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CONSERVATION AND THE ANTIQUITIES TRADE

CATHERINE SEASE

ABSTRACT—Experience as an expert witness in a case involving some looted Byzantine mosaics from Cyprus led the author to examine the role of conservation in the antiquities trade. To understand the significance of looting, the author discusses the concept of archaeological context and how looting robs artifacts of their context, thus severely compromising their scientific value. Conservators may, through treatment and analysis of artifacts on the market, unwittingly contribute to that loss of information. The author presents some of the complex ethical issues involved in the treatment of archaeological material, including the proper understanding of the consequences of those treatments, in the hopes that the topic will be opened up for discussion.

TITRE—Conservation et commerce des antiquités. **RÉSUMÉ**—L'auteur de cet article examine le rôle que joue la conservation dans le commerce des antiquités; cette réflexion lui est inspirée par son expérience d'expert, appelée à témoigner dans le cadre d'un procès relatif à des mosaïques byzantines volées dans une église de Chypre. L'auteur étudie le concept de contexte archéologique dans le but d'appréhender l'importance et les répercussions du pillage: soustraire illégalement un objet de son contexte a pour conséquence de mettre en péril sa valeur scientifique. Il peut se produire que le restaurateur, en analysant et en traitant des pièces présentes sur le marché, contribue involontairement à cette perte d'information. L'auteur aborde certaines questions complexes de déontologie posées par la traitement de matériels archéologiques, en particulier celle de la bonne compréhension des conséquences des traitements apportés aux objets, et manifeste le souhait qu'un débat s'ouvre sur ce thème.

TITULO—La conservación y el comercio de antigüedades. **RESUMEN**—La experiencia adquirida por el autor al participar como testigo experto en un caso que involucra el saqueo de algunos mosaicos bizantinos de Chipre, lo llevo a examinar el rol del conservador en el comercio de antigüedades. Con el fin de entender el significado del saqueo, el autor discute el concepto de contexto arqueológico, y como el saqueo priva a las piezas arqueológicas de su contexto poniendo en serio peligro su valor científico. Los conservadores pueden contribuir sin intención, por medio del tratamiento que efectúen y el análisis de obras de arte que estén en el mercado, a la pérdida de información. El autor presenta algunos de los complicados dilemas éticos involucradas en el tratamiento de material arqueológico, incluyendo el entender a fondo las consecuencias de esos tratamientos, con la esperanza de que el tema quedará abierto debate.

1. INTRODUCTION

The small church of the Panagia Kanakariá is located in the village of Lythrankomi, part way along the Karpas peninsula of northeastern Cyprus that points toward the mainland of Turkey. Although small and seemingly insignificant, this church contained some of the most important examples of Byzantine art from the sixth century (Michaelides 1989). Sometime after the 1974 invasion of Cyprus by Turkey, but before 1976, significant portions of the mosaics were stripped from the walls of the church and removed from the island. Their whereabouts were unknown until four fragments surfaced in the hands of an Indianapolis art dealer in 1989.

Legal proceedings were undertaken jointly by the Cypriot government and the Autocephalous Church of Cyprus to have them returned. In 1990, Danaë Thimme and the author were called in by the prosecution as expert witnesses to examine the fragments with a view to testifying in a suit for damages.

The four fragments depict the heads of the North Archangel and the upper half of the figure of Christ from the apse and the heads of the Apostles James and Matthew from the arch in front of the apse. Dating to the mid-sixth century and surviving unscathed the Iconoclastic period of the eighth century, these mosaics are considered among the finest examples of Byzantine art. Demonstrating a high level of workmanship and preserving unique iconographic features, these fragments can be compared with counterparts in Ravenna, Thessaloniki, and Sinai (Megaw and Hawkins 1977:61–145).

Our task was to establish the overall condition of the fragments and see if it was possible to determine a chronological sequence of damage. We found that the damage could be divided into five discrete phases. However, only the three that are relevant to the topic of this paper will be discussed here:

1. The inexpert facing and hurried removal of the mosaics from the church. Each fragment was part of a larger composition that was roughly cut up; the figure of Christ suffered the most since it was cut in two and the halves disposed of separately.
2. The removal of the facings. There was every indication that the facings were ripped off the fragments without the use of a solvent. As a result, many tesserae were loosened, and the surfaces of others, already riddled with minute cracks, were sheared off.
3. Restoration. Cracks were realigned and filled, and the surface of each fragment was brought into a level plane by raising or lowering the tesserae with no consideration given to the fact that the fragments had come from a curved surface. The flattening, achieved by removing existing plaster or by

adding fill material, altered the placement of tesserae, effecting subtle changes in expression in the composition as a whole, most noticeable in the faces of the figures. By altering the original setting of the tesserae, the subtle movement of the figures carefully effected by the mosaicist through the reflection of light off the surfaces of the tesserae was also destroyed. From a technical point of view, this treatment obliterated what remained of the red sinopia, or underdrawing.

In addition, irreversible materials were used throughout, and no documentation was made. Each fragment was encased in a thick layer of plaster of Paris with no separating layer between it and the original plaster. The original plaster was not consolidated prior to encasement in the rigid surround and remains friable and unstable. Each fragment, mounted precariously with screws to flat squares of Masonite, was meant to be hung on the wall. A more detailed discussion and illustrations of the condition of the mosaic fragments can be found in Sease and Thimme (1995) and some of the legal aspects of the case can be found in Gerstenblith (1995).

The court decided in favor of the plaintiff, and the decision was upheld by the U. S. Court of Appeals. A decision was then made not to pursue the damages portion of the suit, and in the summer of 1992 the fragments made the long trip back to Cyprus. Although the fragments are back home, they are greatly diminished and, because of flattening and fragility, can never go back to their original positions in the church, assuming that the political situation there might one day make their reinstallation possible.

These antiquities are by no means the first or the last to suffer such a fate. Since the 1960s, the antiquities market has been escalating at an alarming rate to become a billion-dollar-a-year business involving archaeological artifacts and works of art from all over the world. As the market grows it creates an ever-increasing demand for antiquities, which, in turn, leads

inexorably to the looting of archaeological sites. This insatiable demand has been responsible for the partial, sometimes complete, destruction of untold numbers of sites. This fact is all the more unfortunate because many of these sites disappeared without their presence ever having been known to the scholarly community, a situation not unlike the extinction of many plant and animal species. A recent estimate is that "80 percent of all antiquities that come on to the market have been illegally excavated and smuggled" (Norman 1990).

The consequences of looting are extremely serious, not only from a scientific point of view but also from a humanitarian perspective. Our archaeological heritage is finite, and once it is lost, it is gone forever. In essence, the looting of sites wipes out our record of past peoples and their ways of life. Meyer equates the looting of archaeological sites with the burning of the famous ancient library in Alexandria by the Romans, "the catastrophic bonfire in which much of the wisdom of antiquity was consumed in flames" (Meyer 1973, 12).

Since involvement with the mosaics case, the author has given much thought to the role of archaeological conservation in the antiquities trade. The purpose of this paper is to share some of these thoughts and open the topic for discussion. First, it is necessary to discuss the concept of archaeological context for an understanding of how essential it is to comprehending the significance of the devastation caused by looting.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The predominant concern of archaeologists is the preservation and explanation of the archaeological record, of which artifacts form only a part. Excavation is not undertaken solely to recover objects but rather is dedicated to the reconstruction of the past. This process is achieved through the careful, systematic excavation of all the material remains from a site regardless of size, type, quality, and quantity, fol-

lowed by the analysis, interpretation, and publication of this material.

With modern excavation techniques, painstaking excavation not only uncovers the artifacts themselves but also reveals their associations to each other and to the site. The recovery of much of the unique information embodied in an artifact depends on many associations, including the stratigraphic layers in which the artifact was found, its position in the ground, its relationship to other artifacts, and traces of material found with it. This information, meticulously recorded in field photographs and notebooks, is all-important as it provides the contextual record for the artifacts.

Since archaeological excavation is by nature a destructive process, documentation plays a crucial role in excavation. Like conservation work, all stages must be carefully and accurately documented with written records, drawings, and photographs. Once excavation has taken place, the context of an artifact is preserved only in these documents.

Context is extremely important to the archaeologist; it is, in fact, what the discipline of archaeology is based on. It gives artifacts their legal authenticity and archaeological significance (Ford 1977, 14). The more that is known about the material associated with artifacts, the more that can be concluded not only about their function within a past society, including how and why they were made and used, but about broader issues, such as ancient economy, trade, or religion.

When artifacts are pulled out of the ground without proper excavation and documentation, their context is irretrievably lost without ever being known. Unlike archaeologists, looters are not interested in the context of artifacts, nor are they concerned with all artifacts from a site. They are interested only in those few, such as intact vessels, sculptures, and textiles, for which a market exists or can be created. All other material is ruthlessly broken and tossed aside, and in the process the site itself may very well be destroyed.

Cannon-Brookes (1994, 350) refers to looted artifacts as being "cultural orphans, which, torn from their contexts, remain forever dumb and virtually useless for scholarly purposes." Some archaeologists estimate that looted artifacts have lost 95% of their value to tell us what was going on in the past (Monastersky 1990, 393). Thus, the looting of sites means the complete loss of information, the loss of knowledge that can never be recovered, even if one has some or all of the artifacts from the site. One must realize that "mere appreciation of visual attractiveness, and the aesthetic pleasures to be derived from high-profile objects, must not be confused with knowledge or depth of understanding of them" (Cannon-Brookes 1994, 350). One needs to understand that, from an intellectual point of view, artifacts bought from a dealer's shop are not just as valuable as those retrieved through excavation. As Howard Carter, the excavator of King Tutankhamen's tomb in Egypt, stated:

Field-work is all-important, and it is a sure and certain fact that if every excavation had been properly, systematically, and conscientiously carried out, our knowledge of Egyptian archaeology would be at least 50 per cent greater than it is. There are numberless derelict objects in the storerooms of our museums which would give us valuable information could they but tell us whence they came (Carter and Mace 1923, 125).

Thus, artifacts are only of scientific value when their context is known. In the words of the noted American archaeologist W. W. Taylor (1948, 154), "It is not what you find, but how you find it" that is the guiding precept for archaeology.

It is no mere accident that archaeological sites are the targets of those involved in the illicit trafficking of artifacts. As many sites are located in remote areas, the risk of capture is relatively slight. More important, however, is the undeniable fact that artifacts that have not been documented, photographed, or cataloged are impossible to trace and can, therefore, be traded on the

international market with impunity (Platthy 1993, 45).

3. STOLEN ANTIQUITIES

Looting is not the only way in which antiquities come onto the market. The high prices paid for antiquities have created an insatiable demand that cannot always be met by looting and clandestine excavations. When the looted supply cannot meet demand, theft provides relatively easy access to large numbers of antiquities. It is a sad fact that conditions throughout the world provide art and archaeological thieves with relatively easy access to public collections.

War is perhaps the most obvious of these conditions and has taken a heavy toll on archaeological sites, as opportunists are most likely to be found where there is disorder. The hemorrhaging of large numbers of antiquities from war-torn countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait are only the latest in a long line of similar situations throughout human history. It is sobering to think that 50 years after the end of World War II, the fate of many important archaeological collections still remains unknown. The celebrated collection of antiquities found at Troy in Turkey by Heinrich Schliemann in the 1870s is a case in point. Only recently have the whereabouts of this collection been ascertained.

It is a sad fact that museum security measures in many of the antiquity and art "producing" countries are simply inadequate to deter or stop such activities. In addition, relatively unsophisticated, ignorant local inhabitants, particularly in rural areas, fall easy prey to more sophisticated, unscrupulous individuals from urban areas or art "consuming" countries. This situation is aided by deteriorating living conditions caused by severe periods of drought, earthquakes, or other natural disasters. How can a subsistence farmer, for example, turn down an amount of money that would keep his family in food and clothing for a year, especially when it is in exchange for a seemingly common, insignificant commodity,

such as pots or figurines?

While Italy heads the list of countries losing the greatest number of antiquities to looters, other Mediterranean countries, including Turkey, Greece, Egypt, and Lebanon, are not far behind (Platthy 1993). Within the past decade, numerous museums in Africa alone have been robbed of substantial numbers of their archaeological heritage (ICOM 1994). Unfortunately, the situation is no better in Central and South American countries (Pendergast 1991).

Theft, like looting, robs antiquities of their context. The origins of the antiquity must be obscured to prevent discovery of how it was obtained. Unless an antiquity has been carefully documented (and perhaps published) before its theft, it is virtually impossible to reconstruct where it came from, especially if it has been cleaned and altered by conservation treatment.

4. THE CONSERVATOR'S DILEMMA

The Kanakariá mosaics case illustrates the dilemma the antiquities trade presents to the archaeological conservator. When presented with an artifact for treatment, should a conservator treat it knowing that by so doing she or he is enhancing the artifact's value and thereby directly abetting the market, while indirectly contributing to the looting of sites? Such action could be rationalized by saying that at least the work would be done according to accepted conservation practice, be fully documented, and become part of the public record—none of which can be said for the Cypriot mosaic fragments. In effect, one is saying the context is already lost, but at least the object, which is surely worth something, can be saved. While most of the information embodied in it has been lost, it can at least tell us something about the past.

Or should the conservator take an ethical stand, refusing to have anything to do with the artifact, least of all its treatment? The rationale for this approach is that any work undertaken, no matter how small or insignificant, condones the antiquities trade. Furthermore, it recognizes

that any conservation work will more than likely significantly enhance not only the artifact but its market value as well. Conservation work can also serve to authenticate artifacts, which will add to their market value. In taking this stance, however, the conservator knows full well that the owner will find someone else to do the work, with the possibility that the artifact will not receive an appropriate treatment or that the treatment will not be properly documented and made available to the public.

5. CONSEQUENCES OF TREATMENT

It should be pointed out that for the purposes of this discussion the term "treatment" is used in its broadest sense, to encompass all activities or work that a conservator may undertake on an artifact. Thus it includes not only active treatment, such as cleaning, desalination, consolidation, and restoration but also technical studies and authentication.

Any work undertaken by a conservator can alter an artifact in ways that can have serious implications for the antiquities trade. Elia (1995, 249) refers to conservation work as being "the final stage in the laundering process which transforms looted antiquities into art commodities: objects go in dirty, corroded, and broken, and come out clean, shiny, and whole." In this way, conservation work can clearly enhance the value of an artifact. Even the simplest of conservation techniques, such as mechanical cleaning, can easily alter its appearance. Although they may be unsightly, dirt and other accretions can contain important scientific evidence, such as how an artifact was made or used. They can also contain vital information for identifying or proving or disproving its provenance (Monaster-sky 1990; O'Keefe 1995). Thus cleaning—the removal of this evidence—can aid the market by making artifacts virtually untraceable. More complicated conservation procedures, such as chemical cleaning, repatination, and restoration, can so totally change an artifact in appearance, structure, and composition as to make its identi-

fication impossible.

This is not to suggest that conservators are necessarily willfully trying to alter or obfuscate the archaeological record when treating unprovenanced material. While most would be appalled to think that their work might contribute in any way to the wanton destruction of sites, they simply may not understand or think through the repercussions of their actions. Nonetheless, the fact remains that they are contributing to the illicit trade of antiquities, albeit inadvertently, and the net result is the same; the damage has been done and cannot be reversed.

Authentication and technical studies can present particularly sticky situations. In many instances, scientific and technical studies have come to be regarded by many as valid substitutes for established provenance. The Djenné terracotta figurines from the Niger Delta of Mali provide an excellent example. Over the past 20 years, vast numbers of figurines have been illicitly excavated and exported. The more that have come onto the market, the greater the demand for them has become. As supply failed to meet demand, forgeries appeared. To distinguish fakes from authentic objects, the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art at Oxford University undertook thermoluminescence dating on figurines on a no-questions-asked basis. As part of this service, the laboratory provided certificates of authenticity for figurines that passed the tests. As expected, these certificates had a significant effect on the market price of figurines. In 1988, figurines without certificates at Christie's had an average presale estimate of £175. The previous year at Sotheby's, however, similar figurines with certificates had estimates averaging £1,200 (Chippindale 1991). The value of these certificates to looters is patently obvious, as testing can vindicate months of extreme risk and in so doing vastly increase the profits of looting. Age, like other attributes, has become a valuable commodity.

As archaeologists and art historians receive much of their scientific and technical information and analysis from conservators, conserva-

tion reports, especially those involving technical analysis, could also come to be regarded as substitutes for an established provenance, "cloaking the shady practices of the antiquities trade in a mantle of academic and scientific legitimacy" (Elia 1995, 245). It is easy to see how such reports and test results could allay any doubts of authenticity. In addition, the very fact that an artifact was treated by a conservator could be taken as an indication of authenticity by someone, for why would anyone go to the trouble and expense of having a fake conserved?

6. THE CONSERVATOR'S RESPONSIBILITY

What is the responsibility of the conservator? Is it to the individual artifact in question, or is it to material as yet unplundered? Unfortunately, the codes of ethics of the various national and international conservation groups do not specifically address this issue (Tubb and Sease 1996), leaving it up to the individual conservator to decide.

By undertaking the treatment of an antiquity to ensure that such treatment will be performed following accepted conservation practice, a conservator could be seen to be acting professionally and ethically. Our training has conditioned us to regard the safety and integrity of the artifact, object, or painting to be of paramount importance. For example, according to the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material's *Code of Ethics* (1986, 4), "All actions of the conservator must be governed by an unswerving respect for the physical, historic and aesthetic integrity of the object." While the AIC (1994), IIC-CG (1989, 5), and UKIC (1995, 1) have substituted the term "cultural property" for "object" in their codes of ethics, it is clear that the intent remains the same. Like physicians, most conservators find the idea of turning away a patient, especially one in dire need, not only difficult to accept but difficult to do. We have set ourselves up as being advocates for objects and have a tendency to think in terms of "this

object needs me.” Looked at in this light, to treat the object would appear to be the moral way to proceed. No matter how moral this attitude might seem, however, it does have potentially serious legal implications that, while not directly relevant to this discussion, must at least be acknowledged. By treating a looted artifact, the conservator could legally be considered an accessory and, therefore, be prosecutable.

Archaeologists are presented with a similar dilemma when faced with publishing looted, or unprovenanced, material. In the archaeological community, this issue has been and continues to be the focus of considerable ongoing debate. Many archaeologists feel that because of the manner of its recovery, the publication of looted material is unethical and, therefore, does not serve the needs of archaeology. Others have put forward persuasive arguments in favor of publishing such material. They feel not only that it can be done ethically but that it must be done to get the material into the archaeological record. Interested in all objects no matter how they have come from the earth, these individuals feel that if qualified scholars do not examine looted artifacts they will be lost forever to science, most likely disappearing into private collections. Oscar Muscarella, an archaeologist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, argues that by the very nature of archaeological inquiry, which encompasses in theory a regard for the totality of the available data, exclusion of individual or classes of objects is not possible. To choose to exclude from examination those objects that legitimately disturb us because of the process by which they come to our attention would signify incompleteness of the data, and consequently incompleteness of cultural conclusions (Muscarella 1984, 64).

Using a similar argument, a conservator could decide in favor of treatment on the logic that if the artifact is not treated and consequently disintegrates through the devastating action of soluble salts—or if it is irretrievably damaged through improper treatment, as with the Cypriot mosaics—the record is similarly lost. This

argument in favor of treatment seems analogous to that given by many museums and other institutions when defending the acquisition of material known to be plundered: “If we don’t buy it, someone else will.” Wylie (1995, 18) refers to this rationale as the “salvage principle.” Based on the premise that some data are better than none, this justification has been used repeatedly over time as a defense for looting and stealing (Akinsha et al. 1995). This rationale is really just another way of saying, “If we don’t buy it, a private collector will and the artifact will go out of the public domain.” But does having a looted artifact in the public domain negate the fact that it is plundered or make up for its loss of context? Philip Ravenhill, curator at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of African Art, appears to think so. In defending the purchase of a looted Djenné artifact, he stated, “There is a big difference between public and private collectors. We do not gather this material as a profit-making investment, but to foster understanding of African culture. In museums like ours these items remain available for study and appreciation” (quoted in French 1995). Does the end justify the means, especially when it entails the irretrievable loss of knowledge? Many archaeologists would disagree with this argument, feeling that the salvage principle should never override considerations of how antiquities were acquired. They would argue that “more than legality of export and possession is relevant in judging whether material has been acquired in a manner appropriate for research purposes” (Wylie 1995, 19).

While the argument in favor of treating an artifact can be seen to be consistent with ethical conservation practice, it ignores the larger issues involved. It is hard to overlook the significance of the damage looting does to the archaeological record. The conservator who works on archaeological material must understand how loss of context is equated with loss of knowledge. Just as the conservator is concerned about the integrity of the artifact, so should she or he be equally interested in the integrity of the

disciplines of archaeology and archaeological conservation.

Certainly, the most compelling argument against treating looted material is recognizing that any conservation treatment it receives will increase its value, rendering it more salable. As prices rise, so do the incentives to bring more artifacts onto the market through looting. While archaeological conservators do not generally think of artifacts in their care in monetary terms, others have no such scruples. Although many collectors are prompted by a sincere appreciation of the artifacts, most of the middlemen are inspired solely by the profit motive. As Sir Thomas Browne, an antiquarian in 17th-century England, sadly noted when examining a looted site, "Where profit hath prompted, no age hath wanted such miners" (Browne 1964, 106). Unfortunately, not much has changed in the intervening 200 years; Meyer (1973, 3) reminds us that "the growth of the antiquities market has outpaced that of almost every other area for risk capital." It is a sad reflection of our times that archaeological artifacts as well as works of art perform better than most large multinational corporations. What is even more distressing is that in the intervening 24 years, the antiquities and art markets together have burgeoned beyond all comprehension.

We cannot fool ourselves into believing for a moment that any single refusal to treat a looted artifact in and of itself will bring about an end to the antiquities trade. The fact remains that for every ethical conservator there will always be someone willing to undertake the treatment. Even membership in AIC or its sister organizations does not necessarily prevent conservators from treating looted artifacts, no matter how high-minded and stringent the codes of ethics of these organizations might be.

For any isolated refusal to even begin to be effective, one first must believe that it can have an effect. It must also be part of a larger effort, for only through a concerted effort with other conservators, archaeologists, and art historians can such attitudes affect the trade of antiquities.

After all, one has to start somewhere, and small, grass-roots efforts can grow into significant and effective movements. Such efforts, for example, were successful in the case of the Djenné figurines from Mali. In 1991, the Oxford Research Laboratory changed its policy on testing in response to the hue and cry from archaeologists outraged at the destruction of archaeological sites in all of West Africa to satisfy the demands of antiquities dealers for terracotta figurines. The laboratory now will only test figurines recovered from lawful archaeological excavations or those from the collections of recognized museums. It will no longer carry out analysis for private individuals, salesrooms, or commercial galleries (Inskeep 1992, 114).

But what about the already-looted object? Is it fair to doom it to destruction so that others might maintain their context? Even if its context is gone, one could argue, it still remains an artifact and as such is worth something, as evidenced, ironically, by the antiquities trade. In response to this argument, one could contend that sometimes the long-term picture justifies taking difficult, short-term measures. In other words, it is better to lose some data than to actively contribute to the wanton destruction of the archaeological record. Archaeology is not solely about the recovery of data but is also concerned with larger issues of preservation and the integrity of the resource base consistent with the concept of stewardship. Just as archaeology is involved with issues beyond any individual artifact or site, archaeological conservators cannot afford to be concerned solely with the individual artifact. In this respect, archaeological conservation has much in common with ecological conservation. The loss of our archaeological and cultural heritage can be likened to the loss of plant and animal species through overpopulation, urban development, and conspicuous consumption. All are nonrenewable resources whose loss will greatly diminish our lives and the lives of those who come after us. It is interesting to note that while we in the Western world agonize over the loss of wildlife, we do

little about the loss of our own cultural heritage. As Meyer (1973, xv) states, given the pace and rapacity of looting "we face a future in which there may be no past beyond that which is already known and excavated. Or equally sad, what is left may be so ruinously mutilated as to afford only a forlorn fragment of a vanished legacy."

7. CONCLUSIONS

The antiquities trade poses difficult issues for the conservation profession. A growing awareness of the problems involved has prompted some conservators to call for a re-examination of the conservator's role in treating unprovenanced archaeological material (Tubb 1995; Jaeschke 1996; Tubb and Sease 1996). While the profession may never reach a consensus on what is right, and indeed it may only be possible to deal with each case on an individual basis, it is important for conservators to think about these issues and discuss them openly. This is the only way we can hope to develop meaningful yet realistic standards of practice. As Jaeschke (1996, 84) states, any conservator who works on archaeological material must recognize that "archaeological conservation is a part of archaeology; it is not an adjunct of the art market or an independent process." And this brings with it certain responsibilities to the archaeological record. If conservators choose to work on archaeological material, they must at least do so with a full understanding of the possible effects and repercussions of their actions.

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