



AMERICAN SCHOOLS OF ORIENTAL RESEARCH

Statement of ASOR Policy on Preservation and Protection of Archaeological Resources

**As passed by the ASOR Board of Trustees
18 November 1995; modified 22 November 2003 (sections in *italics* added)**

I. Preamble

A. ASOR's policy is based upon and derived from the principle that its primary responsibility is one of stewardship of the archaeological record. Stewards act as both caretakers and advocates. The archaeological record consists of archaeological sites, archaeological collections, records, and reports. It should be used for the benefit of all people, and not be treated as a commodity to be exploited for private enjoyment or profit. ASOR and its members work for the perpetual preservation and protection of the archaeological record, and actively promote public understanding and support for these goals.

B. In furthering these goals, ASOR works in close cooperation with other archaeological and related groups that share these principles.

II. Preservation of Sites

Archaeological sites are a nonrenewable resource, each containing unique information about the human past. The loss of sites presents part of the world's cultural heritage that can never be recovered.

A. There is an urgent need worldwide to document the endangered archaeological record before it is lost forever. ASOR supports and encourages its members to undertake efforts to document the archaeological record through surveys, inventories, and other means.

B. Directors of excavations should plan for appropriate post-excavation site protection in their initial research designs. Such plans must take into account the natural conditions affecting the site and the demands of multiple uses.

C. Unplanned development poses a threat to archaeological sites worldwide. ASOR encourages a partnership among governments, archaeologists and developers to make and execute proper plans to preserve the archaeological record. ASOR urges the

United States government, UNESCO, and the United Nations to play a leadership role in efforts to protect the world's cultural heritage from unnecessary destruction through development.

D. Warfare threatens the archaeological record in many parts of the world. ASOR urges all governments to adhere to the terms of the "Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict" (the "Hague Convention," 1954) and its Protocol.

It further urges that the United States ratify this Convention at the earliest possible opportunity. ASOR members should take every precaution to insure that parts of the archaeological record for which they are responsible are fully documented and, to the extent possible, protected from the eventuality of warfare.

III. Trade in Antiquities

Trade in antiquities, especially illicit trade, encourages the looting of archaeological sites and thus is a direct cause of the destruction of sites and the loss of the information they contain. *ASOR supports all efforts—that are in accordance with international law—to prohibit and prevent the looting of archaeological sites and to disrupt the illicit trade of antiquities.*

A. ASOR members should not participate, directly or indirectly, in the buying and selling of artifacts illegally excavated or exported from the country of origin after 1970, the date of the adoption of the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

B. ASOR members should refrain from activities that enhance the commercial value of such artifacts and thus contribute indirectly to the illicit market, for example, publication, authentication, or exhibition. ASOR publications and its annual meeting will not be used for presentations of such illicit material.

C. ASOR urges all governments, including the United States, to establish and enforce a legal framework effective for deterring the illicit trade in antiquities.

D. ASOR will continue to explore innovative strategies and support legislation designed to eliminate the illicit trade of antiquities and enhance the protection of the world's archaeological and cultural heritage.

IV. Excavation Standards

Archaeological excavation is, by nature, a destructive procedure. ASOR seeks to insure, through the review process of its Committee on Archaeological Policy and any other means available, that excavations are conducted according to the highest possible professional standards. Such standards demand that all individuals participating in the

excavation are fully qualified to carry out their responsibilities, that final publication of the results is prompt and complete, and that the resulting collections and records are properly curated.

V. Responsibility to the Public

As stewards of the archaeological record, ASOR and its members have a responsibility to communicate with and act for the benefit of the public, while recognizing that the public is a diverse one.

A. ASOR and its members are active in educating the general public regarding archaeological interpretations of the past and the methods used in archaeology to understand human behavior and culture. They should also actively enlist public support for the preservation and scientific study of the archaeological record.

B. ASOR and its members will at all times show sensitivity toward and respect for groups affected by their research, and make every effort to act cooperatively with them.