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Object Lessons[1]: The Politics of Preservation and Museum Building in Western China in the Early Twentieth Century

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Abstract: The preservation of cultural property is never a neutral activity; and the question of who is to possess, care for, and interpret artifacts is highly politically charged. This paper examines how preservation was used as a justification for the removal of pieces of immovable archaeological sites in the early twentieth century, and became a tool for building museum collections. This study focuses on a collection of 12 wall painting fragments from the site of Dunhuang, China, which were removed by art historian Langdon Warner in 1924 for the Fogg Art Museum. The removal process resulted in significant damage to some of the fragments as well as to the site itself, calling into question what is preserved: an intact ancient artifact or an ancient artifact scarred by and embedded with its modern collection history? Using the Harvard collection as an example, I explore the contradictions and legacies of early preservation ethics.

> Probably there is no thoughtful collector in America today who does not deplore the means by which some of his most valued treasures became available, at the same time that he cherishes and reveres them as great works of art of a universal moment.
>
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When the Fogg Art Museum reopened its doors to the public on the June 20, 1927, following the construction of its new building, a polychromed clay Bodhisattva figure from the site of Dunhuang, Gansu Province, China sat prominently in a glass case in the Asian gallery. The Fogg was reimagined as a crucial component of director Edward Waldo Forbes' vision for an *art laboratory* at Harvard, a locus for the detailed study and preservation of original art objects representing cultures from all over the world and a place for drawing inspiration from the original and authentic object.[3] The delicately painted kneeling Bodhisattva was well provenanced, having been removed from Cave 328 in Dunhuang by art historian Langdon Warner (1881–1955) in 1924 during the Fogg's First China Expedition. Warner would later write heroically of his task of breaking the statue from its pedestal and transporting it from the end of the Chinese Silk Road to the Fogg, a labor that involved wrapping the statue in his own undergarments and "very B.V.D's" as they "kept that fresh smooth skin and those crumbling pigments from harm"[4] (see Figure 1). Although the statue was proudly exhibited and well published in both fine art magazines and Warner's memoir, less fanfare accompanied the display of a few of the wall painting fragments Warner removed from Dunhuang. The pursuit of wall paintings had in fact been Warner's primary purpose, and a total of 12 fragments from 6 Tang Dynasty (618–907 C.E.) caves at Dunhuang returned to Cambridge along with the statue.[5] Although these fragments were of no less historical or artistic value than the statue, several were so damaged by Warner's removal method that they could not be exhibited.

Figure 1. The removal of the *Kneeling Attendant Bodhisattva* statue (now HUAM Accession No. 1924.70) from Cave 328, January 1924. Courtesy of and held at the Straus Center for Conservation, HUAM © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

This paper considers the example of the collection of Dunhuang wall painting fragments at the Fogg Art Museum, now part of the Harvard University Art Museums (HUAM), as a window into the preservation ethics and collecting policies of Western institutions in early twentieth-century China.[6] Warner and the Fogg were among the last agents in a series of imperial and colonial explorations of western China with the specific intention of identifying, excavating, and collecting artifacts for Western museum institutions. Such art objects, when on view in museums, functioned as important pedagogical tools, opening up Western audiences to what was presented as an authentic understanding of Asia and offering a "reminder that these Orientals are not sinister barbarians but a race founded in wisdom and culture."[7] Additionally, the removal of these artifacts from China was meant as an *object lesson* to the Chinese themselves, demonstrating the West's superior capability to care for China's heritage and at the same time setting an example of the kind of ethical and intellectual development to which the Chinese should aspire.

One of the most important justifications for collecting artifacts during the early twentieth century was the assertion that significant cultural heritage was best preserved within Western institutions where it could be physically secured, scientifically studied, and suitably admired for its aesthetic characteristics. Although preservation today has come to suggest a relatively neutral practice with the intention of saving heritage for the universal human good, it was and continues to be highly politically charged. The ownership of cultural heritage is often contested, along with the associated responsibilities of caring for, studying, interpreting and displaying this material; this is particularly the case for artifacts removed from their original sites under colonial or imperial rule.

This study examines the added complications involved when immovable heritage, or rather, physical parts of a site are dismantled for purposes of preservation and in the process damage the site itself. I suggest that early preservation ethics condoned the partial destruction of intact visual archives for the purposes of museum building, and that this violence left its traces both on the original site as well as on the removed artifact. In less successful cases, the traces of removal in fact scar both the artifact and the site so much so that the integrity of both is irreparably compromised, and they become more valuable as records of the acquisition process than as artistic products of their original culture. I consider how the scars of preservation are transformed into pedagogical tools and how the legacies of early preservation ethics continue to haunt contemporary museological practice.

COLLECTING FROM THE *BARREN WASTE OF SAND*

In 1922, Langdon Warner wrote,

> The British, the French and the Germans and the Russians have so added to our knowledge of the history of the human race and incidentally en-

> riched their museums with artistic monuments brought back from Turkestan [current day Xinjiang province in western China] that it has become almost a matter of reproach that America has contributed nothing in that direction.[8]

Later that same year, Fogg director Edward Waldo Forbes asked potential funders to support an expedition to China because Harvard possessed "records of certain sites of the early trade route, which make it virtually certain that important artistic and archaeological treasure are awaiting to be brought to light."[9] He emphasized the collecting possibilities in an "immense desert where the trade routes ran from China to Persia to India, which once was a civilized country and now is a barren waste of sand which merely needs to be excavated."[10] The deserts of western China and Central Asia had produced spectacular discoveries in the previous quarter century. Explorers armed with technologically advanced survey and photographic equipment as well as scientific methodology from the emerging field of archaeology crisscrossed the region, publishing accounts of found documents, artifacts, and wall paintings that connected China with India and the Near East. Individual explorers connected with major institutions such as the British Museum, London; the École Française d'Extrême Orient (EFEO), Paris; the Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin; and the Asiatic Museum, St. Petersburg, returned home with hundreds of cases of photographs, notes, and archaeological finds and published popular memoirs and academic works on their findings.[11] Museums in North America were slower to establish expeditions in western China, in part because European explorations were to some extent outgrowths of established political and military interests in China.[12] However, by the early 1920s, the American Museum of Natural History, New York; the Freer Museum (now the Freer Gallery of Art), Washington, DC; the Field Museum, Chicago; the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), were all looking to the seemingly inexhaustible archaeological resources of western China and Central Asia.

Among the many sites of the region, the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas in Dunhuang, as the last trading point of the Chinese Silk Road before the Taklamakan Desert, held a particular interest for early explorers (see Figure 2). Dunhuang's several hundred intact painted and decorated caves, dating from the fourth to the fourteenth centuries, were first documented by the Hungarian Széchenyi expedition in 1879; an 1899 publication described the splendors of the site and established its precise physical longitudinal and latitudinal location for the first time.[13] Reaching the site became the focus of fierce competition among several expeditions. In 1907 Sir Marc Aurel Stein (1862–1943), working under the auspices of the government of British India, arrived in Dunhuang and negotiated with and cajoled the local abbot into selling approximately 6500 documents predating the twelfth century from the so-called *Library Cave* at the site, as well as roughly 500 paintings on textile or paper and 150 textile fragments.[14] The acquisition of these treasures was widely publicized and the collection was exhibited at the Brit-

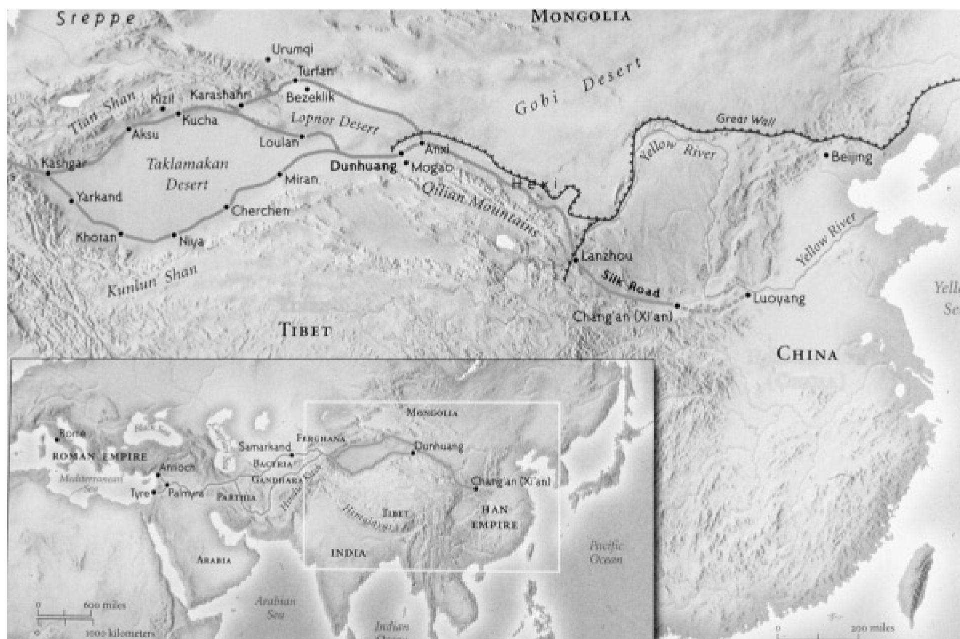

Figure 2. Important archaeological sites along the Silk Road. © 2000 the J. Paul Getty Trust.

ish Museum in May 1914.[15] In 1908 French sinologist Paul Pelliot (1878–1945) who was working in the employ of the EFEO reached Dunhuang; after 3 weeks examining thousands of manuscripts in the Library Cave, he acquired an additional 7000 documents from the site for the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. The seemingly endless archive at Dunhuang led Alfred Foucher, director of the EFEO, to remark in 1909 that "the famous grotto already twice exhausted by Stein and Pelliot. . .appears to have the singular virtue of remaining all the more intact the more often it is violated."[16] Indeed, the apparently inexhaustible archive of Dunhuang was still accessible in the 1920s when Pelliot alerted the Fogg of "a collection which [he was] so particularly anxious to have acquired by some serious museum in the West [and that] was the part of the collection to Touen-Houang which [he] and Mr. Stein did not bring away."[17]

As early as January 1922, the Fogg Visiting Committee acknowledged that Chinese sculpture and paintings in particular were "not adequately represented" at the museum.[18] The expedition would provide an opportunity to identify, excavate, and collect unique archaeological objects that were unlike the Chinese "curiosities" already flooding the international art market. A thriving art trade had existed in Beijing and other Chinese treaty ports at least since the late 1800s and was supplied by "palace eunuchs. . .bringing curios from the palace collections" as well as "Chinese collectors, who were increasingly forced to sell of treasures be-

cause of hardships caused by warfare and political chaos in China."[19] Hevia also notes the presence of both Chinese and foreign art dealers in various cities by the 1890s. The vast numbers of objects leaving China led tourist Eliza Skidmore to remark in 1899 that "travelers could forget about finding valuable curios in Chinese markets; the best things were on sale in London, Paris, Dresden, Berlin, Weimar, New York, and Baltimore, not Beijing."[20] Conn[21] and Cohen[22] discuss the growing prominence of Asian artifacts in the United States in the early twentieth century and the changing understanding of Asian art as fine art rather than material culture. It is therefore significant that Harvard's art museum rather than its museum of ethnology (the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology) actively pursued an expedition to China at this time. Given the intention to establish an *Oriental* department and offer courses in Asian art history, the museum required authentic artifacts of indubitable provenance to provide ample opportunity for the kind of interdisciplinary research the new *laboratory of the arts* hoped to foster. Although the Fogg could not rival the size or breadth of the MFA's Asian collection, the strengths of their future collections would be in their uniqueness, archaeological importance, and role in teaching.

The China Expedition was envisioned as a 5-year project, with the first year to be led by Langdon Warner and devoted to identifying and documenting sites of interest. Warner and Forbes, both Harvard graduates and family friends, interacted while the former was a curator in training at MFA's department of Asiatic art. Forbes appointed Warner to a teaching position at Harvard in 1913 with the belief that he "ought to be an Oriental specialist."[23] When the opportunity to lead Harvard's China Expedition arose in 1923, Warner was director of the Pennsylvania (now Philadelphia) Museum of Art, a position he relinquished for the chance to "boss an expedition of this sort, [which had] been [his] dream."[24] Warner was eager to take to the field and make his mark like Stein, Pelliot, and others. He had spent considerable time in Japan studying under philosopher and curator Okakura (Tenshin) Kakuzo (1862–1913) and visited Central Asia and China on several occasions as an art historian for the MFA and Charles Freer, and as an attaché to the U.S. State Department. He also had numerous previous opportunities to carry out fieldwork in China; but these had failed to materialize, much to Warner's bitter disappointment. For example, in 1909 the MFA denied him funding to explore the Longmen Grottoes in Henan province, a site that was later published by Édouard Chavannes (1865–1918)[25]:

> Six years before I had urged the study and publication of the Lung-Men grottoes but the Museum discouraged so visionary a plan, and when the money did finally come in sight, Chavannes was in the field working on his publication that has since become famous. . . . By that one piece of work he has put French scholarship and enterprise at the head in Chinese research.[26]

I suggest that these frustrations of his prior attempts to establish himself as a field-based scholar in China fueled his drive to produce results for Harvard.

Forbes was aware that the results of the China Expedition's inaugural year might be "wholly on paper, as to separate sculptures from the living rock would be a vandalism of which [he did] not approve."[27] However, if opportunities arose to bring back wall paintings, Warner was prepared to attempt their removal.[28] Asian wall paintings, and in particular Buddhist paintings, were increasingly fascinating to Western collecting institutions in the early twentieth century. Warner identified the importance of Chinese "frescoes" as "among the most valuable material of all.... These are not merely curiosities of the Orient, which appeal only to the student, but are artistic products comparable to the great work of our own medieval masters."[29] This attitude may have resulted from a renewed interest in European fresco painting, particularly that of the medieval period and the Renaissance.[30] The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the emergence of a collecting frenzy for European frescoes, with specialists trained to remove frescoes from their original locations for display in collections elsewhere. In some cases, wall paintings were detached for reasons of preservation from abandoned buildings or those slated for destruction; but in other cases, they become consumer goods for the burgeoning art market.[31] In an infamous case, unscrupulous Spanish businessman Lluis Planidura employed Italian and Polish craftsmen to remove early medieval frescoes from isolated churches in Catalonia with the intention of selling the fragments at high prices to American museums. He succeeded in selling the apse of the church of Santa Maria de Mur to the MFA in 1921 before Spanish artists and curators, decrying his despoliation of Spain's cultural heritage, had him stopped.[32]

Unlike sites in Europe where local agencies and cultural institutions actively protested the removal and destruction of what was seen as national cultural heritage, the isolated Buddhist grottoes of western China and Central Asia had no such advocates in the early twentieth century. First, because of the chaos of the end of the Qing Dynasty [1644–1911] and the creation of the new Republic of China [1912–1949], there was no single governmental agency in China overseeing such matters; and there was no law against exporting archaeological or artistic objects until 1930.[33] Most significantly, the idea of a *national* cultural heritage was only beginning to develop in China at the time; Watson[34] and Hamlish[35] have described the difficulty of recasting art objects and sites previously associated with Chinese imperial power as symbols of national culture. This was complicated by the fact that "for many Chinese, nation-state building was about science and industrialization rather than Song paintings or Ming porcelain."[36] Only with the 1925 founding of the Palace Museum in Peking did imperial collections in effect become symbols of the nation, with the understanding that it was the responsibility of all Chinese to defend these symbols, and thereby protect the nation in turn.[37] Although these relationships were made explicit in the capital, the western regions of China, separated by vast distances and areas of civil unrest, were not as easily policed. Millward[38] has noted the historically uneasy relationship between the Qing Dynasty court and the so-called *western regions* beyond Gansu Province, one that continued to be tenuous under the new Chinese Republic. The kinds of

objects considered worthy of display and collecting within China also had an important impact on what was identified as art. In addition to the collections once held by the emperor and the imperial court, literati paintings were appreciated as the highest fine art form.[39] In contrast, medieval Buddhist paintings were considered functional religious icons and thus not truly works of fine art, or part of a provincial folk art tradition and therefore of little artistic significance.[40]

For Western scholars keen to establish artistic and religious connections between China and India in particular, the Buddhist wall paintings along the Silk Road provided evidence for the continuity and transference of these traditions. The discovery of partially intact sites with their elaborate wall paintings at Turfan, Niya, Miran, and Khotan offered unique collecting prospects. The relative lack of interest on the part of the Chinese in these sites was ample justification and opportunity for removing as much as possible for preservation and study in Western institutions. In the narrative of Western expeditions and museums, the removal of these materials was a heroic act meant to protect the culture of ancient China at a time when China was neither invested in nor capable of doing so. In the Chinese narrative since the mid-1920s and particularly in 1928 with the establishment of the Chinese National Commission for the Preservation of Cultural Objects (NCPCO), these Western expeditions were legitimized plunder. The Fogg sent three expeditions to China: the first, under Warner in 1924; another, also led by Warner in 1925; and a final expedition led by Sir Aurel Stein in 1931. The latter two expeditions were blocked by various Chinese agencies who argued that Westerners had removed cultural materials under false pretences for far too long. In 1931, the NCPCO cancelled the Fogg's final expedition, admonishing not only Harvard but all Western institutions for the exploitation of sites and artifacts in such a way that the "rightful owners, the Chinese, who are the most competent scholars for [the] study [of Chinese materials were] deprived of their opportunity as well as their ownership."[41]

PRESERVATION ETHICS OF THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

With increased colonial and military expeditions as well as more intense archaeological excavation in the nineteenth century, preservation became an important justification for collecting non-Western artifacts for Western institutions.[42] Hevia[43] has described the importance of Euro-American looting and collecting of Chinese art objects, and appropriation and destruction of historic sites, as means of asserting Western superiority and furthering Western civilizing missions. Hooper-Greenhill,[44] Duncan,[45] and Lyons and Papadopoulos[46] have discussed the power of the museum to order, construct, and project particular understandings of a culture or a nation. The Western museum, in displaying Asian and, specifically, Chinese artifacts, provided audiences access to China, highlighting the artistic achievements of the ancient civilization while underscoring how far the modern

Chinese had fallen from their ancestors. Unlike countries such as Japan, which were "pursuing a progressive—that is to say, Western—course of development," the Chinese were depicted as incapable of and unwilling to embrace the technological and political trappings of a modern nation.[47] Thus, "Chinese culture [had] a glorious past, a decayed and exhausted present and no future."[48]

The powerful teaching role of museums and those who collected for them was lauded in the 1929 publication *China and Japan in Our Museums*; the preface noted that "those who provide our American public with these opportunities of visual learning 'are to be complimented upon calling our attention to people whom in every way it behooves us to know.'"[49] This catalog, compiled by Benjamin March, curator of Asiatic Art at the Detroit Institute of Arts, highlighted the growing collecting interest of North American museums in Asian art. As March wrote, the collecting of Asian materials had:

> until comparatively recently . . . been due to the interest of individuals who were themselves usually collectors. In later years, the general recognition of the right of China and Japan to representation among the fine arts has encouraged the development of collections in most museums of good standing.[50]

Western museums were perceived as uniquely suitable for the preservation of material culture. First, they were identified as scientific institutions with specialists capable of properly cataloging, studying, and analyzing the material. Next, they were proposed as safe and secure repositories for artifacts. Finally, it was assumed that artifacts could be better appreciated for their intrinsic artistic, cultural, and historic significance by Western museum audiences rather than in their home countries where they were little valued.

The earliest explorations of western China were focused on surveying the region rather than on archaeological excavation.[51] Surface collection soon gave way to more aggressive excavation practices as explorers came under increasing pressure to return to their home institutions with *treasures* in addition to data. The writings of several explorers of the era express the ethical principle that materials only be removed from already damaged or partly destroyed sites; however, this high standard was not always easy to uphold given the need to produce solid results not only for the institution but also to establish the reputation of the excavator himself. Foucher wrote of Albert Grünwedel's (1856–1935) work for the Berlin's Museum für Völkerkunde:

> Certainly we believe [his] narrative when he assures us that he took nothing but monuments in complete ruin and only after having drawn plans and taken necessary reference marks. . . . And then it is necessary that the most virtuous archaeologist surrender to the law of the times: the savant societies which have sent him would not be pleased at all if he pushed loyalty to high principles only to return home empty handed.[52]

Warner, too, was keenly aware of the weight of producing results with the "Fogg's hard-begged dollars," but he was also intent on establishing himself in acade-

mia.[53] He was hopeful of joining the ranks of the enviously idolized Stein and Pelliot, but he also wished to gain stature in Harvard's fine arts department, which boasted such prominent intellectuals as Arthur Kingsley Porter, Arthur Pope, and Denman Ross. These administrative pressures encouraged or necessitated aggressive excavation and collection methods rather than the mere documentation and reburial of intact sites. There was the additional need to excavate and remove anything of historic or visual importance to prevent other expeditions from finding and collecting them for their own institutions. At the site of Kharakhoto, for example, Warner abandoned his search for wall paintings because his predecessors Stein and Russia's Pyotr Kuzmich Kozlov (1863–1935) had "cleared every wall and gutted every little sealed pagoda."[54]

In contrast to surface finds or other easily portable objects that could be removed and packed with minimal damage, architectural remains often required extensive stabilization and considerable labor to be moved and transported. Why was the removal of this immovable heritage worth the effort? Unlike portable heads of statues or pieces of textile or paper, these wall painting fragments were creations unique to a specific site; it was therefore possible to acquire a part of the site itself rather than an object that came to be placed there. Expeditions including Albert Von le Coq's (1860–1930) and Stein's traveled with individuals trained in the painstaking work of sawing out sections of painted walls, the prevalent removal technique at the time. This method entailed cutting surfaces into several smaller blocks, thus transforming once-intact visual surfaces into elaborate jigsaw puzzle pieces. The Bezeklik wall paintings at the Berlin Museum für Völkerkunde showed evidence of these vertical and horizontal saw marks, which could not be effaced even by skillful restorers. Although such dismantling and partial destruction of a site would have been problematic in other places, it was acceptable in western China. As Pelliot wrote:

> While I am an enemy of all archaeological operations which gouge the monument under study, and I would agitate against museum agents who would want to take away pieces of Ajanta with them . . . here the situation is quite different. . . . One can . . . say without hypocrisy that by removing the frescoes . . . we are saving them, at least saving them in pieces.[55]

What was the difference between the cave temples at Ajanta in western India and those in western China according to Pelliot? Unlike the former, which was being studied, documented, and protected by the (British) Archaeological Survey of India, in the view of Pelliot and others, the isolated sites of western China were vulnerable to the ravages of the environment and time, and worse, unprotected from vandalism. As there were no mechanisms to ensure the security of the sites in situ, he argued that it was responsible and ethical to dismantle them for safe-keeping and study in Western museums. Therefore, any damage inflicted on either the site or the fragments that would come from it were in fact a necessary part of their preservation. Fred Andrews, the restorer in charge of the wall paintings removed by Stein, noted the following:

> It has been contended that such [wall] paintings and other objects of artistic and archaeological interest should not be removed from their original site. In some instances the argument is justifiable, but in the case of these paintings, to have left them would have meant their ultimate complete disappearance, as it was impracticable to safeguard them in situ. . . . It would seem therefore, that the only way of saving what remained was to bring them away.[56]

The safety of these archaeological finds could be ensured in Western institutions in part because they would be out of the hands of *Orientals*, a term used to describe the Russians, Muslim communities, and Chinese in western China. The first two groups were thought to vandalize ancient Chinese heritage out of ignorance and religious fervor, respectively, and because the culture they destroyed was not their own. But Russian soldiers in Dunhuang, who marked "the mouth of the Buddha . . . [with] some Slav obscenity," and Muslim Dungan bandits, who burned wooden statues and temple facades at the site, while deplored, were less culpable than the "Chinese irresponsibles" who did not care for their own cultural heritage.[57] Reports of farmers grinding fragments of wall paintings for use as fertilizer and "bow legged Mongols" distractedly picking away at painted areas of Tang dynasty caves came as further incentive for removing all culturally valuable material to a place of safekeeping.[58] The Chinese were consistently stereotyped as greedy, ignorant, and intellectually and morally incapable of protecting their historic and artistic artifacts and monuments. As the notion of a collective *Chinese* cultural heritage was only developing among the Chinese at the time, the seeming lack of a preservation mindset was taken as evidence of the need for Western collecting in western China.[59]

Shelton has noted that the acquisition of collections is a mediated event; and however unbalanced this interaction may be, "the desires of the collector must always engage with the criteria adopted by an originating community in stipulating what can and cannot be alienated."[60] The collecting of artifacts, therefore, often necessitated explorers' dependence on the local knowledge of indigenous people, a fact which was sometimes exploited by western Chinese and Central Asian agents as much as the *foreign devils*. Explorers' interest in documents, for example, encouraged an industry in forgeries, many of which found their way into Western collections.[61] Westerners' desire for "documents and [statue] heads" also fueled local treasure-seeking economies; instead of recognizing their own roles in the creation of the demand for such artifacts, explorers such as Pelliot saw this as evidence of Chinese avarice.[62] The worst criticism was leveled against those who were in the position of protecting important cultural heritage but imagined as too ignorant or untrustworthy for the task. Dunhuang's caretaker, Wang Yanglu, was depicted by Stein, Pelliot, and Warner as an illiterate simpleton more concerned with repainting statues with lurid colors than preserving the most ancient parts of the site. However, their ability to collect materials from Dunhuang rested soundly on Wang's supposed ignorance; it is precisely because he was unaware of the trea-

sures of the Library Cave that 14,000 manuscripts left Dunhuang. Even Warner claims to have had little trouble convincing Wang to allow him to remove wall painting fragments, noting that Wang saw "no harm in [my] smearing the masterpieces on his painted walls with hot jelly" to remove them.[63] Attempts by governmental agencies to curb the removal of artifacts was seen as doomed to failure; in late 1909 when Peking demanded that the remaining manuscripts at Dunhuang be brought there for safekeeping, many documents were reportedly removed from the collection by unscrupulous officials while it was en route to the capital.[64] For Warner and others, these reports made for little confidence in a Chinese-managed preservation.

The stereotyping and distrust of the *Orientals* brushed aside existing Chinese structures for the study, renewal and preservation of cultural heritage. Western explorers ignored evidence of a long-standing antiquarian tradition that had persisted in China since the Song Dynasty (960–1279) and was based on the study of inscriptions on metal and on stone artifacts.[65] The repainting of Buddhist statues as a practice of religious piety was entirely misunderstood by Warner who decried the "paint box of the local image-maker [and his] orgy of vandalism."[66] The notion that some sites were considered too sacred or dangerous to disturb was dismissed as unscientific or superstitious, rather than as a particular cultural approach to the protection of cultural heritage. Stein scoffed at the advice of a Chinese official in Dunhuang to avoid excavating tombs because "the popular prejudice thus aroused might expose [him] to personal risk."[67] Warner wrote of the untouched burial mounds outside Xi'an that "before many years are gone… grave robbers will have ploughed their clumsy way through these mounds…to recover for the foreign market what their predecessors left."[68] Seeing no irony in the fact that these sacred sites would be looted for a Western-driven art market, Warner asserted that the only salvation for the mounds would be if "scientists, by special permit … [were] allowed to come with their measuring tapes and their cameras to open up in all reverence those kindly tombs."[69] By scientists, of course, Warner assumed non-Chinese archaeologists despite the fact that there was disdain even among Western explorers for the "burrowing" and "hacking" methods of their colleagues.[70] In fact, at the time of the Fogg expedition, the first western-trained Chinese anthropologist, Li Ji (1896–1979) returned to China from Harvard, and went on to carry out significant excavations within the country, in an attempt to reconcile archaeological findings with Chinese historiography.[71]

THE SCARS OF PRESERVATION

Although preservation supposes the protection of an original, authentic artifact, the application of preservation principles always marks or changes the original object. When a site is dismantled for the purposes of preservation, both the removed fragments and the site are physically and symbolically transformed. This

moment of collecting, then, is legible both on the removed artifacts and the site, changing both from evidence simply of a specific period in antiquity to evidence of a specific modern moment as well. These hybrid objects therefore no longer represent merely *China* or *Buddhist art*, but also the hands of *Western collectors*. In turn, the preservation of these artifacts and sites also preserves the method of, and intentions behind, their dismantling. Both Hevia[72] and Clunas[73] have described how Chinese objects, once removed from their original context, were infused with new values more identified with the possessor rather than the original creator or owner. Quoting Susan Stewart, Clunas notes that a collection "represents not the lived experience of its maker but the 'secondhand' experience of its possessor/owner."[74] Taking this idea, I now turn to the removal method used by Warner at Dunhuang, and its enduring effects, both on the fragments at the HUAM as well as on the caves from which they were removed.

As discussed, the preservation ethics of the time justified the removal of both movable and immovable materials from abandoned, ruined, or partially destroyed sites—I suggest that these kinds of sites were chosen so as to arouse minimal local resentment when artifacts were removed or sites further damaged. At sites such as Dunhuang where "the cave temples . . . were still real cult places 'in being' [that] . . . drew the villagers and townspeople of the oasis by the thousands to the site," Stein made do with surreptitiously negotiating the acquisition of portable artifacts rather than wall paintings.[75] Warner, however, decided to attempt the removal of painting fragments from Dunhuang precisely because certain caves were already vandalized and he feared that greater visitation of the site would hasten its destruction. He was also displeased with the kinds of damaged and marked artifacts that entered European collections from western China: the scarred, sawed fragments and the glue-darkened paint layers distorted the ancient Chinese masters' work and required extensive cleaning or reassembly.[76] He did not intend to have any objects he collected for the Fogg to be restored. These concerns led him to consider the *strappo* technique, a method that would theoretically minimize the scarring of both the removed object and the site, thus also minimizing chances of inciting local protest.

The strappo method promised the ability to simply strip away the painting surface from a wall, leaving both the wall and the paint layer structurally intact. This technique not only offered an alternative to the destructive and labor-intensive sawing method, but would also make transporting wall paintings far easier. Daniel Varney Thompson (1902–1980), a student of Forbes' who was training in the use of the method in Italy, advised Warner on its appropriate application but cautioned that its efficacy was unknown on Asian wall paintings, which were not true frescoes.[77] First, the desired painted surface was coated with a dilute layer of glue to ensure its stability. Next, a thicker adhesive such as animal glue was applied hot to pieces of cloth (called the *intelaggio*), which were firmly pasted onto the painting in overlapping layers. When the glue was completely dry, the intelaggio could be peeled away from the wall, carrying the painted layers with it. The stripping

away of the intelaggio was expected to leave a "shadow of the painting on the wall" but as long as Warner could "take them off the walls as ... described, [he] need have no further fears for their preservation."[78]

Warner's letters to his wife Lorraine Roosevelt Warner and Forbes in early 1924 are the only documentation of his immediate reactions to reaching the site after nearly 6 months after he and his assistant Horace Jayne (1898–1975) arrived in Peking. This correspondence captures with striking immediacy Warner's complex and contradictory emotions on reaching the site. He was genuinely in awe of the beauty of the wall paintings and their state of preservation but equally concerned about the ongoing vandalism and deterioration of the caves. Warner was arrogant enough to believe that it was his duty to save some of the most important parts of Dunhuang yet also tortured by his fear that his actions to remove wall painting fragments would be unsuccessful. Because Jayne fell ill and did not accompany Warner to Dunhuang, Warner was left to confront his inner demons alone and carry out the work of removing wall painting fragments on his own. He first attempted the more familiar method of sawing paintings out of the cave walls; however, when this yielded little but powder, Warner steeled himself to try the strappo technique despite "being neither chemist nor trained picture restorer, but an ordinary person with an active archaeological conscience."[79] He selected at least 14 sections in 5 Tang dynasty caves for his removal experiments, claiming they were suitable because they were "from partly destroyed groups," but recent examinations of the caves show this to be untrue.[80] He chose images of monks, dancers, demons, and attendants: easily recognizable figures often adjacent to the central Buddha or Bodhisattva depicted on a wall, possibly because they would make suitable framed paintings at the Fogg. A single photograph documents the removal process Warner undertook over a period of 5 days. In it, a darkened area of the south wall of Cave 320 indicates the section he painted with dilute glue before applying the intelaggio and stripping the fragment (now HUAM Accession number 1924.44, *Bust of a Bodhisattva, with Lohan and Guardian*) from the wall (See Figure 3).[81] The extreme cold in the caves made the animal glue gelatinous and unworkable, leading Warner to "fear that the few fragments I removed by the intelaggio process will prove failures because of the almost instantaneous freezing of the ... fixative."[82] He said, however, "I shall not throw them away until [restorer] Thompson has had a try at them."[83] Despite his concerns about the success of the removal technique, Warner mollified himself with the belief that they would still be of great significance in a Western collection, even if damaged, because, "they are the first Oriental wall paintings removed without being seriously marred by saw marks, and they are undoubtedly of an aesthetic and historic value equal to any Chinese paintings which have hitherto come to this country."[84]

In Warner's words, "Five days of labour from morning till dark and five nights of remorse for what I had done ... saw the fragments of paintings securely packed ... for the eighteen weeks' trip by springless jolting cart, railroad and ship to the

Figure 3. Warner's photograph of the south wall of Cave 320 before the removal of two wall painting fragments. The dark rectangle to the right of the central figure is now *Bust of a Bodhisattva, with Lohan and Guardian* (HUAM Accession No. 1924.44). Courtesy of Historic Photographs, Fine Arts Library, Harvard College Library.

Fogg Museum at Harvard."[85] In June 1924, twelve wall painting fragments arrived in Cambridge, 6 months after their removal from Dunhuang. The responsibility of rescuing them from their glue fell to Thompson, who completed the task of transferring the painting fragments onto new supports of canvas and paper over a period of 10 days. Although familiar with techniques used in the transfer of Italian fresco paintings, Thompson was forced to modify his methods for his work on Chinese wall paintings, a nerve-wracking experience that culminated in the tense moment of removing the intelaggio layers to reveal the painting surfaces for the first time since they were stripped from walls at Dunhuang (see Figure 4). Thompson immediately realized that Warner's technique and the poor penetration of the cold glue onto the painting surface created severe problems. In the case of the *Bust of an Adoring Figure* (HUAM Accession number 1924.45), "the intelaggio came away with unusual ease and brought no color whatever with it [but] . . . there was . . . less color than was expected."[86] In fact, the face of this figure is entirely missing. A figure of a dancer, considered the "most hopeless case," was too damaged to be accessioned into the Fogg collection.[87] After two attempts at liberating the layers of paint from its intelaggio, *Head and Shoulders of a Buddhist Figure* (HUAM Accession number 1924.47a) was left unfinished because "the identity of the picture was entirely destroyed."[88] Additional damage was done to the paintings by Thompson's treatment, which although

Figure 4. *Bust of a Bodhisattva, with Lohan and Guardian* (HUAM Accession No. 1924.44) soon after conservation treatment in 1924. Courtesy of the Photograph Collection, Fine Arts Library, Harvard College Library.

typical for restoration at the time had severe consequences for the fragile fragments. His chosen glue clouded the paint surfaces and imparted an unnatural iridescence to them, while the ironing and pressing methods used to transfer the paint layers to new supports embedded the weave pattern of the intelaggio into the images.

For the Fogg, the unattractive and damaged final appearance of some of the Dunhuang paintings must have come as a blow, particularly given Forbes' commitment to a strongly preservation-minded approach to the study of art objects. The fragments remained unframed for several months, and photographs of them were not published in articles describing the China Expedition, much to Warner's dismay. His hopes of establishing himself within Harvard's fine arts department were seemingly dashed by the lukewarm reaction to the results of his expedition. A letter from Warner to Forbes reveals his disappointment that his colleague Denman Ross, an important collector of Asian art "wasn't keen about [the Bodhisattva statue] or much interested in the frescoes."[89] He wrote plaintively to Forbes:

> I depend entirely on you and Paul and him to let me know if the work that we have undertaken is worthwhile. My own judgment cannot always be relied on because I sometimes mix aesthetics with archaeological importance or rarity or something else that is quite foreign to it.[90]

When the painting fragments were accessioned into the Fogg collection, little remained of the architectural context from which they originated. Once part of layers of painted mud plaster on carved cave walls, the fragments were physically reduced to millimeter-thin layers of pigment coated with adhesives and glued onto canvas, Japanese paper, or asbestos-board. The significance of these fragments in their original architectural contexts was also obscured by their renaming during the accessioning process; for example, images once part of the retelling of Buddhism's introduction to China were rather plainly titled *Three Figures* (HUAM Accession number 1924.40) or *Eight men ferrying a statue of the Buddha* (HUAM Accession number 1924.41). Other fragments became generic *busts* of Bodhisattvas or *adoring figures*. In some instances, however, the original image was so obscured that the new titles given to the fragments became their primary identifying feature. The damaged condition of several of the objects also made it impossible to display fragments from the same cave together, a format that would have allowed for some understanding of the various styles, themes, and time periods of the different objects. Even today, only two paintings from the same cave, Cave 320, are displayed together.[91]

What of scars on the location from which the fragments were stripped? Although Stein and Pelliot acquired far greater numbers of objects from Dunhuang than did Warner, there is little but an empty cave to suggest their presence at the site. Evidence of Warner's hand, however, is unavoidable in the caves where he worked; stark white, generally rectilinear spaces with ghostly tracings of the paintings once there stand in sharp contrast to their elaborately painted and often well-preserved surroundings. Areas alongside the losses show darkened glue drips and splatters, further evidence of Warner's untrained glue application and unpracticed removal methods. The scars of the missing fragments disrupt and change the narratives at Dunhuang in two separate ways. First, the areas of loss interrupt the visual narratives painted on the grotto walls, sometimes removing details significant to the stories depicted in the caves. For example, in Cave 321, the arrival of the first statue of the Buddha, (now *Eight men ferrying a statue of the Buddha*, HUAM Accession number 1924.41) an important part of the story of Buddhism's introduction to China, has been erased from its original context. Second, the missing fragments have become part of a contemporary narrative about the historical and artistic significance of Dunhuang. Today, tour guides at Dunhuang orient visitors to these caves with mention of not only Tang Dynasty patronage and craftsmanship but also the destruction of Chinese cultural heritage by Warner and *the Americans*. In this way, the scars of a modern preservation policy upstage the authentic and largely intact ancient narratives on the walls.

OBJECT LESSONS

I have examined how the collection and preservation of both movable and immovable artifacts have played an important role in the pedagogical mission of Western museums both in China and in their home countries. Thus far, these artifacts have held the relatively passive roles of being possessed, removed, or preserved. I now turn to the kinds of lessons the objects themselves taught, both to those who possessed them and to those who were "deprived of their ownership."[92] In China, as I will show, the loss of the painting fragments prompted action on the part of several Chinese individuals against the Fogg's second expedition in 1925, effectively ending the museum's attempt to collect more materials from western China. Ironically, it was the West's removal of Chinese artifacts for preservation that incited both local and governmental calls for the preservation of cultural heritage in China. In the case of the Fogg, a university art museum with a mandate for pedagogy and "educational experimentation," the damaged Dunhuang wall painting fragments taught two rather contradictory lessons.[93] First, they embodied cautionary tales of the destruction wrought on artifacts, specifically wall paintings, in the name of preservation, and exposed the problematic ethics of contemporary preservation practice. Second, they encouraged further studies of improved techniques for the removal of wall paintings from their original sites. These contradictory lessons underscore the problematic underpinnings of the then-developing field of art conservation: a discipline that while dedicated to preserving art, often required the same art to have been lifted out of its original context for preservation in a museum.

The Fogg's Second China Expedition came close on the heels of the first, with its primary purpose to establish relationships with Chinese universities in the hope of creating a Peking-based institute for the study of Chinese culture. Backed by Charles M. Hall, who wished to fund projects "educating the Chinese," the so-called *Big Scheme* was to provide a secure location in China for archaeological finds from future field expeditions where an interdisciplinary group of American and Chinese scholars could study them.[94] Although the main thrust of the expedition was intended to create a new institute, the seven-strong team (including Thompson, and Jayne who accompanied Warner to China the previous year) was focused specifically on returning to Dunhuang to study and remove wall paintings, perhaps entire caves of paintings. The eagerness to return to the field was based on the urgency of preserving paintings from the site before they were further damaged but was also legitimized by the technical expertise that the Fogg had acquired as a result of the First China Expedition. This technical know-how, bolstered by work in the "laboratory at the Fogg Museum. . .[that] proved by actual experiment that Oriental wall-paintings in water-color can be successfully removed by the Italian process," made the chances of successfully removing wall paintings seem more likely.[95]

Changed circumstances in China, in particular new government legislation requiring the preservation of antiquities as well as increased communist agitation

against foreigners, made for fewer opportunities to remove artifacts for Western collections. Even government-sponsored expeditions such as John Gunnar Andersson's (1874–1960) work for the Geological Survey of China ran into trouble when the Gansu provincial authorities were dissatisfied with the division of specimens between Sweden and China.[96] Warner wrote of how even "local societies [were passing] resolutions bringing to the attention of the officials that foreigners were despoiling China of her antiquities."[97] When Warner was detained in Peking on Big Scheme business, Jayne was persuaded to lead the team ahead to Dunhuang even though he had never been there.[98] As the expedition made its way westward, Jayne learned that news of Warner's removal of wall paintings was known and decried not only in the western provinces but also as far as Peking. Weeks before arriving at Dunhuang, he wrote to Forbes that the expedition had to give up hopes of acquiring any wall paintings:

> The circumstances had altered much from Warner's successful trip last season: it was known frescoes had been removed and it must have been suspected that more were to be removed; it was a very different matter to remove a few fragments of damaged frescoes which could be done swiftly without attracting attention or causing undue distress among the priests or local people, compared with attempting to take away one or more complete caves, a matter of three or four months work at least, which would inevitably attract great local attention and probably actual disturbance.[99]

When the expedition arrived at the site, it was received by an angry 100-strong crowd and escorted under a "guard of mounted riflemen."[100] Although the team expected to spend 8 months at Dunhuang removing entire caves worth of paintings, it was limited to brief visits over a period of 4 days and closely watched in case there were attempts to remove anything. Jayne wrote to Warner,

> After you had left last year the populace was exceedingly displeased with what had been removed, had raised a fearful row and accused the magistrate at TH [Dunhuang] of accepting a bribe to allow you to take things away, and in consequence thereof he had to be removed from office.[101]

Rumors of Warner's spoils had also apparently been spread by "a retired Yamen official coming to Peking and a post office clerk [in Lanchow]."[102] As a result, two Peking officials were sent to Dunhuang "for an investigation of exactly what had been taken."[103] Warner met Jayne at Ansi, a 3-day ride away from the site because of fears that "if I had been there this time, the situation would have been even worse."[104] He remained unconvinced both at this time and throughout his career that he had done anything wrong in 1924:

> I have been racking my brains to find out if anything that I did last year was a mistake in policy but can find nothing. When I left Tun Huang the scene seemed quite set for another year's work and everyone pleased with the foreigner's visit. Wang, the interpreter, told me at the time that it would be easier on the next trip![105]

Unbeknownst to Warner, the Second Fogg expedition was in fact effectively blocked from its inception by his own interpreter Wang Jinren, and William Hung, an American-trained historian and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Yanjing University in Peking who would later teach at Harvard.[106] Wang had confessed to Hung that he had been a "traitor to China" for not having stopped Warner the previous year at Dunhuang when:

> He discovered him in one of the grottos working with some cloth over one of the murals . . . [Warner had] explained that the murals on these walls were of great historical and artistic value. Unfortunately, he said, the Chinese were not interested in such matters; but as the universities in America were eager to study them, he was experimenting with a process . . . to see whether he could transfer some of the murals back to America. . . . But he told him not to tell anybody, which led Wang to suspect that what he was doing was not authorized. Now this Warner was back with a big delegation of Americans. . . . Wang was certain that they wanted to take all of the murals away.[107]

Hung immediately went to see the Vice Minister of Education in Peking, Qin Fen, who then "sent a telegram to every governor, district magistrate, and police commissioner along the way to Tun-huang, [i.e., Dunhuang], saying that very soon, a delegation from a great institution in America would be coming" and "on no account allow them to touch any historical relics."[108]

The Second Fogg Expedition ended in disappointment for Warner. He was unable to acquire any significant materials for the museum's collection and had to comfort himself with the photographic study of the nearby Wan Fo Hsia caves, already visited by Stein. Plans for the Big Scheme also eventually fell through, leaving Warner bitter and keen to identify the saboteurs of his expedition.[109] Ironically, he placed the blame squarely on educated Chinese and Chinese government officials, the same individuals he chastised less than a year before for not taking steps to protect China's cultural heritage. He accused Dr. Chen Wanli, a scholar from the Peking National University who had accompanied the team to Dunhuang on Warner's invitation, of spying on the expedition and profiting financially from it. Warner was particularly stung by the disloyalty of Western-trained Yuan Fuli (1893–1987), an "archaeologist and a graduate of Columbia. . .whom I saw here [in Gansu] when I passed on my way back last year, [and] spread rumors of my finds and robberies at Tun Huang chapels."[110] He also bitterly acknowledged that, "It now looks as if both Peking and the Provincial officials (and possibly Dr. Chen) knew all along that we were going to be blocked and that they let us spend all this time and these thousands of dollars with their tongues in their cheeks."[111] It is deeply ironic that Warner did not view the strengthening of Chinese regulations as a positive step towards the preservation of cultural heritage in that country when in fact this had been his justification for removing wall paintings all along.

Although the Second China Expedition ended without the removal of any wall paintings from Dunhuang, the existing collection at the Fogg transformed it into

an important center for the study and conservation of Asian wall paintings. This was caused by Forbes' establishment of a research department at the Fogg in 1928, where conservator George Leslie Stout and chemist Rutherford John Gettens were charged with investigating the preservation of Chinese wall paintings using scientific means. Both Gettens and Stout were engaged in studying and identifying the original materials and techniques used in the fabrication of these art objects. Gettens' unpublished work on the pigments of the Dunhuang wall paintings and Bodhisattva statue remains one of the most important references on early Chinese polychromy today.[112] Both Gettens and Stout were skeptical of the preservation priorities of the day, which justified the removal of wall paintings from their original site yet at the same time exhausted significant efforts in developing a more effective and less damaging way to remove wall paintings from their original sites. How could these two contradictory approaches coexist? I would argue that Gettens' and Stout's main concern was for the physical integrity of the artifact; for example, if removal of the artifact from its original context damaged it, then it should not be done. I do not mean to suggest that they were against removing artifacts from their original sites because of some sense that the Chinese were more legitimate possessors or caretakers of materials found there; instead, for Gettens and Stout, the legitimacy of the museum (and in particular a teaching museum) as a repository for art was never in doubt. This is made clear in lecture notes for Fine Arts 15a, a Harvard course entitled, "Museum Work and Museum Problems"[113]:

> There are two possible aims in transferring the painted wall surfaces of the Far Eastern type. The more important of these is to restore the painting and leave it in situ. Occasionally, however, circumstances demand that it be removed entirely and transported to another and safer location.[114]

There must have been considerable administrative pressure for Gettens and Stout to develop improved methods for the removal of wall paintings as the Fogg was embarking on the Asiatic Expedition, to be led by Sir Aurel Stein in 1930. Stein intended to explore Xinjiang province (then called *Chinese Turkestan*), "which in its scattered oases [comprised] an almost entirely non-Chinese population accustomed to view Western travelers with friendly eyes," and a region of China Stein considered "in practice independent from whatever central authority has prevailed in China proper."[115] Stein warned the Fogg against hoping for "archaeological proceeds" given the increased governmental policing of foreign expeditions. Nonetheless, between 1928 and the summer of 1930 when Stein left for the field, Gettens and Stout undertook no less than seven experiments to determine more appropriate materials and techniques for the so-called *transfer* of non-Western wall paintings.[116] One experiment involved the construction of a fake mud wall based on Warner's recommendations to simulate conditions found at Dunhuang, complete with a Bodhisattva image painted by Stout. Gettens' notes from March 1930 evidence the meticulous work required in choosing an appropriate adhesive that would not freeze in the field as Warner's had as well as the difficulty of selecting

proper tools for cutting away paint layers from their walls.[117] These experiments resulted in the development of compact field kits, which included all the materials and implements needed to remove approximately 144 square feet of wall painting each, as well as written instructions describing the proper procedure. These portable kits, therefore, were a direct result of lessons learned from the damaged Dunhuang fragments. Gettens and Stout wrote:

> Archaeological expeditions in the past occasionally have made attempts to remove Eastern Mud Wall paintings in the field, and to transport them to this country. In many cases their efforts have been unsuccessful or only partially successful due to lack of equipment and to unforeseen difficulties. Now that many of these difficulties can be anticipated from the experience of others, it only remains to provide these expeditions with the proper equipment.[118]

In addition to producing appropriate preservation tools for individuals leaving for the field, Gettens and Stout also gave hands-on practical training in their use. For example, both Stein and his assistant Milton Bramlette were given demonstrations of the method in hopes that this would minimize damage to immovable cultural heritage removed from the field. Ultimately, these preparations were of little use: Stein's travel pass was cancelled by the Chinese government in March 1931 and his work denounced as vandalism by China's National Commission for the Preservation of Antiquities.

Even after the end of the Fogg expeditions, Gettens and Stout continued to work on technical issues related to Chinese and Central Asian wall paintings because of the increased looting of cultural sites in China. A 1930 law banning export of Chinese antiquities did little to staunch the flow of illicit archaeological material into the international art market; wall painting fragments were relatively easily available because they could be sawn out of isolated temple and grotto walls and then sold piecemeal to various bidders. In cases where large sections of wall paintings were purchased by museum institutions, these fragments required extensive conservation and reassembly before they could be placed on display. Gettens' and Stout's expertise in Chinese wall paintings thus made them particularly sought after in North America. The Fogg's conservation staff examined and reconstructed large-scale Asian wall paintings purchased by institutions including the Pennsylvania (now Philadelphia) Museum of Art; the MFA; and the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.[119] In the latter case, Stout oversaw the reassembly of the monumental *Maitreya Paradise*, a wall originally from the temple of Xinghua-si in Shansi province, which arrived in Toronto in 1928 in 69 sawn fragments.[120] Unfortunately, there is little evidence that the acquisition and subsequent preservation of these looted artifacts was considered problematic at the time. March in his meticulous catalog of more than 32,300 Chinese objects in American collections, waved aside concerns that anyone was culpable for the removal of artifacts. For March and many others, the preservation of cultural artifacts was best served in a Western museum, no matter how the material was acquired:

> Any man seeking or needing to sell will naturally dispose of his goods to the highest bidder, and it is difficult to blame either seller or buyer in such a transaction, as long as irreplaceable objects of merit are preserved from destruction. . .It is not improbable that the knowledge of a market largely created by Western collectors has saved many choice pieces from oblivion.[121]

THE LEGACIES OF PRESERVATION

> Because no reconciliation [between China and the West] was ever arrived at, because the past continues to be selectively plundered by the present, the scars, both physical and mental, remain, shaping the consciousness of the next generation.
>
> James Hevia[122]

At the 2004 conference on the "Conservation of Ancient Sites Along the Silk Road" held at Dunhuang, Fan Jinshi, director of the Dunhuang Academy, called for the *recovery* of all objects originally from the site.[123] Leaving aside the legal considerations this question raises, how do or how can sites recover from their losses? More importantly, how can nations that assume these sites as symbols of a national, collective cultural identity recover? What, if anything, do institutions holding such hybrid, entangled objects from these sites owe China? Can dispersed collections from a site be reassembled like so many sawn wall painting fragments? Are there ways to disentangle objects from the complex and often violent histories that created and changed them? These problems cannot simply be solved by legal means, which may in some cases satisfy political demands but cannot address the scars of preservation. Rather, such questions require open and honest dialog between parties willing to look beyond the limiting narratives of these events of the early twentieth century as either heroism or plunder. In recent years, the need for the conservation of Dunhuang and materials removed from the site has in fact driven significant international collaborative efforts.[124] Additionally, numerous publications, international conferences, and online digitization projects have attempted to increase access to, and reunite, dispersed collections.

My original research project aimed to *recover*, through nondestructive analytical techniques, the pigments and painting techniques used during the Tang Dynasty period from the damaged Dunhuang fragments at the HUAM.[125] Although that study yielded extensive information about the hands of artists active in the seventh and eighth centuries who made the wall paintings, it also revealed the extent to which these objects show the hands of Warner, Thompson, Gettens, Stout, and other conservators. Perhaps the most poignant example of the entangled and interlocked histories of the ancient and modern is that of *Head and Shoulders of a Buddhist Figure* (HUAM accession number 1924.47A). Fragments of the original intelaggio used by Warner to remove this fragment were discovered at the Straus Center for Conservation in a paper bag labeled with Gettens' spidery handwrit-

ing, "(Facing) Transfer Cloth from Tun Huang Fresco—bearing fragments of the original fresco."[126] Once humidified and flattened, the intelaggio was shown to carry as much pigment and painted definition as the fragment accessioned into the museum collection; in this case the ancient pigments and the modern adhesives and cloth had become a single, hybrid object, scarred by the moment of removal as well as subsequent attempts at preservation (see Figure 5).

History has dealt harshly with many of the larger-than-life figures who traversed the difficult terrain of western China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, alternately propping them up as saviors or as foreign devils. Shelton warns that "peoples of one historical epoch removed from our own are also 'other' to us, and it is dangerous and at worst disingenuous to impute their motives or project judgments from a totally unlike historical milieu such as that which we ourselves occupy."[127] Although it is tempting to solely cast Warner as an arrogant, opportunistic, and insensitive treasure-seeker, this would be inconsistent with the

AC 1924.47A, "Head and Shoulders of Buddhist Figure" in its current state.

The fragments of cloth *intelaggio* used by Warner in the removal of the painting from the wall, after re-assembly in Adobe Photoshop. Note that nearly half of the original pigment from the wall painting is still adhered to the facing.

Figure 5. [See image] Photographs by Sanchita Balachandran. Courtesy of the Straus Center for Conservation, HUAM.

more complex picture of his motives that emerges from examining his correspondence. Like many of his contemporaries, Warner was an ambitious and adventurous man with a deep respect for the artistic production of the past, and a genuine concern for the protection and study of that material. Nevertheless, his actions, which were problematic soon after his expeditions to western China in the 1920s, continue to haunt the Dunhuang collection at the HUAM today.

The near-century since Warner's expedition to Dunhuang has demonstrated the unpredictable nature of events which affect the preservation of cultural heritage. Can either museums or sites effectively and indefinitely ensure the survival of the cultural and material significance they contain? Although current conservation ethics lean toward preserving both movable and immovable cultural in situ whenever possible, there are also countless examples of how materials were preserved because of their dispersal from their original sites. Precisely because Dunhuang remains in an extraordinary state of preservation, it is perhaps easier to dwell on and condemn the destructive effects of removing movable and immovable artifacts from the site. Two Bodhisattvas in Cave 321 and 323, which Warner outlined and framed with his adhesive but never removed still stand intact, whereas only 4 of the 12 fragments he transferred for the Fogg are on view today. Not all sites remain as intact as Dunhuang, and in these cases, the documentation of Western expeditions and the catalogs of artifacts they removed are the solitary evidence for what once existed. These traces, then, offer opportunities to recover information of ancient pasts, but also demand that the institutions that hold them acknowledge their own troubled and difficult journeys on the "Long Old Road in China."[128]

Archive Abbreviations

BOD	Bodleian Library, Department of Western Manuscripts
HA	Houghton Library Archives, Harvard University
HUA	Harvard University Archives
HUAMA	Harvard University Art Museums Archives
HUAMAsian	Harvard University Art Museums Asian Department
SCC Ob	Straus Center for Conservation, Objects Files, Harvard University Art Museums
SCC Pt	Straus Center for Conservation, Paintings Files, Harvard University Art Museums

ENDNOTES

1. This term was first used by Swiss educationist Johann Pestalozzi who emphasized a "connection between attentive observation of objects and the cultivation of moral judgment." For Pestalozzi's usage, see Glover, "Objects, Models and Exemplar Works," 543. I suggest a different usage of the term, as explained further in this article.
2. March, *China and Japan in Our Museums*, 26.

3. Bewer, "Technical Research and the Care of Works of Art at the Fogg Art Museum (1900 to 1950)," and Brush, *Vastly More than Bricks and Mortar*.

4. Warner, *The Long Old Road in China*, 221–22.

5. The cave numbers (according to the current system used at Dunhuang) are: 320, 321, 323, 328, 329, and 335.

6. I do not discuss the three Chinese Central Asian expeditions of Count Otani Kozui (1876–1948) because the materials he and his team removed were for the Nishi Honganji monastery in Kyoto.

7. March, *China and Japan in Our Museums*, vi.

8. Warner to Unknown, n.d. HUAMA, Folder: Warner, Langdon, Chinese Expedition/1922–1923, also 1925–1926.

9. Forbes to Funders, September 22, 1922, HUAMA, Folder: Warner, Langdon, China Expedition.

10. Forbes to Funders, September 22, 1922, HUAMA, Folder: Warner, Langdon, China Expedition.

11. See for example, Von le Coq's *Buried Treasures of Chinese Turkestan*, Pelliot's "Une Bibliothèque Médiévale Retrouvée au Kan-sou," or Stein's *Sand-buried Ruins of Khotan*.

12. Hevia, *English Lessons*.

13. Russell-Smith, "Hungarian Explorers in Dunhuang," 360.

14. Wang, *Sir Aurel Stein in the Times*, 144. The cave is now referred to as Cave 17.

15. Wang, "Catalogue of the Sir Aurel Stein Papers in the British Museum Central Archives."

16. Bongard-Levin et al., *Correspondances Orientalistes*, 211. This is my translation. Foucher's statement underscores the frequently physically and sexually violent language common to explorers' narratives at the time.

17. Forbes to Pelliot, December 7, 1921, HUAMA, Folder: Warner, Langdon, Chinese Expedition/1922–1923, also 1925–1926.

18. Brush, *Vastly More than Bricks and Mortar*, 45.

19. Hevia, *English Lessons*, 132.

20. Hevia, *English Lessons*, 132.

21. Conn, "Where is East?"

22. Cohen, *East Asian Art and American Culture*.

23. Forbes, *History of the Fogg Art Museum*, 224. This was the first time that courses in Asian art were offered at an American university.

24. Bowie, *Langdon Warner Through His Letters*, 29.

25. Warner was also offered fieldwork in Java or Khotan (1906), in Japan (1909), with Pelliot in Turkestan (after 1914), and for the Cleveland Museum in Turkestan (1915).

26. Bowie, *Langdon Warner Through His Letters*, 45–46.

27. Warner to Unknown, n.d. HUAMA, Folder: Warner, Langdon, Chinese Expedition/1922–1923, also 1925–1926.

28. These differences in opinion are significant in that they suggest that there was more than one point of view as to what was acceptable for removal even within the Fogg. Forbes and Warner clashed again over how to proceed during the Second Fogg Expedition.

29. Warner to Unknown, n.d. HUAMA, Folder: Warner, Langdon, Chinese Expedition/1922–1923, also 1925–1926.

30. I would like to thank Robert Mowry for suggesting this to me.

31. Brajer, "Aspects of Reversibility in Transferred Wall Paintings."

32. Meisler, "The Case of the Disappearing Frescoes."

33. "Statement Regarding Sir Aurel Stein's Archaeological Expedition in Chinese Turkestan," written by the National Commission for the Preservation of Antiquities, HUA, Folder: Langdon Warner, Correspondence, Sir Aurel Stein.

34. Watson, "Palaces, Museums, and Squares."

35. Hamlish, "Preserving the Palace."

36. Watson, "Palaces, Museums and Squares" 8.

37. Hamlish, "Preserving the Palace." I use Peking, Peiping, and Beijing in keeping with what the city was called during different historical and political moments.

38. Millward, "Coming Onto the Map," 61–98.

39. For discussions of literati painting, see Li and Watt, *The Chinese Scholar's Studio*, and Sullivan, *The Three Perfections*. I thank Robert Mowry for his kind guidance on this subject.
40. Russell-Smith, "Hungarian Explorers in Dunhuang," 352.
41. National Commission for the Preservation of Cultural Objects, "Statement regarding Sir Aurel Stein's Archaeological Expedition in Chinese Turkestan." HUA, Folder: Langdon Warner, Correspondence, Sir Aurel Stein.
42. McBryde, "Introduction," and Barkan, "Amending Historical Injustices."
43. Hevia, *English Lessons*.
44. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*.
45. Duncan, "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship."
46. Lyons and Papadopoulos, "Archaeology and Colonialism."
47. Conn, "Where Is East?" 164.
48. Clunas, "China in Britain," 47.
49. March, *China and Japan in Our Museums*, vi.
50. March, *China and Japan in Our Museums*, 10.
51. Wood, *The Silk Road*.
52. Foucher, "A. Grünwedel," 442. This is my translation.
53. Warner, *Buddhist Wall-Paintings*, xiv.
54. Warner, *The Long Old Road in China*, 147.
55. Pelliot, "Chronique: Chine," 207–08. This is my translation.
56. Andrews, "Central Asian Wall-Paintings," 4.
57. March, *China and Japan in Our Museums*, 25. Russell-Smith, "Hungarian Explorers in Dunhuang," 358.
58. Warner, *The Long Old Road in China*, 217.
59. Watson, "Palaces, Museums and Squares: Chinese National Spaces," and Hamlish, "Preserving the Palace."
60. Shelton, "Introduction. 'Doubts Affirmations,' " 18.
61. See ⟨http://idp.bl.uk/archives/news12/idpnews_12a4d⟩ (Last accessed January 13, 2007). See also Whitfield, *Dunhuang Manuscript Forgeries*.
62. Pelliot, "Chronique: Chine," and March, *China and Japan in Our Museums*, 25.
63. Warner, *The Long Old Road in China*, 219.
64. This version of the story has been disputed by Rong Xinjiang, who suggests that the collection was in fact dispersed after it reached the Ministry of Education in Peking. See ⟨http://idp.bl.uk/archives/news12/idpnews_12.a4d⟩ (last accessed 13 January 2007).
65. Von Falkenhausen, "Rediscovering the Past."
66. Warner, *The Long Old Road in China*, 219.
67. Mirsky, *Sir Aurel Stein*, 279.
68. Warner, *The Long Old Road in China*, 57.
69. Warner, *The Long Old Road in China*, 57.
70. Stein to Publius Allen, December 2, 1907, BOD MS Stein 4.
71. Von Falkenhausen, "Rediscovering the Past," 41. Li Ji is also spelled Li Chi. See Yang, "A History of Modern Chinese Archaeology" for discussions of Chinese-led scientific expeditions and archaeological excavations since the early 1900s.
72. Hevia, *English Lessons*.
73. Clunas, "China in Britain."
74. Clunas, "China in Britain," 48.
75. Stein, Lowell Lecture XII: "The Cave Shrines of the "Thousand Buddhas." December 1929. BOD MS Stein 414/2.
76. Warner asked Forbes to suggest materials that would best stabilize the delicate surfaces of wall paintings without changing their appearance. He wanted to avoid using the paraffin wax and celluloid commonly in use by other explorers because they often darkened or clouded the painting surfaces. See Warner to Forbes, February 14, 1923, HUAMA, Folder: Warner, Langdon, Correspondence 1910–1950.

77. Thompson to Warner, June 10, 1923, HUAMA, Folder: EW Forbes/DV Thompson 1922–1923.

78. Thompson to Warner, June 10, 1923, HUAMA, Folder: EW Forbes/DV Thompson 1922–1923. Recent analysis completed by Narayan Khandekar at the Straus Center for Conservation showed that Warner did not precisely follow Thompson's advice on the kinds of adhesives to use. Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy showed that in addition to rabbit skin glue and *nikawa* (an animal glue), Warner also used gum Arabic, which was not suggested by Thompson.

79. Warner, *The Long Old Road in China*, 216–17.

80. Warner, *The Long Old Road in China*, 219. Ultimately, Warner only removed 12 of the 14 fragments he originally intended to strip.

81. Had Jayne been at Dunhuang with Warner, perhaps there would have been more photographs of the removal of the fragments.

82. Warner to Forbes, February 10, 1924, HA, Folder: Warner, L 1881–1955, Correspondence 1906–1946.

83. Warner to Forbes, February 10, 1924, HA, Folder: Warner, L 1881–1955, Correspondence to Forbes, 1906–1946.

84. Warner, "Preliminary Report of the Fogg Museum," n.d., HUAMA, Folder: Warner, Langdon, Correspondence 1910–1950.

85. Warner, *The Long Old Road in China*, 216–17.

86. Thompson, "Delta Fragment" treatment report. SCC Ob, Folder: AC 1924.40-47.

87. Thompson, "Alpha Fragment" treatment report. SCC Ob, Folder: AC 1924.40-47. The current whereabouts of this fragment are unknown.

88. Stout and Binyon, "Transference of Mutilated Chinese Wall Painting," March 1, 1930. SCC, Objects, Folder: AC 1924.40-47.

89. Warner to Forbes, September 11 or 12, 1924, HUAMA, Folder: Warner, Langdon, China Expedition.

90. Warner to Forbes, September 11 or 12, 1924, HUAMA, Folder: Warner, Langdon, China Expedition.

91. These fragments are *Bust of an attendant Bodhisattva* (HUAM Accession No. 1924.43) and *Bust of a Bodhisattva, with Lohan and guardian* (HUAM Accession No. 1924.44).

92. Chinese Commission for the Preservation of Cultural Objects, "Statement regarding Sir Aurel Stein's Archaeological Expedition in Chinese Turkestan." HUA, Folder: Langdon Warner, Correspondence, Sir Aurel Stein.

93. Brush, *Vastly More than Brick and Mortar*, 60.

94. Forbes, *History of the Fogg Art Museum*, 273.

95. Warner to Pelliot, August 10, 1924, HUAMA, Folder: Warner, Langdon, China Expedition.

96. Jayne to Forbes, April 9, 1925, HUAMA, Folder: Chinese Expedition, Tun Huang Caves 1924–1926. Andersson worked with the National Geological Survey between 1915–1925. See Fiskesjö and Chen, *China Before China*.

97. Warner to Willys, May 5, 1925, HUAM Asian, Folder: Tun Huang Frescoes, Accession Information, 1924.40-47.

98. As previously mentioned, Jayne fell ill during the First Fogg Expedition and was not with Warner during his sojourn to Dunhuang.

99. Jayne to Forbes, April 9, 1925, HUAMA, folder: Chinese Expedition, Tun Huang Caves, 1924–1926.

100. Warner to Forbes, May 28, 1925, HUAMA, Folder: Chinese Expedition, Tun Huang Caves, 1924–1926.

101. Jayne to Warner, May 4, 1925, HUAM Asian, Folder: Tun Huang Frescoes, Accession Info, 1924.40-47.

102. Warner to Willys, May 5, 1925, HUAM Asian, Folder: Tun Huang Frescoes, Accession Information, 1924.40-47.

103. Jayne to Warner, May 4, 1925, HUAM Asian, Folder: Tun Huang Frescoes, Accession Information, 1924.40-47.

104. Warner to Forbes, May 28, 1925, HUAMA, Folder: Chinese Expedition, Tun Huang Caves, 1924–1926.

105. Warner to Forbes, May 28, 1925, HUAMA, Folder: Chinese Expedition, Tun Huang Caves, 1924–1926.

106. Wang Jinren was formerly spelled *Wang Chin-jen*. Yanjing University was formerly spelled *Yenching University*.

107. Egan, *A Latterday Confucian*, 112–13.

108. Egan, *A Latterday Confucian*, 114. Hung's dictated tapes to Egan, currently held at the Harvard University Archives, will be opened to public in 2007 and more details may be forthcoming. It should be noted that Hung was instrumental in securing funds for the opening of the Peking Historical Museum in 1926, an institution which apparently drew one fifth of the city's population in its inaugural month (Egan, 95). Qin Fen was formerly spelled *Ch'in Fen*.

109. The Harvard-Yenching Institute was eventually founded in 1928 with funding from Hall.

110. Warner to Willys, May 5, 1925, HUAM Asian, Folder: Tun Huang Frescoes, Accession Information, 1924.40-47.

111. Warner to Roger S. Greene, June 23, 1925. HUAMA, Folder: Chinese Expedition, Tun Huang Caves, 1924–1926.

112. Gettens, "Preliminary Report on Chinese Pigments," 1935, SCC Pt, Folder: Microscopy, General Notes—Far East Wall Paintings, 1924.40.

113. This course was taught by Paul Sachs, who often invited his colleagues to present various topics to students hoping to pursue museum careers.

114. Stout, "Museum Work and Museum Problems," November 21, 1930, SCC Pt, Folder: Paintings, Conservation, Treatment, Transference, Oriental.

115. Stein to Forbes, January 11, 1930, HUAMA, Folder: Directors' Files, EW Forbes, Sir Aurel Stein.

116. These experiments included "The Transfer of a Painting Made Without a Binding Material Upon an Artificial Mud Wall"; "Studies in the Fixation of a Mud or Clay Surface with Various Lacquers"; "Further Study in the Fixation of Mud or Clay with Vinylite and Vinyl Resin"; "An Investigation of the Cause of 'Buckling' or 'Lifting' of the Paint Film in Chinese Mud Wall Paintings"; "Experiments to Show the Extent of Adhesion of a Glued Facing to a Smooth Vinylite Lacquer Surface." See SCC Pt, Folder: Transfer, Chinese Wall Paintings, Early Experiments.

117. Gettens, March 1930, "Transfer of a Painting Made Without a Binding Material Upon an Artificial Wall," SCC Pt, Folder: Transfer, Chinese Wall Paintings, Early Experiments.

118. Laboratories for Technical Research, "Equipment for Field Use," 1930. SCC Pt, Folder: Conservation Treatment, Transference-General. The final materials chosen for field use were rabbit skin glue, glycerine, and a vinyl resin in varying concentrations mixed in different solvents.

119. Department of Conservation, "Chinese Wall Paintings," n.d., SCC Ob, Folder: AC 1924.40-47.

120. Phillimore, "Initial Report on the Treatment of Two 13th Century Chinese Wall Paintings in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto," 153. Stout, "The Assembly of Transferred Fragments of Chinese Wall Painting," 1934, SCC Pt, Folder: Conservation, Transference—General, Treatment. Xinghua-si was formerly spelled *Hsing-hua Ssu*.

121. March, *China and Japan in Our Museums*, 26.

122. Hevia, *English Lessons*, 349.

123. This conference was coorganized by the Getty Conservation Institute and the Dunhuang Academy.

124. The site has been preserved by the Dunhuang Academy since 1943; currently, the site and materials from the site are being studied, documented, and conserved by the Dunhuang Academy in collaboration with several international organizations, notably the Getty Conservation Institute and the International Dunhuang Project. See ⟨http://www.getty.edu/conservation/field_projects/mogao/index.html⟩ and ⟨http://idp.bl.uk/⟩, respectively (last accessed January 13, 2007).

125. The unpublished documentation for this project is currently held at the Straus Center for Conservation, HUAM.

126. I would like to thank Francesca Bewer for bringing these objects to my attention.

127. Shelton, "Introduction. 'Doubts Affirmations,' " 18–19.
128. This is the name of Warner's memoir.

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