired some time prior to the visit of the British explorer James Bruce in 1769, who describes the location of 'old Cosseir [sic]' as "five or six miles to the northward" of the modern city (Bruce 1790:192).[10]

The residents of modern Quseir have long been aware that their region is an ancient one. Statements such as "this is the oldest city in the Red Sea... it was for a long time the oldest town here" (Int. 32), and "we know that the city was very important in the past" (Int. 2.3) recur with great frequency in almost all of the interviews processed to date (see chapter five).

The status of Quseir al-Qadim in antiquity has nevertheless been an area of some controversy. Saler and Heli (1999:7) suggest that the city of Quseir is named as early as 1320BC (18th dynasty of the New Kingdom) in the Pharaonic hieroglyphs that adorn nearby Wadi Hamamat, though this is unsubstantiated. Similarly, Kamal el-Din Hussein Hamam (2000) equates the Pharaonic harbour of Thago – the port of embarkation for Pharaonic expeditions to the land of Punt – with modern Quseir. Local tradition too links the city with Haptshepsut and Punt: "Haptshepsut passed through Quseir on her way to Punt" (Int. 3.7) to collect perfumes and spices some 3000 years ago (Int. 3.10; Int.

3.14). There is as yet no direct archaeological evidence of Pharaonic activity in Quseir or its environs.

Of more contention, however, is the title of the port in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. Bruce suggests that

> Cosseir [sic] has been mistaken by different authors. Mr Huet, Bishop of Avranches, says it is the Myos Hormos of antiquity; others the Philoteras Portus of Ptolemy. The fact is, that neither one nor the other is the port, both being considerably further to the northward...There can be no sort of doubt that it was the Portus Albus, or the White Harbour...Ptolemy places the Aias Mons, or the mountain Aias, just over Cosseir...and upon this mountain (and the one next to it) are two very remarkable chalky cliffs; which, being conspicuous and seen far at Sea, have given the name of the White Port, which Cosseir bore in all antiquity (1790:192).[11]

Following their excavation of the area in the late 1970s, Whitcomb and Johnson similarly concluded that Quseir al-Qadim was the ancient site of the White Harbour – Portus Albus or Leucos Limen, a small Roman trading port (see Whitcomb & Johnson 1979; 1982). This hypothesis is based largely upon a description of the location of the harbour given by Ptolemy, which, as Peacock suggests "need not be reliable" (1993:231) and a fragment of an ostracon engraved with the word "leuk": "as Reddé and Golvin remarked, ports are not the only thing that can be white" (Peacock 1993:231 [Reddé and Golvin 1987]; see also Whitcomb & Johnson 1982:264;). It is nevertheless suggested by Hamam that the emergence of both Myos Hormos and Berenice as the pre-eminent ports of the Red Sea resulted in the sudden demise of Leukos Limen. Tradition has tended to place Myos Hormos at Abu Sha'ar, just north of modern Hurghada (Peacock 1993:228), or at Abu Somer, north of Safaga (e.g. Klunzinger 1878:270).

The Bishop of Avranches would, though, no doubt be pleased to find that other authors concur with his belief that Quseir al-Qadim was, in actuality, the vibrant port of Myos Hormos: Desanges (1978), Huntingford (1980) and Reddé and Golvin (1987) all place Myos Hormos at Quseir al-Qadim (Peacock 1993:2209). This assertion is supported by Peacock himself, who, after analysing classical descriptions of the port and its location,

concluded "the claim of Quseir al-Qadim to be the site of Myos Hormos is strong" (1993:232).

Myos Hormos

One of the great trading centres of the Roman world, the port of Myos Hormos was an integral part of a trade axis that linked Rome and the Mediterranean with India and the East (Peacock 1993:226). Situated at the end of a caravan route linking the Nile to the Red Sea, goods were transported to and from Myos Hormos through a desert passage of some 200 kilometres, continuing their voyage to the East by sea, or flowing upwards along the Nile to Rome and her provinces.

Ongoing large scale excavations conducted at Quseir al-Qadim by the University of Southampton, with the assistance of archaeologists from Luxor and excavators from Quseir itself, appear to confirm that it was indeed the ancient port of Myos Hormos. An ostracon inscribed with the name 'Myos Hormos' was recovered in the 1999 field season (Peacock *et al* 1999:5) – effectively cancelling out the 'leuk...' of the Whitcomb and Johnson excavations. This attribution was confirmed by a papyrus contract recovered during the 2000 excavation season, which gave "the full name of the site as Myos Hormos on the Erythraean Sea" (Peacock *et al* 2000:11; figure 4.8). Such contracts were retained in their port of origin. Finds from the recent excavation appear to suggest that the Roman occupation of Myos Hormos continued into the third century AD (see for example Tomber 2001:43).

Interviews with local residents would, however, seem to indicate that the present excavation area does not cover the full extent of the site in antiquity. During the construction of the Mövenpick hotel, several archaeological structures were removed:

> Whilst I was working as a builder at the Mövenpick we uncovered lots of stone buildings which I think were probably archaeological. They were in between the diving centre and the hotel – where the harbour used to be. A bulldozer went through them, and then sand was brought in from outside to make the beach (Int. 20).

Figure 4.7 The Mövenpick hotel.

Figure 4.8 The 'Myos Hormos papyrus'.

A great deal of skeletal remains were also uncovered during the construction of the SubEx diving centre, to the north of the Mövenpick (Int. 11), and reports suggest that other graves were found close to the present site of the Flamenco (Int. 39) – a modern hotel some 500 metres north of Quseir al-Qadim. [12]

Myos Hormos flourished throughout the Roman period, importing spices and silks from the Orient, exporting wines and pottery. A magnet for traders from around the world, the wealth of the west and the luxuries of the east flowed through it, a conduit for the decadence of Rome and a central point in a communications network that spanned the known world. Its fame has endured, recorded for prosperity by the classical geographers Agatharcides, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo and Pliny (see Peacock 1993), to such an extent that one eager fan of *Xena: the warrior princess* deemed it worthy of gracing a somewhat bizarre episode of the television series, lovingly committed to the internet (www.ausxip.com/fanfic14/stone2.html).

Mamluk Quseir

Both the American excavations and the current investigations at Quseir al-Qadim confirm that the settlement again rose to prominence during the medieval period (figure 4.9). It is suggested by Whitcomb and Johnson (1979:3) that throughout this period Quseir al-Qadim served as the chief port of Qus – the capital of Upper Egypt – during the Fatimid period (969-1171AD), though this would seem unlikely: the present excavation has revealed no significant occupation of the site at this early date. Rather, evidence suggests that the port flourished during the late Ayyubid, early Mamluk period – the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Peacock *et al* 1999). The presence of a large assemblage of Yemeni pottery indicates that the port was primarily sustained by trade with the Yemen and other parts of the Arabian Peninsula – a stark contrast to the Roman period (Bridgman 2001:47).

Whenever it first emerged, it had, by the fourteenth century, become an important enough spice port to feature on a number of European maps (Whitcomb & Johnson 1979:4). Spice may not have been its only commodity however: Hamam (2000) suggests

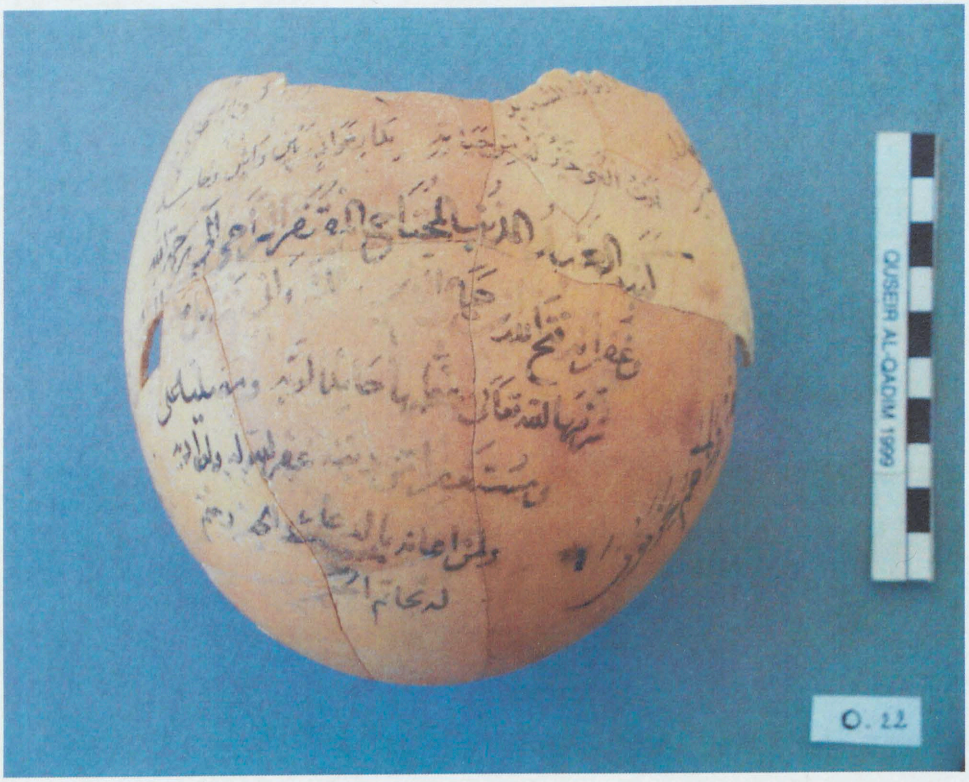

Figure 4.9 An Ostrich eggshell inscribed with a prayer for the dead, recovered from Mamluk deposits at Quseir al-Qadim.

Figure 4.10 The excavation of Quseir al-Qadim.

that pilgrims from across North Africa would flock to the port, from where they would journey to the Holy cities of Mecca and Medina.[13] Others too have suggested that the port may have played a central role in the pilgrim trade:

> I was just wondering yesterday, because it is now the pilgrim season, how much of Quseir al-Qadim was in fact dedicated to the pilgrimage business. A lot of ships must have sailed from there, and a lot come back from the Hijaz after the pilgrim season. Of course we know that the main route was across Sinai – Cairo, north of Suez, Aqaba and down to Mecca. But there would have been secondary routes: it just doesn't make sense for someone from Upper Egypt to go all the way to Cairo when they could just come across to here and get a boat to Mecca (Int. 19).

The earliest known reference to the name 'Quseir' appears in the late thirteenth century, the Bahri Mamluk Sultānate (Whitcomb & Johnson 1979:3). The majority of interviewees suggest that it is an abbreviation of the Arabic 'short route' (el-Darb el-Qasir), indicative of its position at the terminus of the shortest passage between the Nile and the Red Sea (e.g. Int. 20, 3.8, 3.13 3.21). In contrast, Hamam (2000:1) argues that it is a modification of the Arabic 'Qasr', meaning palace. Given the early date of the first recorded mention of Quseir – some 250 years prior to the founding of the modern city (see below) – and the apparent lack of any structure significant enough to lend its name to the Mamluk port, the former interpretation appears more convincing.

The excavation and pottery analysis conducted to date seems to suggest that the Mamluk port was abandoned sometime in the late fourteenth/ early fifteenth century (several deposits have yielded pottery generally considered to be early fifteenth century in date [Bridgman 2001:46). Whitcomb and Johnson argue that both the Roman and Mamluk ports shared similar fates: a temporary disruption of trade resulted in the

> gradual realisation of entrepreneurial over-extension without the development of compensatory commercial or social advantages…In both instances the stresses – and, ultimately, the artificial economic underpinning of these settlements, prompted out of a set of larger imperialistic policies – led to the collapse of settlement and failure of these ports (1982:13; 17).

An alternative hypothesis for the demise of the Mamluk port is offered by the architects Saler and Heli (1997:8), who suggest that an unusually heavy rain may have resulted in the collapse of a significant number of the largely mud brick buildings. They argue that

the location of the port at a break in the coral reef – a prerequisite for a natural harbour - left it susceptible to erosion caused by a spill way. Given that the majority of the site is situated on a large mound and surrounded by a natural lagoon, this would seem unlikely. Le Quesne (1999:10) offers an even more implausible explanation, that the settlement at Quseir al-Qadim was destroyed by the sixteenth century Portuguese 'explorer' Don Juan de Castro's unfortunate predilection for firing cannons at every port on the Red Sea coast. The apparent lack of any single catastrophic event in the ancient port, combined with chronological evidence suggesting occupation only until the early fifteenth century, renders this hypothesis untenable.

Peacock offers a more credible explanation: the lagoon that formed the basis of the natural harbour began to silt up, thus necessitating a shift to a different location (1993:232). That the lagoon would have reduced in size during the Mamluk period has been confirmed by a sedimentological analysis of the sabkha, undertaken during the current excavations of the site (see Blue & Dix 1999:13-14, 2000:19-24). It is tempting therefore to suggest that loss of protection offered ships by the natural lagoon, combined with the prevalence of the Black Death and famine in Egypt in the late fourteenth century, resulted in the eventual abandonment of the Mamluk harbour.

Exactly when this occurred is unclear. As we have seen, there is no evidence for occupation of Quseir al-Qadim after the early fifteenth century, whilst the modern city of Quseir does not appear to have been founded prior to the sixteenth century. Saler and Heli's suggestion that "it is safe to believe that the ports were used simultaneously during the transition period" (1997:11) therefore seems unlikely.[14] Whenever the port fell into disuse, the sea air and desert winds performed their task admirably, reducing walls to rubble, covering the city in a thick layer of sand and salt. By the mid nineteenth century, Flaubert was able to remark "we set out very early on donkeys to see old Koseir [sic], of which absolutely nothing remains" (1850 [1996]:190).

From the Mamluk to the modern

Despite the lack of obvious visible remains, there does appear to be a general awareness of the presence of Quseir al-Qadim in the modern city. Interviewee 13, for example, suggests that

> Quseir al-Qadim is a very old town, a centre between East and West. People were living there for a long time. The site was a harbour, a centre. The culture began here, and moved to Safaga and Hurghada.

Similar statements recur throughout the interviews conducted in the city.[15] It would be tempting to suggest that the recognition of Quseir al-Qadim as an ancient harbour is simply a result of the excavations conducted by Whitcomb and Johnson in the late 1970s (see Whitcomb and Johnson 1979; 1982) and the subsequent histories of Hamam (e.g. 2000), popular throughout Quseir. A cursory examination of the historical literature does, however, make such a theory appear implausible. As we have seen, Bruce mentions the location of 'old Cosseir' in 1790, whilst Flaubert seems to have been directed to the site of Quseir al-Qadim by residents of the Quseir in 1850 – natural enough given that he and his companion were on a tour of the archaeological sites of Egypt. Clearly people in Quseir were aware of the antiquity of the region prior to any archaeological investigations at Quseir al-Qadim.

It is suggested by several interviewees that, following its abandonment, Quseir al-Qadim was utilised as a resting place for travellers (Int. 14), the sheltered bay protecting small boats from fierce winds and providing individuals with a peaceful spot in which to perform their ablutions and pray: "people travelling would need to rest, to allow their animals to sit and to give themselves time to pray. They would leave a sign on a piece of rock to let other travellers know that they had done this here" (Int. 14).[16] The site continued to perform this function into the more modern period:

> About 20 years ago we had some heavy rain, only it wasn't actually raining in Quseir but in Hamrawein, [fifteen kilometres] north of Quseir al-Qadim on the way to Hurghada. I had to go from here [Quseir] to Hamrawein to get food for the camels, so I drove my camel into the rain. The rain got very bad, so I sheltered at Quseir al-Qadim. In the end it took me about four days to get from here to there (Int. 16).

A ship also seems to have been lost in the bay of Quseir al-Qadim in the recent past. 'The sunken ship' has become a staple of the archaeological folklore of the site (see chapter six), yet it also corresponds closely to the location of an amphora scatter identified as a Roman wreck by Douglas Haldane.[17] It appears, however, that several interviewees are describing the loss of a more modern ship:

- There was a ship lost in the bay opposite the Mövenpick. There was a big storm that lasted a long time, a bit like a hurricane, and the water came over the top of the ship (Int. 20).

- I: A large boat was lost outside the Mövenpick – a big boat at Quseir al-Qadim. I've heard about it, but I've never seen it myself.

  DG: How long ago was the boat lost?

  I: About 150 years ago, or maybe 200 years ago (Int. 10).

Fisherman, day-trippers and archaeologists

As we have seen above, Quseir al-Qadim was extensively occupied in both the Roman and Mamluk periods. Several interviewees do, however, reveal a more recent occupation of the area. Interviewees 16, 23, 32, 34, 2.4 3.17 and 3.30 – all elderly gentleman – indicate the presence of a small fishing village in the proximity of the site, established approximately 150 years ago and abandoned in the 1950s. The descriptions of the village given by each concur on all but the permanence of the settlement. Analysis of the transcripts would seem to place the village just beyond the northern extent of the site, possibly where the Flamenco hotel now stands.

The village was occupied by fishermen (Int. 8), their income generated by drying fish and selling it to the citizens of Quseir and traders from Qena (Int. 32). That these residents were aware of the archaeological site at the time is evident in a statement made by one interviewee: "people did not feel right about living on top of Quseir al-Qadim, so they chose to live just beside it" (Int. 32). Interviewee 3.17, an elderly gentleman in his 70s, was born in the village itself, whilst Interviewee 32's Grandfather, a man named Abdul, lived in the village from 1900-1950. Between fifty and sixty people appear to have been resident in the village at any one time, all occupying a collection of mud brick houses. This is not an insubstantial population given that only 1000 people are estimated to have been resident in Quseir itself at the beginning of the 20th century (Int. 34; Int. 317 and see below). Water was transferred to the village from Quseir by donkeys – a task performed for a period by interviewee 3.17's two sons. The village was eventually abandoned at the request of the city Mayor, desirous of relocating local residents to the

centre of Quseir following massive expenditure on the city's infrastructure, including the construction of new Mosques, housing, roads and coffee shops (Int. 3.17).

Yet despite the lack of a permanent settlement, people continued to fish regularly from Quseir al-Qadim:

> Every day before the Mövenpick and the other hotels were built I used to fish from there, in the evening until dawn, trying to catch fish...The Mövenpick shore is the best place to catch fish from – it still is. You'll find so many fish coming to this place. The fish were so fat that we could see them with our eyes (Int. 3.21).

Another interviewee expressed the joy that was to be had in fishing from the site:

> DG: Did you ever go to Quseir al-Qadim when you were younger?
>
> I: [laughs] Yes, me and all my friends used to go there for fishing and swimming...If they re-opened this beach for just one hour I think that you'd find all the fisherman of Quseir sitting there in front of the Mövenpick (Int. 3.15).

Indeed, Quseir al-Qadim is generally regarded as the pre-eminent fishing location within the region (e.g. Int. 10; 3.10): the vast majority of interviewees spoke at length about fishing from the site prior to the construction of the Mövenpick, with nets or lines from the reef or from boats in the deep waters of the bay.[18]

Fishermen were not the only people, however, to make use of the site. As motorised transport became more readily available, the area was widely utilised by Quseir residents as a pleasure beach, a place where people could snorkel, swim and fish away from the city (e.g. Int. 3.2; 3.23; 2.2; 3.26): "I used to go swimming, snorkelling and fishing there...this place is *my* history, and I remember it, though now I can just look" (Int. 3.4).[19] Children would explore the archaeological site itself, finding stones, potsherds and textiles, and linking them, as children do, to graves, bodies and gold (Int. 20). So popular had the area become that whole families would travel to Quseir al-Qadim on feast days and festivals (e.g. Int. 2.7).

Such peaceful scenes at the beach were interrupted momentarily in the late 1970s by the arrival of Donald Whitcomb, Janet Johnson and their team from the University of Chicago, determined to unlock the secrets of the ancient past. Several of the older

interviewees remember the American team; some worked for them for successive seasons (e.g. Int. 3.21). Trenches appeared in the sand, and the finds once exhumed were transported to a dig house within the phosphate factory compound for cleaning and analysis (Int. 3.21).

Following the departure of Whitcomb, Johnson *et al*, Quseir al-Qadim was left once more to fishermen and day-trippers. The site was, though, to become inaccessible again in 1993 as work began on the construction of the Mövenpick at the eastern extent of Quseir al-Qadim.[20] The vast majority of the ancient port was abandoned, left to stray dogs and the occasional tourist, wandering across to look at the archaeologists trenches or passing through on camel or horseback; the more adventurous on quad bike. The remainder of the archaeological site, situated on a prime location on the edge of the Red Sea and close to the luxuries of the Mövenpick, was earmarked for the development of high cost housing (see Saler & Heli 1997:7).

That is, of course, until the arrival of the University of Southampton archaeological team in 1999, cutting through the layers of salt and sand to uncover the ancient past of Quseir al-Qadim; traversing it in one metre grids with curious machines and burrowing deep into the now silted lagoon to recover the sea levels of antiquity (figure 4.10). Experiencing both the past and the present of the site through the segmented, often detached processes of modern archaeological practice. And we too have now become a chapter in the long, fascinating, turbulent past that we are endeavouring to recover.

Influx and exodus: historic Quseir

As we have seen, the history of Quseir al-Qadim stretches at least from the Roman period to the present. Establishing the antiquity of the modern city of Quseir is, though, somewhat more problematic – as yet there is little archaeological evidence to support Hamam's hypothesis that the modern harbour was the Pharaonic port of Thago. Of equal contention, however, is the presence of a Roman temple within Quseir, subsequently re-used in the construction of Ottoman buildings:

> There is a place, a street beside the sea that had a Roman temple that was taken down and made it into a big house. I have seen two very big stones – maybe one

> metre thick – with what I think was Greek writing on them. I saw these stones when I was maybe 13 or 14, but I don't know where they are now (Int. 8).

A late eighteenth century French illustration in Hamam's *Quseir: a historical tract* (2000) entitled *Reinforcing the citadel during the French occupation* clearly shows French soldiers dismantling what appears to have been a Roman temple, though nothing in the illustration distinguishes the setting as Quseir (figure 4.11). Yet the eminent archaeologist Arthur Weigall observed hieroglyphic blocks in the foundations of several houses in the city, attributed by Weigall at least to a Ptolemaic temple (see Weigall 1909:60-1, 81). The survey and excavation conducted during the restoration of the citadel also appears to indicate that several stones built into the fabric of the citadel may be of a more ancient origin (Le Quesne 1999:42), whilst dressed stone blocks are visible in the ruins and foundations of several of the oldest residential buildings within the city.[21]

Of more certainty is that the modern city rose to prominence in the early part of the 16th century following the construction and garrisoning of the citadel (figure 4.12). Hamam (2000) attributes its construction to the Ottoman sovereign Selim I (Selim the Grim, c.1517) following the Ottoman invasion of Egypt. In contrast, Klunzinger (a German physician resident in Quseir throughout much of the latter part of the nineteenth century) states that the building was first constructed by Sultan Selim III, endeavouring to create a safe port for both trade and pilgrim vessels (1878:271).[22] Though this may indeed have been the motivation behind its creation, his chronology is inaccurate; Selim III did not accede to the Sultānate until 1789, some 20 years after the building (already somewhat modified) was described by Bruce (see 1790:189).

Ashraf Salama, an architect commissioned by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to conduct a feasibility assessment on the potential for the development of environmentally sustainable tourism in the region (see chapter seven), suggests that tradition in Quseir also attributes the construction of the citadel to Sultan Selim I (n.d.). The evidence upon which this is based is not apparent, though it would seem likely that he merely followed Hamam. The interviews, however, suggest a different tradition: the majority of interviewees professed the belief that the citadel was created by the reformer Mohamed Ali, Viceroy of Egypt from 1805 until his death in 1848. Interviewee 2.6, for example, asserts "I don't know much about it [the history of Quseir], but I know that Mohamed Ali built the citadel", whilst in interview 2.2 we find

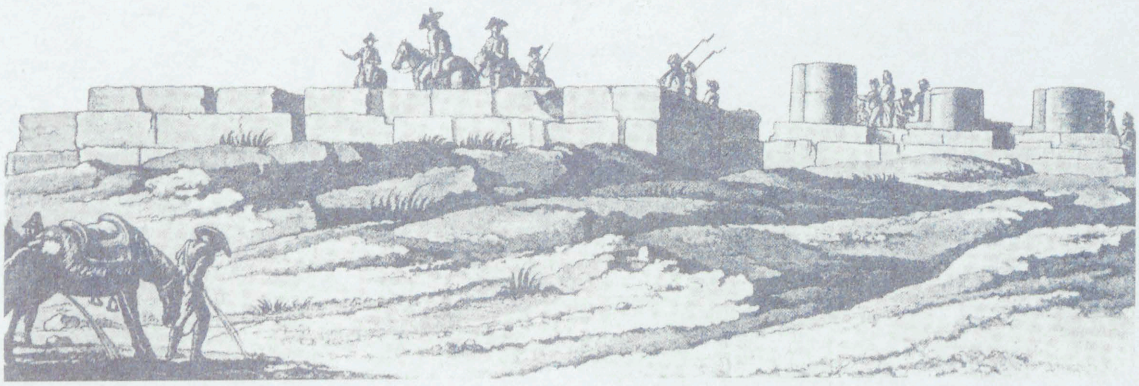

Figure 4.11 *Reinforcing the citadel during the French occupation.* Reproduced from Hamam (2000).

Figure 4.12. The citadel of Quseir.

the claim that "it was built during the Ottoman age of Mohamed Ali". It is certainly true that the citadel was extensively modified and a number of government buildings erected in this period (see Klunzinger 1878: chapter five; and below), which may explain the prevalence of this tradition.

It has been suggested that the citadel functioned as a strategic outpost, offering defence from coastal raiding parties (Int. 3.14; Int. 3.6) and thus facilitating the development of a permanent trading post – previously, the harbour had been utilised only periodically (Klunzinger 1878:271). The great fort also afforded protection from desert raiders, allowing traders to seek a temporary refuge within its steep walls (Int. 3.14). The architecture and layout of the historic city offers credence to this suggestion, protecting citizens from raids from both desert and shore: the streets between the houses are narrow and winding, with blind passages and seemingly identical alleys decreasing the potential for concerted, organised attacks. The arches above many of these passages bear witness to the number of gates that would have been secured to prevent attackers gaining entry into the streets themselves.

The status of the citadel in the mid eighteenth century is highlighted by its use as a lodging house for dignitaries and nobles, a practice that appears to have ceased by the early nineteenth. The Scottish traveller James Bruce, for example, initially took up lodgings within the citadel, before the arrival of the Sheriff of Mecca forced him to find rooms elsewhere (see Bruce 1790:190). Bruce describes the Quseir of 1769 as little more than

> a small mud walled village, built upon the shore, among hillocks of floating sand. It is defended by a fort of hewn stone, with square towers in the angles, which have in them three small cannon of iron, and one in brass, all in very bad condition...the walls are not high; nor was it necessary, if the great guns were in order. But as this is not the case, the ramparts are heightened by clay, or by mud walls (1790:189).

He is similarly dismissive of the port, "if we may call it so" (1790:189), though he does suggest that coarse goods from India were Quseir's primary import; the trade that had allowed the city's ancient counterpart to flourish appears to have resumed. Irwin, a fellow traveller resident in the city in the summer of 1777 is equally disparaging of the citadel, finding it "in a defenceless state...[with] not more than three pair of dismantled

cannon left to protect it" (1780:121). The city does appear, however, to have been a significant enough settlement to sustain at least a small industry of shipwrights: during one particularly eventful voyage along the coast, Bruce assured the captain that "all harm done to his vessel should be repaired when we should get to Cosseir [sic], or even a new one brought for him if his be much damaged" (1790:216).[23]

It was the development of the grain trade, however, that would ultimately lead to the transformation of Quseir from a 'small mud walled village' to the pre-eminent trading centre of the Red Sea. The importance of this trade in the development of Quseir is reflected in its designation as the primary port for the shipping of grain to Mecca in the mid eighteenth century. So great was the volume of grain traded that the construction of "a large mud walled enclosure" was required, within which every merchant had room to store goods, grain and to establish a small shop (Bruce 1790:189). The grain store, or *shuna*, is now commonly known as 'the quarantine' within Quseir (figure 4.13).

The relative calm of the port described by Bruce was nevertheless shattered by the repeated attempts of the French to take the citadel in 1798, endeavouring to sever the Ottoman Porte's communications with the Arabian peninsula. The citadel was finally taken by land on May 29th 1799 and garrisoned with 100 soldiers of the 21st regiment under the command of Belliard. The garrisoning was timely: during the Anglo-French battle for the effective control of Egypt, the normally placid harbour of Quseir became a theatre of war, both sides desperate to control the vital trade routes of the Red Sea, the Arabian gulf, and, most importantly of all, the passage to India. In the summer of 1799,

The Daedalus, a fifty gun ship bearing the British flag of Rear Admiral John Blankett anchored in Quseir, later joined by *The Fox*. On the afternoon of the 14th August 1799, the British bombardment of the citadel began.

The battle for Quseir was fierce. Some 5000 cannon shots rained down on the city over two days; two land invasions were beaten back by musket fire from both ruined buildings and the citadel itself. The British boats limped away from the harbour having suffered heavy casualties and the loss of six cannons, the French finally abandoning the citadel in 1801, sometime prior to the foundation of a temporary British military encampment on a high ridge to the south west of the city.[24] Only a few years later, the citadel would be

Figure 4.13 The *Shuna*, or grain store.

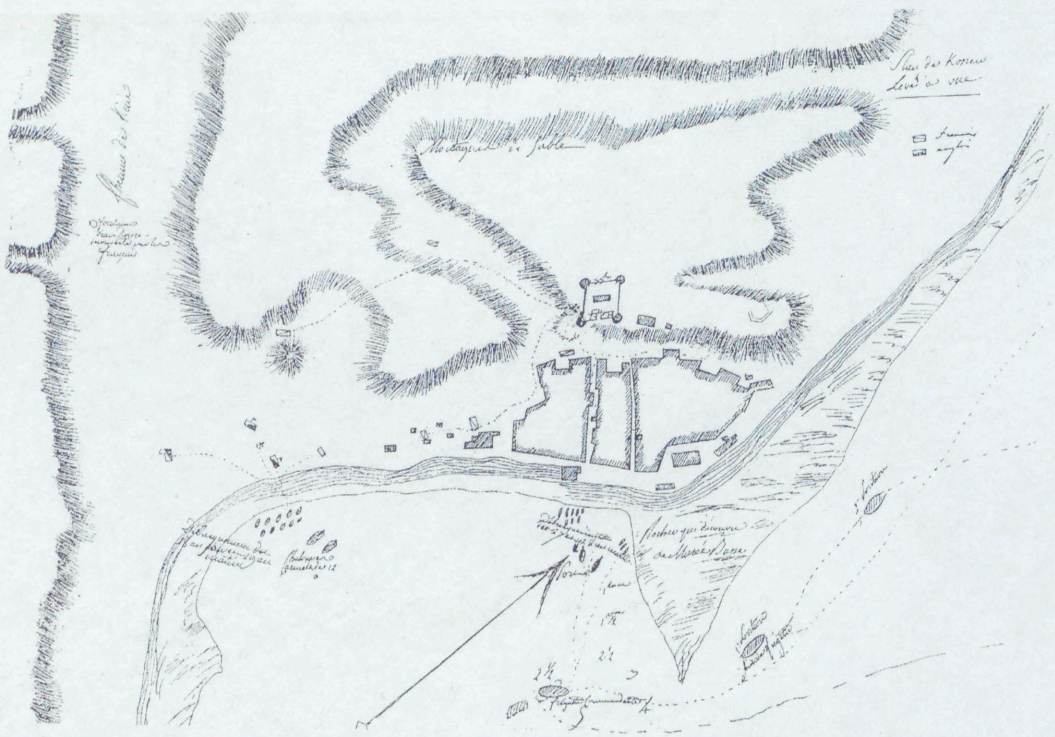

Figure 4.14 Plan of the British attack on Quseir, 1799. Reproduced from Hamam (2000)

used as a stronghold by Ibrahim, son of Mohammed Ali, during the war to recover the holy cities of Islam from Saudi/Wahhabi invaders (Int. 36; Int. 3.8; Le Quesne 1999:14)

The legacy of this ferocious battle is still visible in the city today. If the curious explorer wanders away from the main street, turning left by the citadel and doubling back towards the coast, they will find themselves in an area of deserted, half ruined buildings of some considerable age – almost all constructed of the same dressed stones found at the citadel and other Ottoman structures in the city. Scrambling through these buildings, one is confronted by evidence of ferocious fires, exemplified best perhaps by the ruin of a small mosque that I and my fellow explorer James Phillips stumbled across in September 2002 (figure 4.15). Given the antiquity of the buildings, and the fact that all seem to have suffered the same fate simultaneously, it is not unreasonable to presume that they were destroyed by British guns – they were certainly directly in the firing line of the frigates.

The beginning of the nineteenth century nevertheless appears to have been something of a watershed in the history of Quseir. Indeed, under the patronage of Mohammed Ali, the city truly began to flourish. Appointed as the centre for collection of the *dachîre*, a tribute paid by the Viceroy to the Sublime Porte of the Ottoman Empire, the population swelled:

> The hope of deriving some profit from the transport of this grain...and from the passage annually of a large number of pilgrims to Meccah [sic]...soon attracted a multitude of people both from the neighbouring Valley of the Nile and from the Hedjaz [sic], especially Yemba. Thus in a short time (in the first thirty years of this present century [the nineteenth]) Kosseir acquired a settled population of 6000 to 8000 souls (Klunzinger 1878:272).

This massive influx of people, aided in no small part by the cessation of direct taxation and freedom from military service granted to the citizens of Quseir by Mohamed Ali (see Klunzinger 1878:272) is reflected in the cosmopolitan nature of the city in the mid nineteenth century. Mrs Colonel Elwood describes in some detail "the endless variety of nations congregated at Cosseir [sic]", including 'Hindus from the Punjab, Africans, Greeks, Moroccans and Arabs' (1830:270; see also Flaubert 1850 [1996]:187). By 1878, the population consisted of merchants from Arabia, Upper Egyptians, Turks, Copts and

Figure 4.15 A ruined mosque in Quseir.

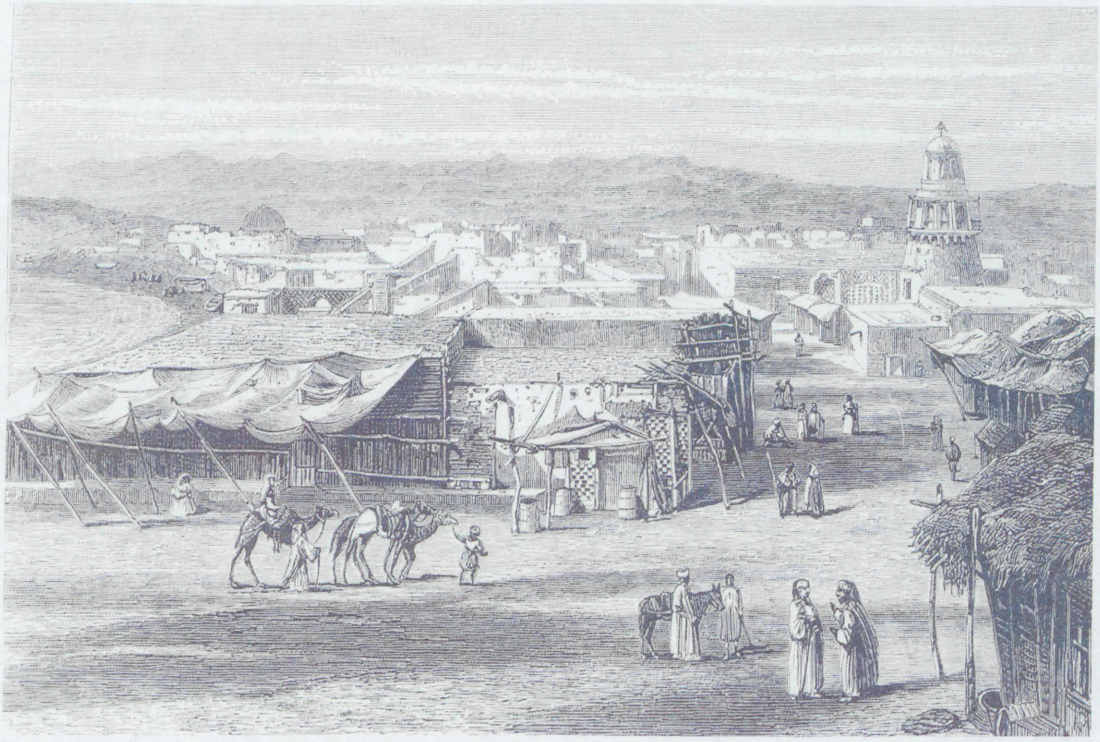

Figure 4.16. The city of Quseir in the nineteenth century (Klunzinger 1878:frontispiece).

'African slaves' (Klunzinger 1878:278), whilst the census figures for 1897 given by Hamam (2000) include Egyptians, Britons, Greeks, Italians and Austrians. This increase in population was to be mirrored at both the beginning and the end of the twentieth century.

The port also seems to have become something of a meeting place for European travellers in the nineteenth century: Sherer (1824), Elwood (1830) and Flaubert (1850) all describe meeting with fellow European travellers during their brief stays in the city. Brief, yes, but certainly not uneventful. Jospeh Sherer, for example, almost succeeded in poisoning the governor by supplying him with rather too much sherbet (1824:66); during Mrs Colonel Elwood's visit she was witness to the horrific scandal of the attempted kidnapping of a Frenchman's poodle (1830:272). The French novelist, Gustave Flaubert, though visiting Quseir at its zenith, found the city far from pleasing, complaining vociferously that everything in Quseir is "permeated by this ghastly odour of soap and rotten eggs" (1850 [1996]:189). Though this may indeed have been true, Flaubert was equally scathing of the majority of other cities, towns and villages in Egypt (and perhaps more so of her monuments), preferring instead to find sanctuary in the salacious confines of local brothels.[25]

If we ignore the remonstrations of the ever petulant Flaubert, the mid nineteenth century appears to have been a golden age for Quseir. A flourishing, vibrant port, rich and cosmopolitan, its international significance is attested to by the presence of British, French, Austrian and Persian consuls.[26] The prominent status of Quseir in an era of increased communication is reflected in the founding of the French consulate in the city in 1840; the consulate in Luxor was not established until 1880. Under Mohammed Ali, Quseir acquired its own governor, and a permanent government staff of some 60 people. An extensive building programme was initiated, leading to the construction of the Governor's house overlooking the harbour (now the police station), the customs house and a stone lined quay. Mosques, houses and bazaars sprung up around the shores edge, with numerous coffee shops designed to cater to weary sailors and travel sore merchants (Klunzinger 1878:272). Twice a month Anglo-Indian steamers arrived in the harbour to collect passengers fatigued from the ardours of the overland route from Britain to India (Klunzinger 1878:273).

So prosperous had the city become that by the mid nineteenth century almost all of the trade between Egypt and the Arabian peninsula was channelled through its port (Klunzinger 1878:273). Central to this trade was the *shuna*, from which the government drew both the *dachîre* and its supplies for the military; its great door sealed with clay every evening (Klunzinger 1878:287). Perhaps in tribute to its former role, the grain store is now permanently locked, but still stands proudly behind the Governor's house, a testimony to the grandeur of Quseir's past.

A more permanent English presence arrived in the 1850s with the establishment of a relay station by the Red Sea and India Telegraph Company, eager to construct a telegraphic network that linked London to Karachi.[27] A submarine cable was laid across the Red Sea, with relay stations established at Suez, Quseir, Suakin and Aden; the station permanently manned in Quseir by five British engineers, their requisite luxuries supplied by the Anglo-Indian steamers (figure 4.17). Three buildings have been identified as the offices and accommodation of the company and its employees – one on the waterfront itself, two more approximately 100 metres from the shore, their low hanging eaves, verandas, picket fences and chimneys the perfect colonial Englishman's vision of a Mediterranean bungalow (figure 4.18).[28] So important to the British government was the station that a war steamer was sent to the harbour to protect company equipment and engineers following the massacre of the Christians at Jeddah. Fortunately, no intervention was necessary and both project and station were later abandoned following unsuccessful attempts to counter coral wear on the cable (Klunzinger 1878:274).[29]

Yet English Christians were not the only visitors to Quseir in the nineteenth century. As the principal port on the Egyptian Red Sea, relatively close to the Arabian coast, thousands of pilgrims flocked to Quseir annually: "every year there passed about 30, 000 pilgrims... among them many men of rank and wealth from the whole Mohammedean [sic] world" (Klunzinger 1878:273; see also Int. 19; 32; figure 4.19). Numerous inns sprung up to cater for the pilgrims, though most pitched camp around the city itself – Mrs Colonel Elwood speaks of an extensive plain outside of the port covered with tents and caravans (1830:261), the still extant *Mabkhara* constructed to disinfect the clothes of pilgrims before they embarked on the final stages of their pious journey (figure 4.20). The intensity and energy of life inside Quseir would have been matched only by the bustle of the Dows in the harbour itself, jostling for supplies and positions. So busy had

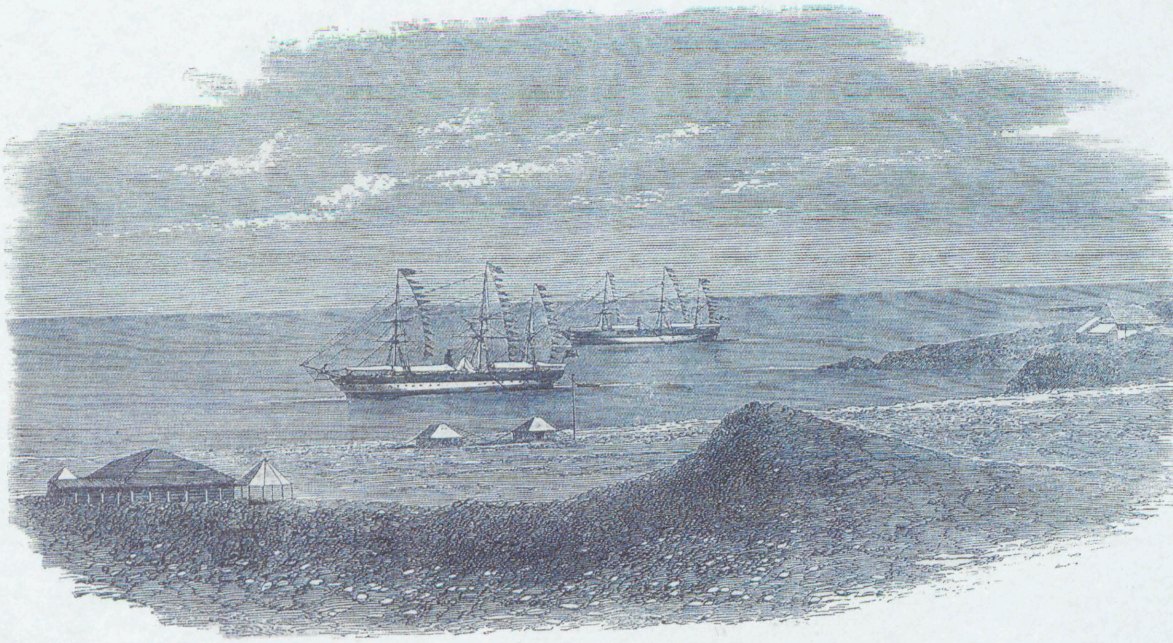

Figure 4.17 The telegraph cable laying ship *The Cyclops*, anchored at Aden. (*Illustrated London news* July 9th 1859).

Figure 4.18. A bungalow of the Red Sea and India Telegraph company.

Figure 4.19. 'Fellah' pilgrims at Kosseir' [sic] (Klunzinger 1878:320).

Figure 4.20. The *Mabkhara*.

the port become that it was almost impossible to charter a boat during the hadj season – the Elwood party were initially asked for the princely sum of 400 dollars for transport to the port of Yambo (Elwood 1830:270).

The mid nineteenth century was a period of great wealth and prosperity for Quseir; goods and people flowed through it, just as they had through Myos Hormos almost two millennia before. Like its ancient counterpart, just a short distance up the coast, such prosperity was not destined to last. Following the completion of the Cairo-Suez railway, both the *dachîre* and the pilgrim trade were forcibly removed to Suez by Said Pasha, son of Mohammed Ali, desperate to make his new line profitable. The fortunes of Quseir declined dramatically, the majority of its residents deserting with alarming alacrity: the population of Quseir decreased to just 1500, the city sinking "more quickly than it had risen" (Klunzinger 1878:275). The prohibition of the grain trade with Arabia during the famine of 1864, the 'year of cholera' in 1865 and the arrival of cheap steamer transportation through the Suez Canal signalled the end of a glorious period in the history of Quseir.[30] Klunzinger describes the city that he knew as "in the condition of a sick person, wasting away through some internal complaint; it can neither live nor die, but every year becomes worse and weaker, and will hardly as such last more than half a score years" (1878:276). Whole streets were deserted, left to ruin, as the population slumped to just 800 (Klunzinger 1878:276). The city though limped on; surviving, just, through an exchange based economy with traders from the opposite coast of the Red Sea.[31] It was not until the arrival of the Red Sea Phosphate Company in the second decade of the twentieth century that the city flourished once more, establishing itself as *the* industrial centre of the Red Sea coast.

As we have seen above, the modern city of Quseir is yet again repositioning itself. The parallels to its recent past are striking: following the demise of the phosphate industry, Quseir was left destitute; the now defunct telegraph station the only tangible reminder of the region's former pivotal role in a communications axis that spanned almost half the globe (see Taylor n.d.). Yet the bizarre cycle of prosperity and decline, of influx and exodus that has so characterised the region in the past is beginning anew, this time with tourism as its genesis. Inspired, perhaps, by the fate of Hurghada – a concrete monstrosity of kitsch tourist villages – Quseir has been selected to occupy a unique niche in the Red Sea tourist trade, a luxurious resort combining the pleasures of the sea with

heritage tourism.[32] The future of the city has become reliant upon the celebration of its often turbulent past.

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[1] Int. 3.29

[2] In recent years, a number of post-colonial theorists have begun to question the usefulness of constructing histories such as this. History is, they argue, a fundamentally Western construct, and therefore is only applicable within that context (see Williams & Chrisman 1993:12). Whilst that may indeed be true in some instances, as we shall see throughout this project the community of Quseir places great importance and value on its past.

[3] The reader may, however, be somewhat surprised by the manner in which this history of Quseir is presented (cf. Joyce 2002). It is written as a traditional history; oral histories, written histories and archaeological histories discussed in the same manner. That may seem somewhat conservative, yet it was a conscious decision: I experimented with various narrative techniques and writing styles, but kept returning to the same problem. How could I give oral history equal prominence, equal weight alongside traditional histories, if I write them in a non traditional manner? Would that not allow others more sceptical of oral history to maintain the dichotomy between different ways of knowing the past? In this chapter then, I present all histories in the same manner. None are given precedence over another.

[4] Throughout the last decade, there has been much discussion of the use of oral history in archaeology. These have largely arisen from calls from indigenous communities for the right to have their own ways of knowing of the past recognised by the discipline (e.g. contributions to Schmidt & Patterson 1995; contributions to Swidler *et al* 1997; contributions to Biolsi & Zimmerman 1997). In *Alternative histories* (1995), for example, Schmidt and Patterson challenge the distinction between oral history and archaeology, encouraging readers to recognise the often delicate interplay between archaeological remains and oral histories. Similarly, Anyon *et al* (1997:78) demonstrate that both archaeology and oral history are inherently limited; combining both approaches facilitates the construction of a history that goes beyond what either tradition is capable of on its own. Fredericksen terms the results of this combination 'culturescapes' – landscapes that are constructed by, and imbued with, both 'local' and 'archaeological' meaning (2002:293). The incorporation of oral history into historical analysis gives the past back to those who lived it (Thompson 2000:3).

[5] Quseir Heritage has produced a brief outline of Hamam's works in translation, though there are as yet no plans to publish the manuscripts in full

[6] Following the residents of Quseir, the Red Sea Phosphate Company is referred to hereafter as the Phosphate Company.

[7] These figures are based upon the Egyptian government's Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics 1996 population census for the Red Sea governorate. The city itself is listed as having a population of 20, 472, the five villages that fall under the city's administrative jurisdiction making up a further population of some 6000 people.

[8] The patron Saint of those at risk of sudden death. Originally Barbara was primarily associated with individuals at risk of being struck by lightening. Later she gave her patronage to miners and gunners. Her feast day, formerly the 4th December, was suppressed in the Roman calendar of 1969 (Marion Earl, pers. comm.).

[9] The Egyptian equivalent, perhaps, of 'sending people to Coventry'.

[10] Though Bruce's travelogue was not published until 1790, he records the year of his visit to Quseir as 1769.

[11] In the map of Bruce's travels found in Vol V (1790:appendix), Quseir al-Qadim is marked as 'Old Cosseir' 'Leucos Limen and Portus Albus'.

[12] The SubEx diving centre is located at the opposite end of the Mövenpick, some 500 metres to the north of the hotel and close to an area identified by the University of Southampton as a Mamluk necropolis (e.g. Macklin 2000, 2001).

[13] It is not clear whether he refers to the ancient or the modern port.

[14] That is not to say, of course, that it is impossible that a small number of people remained resident in the city after its abandonment by the majority. I simply suggest that it is unlikely that both ports functioned as major trading centres simultaneously.

[15] See chapter five for a more detailed discussion of historical awareness in modern Quseir.

[16] As yet there is no direct archaeological evidence for this period of use.
[17] Doug Haldane, of the Institute of Nautical Archaeology, Egypt, intends to undertake a thorough survey of what he has identified as a Roman wreck in the bay (L. Blue, pers. comm.).
[18] The copious amount of folklore connected to fishing at Quseir al-Qadim is discussed in chapter six.
[19] For a discussion of the impact of tourism on the use of Quseir al-Qadim as both a fishing harbour and pleasure beach see chapter seven.
[20] The shoreline is now the property of the Mövenpick, but the sea itself is open territory in Egyptian law. In reality, however, fishing is no longer permitted by the hotel management in the bay at Quseir al-Qadim. See chapter seven for a more detailed discussion of attitudes toward the construction of the Mövenpick.
[21] It is suggested by Le Quesne (1999:42) that these blocks may have been taken from a temple at Quseir al-Qadim and reused in the construction of modern Quseir. At present, this appears somewhat unlikely: though neither team has sampled the total extent of the site, neither Whitcomb and Johnson (1979, 1982) nor the current excavations at the site have revealed traces of buildings that may indicate the presence of a temple at Quseir al-Qadim.
[22] The preface to Klunzinger's *Upper Egypt. Its people and products* was penned by the prominent German naturalist Georg Schweinfurth, reflecting, perhaps, the perceived importance and popularity of works devoted to modern as well as ancient Egypt in the nineteenth century.
[23] Both Bruce and Irwin's visits to Quseir are somewhat unusual: issues of safety in Upper Egypt from 1750-1800 meant that most European travellers avoided the area (see Reid 2002:28).
[24] This history has been reconstructed from a number of naval records and officers' diaries, the majority held at the University of Exeter's Centre for Arab and Gulf Studies. Many of these are now available online through their Arab World Documentation Unit: www.ex.ac.uk/awdu/index.htm. See also www.btinternet.com/~PBenyon/Naval_History/Vol_111_P_108.htm
[25] See Said (1978:166-197) for a discussion of Flaubert and Orientalism.
[26] The British consulate was staffed by unpaid, unnamed vice-consuls and was under the jurisdiction of the Consul-General of Egypt, based in Cairo. The Foreign Office List of Consulates for both 1852 and 1858 lists Cosseir [sic]; there is no record of a consulate after that date. In contrast, the French consulate was staffed by a list of named agents from 1840 until its closure in 1923. The agents had various ranks, ranging from *agent consulaire*, *consular officer* and *manager of the consulate*. The buildings of the British and Austrian consulates can still be found in the city, through neither retain an administrative function. Both are presently occupied by local residents.
[27] *Hansard* of 1859 (volume CLIV, 3rd series) records the total length of the line from Alexandria to Karachi as 3, 268 miles. The Red Sea line from Alexandria to Aden incorporated

> 200 miles of overland cables from Alexandria to Suez, and submarine lines of
> 260 miles from Suez to Cosseir (sic)
> 474 miles from Cosseir to Suakin
> 636 miles from Suakin to Aden

[28] These buildings are commonly referred to in the city as belonging to the Marconi wireless company (see also Taylor n.d.; Saler & Heli n.d.), yet Marconi company historians were unable to find any references to the Italian firm establishing even a temporary post within Quseir; the same is true of Cable and Wireless who operated in Egypt under the name the Egyptian Marconi Company. In contrast, the London *Times* newspaper of 28th April 1859 claims that "huts have been dispatched from Suez for the temporary accommodation of working telegraphists, whilst a letter to the same newspaper from W.J.J. Pullman, captain of the cable laying ship *The Cyclops* emphasises the need to lay the cables away from the anchorage of the bungalows in Quseir (21st may 1859). The 1931 survey of Egypt plan of Quseir clearly labels at least the building on the shore as the 'telegraph office'.
[29] The London *Times* newspaper of 15th May 1860 reports the breaking down of communications:

> The submarine cable between Suez and Aden is broken again...These repeated failures are most discouraging...[if financiers were to invest further in the company] it would be simply the submersion of their capital, with as good a chance of receiving any return from the so-called guarantee as they have of fishing up the wheels of Pharaohs chariot.

In a statement made to the House of Lords in August 1860, the cable was declared unserviceable with little hope for restoration (London *Times* 16th August 1860).
[30] For a detailed description of quarantine restrictions in Quseir during the 'year of cholera' see Klunzinger (1878:330).
[31] It is suggested by one interviewee that this practice finally ceased only fifty years ago (Int. 35).
[32] The role of local, national and international agencies in the construction of a new heritage based identity for the city will be discussed in some detail in chapter seven.

CHAPTER FIVE

'It is something honourable for the citizens of Quseir to have a history'[1]

The past of Quseir in the present

She wondered if there was such a thing as collective memory, something more than the sum of individual memories. If so, was it merely coterminous, yet in some way richer; or did it last longer? She wondered if those too young to have original knowledge could have it grafted on...

Julian Barnes, *Cross channel* (1996:100)

All we want today is to create for ourselves an independent personality which will be strong and not dependent

Gamal Abdel Nasser, Prime Minister, later President of Egypt, 1955[2]

In the previous chapter I briefly outlined the history of the region, demonstrating the potentially richer texture of a narrative that incorporates oral history, archaeological and historical evidence. In this chapter, I turn my attention to the relationship between the archaeological past and the present in modern Quseir, highlighting several themes prevalent throughout the interviews conducted with local residents. As such, a substantial portion of this chapter is made up of direct quotes from the interviews themselves.

The anthropologist David Shankland (1996:356) has argued that, though we have become increasingly aware of the social and political significance of archaeology, we know nothing as yet about the effect of the practice of archaeology on the communities within which we work. To this, we should perhaps add that we know very little about the impact of those communities on *our own* work as archaeologists; an awareness of both is essential if we are to ensure that archaeology retains a social relevance in the twenty first century. In this chapter, I nevertheless examine the former, addressing the question: Just how important are *archaeological* interpretations/ perceptions of the past in Quseir? To answer this, I discuss the

interplay between the archaeological investigations at Quseir al-Qadim, perceptions of heritage and the ownership of the past in the modern city.

Historical awareness, archaeology and modern Quseir

An awareness of the antiquity of Quseir al-Qadim, regardless of archaeological 'accuracy' or 'depth' of historical knowledge, is ubiquitous within Quseir. In *every* interview conducted with local residents the historic nature of the site was fore-grounded, apparent in such statements as:

- It [Quseir al-Qadim] was an old harbour, the oldest harbour in the whole of Egypt...People lived there. Everything started from there (Int. 16).
- We were told by our grandfathers that once it was an old city and that people lived there. There was nothing here [Quseir]. Now it is the other way round – here is modern Quseir; before everything was there. We know about this because we have been in the area for a long time (Int. 20).
- I know that it was an important place in the past, but exactly why, and what happened there, I don't know (Int. 2.4).

Furthermore, many interviewees emphasised a symbolic connection between the ancient and the modern harbours:

> For sure the place where the site is was Quseir before, this is for sure. We know nothing about dates, about when or how long it was, but we are quite sure about that (Int. 14).

The general recognition that Quseir al-Qadim was an 'old harbour' occurs far more frequently than any 'archaeological' definitions of the port as either Roman or Islamic. Though we would not perhaps expect long, detailed archaeological descriptions to be prevalent within the interviews, this is still somewhat surprising. As we have seen in chapter four, the area was partially excavated by Whitcomb and Johnson in the late 1980s, yet very few interviewees attribute the site to one particular era – even those employed by the Chicago team (e.g. Int. 3.21). It would be too simplistic to suggest that this is merely indicative of a lack of direct interaction, let alone collaboration, with the residents of Quseir: several interviewees speak fondly of the Chicago excavation, whilst two residents previously

employed within the phosphate factory recall the use of buildings within the compound as laboratories, an open door policy in operation for the viewing of finds (Int. 41; Int. 3.21). Similarly, very few of the local residents employed on the present excavation described the site archaeologically, remembering instead its use as a port of embarkation for fishing trips or as a pleasure beach (though see Int. 44). It is, however, significant that the vast majority of the interviews with Quseir based excavators were conducted in the first field season, when the Community Archaeology Project itself was in its infancy. This will be developed in more detail below.

As archaeologists, we often have a tendency to presume that archaeological interpretations of the past are as central to the lives of others as they are to our own.[3] Yet we should be aware that archaeological interpretations are often of less significance than a 'sense' of the past – an awareness of antiquity based upon tangible, visible remnants of the past, contributing, in Quseir at least, to a communal sense of longevity. As Lowenthal suggests, "the past is more admirable as a realm of faith than fact... 'we have a history here you know" (1998:135). This is reinforced at Quseir, where the site already exists for many interviewees as a symbol, an ever present reminder of the antiquity of the region. In this context, dates, stratigraphic layers and Harris matrices matter very little; archaeological investigation serves only to bolster a general sense of history already prevalent in the city.

That is not to say, however, that the investigation of Quseir al-Qadim (and perhaps most especially the CAPQ) has not had a significant impact upon the way some in Quseir perceive of their past. Though it is possible to discern the beginnings of this impact in the first field season, it is perhaps most apparent in the second and third:

> We only really discovered this past when you came here and we watched the reality. Before we just knew that it was Quseir al-Qadim – old Quseir. We knew that this was old Quseir, and that now we are in new Quseir, but we didn't know what exactly the history of this place was (Int. 2.6).

Similarly, in response to a question concerning knowledge of the site prior to the onset of archaeological investigations one interviewee replied

> Naturally [I knew] nothing *important.* This site has a history...I heard some mysteries, but nothing *serious* (Int. 21; my emphasis).

For several interviewees archaeological interpretations are clearly given precedence over other ways of knowing the past.

The development of the Heritage Centre too is seen by some as central to the fostering of an increased interest in the archaeological past of the region:

> This place [the Heritage Centre] will gather everything, like the citadel and Quseir al-Qadim, all the monuments you can find here. This will make people attracted to their own past...I will be proud - proud of this idea of collecting the whole city of Quseir together so people can know their own history. Any foreigner can come into the city and see that this man, this small boy, this young man, this old man has information about their city. So this will give a unity to the whole society (Int. 3.4; see also Int. 5).

Perhaps significantly, all the extracts cited above are taken from conversations with employees of the Learning Development Centre. It is tempting to suggest that this greater emphasis on the archaeological past is simply the result of their often closer, prolonged interaction with project members (see chapter one, chapter two). Yet the importance of the increased visibility of the Community Archaeology team in the city and the role of 'plain-language' reports in developing an awareness – though not necessarily a privileging – of the archaeological past cannot be underestimated:

- This is what people need [the plain language report]. It is a very good idea. Really, a really good idea. If anyone asks me 'What do you know about Quseir', then what can I say? But now I have a book (3.12).
- You must have noticed the effect of the report on people (3.34).

'To know about history will bring people together'[4]*: the past and the construction of identity in Quseir*

For several interviewees, the investigation of the archaeological past has the potential to impact positively upon the community of Quseir. Indeed, as we have seen from Interviewee 3.4 above, there is a perception amongst some residents that the past of Quseir will be significant in constructing and maintaining a sense of 'cohesion' within the city – a matter of

concern for a great deal of interviewees as tourist development increases. For three interviewees, this will be facilitated through archaeological investigation, the Community Archaeology Project, but most especially the Heritage Centre itself:

- People will be able to see that in the past we were able to make something that we can't make in the present. So we must make an effort to be like our grandfathers, to have a good civilisation and so be like them (Int. 2.1).
- People have nothing to do now...the Phosphate Company has been sold. So when we have a museum then people can go in and see it, and this will make a lot of difference for people later on – everyone will know about the history of Quseir (Int. 17).
- To know about history will bring people together (Int. 31).

It is of course important to emphasise that this view is not shared by all:

> I think we have to be honest here. I don't think a museum will keep people together as a community...[but] this museum will give people an idea about the city and tell people the history of the area, which will be perfect, the best way...Most of the people will know about the history, so of course this will be good (Int. 3.15).

It is nevertheless true that the archaeological excavation and subsequent presentation of Quseir al-Qadim is perceived by many as significant in the construction and maintenance of identity in Quseir. As Jonathan Friedman, in his study of Greek and Hawaiian identity constructs suggests, "making history is a way of producing identity insofar as it produces a relation between that which supposedly occurred in the past and the present state of affairs" (1992:837).

Yet it is not simply *archaeological* investigation or the development of the Heritage Centre that contributes to the construction of identity within the city. Again, a general recognition of the historical nature of the area, based upon familial longevity and tangible remains of the past is sufficient:

> It is hard for us to move away – we are tied to the place. The people here are like a big family you know?...I think we are the most traditional city in the whole area, not only the oldest one. You can see this difference in general between the Egyptian people and the European people or the Americans. The Americans don't have any tie with a place, they can move from one place to another very easily. They don't

> have this [historical] connection with their things, their cars or their houses. They don't have this connection....we have history here, different to Hurghada, Safaga or Marsa Alam, we have history here so we are tied more to things and places. So it is not easy for us to leave (Int. 3.9).

It is clear that both Quseir al-Qadim and the history of modern Quseir is of cultural importance to some in the city, whether that history is constructed archaeologically or not.

This is further evident in the apparent 'kudos' derived by many interviewees from the longevity of Quseir's past:

- This is the oldest city in the Red Sea and I feel proud about this (Int. 5).
- I am very proud that I am from Quseir – my Grandfather and all his sons were born in Quseir (Int. 8).
- This is the oldest city here in the area (Int. 3.6).
- It is something honourable for the citizens of Quseir to have a history (Int. 3.21).

Once again, none of these statements – often repeated throughout the interviews conducted in the city – are reliant upon awareness of or interest in the past as recovered and interpreted by archaeologists. As we have seen in chapter four, the residents of Quseir were aware of the site at least as early as the eighteenth century, long before any archaeological investigations took place. Recognising the level of historical awareness that already exists in the city nevertheless raises an interesting question: will the excavation, the Community Archaeology Project and the Heritage Centre affect the way some residents perceive their city in the present?

For several interviewees, the answer is definitely yes:

- It is all about history and culture, beginning again. It started there, and now you have it again. So I think it is really good what you are doing there...If we had these excavations earlier we would be a completely different culture to what we are now. Because we should be in the history books, part of the big history. Quseir al-Qadim is part of history, and we have it now (Int. 13).
- We want everyone to know about it. My colleagues are always asking me if, now we are on the internet, journalists will come here. They want many people to know this past, all the world (Int. 21).

And perhaps most poignantly of all:

> Quseir is like a small girl sleeping. This small girl, beautiful and sleeping. If you would like to wake her up, then you have to write the history of the monuments, and show it to the whole world. This will make Quseir special, and the girl will wake again (Int. 3.29).

The combination of the historic nature of the region and the continuing archaeological investigations also serves to create significant contrasts to other cities on the Red Sea coast (particularly, for many residents, Hurghada, Safaga and Marsa Alam):

- Quseir is the oldest city in the Red Sea government area. Hurghada is only just starting. With these excavations, the archaeology and so on, then we will become another culture; it will be different from now – we will have more than other people…I would like here to be more interesting than Hurghada (Int. 17).
- It [the heritage centre] will have an affirmative effect on Quseir itself because Quseir will be the only place on the Red Sea coast with a history – not like Hurghada, Safaga or Marsa Alam (Int. 3.28).
- If we had these excavations earlier, then the city would be completely different to what it is now. Because we would be in the history books, part of history. Quseir al-Qadim is part of history now (Int. 13).

A unique identity is thus constructed, for Quseir, an identity that draws upon several different constituting factors:

> DG: Do you feel that Quseir is different to other cities in Egypt?
>
> I: Yes – we have the sea, the weather, the coral and history. We have these four elements that you can't find anywhere else but Quseir: coral, history, good weather and the sea (Int. 3.28).

As we saw in chapter one, the construction of identity is reliant upon the presence of an 'other' that emphasises both difference and similarity. One of the major factors in constructing this 'otherness' in Quseir is the presence of tangible archaeological remains which, when combined with the historic monuments of the modern city, marks it out as substantially different to other Red Sea communities. This will be explored more fully in later chapters.

A Pharaonic past for Quseir?

The presence of a tangible archaeological past does not, however, simply construct contrasts to newer tourist based economies. It also facilitates comparisons with cities with a more 'established' past – the similarities necessary for the successful maintenance of a coherent community identity. This too is reflected in the interviews conducted in Quseir, where statements such as 'now we will be important, like Luxor' (Int. 11) and 'this will make Quseir an interesting city, like Luxor' (Int. 2.1) recur with great frequency.

Inextricably linked to this is the belief – perhaps even desire – that Quseir al-Qadim will eventually yield to the patient archaeologist evidence of a glorious Pharaonic past:

- We are imagining if the Pharaohs had been here visiting...we think about, to find the *target* (Int. 12).
- I have a feeling that you will find Pharaonic. I hope to find that (Int. 2.1).
- I think the Pharaonic past is important because it affects the whole of Egypt (Int. 3.29).

This emphasis on the possibility of a Pharaonic past for Quseir is significant. Though, as we saw in the previous chapter, Hamam (2000) links Quseir to the Pharaonic port of Thago, there is little archaeological evidence to support this claim. Yet all the quotes above reveal a longing to reconstruct a lost Pharaonic era for the city: 'I *hope*' 'to find the *target*'.

It would be too naïve to suggest that this desire is simply a reflection of Western perceptions of Egypt as a country strewn with Pharaonic remains. As I will demonstrate in chapter seven, it is at least in part related to the perceived potential of the site to function as a heritage tourism destination. It is nevertheless tempting to suggest that it is also indicative of a need for civic recognition in a country so rich in archaeological remains – a desire exaggerated in a city that has traditionally felt isolated from the administrative power of Cairo and the perceived economic success of the Nile Valley. As the social anthropologist, turned novelist Amitav Ghosh highlights, "everywhere in the country, except perhaps the city itself, Cairo *is* Egypt" (1994:32, emphasis in original).[5] This is evident in such statements as:

> Everyone in Egypt thinks we have nothing, and that Quseir is not on the map. This is what they always say: 'We have nothing to live on'. It's not OK to feel this in your country. We want to know something about us, about our history, our heritage. We want to know that this is not a city from two or three days ago, but is from the past (Int. 21).

The Pharaonic past has always played a prominent role in the construction of identity in Egypt, at least at a national level. As Donald Reid suggests, "learning about archaeology primarily from the Europeans, Egyptians gradually came to realise that it could be turned to their own ends...[recognising the] vital role archaeology could play in shaping their modern national identity" (2002:2). Mitchell (2001:213-4) too highlights the concerted effort made to project and maintain a Pharaonic identity by nationalist movements from 1922 onwards, significantly, perhaps, the same year in which Egypt gained partial independence from the British Empire and Carter unveiled Tutankhamen to an eager world. Egyptian Egyptologists swiftly began the task of re-appropriating the country's glorious history for their own countrymen (Reid 1997:129), whilst right wing political movements such as Misr al-Fatâh (Young Egypt) emphasised militarism and conquest in the Pharaonic past (Mitchell 2001:214).

Explicit Pharaonism was, however, largely restricted to the cultural and political elite, and was to be replaced by more populist pan-Arab and Islamist discourses in the 1930s and 40s (see Gershoni & Jankowski 1986; Reid 1997; Mitchell 2001). Both Gershoni and Jankowski, writing together and separately, have highlighted the dialectical relationship between the promotion of a pan-Arab and Islamist past based upon religious and linguistic ties with other countries, and a Pharaonic past based solely upon national heritage at various stages of the political life of the nation (e.g. Gershoni & Jankowski 1986; Gershoni 1992; Jankowski 1997; see also Hassan 1998; Lowenthal 1998). The promotion of a pan-Arab heritage was, though, never exclusive. As Reid (1997:145) demonstrates, the Egyptian antiquities service was not dismantled in the 1930s for its inextricable association with a pagan past, it was nationalised; the retention of archaeological artefacts and the graduations of Egyptian Egyptologists celebrated as a source of national pride. It is difficult therefore to refute Reid's assertion that "a current of identification with ancient Egypt, which Egyptology and Pharaonism sometimes extravagantly promoted, seems to have become an independent and self-sustaining element of modern Egyptian identity" (1997:149).

In contrast, Lowenthal argues for what we might clumsily term a process of 'Islamisation' within modern Egypt, the rejection of a 'pagan' past and the promotion of a 'pure' Islamic heritage:

> Pharaonic blood soured from blessing to blasphemy...Pharaonic spokesmen turned Muslim heritage mongers...Islam alone could fuel Egyptian revival. But this heritage threatens to disable the secular state. Dynastic relics are episodically locked away lest they give offence; militant Islamicists target antiquities, crippling Egypt's tourist industry. Egyptians are saddled with a heritage seen first as a curse, then a blessing, now both at once (1998:73-74).

Butler (2000) too suggests that there is little affinity with the ancient past – of whatever period – in Egypt. Basing her arguments upon an ethnography conducted in Alexandria, consisting of interviews with the city's 'cultural elite', she states that most Egyptians champion an Arab identity, reflected in the belief that the modern population arrived only with the Arab conquest of the seventh century (see Butler 2000).

This is somewhat simplistic. As we have seen above, Islamisation was never ubiquitous in Egypt – at least not to the same extent as it was in Turkey, for example (see Shankland 1996; Hodder 1998 on Turkey). Perhaps most importantly, in none of the interviews conducted in Quseir is the non Islamic past perceived as a 'curse':

> It is our history, it has been written down already...Mamluk, Roman, Pharaonic – these are periods of our history, so we have to know about them all. That is most interesting for us (Int. 15).

It is certainly true that an anti-Pharaonic movement inspired by religious fundamentalism has existed in Egypt throughout its history. Donald Reid (2002:29-30), for example, documents the destruction of Pharaonic monuments by medieval zealots. Yet the belief that the ancient past, whether Pharaonic, Hellenistic, Roman or Coptic, has little relevance for Egyptians in the present is more likely to have originated in European efforts to appropriate the country's heritage from the late eighteenth century onwards: the very term 'Egyptology' emphasises the primacy given to the ancient past by Europeans (Reid 2002:7), implying as it does that "Egypt ceases to be Egypt when it ceases to be ancient" (Zvie 1991:38; cited in Reid 2002:8).

Said too demonstrates Western scholars appropriation of the past during the nineteenth century, the legacy of ancient Egypt the birthright of the West, rather the modern inhabitants of the country (1978:204). As Fanon, in his classic resistance text *Les damnés de la terre* (1961) highlights, one of the prerequisites of successful colonial expansion is the distortion of the past of the colonised, de-valuing or appropriating pre-colonial history (see also Cabral 1993).

Despite the desire of Western scholars, diplomats and civil servants to assert modern Egyptian ambivalence towards the 'pagan' past, this is not reflected in the interviews conducted in Quseir. Given the context in which I am writing, a time when we are increasingly bombarded by the Anglo-American news media with images of Muslim fundamentalism, juxtaposed with countless documentaries exploring the wonders of the Pharaonic past, it is important for us to recognise that modern Egyptians not only have an interest in the ancient past of the country, but are the major stakeholders. The past that is claimed in our own name is the heritage of those we are encouraged to fear:

- We must find out about all places. Islamic, Roman, Pharaonic, Mamluk – whatever (Int. 41).
- DG: What would you like to see in the museum?
- I: Islamic, Roman and Pharaonic. The museum is a great idea, and we'd like to see everything in it, especially the Roman and the Mamluk that you've found. We have to know about it, we have to (Int. 15).
- We want to know the whole story, the history and the dates. We want to know if it is Roman, and about the Mamlukes. We want to know the whole story, from when it started to when it ended (Int. 31).
- If it is Pharaonic or Roman or Islamic it doesn't make a difference – just keep going [with the excavation] because we have to know about it, whatever you have (Int. 13).

Attitudes such as these are reminiscent of Hassan's 'Egyptian pastiche' (1998), the notion that the multiple, diverse strands of Egyptian history have combined to create the modern Egyptian nation.[6] In Quseir at least, the primacy given to one past over another is simply a matter of personal preference:

> DG: You're obviously very interested in the Pharaonic past [there are many representations of the Pharaonic past in the room]. Do you think that the Roman and Mamluk pasts are equally important to Egypt?

> I: It is something that is a personal thing. Some people like different things; it differs from person to person. You can find people here that have much focus on the history itself – much history whatever, the Pharaonic, the Mamluk, whatever. Others will be more interested in particular pasts. It's just the difference between people (Int. 3.11).

Similar statements recur with great frequency throughout the interviews conducted in the city.

The ownership of the past in Quseir

This interest in the history of Quseir is reflected in the sense of 'ownership' of the past felt by some in the city. The concept of ownership is complex, and has yet to be substantially investigated in archaeological writings, despite the fact that local ownership of the past is a central tenet of much community oriented archaeology. It is true that the ownership of the past is at least partially facilitated by frameworks such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990) in the United States, but what of contexts in which there are no legal mandates? In Quseir, the local community own their past only in so much as it is owned by the Egyptian government – they have no legal claim to involvement in the investigative process, nor any entitlement to local deposition of archaeological finds. That does not preclude, however, some interviewees from claiming an ownership of the past in their own terms:

> In the end the past is for Egyptians, so I think it should be governed by Egyptians, but with assistance. I want to keep the past for Quseir, with co-operation from outside...the more I know about history the greater I'll be able to control it myself, so give me all the information you get, don't keep anything from me and I'll return it to you with gratitude (Int. 2.2).

'Ownership' is not simply a legal or bureaucratic concept; it runs much deeper than that. It is something that an individual feels, an emotional attachment to the past, a passion for and connection with the past that not everybody shares – including, perhaps, many archaeologists. The ownership of the past cannot be 'given' to a local community, either by legal mandate or by archaeologists. It is not something that was ever ours to give. Clearly

many people in Quseir, regardless of legality or of archaeological interpretations, already own their past in an intellectual, emotional and symbolic sense:

- It is our culture (Int. 15).
- Everyone *must* know the history of the city (Int. 32).
- I have to know about my past (Int. 2.1).
- It's great that you take information from me about my history, but *don't take* my history… It's my history (Int. 3.14).

Statements such as these also serve as a stark warning to the archaeological community: the past of Egypt, and of Quseir in particular, is no longer open to plunder.

Yet if archaeology cannot give the past to others, then perhaps the right conditions can be created to allow a sense of ownership to ferment and develop – conditions that are not readily apparent in traditional archaeological research practices in Egypt. It is to be hoped that these conditions may be found in the Community Archaeology project at Quseir, with its emphasis on collaborative research practices and community led presentation. If the project achieves only this, then it will have been successful, whatever else might occur.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I posed the question: Just how important are archaeological interpretations/ perceptions of the past in Quseir? It is apparent from interviews with local residents that the cultural and symbolic importance of Quseir al-Qadim in the modern city is not reliant upon archaeological investigation, or indeed interpretation. The very presence of the site emphasises the antiquity of the region: archaeological interpretations change, the archaeology, to paraphrase Otis Redding, remains the same. This 'sense' of history is fundamental to the success of the Community Archaeology Project at Quseir; without it, our work would be worthless. Yet, paradoxically, it would appear that for several interviewees the detailed analyses of archaeologists serve to add only another layer to something that already exists – a confirmation of the antiquity of the region, but little more.

The excavation itself and the subsequent development of the Heritage Centre is, however, seen by some as central to the construction of a unique identity for the city, an identity substantially different to the newer tourist based economies of Hurghada, Safaga and Marsa Alam. At present, the past that is constructed within Quseir is both *in opposition to* and *in support of* what is perceived as the 'national heritage', reflected in the desire for a verifiable Pharaonic past at Quseir al-Qadim.

In this chapter, I have nevertheless restricted the analysis to what might be regarded as historical, if not strictly archaeological perceptions of the past in the city. Throughout the interviews conducted in Quseir, however, a great deal of local knowledge of the site was expressed in a manner that we would describe as 'folkloric' – alternative perceptions of the past that are clearly of great significance within Quseir. It is to these that we turn in the next chapter.

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[1] Int. 3.21
[2] Cited in Jankowski (1997:160)
[3] Though this presumption is less prevalent in areas with a vociferous indigenous community, such as Australia (S. Moser, pers. comm.).
[4] Int. 31
[5] The Arabic for Cairo and Egypt are synonymous: *Masr*. It is not a little confusing to be told by someone in Quseir that they are going to Egypt for the day.
[6] Hassan does, however, assert that the Pharaonic past is little more than a 'political card' that has not become fully integrated into everyday Egyptian reality (1998:212).

CHAPTER SIX

'If I tell you what I saw with my own eye, you will tell me that people go to the moon, and yet you speak of Jinn and Afrites...'[1]

The archaeological folklore of Quseir al-Qadim

It is not the date that matters, it is the place. Time passes, but land endures, demanding attention. For most people, history's purpose is to enrich the world they inhabit by explaining the origin of some feature on the landscape – a twisted river, a spot of bare grass, the name of a meadow – for that is the most obvious way that the past forces itself on the present, and the past unalive in the present is not history

Henry Glassie, *Passing the time in Ballymenone*, (1982:196).

In the previous chapter, I examined perceptions of the past in the present of Quseir, questioning the extent to which archaeological interpretations are given precedence over other ways of knowing. In this chapter, I address folkloric constructions of the past in the city, suggesting that at present the perceived relationship between the ancient and the modern ports is frequently articulated through the folklore of Quseir al-Qadim. In doing so, I demonstrate the central role of archaeological folklore in the maintenance of identity in Quseir.[2] I begin, however, with a discussion of the importance of context.

Folklore, Egypt and the importance of context

What is not in harmony with the people dies out

Vladimir Propp, *Theory and history of folklore* (1984:5)

In the ancient wonderland of Egypt, according to the almost unanimous testimony of its inhabitants, there are still at the present day wonders upon wonders; and the phenomena from the region of the supersensual, which extends without any obvious boundary from the dominion of faith to that of superstition are still of daily occurrence...whoever has had an opportunity of mixing with the Moslimin [sic] for only a short time will

admit how deeply penetrated by superstition the whole people are, and how they cannot be understood unless by one who has a knowledge, not only of their religious beliefs, but also of their superstitions

C.B. Klunzinger, *Upper Egypt. Its people and its products* (1878:382)

For an analysis of archaeological folklore to succeed, it is essential that we recognise the importance of cultural context: folkloric traditions are only meaningful within the knowledge system in which they are produced (Gramsci 1971; Blake 1999). It is not for me, or anyone excavating at Quseir al-Qadim, to reject its folklore as false, or even to accept it as true. We must simply acknowledge the presence of folklore, and endeavour to incorporate that knowledge into our own analyses. In adopting this position, I draw – as Blake (1999) has done – on the pragmatist philosophy of Richard Rorty (e.g. 1991). Rorty argues that though we must be cognisant of cultural diversity, recognise that there are no criteria for 'judging' practices cross-culturally, we must also acknowledge that each of us are deeply embedded in, "participate in and feel an affinity for a particular culture, a solidarity" (Blake 1999:234).

I have no qualms in admitting that much of the folklore of Quseir al-Qadim is alien to me. Situated within my own social and cultural milieu, writing this, as I am now, in a house in the centre of a modern city, I can comfortably question the existence of supernatural beings. In reality, I am not sure what I believe. I am aware, however, that if I do deny the existence of demons I do so on my own grounds. This approach

> accords more respect to cultures than the blindly inclusive approach, which denies holders of alternative viewpoints the right to struggle for recognition...to say that we of the dominant group have a blanket respect for all other groups overlooks their individual differences and belies the actual power relations that are behind their conceptual marginalisation (Blake 1999:234).

Recognising and accepting cultural difference enables the researcher to minimise the risk of transforming 'alien' concepts into things that make sense in their own academic or social world, if not eradicate that risk all together (see Krupat 1992).

The need to understand cultural context of folklore and its transmission is highlighted eloquently by the English novelist Julian Barnes. Barnes has long been fascinated by identity constructs, particularly as they relate to heritage[3] – in *England, England* (1998) the historic

monuments and buildings of England are purchased by a financier and removed to the Isle of Wight, where they form the central attractions of an ingeniously devised heritage theme park.[4] As the fortunes of this 'new England' ('authentic England') increase, the wealth and stability of Old England, deprived of its heritage, declines dramatically:

> Jez Harris, formerly Jack Oshinsky, junior legal expert with an American electronics firm...preferred to stay, and backdate both his name and his technology: nowadays he shoed horses, made barrel hoops, sharpened sickles, cut keys, tended verges, and brewed a noxious form of scrumpy into which he would plunge a red-hot poker just before serving...[but] his inextinguishable pleasure was to play the yokel whenever some anthropologist, travel writer or linguistic theoretician would turn up inadequately disguised as a tourist.
>
> 'Tell me,' the earnest hiker with the give-away new boots might begin, 'does that clump of trees over there have a special name?'
>
> 'Name?' Harris would shout back from his forge...'Name?' he would repeat, glaring at the investigator through matted hair. 'That be Halley's copse, half-drowned dog know that.'...
>
> 'Halley's copse...You mean...like Halley's comet?' Already the disguised sipper and browser of retarded humanity would be regretting that he couldn't take out a notebook or recorder.
>
> 'Comet? What comet's that? No comet's round here betimes. Ain't never heard of Edna Halley then? No, reckon it's not what folk hereabouts like to tell of. Rum business, if you ask me, rum business.'
>
> Whereupon, with studied reluctance, and after making signs of hunger, Harris the farrier né Oshinsky the legal draughtsmen would allow himself to be treated to a steak-and-kidney pudding at the Rising Sun, and with a pint of mild bitter at his elbow would hint, without ever quite confirming, at tales of witchcraft and superstition, of sexual rites beneath a glowing moon and the tranced slaughter of livestock, all not so very long in the past...
>
> From time to time Mr Mullin the schoolmaster would chide Jez Harris, suggesting that folklore, and especially invented folklore, should not be the subject of monetary exchange or barter (1998: 242-244).

To those of us raised on a diet of positivism and empiricism, it would perhaps be easy to dismiss folktales, as Barnes' scholar does, as 'meaningless superstition', amusing curios of little or no intellectual worth.[5] This would, however, not only be extremely unethical in the current archaeological climate, but would also deny beliefs that are – in many instances – essential to the creation and maintenance of national, local or communal identity (see chapter three). This is especially true of Egypt, where such beliefs are deeply embedded in society. As Richard Dorson suggests, the Jinn from Aladdin's lamp did not originate with the storyteller, but "from a belief system ingrained in the Egyptian culture and approved by the Koran" (1980:xviii).

It is, perhaps, the Jinn, who can provide us with our entrée to the folklore of Quseir.[6] Created by God some 2000 years before Adam, the Jinn exist as "an intermediate race of beings between angels and men", their existence attested to by the Koran (Lane 1836:73). The Jinn should not be regarded as the equivalent of fairies or elves in the Western world, but as angels and devils; just as a devout Christian will believe in the existence of the Holy Trinity, a devout Muslim recognises the existence of Jinn. Masters of disguise, they endlessly shape shift and can be distinguished only by their flaming, vertical eyes. Like people, the Jinn are neither inherently good nor intrinsically evil, capable of both acts of extreme benevolence or frightening malevolence.

Edward Lane, in his seminal *Accounts of the manners and superstitions of modern Egyptians* (1836), highlights the prevalence of Jinn, both in Egyptian society and within Islam itself (e.g. 1836:283).[7] For Lane, the beliefs of nineteenth century Egyptians differed little from those found within *The book of the thousand nights and a night*: "if the reader possessed a close translation of it with sufficient illustrative notes, I might have spared myself the labours of the present undertaking" (1836:vi).[8] Klunzinger too demonstrates the ubiquity of folklore and folkloric beliefs, suggesting that Upper Egypt is inhabited by a vast number of Jinn, in addition to its human residents (1878:382). Though his discussion of religion, folklore and superstition in Upper Egypt is infused with the colonialist perspective that permeates much of his work (cf. Lane 1836), Klunzinger's insistence on the prominence of folklore in nineteenth century Quseir maintains a resonance in the present.

The interviews conducted in the city suggest that what we would term folklore is still central to many interviewees – not least in their understanding of the past. To the visitor, even one that has spent a considerable amount of time immersing himself in *The nights*, Lane and others, it is still surprising to recognise the extent to which 'folkloric' beliefs permeate conversations in Quseir: it is not a rare occurrence for talk in coffee shops to turn casually to Jinn, curses, or talismans for warding off the evil eye. During a conversation with a friend over coffee, for example, I mentioned the vividness of my dreams in Quseir – it is not unusual, for me at least, to have recurring dreams whilst sleeping in the archaeological desert camp, some entertaining, and others less so (figure 6.1).[9] One particular nightmare stands out, a skeletal white face with deep set, jet black eyes flashing repeatedly before me. I interpret my flood of dreams (or at least my ability to remember them) as a lack of the usual external stimulus that I submit myself to daily – radio, TV and the internet, for example; things that numb the mind and dumb the imagination. My friend was less sure:[10]

> I know what you are saying because the same thing happened to me when I was in the desert – the same dream every night. They are nightmares my friend, they make you wake up wet and scared, you feel like you have a big weight on your chest. It is because you're in a place that's a cemetery – for a long time nobody was living there. So what do you think you will meet there? The souls that are still around the place.
>
> I could help you with this if you want. Believe me, I know many things that could help you with this (Int. 3.19).

To adequately analyse the folklore of Quseir al-Qadim and its role in the construction of the past, it is therefore essential that we place it within the wider context of folkloric beliefs within Quseir. The importance of the cultural context of folklore was recognised by Lane: though written in the midst of a colonial era, *Accounts*... is both exhaustively researched and sensitive to its subject matter. This book laid down the gauntlet for all who followed in Egypt, setting "the tales in the beating heart of the society whose people tell them" (Dorson 1980:xiii). My research attempts to emulate that of Lane, by situating the folklore of Quseir al-Qadim in modern Quseir.

Despite this, a great deal of folkloric scholarship has been devoted to cross-cultural comparisons, analysing seemingly similar folkloric motifs from geographically disparate regions.[11] Propp, for example, asserts that there are 'laws' common to all folktales, thus

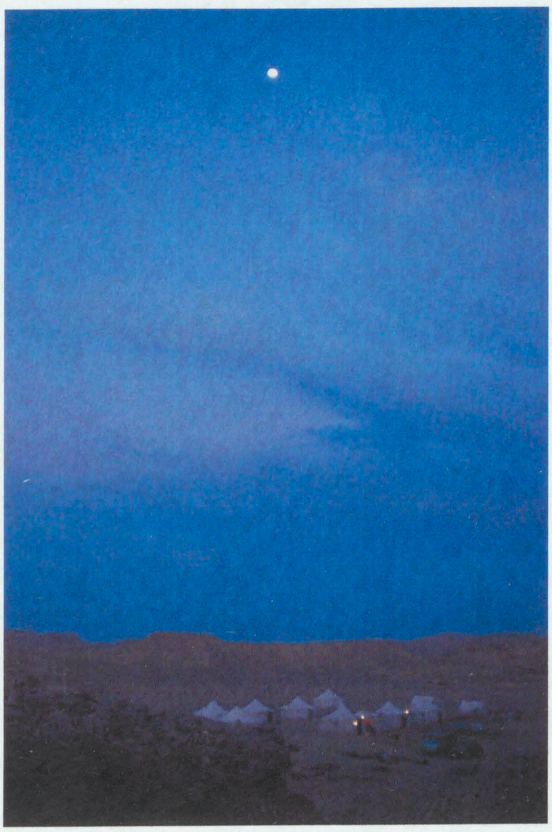

Figure 6.1 The camp at night.

Figure 6.2 Wadi Nakheil, The Valley of the Jinn.

allowing for their classification and analysis within specific genres (e.g. 1984: 17, 49; see also Lévi-Strauss 1968). Dundes (1984), too, suggests that if a similar 'tale type' is found the world over then the analysis of its cross-cultural manifestation is imperative. I argue that by actively seeking laws common to all 'folk genres', by classifying folklore on the basis of perceived plot similarities with little or no regard for cultural context, folklorists divorce the tale from the society in which it is created or transmitted, effectively rejecting its meaning. Cross-cultural comparisons rely, out of necessity, upon textual analysis derived from compendia of folklore (e.g. Stith Thomson's monumental tract *The folk tale* [1946]); as Bascom (1953:289) suggests, it is impossible to ascertain from texts alone the extent to which a folktale is accepted as fact or fiction, or the status of the tale within the society itself (see also Jacobs 1966). Unfortunately, these reservations do not appear to be shared by UNESCO, who in 1989 established a special committee charged with the creation of a 'standard typology of folklore' (see Ó Giolláin 2000:181).

In reality, analyses based solely upon cross-cultural comparisons of folklore tell us very little. All too often they are couched in impenetrable language, filled with polemical debate, reducing the study of folklore to pointless semantics (see for example Propp 1958; Aarne 1961; Dundes 1962; Lévi-Strauss 1968; Krohn 1971). The excessive use of formulas – impenetrable to my eye – not only makes analysis unnecessarily difficult to all but the most brilliant mathematicians and linguists (e.g. $\beta^{3}\delta^{1}A^{1}B^{1}C\uparrow H^{1}\text{-}I^{1}K4\downarrow w^{\circ}$ [after Lévi-Strauss 1968] – and that's a relatively simple one) but further divorces folklore from society. I do not wish to suggest that there is no place within folklore for classification, or indeed cross-cultural comparisons: they have at least demonstrated the ubiquitous nature of folklore globally. But there is now a need to move beyond that, to assess the meaning of each folktale within the specific context in which it is recounted.

The problems inherent in cross-cultural analysis are illuminated by the Zuni tale of *The cock and the mouse*, recorded by Frank Hamilton Cushing (1931) in the early twentieth century.[12] An Italian folktale recited by Cushing to his Zuni informants during a discussion on folklore, *The cock and the mouse* was subsequently told to him by a different informant one year later as an indigenous folktale (Cushing 1931; see also Bascom 1953). The tale is transformed,

though it maintains the same plot, it has become incorporated into Zuni society, adopting new meanings within its new context. Though folklore may be transferred from culture to culture, a new layer of significance is added within each context. It is indeed possible – perhaps even probable – that archaeological folklore similar to that found in Quseir is prevalent throughout Egypt. What is important, however, is not that a folktale in Quseir shares many of the same characteristics as those from the Arnhem Land, Maine, Manchester or Tanzania, but what its continual transmission can tell us about Quseir. It is the context in which it is transmitted and the location of the action within the tale itself that makes folklore meaningful

Throughout the next section, I therefore introduce the reader to the archaeological folklore of Quseir al-Qadim, highlighting the main themes and examining the interplay between archaeological remains, alternative perceptions of the past and the present in modern Quseir. I argue that in many instances it is the folklore of Quseir al-Qadim that enables local residents to claim that "Quseir is the oldest city on the Red Sea" (Int. 20), and thus construct for themselves an identity substantially different to the newer towns of Hurghada and Safaga.

The archaeological folklore of Quseir al-Qadim

El-Shamy (1980) divides the folklore of Egypt into four broad categories of narrative: serious, non serious, humorous and undelineated narrative talk. Broadly speaking, the folklore of Quseir al-Qadim falls into the latter category – *kalám* or *hàky*, narrative talk that encompasses local belief legends and historical accounts of either a personal or communal nature. This category includes tales that are recounted as fact and not delineated within the conversation by an indicatory prefix, a common trait in much of the folklore within Quseir (e.g. "and of course there is the tunnel" Int. 3.8; "we know about the ship that was lost" Int. 41). In this instance, there is no need to narrate the tale in full as it is already generally known throughout the city; the complete narrative is given only for the benefit of the researcher (El-Shamy 1980:xlvi). It is also important to recognise that in many instances these accounts are not emphasised as 'folktales' or 'folklore' within Quseir itself (though the vast majority are designated as 'old stories'). As Handler (1988:55) suggests, the category

'folktale' is often created as much by the researcher as by the society itself (see also Honko 1991; Ó Giolláin 2000:174).

With this in mind, the folklore of Quseir al-Qadim can be roughly divided for analytical purposes into five, wholly arbitrary themes:

- *The Greek*
- *Folklore and fishing*
- *Curses and supernatural beings*
- *The sunken ship*
- *The site and the citadel*

The Greek

The first of these, *The Greek*, is perhaps the most fully developed and highly stylised of all the folklore connected to Quseir al-Qadim. Set some time in the past, and often recounted as a family anecdote, it narrates the tale of a European traveller who reveals to a number of residents the presence of treasure at the site:

> My father once told me that a Greek man came here to Quseir and asked for food. There were no restaurants, so my father gave him food and then he [the Greek] gave him a map of Quseir al-Qadim with something on it. When my father went [to Quseir al-Qadim] he saw stairs going down like this [motions downwards] and they found cloth. When they lifted them out they vanished in the air...
>
> ...The Greek man who was there told them it was a historical area there, and said if you dig it and succeed then please come and tell me. But no one succeeded in this, and so they thought it was a magical area that no one can dig treasure from. It is like Pharaonic – that is what they think.
>
> DG: So it is a magical area?
>
> I: Yes (Int. 8).

The Greek emphasises the historic nature of the area, fostering a communal awareness of the past through references to a specific and, crucially, a *known* locale. Perhaps more

importantly, however, it also demonstrates to those to whom the tale is recounted that people in the past were aware of this: the community of Quseir has always acknowledged its historic roots. As David Gross (1992) highlights, one of the central criteria for establishing a sense of authenticity and tradition is an emphasis on continuity between past and present.

Interestingly, we know from the writings of both Joseph Sherer (1824:65) and Mrs Colonel Elwood (1930:270) that a Greek mercantile agent named Peter John was resident in Quseir in the early part of the nineteenth century. Though the interviewee was an elderly man, it is unlikely that his father would have been alive at the time of Peter John's residence within the city. Significantly however, when this tale was later recited by the interviewee's daughter she too referred to the individual within the tale as 'my father' (Int. 21), though she was not present during the original interview. It is tempting (though somewhat contentious) to suggest that this tale relates directly to the presence of Peter John within Quseir, a family remembrance of *The Greek* from the early nineteenth century. This folktale, along with others, also parallels the perceived potential of the site for modern economic exploitation (see chapter seven).

Folklore and fishing

The second theme, *Folklore and fishing*, focuses upon Quseir al-Qadim as a point of departure for fishing trips and the mysterious events that occur before, during and after these expeditions. Within this category, we find tales such as:

- We heard a story that between fifteen and twenty years ago people would go out fishing for three months from there. When one of these trips returned back to Quseir al-Qadim they gave someone an anchor to put about three or four metres into the sand. The man took the anchor, put it into the sand and after that they don't find him.

  DG: They don't find...?

  I: The man. They looked up and down for him, but there is nothing, not even now (Int. 11).

- These kinds of places have a special spirit, a special atmosphere you know? When you think about the desert and the sea, especially in this area [Quseir al-Qadim], you

have this feeling that there must be something. You are not sure 100%, but you have this feeling. It is like that. The Bedouins believe it, and many people when they have some kind of disease they think that it's because of the effects of the Jinn.

You feel there is something, but you are not sure what it is. You don't want to believe it, you know? You think to yourself 'What am I thinking? This is a silly idea', but you feel it. It is the same feeling when you go on a fishing trip in the sea in this area. I have had experiences like this before - it is the same feeling. You feel that there couldn't be all this wide sea that is empty. You feel that there is something there, but you're not sure (Int. 3.20).

- We heard that a group of fishermen were there – it was very nice and very quiet. There was lots of fish there and they had a lot of stuff so that they could stay for a long time. They were just sitting and waiting for the time when they could go into the sea – waiting for the big shoals to appear. Suddenly a big storm started and lights appeared from everywhere - light...lights, lights, lights [gesticulating]. And then a big light appeared right in front of them – they just hurried off and left everything there.

  This was about four or five in the morning, and they didn't return back until about nine or ten. They found nothing. All of their clothes, fish, material for fishing...It had all gone (Int. 11).

- I: I heard this story from one guy; it was a long time ago. There was a fisherman on a small boat, a very small boat, he was just catching fish and so on, and then a huge whale came along and swallowed him and the boat. A very big whale.

  So the man took the knife that he kept with him for fishing - he was inside the whale and he wanted to get out - so he cut the whale open with a knife and got out. He was married and had a lot of children and all of their children had something different about them - something here, on their faces [points to cheek]. When the man asked why he had the mark on his face, he was told that it was his grandfather and grandmother in the story about the whale.

  DG: Where did that happen?

  I: In the sea near the site, near Quseir al Qadim (Int. 16).

It is perhaps significant that a great deal of the folklore associated with Quseir al-Qadim focuses upon the sea, a theme that runs throughout *The book of the thousand nights and a night.* It is of course natural that much of the folklore will concern fishing: as we saw in chapter three, the site was central to the fishing industry prior to the construction of the Mövenpick. Yet even those tales that take place at sea have Quseir al-Qadim as their point of departure for their voyage, the constant repetition of the folklore reiterating the prominent role of

Quseir al-Qadim in the economic history of the modern city for both storyteller and audience.

Curses and supernatural beings

Closely connected to *Folklore and fishing* is the ever popular folkloric theme of *Curses and supernatural beings* – indeed, the two are often interchangeable. In the archaeological folklore of Quseir al-Qadim these tales are by far the most commonly recited, and often contain a consistency not found in other tales:

- People had an intuition about the place. They did not feel right to sit there...They feel something very strong, something that makes you scared of the place (Int. 32).

- There are a lot of stories about people dying there and appearing again – things like this (Int. 3.28).

- People used to go to the beach there, but not the site because they were afraid of it. They thought that there were ghosts there and that if you went near it then it would be harmful for you (Int. 21).

- I: I remember during the building of the Mövenpick there were a lot of accidents there. Some people died – the first one was Mr ******, then one of the workers, or two workers, something like this. It was like a curse, a Pharaonic curse.

  DG: So there were more accidents when the Mövenpick was being built than would be expected on a normal building site?

  I: Yes. There are a lot of stories inside the Mövenpick.

  DG: Why did people associate it with a Pharaohs curse?

  I: Because of the risk, we knew that (Int. 3.27).

- I: [During the building of the Mövenpick] they found a hole and saw something underground. They called people to come and look at it, and soon everyone began to dig in this one place. One man found a room, a stone room, and they started to dig it out. They found these things...what do you call them? Pottery? They're like a watermelon.

  DG: Amphora?

I: Yes, amphora, like a watermelon. The man who went down didn't know what they were, so he took one from the ground and put it down clumsily, breaking it. Something like smoke came out from it, black smoke, very black. After that he took the second one out and then the third, breaking all three.

DG: When they get broken the smoke comes out?

I: Yes, smoke came out of all three. Soon after this the man was travelling somewhere, I don't know where but he was in his car. He had an accident and died – directly after breaking the pottery (Int. 15).

This last tale, *The Shaitan and the amphora*, appears to be a contemporary re-telling of the tale of the Fisherman and the Jinee in *The book of the thousand nights and a night*, this time with a tragic ending.[13] In Egyptian folklore, black smoke is most commonly a manifestation of a Shaitan, an invariably evil sub species of Jinn with an unfortunate propensity to become trapped in sealed vessels. That this is the case may be confirmed by the presence of a cockerel at Quseir al-Qadim, an animal renowned for its ability to repel the Shaitan (see Mack & Mack 1998:151). A cockerel does indeed feature in much of the folklore connected to the site (e.g. Int. 15; 17; 31; 35; 39; 41):

- Some years ago I was fishing during the season by the Mövenpick site and I heard a strange story about a cockerel that came in the morning and made noises, yet there was nothing. This scared people, they thought it was not a good place - it is strange, if you go there you have to be very careful. You must not go on your own or even with many people, because it is very strange to be there.

  The cockerel was guarding gold and silver or whatever. It was responsible for guarding these things, so that nobody can come and take it or touch it (Int. 17).

- I was a guard at the Mövenpick when it was being built, so I had to stay in the area. A cockerel would come out of the buildings - every evening it would come and use a strange voice. If something is found like that at a place where the Pharaohs used to live then it is dangerous to go there – you have to write something or read some words from a book before you can enter. After that, you must throw some sand at the cockerel and it will fly away (Int. 15).

Perhaps the most interesting tales in this theme, however, focus upon how such curses can be overcome:

- There is something strange there.

DG: Do you know why it is strange?

I: No, we don't know. When the Pharaohs were in this area they made something, like a song or I don't know, in some kind of language. It made it so that nobody go inside. There are special people...very special people from Morocco. They can just talk and say something and everything becomes good...They can fix the site, make it not strange.

DG: Were the people from Morocco at Quseir al-Qadim at the same time as the Pharaohs?

I: No. The Pharaohs were a long time ago. The special people came more recently, and not just from Morocco but from everywhere. They know which language the Pharaohs used when they were visiting this area. It is almost like when you have something very expensive, gold or whatever, and you to keep it so that nobody can take it.

DG: So the Pharaohs did that, they protected the site?

I: Yes, exactly (Int. 14).

- There is supposed to be something there. My grandfather told me a lot of stories about a cockerel at Quseir al-Qadim and a lot of other voices there. Some people came from Morocco, especially Morocco, who knew how to deal with these kinds of things. Everywhere the Pharaohs have been there is a lot of things, but they stored it so that no one could enter (Int. 41).

The mention of Moroccans within these tales is significant. It is suggested by Klunzinger that during the height of the pilgrim season in Quseir

> [t]he Moghrebins, that is, the inhabitants...of Marocco [sic]...make something by conjuring, writing curative mottoes and talismans, prophesying, astrology and other mystic arts. In these matters the greatest confidence has long been placed in a Moghrebi (1878:322).

It is plausible to regard these tales as a remembrance of that period, the golden age of Quseir when pilgrims from all over north Africa would flock to the port. This requires no great leap of faith: the tale was recounted to interviewee 41, an elderly gentleman (he speaks of attending school during the reign of King Fuad [1922-1936]) by his grandfather. If interviewee 41 was a young man in the first quarter of this century, then it is not unreasonable to assume that his grandfather witnessed the actions of these sorcerers first hand.

Cautionary tales such as those discussed above, some of which are recounted as happening in the past, others fairly recently, place the site uppermost in people's minds. It is the site itself, not simply the desert, that blame is attached to, often linked in the interviews to the presence of Pharaohs. Once again, this serves to remind the community that they have an ancient past. The link to Pharaonic folklore is also significant – as we have seen in chapter five, there is a very ardent belief that the site will eventually yield Pharaonic remains. It is of course likely that the Pharaonic nature of much of the archaeological folklore is simply a reflection of the desire felt by many for a Pharaonic past for the city. At least to a certain extent, however, it may be explicable by recognising the dominance of Pharaonic (and Pharaonic inspired) folklore throughout both the Western world and Egypt itself – from the nineteenth century onwards, the world has been fascinated by the Pharaonic curse, the ultimate revenge on those who dare to disturb the slumber of a king. The Pharaohs are perceived as enigmatic, esoteric and hermetic, their monuments testimony to their deep knowledge and understanding of the cosmos. The Romans, in contrast, are a mundane, uninspiring lot – military men and engineers, punctilious bureaucrats who would just as soon build a viaduct as invoke ancient or mysterious powers. A subtle interplay between archaeology, folklore and perceptions of the past is thus constructed: if Quseir al-Qadim is still, or has been in the past, under the protection of a curse, then the site itself must be Pharaonic; if the site is Pharaonic, then the folklore must, out of necessity, be Pharaonic too. Just as archaeology in Egypt *is* the Pharaonic past, archaeological folklore is the folklore of the Pharaohs.

Both the theme *Folklore and fishing* and *Curses and supernatural beings* contain an assorted cast of Afrites, Jinn and spirits. Like the Shaitan (though somewhat less powerful), the Afrite is an evil Jinn, their existence attested to by the Koran: "an Afrite from amongst the Jinn answered" (chapter xxvii, verse 39).[14] Afrites are known to populate the temples, tombs and ruins of Upper Egypt (Lane 1836:289), thus emphasising the antiquity of the region: it is no coincidence that the area of desert that the site stands in is referred to by some in Quseir as the 'City of ghosts' (Int. 8; Int. 21; Int. 3.14), whilst nearby Wadi Nakheil (which also contains archaeological remains) is known as the 'Valley of the Jinn' (e.g. 3.19; figure 6.2):[15]

- Even now there are some places here that are famous for this [the presence of Jinn. I will tell you, but you'll think I'm crazy. You know Wadi Nakheil? This area is the Valley of the Jinn. One of the Bedouins, a Bisharia, has lived in the desert near here for almost 25 years and he swears he will never leave. You know why? Because he saw a golden city inside this valley. It was a celebration.

  DG: A Jinni celebration?

  I: Yes. He went inside it and everything was golden. Even now he tries to go back to this city. We believe in the Jinn – if you believe there is a devil, then you have to know there are Jinn too (Int.3.19).

- We think about the Afrites (Int. 36).

- I: I saw an Afrite in the place where the Mövenpick was built; there are many, many Afrites there. Thirty eight years ago I went to this place fishing and saw two men with a gold plate. Our boat was setting out from there, but one of our party forgot something and we had to turn back. When we returned there was nothing there, no men, no plate. Strange things happen there. People used to live at Quseir al Qadim - we used to find old buildings there. I saw an Afrite there in the water – it was a strange thing. I think that the people who lived at Quseir al Qadim buried dead people in the area.

  DG: Were you afraid?

  I: No, because I was with three other men. None of us were afraid because we usually saw this Afrite when we were fishing in the sea.

  DG: What was it usually doing?

  I: It would just stand and watch us, trying to make us afraid. It never touched any person though (Int. 3.5).

- There was a fisherman who was trying to fish at night and an Afrite tried to shout at them and throw things at him – stones – until dawn. There was some kind of quarrel between them (Int. 3.18).

- I: I have heard before that there is some kind of Jinn who appears in this area and tries to frighten the people there. Once a friend of mine said that he was in the Quseir al-Qadim area and suddenly a man appeared and congratulated him, then suddenly disappeared without speaking, just shaking his hand. He didn't know where he had come from, or where he was going. He was so afraid of him that his hair stood on end. But I myself didn't see him.

  DG: Is Quseir al-Qadim famous for that sort of story? More so than Quseir itself?

  I: Yes (Int. 3.27).

The presence of these supernatural beings at Quseir al-Qadim serves to fix the site in the mind of the listener. As Mack and Mack suggest "demons, like blazing stop signs, demanded attention and defined limits" (1998:xiii). This process is visible throughout the interviews themselves – during Interview 8, for example, when an elderly man was reciting tales of Afrites at Quseir al-Qadim, a young relation confessed "now I am scared of this place!", whilst during interview 3.27 a young man seated at a nearby table in a coffee shop exclaimed "I think I would be afraid to sleep there". It would be foolhardy to dismiss the power of tales of the supernatural, the mysterious and the unknown, even when we do not believe the tales ourselves. A house, an office or a hotel becomes instantly more significant in our imaginations when it is said to be populated by unseen hosts.

The sunken ship

Though several of the tales described above may relate to historical occurrences, it is the fourth theme, *The sunken ship*, that is perhaps the most problematic to classify purely as folklore. The tale itself recounts the whereabouts of a ship, often attributed to the Romans, buried deep within the harbour:

- There was a ship lost in front of the Mövenpick, but we knew about this a long time ago (Int. 32).
- I heard about the ship that was lost (Int. 35).
- We know about the boat that has been lost in front of the Mövenpick a long time ago (Int. 34).

The often precarious distinction between folklore and history is significant here. As we have seen in chapter four, many interviewees also recount the loss of what appears to be a more recent ship in the bay opposite Quseir al-Qadim. For the purposes of this project, I have therefore chosen to designate references to an earlier ship as folkloric, though with an element of caution. It is certainly true that interviewees do appear to be describing different ships, though I accept that my willingness to categorise this tale as folklore, when it is not referred to as such within the city itself (see above), may colour the analysis.

References to an earlier ship do nevertheless appear to have some basis in archaeological fact. Indeed, the location of the ship described often matches the wreck in the Mövenpick bay identified by Haldane (see chapter four). Unfortunately, given the limited time period available to my study it has not been possible to ascertain when this particular folktale became prevalent in Quseir. If it could be proved that the tale was first transmitted only after the underwater survey conducted in the early 1990s, it might provide us with an indication of how archaeology is incorporated into local perceptions of the past. Ultimately, however, this does not matter: the very fact that it is pervasive throughout the city makes it important for our analysis.

The sunken ship reiterates a theme apparent throughout much of the city's folklore, emphasising the historic nature of the region and its previous importance as a centre for trade. An ancient, industrial identity is thus created for Quseir in comparison to both Hurghada and Safaga: 'The trade may have moved up the coast, but we had it first.'

The site and the citadel

The final theme, *The site and the citadel*, is one well documented in the world's archaeological folklore. In this theme, Quseir is linked to the site by a tunnel stretching between the citadel, the most prominent and – crucially - the oldest landmark in modern Quseir, and the ancient harbour:

- I: Here in the citadel we found a lot of rooms. We don't know anything about the rooms, but the citadel is connected to Quseir al-Qadim underground...We found a tunnel leading from the rooms which we began to walk along, but we didn't finish. We stopped, because people said it was too dangerous to go on. Maybe they were just trying to make us scared, but I think we made it to about halfway between the citadel and the Mövenpick...

  ...There is a place just by the sea, it is 100% that there are a lot of excavations there. 100%. It is just down from the site, in front of the beach. Under the road, connected with the citadel. 100%...

  ...We are quite sure also that there was a big hole inside the Mövenpick when they started building it. They found a big hole, a very big one - it's a very, very big one, like a well. We are sure about the connection between there and here [the Mövenpick

and the citadel]....When the rain comes, a very strong rain, it takes the road - washes the road away and leaves the hole. We saw the hole, a very big hole. It is connected with the citadel. About two days later they came and fixed it. It was only this area, nowhere else, just this road that makes the problem when the rain came (Int. 11).

- When the yearly rain comes, the road by the Mövenpick is washed away. There was a big hole there and some people thought it was connected to the citadel, and some people said other things.

  DG: What other things?

  I: Maybe it was connected to Safaga (Int. 20).

- They were playing football in the citadel, and a hole appeared. It connected the citadel and Quseir al-Qadim. (Int. 31).

The tale also has variations:

- DG: You were saying that someone had told you that there were tunnels underneath the houses?

  I: Yes, one of my workers has one underneath his house. There are three houses in the city that have these – I try to know which houses exactly and the direction of the tunnels.

  DG: And these tunnels are believed to go to Quseir al-Qadim?

  I: Yes, because the direction of these tunnels leads to there. They go north, maybe not quite north – straight in the direction of Quseir al-Qadim.

  DG: Has anyone ever followed them?

  I: No, because they were afraid. There were doors inside it, iron closed doors, so they were scared of snakes and scorpions and things (Int. 3.31).

The site and the citadel is perhaps the most important theme for my analysis: it is one of the most frequently recounted, and the only folktale that demonstrates an *explicit* connection between the old and the modern city.[16] It is tempting to see this tunnel as a metaphorical umbilical cord – the perception that the ancient port gave birth to the new. Certainly many of the interviewees suggested that their ancestors (in the literal sense) would have lived at Quseir al-Qadim before moving to the city's present site. Whether this is a direct result of folklore, or a more general awareness of the site is difficult to ascertain at this juncture.[17]

There does however appear to be a palpable decline in the recitation of folklore amongst younger members of the community, particularly evident in several interviews conducted in the second field season. This may in part be due to the people interviewed in field season two: several were teachers at the LDC, university educated, Egypt's answer to the 'MTV generation', and those who have had the closest prolonged contact with members of the Community Archaeology Project. The majority of remarks made about folklore during these interviews were somewhat disparaging – also apparent in the one interview conducted with a member of the LDC in season one: "*they* speak of ghosts and magicians" (Int. 21; spoken emphasis in original). I argue, however, that this does not negate the hypothesis that archaeological folklore constructs knowledge, nor indeed that it is ubiquitous. An individual does not have to 'believe' in a tale for it to construct meaning, they simply have to acknowledge its existence.

The development of tourism, particularly at Quseir al-Qadim, also seems to have had an impact upon alternative perceptions of the past in the city. It was suggested by interviewee 3.23, for example, that "there were lots of stories [about Quseir al-Qadim]. Before the hotels there were lots of these stories...but after the hotels I heard nothing", whilst interviewee 3.15 emphasised his concerns over the potentially devastating impact of satellite television on storytelling traditions within the city. Whilst an analysis of the impact of both tourism and electronic media on folklore has not been included here, this would form an interesting adjunct to this study in the future.[18]

I suggested previously that folklore functions as an alternative representation of the past – a representation that has the potential to construct identities for different communities. Despite the apparent decline in the transmission of folklore outlined above, it would appear that the archaeological folklore of Quseir al-Qadim contributes to the shared sense of antiquity highlighted in chapter five. Acting as a focal point for storytelling, the folklore of Quseir al-Qadim demonstrates that identity in Quseir is, at least to a certain extent, based upon the notion of continuity with the past. It matters little if that continuity is real or perceived. It is not enough, however, to leave it there: we need to understand *how* archaeological folklore constructs identity within Quseir. Throughout the remainder of this

chapter, I therefore analyse this process in more detail. Though the vast majority of the folktales recounted within the city are transmitted verbally – all of the folklore discussed above can be regarded as 'oral traditions' – I nevertheless argue that at least part of their power to construct identity resides in the repetition of key scenes, symbols and motifs; components of the tales that are inherently visual.

Folklore and visual analysis

A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical investigations* (1958:48)

Folklore has inspired many poets, authors, songwriters and visual artists; many great works of art have been inspired by folktale, myth and legend. The visual elements of the tales themselves have, however, never been examined. Yet folklore, as with any narrative, relies upon the construction of imagery to make the tale understandable and recognisable within its own context – imagery that is constructed, construed and interpreted mentally. Throughout this section, I therefore examine the construction of mental imagery, suggesting that these images may be analysed using techniques similar to those used in the examination of more 'conventional' representations of the past.

In doing so, I adopt a methodology drawn from the work of scholars of visual representation. This is, I admit, a fundamentally Western approach: using theories derived from (mostly) Western scholars and images produced by a Western artist to understand the folklore of a 'non Western' community. My intention here, however, is merely to explore the potentials of such an approach. I do not suggest that visual imagery is the only means through which folklore constructs knowledge, nor indeed that my interpretations of the visual elements will necessarily be the same as those constructed by a resident of Quseir. I simply suggest that a visual approach to the archaeological folklore of Quseir can provide us with fresh insights into the role of the past in the present.

The construction of mental imagery

One of the defining characteristics of narrative is its ability to construct vivid imagery; a good novelist, for example, provides us with the information through which we mentally construct a scene. This process has long been recognised within cognitive psychology, with researchers highlighting the intricate relationship between language and verbal and mental cognitive functions: in essence, we visualise what we hear. So, for example, if we hear the phrase 'a red haired boy is peeling an orange', we visualise a red headed male child peeling an orange (Paivio 1971*a*:7). Words are transformed into symbols and images, images that act as a mental shortcut; to construct a mental representation that uses words only would require a potentially infinite number of sentences or inferences. In contrast, a pictorial representation requires a single image – a complex image, but a single one nonetheless (Rollins 1989:20).

This does not mean, however, that we all understand and interpret words in the same manner – the mental imagery that we construct depends upon a response that makes sense only within a context with which we are familiar (Haugeland 1985; Messaris 1994). For one to make sense of what occurs between King Arthur and the Lady of the Lake, for example, in a context in which it is not practical to be told "the passing of the sword Excalibur to King Arthur from the Lady of the Lake signifies Arthur's rightful sovereignty and emphasises his courage and nobility" requires an awareness of and involvement within a particular context. To understand the meaning of the sentence 'it is snowing in the mountains', we simply visualise snow falling on a mountain range, based upon our interpretation of the sentence and whether or not we have seen snow falling or mountains before.

This too is a fundamental tenet of representational theories: a constructionist approach argues that representations never passively reflect the intentions of the producer or, in folkloric terms, the storyteller. We participate in the construction of knowledge by interpreting and decoding the visual symbols found within a representation (see Hall 1997; Moser 1998; 2001). In both mental and non-mental imagery we literally take an active part in the construction of meaning by being asked to *imagine* the events.

The power of mental imagery to construct interpretations and knowledge is evident in the plethora of self help books that, since the 1970s, have urged readers to overcome phobias and addictions through visualisation (e.g. Lazarus 1977). Indeed, visualisation is a common technique used by therapists, 'curing' patients of alcoholism, for example, by associating alcoholic beverages with a glass of vomit. Though this process of association will not be purely visual, it nevertheless demonstrates the importance of mental imagery in determining how we respond to the world around us.

The manner in which we construct mental imagery is nevertheless a subject of some contention amongst cognitive psychologists.[19] It is generally recognised, however, that mental imagery is intimately associated with both perceptual recognition and memory:

> Visual [mental] imagery is regarded primarily as a parallel processing system, specialised for the storage and symbolic manipulation of information...capable of flexible and swift symbolic transformations (Paivio 1971*b*:9).

As Rollins (1989:83) suggests, mental imagery, rather than verbal description, is central to both perception and categorisation – words can be interpreted by pictures, as much as pictures can be interpreted by words.

It is possible therefore to question the intellectual distinction between a photograph, a painting and a mental image. A photographic image is constructed and framed mentally, then transferred to paper through a mechanical process; a painting is conceived mentally and reproduced onto canvas from an image formed in the mind. Both are translations and interpretations of the mental image; only the physical act of transferral distinguishes them. It is true that a painting or photograph, once produced (and endlessly reproduced) becomes static and unchanging in a way that a mental image does not, yet our reactions to paintings and photographs are always subjective – Freedberg demonstrates the power of emotional responses to images throughout history (1989). If we accept this, then it becomes clear that we can begin to use practices developed within the field of visual representation to analyse folkloric constructions of meaning.

The language of a folktale, just as with any narrative, is transformed into a mental image, pictures and symbols representing the main features of the tale. Interestingly, long

descriptive narratives and hyperbole are utilised only rarely in folklore (Propp 1984:22). In folklore it is the events within the tale that are important, not 'the teeming beauty of the desert' or 'the brooding clouds overhead', events mentally visualised as stark, striking images replete with iconic figures and motifs – demons, heroic rescues and magical talismans, for example. As we have seen above, folklorists have long emphasised the primacy of such motifs within the folktale, "those details out of which full fledged narratives are composed" (Thomson 1975:10), facilitating the construction of folkloric typologies and cultural comparisons. Somewhat ironically, I suggest that we can use those same motifs to analyse the construction of meaning within a folktale in very specific, localised contexts. Just as the same story can be retold differently whilst retaining the same basic vocabulary, a visual narrative can be constructed in a number of different ways whilst retaining common themes and motifs (Rollins 1989:20).

Toward a visual analysis of archaeological folklore

I have argued above that the folklore of Quseir al-Qadim can be examined using practices developed within the field of archaeological representation. Throughout this section, I demonstrate the potentials of such an approach by applying it to two different folktales from Quseir. To assist in this process, I have commissioned two images from the archaeological illustrator, Julian Whitewright, illustrations based solely upon the artist's interpretations of each folktale (figures 6.3; 6.4). Though there are naturally differences between an illustration and a mental image, not least the staid nature of the reproduction, this approach is of use to anyone undertaking a similar analysis.[20]

Figure 6.3, a visual representation of *The Shaitan and the amphora*, (see p.148-9), reproduces the breaking of the first amphora; black smoke pours from a broken amphora, a Shaitan gradually manifests from within. The remaining two amphora stand half buried in the corner of the room, whilst from within the smoke emerge two flaming eyes, the classic sign of a Jinn. Figure 6.4 represents a scene from the tale of *The site and the citadel.* In this image, the area surrounding Quseir al-Qadim has been torn open, the foreground dominated by a series of steps that draw the viewer toward a forbidding stone lined tunnel.

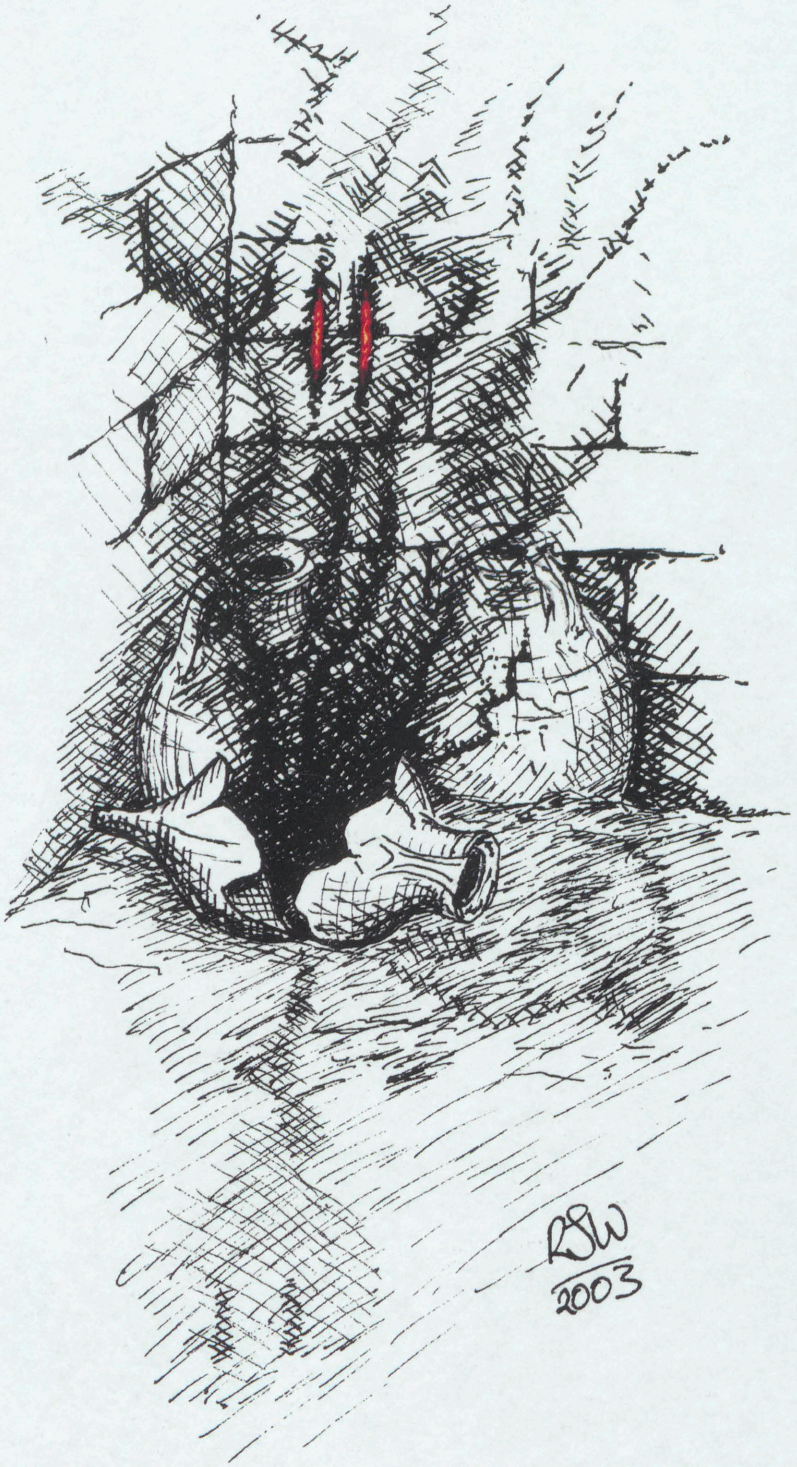

Figure 6.3 *The Shaitan and the amphora.* Illustration by R.J. Whitewright.

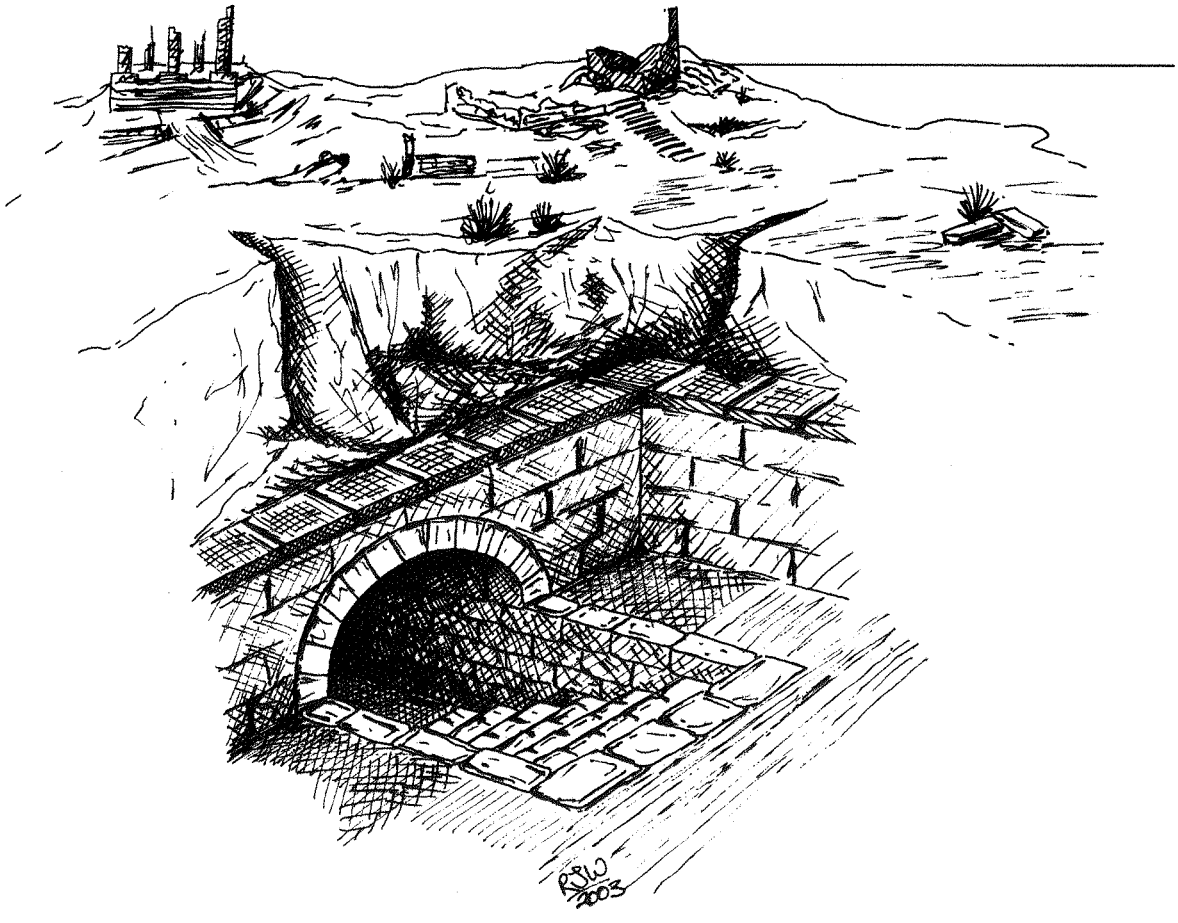

Figure 6.4 *The site and the citadel.* Illustration by R.J. Whitewright.

If we analyse these scenes as archaeological representations then several themes begin to emerge. In figure 6.3, for example, we recognise the presence of the Jinn, represented within both the original tale and the illustration by swathes of black smoke. Smoke is understood within Islamic folklore to be indicative of the presence of Jinn; that it emanates from a broken vessel confirms to us that it is a Shaitan. Crucially, this is left unsaid in the recital of the tale (see above). It is suggested by Moser (2001:270-1) that icons serve to communicate messages instantly and effectively, their repetition within different representational contexts reinforcing and legitimating their meaning. Both the smoke and the broken amphora may be understood as iconic, communicating the presence of a Shaitan non-verbally through a process of denotation and connotation: the smoke from the amphora (denotation) denoting the Shaitan (connotation).[21] Yet the Shaitan itself is also an icon, an icon that symbolises

malevolence and pernicious evil. The juxtaposition of these icons with amphora, rather than a more modern sealed vessel, constructs a perception of the past as mysterious, shocking and dangerous through the repetition of icons of Arabic and Islamic folklore. In Saussurean terms, the Shaitan acts as a signifier, a mysterious past the signified.

It is important to recognise, however, that this relationship is not fixed or immutable. The sign is arbitrary, and can be constructed and interpreted in a number of different ways.[22] The same is true of the reproductions of the folktales included here – though they are based upon the transcripts of the interviews themselves, they are undoubtedly influenced by both Whitewright's interpretation of the tales and the original transcripts.[23] This is not necessarily problematic, as both the transcripts and the illustrations retain the key icons, motifs and symbols present in the recital of the original tale. In essence, it matters little if the visualisation of the tunnel in figure 6.4 differs from individual to individual, in Quseir or elsewhere; some may visualise and interpret the tunnel as foreboding, others as inviting. The mental imagery constructed by a folktale will change as the tale changes, as it absorbs new elements and discards old. Images will be altered as different vocabulary is used, vocabulary that may change the nature, the style, the ambience of the tale. What is important, however, is that the icons themselves are retained within each retelling and thus each visualisation – the site, the citadel and the tunnel.

The recycling of icons is common practice in archaeological representations (see Moser 2001:273), just as it is in folklore. As we have seen above, much of the folklore that relates to Quseir al-Qadim focuses upon the sea, fishing or fishes, a theme constant throughout *The book of the thousand nights and a night.* Similarly, interviewees speak of Jinn taking human form at Quseir al-Qadim then vanishing swiftly, a trait attested to by Pliny in his *Natural History* (Volume II): "one often meets men in the African deserts who belong to a quite peculiar human species and who suddenly disappear from sight". Both the plume of smoke in figure 6.3 and the Shaitan that it represents may be seen as examples of this process, motifs reused again and again in different contexts, their repetition enhancing their iconic status and thus their ability to construct meaning.

A similar analysis of *The site and the citadel* (figure 6.4) also appears profitable. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes argues that the 'existence' of an image, its power to create an emotional response in the audience, derives from the co-presence of two different elements, the studium and the punctum (Barthes 1993*b*). The studium reflects the intentions of the image maker; it is the essence of the image for the artist (for example) and can consist of anything from action, landscapes and portraits. The studium will nevertheless always produce what Barthes describes as 'an average effect' (Barthes 1993*b*:26), the passive acceptance of the image makers vision, thus requiring little interaction with the image itself. The punctum, in contrast, is the element of the image that grabs the viewer's attention, forcing the individual to focus upon it, 'the small detail that attracts' (Barthes 1993*b*:42). Always subjective, the punctum takes you beyond the image itself and leads you into deeper contemplation.

For me, the punctum of *The site and the citadel* is not the tunnel entrance or even the stairs that lead us towards it, as dramatic as they are, but the archaeological site itself. It is the juxtaposition of the gaping crevasse with the extant ruins at the edges of the image that demands my attention. The power of the punctum is often metonymic (Barthes 1993*b*:45); the presence of these ruins – confirmed by oral history, folklore and now archaeological excavation – evokes a sense of ancientness, emphasising the importance of the past. Quseir al-Qadim has a living presence within its own folklore: there is no direct interaction with the site, but it functions as the stage on which the action is set or, perhaps more pertinently, the canvas onto which it is depicted.

This notion of place is essential to my analysis. Archaeological sites attract folklore (see Bord and Bord 1978; Champion and Cooney 1999; also chapter three), folktales acquiring at least part of their power from their relation to physical locales, real places that can be visited and experienced. The folklore of Quseir al-Qadim, indeed of any archaeological site, is exclusive to the site itself: "folklore focuses on empirical space...anything that occurs outside this space does not become the object of narration...two theatres of action do not exist in different places simultaneously" (Propp 1984:22). Though much has been made of the use of phenomenology in archaeology, it does demonstrate the importance of both the natural and cultural landscape in the formation of local memory (Symonds 1999:123). As Tilley suggests:

> Places, like persons, have biographies inasmuch as they are formed, used and transformed in relation to practice. It can be argued that stories acquire part of their mythic value and historical relevance if they are rooted in concrete details of locales in the landscape, acquiring material reference points that can be visited, seen and touched (1994:33; see also Bradley 2000).

The representation of Quseir al-Qadim through folkloric scenes acts as a continual reminder of its presence, the juxtaposition of modern and ancient Quseir continually reinforcing the historic nature of the region. The narratives occur *there*; there is nothing outside of it.

Both *The site and the citadel* and *The Shaitan and the amphora* contain dramatic elements, the key scenes of each tale are visually spectacular. In figure 6.4, for example, we are confronted by ravines and crevasses which emphasise the violence of the moment, the tearing open of the landscape to reveal a dark, foreboding entrance. In figure 6.3, we see the outline of a Shaitan manifest slowly in the smoke, its sinister, flaming eyes already visible. Moser (2001:295) suggests that the presence of dramatic imagery in archaeological representations often serves to mask symbols that provide images with their archaeological context, and a similar process may be at work here (Moser 2001:295) – we are so focused upon the action and the events that we fail to recognise those elements of the folktale that make it archaeological. In the background of figure 6.3, for example, stand two unbroken amphora (their presence attested to by the original tale), subtly confirming the status of the area as an ancient site.

The site and the citadel, however, also contributes to the construction of identity in Quseir in a more explicit manner, facilitating the visualisation of a physical connection between the old and the modern ports. The tunnel in figure 6.4 represents a tangible link between Quseir and Quseir al-Qadim, it pulls us towards Quseir, drawing us into the stone lined tunnel with the promise of adventure, movement and continuity. We do not have to be consciously aware that we are equating the two cities – we can *visualise* their interconnectedness. As I suggested above, the tunnel functions as a metaphorical umbilical cord, its mental representation reminding us symbolically of the perceived connection between the ancient and the modern city.

It is important to recognise, in addition, that the social and cultural context of the listener will have a significant impact upon the manner in which an individual interprets folktales. The same is true of visual imagery: the way we construct mental imagery is dependent upon our own social and cultural milieu (Haugeland 1985). The Jinn of Egypt are representative of religion, the supernatural, of mischief, and often of dread. To be understood as such requires that the audience is situated within a specific discourse – Islamic and Middle Eastern folklore – which renders particular symbols, icons and motifs meaningful. Outside of this discourse, the Jinn have been transformed into the Ginn, a Disney commodity whose sole purpose is to entertain children for financial reward. Quseir al-Qadim and its Ginn retain their mystique, but their nature is transformed – 'A whole new world' is created, where Robin Williams becomes Jack Nicholson, sinister Vizier's get their comeuppance and the good guy gets the girl.[24] Representations work only when they function within a context in which their meaning is recognised by all (Hall 1997).

What is significant here, however, is not that the meaning of the sign is culturally contingent, or even that the individual folktales will change with every retelling; new details will emerge, new features added and old ones discarded. Though the details may change, the actual power of the folktale to construct a sense of community identity does not – underlying all remains the site itself. As long as Quseir al-Qadim remains the locus, the tableau upon which dramatic scenes occur, as long as it is recognised as an archaeological site within the folktale, then it will continue to construct an identity based upon an appeal to a common past.

It is nevertheless important to recognise that, just as I do not argue for the primacy of folklore in the construction of identity, I do not suggest that the visual is central to the construction of meaning – psychologists and physiologists would no doubt argue that the aural is equally important, as are touch, taste and smell. I simply suggest that it is time for us to move beyond the refrain "collective identities are often connected with the folklore of archaeological sites" (Gazin-Schwartz & Holtorf 1999*b*:17) and begin to analyse *how*. Though I have examined only two examples from the plethora of folklore collected in Quseir, this approach would appear to be equally applicable to many of the other folktales of Quseir al-Qadim – the tales of the cockerel, for example, again signifying Shaitan, or *The*

Greek, or vanishing Afrites. A visual approach affords us the opportunity to go deeper, to explore the way that meaning and identities are constructed and maintained through the folklore of archaeological sites.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated that the relationship between the ancient and the modern ports is frequently articulated through archaeological folklore. I argued that the folklore of Quseir al-Qadim plays an important role in the construction of identity within Quseir, before demonstrating the benefits of examining this process through a visual analysis of the tales themselves.

As archaeologists, we must recognise that people have always developed different ways of understanding and integrating the past into their lives. It would indeed be foolhardy to fix one meaning onto any single monument, site or artefact (Shankland 1999); the plethora of archaeological folklore at Quseir al-Qadim clearly demonstrates this. The folklore has not stood in the way of the excavation, nor in the acceptance of its findings – there is room for both, and neither devalues the other. We must be aware, however, that in many instances local communities are already in possession of a perfectly valid version of the past in their own terms (Layton 1989:14), often based upon folklore. We can respect all histories (Champion & Cooney 1999:210), whether they are archaeological, oral, mythic or folkloric, without altering our understanding of the archaeology itself. They are simply different ways of understanding the same evidence.

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[1] Int. 3.19

[2] It is important to emphasise that I do not suggest that the folklore of Quseir al-Qadim functions solely to construct identity within Quseir. I simply argue that this is an inevitable by product of the repetition of the archaeological folklore of Quseir al-Qadim.

[3] It is no coincidence that the National Museum of Archaeology is situated next to the Office of State Security of a nameless Soviet state in Barnes' political satire *The porcupine* (1992).

[4] The Isle of Wight is situated off the south coast of England, close to the mainland cities of Southampton and Portsmouth.

[5] See also Symonds (1999:124) for further discussion of the tendency of some to dismiss folklore as superstition.

[6] Texts contain many different spellings of the word, the most common being Jinn, Djinn or the Europeanised Ginn (all plural). I favour Jinn (singular Jinee), adopted by Burton (1890) in his translation of the *Book of the thousand nights and a night* and by El-Shamy (1980).

[7] Edward Said is highly critical of Lane in *Orientalism* (1978:166-197), arguing that his writings were central to the Western construction of the Orient in the nineteenth century. In contrast, I see Lane as curiously counter-hegemonic: though *Accounts...* was written at the height of Britain's Imperial ambitions and is thus infused with colonialist discourse, there are many contradictions and ambivalences within the text where Lane appears to be struggling to come to terms with his respect for Egypt and Egyptians. It is these contradictions that ensure its counter-hegemonic function. As Porter suggests in his critique of Said's analysis of TE Lawrence, there is a need to adequately historicise texts, lest we always find in them "the same triumphant discourse" (1993:160).

[8] Only two years after the publication of *Accounts...* Lane published his own translation of *The nights...* Though it is a work vociferously (and often humorously) critiqued by Burton in his own translation, it remains one of the standard editions of the text. See Lane (1838); Burton (1890).

[9] I have spoken to many people on the excavation team about their dreams in the desert. All are in agreement that they are far more vivid, more real, than in other places. At least one of my colleagues has woken the rest of the camp screaming during a peculiarly realistic nightmare.

[10] By this time, as the conservation turned to folklore and dreams, I had already asked my friend for permission to tape parts of the conversation.

[11] Both Tylor and Frazer also used cross cultural comparisons in folklore, though with the explicit intention of highlighting 'ancient survivals' in their own countries and thus uncovering the keys to their own past. This approach, pioneered by Tylor, is exemplified in Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890; see Ó Giolláin 2000:51).

[12] Cushing himself believed firmly in the necessity of contextualising his information and pioneered participant observation some years prior to Malinowski (see Gosden 1999:43-5).

[13] The tale of *The fisherman and the Jinee*, recounted on the third and fourth nights of the *Thousand nights and a night* describes a fisherman bringing up a sealed vessel in one of his nets. On opening the vessel, vast swathes of smoke pour forth, eventually taking the form of a Jinee. The Jinee informs the fisherman he will suffer death at his hands, before being tricked back into the jar and cast once more into the sea. For the full tale, see Mardrus & Mathers (1958:19-24).

[14] In the Sale translation, this line reads "a terrible genius answered".

[15] During Bruce's brief visit to the city in 1769, Wadi Nakheil was inhabited by Bedouin known – by Bruce at least – as the 'Slave of the Jinn' ('Mahomet Abdel Gin' [1790:171]).

[16] Michael Jones, director of the restoration of the citadel in Quseir for the American Research Centre, Egypt, informs me that that during the excavation of a cistern in the fort many believed that they would uncover the entrance to the tunnel.

[17] A large corpus of folklore in the city focuses upon the citadel itself. This is not the place to undertake a detailed analysis of this phenomenon, but it serves to highlight further the significance of the building as a unique symbol for Quseir.

[18] Those two great structures of modernity – colonialism and tourism – do appear to have had a profound impact upon folklore in Egypt throughout the previous two centuries. Lane (highlights the potentially devastating effect of colonialism on popular perceptions: the Cairene Jinn would hold an annual ten day market around a sarcophagus in El-Saleebeh (Cairo); any individuals fortunate enough to purchase an item from this market would find all their possessions turned to gold. In the early part of the nineteenth century, however, the sarcophagus was removed to the British Museum, and the Jinn discontinued the market. In contrast, the increase in 'fabricated folklore' in Egypt – mummy's curses etc. – may be linked directly to the heritage tourism industry. For further discussion of heritage tourism see chapter seven.

[19] See for example Paivio (1971*b*); Fodor (1975); Lazarus (1977); Carr & England (1995).

[20] Translation may not be the best medium for the visual analysis of folktales, as it is likely that certain aspects will be lost in the translation process. This paper, however, proves at least that a visual analysis is both possible and profitable.

[21] See Barthes (1967) for a discussion of denotation and connotation.

[22] Quseir al-Qadim, for example, through a different combinations of signifiers and signified, can be variously interpreted as a fishing port, as a site of indulgence and excess in a luxury hotel or as an archaeological excavation. See Barthes (1993*a*) for further discussion of the arbitrary nature of signs.

[23] See chapter two for reflections on the interview process and construction of transcripts.

[24] It is perhaps ironic that, as the West and the Middle East move ever further apart, we have witnessed an increase in the numbers of Western adaptations of Middle Eastern folktales. Disney's hugely successful

Aladdin was followed by a US TV adaptation of several stories from *The book of the thousand nights and a night*; as I write, the advertising campaign for DreamWorks forthcoming film release *Sinbad and the seven seas* has begun, an animation voiced by amongst others Brad Pitt and Michelle Pfeiffer. In what can only be described as a shockingly offensive, orientalist twist, the studio has nevertheless relocated Sinbad, a thirteenth century Arab hero, to classical Sicily, removing from the film *every* reference to the Arab world. We can only presume that this was a reaction to the potential box office impact of a film located within Iraq (the ship having sailed from the port of Basra in the original tale) at this particular juncture in world history. We can only wonder what the reaction to the film will be when it is released in the Arab and Muslim world. The opportunity to present a film that portrays Iraq in a positive light, challenging stereotypes and assumptions, has been tragically missed. Curiously, the screenwriter responsible for relocating Sinbad, John Logan, was also responsible for *Gladiator*, a film that inexplicably features a band of Arabs rushing into Rome and kidnapping our hero.

CHAPTER SEVEN

'History gives value; archaeology gives substance'.[1]

Heritage tourism, archaeology and the residents of Quseir.

The nominal suzerain of Egypt is the sultan; its real suzerain is Lord Cromer. Its nominal Governor is the Khedive; its real governor, for a final touch of comic opera, is Thomas Cook & Son

G.W. Steevens, *Egypt in 1898* (1898:208)[2]

In the previous chapter, I examined the role of the archaeological folklore of Quseir al-Qadim in constructions of identity based upon appeals to a shared past. In this chapter, I endeavour to re-orient the focus towards the future, analysing the emergent heritage industry in the city and the perceived role of the past in the development of heritage based tourism.

It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that the modern Egyptian state is built upon the twin foundations of archaeology and tourism. Though people have been travelling to Egypt to witness the wonders of the ancient world since the Hellenistic period (see El Daly 2000), it was not until the early nineteenth century, with the development of archaeology and Egyptology, that tourism in what could loosely be described as the modern sense began to have a recognisable impact upon Egypt (Reid 2002:77). In archaeology, the travel industry found its true companion: the eminent Egyptologist John Gardner Wilkinson, in an age of wealthy scientific amateurs, urged nineteenth century travellers to take with them to Egypt the requisite equipment for both the recording of archaeological remains and small scale excavation; recommending visitors pack his own *Ancient Egyptians* (1837) as well as classical literature into their ever burgeoning trunks (Reid 2002:82). Archaeologists wrote guidebooks for tourists – Wilkinson himself published *The Topography of Thebes, and General View of Egypt* in 1835 – whilst many tourists gained inspiration for their visit from exhibitions of ancient Egyptian artefacts in their host country (see Reid 2002, chapter 2).

The centrality of archaeology to tourism and the Egyptian economy in the present is demonstrated by the events in the village of Gurna, Luxor, in the early 1990s. Originally

mooted in the 1950s, a coalition that included the Egyptian government, international tourist agencies and international development experts urged the removal of residents from the village to a new location as a means of improving tourist access to the tombs of the west bank (see Mitchell 2001). Though it was justified by the claim that the villagers were damaging the tombs, in reality the desire to relocate the inhabitants of Gurna was based solely on the perceived benefits to the tourist infrastructure, the desire to create a more 'comfortable' atmosphere for tourists: "heritage is now to be shaped by the forces and demands of a worldwide tourist industry" (Mitchell 2001:228).

Yet in spite of their long, often dubious relationship, the discussion of tourism does not come easily to an archaeologist, firmly rooted in the traditions of a discipline that, despite making great strides into the analysis of archaeology and heritage in the construction of nations (e.g. contributions to Kohl & Fawcett 1995*a*; Díaz-Andreu & Champion 1996; Meskell 1998), has tended to shy away from a detailed examination of heritage tourism (though see Boniface & Fowler 1993; Odermatt 1996; Logan and Leone 1997; Meskell 2001). Indeed, at the outset of this research project, I had no intention of addressing issues of heritage tourism, focused as I was on producing a somewhat more 'traditional' socio-political analysis of archaeological investigation in Egypt (whatever that might be). Yet, as we shall see below, in almost every interview conducted the potential role of the past in the future economic development of the city was highlighted as a major concern. It soon became apparent that no study of the interplay between archaeology, archaeologists and local residents could ignore the trend towards heritage based tourism. The discussion here therefore represents the first steps of an archaeologist seeking to understand the wider role of the past in the international tourist industry.

What follows is an analysis of this process in action, comprising a critique of the heritage vision offered by the tourist industry in Quseir and incorporating perceptions of the industry prevalent amongst residents of Quseir, hoteliers and others directly employed by tourism. As such, it constitutes a unique case study of the diverse and often contradictory attitudes towards the development of heritage tourism in a city that is actively redefining itself.

Tourists and the tourist 'industry'

It is hardly revolutionary to suggest that tourism is big business. The actual figures are nevertheless still somewhat astounding: in 1992, it was estimated that 7% of the world's population were employed within the industry, contributing to a gross output of $3.5 trillion (World Travel and Tourism Council 1992). International tourist arrivals are projected to reach some one billion by 2010; at the beginning of this century, the number of individuals that made trips abroad had increased 100 fold from the late 1970s (AlSayyad 2001:1).

The tourist industry itself remains, however, "shrouded with myths and stereotypes...its definition a particularly arid pursuit" (Williams and Shaw 1991*a*:1-2). Though it is commonplace to refer to the tourist *industry*, this is something of a misnomer, acquiring the moniker in the 1970s as an attempt to negate negative perceptions of both tourists and tourism – industry is a positive term, denoting employment and productivity (Davidson 1994:21). In reality, tourism is a social phenomenon, a phenomenon that transgresses a wide variety of industrial sectors, one that deals in experiences, not products, experiences that cannot easily be substituted for another. As Davidson suggests "food is not competitive with lodging. A visitor buys both" (1994:24). Throughout this chapter, I therefore refer to tourism and the tourist industry only to differentiate them from individual tourists (see also Robinson 2001:35). Furthermore, the segmented nature of tourism and related industries makes the analysis of global, national and regional frameworks difficult: every context is unique, and will be affected by different variables (see Schlüter 1994:246). Though I recognise that tourism is not generated in isolation (see Urry 1995:152), my focus remains firmly rooted in Quseir.

The term 'tourists' is equally problematic, implying as it does a single, homogenous whole. Individuals have very different motivations for travel and very different attitudes towards the host communities within which they temporarily reside, thus limiting the generalisations that can be made (Pearce 1994:106). The vast majority of visitors to Quseir are international tourists, large numbers from western Europe[3], a few North Americans and visitors from the far East. At present, domestic tourism has very little (economic) impact in the city.[4]

It is important to emphasise that throughout this chapter, I will endeavour to avoid overt or explicit criticism of tourists themselves. There is an unfortunate tendency in some archaeological texts to dismiss tourists as a group, citing the potentially disastrous impact of their presence on archaeological sites, or their negative impact upon 'traditional' communities. This is exemplified in Boniface and Fowler's discussion of package tourists:

> The sadness of the tortoise approach to travel, the cowering, sheltered approach (taking your own 'roof') is that so often it appears as a denial of that inter-communication which is sought to be embraced....Part of the appeal, the *frisson*, of travelling to strange lands is the opportunity that it may afford to patronize the poor native unfortunates who may know no better way of life than that of their homeland. Tourism, in many ways, is a sort of neo-colonialism (1993:18-19; emphasis in original).

Whilst I would not disagree with the suggestion that certain elements of tourism, especially its management frameworks, are neo-colonialist in orientation (see below), I would hesitate to acquiesce to the claim that neo-colonialism is a motivating factor in the desire for travel. Furthermore, the distinction between package holidays and the 'individual urban traveller' so championed by Boniface and Fowler (e.g. 1993:70-71) must be questioned: neither the package tourist nor the 'trendy traveller' can ever hope to truly experience another culture. They simply get a different tourist experience, different tales to tell. It is perhaps important to remember that on occasion we are all tourists – even in Quseir.[5] The critique that follows is therefore of the heritage industry in the city, the perceptions of what the industry *believes* tourists want to see, not the tourists themselves.

Tourism in Quseir

The opening of the Mövenpick (figure 4.7) in 1995, a luxury tourist resort situated immediately opposite Quseir al-Qadim, initiated the development of international tourism in Quseir. Previously the city was served by two hotels, the Sea Princess, essentially a backpackers hostel, and the now defunct Fanadir. Already one other international hotel, the Flamenco (figure 7.1), has sprung up, and work has already begun

Figure 7.1 The Flamenco hotel.

Figure 7.2 The Hotel Quseir

Figure 7.3 The Hotel Shah Shah.

on a Radison Hotel, due for completion in early 2004. Two locally run hotels have been established – the Hotel Quseir (figure 7.2), housed in a restored historic building leased by Quseir Heritage, and the Shah Shah (figure 7.3), a small family run hotel just outside of the city. The Utopia Beach resort, some 20 kilometres to the south of the city, sends increasing numbers of its guests on afternoon trips to the city.

The extent of capital investment in Red Sea tourism is highlighted by the eagerness with which international hotel chains have sought to procure the remaining stretches of the coastline from Hurghada to Marsa Alam. It is likely that the increase in guests precipitated by the development of resorts close to Quseir will have a significant impact upon the carrying capacity of the resort, in both aesthetic/environmental terms and in terms of perceived and real social impacts to local residents.[6] Even at present, the total number of guest spaces in all the hotels in Quseir combined is some 2500, a significant 11.9% of the city's population. Consequently, another influx of economic migrants has begun, as those with experience in the tourist industry flock to Quseir.

The present tourist industry in Quseir caters almost exclusively to groups of European divers, seeking to take advantage of the pristine reef that extends the length of the Red Sea. The emphasis is very much on recuperation, a leisurely break away from the rigours of work – as the Mövenpick's promotional material suggests, "a paradise for divers, snorkellers and the perfect beach holiday". A large road sign that greets the weary traveller as they approach from the north promises "Relaxing days. Romantic nights at the Mövenpick", the opulence of the resort compensating for the lack of a service industry infrastructure in Quseir itself (see Urry 1990:58).

The development of tourism within the region naturally produced a mixture of responses in Quseir. Though the vast majority of interviewees now appear to welcome the tourist industry (see below), several interviewees expressed a certain amount of resentment at the construction of the Mövenpick at Quseir al-Qadim – an area traditionally used for fishing and beach excursions (see chapter four):

- We are not allowed near the Mövenpick. Not allowed anywhere near the Mövenpick anymore (Int. 35).
- They took a beautiful place. I miss this place (Int. 3.28).

An alternative view of tourist development was nevertheless offered by a young man employed as an assistant in one of the numerous bazaars that line the main street. Discussing the recent history of the site, the interviewee offered this poignant statement on tourism at Quseir al-Qadim:

> DG: Did you ever go to the beach at Quseir al Qadim?
>
> I: Before they built the Mövenpick and during its building. I used to go there all the time.
>
> DG: What did you do there?
>
> I: Before they built the Mövenpick I used to go swimming, snorkelling, and fishing. But afterwards I can't go there to the beach any more – it's forbidden because of the tourists. I remember my history there though. This place is my history, and I remember it, though now I can only look. I think you have visited this place – I think if you look at it from the sea, if you see the desert, I think you will imagine my history at this place.
>
> DG: How do you feel about not being able to use it now?
>
> I: I don't object too much that we're not able to go and swim there, but the main thing is that when I go right now I feel so happy about the place itself. That after all this time, after all these years, after all these centuries people have come back, returned again to Quseir al Qadim, to find out about the place, to build hotels in front of it – to use again the sea there. Imagine it. It is a magical thing I think. I don't take it personally that I'm not able to swim there, but having a large number of people who come to swim and to dive and to see the place... really it is a great thing. It is a great thing for our society, for the people, and for our history itself (Int. 3.4).

There is, nevertheless, recognition within the tourist industry that new resorts such as Quseir must distinguish themselves from more established destinations if they are to succeed.[7] As more people travel, and the number of resorts available to them increases, resorts are required to offer something unique, something other than the sun, sea and sand available elsewhere (Morgan 1994).[8] The management of the various hotels of the region (e.g. Int. 3.13) recognise the need to provide their guests with a viable alternative to diving and desert safaris if Quseir is to consolidate its position as a holiday destination *par excellence.* Local, national and international bodies believe that the answer lies in the exploitation of the city's abundance of historical resources, a solution emphasised by many individuals in Quseir:

> When we have the excavations, the tourists will come for two things – the Red Sea and the excavations. It will be totally different to the other cities, especially Hurghada and Safaga (Int. 15).

A new identity is slowly, yet consciously, being constructed for Quseir as a city of heritage, the antithesis of 'newer' tourist based economies on the Red Sea coast.

There is of course nothing new in this turn towards the past to facilitate tourism – as Ringer (1998:7) notes, tourism is based upon the notion of reformulating landscapes through the manipulation of history into distinctive tourist sites; that is the essence of tourism. We might, however, question why it is the past that is so often given primacy in the construction of unique destination identities. At least to a certain extent, this is explicable by simply examining market demand: the West has grown increasingly fond of heritage, evident in the astonishing popularity of heritage city breaks in both Britain and continental Europe and reflected in the media fascination with archaeology, history and antiques.[9] There is an irredeemable nostalgia built into many forms of modern tourism (Frow 1991), a nostalgia increasingly prevalent in the uncertainties of the post September 11th 2001 world. As Davis suggests, this is not simply a feeling, a yearning, but "a positively toned evocation of a lived past in the context of some negative feeling toward present or impending circumstances" (1979:119; see also Dann 1994).

Heritage has become fashionable; the middle class elixir of choice. Indeed, it is difficult to disagree with Morgan's claim that "promoting the cultural heritage of an area improves the *value* and *status* of the resort for the visitor, even if the visitor is not particularly interested in the heritage itself" (1994:392; my emphasis). It is certainly true that Quseir is seeking to attract what can only be described as 'a better class of tourist', at least in comparison to the more developed 'party' resorts of Hurghada and Sinai – evident in the comparatively expensive nature of the resorts current hotels (see also Int. 19 and below). The development of heritage tourism would also seem to offer certain guarantees that mass tourism cannot:

> In contrast to mass tourism, heritage tourism destinations must limit development and avoid crowding if they want to maintain an attractive ambience. The payoff...[is a community more able to] support small business enterprises and provide employment to keep its brightest young people in the community (Caldwell 1996:135).

How realistic this is in Quseir will be discussed below.

What is heritage?

Though this is not the place for a detailed discussion of the concept of heritage, it is necessary to define what I mean by 'heritage' within the context of Quseir.[10] The term itself is derived from the Old French *eritage*, meaning literally "property which derives by right of inheritance in a process involving a series of linked hereditary successions" (AlSayyad 2001:2). It has, nevertheless, become imbued with a new layer of meaning in the modern world, and though there are now many different definitions of the term, I favour that offered by Lowenthal:

> ...heritage is not history at all; while it borrows from and enlivens historical study, heritage is not an inquiry into the past but a celebration of it, not an effort to know what actually happened but a profession of faith in a past tailored to present day purposes...No aspect of heritage is wholly devoid of historical reality; no historian's view is wholly free of heritage bias...The heritage fashioner, however historically scrupulous, seeks to design a past that will fix the identity and enhance the well being of some chosen individual or folk. History cannot be wholly dispassionate, or it will not be felt worth learning or conveying; heritage cannot totally disregard history, or it will seem too incredible to command fealty. But the aims that animate these two enterprises, and their modes of persuasion, are contrary to each other (1998:x-xi).

Heritage is not history, but that does not mean that it is not *historical*, that it does not have to at the very least resemble history. Like archaeology, it is a constructed representation of the past in the present, one that conflates the past into historical tales that are easy to consume – it is not so much the past as a "*declaration of faith*" in the past (Lowenthal 1998:121; emphasis in original). Heritage does not shock, confront or disgust, but comforts and entertains the consumer.

Heritage and identity

> *Old England had progressively shed power, territory, wealth, influence and population. Old England was to be compared disadvantageously to some backward province of Portugal or*

Turkey. Old England had cut its own throat and was lying in the gutter beneath a spectral gas light, its only function as a dissuasive example to others. From Dowager to Down-and-Out as a Times headline had sneeringly put it. Old England had lost its history, and therefore – since memory is identity – had lost all sense of itself.

Julian Barnes, *England, England* (1998: 251).

Heritage is...the cultural expression of what makes us what we are, our spiritual DNA

Germaine Greer (cited in Boniface and Fowler 1993:150)

Heritage as a concern for the past emerged alongside the formation of the nation state (see Díaz-Andreu & Champion 1996; Hall 1995). As such, it is inextricably linked to the construction of identities – even a fabricated heritage, through its façade of historicism, constructs identity (Lowenthal 1998:132). Through designating an area as a heritage site, meanings become imbued in the landscape and the built environment, meanings which shape the way that people perceive the world around them (see Graburn 2001:71).[11] As Graham *et al* suggest, "the corollary of understanding who 'we are' is that the burdens of heritage are invariably invoked" (2000:62).[12]

Nowhere is the perceived power of heritage to locate identity within the built environment more evident than in Fathy's creation of New Gurna in the 1950s.[13] Intended to re-house the villagers of Gurna, Luxor, who were to be forcibly removed from archaeological sites by the Egyptian authorities, Fathy's architecture was explicitly designed to "revive the peasants faith in his own culture" (Fathy 1973:40; quoted in Mitchell 2001). His project was seen as a pilot for a national programme of "rural reconstruction"; by focusing on 'traditional' Egyptian architecture the cultural and economic regeneration of the Egyptian village was deemed possible (Fathy 1973:63-64; cited in Mitchell 2001:220). The 'recovery' of a (falsified; see Mitchell 2001; AlSayyad 2001) national heritage was thus seen as the answer to the pressing social problems of Egypt, providing citizens with a rejuvenated energy and purpose (Mitchell 2001:220). Appeals to heritage and the tangible presence of heritage sites emote memories of a shared past, 'uniting' people behind a common vision (Daniels 1993; Agnew 1998; Lowenthal 1998). Even heritage tourism is an identity marker, bonding tourists through a common experience (Hall 1995).

Heritage is nevertheless at its most powerful when constructing local identities – not only is it ubiquitous, it is also unique. The promotion of heritage is, by its very nature, exclusive. By selecting one past to be presented as heritage, another is, out of necessity, excluded: heritage is one of the defining criteria of social inclusion/ exclusion (see Graham *et al* 2000; especially chapter two). As we saw in chapters one and five, this notion of otherness is crucial to the formation of identity. Simply by acting as a physical and symbolic focal point in the city, the citadel of Quseir constructs an identity for those that live in its shadow. As a symbol of Quseir, it can be either inclusive or exclusive (to outsiders) in a way that other potential heritage sites in the city are not – the El-Farran mosque, for example, the oldest place of worship in Quseir, is inherently inclusive to Egyptians through its association with an almost ubiquitous religion. Somewhat paradoxically, the citadel can also be manipulated to become *exclusive* through its promotion as a European heritage site. This will be developed in more detail below.

The heritage industry in Quseir

There are two national/ international bodies seeking to develop tourism in Quseir, the Environmentally Sustainable Tourism Project (EST), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Peder Seger Wallenberg Trust; one local, The Quseir Heritage Preservation Society. EST/ USAID has selected the city of Quseir for special attention "because its cultural and natural resources offer a potential for the development of tourism" (EST/ USAID n.d.). The project aims to assess, according to its action plan, "how to harvest the greatest benefits from the heritage sites of Quseir, which offer a great potential for additional growth in tourist development" (EST/ USAID n.d.). Much of the work of the EST/ USAID project in Quseir has been conducted under the auspices of the American Research Centre in Egypt (ARCE).

It is the buildings of the nineteenth and early twentieth century that are deemed the most important resource in the regeneration of Quseir, a product to sell to tourists desirous of something more than long sandy beaches (figure 7.4). It is hoped that these will entice visitors away from the more developed, Mediterranean style resorts of Hurghada and Sinai, simultaneously increasing living standards in the city by providing residents with employment opportunities and a "modern infrastructure".

Figure 7.4 One of the many historic buildings in Quseir.

Figure 7.5 Phosphate Company houses.

Figure 7.4 One of the many historic buildings in Quseir.

Figure 7.5 Phosphate Company houses.

A similar development plan has been financed by the Swedish philanthropist Peder Seger Wallenberg, under the auspices of the Peder Seger Wallenberg Trust (hereafter Wallenberg Trust). The premise of the Wallenberg Trust is essentially similar to that of EST/ USAID, the preservation of the city and restrictions on tourist development in the belief that

> [i]f the town could get back some of its former glory, tourists would probably develop the economic situation in the area and create job opportunities to many more citizens than the present number directly employed by the resort hotels (Saler and Heli 1997:2).

To ensure that development does not go unchecked, it is proposed that Quseir apply for World Heritage Site status, based upon the conventions desire to protect "living traditional knowledge and technical heritage, human settlements and cultural landscapes" (Saler and Heli 1997:5). The trust, with the assistance of the University of Southampton, also intends to promote the site of Quseir al-Qadim as a tourist attraction, preserving the features in-situ and incorporating walkways, interpretative panels and guided tours (see Peacock and Phillips 2002).

Operating alongside these international bodies is The Quseir Heritage Preservation Society (Quseir Heritage), a non-governmental organisation established within Quseir that seeks to protect and re-generate the cultural heritage of the modern city. Quseir Heritage too draws a direct correlation between a great past and a great future, as one of its members informed me:

> Quseir has a very unique position in Egypt. It is on the Red Sea, it is the oldest city on the Red Sea. It has its own history of pilgrimage and trade from early times. It was a cross road in the olden days. This gives it a particular attraction that people now must know about and must be able to sell it for the future. I cannot see that Quseir has any future other than tourism and related industries. So to have something like this to build on is very important (Int. 19).

As we have seen in chapter one, the Community Archaeology project at Quseir works in partnership with Quseir Heritage - indeed, collaboration with Quseir Heritage has been fundamental in shaping the interviews and oral history programme of the project, and thus this research project (see chapter two). The relationship between Quseir Heritage

and the other agencies active in the city is nevertheless complex: previously aligned to the Wallenberg Trust, these ties have now been severed and sponsorship sought elsewhere.

Which past? Whose heritage?

To select only monuments suppresses at one stroke the reality of the land and that of its people, it accounts for nothing of the present, that is nothing historical, and as a consequence, the monuments themselves become undecipherable, therefore senseless. What is to be seen is thus constantly in the process of vanishing

Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (1993*a*:76)

If we really are interested in our history, then we may have to preserve it from the conservationists

Robert Hewison, *The heritage industry* (1987:98)

At present the city of Quseir has been - to use Hewison's terminology – preserved, rather than conserved (1987). The old buildings remain not through a conscious desire to utilise them as heritage sites, but simply because they have not yet been knocked down (many are still in use). However, as we have seen above, various organisations have expressed an interest in developing the heritage potential of the city. It is therefore important to look in some detail at the heritage vision they endeavour to promote. Though we should not castigate heritage as biased (for that is the point of heritage – see Lowenthal 1998:122), we can and should endeavour to deconstruct its messages. Failure to look critically at such messages, indeed, to look critically at archaeological or historical messages, is the day that we cede the right to promote our own visions of the past.

It is important to stress, however, that it is not my intention to provide the reader with a single, monolithic interpretation of the heritage sites selected in Quseir. Interpretation of heritage sites is complex, each site infused with a myriad of different meanings, imbued with their own unique ambience. I am aware that there are other ways to read the simulacra, other ways of interpreting the designated heritage sites of the city than those I outline below. Different visitors will bring different readings and take different meanings from them; there is no single, monolithic 'tourist gaze' (see Urry's critique of Hewison [Urry 1990:111]). Nor do I suggest that the producers of the signs are often aware of the

consequences of their production, that the heritage sites are necessarily intended to portray the messages that they do. I do not believe that this negates my analysis: the very fact that these messages *can* be read makes them significant. If identity is a social construct, founded upon the past, then heritage can only symbolise identity as perceived and understood by one individual, one agency, at any one moment (AlSayyad 2001:7). Finally, it should be emphasised that in this section, just as in the rest of this thesis, I do not presume to 'speak for the people' of Quseir. Dissonance is an inevitable by product of the promotion of heritage (see Graham *et al* 2000:99), and only when quoting directly from interviews should it be presumed that these are the views of individuals in the city.

Potential heritage sites: a European past for an Egyptian city?

An integral part of the EST/ USAID action plan is the selection of heritage sites with 'potential for development'. One of the five sites selected is 'a Marconi company building' (the telegraph houses; see chapter four), constructed at the turn of the turn of the nineteenth century "in a distinguished European style" (EST/ USAID n.d.). Also highlighted for re-generation are six early twentieth century Phosphate Company houses (figure 7.5), Mediterranean-esque villas located on the waterfront (and presently occupied by tenants). Both potential heritage sites represent distinctive architectural styles in the region. They are not, however, the buildings known by the majority employed within Quseir throughout most of the previous century. These cluster around the phosphate factory itself, a village in which large families continue to share only two rooms. By selecting European buildings for regeneration, USAID constructs an alternative past, a pristine past, a sanitised history of the cultural elite. Struggle is denied, signs of poverty neglected. It is interesting to note that the only other buildings selected as potential heritage sites – the citadel, the quarantine (the *shuna*) and the police station (the eighteenth/ nineteenth century Governor's house) – are similarly grand administrative buildings.[14] As Barthes reminds us so eloquently,

> To select only monuments suppresses at one stroke the reality of the land and that of its people, it accounts for nothing of the present, that is nothing historical, and as a consequence, the monuments themselves become undecipherable, therefore senseless. What is to be seen is thus constantly in the process of vanishing (1993*a*:76)

It is true that the selected sites do link modern residents with the past, at least in a geographical sense. Yet they also connect *tourists* to the past in Quseir. They are European buildings, occupied by the Italians (the Phosphate Company houses), the Germans (the quarantine, through Klunzinger) and the British (the telegraph houses). Even the Ottoman citadel can be linked to a European past through its occupation by the French and British armies: at present, exhibitions within the citadel created at the time of its restoration by the American Research Centre in Egypt (ARCE) give primacy to its role in the Anglo-French battle for Egypt. This is in stark contrast to most interviewees, for whom the citadel is indelibly associated with Mohammed Ali (e.g. "I don't know much about it, but I know that Mohamed Ali built the citadel" [Int. 2.6]; "Mohammed Ali was responsible for the citadel" [Int. 2.5]). Clearly, the same heritage sites can be manipulated to mean very different things to different people. It is interesting to note that at present it is tourists from these four nations that make up the bulk of the visitors to Quseir each year.

Somewhat curiously, given the prominent role of Quseir in the passage of pilgrims, it is also a predominantly Christian past: though the action plan highlights the architectural and historical worth of the numerous shrines devoted to pilgrims found throughout the city, none are selected as potential heritage sites (figure 7.6). AlSayyad (2001:6) has argued that the introduction of colonial or hybrid architectural styles served to unify lands under colonial administration.[15] A similar process appears to be at work here, albeit unconsciously: the past as presented in Quseir is not so different, so alien.

This would nevertheless appear to run contrary to the notion that tourists seek something different, an inversion of their everyday reality (see for example Gottlieb 1982; Rutherford 1990:11; Urry 1990:3,11).[16] In many instances that may well be true, particularly perhaps when viewing heritage sites within our own culture. Yet I would argue that we do not want to see things *too* 'out of the ordinary' in other cultures – we do not necessarily want to be shocked. People visit the Taj Mahal or the pyramids of South America in their thousands, yet these are images we are comfortable with, that we have seen reproduced countless times before, that we have *experienced* before through television and film. In Quseir, it is only really the physical context of these British and Italian villas that could be deemed unusual; it is 'our' heritage in the West, defining 'us' at a particular historical moment. We belong in Quseir, we are comfortable there; familiar

architectural styles, familiar histories, in unfamiliar places. The absence of any 'Egyptian buildings', or at least what we might consider uniquely 'Egyptian architecture' (in stark contrast to the 'traditional' design of the Mövenpick) serves only to reinforce that perpetual stereotype – the spark of civilisation was ignited in the Nile valley, the flame passed onto Europe. Just as the ancient past of Egypt has been subsumed into a vision of Western heritage, the modern history of Egypt is Western history too.

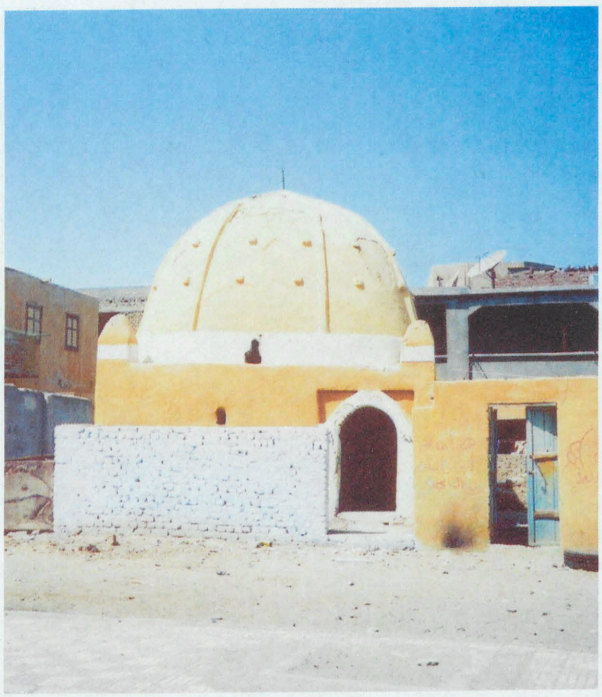

Figure 7.6 A historic shrine in Quseir.

Such a process of Westernisation is of course not uncommon in the selection and promotion of heritage sites[17]. As Graham *et al* suggest,

> In postcolonial states, the principal dissonance is between new national identities based upon revised and unifying heritage values, and tourism economics, which perpetuate colonial heritages to sell them to visitors from metropolitan countries who recognise their own identities therein (2000:94).

The pattern is repeated in Quseir. Once again, international tourism appears to be universalising (read Westernising) cultures and societies (see Lanfant *et al* 1995:101).

That is not to say that many residents in Quseir do not want these buildings preserved – they do after all present a grand image of the past in Quseir to international tourists; their very longevity (at least in the case of the citadel, the quarantine and the police station) testament to the historic nature of Quseir and recognised as a source of pride by a large number of interviewees – statements such as 'have you been in the citadel? It is really good' (Int. 41) abound. It is also true that the citadel at least is an obvious choice for a heritage attraction. Indeed, it would be difficult to envisage an economy based upon heritage tourism in Quseir that did not include the citadel as a central focus: it is the largest standing cultural monument on the Red Sea coast (ARCE website). I certainly do not suggest that these sites should be ignored, simply that they should not be the only focus, the only sites deemed worthy of re-generation and presentation. As Cogswell (1996) suggests, the successful development of heritage tourism is dependent upon facilitating an increased interest in, and ownership of, the past amongst local residents, not just tourists.

The mere presence of a historic building in an urban environment does not *automatically* qualify it as a heritage site; it must be considered as such by the local community.[18] As we have seen above, historical and heritage sites play an important role in constructing place identities, yet that identity is always a 'popular identity'. A monument, site or building must 'connect' with people to generate an emotional response (Mitchell 2001:213). Familiarity is key; if sites are not familiar to individuals, either symbolically or physically, they will not become part of an individual's heritage:

> Bourdieu's view that identity (self-identification) is increasingly shaped through consumptive behaviour and 'lifestyle' may be helpful in explaining the role of the tourist. But the cultural identity of the host community is surely something greater...it is bound up with an intimacy shared with the evolved and natural and built environment, and is defined in part by its fixedness (Robinson 2001:52).

Regardless of how it is constructed or 'Westernised' by USAID, the Wallenberg Trust, perhaps even the Community Archaeology Project, the citadel *is* a heritage site for residents of Quseir, incorporated into their own visions of the past and their own historical identity; testimony to the grandeur of Quseir under the patronage of Mohammed Ali.

Furthermore, many interviewees argued that the phosphate factory itself should be presented as a heritage attraction. It was, after all, the single biggest employer in Quseir for some eighty years, providing employment and economic security, its demise a matter of deep regret (e.g. Int. 3.15; Int. 3.21; Int. 3.30). A great deal of interviewees also suggested that the lives of those who worked within the factory should be memorialised and promoted – they made Quseir what it is today (e.g. Int. 41; Int. 2.4). The phosphate factory itself could feasibly serve to celebrate the historically cosmopolitan nature of the city, acting as a locus for the celebration of multi-ethnicity through the discussion of the migrant workers employed by the industry. As Robinson (2001) suggests, the development of successful heritage tourism is reliant upon local communities being given the opportunity to decide for themselves what should be presented as heritage.

I have nevertheless suggested above that the selected heritage sites 'Europeanise' Quseir for tourist consumption, a process that some may argue would be exacerbated by the inclusion of the phosphate factory as a heritage site. The factory is indeed a European construction, yet its selection would allow for an emphasis on the lives of all those employed within the compound, both Egyptians and Europeans, to a far greater extent than the villas, the telegraph buildings, even the citadel or the police station with their political, militarial and administrative histories. Furthermore, and perhaps most fundamentally, members of the *local community* have selected the factory as a heritage attraction; it has not been imposed from outside.

It is interesting to note that at present an integral component of all three hotels guided tours of Quseir is the Catholic church within the Phosphate Company compound, yet not the factory itself (Int. 3.10; Int. 3.11; Int. 3.23 – hotel tour guides). This may of course be due to the intended consumers of the product: designed to appeal largely to wealthy Euro-American tourists, it is an audience uncomfortable with confronting the realities of heavy industry, particularly within the context of a European company operating in a 'third world country'. Culturally conditioned to regard industry as both alarmingly damaging to the health of its workers and the environment, many of us would perhaps prefer to ignore it altogether.[19] It is certainly not suitable for the tourists gaze.[20]

Paradoxically, industrial tourism appears to be on the increase in 'developed' countries (see Urry 1990; especially chapter 6; Lowenthal 1998). Indeed, it is suggested by Urry

that anything can be constructed to meet the tourist gaze – from the harsh realities of Welsh or Pennsylvanian coal mining, to the macabre voyeurism of the London Dungeon. I would suggest that this is only true within our own cultural context, when dealing with specific historical moments, and only when packaged in a certain way. Why do we hanker to visit coal mines in Wales, textile factories in Lancashire, tin mines in Cornwall? Because it is a past that has gone; though it made the country what it is today, we know that people in that context do not suffer in the same manner in the present.[21] We can consume concentration camps as heritage sites (see Graham *at al* 2000:71), feel the horror of Auschwitz knowing that we were not part of it, that it has nothing to do with *us*; we can express our moral repugnance at neo-Nazi groups that purport such views in the present. We cannot do that in post-colonial or third world industrial contexts, we cannot do that because we are deeply implicated in the present. We visit heritage sites in Egypt wearing our Nike trainers, our cotton T-shirts, our Levi jeans, sipping our Coke and waiting for our coach powered by Shell. We cannot visit industrial sites in Quseir and not feel guilt because we still consume the industrial products of the third world every day. Perhaps a small part of us hears the echoes of the Martiniquan writer Aimé Césaire's lament in *Discourse on colonialism,* "I see clearly what colonisation has destroyed: the wonderful Indian civilisations – and neither Deterding, nor Royal Dutch nor Standard Oil will ever console me for the Aztecs and the Incas" (1972:20). Instead, we turn to the past.

Wanted: an authentic Egypt

A further component of the EST/ USAID action plan is the creation and maintenance of a historic core in the centre of the modern city (figure 7.7). To achieve this, it is proposed that restrictions be placed upon future developments – as many residents have remarked, a necessary and important step if Quseir is to avoid the unchecked development of Hurghada:

- We need new projects, like hotels and tourist villages, but if we can we need to keep the heritage of Quseir as it is now. There are many places around the city that they can build on and start new projects, but we should keep the city and the buildings as they are.
- DG: Does the pace of tourist development concern you?

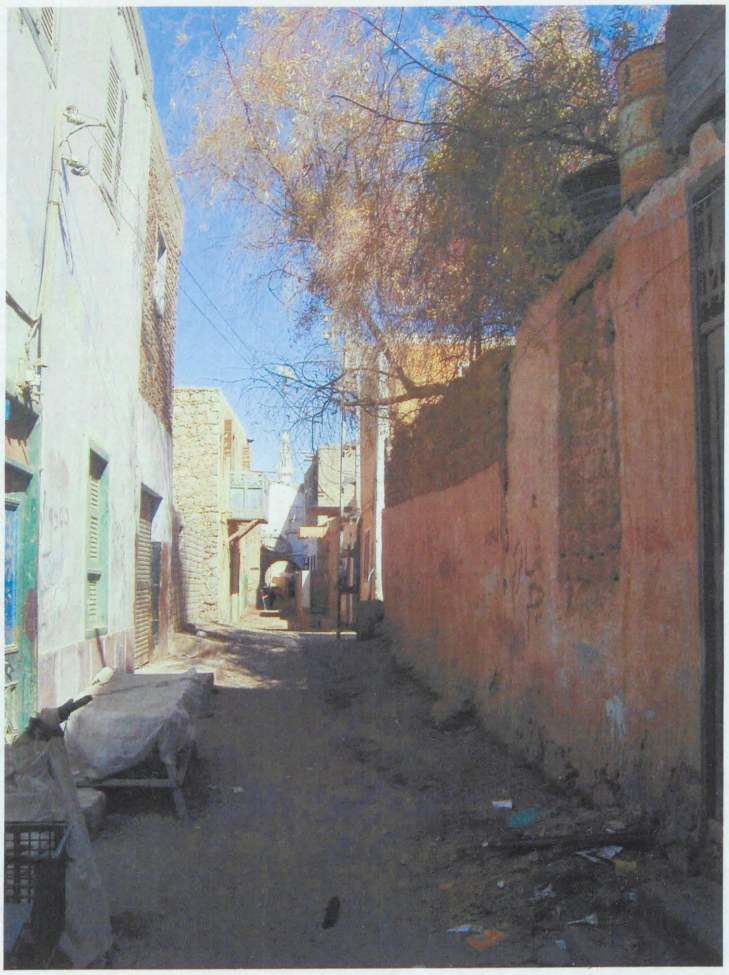

Figure 7.7 The historic core.

Figure 7.8 Site preservation.

I: As long as everything is as it is now, then it isn't a problem. Hotels and tourist villages must try to keep places as quiet as they are now (Int. 39).

- DG: Do you think the past of Quseir has a role in its future?

I: It will protect us. We don't want to be like Hurghada – everything there is new You can enjoy it, but you feel nothing in it. Here the NGO [Quseir heritage] is trying to protect everything. The NGO members are all from Quseir and are all dedicated. They want to protect our history, our heritage, from being like Hurghada (Int. 21).

Somewhat more problematic, however, is the suggestion that the EST/ USAID project should highlight

> land and building uses that are in keeping with the existing land use patterns and the character of the historic core [the centre of Quseir], and identify uses that conflict with them and should not be permitted (EST/ USAID n.d.).

It is easy to forget that the majority of buildings within this core are privately owned, a great many occupied by residents. By outlawing any development of these properties that conflict with their historic character, an increase in living standards – the professed aim of the project – becomes impossible. The past constrains the present (Graham *et al* 2000:19): change is denied, the residents of the core are left in stasis, frozen in time, a real life reconstruction for wealthy European tourists.[22] It is not a little ironic that, by denying change, the vibrancy and dynamism that characterised historic Quseir is rendered invisible (see for example Shrerer 1824; Elwood 1830). Only tradition remains.[23]

The geographer Derek Gregory, drawing on Rajchman's reading of Foucault (1991), describes Egypt as "space of constructed visibility", a space constructed by the tourist industry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to meet the needs of Western tourists, an "imaginative geography' through which landscapes were made timeless, authentic and real" (Gregory 2001:115; see also Reid 2002: chapter 2). As Aziz rightly highlights, the relative lack of development in Upper Egypt has become a tourist attraction in itself, actively promoted as such by the tourist industry (1995:93). As tourists, we want to see, though perhaps not experience, the Egypt, and perhaps more especially the Egyptians, that we see on television (thought not on the news), in films, that we read about in historical novels, that we see in the pages of *National Geographic* or the travel supplements of national newspapers. We want to see old men smoking sheeshas, smiling street

urchins, perhaps even veiled women. That is what our travel brochures promise; that is what we demand. 'Heritomania', to coin a phrase, might just be the malaise of the modern world – the desire to turn everything (and everyone) into a heritage commodity that can be consumed.[24] "It is the dislocated Western traveller of today who experiences nostalgia to its fullest" (Dann 1994:65).

Through tourism, Egypt is divided into traditional and modern spheres (Gregory 2001) – an ancient culture, timeless and authentic juxtaposed with the modern opulence and consumer comforts of the hotel compounds. The hotels themselves have become stage sets for consumption (after Zukin 1992*a*;*b*; Urry 1995:20-21), imagined places in which an archetype of the Egyptian and Middle Eastern 'experience' is constructed; an experience featuring Ali Ba Ba's tents, camel rides and belly dancers at the Flamenco. As tourists, we do not discover the 'real' Egypt, but that of Messrs Cook constructed in the nineteenth century, the "Egypt of the hovels and the palace-steamers, the Egypt of the dragoman and the donkey boy" (Low 1914:140; cited in Gregory 2001:135).

This notion of 'staged authenticity' (MacCannell 1973) is also prevalent in the 'Bedouin evenings' organised by the Mövenpick for its guests.[25] The visitor is invited to journey into the desert (on air conditioned coaches), to enjoy a 'traditional' Bedouin meal and to witness the festivities of a Bedouin marriage. It is recognisably a façade, a Western vision of the Orient that the tourists are encouraged to enjoy: once again, time has stood still, though this time the guests are aware of and actively participate in the deception. The guest is initiated into 'traditional' Egyptian culture, or perhaps more specifically the Western perception of it, whilst remaining within the metaphorical confines of their hotel (see Baudrillard 1993; Meskell 2001). Guests are encouraged to gaze voyeuristically, to consume a particular reality, yet never to *experience* another culture. And here we are confronted with the ultimate post-modern irony: the distinction between the real and the artificial is no longer important for many visitors to the region. One local entrepreneur who runs his own desert safari company highlights the paradox:

> You should come with us one day Darren and meet the family that we visit, they are original Bedouin. Most of the tourists when we take them think that we have just made them up, that they are pretend Bedouin, but they are very real… (Int. 3.20).

The tourist desire for tradition and nostalgia is recognised by many in Quseir. Interviewee 3.3, for example, asserts:

> Everything is very old here, everything in Hurghada is new. People from Europe want something old, they don't want something new. You have many new things in Europe, but here everything is old.

Quseir Heritage too recognises the potential for the city in exploiting heritomania:

> Quseir is the only place [on the Red Sea] with the potential to offer something different. If they [tourists] can come here and spend the best part of the day here, look at the fort, buy a couple of sandwiches and a couple of drinks, buy some souvenirs – in other words fleece them of their money, then put them back on the bus and send them off to their tourist village, then it will have done a lot for the city (Int. 19).

The preservation and subsequent regeneration of the historic core is also central to the development plans of the Wallenberg Trust. Again, it appears that the motivation behind this is not the benefit of the present inhabitants:

> there is a strong likelihood that the town will be occupied by better off people one's [sic] the buildings have been restored. It is therefore advisable to plan for and install a sewerage system as one of the first priorities of the restoration work (Saler and Heli 1997:14).

They do, however, advocate the involvement of the local population at the earliest possible stage of planning (see Saler and Heli 1997:7).

EST/ USAID similarly stress the importance of liaising with the local community, through government officials and NGOs. The project's action plan nevertheless stipulates that the opinions of local residents will only be incorporated into the project if they "have a strong and convincing argument" (EST/ USAID n.d.), thus implying that residents will have to mobilise themselves into a quasi activist movement if they wish to have their feelings heard.[26]

In reality, community collaboration is central to the success of any project intent on promoting the heritage of a local community (see for example Cogswell 1996). This is exemplified in the development of Kakadu National Park, Australia, as a tourist site, where Aboriginal groups, developers and government agencies are equally involved in

both planning and park management policies (see Mercer 1994). Though it may appear to be something of a spurious point, honesty too is essential: one interviewee employed within the citadel stated that "the American people [ARCE] said that they would make the citadel like Karnak temple" (Int. 3.6) complete with *son et lumière*. Given the relative size of the citadel, the lack of funds and its present state of disrepair, one has to wonder how realistic this claim ever was.

Without an effective dialogue, the tourist industry is in danger of enforcing a pre-conceived plan upon the community of Quseir from outside.[27] I do not suggest that international agencies are not aware of these issues; merely that by not addressing the concerns of the community directly, the industry and its financial backers are in danger of assuming the mantle of colonialism, transforming everything into a commodity that can be consumed, physically or intellectually (El Saadawi 1997:56; Butler 2000) – something that the archaeological community itself is not averse to (e.g. Boniface & Fowler 1993:54-55).[28] Yet it is somewhat ironic that as Egyptians have successfully regained control of their museums and exportation of their antiquities (see Reid 1985, 1997, 2002), international agencies and multi-national conglomerates have taken control of their heritage (Moser *et al* 2002; see also Mitchell 1995, 2001; Meskell 2001). The Community Archaeology Project at Quseir has endeavoured to avoid these problems through both a commitment to communication and collaboration, and the interviews and oral history programme.

Heritage tourism, Quseir al-Qadim and future development

Egypt is a treasure for archaeologist, but they help each other you know? Tourism and archaeology. And the more discoveries you make, the more tourism we have

Int. 3.20

Tourism is, everywhere, the enemy of authenticity and cultural identity

Turner and Ash, *The golden hordes* (1975:197)

Despite the problems outlined above, it is apparent from the interviews with local residents that the vast majority welcome the arrival of the tourist industry – the benefits

that may be accrued by tourism are generally perceived to outweigh the costs. Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I therefore discuss attitudes towards the development of tourism in Quseir, focusing especially on the perceived role of Quseir al-Qadim in the future of the city. Perception is crucial to this analysis: as Phillip Pearce suggests, if individuals believe a certain impact exists, then their behaviour will be altered, regardless of whether the impact is 'real' or 'imagined' (1994:104).

The perceived centrality of the tourist industry to the economic development of Quseir is highlighted by the rapid expansion in the number of bazaars and coffee shops designed to cater almost exclusively to tourists: the number of 'tourist' oriented coffee shops in the city has risen from just one in 1999 to eleven in 2002.[29] Indeed, the potential impact of the industry for the economy in Quseir is recognised by many. To quote from just five interviews,

- Many people felt good about the Mövenpick being built because tourism improves our life in Quseir. We need to encourage its development so that Quseir will become more advanced (Int. 2.5).
- I think it will be really different when people [tourists] are here. People have nothing to do now that the Phosphate Company has been sold (Int. 17).
- The Mövenpick gives us a lot of jobs, which means work for the young people in the city. It opens many doors for us (Int. 3.9).
- It was a shock at first [after the building of the Mövenpick], but we had many problems with unemployment at the time, so the people were happy about it. After the phosphate company it gave many opportunities for people to work, so we received it with pleasure (Int. 3.2).
- Tourism has a very positive effect. I qualified as an English teacher three years ago, so tourism gave me a good chance to improve my knowledge and improve my language. The first time I tried to speak English I felt that my tongue was stuck, or tied with a rock. So it gives me the chance to practice. I also learned a small amount of German, which also improves my talent – if I know more than one language then it is so beneficial for me (Int. 2.2).[30]

At least for one interviewee, the Mövenpick has a symbolic value, the past, present and future of the area articulated by the juxtaposition of tourist development, archaeological site and modern city:

> There is a connection between here and there [Quseir al-Qadim]...that connection now is the Mövenpick (Int. 3.2)

For many, a tourist industry based upon the promotion of heritage sites and incorporating Quseir al-Qadim, the historic city and the Heritage Centre is central to the development of Quseir, capable of enticing tourists away from the confines of their hotels and thus ensuring the economic survival of the city:

- Don't forget the economy – if we have a museum or a heritage centre then many tourists will come into the city. They won't just lie down on the beach; they'll come into the city to see something interesting (Int. 5).
- DG: Do you think that the history of Quseir is important to people in Quseir?

  I: It is important to all people, because it is different. In the future it will become a very famous area and will bring the tourists in – they will come especially for this. So yes, it is very important for Quseir (Int. 11).
- As a result of the excavation and presentation of the site, so many tourists will come here and so much work will be offered to people (Int. 3.2).

The perceived economic importance of Quseir al-Qadim and the Heritage Centre is further highlighted by a revealing answer to what is, in reality, an outrageously leading question. During the first field season, somewhat buoyed by the success of the interviews to date, I asked one interviewee (a member of Quseir Heritage) 'Do you think that if people learn more about the past it will help keep them together as a community as they move into the future?' His answer is telling:

> I don't think more than they are now. I sense a sense of belonging amongst the people which I don't think, whatever is being done, the excavations are going to help make stronger. Economic pressures are the ultimate driving force for people, so if you can't find a job here they will move on. What we have to do here as an NGO is to try and create jobs for the people to be able to stay. *It is all very well to be idealistic about the past, but it doesn't buy the bread every day...I think archaeology in the sense of Quseir is a very important - it gives substance to something that they can sell as a tourist attraction. That is the main importance for me* (Int. 19).

Such quotes run contrary to a great deal of academic literature, which generally perceives tourism (and heritage tourism in particular) in developing countries as negative (e.g. Mishan 1969; Turner & Ash 1975; Boniface & Fowler 1993; Plogg 1994).[31] Beckerman argues that this is symptomatic of what might be described as a 'middle-class anxiety' (1974:50), a simplistic, often overtly paternalistic attitude towards tourism as a 'destroyer of societies' (Williams 1998:152). All too often, this negative attitude towards tourism appears to be based upon little or no real evidence – Boniface and Fowler, for example, suggest that "a measure of envy or derision may be incurred" by tourists when travelling

far from home (1993:15), and their text is replete with similarly unsupported statements.[32] As Williams (1998:152) highlights, tourism is not a single monolithic force distinct from wider agents of social and cultural change and development.[33] It is important that we, as academics, resist the temptation to speak for others, particularly when we are unsure of what those 'others' might want to say.[34]

That is not too say, of course, that such attitudes are entirely the prerogative of Western scholars. Aziz too suggests that tourism in developing countries is indicative of Western domination – "the most explicit and tangible representatives of the rich and the comfortable, 'have' societies, clustered together in luxurious ghettos, challenging all moral, religious and social values of the 'want' society" (1995:94). It is certainly true that a small number of interviewees do perceive the development of tourism within the area as problematic, particularly with regard to the potential socio-cultural impact upon the residents of the city:

> The most angry men were the religious men, because they didn't want tourism here. Not tourism itself, but the things tourists do to enjoy themselves – not wearing too many clothes for example. And of course the prices. Everything became very expensive, and that is not good for religious people… (Int 21).

The social and cultural benefits of heritage based tourism are nevertheless generally perceived to be high by the vast majority of interviewees. This is especially true in connection with the excavation and subsequent presentation of Quseir al-Qadim. Indeed, many interviewees suggested that an archaeological tourist attraction (including the heritage centre) would greatly enhance the national and international reputation of the city, archaeology and nature combining to create a tourist identity substantially different from other destinations in Egypt:

- We don't have anything for tourists here, only the sea…with the excavations, far more people will come to visit (Int. 17).
- Also important to the city is development. If there is nothing, then there is no development. If there is something, if there is background, if there is something like Quseir al-Qadim, so there is development (Int. 5).
- History gives value to Quseir, like Luxor. Quseir, after this excavation, will turn into something else. I have reservations about Hurghada because it relies only upon tourism of the sea. Here we have a historical background – the citadel and now Quseir al-Qadim - and therefore a good foundation for the fame of Quseir (Int. 2.2).

- It is something good for this city. I think a special museum here in Quseir will be a wonderful method for attracting tourists to Quseir. There are two things that make this an amazing project: here in the Red Sea we have only the underwater museum in Hurghada, so this will be the first historical one that deals with monuments. So Quseir will have the initiative and it will restart Quseir's previous role in the Red Sea - it is one of the oldest and most historical places here on the Red Sea coast. Another thing that is so important about it is that now Quseir will gather all – those who want to snorkel and those who have an interest in historical and ancient things (Int. 3.4).
- Egypt is a treasure for archaeologist, but they help each other you know? Tourism and archaeology. And the more discoveries you make, the more tourism we have (3.20).

One interviewee even suggested that a shift towards an archaeologically based tourism would challenge his attitude towards tourism *per se*:

> I was so angry about the Mövenpick, but now we are going to become important like Luxor because they [the archaeologists] have found a lot of things. Before, tourists came just to see the sea. Now they will come for the nice clean beaches – our beaches are cleaner than Hurghada – and for the archaeology. I will be happy if there are excavations for them too (Int. 11).

To this end, work has begun on preparing the site to receive visitors – both local residents and tourists. Professor David Peacock, director of the excavation, and a taskforce from Quseir has constructed walkways around the site which will soon be complemented by interpretative panels in Arabic, English, German, Italian and French. Trenches are being cleaned and protective layers added to structures to reduce the risk of erosion; a pamphlet designed to guide visitors around the site has been prepared for visitors in both Arabic and English (see Peacock and Phillips 2002; figure 7.8). It is hoped that the presentation of the site will complement the heritage centre once it is established, with visitors touring Quseir al-Qadim either before or after their trip to the centre itself.

This is certainly not the first time that the ancient past has been called upon to facilitate the construction of a new identity, particularly one related to the development of tourism. The construction of the New Alexandrina in Alexandria, for example, explicitly appeals to the past: the 'hall of fame' or the 'Ptolemaic space' contains the busts of famous scholars of the ancient library, thus establishing a direct link between the ancient and the modern city (see Butler 2000). As Beverly Butler (2000) has demonstrated, the New Alexandrina is destined to play the pivotal role in the renaissance of the city as a

tourist resort *par excellence*, consciously constructing itself as the traditional meeting point of East and West. Benedict Anderson, writing in the *Times Literary Supplement*, asked the question: 'Why do nations celebrate their hoariness and not their youth?'[35] In Quseir, the community seems to be celebrating both their hoariness *and* their youth – seeking to construct a new tourist identity, based upon a heritage vision of the past.

This does, however, raise an important question. Is it feasible to build a tourist industry in Quseir with archaeology at its epicentre? In other contexts, the answer to this would be a resounding 'Yes'. In Egypt, with the impressive monumental complexes of the Nile Valley and Cairo, the answer is perhaps less certain. Graham *et al* (2000) have highlighted the difficulties inherent in the promotion of a local heritage when a national heritage is so dominant (see also chapter five): at present, the site has revealed no Pharaonic occupation, yet it is only the (monumental) Pharaonic past that may be considered a viable archaeological economic commodity in Egypt. As Zvie suggests "Egypt ceases to be Egypt when it ceases to be ancient" (1991:38; cited in Reid 2002:8).[36]

Pharaonism is enacted in Egypt through the tourist industry, the media and the simulacra of the souvenir trade, as well as the Egyptian government and Egyptologists. Though the vast majority of tourists that visit Quseir will not see a pyramid or temple, hotel walls are adorned with Pharaonic representations of the past and bazaars brim with quasi-Pharaonic trinkets: a visitor to the Red Sea coast who has spent their time exclusively on the beach will still be able to return home with a sand blown pyramid in a glass dome as a souvenir of their visit to the land of the Pharaohs. Just as Flamenco dolls have become symptomatic of Spain even when miles from Andalusia (see Morgan 1994), so too Pharaonic souvenirs have come to be seen as emblematic of Egypt. As one local resident cogently remarked, "Pharaonic history is exciting for the whole world. Not like the Roman or Mamluk period" (Int. 2.1).

One shop owner spoke at some length about the realities of the Pharaonic past:

- I: Will you buy any Pharaonic stuff to go into the museum? Not something old, but something new that you can make look old?

  DG: Do you think that it would be more successful if it contained Pharaonic artefacts?

> I: Yes, I think so...Everything I sell is Pharaonic. Everything is related to the Pharaohs. We have a few things with Islamic designs on them, but most of our stock is Pharaonic (Int. 3.3).

It would therefore appear that what has been termed 'Egyptomania' is in reality far more profitable to Egypt than the 'real history', the 'real' past of the country. As Fayza Haikal (2000) suggests

> It is still international Egyptomania which forms the base of the tourism industry, one of the pillars of the Egyptian economy...It is true that Egyptomania is often stimulated by Egyptology and new finds, but this is not always the case. For Egyptomania thrives on dreams, imagination and fantasy and it must never be disappointed by harsh scientific realities.

Regardless of the importance of the site to both academics and, in a social and cultural sense, to the local community, it is questionable whether a Roman and Mamluk site lacking monumental remains has the ability to be a monolithic tourist attraction, functioning on its own. It is certainly true that people do visit other pasts in Egypt – early Christian monasteries, the Islamic and Coptic quarters of Cairo – but very few make the trip just to see them.[37] Quseir al-Qadim could, however, plausibly function as a secondary attraction, one component of a wider natural and cultural holiday package encompassing both diving and heritage tourism. As one hotel manager remarked, the site could feasibly serve as an afternoon diversion for tourists "who cannot dive all the time" (Int. 3.13). It is significant that the same hotel runs weekly day trips for its guests to Luxor.

The problems of the promotion of a non Pharaonic heritage in Egypt are nevertheless recognised by several interviewees:

> DG: Do you think the excavation at Quseir al-Qadim will attract tourists to Quseir?
>
> I: Not a lot, because most of the tourists that come here are interested only in the sea and diving. Only very few come for the culture.
>
> M: But is that because there is no information about it?
>
> I: No, no. The people who are interested in culture prefer to pay the money for the flight and the holiday and go to Luxor. They see more. I wouldn't pay LE10 for a cup of tea; I'd pay LE10 for a meal.[38] It's a financial thing for the Europeans – they have to have something worth what they pay.

> Me, myself, if I had the money I would pay it to go and see something big – temples, Valley of the Kings, the pyramids, something like that. But to spend money and then spend one week here just only to see a small area like Quseir al-Qadim?...But maybe this is our problem here [in Quseir]. Because we have such a great history, a great Pharaonic history, then maybe we don't care about these other things. But maybe these small things, like you were saying about Quseir al-Qadim, maybe it is a big thing for other people outside (Int. 3.9).

It is therefore significant that, as we saw in chapters five and six, a Pharaonic past is claimed by many residents. Cockerels conceal the last hiding places of Pharaonic gold, whilst statements such as "It is similar to the Pharaonic past" (Int. 8) and "we are imagining if the Pharaohs had been at Quseir al-Qadim...we think about that, to find the *target*" (Int. 12) recur with great frequency. I suggested previously that this is indicative of the need for civic recognition in a country so rich in archaeological remains, a need exaggerated perhaps by the perceived economic success of heritage tourism in other regions:

> People who come to Quseir will do so for the history, nothing else. You can go diving in Hurghada, you can find diving in Marsa Alam. Quseir will make a name for itself, an old name, that will make people ask questions: What is Quseir? Where is it? What is its background? (Int. 3.4).

In a very real sense, the heritage industry makes Egypt Egypt.

The 'uniqueness' of Quseir's heritage identity as envisaged by many residents, Quseir Heritage and the Wallenberg Trust is nevertheless at least archaeologically dependent upon a negative – a lack of the monumental Pharaonic remains that are generally deemed to be the national heritage. Some regard this as beneficial, at least in marketing terms:

- Here in Quseir we have something different, so this gives support also. It is not the Pharaonic life like in Cairo or Luxor, but it is something different. 'Come to see these different things'. So support the whole project and support the history of the city itself. It is not only Pharaonic life in Egypt, so come to see something new, the Islamic or Mamluk past. Mamluk is something that is really new for them (Int. 2.2).
- Tourists are just like us in Egypt – everybody has their own different interests in the past. You can find people that are interested in all sorts of different things. If you present the site in an attractive way, the heritage centre in an attractive way, then of course people will be interested to see it. Eventually it will become very popular (3.11).

Despite the perception of many that heritage tourism will facilitate the construction of a new identity for the city, it is suggested by Plogg in his analysis of global leisure travel that tourism serves only to lessen heritage ties, to 'weaken' identity consciousness in all contexts:

> To feed, house and make tourists happy, relatively universal standards for how to treat and serve guests are established and all locally hired help ('natives') must conform to these new rules of behaviour...in doing so, they give up part of their own identity and often part of a valuable ancient heritage or tradition that contributes to pride, self-confidence and feelings of self-worth (1994:42).

This is certainly not my experience in Egypt, nor is it apparent in the interview data. It is true that there must be genuine concern regarding the impact of tourism on communities; yet to insist that *all* tourism actively destroys the traditions of a passive host community is surprising to say the least. Nowhere, however, does Plog make clear what data he bases his generalisations upon.[39]

Heritage tourism: a viable economic strategy?

Similarly, the economics of heritage have traditionally been regarded as secondary in academic discussions of both heritage and heritage tourism (though see Mitchell 2001). This is summed up most eloquently by Graham *et al*:

> There is a strongly felt, and frequently articulated, view that any attempt to attach economic values to heritage, and to other cultural products and performances, is at best a pointless irrelevance and at worst an unacceptable soiling of the aesthetically sublime with the culturally mundane (2000:129).

Given the huge disparities in standards of living on a global scale, it is perhaps only the Western middle classes that can afford to question the ethics of the commodification of the past – ironically, those who are most likely to visit the area in its commoditised state. Though, as I have outlined above, there are many problems that must be addressed in the heritage visions presented by the various agencies active within the city, many interviewees expressed their desire to maximise the tourist potential of Quseir al-Qadim: the presentation of Quseir al-Qadim as a heritage site is welcomed both economically and symbolically in the city. Neither should be given precedence over the other.[40]

Nevertheless, whilst we must be wary of critiquing the ethics of the commodification of the past *per se*, we should perhaps question the viability of heritage tourism as an economic strategy within the context of Quseir. Despit e the perceptions of many interviewees, it is certainly not guaranteed that an increase in tourism, whether founded upon archaeology or not, will result in higher levels of employment in Quseir – at present a large number of those employed within the industry are economic migrants from the Delta and the Nile valley, whilst the managers of both the Mövenpick and Flamenco, the two largest hotels in the region, are Europeans. Though there are rest houses for hotel employees in the city itself, it is difficult to ascertain what percentage of employees wages remain in Quseir, and what is sent to their families elsewhere. Similarly, Lea (1988) has demonstrated that most employment in tourist resorts is generated through the resultant increase in the number of restaurants and bars, employees generally outnumbering their counterparts in hotels by some 40%. Given the enclave nature of the resorts in Quseir, this is unlikely to have a significant impact in terms of employment in the city. [41]

Both Samy (1975) and Smith (1994) have challenged the notion that tourism as an economic strategy is mutually beneficial to all: as Lea demonstrates, only 22-25% of the *retail price* of a holiday remains in the host country, let alone the host city (Lea 1988; drawing on data gathered by Britton 1981). Mitchell's (2001) analysis of development in Luxor similarly highlights the vast sums that can be lost to trans-national tourist corporations, through both the awarding of contracts to foreign companies and the channelling of profits overseas – a problem exasperated by the enclave nature of the resorts in Quseir, in contrast to locally owned and run establishments.[42] The actual percentage of tourists visiting the city from these enclave resorts is not at present high, as revealed by the manager of one of the resorts:

> We have trips to Quseir twice a week, for people to get an idea about what Egyptian cities are like and maybe have a look at the shops. People enjoy it, but usually not too many people actually go (Int. 3.13).

Yet even at a local level, access to the potential economic benefits garnered from heritage tourism is unlikely to be equal. Indeed, it would not be misleading to suggest that only a select few residents in Quseir will truly benefit financially from the arrival of mass tourism, at least in comparison to the establishment of any other industry – entrepreneurs and owners of the biggest and brightest bazaars. It should be noted that at present the majority of these are owned by individuals from outside Quseir, individuals

from Hurghada or Luxor with knowledge of the tourist industry and the ability to draw upon existing manufacturing frameworks.[43] Unfortunately for the bazaar owners, one hotel employee also stated that, though they are eager to provide their guests with the opportunity to visit Quseir, they are not encouraged to visit the bazaars themselves: the hotel has its own shops within the compound (Int. 3.12). Any economic benefit from these trips would therefore be minimal.

The potential impact of the tourism on other employment sectors must also be taken into consideration. Many highly trained, well qualified and motivated employees in Quseir have moved from hotel to hotel, performing often menial tasks with little or no opportunity to move up the promotional ladder. Though the pay is meagre, positions unstable and the hours long (it is not unusual for some staff in the hotels to work sixteen hour days), the financial rewards are nevertheless better than those found in the civil service: two archaeology graduates working within different hotels were prevented from pursuing careers in their chosen profession by the relative disparity in the wages of the public and the private sector. Similarly, a large number of language graduates and trained language teachers have left education to move into the tourist industry (e.g. Int. 21; 2.2; 2.3; 2.7; 3.12; 3.17). If the trend continues at its current rate, there will be soon be a shortage of teachers in the city qualified to train the industry's future intake.

Furthermore, whilst it is certainly true that heritage tourism can be fiscally rewarding, heritage sites cost significantly more to maintain than beaches (particularly when those beaches are already privately owned) – conservation often means foregoing large sums of capital that could be equally, if not more profitably spent elsewhere (Graham *et al* 2000:130). In many instances, the costs of restoration may outweigh the benefits – the ARCE/ USAID restoration of the citadel occurred at great expense; money that could have been utilised for the provision of adequate sanitary facilities within the city, for example.[44]

Finally, it is important to question the long-term feasibility of Quseir as a tourist resort. Following the completion of Marsa Alam airport, there is the very real possibility that the industry will shift its gaze further south, tempted by the opportunities for developing stretches of virgin coastline. Indeed, a representative of the industry in Quseir described the city as little more than a 'stepping stone', a bridge between the resorts of Hurghada

and Marsa Alam, that will become redundant once the latter becomes sufficiently developed (Int. 3.13). Others concur:

- Here things will go very slowly – it's not like Hurghada or Sharm al-Sheikh, everything will not happen at once. Quseir is just a bridge, a bridge to move the tourists from Hurghada to the south (3.9).
- Maybe the tourist industry will stay for a few years, but one day everything will move down to Marsa Alam. We have a good example of this. Do you know how old the Mövenpick is? 6 or 7 years old. After 6 or 7 years of the first hotel in Hurghada there were maybe 60 or 70 hotels. Now we have only 4 hotels...The hotels will be full here because there are only 4, and in the future maybe a maximum of 10. Many of the young people from here will move to Marsa Alam. I'm sure of this (Int. 3.20).

If this were the case, the consequences for a city that is presently aiming all of its resources at the generation of a sustainable tourist industry would be alarming. For one individual, this makes the excavation and subsequent presentation of Quseir al-Qadim even more crucial:

> In the next six months or so the airport will open at Marsa Alam and a lot of people will go from here to work in the south. So it is important for them, and for the city, to know their history (Int. 3.7).[45]

An alternative industry for Quseir?

Many residents, recognising the potential pitfalls inherent in the promotion of tourism, have highlighted the need for a multi-faceted approach to economic development, the promotion of Quseir as both an attractive base for tourists and heavy or manufacturing industry:

- Now that the Phosphate Company has finished, I think the people here in Quseir need more projects, productive projects like the government wants. There is no production here, no factories here. We need to have factories because so many people are unemployed. I am a teacher, and there is no community if there is no production (Int. 3.7).
- The closure of the Phosphate Company was bad, bad, bad for the people of Quseir. The nature of the citizens here in Quseir is that we are not able to work with tourists. We don't have the experience, we didn't even think of tourists to prepare for the activity. The people here are finishing their school and going to work in the tourist industry only to wash dishes, because they have no experience. People come from Cairo from the tourism colleges taking better

positions, better salaries, and the citizens of Quseir take about LE120 a month. This is a bad situation. How do people get to live? Make new factories, provide us with places to work again (Int. 3.21).

- There is no factory, nothing for the people to work. The only thing we have is the tourist village right now. But if we focus on only one thing, then we won't succeed...

  Quseir is a small city, so how do you make it bigger? By tourism only? No. A lot of people who come from the Nile valley still return there after work – they haven't settled here. It's only a job. So building factories, clothes for example, fishing – so many things we have to make here, not tourism only. I don't think we should focus on one thing. Yes, tourism can bring a lot of income, but you have to split it. People have their own traditions, their own thoughts, they need alternatives if they don't want to work in tourism. 20 years ago, the fishing industry was the same size as the Phosphate Company – if you didn't work in the company, you were a fisherman (3.22).

Quseir Heritage too recognises the need to promote an alternative to tourism for people in Quseir. For them, the emphasis is on the regeneration of the fishing industry concurrently with heritage tourism (figure 7.9):

> One of the things that I am very concerned about is the fishing industry. The fishing industry was at one time the backbone of this economy, particularly after the harbour ceased to be operational and before the phosphate came into the picture.
>
> Now all the fishermen are at a loss. They have no money to start, they have no ice so they don't know what to do with the fish. They are denied access to the shore because hotels are being built all over the place, so they obviously need help and the NGO is trying to do something in uniting them into groups - each group will be able to get a loan, buy the equipment, fishing nets and whatever else they need to be able to fish, and hopefully they will organise themselves with the help of the NGO to cool store the fish and transport them to the centres where they can be sold at a reasonable price. If you realise that the fish is sold here at LE five or six a kilo and in Cairo it is about four times that much, obviously there is room for some of this fish to be moved to Cairo to be sold there. To ask fishermen to do that on their own is out of the question - they would not be able to do it because they have not got the funding.
>
> But if the Egyptian Social Fund will help them through the NGO, and the NGO could get them together to organise themselves, so that they own their destiny and they own the equipment, then they stand a better chance for the future (Int. 19).[46]

Figure 7.9 Fishing in the bay of Quseir.

It is clear that both fishing and heritage tourism can co-exist – indeed, the heritage potential of Quseir may even be enhanced by the presence of a visible, thriving fishing industry. What is more questionable, however, is whether tourism and heavy industry are equally compatible; it is unlikely that many tourists would deem them to be comfortable bedfellows (see above). Though my political and ethical beliefs are currently screaming at me 'So what!', it is important to remember that it is these tourists who will ultimately decide the success of Quseir as a holiday resort. At present, there are no plans for any developments in Quseir other than those based upon fishing and tourism.[47]

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have examined the emergence of heritage tourism in Quseir, analysing the perceived role of heritage in the repositioning of Quseir as a tourist resort *par excellence*. I nevertheless suggested that the vision of the past as promoted by the heritage industry in Quseir is, at present, a distorted one. I concluded by questioning the

feasibility of tourism as a long-term economic strategy in the city, arguing that for the majority of local residents the benefits will not be as great as anticipated.

Despite these reservations, in all but four interviews conducted in Quseir, the development of tourism was perceived in solely positive terms. It will be interesting to see if interviews conducted in the city in the next few years, when the tourist industry has become more firmly established, reflect a similar positive attitude toward tourism, or whether the potential social and cultural impact of the industry and tourist behaviour is fore grounded. At present though, the industry is perceived as having the potential to meet the basic need of economic security, and archaeology, or more specifically the excavation and presentation of Quseir al-Qadim, is deemed essential to its growth. It is therefore up to us as archaeologists, working in conjunction with the local community, to ensure that the potential social, cultural and economic benefits of the site within which we are privileged to work is maximised in a sensitive and inclusive manner. It is this that the Community Archaeology Project at Quseir, and the excavation more generally, is endeavouring to achieve.

As two local residents so cogently remarked, "*history gives value; archaeology gives substance*" (Int. 19; Int. 2.2).

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[1] Int. 2.2; Int. 19.
[2] Cited in Reid (2002:89).
[3] Predominantly Germans and Italians, though with increasing numbers of Austrian, French and Swiss,. At present, relatively few Britons have found their way to Quseir, the vast majority seemingly preferring the somewhat more ostentatious surroundings of Hurghada.
[4] This is not the place to go into a detailed discussion of the motivations of individual tourists, their expectations of resorts or tourist behaviour. This has been dealt with eloquently elsewhere (e.g. Urry 1990; World Tourism Organisation 1991; Williams and Shaw 1991*b*; Williams 1998).
[5] Archaeologists, or perhaps archaeo-tourists as I prefer, are perhaps the worst kind of tourists; hanging around for weeks on end constantly haggling over the price of gallebayahs....
[6] Carrying capacity can be defined as the point at which residents perceive a negative impact upon their social and cultural structures through further development. It may also take into account potential environmental and physical damage incurred through increased development (see D'Amore 1983; Getz 1983; O'Reilly 1986).
[7] See Petford (1996), drawing on Root's notion of the post-Fordist marketing economy (1996), for discussion of homogeneity within the tourist industry.
[8] To this list, the traditional 'three S's', we should perhaps add a fourth, Sex. The popularity of this fourth element cannot be underestimated – we only need to look at the huge numbers of British revellers that descend upon the Balearics and certain Greek Islands each year. This is also true, to a certain extent, of Hurghada. Both a colleague and myself have been offered the services of Eastern European prostitutes whilst on airport runs to the city (turned down, I hasten to add), whilst a less

regulated form is visible every night in the numerous bars and clubs of the diving resort. At present, I do not believe that this plays any part in the selection of Quseir as a holiday destination.

[9] See Swinglehurst (1994:100) on the increase in visitors to the Uffizi, the Acropolis, the Sistine Chapel, even the reproduction Lascaux.

[10] For a discussion of the concept of heritage more generally, see Urry (1990); Lowenthal (1998); Graham, Ashworth & Tunbridge (2000)

[11] In this respect, the designation of a building or landscape as a heritage site operates in a similar manner to folklore, emphasising the importance and uniqueness of place (see chapter six).

[12] 'The burdens of heritage' is not merely a pithy phrase – the authors provide an often fascinating discussion of the gruesome, macabre power struggles involved in efforts to claim concentration camps as an enduring symbol of group identity, "the material heritage of atrocity" (Graham *et al* 2000:71, chapter three).

[13] For a detailed discussion of the philosophy behind the construction of New Gurna in the 1950s see Mitchell (2001).

[14] A restoration project funded by USAID with the assistance of the Wallenberg trust and conducted by the American Research Centre of Egypt (ARCE) has undertaken extensive work within the citadel, designed to make the structure both safe and presentable for tourists. Subsequent wall tumbles have, however, rendered the citadel unsafe, and it is not yet open for public consumption.

[15] This process is perhaps more explicit in other areas of Egypt: Interviewee 17 showed me several photographs of houses constructed by the Shell company in Ras Gharib, an oil centre some 200km north of Quseir. Constructed in a 'classic' English style, complete with veranda, the buildings would not have been out of place in rural Oxfordshire.

[16] e.g. "[c]apital has fallen in love with difference: advertising thrives on selling us things that will enhance our uniqueness and individuality. It's no longer about keeping up with the Joneses, it's about being different from them...cultural difference *sells*" (Rutherford 1990:11).

[17] See Hamilton (1984); Rowse & Moran (1985); Mercer (1994); Hollinshead (1996) for an analysis of this process in Australia; Levine (2001) on the Israeli appropriation of Arab heritage sites in Jaffa/ Tel-Aviv; Boniface & Fowler (1993:27) on the predominance of European heritage sites in the U.S.

[18] See Graburn (2001) for a discussion of Bulgarian attitudes towards its Roman past.

[19] It is perhaps ironic that tourism itself is inherently damaging to the environment. Even in instances when efforts are made to limit the potential impact upon the environment (at the Mövenpick for example), the very act of getting to the destination by plane requires the consumption of huge amounts of fossil fuels.

[20] Thayer describes this as the 'technological landscape of guilt' – the presence of objects in the landscape (often industrial) that are perceived to be inappropriate or unsuitable for consumption (1990:2).

[21] It is suggested by Graham *et al* that the climate of nostalgia, the desire for a greater past, has facilitated the repackaging of coal mines as heritage sites in Britain (2000:43). It is clear that this nostalgia is also prevalent in Quseir, with interviewees continually emphasising the importance of the city in phosphate production.

[22] A similar phenomenon has been documented by Schlüter (1994) in the context of Latin American tourist developments. See also Cogswell (1996) on the impact of cultural tourism on residents when the sites are designed with only the visitor in mind.

[23] The physical restrictions of the core must also be taken into account – given its small size, there is a limit to the number of guests that could access the core before potential tensions between tourists and residents become a reality. See Sachs-Jeantet (1996) for a discussion of the problems inherent in directing tourists to already densely populated urban spaces.

[24] See also Lowenthal (1998:21)

[25] See Selwyn's (1996) critique of MacCanell for a discussion of the search for 'authenticity' in modern tourism and its relation to the modern paradigms of commercialisation and consumerism.

[26] Pearce highlights the dangers for developers inherent in ignoring the wishes of the local community in tourism planning, including:

- Loss of support for agencies promoting tourism
- An unwillingness to work in the tourist industry
- A lack of enthusiasm for the promotion of tourism
- Increased hostility towards tourists
- Delays in development (after Pearce 1994:104-5).

[27] Though it is an extreme example, the activities of USAID themselves at Gurna in the 1990s highlight the dangers of imposing a preconceived plan upon the community. The attempts at forced relocation of

the Gurnwaris, a plan financed by USAID that failed to take into account the wishes of the inhabitants of Gurna, resulted in violent clashes between the police and residents (see Mitchell 2001 for a more detailed discussion). I do not suggest that their activities in Quseir are of a similar magnitude, nor that they would have a similar effect on the residents of the city. I simply suggest that USAID should be aware of the image they are gradually constructing for themselves in Egypt, as servants to multi-national corporations unconcerned with the wishes of ordinary residents.

[28] The academic community is not averse to such approaches either. Consider for a moment this description of Hawaiian heritage tourism, given to us by Boniface and Fowler:

> While one could not be but swayed by the enthusiastic pleasure with which we were entertained, a nagging uncomfortable-ness remained in my mind that, naively and perhaps unconsciously on the part of our hosts, we were being gently brainwashed. Apart from the question of cultural continuity, after all, Hawaiians of pure Polynesian stock now compromise but a very small minority...Hawaii as perceived by this tourist begs not simply the question 'Who owns the Hawaiian heritage?' but 'What *is* the Hawaiian heritage?' The smiling and apparently innocent answer we were given to the latter question at our congress was 'indigenously Polynesian (1993:54-55).
>
> ...
>
> We heard nothing of this [an ancient field system] at the Congress, tunnel-visioned as we were into a perception of heritage as conceived by our delightful but scientifically un-educated hosts (1993:58).

Similar themes are echoed throughout their text – the presumption to tell an indigenous community what should and what should not constitute their heritage. As we have seen, what the residents of a certain area perceive of as their heritage instantly becomes *their* heritage, regardless of 'realities'.

[29] Defined as those coffee shops that actively solicit a broad clientele (both Egyptians and tourists). The majority of the tourist oriented coffee shops are situated on the waterfront and are generally (though not exclusively) frequented by the younger male population of Quseir. Tourists are often directed to these coffee shops by tour guides in return for payment from the owners. The total number of coffee shops within the city is estimated to be approximately 70.

[30] Kagermeier's quantitative survey of perceptions of economic benefits in resorts in both Morocco and Tunisia reveals similar perceptions to those prevalent throughout Quseir (pers. comm).

[31] e.g. "[tourism has the] inbuilt potential *to debase both presenter and onlooker*" (Boniface & Fowler 1993:2; emphasis in original). Such reactions to tourism are nothing new: as Reid highlights, contemporary historians of Victorian and Edwardian Mediterranean tourism were undecided as to whether increased tourism to Egypt was beneficial or detrimental to Egypt, socially or economically (2002:92)

[32] Boniface and Fowler's text is indicative of the theoretical and methodological naïvety with which some have approached the study of heritage tourism. For example, they suggest that

> Istanbul, perhaps due to the Eastern side of its character, is still not really geared up to meet the needs of the modern tourist from the West, in Western style. The essence of the city is Eastern...Venice, a city whose wealth is built upon trade between Europe and the East is, its exotic elements notwithstanding, a European place (1993:39-40).

This serves only to reinforce the Occident/ Orient dichotomy deconstructed so forcibly by Said (1978). If we are to understand Boniface and Fowler correctly, the East is exotic and chaotic, the West cultured and civilised.

[33] Recounting what may appear on the surface to be a somewhat trivial example highlights other agents of social change active within the city: in 2000, it was extremely difficult to find somewhere to watch English domestic football in Quseir. In 2001, I had several invitations to watch the ill-fated Spurs V's Arsenal FA cup semi-final on satellite television at people's houses. By 2002, it was possible to watch England internationals in coffee shops; by 2003 we could watch English Premier League football on a Saturday – something that is impossible to do in England itself. I hasten to add that any football watching that did occur was for the purposes of research only.

[34] A personal anecdote may make the point clearer: presenting some of this research at a postgraduate symposium in May 2002, I concluded by suggesting that if tourism is the only way for some communities to ensure economic survival, we should do our utmost to assist in the construction of sensitive and inclusive heritage sites that maximise the social and economic benefits for the local community. I was nevertheless asked the question by one member of the audience "should we not encourage communities to develop an alternative to the cash based, capitalist economy?" I believe that this is indicative of the simplicity with which issues of tourism are debated within some sectors of the

academic community. Such attitudes fail to take into account the immediacy of the situation: people in Quseir require employment *now*, and see heritage tourism as the best way for that goal to be achieved.

[35] Cited in Bhaba (1994:141).

[36] Though the Egyptian tourist board is trying to promote Red Sea tourism in Britain through both poster and media advertisements, it is somewhat ironic, given the geological time depth involved, that the tag line for the posters reads 'Discover the new treasures of Egypt'.

[37] Though a brief survey of Christian based websites would seem to suggest that an increasing number of largely American pilgrims do make trips specifically to see early Christian monasteries.

[38] LE = Egyptian pounds.

[39] Much of the rest of Plog's paper continues in a similar vein, making grand sweeping statements with no data to support them, e.g.:

> when a place loses its quaintness and charm, and its sense of naturalness, it no longer can attract visitors at the rate it once did...with local residents, their loss is much more severe and permanent. *Their 'home' has been destroyed in ways they do not fully understand and for which they lack the capability and unity of action to restore what they once possessed* (1994:48; my emphasis).

[40] It is of course difficult to quantify the exact economic impact of tourism on the city – as many authors have noted (e.g. Davidson 1994; Theobald 1994; Robinson 2001), the segmented nature of the industry, the impossibility of separating tourist spending from that of the local inhabitants and conflicting definitions and concepts within both tourism and economics makes an exact economic appraisal almost impossible These problems are succinctly summarised by Theobald (1994:17):

> For too long, the tourism industry, both international and domestic, has had difficulty making statistical comparisons with others sectors of the economy. In all nations, this had led to difficulty in developing a valid, reliable and credible information or database about tourism and its contribution to local, regional and global economies.

See also Eadington and Radman (1991) for further discussion of the economic advantages/ disadvantages of tourism.

[41] An enclave resort is one that is essentially self-sufficient, minimising contact between locals and tourists except those employed in servile capacities within the hotels themselves. They are characterised by physical separation from urban settlements, minimal economic linkages with host communities and a dependence upon foreign tourists (often reflected in prices that reinforce exclusivity). Enclave resort developments have been encouraged by the World Bank (see Williams 1998; Mitchell 2001 for further discussion).

[42] 'Leakage' of profit from Egypt is evident in the attractive terms and conditions available to foreign investors in Egypt, outlined in the brochure of the Tourist Development Authority which asserts:

> The right of profit repatriation and re-exportation of invested funds, tax exemptions ranging up to 100 years, custom duty on imported equipment and machinery at 5% flat rate, elimination of controls on process and profit ceilings and right of acquisition of land and real estate (Tourist Development Authority n.d.; cited in Petford 1996:94).

[43] A similar trend has been noted by Long (1989) in Oaxaca, Mexico.

[44] No figures are available from ARCE that detail the total cost of the restoration of the citadel. It is reasonable to assume, however, that given the major structural refurbishments, the restoration of one entire wall (since collapsed), the production of visitor centres within the citadels interior, the employment of local artisans, labourers and a European sculptor, that the cost was fairly substantial.

[45] Several writers (e.g. Williams 1998) have also argued that the volatile nature of the tourist industry must be taken into account before it is embraced as a singular development plan: long term sustainable tourism is dependent upon economic factors that are often beyond the control of the destination country, let alone the resort (e.g. global recessions). Perceptions of visitor security are also crucial – both the Cairo and Luxor terrorist attacks of the mid 1990s had a dramatic impact upon the tourist revenue of Egypt, an impact that even the well developed tourist based economies of the capital and the Nile Valley struggled to cope with. Even the short-term perception of a security threat in the Middle East could have a potentially catastrophic impact upon a developing infrastructure in Quseir.

[46] The Egyptian Social Fund was established in 1991 with the objective of increasing employment through the support of small projects and the creation/ maintenance of the country's infrastructure. The fund is headed by a director who reports to a board chaired by the Prime Minister and receives funding from the World Bank, the EU, and a number of Arabic funding bodies. Several applications to the Social Fund have been made in Quseir through the auspices of Quseir Heritage.

[47] It is important to recognise, however, that in terms of production tourism need not be entirely negative: as El-Daly (2000) has demonstrated, many traditional crafts have been re-discovered in Egypt

to supply tourists with their requisite authentic souvenirs. This is also true of other areas of the globe – Lea (1988:71) notes a similar resurgence in traditional crafts of the Inuit and the sand or bark paintings of Australian Aboriginal groups, directly related to increases in tourism. It is nevertheless argued by Fanon (1961) that a return to 'traditional crafts' does little more than replicate the asymmetry of colonialism: people are denied a future by gazing back to the past; it is 'colonial specialists' (ethnographers and archaeologists) who champion tradition, 'who become defenders of the native style'.

CONCLUSION

Community archaeologies; archaeological communities

It's great that you take information from me about my history, but don't take my history

Int. 3.14

The research presented here forms one component of the Community Archaeology Project at Quseir, an integral part of the wider archaeological investigation of Quseir al-Qadim. Developing out of critiques of the discipline from indigenous communities, most notably in Australia, community oriented approaches incorporate a range of strategies designed to facilitate collaboration with local communities at every stage of the research process. A commitment to community archaeology should not, however, be regarded as simply a moral or ethical issue (Moser *et al* 2002:243); it should not be seen, in Lippert's terms (1997:127), as disciplinary penance. As this thesis has demonstrated, collaboration with local communities results in better archaeological practice.

The disparate themes addressed within this thesis are testament to the potential of community archaeology to generate intriguing research questions; questions that are of interest and relevance to all parties. Each chapter of part two is devoted to a theme given precedence by local residents during the interviews themselves: the role of the past in the construction of contemporary community identity, oral history, alternative perceptions of the past and the development of heritage tourism. The potential for collaborative archaeological practice to impact positively upon investigation is also evident in the transformation of the research process itself in Quseir, outlined in some detail in chapter two.

Incorporating interviews with local residents into archaeological investigations also facilitates greater access to resources and information. Chapter four demonstrates the benefits of this for the archaeological community, interweaving oral history, 'traditional' history and archaeological evidence to construct a richer narrative, a more textured narrative than would

be possible through traditional archaeological analysis alone. Listening to others speak about the past enriches the histories that we construct in the present.

Yet it is not just oral history that has the potential to enrich archaeological investigations – as several interviewees suggested, any discussion of Quseir al-Qadim must incorporate all ways of knowing the past, whether archaeological, historical, mythic or folkloric (e.g. Int. 29, 47). In chapter three, I therefore suggested that a sensitive, perhaps cautious analysis of the folklore of archaeological sites can provide insights into how the past is experienced, how it is negotiated and understood in the present. The sheer quantity of archaeological folklore at Quseir al-Qadim emphasises its iconic status within the community, reiterating for residents the antiquity of the region and contributing to the construction of identity within the city by appealing to a sense of a shared, communal past. I demonstrated in chapter six that this process can be fruitfully explored through an examination of the visual elements of the folktales: the juxtaposition of folkloric icons, motifs and the archaeological site articulating the relationship between past and present.

Indeed, it is clear that Quseir al-Qadim plays a fundamental role in the construction of contemporary community identity in Quseir, an identity much needed following the demise of the phosphate industry in the late 1980s. As we have seen, Quseir is gradually repositioning itself as a city of heritage, and the excavation and subsequent presentation of Quseir al-Qadim is regarded by many interviewees as essential to its growth.

It is interesting to note, however, that these identity constructs do not necessarily rely on the past as interpreted by archaeologists. At least for several interviewees in Quseir, archaeological analyses would appear to be of less significance than the tangible presence of the archaeology itself; the physicality of the site emphasising the antiquity of the region, regardless of archaeological or historical investigations. As Lowenthal suggests, the past is often more significant as a realm of faith than of fact: "we have a history here you know..." (1998:135). The presentation of archaeological research at both the site and the Heritage Centre contributes to the construction of identity by demonstrating to those *outside* of Quseir that the city has an ancient past; for many local residents, they serve only to confirm a general 'sense' of history that already exists. As archaeologists, we should perhaps be aware

that our detailed analyses are often of less importance to others than a general recognition of longevity.

The significance of historical awareness, regardless of archaeological 'accuracy', is further apparent in the belief that Quseir al-Qadim will eventually yield evidence of a Pharaonic past. I suggested in chapter five that this is indicative of a need for civic recognition in a country so rich in archaeological remains, a need exaggerated in a city that has traditionally felt isolated from the administrative and economic centres of Cairo and Luxor. Yet it is also inextricably linked to the desire to promote Quseir al-Qadim as a tourist attraction; one facet of the re-designation of the city as a heritage tourist destination *par excellence.* In chapter seven, I therefore critically examined the heritage vision of Quseir's past promoted by the various agencies currently active within the city, arguing that at present it is a distorted one – a European past for an Egyptian city. I also questioned the feasibility of promoting Quseir al-Qadim as a monolithic tourist attraction, suggesting that its lack of monumental architectural remains is unlikely to generate significant increases in tourism to the region. The site could, however, plausibly function as a secondary attraction; both Quseir al-Qadim and the Heritage Centre attracting guests from their hotel enclaves into the city itself. Though, as archaeologists, we have traditionally been reluctant to discuss the economics of the past, it is imperative that we work in collaboration with local communities to *maximise* the potential social, cultural and economic benefits of the archaeological investigations that we are privileged to undertake.

I suggested previously that the research presented here is in essence an introduction to an ongoing project in Quseir, an introduction that addresses the essentials, and one that facilitates the development of future, intriguing research projects. This thesis has nevertheless demonstrated the potentials of community archaeology for a discipline that is prepared not simply to communicate with local communities, but to collaborate. It is an archaeology that is richer and more meaningful to all parties; an approach that allows archaeologists to access other ways of knowing the past, other sources of historical information, and one that allows the discipline to assess the role of archaeology in the present. It is an approach that ensures archaeology retains a social relevance in the twenty-

first century, and one from which all parties involved in the investigation of the past benefit, whether archaeologists or local residents.

Through collaboration, we may truly "*make the diamond shine*" (Int. 3.8).

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