

It is now a year or more since the national newspapers and the BBC brought to our attention the discovery of at least forty lead codices, apparently found in Jordan and possibly of ancient provenance, but currently in illegal private possession. Since the discovery, scientific tests have been conducted on one of these codices, and considerable discussion has taken place among scholars and in the informal social media. There are many indications that these finds are not modern forgeries, but that possibility cannot as yet be definitively excluded.

Since the discovery became known, there has been silence from the Jordanian authorities, who, we understand, have identified the site where they were once deposited, and have taken possession of additional codices from the same collection. The lack of any official announcement is both strange and somewhat disturbing, and we still await news of plans for the repossession of these objects, for proper examination of the objects, and, crucially, for a determination of whether or not they are genuine antiquities.

Whether ancient or not, these intriguing and possibly important finds require an urgent official response. Even a modern forgery on this scale must be investigated, and if they are ancient even more research will be required. We ask the authorities in Amman to make an immediate and detailed public statement about these finds and about their intentions regarding them. This matter is, in our opinion, not just of national and cultural importance for the kingdom of Jordan but also for all those interested in the antiquity (and the controversial antiquities markets) of the Middle East.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Philip Davies