

The
Ethnographic Conservation Newsletter
of
The Working Group on Ethnographic Materials
of
The ICOM Committee for Conservation

Newsletter No. 1

CONFERENCE OF THE ICOM COMMITTEE FOR CONSERVATION
New York, 1985
STAFFORD SMITH ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM, BRISTOL
30th June 1985

June, 1985

Notes from the Editor

Dear Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that we launch the first issue of the ETHNOGRAPHIC CONSERVATION NEWSLETTER. Its shape will crystalize according to both the interests of its contributors and the evolution of the Working Group itself. In fact, the response from correspondents has been so enthusiastic that this very first issue reflects the truly international scope of our group. While subsequent issues may feature conservation developments in a specific country or region, this one demonstrates our diversity in ethnographic conservation - and keen interest!

Already concepts have emerged as subjects for further discussion: for example, consider the decision to replace missing decoration; in what situations would one choose to do this, and in others, not? Do we use similar or identical materials or select visibly different ones? These are not exclusively technical questions, but also ethical and academic ones. They define the different approaches taken to achieve the conservation of ethnographic materials around the world.

In Canada for example, most museums, large and small, have some ethnological collections; and among them are major collections of the cultural property of native North Americans.

Our general approach as conservators is a fairly conservative one in the sense that beyond stabilization we often try to keep treatment to a minimum in order to keep

the original materials intact and unaltered. In that way they maintain their research potential as primary study material. We look forward to the day when researchers in both history, anthropology and science will return to these objects as the "raw materials" of research.

The opportunity to work closely with objects is one of the privileges of this honourable profession, and the rich diversity of materials in ethnological collections adds to that wonder.

Through them one can become closer to the maker - the maker as an individual and as an ambassador of his or her culture. It is that understanding which we nourish as conservators, and the Newsletter in Ethnographic Conservation is here to support you in your endeavours for collections care.

Ann Howatt Krahn
Assistant Co-ordinator
and Editor
Glenbow Museum
Conservation Department
130 - 9th Avenue S.E.
Calgary, Alberta
T2G 0P3

Message from Dr. Wilhelm Bauer

Dr. Wilhelm P. Bauer, the first Co-ordinator of the ICOM Working Group on Ethnographic Materials, has kindly shared his insights here. They have been gained from many years of experience of the Conservation Committee. His contributions continue through his work in the field, and his dedication to advancing the profession of conservation generally. The Newsletter looks forward to the opportunity of communicating the expertise of Dr. Bauer and those others who share his commitment to ethnological collections.

Dr. Wilhelm P. Bauer, Vienna -

At the request of Mrs. Ann Howatt Krahn, the editor of the Ethnographical Newsletter, I am pleased to write a few comments for the first issue concerning general aspects as well as about work in progress at the Ethnographical Museum in Vienna.

The Ethnographical Newsletter: general aspects from my point of view. I welcome very much that the first issue of the NL will be published by the end of June this year. The great importance of this Newsletter is uncontested and I hope that the main aims can be realized. These are: to improve the contacts amongst the WG-members; to give a general survey on conservation and restoration work, done all over the world; to start a vivacious exchange of information: who is working on what and where; which problems exist in restoring and conserving ethnographic objects; and which of these need special observation. In which fields and on which materials are there difficulties and failures, etc.?

From the time when I had to coordinate this Working Group, I know that the activities of the group depend on good and permanent contacts to and between the members. These contacts are endangered especially in the second year between the Triennial Meetings. I hope that the new-founded NL can remove this risk. (Dr. Bauer's report regarding conservation processes follows in the section, Projects in Progress).

Co-ordinator's Report

I am delighted this first Newsletter of our Working Group is now a reality. It is an important initiative and marks the beginnings of a significant improvement in communication amongst ethnographic conservators; it is also, I believe, the best possible way to reach people and exchange ideas at an international level.

As we are only too keenly aware, there is very little research being carried out, or material being published, in the ethnographic field. Indeed, it is often difficult to find individuals, let alone an ethnographic conservation community, with whom to share ideas or seek advice.

In recent years there has been a marked upsurge of interest in ethnographic material within the private and public sectors alike. New museum initiatives in all parts of the world and the upward price-spiral in the artifact market are clear indications of this. Perhaps of even greater significance is the renewed interest of many indigenous cultures in the production of artifacts using both traditional and contemporary methods and materials. This increased interest in, and re-evaluation of ethnographic material is putting pressure on the conservation profession to ensure its survival. Ethnographic collections encompass such a diversity of material and object types that there is still a wide range of problems for which treatments have not been devised. The need for us to expand and pool our knowledge is obvious. Better use also

needs to be made of information developed in fields other than ethnographic conservation. Too often we find ourselves re-inventing the wheel, when, with a better information and communication network, we could adapt methods or materials developed for other uses.

Thus I believe that the identification and sharing of resources is central to the objectives of our Working Group, and is where our energies can be most effectively directed during this triennial period. As the expertise, the interests, the problems and the priorities become better defined, I hope that we will be able to concentrate more on finding practical solutions to common problems.

During the September 1984 ICOM Conservation Meeting in Copenhagen, there was an encouragingly large turn-out at the discussion session organized by Dr. Wilhelm Bauer, the previous Co-ordinator of the Group. The purpose was to examine the problems and possible future direction of the Working Group. Although there was no opportunity at that time to formalize a specific programme, it was possible to extract from the many ideas raised and accepted at that meeting, and use these as the basis for a working programme for the 1984/87 period. These are set out below together with a report on progress to date.

1984/87 Programme

1. A world-wide survey is to be carried out to identify the nature and extent of

ethnographic conservation. This is to be conducted on a systematic geographical basis with the help of regional coordinators.

2. A Working Group Newsletter is to be established and published twice yearly.

3. A working definition of 'ethnographic materials' is to be developed for discussion and resolution at the 1987 ICOM-CC Meeting, with the purpose of defining the scope of the Working Group's activities.

4. A bibliography of the ethnographic conservation literature is to be compiled and made available through the Newsletter, international documentation centres and at the 1987 Meeting.

Progress Report

1. People in 53 different countries have so far been asked if they can assist with the collection and collation of survey data and provide translation assistance where necessary. The following people have agreed to help and have been appointed Regional Coordinators for their countries:

Australia	K. Coote
Austria	W. Bauer
Belgium	H. Van Geluwe
Canada, West Coast	R. Renshaw-Beauchamp
Finland	L. Wilkstrom
Hungary	T. Hoffman
India	O. Agrawal
Japan	T. Morita
Kenya	S. Somji
Netherlands	J. Van Brakel
New Zealand	G. Barton

Nigeria	A. Imonirhua
Peoples Republic of China	J. Lanpo
Philippines	V. Abinion
South Africa	B. Wanless
Sweden	L-E. Barkman
Tanzania	H. Ngumba
United Kingdom	M. McCord
U.S.A, East Coast	C. Rose
U.S.A., West Coast	E. Cornu
Zimbabwe	S. Nduku

2. Newsletter:

It is anticipated that the next issue of the Newsletter will concentrate on the conservation activities of the Scandinavian, Eastern Asian or Pacific countries. Once we have reviewed the processes with this first issue, we shall be contacting you regarding the scheduling, funding and development of future newsletters.

3. Definition of Ethnographic Materials:

Views on this question are being sought in the international survey questionnaire. The responses will form the basis for discussion at an interim meeting of the Group, if this can be arranged, or otherwise at the next triennial meeting in 1987.

4. Ethnographic Conservation Bibliography:

Action on this project will begin towards the end of 1985. In compiling the bibliography, I hope to enlist the help of many ethnographic conservators in different countries as well as national and international documentation centres and training institutions.

As you can see, the programme is well under way. The first Newsletter is out and the

International Ethnographic Conservation Survey is progressing well. The success of these projects is largely due to the efforts of Ann Howatt-Krahn, the first Newsletter editor; Karen Cote, who has given an immense amount of time and energy in helping me get the programme going; and the many Regional Co-ordinators without whose local knowledge such an ambitious survey could never have been undertaken.

Interim Meeting of the Working Group

It is anticipated that an interim meeting of the Working Group can be arranged to coincide with the Canadian Conservation Institute Conference on Ethnographic Conservation to be held in Ottawa at the end of September 1986. With the existing concentration of ethnographic conservators in Canada and the many overseas delegates who will be attending the conference, it seems that this is a golden opportunity for the Working Group to try and get together.

Membership of the Working Group

Membership of the Working Group has so far been composed mainly of people who have been able to attend ICOM Meetings. Although the membership includes many active conservators, it does not represent the ethnographic conservation profession as a whole. It is important, therefore, to improve the Group's membership by involving new people who feel that they can both contribute and benefit, and reducing the number of members who are no longer actively involved in the ethnographic field. To help achieve this, it would be appreciated if you would fill out the

appended membership questionnaire and return it to me as soon as possible.

I know that there is some confusion about the role of Members, and much discussion about this has taken place at ICOM Meetings among Directory Board Members and Delegates alike. The conclusion was that there are no hard and fast rules governing membership of Working Groups. Membership, however, does imply a willingness to contribute actively to the programme and objectives of the Working Group, either through specific joint or individual research projects, the circulation of information, or other forms of participation. Group Members are not necessarily required to attend ICOM Meetings or present papers on their work, but they are expected to make information about their work accessible.

As you may already know, the next triennial meeting of the ICOM Conservation Committee will be held in Sydney, Australia, 6-11 September 1987. This is an advance warning so that as many people as possible will be able to arrange to come. I will be discussing details of the content and organization of our Group session in the next issues of the Newsletter or by direct communication and, hopefully, at the suggested interim meeting of the Group in Ottawa.

Co-ordinator: Sue Walston
Working Group on
Ethnographic Materials
The Australian Museum
6 - 8 College Street
Sydney, N.S.W. 2000
Australia

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

Current Projects at the Canadian Conservation Institute Relating to Conservation of Ethnographic Material

1. The Ethnology Division is currently treating a number of North West Coast Indian monumental works of art for display in the Great Hall of the new National Museum of Man scheduled to open in 1988.

These artifacts consist mainly of totem poles, grave markers, wooden dance screens and dug out canoes ranging up to 54 feet in length. Conservation work consists mainly of surface cleaning consolidation of wood and stabilization of loose and damaged parts. It is planned that Dave Grattan and Wilf Bolman will be undertaking a radiographic examination of some of the totem poles to try to determine the extent of their internal deterioration. It is hoped that this study will improve on the radiographic techniques first developed for the poles on Anthony Island, British Columbia. It is also believed that this technique will be applicable to any large wooden object.

2. The Ethnology Division is involved in a joint project with the Auckland Institute and Museum, Auckland, New Zealand to investigate the problems of various cleaning methods for feathers. These include both wet and dry cleaning methods as well as the use of ultrasound. Work will begin this summer on the project.

3. Dave Grattan and Bob Barclay are currently involved in a project testing gap fillers for wood. A number of fillers have been examined including A.J.K. dough, rabbit skin glue and whiting and both normal and non corrosive silicone rubbers. One of the more promising fillers is a mixture of Dow Corning 738 silicone rubber with the addition of phenolic microballoons. It is carvable, sandable, paintable and will conform without offering any significant resistance to any distortion in the wood. It will also recover its shape after any distortion occurs.

This fill has been used experimentally on several North West Coast Indian artifacts made of western red cedar and shows much initial promise.

4. Shrinkage temperature measurements of skin and leather artifacts are being used regularly in the Ethnology lab to provide the conservator with a more complete picture of an objects condition. Where applicable, several tiny samples are removed from the artifact and their shrinkage temperatures measured on a hot stage under the microscope. As well as providing valuable information concerning the objects condition, it is hoped that with experience the conservator will be able to roughly equate the shrinkage temperature of an artifact with his own intuitive sense of the objects condition and fragility.

5. John Grant and Bob Barclay of the Ethnology Division have developed a new technique for the casting of replacement pieces for basketry. Unlike previous techniques there is no use of an irreversible separating layer nor is there a risk of the mould sticking to or discolouring the basket. 60/40 lead/tin solder is rolled to approximately 0.03mm and this foil is gently tamped over an intact section of the basket. It is then removed and placed onto a wood, cloth and plaster mother mould. A well refined rag pulp is spread over the mould and pressed, using a piece of Mylar covered wood and the whole is clamped and baked at 80°C for six hours. Once dry the paper is cut to fit the missing area and sprayed with Krylon Crystal Clear 1303 lacquer, glued in place and then inpainted with acrylic. The time involved is roughly one-sixth of that used in a repair done by reweaving and it is hoped that by gradually building a library of moulds, the process can be made even quicker.

6. Analysis of the Materials of Native Cultures -

A project was initiated by the Analytical Research Services laboratory of C.C.I. in 1984 in order to document the pigments and binding media used by the various native groups from pre-contact times to the early part of the twentieth century. Topics under investigation include the identification of "native" pigments primarily of vegetable or min-

eral origin, the introduction of trade pigments, the progression of trade pigments available and the use of synthetic organic pigments starting in the late nineteenth century.

This information will enable us to assist curators and conservators in establishing the provenance, date or degree of previous restoration of an artifact, in confirming published historical information and in selecting appropriate display and treatment conditions. Such questions have been frequently asked in the past; however, response has often been hindered by the lack of reliable analytical reference data.

The first phase of the project was conducted in collaboration with the Canadian Ethnology Service of the National Museum of Man. Paint samples from over one-hundred well documented artifacts were obtained in consultation with the curatorial staff. The emphasis in sample collection was on Naskapi, Plains and Northwest Coast artifacts. The analysis of approximately three-hundred of these samples plus two-hundred paint samples from Northwest Coast houseboards already in the ARS reference collection is in progress. Several museums in western Canada were visited in the Spring of 1985; British Columbia Provincial Museum, University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, Provincial Museum of Alberta and the Glenbow Museum. A total of 488 samples of North American native materials

were obtained. The analysis of these samples is in progress. Contacts have been made with European museums regarding the possibility of obtaining samples. The Royal Scottish Museum, for example, has reported favourably by sending samples from four artifacts.

All samples are routinely examined by Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy and X-ray energy spectrometry in a scanning electron microscope. When required, they are also analyzed by X-ray diffraction, light microscopy, gas chromatography or liquid chromatography. The analytical results and provenance information (e.g. type of artifact, tribe, latest date - usually the date collected, owner, accession number) are entered into a computerized database. Elizabeth Moffatt is coordinating the project. Analytical collaborators are Judi Miller, Jane Shaw and Charles Costain.

7. Slatechuck Creek Argillite -

The slate which the Haida have carved since the early nineteenth century is mined by the Skidegate Band, who have the mineral rights on Graham Island, the largest of the Queen Charlotte Islands. The quarry is located on a mountainside about 13 km from Skidegate up Slatechuck Creek. A study of this unique material has recently been completed at C.C.I. to characterize it from the perspective of determining the provenance of carvings and to determine

its response to fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity. The cracking and splitting so often observed with argillite carvings results, in part, from the presence of clay minerals, notably montmorillonite, which is well known for its property of swelling as a result of water absorption. The study found that more stringent requirements for the display and shipping of argillite must be recommended than might otherwise be considered for stone artifacts. Final results of the various physical, chemical, mineralogical and petrographic studies made of Slatechuck Creek argillite have been compiled by Ian Wainwright of CCI.

8. Examination and Replication of a Stone Mask -

A particularly striking example of Northwest Coast art is the Tsimshian stone mask in the collection of the National Museum of Man in Ottawa. Collected in 1879 it is actually one of two masks. The Mask owned by the Musee de l'Homme in Paris is sighted, whereas the Ottawa mask is not. The National Museum of Man asked CCI to undertake a technical examination of the artifact and to determine how to copy it with a view to a possible exchange of images between Paris and Ottawa. It was found, however, that the stone was too porous and painted areas too weak in adhesion to permit a traditional moulding approach. Nevertheless a replica was accomplished non-destructively as follows: A stereophotogrammetric contour plot was drawn of the ob-

verse and reverse at a 2 mm contour interval by Tom Sawyer of Heritage Recording Services, Parks Canada. A rigid polyurethane foam model was cut by Topographics Limited of Markham, Ontario using a milling device in which the cutting tool is guided by a scribe which is manually traced along the photogrammetric plot, contour by contour. This "terraced" model was meticulously smoothed and worked to the exact appearance of the original and was then moulded in silicone rubber. A final cast was made in Fiberglas filled with marble chips and lead shot to approximate the mass of the original. Finally, the replica was inpainted to match the surface appearance of the original. These latter steps from the production of the Topographic model were undertaken by CCI Conservator Stan Frydryn.

Deterioration of North American Indian Trade Beads -

Many instances of glass bead deterioration on ethnographic objects have been noticed and at the Canadian Conservation Institute a project was undertaken to determine the cause of this. Glass bead deterioration manifests itself in many ways. Cracked and broken beads, sweating glass, discoloration of the backing support and pitting and crazing of the bead's surface are some of the problems that have been observed.

Samples of both stable and unstable beads were collected by Sandra Lougheed of the Ethnology Division and examined by stereo-

microscopy. The analysis, performed by Jane Shaw of Analytical Research Services consisted of surface pH measurement, atomic absorption spectrophotometry and scanning electronmicroscopy/X-ray energy spectrometry. Some problems were encountered with the atomic absorption spectrophotometry analysis due to the sample size limitations.

The results of this analysis lead us to believe that the instability of the beads is, in general, due to two factors. The first, is the poor chemical composition of the bead which is usually either too low in lime and/or too high in alkali. The second is the inhomogeneity of the beads due to improper mixing and heating during manufacture.

10. A safe and relatively simple method of unrolling birchbark scrolls has been recently developed by Dr. Mark Gilberg. Tightly rolled birchbark is exposed to a saturated atmosphere of methanol vapours which slowly plasticizes it over several days. During this period the bark is gradually unrolled. Once flattened it is removed from the ethanol vapour and allowed to air dry under weights for several weeks. Once dry it does not display a tendency to recur. An article describing the procedure is to be published soon in J. IIC-CG Vol. 8 Nos. 1 and 2.
11. A number of organic materials frequently found in ethnographic artifacts have

been examined in a study by Catherine Miles on the Lightfastness of Coloured Materials. These included hair, feathers, shell, semi-tanned skin and ivory. One of the more interesting aspects of the study indicated that with the samples of semi-tanned skin an inverse relationship existed between hours of light exposure and temperature of shrinkage onset. Consideration will be given to pursuing further investigations into the fading of various ethnological materials.

12. Maureen MacDonald is investigating hair slippage problems in ethnological fur materials. This project has only recently begun and no conclusions have yet been reached.

13. Rock Art Conservation Research

CCI has been involved in research into the conservation and recording of aboriginal rock paintings and carvings (petroglyphs) since 1972. A review, "Rock Art Conservation Research in Canada", by Ian Wainwright will appear in volume 22 of Bolletino del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici in the Spring of 1985. Two major projects of recent years are currently drawing to a close with the preparation of final reports are currently drawing to a close with the preparation of final reports for publication. A paper by Wilf Bokman and Ian Wainwright of Analytical Research Services describes experimental work in the photographic recording of rock art. The use of cross-polarized electronic flash for routine

photography of rock paintings is described. Photographic and digital enhancement of red ochre pictographs proved successful. The application of stereophotogrammetry and raking electronic flash at night are reviewed. Aspects of the preservation of photographic images and their archival properties are briefly surveyed.

May 7, 1985 marked the official opening of a protective structure over the Peterborough Petroglyphs which was built by the Ontario Ministry of National Resources on the recommendation of CCI. A study by CCI initiated in 1981 at the request of the Ministry indicated that only a building could prevent ongoing deterioration caused by frost weathering and aggravated by the growth of several species of algae on and in the marble outcrop into which the petroglyphs were packed. The unheated but ventilated building was designed to optimize solar penetration to the rock surface. At the same time every effort was made to create a harmonious relationship between the site, the building, and the surrounding landscape. For Ian Wainwright at C.C.I.

Correspondent: Tom Stone,
Chief, Furniture and
Ethnology Division
Canadian Conservation
Institute
1030 Innes Road
Ottawa, K1A 0M8

Oberrat Museum für Völker Kunde

Apart from routine-conservation, the chemical laboratory and restoration department are presently carrying out the following projects, partly in collaboration with the Academy of Fine Arts and the Highschool of Applied Arts, both in Vienna.

Restoration of a shell-inlaid, elliptically shaped wicker shield from the Solomon Islands. The shield has been embellished with designs rendered in Nautilus shell inlay. This very valuable shield - in the whole world only about 20 shields of this type exist - was acquired in 1858 from the Novara expedition. The surface of the shield was covered with parinarium nut glue, after which small pieces of Nautilus shell were set in the glue. Sections of the shield surface not inlaid with shell were painted black and red.

The following damage occurred in time:

The parinarium nut glue peeled off in different places from the wicker ground.

In the parinarium putty mass, cracks and fissures occurred; thereby the little shell inlays were detached.

The restoration program includes:

Cleaning and strengthening of the parinarium glue putty mass and joining it in a flexible manner with the wicker ground of the shield. Completion of the missing pieces of the shell inlays with original nautilus shells, fixed (bonded) with a special Silicon adhesive. Working out optimal climatic conditions for the presentation of the shield in display.

Restoration of barkcloth (tapa) from the collection of James Cook (ca. 1789).

This linear, red-painted tapa is perforated with little holes (probably from nails used for display). Some parts of the tapa were torn.

The following work is undertaken to restore this object: Measurement of the pH of the tapa; removal of rust stains (probably originated from the nails); testing different non-ionic detergents for the washing process; washing and buffering the tapa; closing the tears with original tapa-material and acid-free Japanese tissue; retouching and finally evaluation of optimal conditions for the display of the tapa.

Restoration of a Chinese enamel vessel (Cloisonne): Chemical analyses were carried out to determine the composition of the different coloured enamels as well as of the metal base (or ground) and of the wires.

Because of bad storage conditions and partly because of failures in the production of the cloisonne, enamel inlays peeled off from the metallic ground.

Tests were carried out with different materials to repair the holes with filling materials. Old restorations had been carried out with natural waxes. They have the disadvantages that they are not acid-free and are of inadequate hardness. Later restorations with synthetics like Araldite (epoxy resin), are

difficult to work with and to polish up, and they are not reversible. According to a series of tests a putty mass was found which combines the advantages of a pure synthetic on the one hand, and waxes on the other.

This was a mixture of Araldite LY 562/HY 2962 with different types of Ceridust, a polyethylene wax (VP 130, VP 590, 3620), in the proportion of 1:1,5. This material can be stained well with Araldite colours.

4. Restoration of a large metallic bronze basin from Japan: This very heavy object (nearly 300 kg) was broken in different pieces. The restoration will begin in autumn this year in collaboration with the Highschool of Applied Arts.

Chemical analyses show that the basin and the different rings on which it stands, consist of an alloy of copper, tin and lead. Methods have to be worked out for an optimal joining of the broken pieces, (it is also a static problem), for cleaning and display.

Correspondent: Dr. Wilhelm Bauer
Oberrat Museum für
Volkerkunde
Neue Hofburg
A 1014 Vienna
Austria

Ethnographic Conservation in the United States: An Overview

The number of conservators involved in the preservation of ethnographic objects has greatly increased in the United States during the past five years. The use of these objects for exhibitions, their escalating market value and the extinction of various cultural groups has resulted in an expanded awareness of the urgent conservation problems associated with ethnographic collections and has stimulated conservators, museum curators, administrators and the public to give additional attention to these objects.

In addition, several U.S. Federal funding agencies have commenced grants programs to subsidize the care of anthropological collections and many large and small museums have initiated a more systematic approach to the care of their assessment of the preventive conservation needs of ethnographic collections including proper handling, storage and exhibition techniques. As a result, a number of articles, pamphlets, guidelines, videotapes and slideshows stressing preventive conservation techniques are being developed for museum employees.

Research projects concerning the stability of various construction and padding materials used in conjunction with ethnographic collections have been initiated in several large museums across the country. Traditional pest

control procedures also are being reevaluated and inspection and good housekeeping versus regular fumigation is often advocated. The effect of biocides on ethnographic objects are under study and alternative methods of fumigating active infestations are being explored.

Also, of major interest to U.S. ethnographic conservators is the proper treatment of ethnographic materials not only as exhibit pieces, but also as bearers of significant research information about the culture which conceived and used them. Concern, therefore, has been expressed about fine arts oriented restoration treatments which have been traditionally given to these objects. The proper conservation of artifacts considered to be sacred to various Native American Indian cultures is another subject under discussion. A number of these concerns as well as recommendations for future directions were voiced in the publication: Ethnographic and Archeological Conservation in the United States which was produced by the U.S. National Institute for Conservation (Washington, D.C. 1984). A subsequent report developed by the same organization and titled: A Suggested Curriculum for Training in Ethnographic and Archeological Conservation (1984) urges the formation of a program different from that of existing art history oriented programs for the training of ethnographic conservators. Such a program would require studies in anthropological theory, technology and tradition to more fully understand the subtleties of these cultural materials.

New methods of conserving organic materials are continually being developed and studied by many ethnographic conservators. Of special recent interest has been the proper stabilization of proteinaceous materials. Several courses and seminars on the composition, identification and deterioration of a variety of proteinaceous objects have been offered in the United States for conservators and have resulted in two publications. They are: Protein Chemistry for Conservators published by the American Institute for Conservation, Washington, D.C., 1984, and Recent Advances in Leather Conservation, sponsored by the Foundation for the American Institute for Conservation, 1985. Studies concerning the interaction of inorganic and organic materials such as the formation of fatty acid salts also are being initiated at several conservation laboratories in the U.S.A.

The following list contains the names of members of the American Institute for Conservation who have listed themselves as ethnographic conservators in the United States. Information concerning their specialty area in ethnographic conservation (S), their current research (R), and conservation (C) projects have been assembled from information provided by each respondent. This list will be updated as new conservators enter the field, as specializations and projects change and/or as those who have been inadvertently omitted from this list come forward with information to share with other ethnographic conservators throughout the world.

Correspondent: Carolyn L. Rose
Conservator,
Anthropology Conservation Lab.
Smithsonian Institution, NMNH
Washington, D.C. 20560
U.S.A.

Carolyn Rose has forwarded to us a copy of "Self-Listed Ethnographic Conservators in the United States". This will be available now through Sue Walston who should soon have the most comprehensive list of Ethnographic Conservators anywhere.

Conservation Products

TO RESTORE WITH SOMETHING SIMILAR -
(A New Look at Papers for Ethnographic Conservation) by: Anna-Grethe Rischel

My field is the restoration of graphic materials of both European and ethnographical origin. It is very difficult to obtain high quality restoration materials for a collection as varied as the collection at the National Museum of Denmark. In Europe you can buy only Japanese handmade papers for restoration of Oriental items, and European handmade papers for restoration of European items, but it is nearly impossible to do a satisfying, reversible paper restoration with new paper if the structure, thickness and colour are not as close to the original paper as possible. Every detail is visible, because paper normally functions as both a base and a ground. The pigments stick directly to the paper fibres and therefore the characteristics of the paper - its colour, structure and surface - are just as important to the visual impression as the colours in the painting.

In order to obtain a broader collection of restoration (paper) materials and to study the technology, I went on a research tour to Nepal and Thailand, where the traditional paper craft is still alive in small and more or less isolated workshops. Here paper is produced for local purposes such as writing materials, fine wrapping papers, papers for umbrellas and for blockprints and you can buy the materials at the marketplace or in paper shops in the bigger cities. I visited workshops and collected precise infor-

mation on up-to-date procedures; as well I chose and bought samples of different qualities of paper suitable for restoration purposes.

I want to give a short description of the paper craft in Nepal and Thailand today, and you will see that very little has changed during the 1500 years of paper production in these countries. By studying the papermakers you somehow look back nearly 2000 years to the period when paper was invented in China by unknown craftsmen.

Bundles of barkstribes are collected from trees and bushes with an inner layer of long white bastfibres. The stribes are soaked in running water for a night; bark and bast-layers are separated by hand, and every small impurity is removed before the important step of boiling for two to eight hours in a lye of ashes. This chemical treatment breaks down the bonds between the fibres, and after mechanical hammering for two hours with wooden hammers the boiled mass consists of single, pure cellulose fibres. The papermakers tool, the mould, is a simple wooden or bamboo frame with a fixed net of open-weave material. The paper fibres are diluted with water to a thin pulp, and the mould is either dipped in a basin filled with this pulp, or the pulp is poured into the mould which floats in a basin of pure water. When the mould is lifted up, the water drains away leaving a fine, filtered mat of wet fibres on the open-weave net. The mould is placed in the sun until the sheet is dry. Now the smooth new piece of paper can be peeled off, ready

for use.

As you can see, it is very simple and logical technically, and the raw material consists of fibres of the very best quality; the chemical treatment breaks down and removes the natural lignin bindings from the bast-stribses and leaves the pure neutral cellulose fibres. No harmful chemical like bleaching agents are used and the natural colour blends very well with the yellowed colours of old items.

The prices are very reasonable and it is possible to order directly from the paper shops. The extremely thin "umbrella" paper tissue from North Thailand is made of fibres from paper mulberry trees (*broussonetia papyrifera*) - in Thai named Saa-tree. At the National Archive in Bangkok. Combined with wheat starch or rice starch you can make strong invisible repairs. The paper from Nepal is made of fibres from the silkbast plants (*thymelaeaceae*) - in Nepal named Lockta-trees - similar to the plants used in Japan for mitsumati - and gampi paper. You can have one-two and three layer papers and these types are well suited for restoration of old, fragmented Oriental papers where new material has to be added.

I think that these new Oriental handmade papers in all respects are very similar to the old original papers, produced hundreds of years ago in most parts of Asia. If you are interested in samples of the papers and further details, please contact me.

Correspondent: Anna Grethe Rischel
Paper Conservation Workshop
The National Museum
Brede, 2800 Lyngby
Denmark

Editor's Note: It would be interesting to know if the cellulose fibres are cleared of the lye in subsequent rinses or dilutions with water. Perhaps the author could add a note to this very helpful article for our next newsletter?

Publications/Book Reviews

Supports for Ethnographic Textiles

In the taped proceedings of the Harper's Ferry Regional Textile Group (USA) there are some lectures on the subject of mounts for storage and exhibition. For a list of topics, please write to:

Cassette Recording Company
1444 Third National Building
Dayton, Ohio, U.S.A.

The Minutes of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Working Group for Ethnographic Materials September, 1984, have kindly been prepared by Margaret E.A. McCord for the Co-ordinator; general inquiries regarding the proceedings may be directed to Sue Walston.

Ethnographic Network - Inquiries

Gerry Barton at Auckland Museum, New Zealand, requires information on a paint removal product called "Peel Away". The product is a paste which is applied to the painted surface with a spatula in a layer 1-2 mm thick. A non-woven textile supplied with the kit is then pushed into the paste and left until the paste has dried out. The information sheet suggests leaving the paste for periods up to 24 hours or longer, after which the textile plus paste can be peeled away from the wood taking all the paint with it. The newly exposed wood is neutralized with acetic acid (pH 3.1) and lastly washed with tap water.

In tests at the Museum we have dispensed with the textile and apply the paste to the painted surface only for as long as it takes to emulsify the paint layers which is between 5-15 minutes. The paste is then removed with a dental spatula, the surface washed of the residue sludge, neutralized, washed again and excess water absorbed with towels.

The results are excellent, so much so that if the product is as good as it seems the Museum would use it in preference to other paint removal methods as described in Studies in Conservation. Vol.29.4.1984.

At present the contents of Peel Away are unknown to me. The paste seems to be kaolin or another clay. The manufacturers concede that it contains 10% NaOH as the active agent that emulsifies the paint.

Conservators and chemists so far approached expressed concern about the caustic nature of the product and what it could do to the surface of the wood sculptures. The indicators looked for in tests are of furred or fluffed up surface and darkening or yellowing of the colour of the wood. NaOH as used in the stripping of old house fittings has a fierce reaction and often leaves a rough fur-like appearance on some surfaces. The colour change comes from phenolic compounds in lignin reacting with NaOH, and will not occur if complete neutralization is undertaken.

Neither of these characteristics is to be seen on the tests carried out at Auckland Museum. Given the strict parameters outlined above within which the product is used here in Auckland, it would appear that Peel Away is suitable.

However, I would like opinions, advice, etc. on the product by any conservators who have used Peel Away or who have heard about it being used. The British Manufacturers make mention of the Colonnade ceilings at Greenwich Palace, and of the cast-iron fence at the British Museum being stripped away with Peel Away but these are on a more industrial scale than the cleaning projects Auckland Museum has in mind.

The product is: Peel Away Ltd.
P.O. Box 8
Thames, Oxon, England

Peel Away (NZ) Ltd.
36 Enterprise St.
Birkenhead, Auckland 10

I gather it is marketed in North America
but I don't know under what trademark.

Correspondent: Gerry Barton
Conservator
Auckland Institute
and Museum
Private Bag, Auckland 1
New Zealand
Tel: (09) 30-443

Quillwork, Beadwork, Feathers:

Anyone with recent information and
thoughts concerning the consolidation
of beadwork, conservation of quillwork
or feather cleaning and protection;
please contact Sarah Spafford at Queen's
University, Art Conservation Program,
Kingston, Ontario, K7L 3N6.

Conferences, Seminars (Notices and Reports)

Symposium: "Conservation Of Ethnographic Objects in Museums" - Japan, The National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, is organizing the Ninth International Symposium of the Division of Ethnology of the Taniguchi Foundation to be held on 2-9 December of this year. The theme of this Symposium is "Conservation of Ethnographic Objects in Museums", succeeding that of last year entitled "Toward a Computer Ethnology". Five Specialists from foreign countries and seven Japanese will participate in a round table discussion of problems which have recently appeared regarding ethnographic objects in museums. One of the main foci of this discussion will be "re-consideration of the characteristics of ethnographic objects through the eye of conservation specialists". Society demands a better understanding of other cultures, and is beginning to demand of ethnographic objects not only the esthetics, the curiosities, and exoticism, but also more vivid evidence of human lives in society. How should we answer such demands? Not sophisticated ones, but certainly as material documents of human races How we should treat them? The Symposium will be conducted as a working one attended by limited members only, but the proceedings will be published from the Museum as a special issue of the Museum Bulletin "Senri Ethnological Studies" by early 1987.

Symposium: Le Musee National d'Ethnologie, Osaka, organize le Neuvieme Colloque International de la section d'Ethnologie de la Fondation Taniguchi, qu'il tiendra du 2

au 9 du Decembre de cet an(1985). Sous les auspices financiers de la fondation susdite, sept premieres assemblees ont choisis des themes consernants des divers recherches regionales et depuis le huitieme de l'annee derniere sujets varies autours de l'ethnologie sont pris. Le sujet du huitieme a ete "Vers l'Ethnologie nouvelle d'apres registrator" et celui de cet annee sers "Conservation des objets ethnographique aux musees. Cinq specialistes etrangers et sept japonais assoiront a la table ronde et discuteront des problemes de la conservation particulierement parue aux objets ethnographiques. Un des foci qu'ils doivent discuter en cet occasion sera: comment nous devons conserver le valeur ethnologique ou celui antholopologique qu'il sont peu esthetique, peu historique, et peu de valeurs economiques. Des gens qu'ils se mettent a avoir les interets a l'autres cultures que leurs semblent-ils demander des objets ethnographiques les temoingages vivides de la vie humaine. Porte du colloque est ferme au publique, mais les travaux seront publies du Musee, en premier moitie du 1987, comme un des numeros speciales de Bulletin "Senri Ethnological Studies".

Correspondent: Professor Tsuneyuki Morita
Research Department - 5
National Museum of Ethnology
Expo-park 10-1, Suita-Osaka
565 Japan

Proposed Symposium: "Care and Preservation of Ethnological Materials": Symposium'86 Canada
The Canadian Conservation Institute has recommended to the Canadian Government that the CCI

sponsor a symposium dealing with ethnological materials. If permission is granted, the symposium will take place in Ottawa, Canada from September 28th to October 3rd, 1986. It will include case studies, material science and technology and curatorial and ethical problems relevant to the material cultures of Africa, Oceania, Australia and the Americas. Further announcements will appear at intervals and there will be a formal call for papers early in 1986. For further information write to "Symposium '86", Canadian Conservation Institute, 1030 Innes Road, Ottawa, Ontario - K1A 0M8.

Please Note: Efforts will be made to schedule a short meeting at the ICOM Conservation Committee's Working Group on Ethnological materials during the Ottawa Symposium. One or two days has been suggested.

Correspondent: J. Cliff McCawley
Chief, Conservation Processes
Research, Canadian Conservation
Institute, National Museums
of Canada

8th Triennial Meeting of the ICOM
Conservation Committee

The 8th Triennial Meeting of the ICOM Conservation Committee will be hosted by the Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material in Sydney, Australia, 6 - 11 September 1987. Any Enquiries about the Meeting should be sent to:

Miss Sue Walston
Conference Chairperson
The Australian Museum
6 - 8 College Street
Sydney N.S.W. 2000
Australia