Figure 1: Temporary protective roof over excavations at Sardis, Turkey.

Resim 1: Sardis kazı alanları üzerindeki geçici koruyucu çatı, Türkiye.

Credit: Glenn Wharton

Spring 1999
This guide contains some general suggestions for the preservation of materials remaining on archaeological sites, either between seasons or permanently, including built structures, the decorative elements in those structures, and the edges of the excavations themselves. In the same way that the conservator of artifacts is responsible for the safety and preservation of movable cultural property, there is an essential role at every archaeological excavation for a site conservator. The site conservator can help the archaeologists and project director make well-informed decisions about what measures are necessary for the protection of the site from the effects of weather, theft, and vandalism, as well as the wear and tear of excavation traffic, tourists, and local usage.

Archaeologists at well-established excavations, and there are many in Turkey, sometimes fall into bad habits that contribute to the deterioration of their finds. Workers and excavators may routinely walk on walls or exposed mosaics without noticing how much damage they are causing. Simple actions, such as redirecting traffic, providing temporary physical barriers, and the construction of wooden ramps and walkways over structures, can prevent a great deal of damage; it will usually be the site conservator who must remind the excavators to take these actions. At newly established sites, conservators are often in a position to develop good excavation habits from the start, and this is an opportunity not to be missed. Information on preservation procedures for in situ materials and built structures should be included in "First Aid" handouts and training sessions given to archaeologists by conservators.

During the off season, local residents will return to their customary land-use patterns in and around the excavation area. If a site is in an inhabited area, this may include the use of paths and local roads through the site, use of the site for grazing, or use of the site as a playground by village children. Working with the project director, the site conservator can help to identify the most vulnerable areas and aid in the development of a fencing plan or some other form of protection. Needless to say, good relations and careful diplomacy with local residents can contribute significantly to the off-season protection of a site.

Archaeological excavation, almost by definition, creates a hole in the ground that immediately becomes a natural collection point for both rainwater and solid debris. Many areas of Turkey receive substantial amounts of precipitation, and the runoff of one winter, cascading down the sides and pooling in the bottom of an excavation, can lead to severe erosion and sometimes collapse. Increasingly, reburial is considered necessary because of the danger that the exposed site might attract vandals.
a viable option for both temporary and long-term stabilization of archaeological deposits. In current practice, reburial often includes the use of geotextiles and related synthetic materials. These materials can help protect delicate deposits, enhance or restrict drainage, stabilize loose soils, and control silt deposition. A wide variety of these products are now available in Turkey (see Field Note Number 3, Conservation and Related Materials: Suppliers and Shopping in Turkey.) In addition to geotextiles, reburial will likely include the use of soil, clean sand, a specialized fill material, or a combination of these materials. The site conservator can help the archaeologist design a reburial system appropriate for the site, based on such factors as available space, salt content of the soil, potential for freeze-thaw damage, and the nature of the artifacts themselves.

Temporary protection of archaeological sites may also include tent-like structures or more traditional materials such as corrugated galvanized steel or bitumen papers, and synthetic tarps or sheeting. All temporary covering systems must include sufficient drainage to prevent damage from channeling, erosion, and accumulating water. The site conservator will aid the project director in developing yearly monitoring and maintenance routines for these materials until more permanent solutions are found. At the same time, the site conservator can help to implement a program of more general annual maintenance procedures, such as cutting plant growth and repairing access roads, paths, and fences.

The remains of built structures, present at virtually all archaeological sites in Turkey, often consist of broken and truncated walls, deprived of the roof structures that would have originally protected them. All exposed walls, regardless of the materials from which they were constructed, will eventually begin to deteriorate if left unprotected. Most of these structures will remain exposed well into the future and therefore require permanent protection. Few expeditions can afford to provide new roofing over an entire site; therefore, exposed walls are routinely capped to prevent the penetration of rainwater and plant growth. All too often, the material of choice for wall capping is cement-bonded mortar. Cement mortar is cheap, fast, and easy to work with, but ultimately it is doomed to failure. Whenever possible, conservators discourage the use of cement in direct contact with ancient materials, recommending instead the use of lime-based mortars. Programs for this type of stabilization should include training for local workers in the use of these mortars for both new work and ongoing maintenance with relatively little supervision; such a program will help to integrate the local community into the preservation of the site.

Many sites have erected permanent shelters over particularly vulnerable finds in the past, and new projects that include protective structures are begun every year. In addition to preparing the finds beneath those structures for public display, the site conservator can play an important role in both project design and the design of the building itself. Protective structures must not only provide protection from the weather and security for the finds but should also be as low maintenance as possible. Architects designing these structures can sometimes lose sight of the reality of long-term maintenance, and if maintenance procedures are not kept simple and cost effective, they are less likely to be done. The finds within drenaj olanaklarına, toprağın tuh içeriğine, domna-çoç Zincirine tahribatu potansiyeline ve kalınlarını özellikleri göre yapar.

Arkeolojik alanların geçici olarak korunmasında çağrı benzeri elemanlara veya olulu galvanize saç, bitümenli kağıt, senterlik branda gibi daha geleneksel malzemelerle yer verilebilir. Tüm geçici örtü sistemlerinin kanal oluşturu, erozyon ve su akışı engelleyecek etkili bir drenaj içermeleri gerektir. Önemi bir konservatör, daha kalıcı çözümler bulunan da bu elemanları kontrolu ve bakım konusunun kazı başlatma yardım edecek. Konservatör otların kesimini, yolları, patikaları ve tel örgülerini önlenmesi gibi daha genel ve yıklık bir bakım programının geliştirilmesinde de yardımcı olabilir.


Geçmişte birçok yerleşme tahribatu açık buluntuların üzerine kalıcı korunaklar inşa ederek, koruma yaplarının içeren yeni proje their haber yerel yönetimlerin. Ören yerin konservatörü buluntuların bu koruyuculu yapının altında halka sunulması hazırlık ve hibe değerlendirmesi yapısında, hem proje temelinde de yapımın tasarımında önemli roller üstlenebilir. Koruma yapının buluntuları sadece hava koşullarına karşı korunaklı ve onların güvenliğine sağlamaksız kılmakla, mümkün olduğuna az bakım gerektirir bir nitelikte de olsa olmalıdır. Bu tür yapının tasarlayıcı mimarlar kimi zaman uygun vedere bakınız.
permanent structures also require maintenance, and the participation of the site conservator is essential in the planning and execution of these operations. For example, mosaics preserved in situ will invariably need sweeping and perhaps occasional washing; without adequate supervision, this maintenance can be as damaging as exposure to weather or tourist traffic. As part of the documentation relating to conservation treatment of the ancient materials, the conservator should specify the nature and timing of all routine maintenance within protective structures.

Many older sites in Turkey include large-scale reconstructions of excavated architectural remains. During architectural reconstruction or site-enhancement projects, there will often be a specialist in the conservation of architectural materials at the site, or the architects will assume the role of architectural conservator. Once the excavation, documentation, and publication of these projects is finished, they are often left unattended for years, without the benefit of even the most cursory inspection. The site conservator can make a significant impact on the long-term preservation of such reconstructed structures and their decorations through the implementation of a simple inspection program, supervision of the routine and gentle washing of some structures, or implementation of a comprehensive maintenance program.

As primary advocates for the preservation of a wide range of materials, site conservators are often the bearers of bad news for archaeologists and expedition directors. Conservators’ suggestions are sometimes perceived as major distractions from the real purpose of an archaeological expedition: to excavate, document, and publish; however, all aspects of an archaeological site deserve protection, for both the near and distant future. Buildings, walls, and scars are large-scale finds, therefore recommendations regarding site-preservation usually imply a major allocation of time and resources. Careful cooperation among the site conservator, archaeologists, and the project director in planning and executing site-preservation measures will maximize the effective use of available resources.

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