



New York University
A private university in the public service

Center for the Study of Human Origins
Department of Anthropology

25 Waverly Place
New York, NY 10003-6790
Telephone: (212) 998-8571
Fax: (212) 995-4014
E-mail: randall.white@nyu.edu



January 29, 2007

Cultural Property Advisory Committee
Cultural Heritage Center
U.S. Department of State
301 4th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20547

Dear Committee members :

This letter is in response to your call for public comment on the extension of the bilateral agreement between the United States and Cyprus restricting the import into the United States of undocumented archaeological materials from Cyprus.

It is of utmost importance to archaeology, and to the preservation of the rich archaeological record on Cyprus, that this agreement be renewed. The sites on Cyprus constitute a world archaeological heritage and must be protected against pillaging by all possible measures.

It has come to my attention that one provision of the agreement renewal has been the subject of some discussion: that of the inclusion in the agreement of coins that are older than 250 years. In my considered professional opinion, the inclusion of coins is one of the most important measures in the agreement and is essential for two reasons:

- 1) Coins are a frequent target of pillagers. Sensing their presence with metal detectors, pillagers often destroy important, overlying archaeological deposits to extract them. Reducing the marketability of illegally excavated coins will suppress the financial incentives for the recovery of coins, thereby saving hundreds of archaeological sites on Cyprus from irreparable damage and destruction.
- 2) Coins are one of the most important and precise means by which archaeologists date archaeological layers. Their unsystematic removal seriously impedes archaeological research by depriving professional archaeologists of an exact understanding of site chronology.

For these reasons, the inclusion of coins in the new bilateral agreement should not even be in doubt. I encourage you in the strongest possible terms to prevent the pillaging and illegal export of ancient coins to the United States. You will be rendering a great service to future generations of archaeologists and to the protection of an ancient cultural heritage in which people of all nations have an important stake.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randall White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Randall White
Professeur,
Director of the Abri Castanet Excavation Project
<http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/anthro/programs/csho/white.html>