

BOOKREVIEW

Antiquities: What Everyone Needs to Know. By MAXWELL L. ANDERSON. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xxii + 250. Paper, \$16.95. ISBN 978-0-190-61493-5.

Oxford University Press editor, Sarah Pirovitz (xvii), approached Maxwell L. Anderson, a noted art museum director and prolific writer, to undertake *Antiquities: What Everyone Needs to Know*. This 250 page paperback presents a current and concise look at the legal and cultural heritage aspects of what constitutes antiquities, specifically archaeological materials and ancient art (9). Extensive, complex, and controversial issues face this field. The author himself acknowledges the contentious aspects: "... debates about ethics and practices with respect to collecting antiquities can quickly become heated and personal, I have done my best ... to be fair to divergent positions and refrain from impugning the motives of those with strongly held beliefs." (xv).

"Legal and Practical Realities," "Settled Law and Open Questions," and "Scenarios and Solutions" divide the text into three parts. "Cultural Ownership," "International Conventions and Treaties," and "Retention, Restitution, and Repatriation" are a sampling of the sixteen chapter headings. The text's format is Q&A. The Contents pages list the questions later answered in the various chapters (e.g., "How do different countries define antiquities?" "Did people collect in antiquity?" "How are dealers and collectors coping with increasing restrictions?").

Anderson succinctly addresses issues modern nations face in the preservation of their own perceived antiquities. Throughout his work, Anderson emphasizes America's inconsistent approach to the antiquities' conflict as he compares and contrasts its stances with those of other countries. The author himself, back in 2002, as President of the Association of Art Museum Directors attempted to "grapple with the ethical limits of collecting." (43)

The UNESCO treaty of 1970 (a treaty, not a law) attempted to provide an international role in the debate over terms of ownership and preservation, but "... the paralysis in forming internationally acceptable policy ... results in an uncertain future." (41) Opposing viewpoints are debated in the text: archaeology vs. art world, cultural heritage vs. national heritage, private vs. public collectors, looters

vs. chance finders, illicit vs. licit markets ... The list of divisions afflicting the preservation and trade of antiquities goes on and on.

Chapter 7 examines ways source countries approach the retrieval of antiquities. Here Anderson delves into court resolutions, e.g., the “Lydian Hoard” by Turkey (86); continuing diplomatic negotiations, e.g. the Elgin Marbles (88); successful claims, e.g., Cambodia (88-89); and less successful ones, e.g. Nigeria (89). He provides many more examples than included herein. One creative “mutually beneficial settlement agreement” (88) involved the return of “stolen” Mycenaean jewelry to Greece by a New York antiquities dealer via a donation of the items to The Society for the Preservation of the Greek Heritage (88). I had the privilege of attending the objects’ 1996 repatriation ceremony in Washington, DC.

In Chapter 9’s discussion of potential finds from many of UNESCO’s estimated three million shipwrecks (105), Anderson brings up the challenge of ownership claims. He uses the example of the San José off the coast of Columbia (108) to prove his point. Who was the rightful owner? The country of Colombia whose coast was closest to the wreckage? The sea salvage company that made the discovery? Or even possibly the Kingdom of Spain whose ship it originally was?

I found Part 3, Scenarios and Solutions, particularly relevant to the ongoing debates. What is to be done with all the undocumented objects sitting in museum storerooms? It is mind-boggling to think that, according to Anderson, “in 2009, the Metropolitan Museum of Art New York was estimated to own two million objects, but displays only tens of thousands at a time.” (note 3, 129) To think, this is only one of the world’s major museums!

Another topic of Chapter 9 is what museums do with objects “rescued” from war-torn parts of the world. Among the examples cited are “Priam’s Treasure” taken by Russia during World War II (160) or today’s hot spots of Afghanistan and Syria (159). While return of objects to source countries has always been an historically touchy subject, proposed expansions of licit markets for antiquities often face staunch resistance. An alteration to the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1772 put forth by the Indian Minister of Culture in 2015 to allow the legal “sale and export of objects over one hundred years old” (168) evoked just such resistance.

Chapters 13 and 14 address topics such as replications of ancient objects and the “cultural tourism” occurring in French prehistoric caves, Egyptian tombs, or the Mogao Caves in China (152). Chapter 17 examines today’s and tomorrow’s technologies (e.g. 3D printers, satellites, drones) and their effect on the need for the presence of real ancient objects—personally an unsettling thought. Another

topic addresses recent museum revelations of forgeries. The exposition of terracotta Etruscan warriors in 1960 (185) provides but one example.

Elsewhere Anderson examines approaches regarding the sharing of collections with a wider audience which are being considered by source countries, market nations & institutions, and even private collectors (especially of pre-1970 unprovenanced artifacts). While viable alternatives (131-135) are listed, I find the role of private collectors sharing their collections with museums to be most intriguing.

As luck would have it, a recent combined collections' exhibit entitled "The Horse in Ancient Greek Art" at the National Sporting Museum in Middleburg, VA (September 9, 2017-January 14, 2018) gave this reviewer an opportunity to see this approach in action.

Review space precludes citation of more case examples or discussion of the text's detailed footnotes. The 55 page Bibliography of printed texts and extensive up-to-date website URLs make this book a bargain. By contrast, the 8 page long Index is limiting in its usefulness.

In Antiquities: What Everyone Needs to Know, Maxwell L. Anderson has laid out the debate on the intrinsic value of ancient objects for individuals, nations, and cultures. It is up to the readers to choose which side to be on.

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