Article: Beyond the field lab: Emergency conservation in the Granicus River Valley in northwest Turkey (abstract and references only)

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BEYOND THE FIELD LAB: EMERGENCY CONSERVATION IN THE GRANICUS RIVER VALLEY IN NORTHWEST TURKEY

DONNA STRAHAN

ABSTRACT

Over the past fifteen years, field conservators at the archaeological excavation of Troy, Turkey have been asked to provide emergency conservation on freshly looted tomb material from the region of the Granicus River Valley. This area in northwest Turkey was controlled by both the Greeks and Persians during the first millennium BCE. Looting became increasingly rampant due to the gold and silver objects still present in many of the tomb mounds. The regional Çanakkale Archaeological Museum does not have conservators on staff, thus when tomb looters were caught, the material they were robbing was often left in a precarious condition. The Director and archaeologists of the museum turned to the nearby Troy excavation conservators to assist them.

In their haste to retrieve the precious objects, the looters damaged the less valuable material leaving destruction in their path. Examples to be discussed will include a tomb with painted marble beds, exploded ivory, and disintegrated wood furniture; a superbly painted sarcophagus that was opened with a backhoe; a burial’s funeral cart; and the material in a child’s sarcophagus.

This cooperation between the foreign excavators and local archaeologists allowed important cultural property to be preserved and published. The museum has added an additional room to display the sarcophagi and painted marble beds. This paper will discuss some of the treatment difficulties and accessibility to the material in storage.

REFERENCES


DONNA STRAHAN received a B.A. in Chinese Language and a M.A. in the Conservation of Ethnographic and Archaeological Objects from George Washington University. Over the past twenty years she has been a conservator at the Conservation Analytical Laboratory, Smithsonian Institution; The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore; and Head of Conservation, Asian Art Museum in San Francisco. Since 2006 she is the conservator at The Metropolitan Museum of Art focusing on Asian objects. Her major interests are the technology and preservation of ancient metals and Asian lacquer.

Donna was the senior field conservator, at the archaeological sites of Harappa, Pakistan and Tell Es-Sweyhat, Syria, where she designed and set up conservation field laboratories. Since 1994 she has served as the chief field conservator at site of Troy, Turkey. At all sites she has been responsible for treating freshly excavated materials, lifting fragile field finds, identifying materials and technologies, recommending housing and storage of the finds; and supervising and training conservators and students.

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