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CONSERVATION OF ETHNOGRAPHIC, ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SPECIMENS***Joseph Ingai Casing****ABSTRACT**

Conservation of museum collection starts from the time of collecting to storage or whatever usage the specimens are meant for.

Field collection is tendered in such a way to see that the objects to be transported to the museum are packed properly, i.e. proper packing materials to be used bearing in mind the condition of the objects, and their deterioration (physical, biological and possibly contamination). Boxes and packing materials must suit the objects in order to safeguard them against breakages and even changes in humidity or temperature. Thus one should be well prepared to carry enough materials for such a purpose. Fragile objects must be packed in well cushioned pad and kept in boxes. For archaeological objects, one has to note that often such items are removed from a moist environment and thus one has to retain equitable condition when the objects are to be packed and transported to the museum. For example, specimens from wet ground should not be washed right away and dried, but preferably be collected in its natural state and any further cleaning, has to be done in the laboratory where removal of traces of technique of manufacture or any other evidence associated with its decoration will be minimal. This is important so that such vital evidence will not be disturbed by inexperienced hands in the field. An example of this is the colour and chipping glaze of some earthenware. It is most important, therefore, that the washing and cleaning be done in the laboratory where better equipment and facility are available.

In the case of natural history specimens, e.g. birds and mammals, the process of conservation must be undertaken on the spot. Birds and mammals for example should be skinned as soon as they are shot and appropriate chemical applied in order to preserve the specimens.

CONSERVATION OF ETHNOGRAPHIC, ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SPECIMENS*

by

Joseph Ingai Gasing

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The drying should be done immediately though proper care must be taken not to expose the specimens to prevent rapid drying. Adequate preservative will protect the specimens from deterioration even in difficult conditions such as, high humidity, which encourages mould and fungi growth.

* This paper was presented at the Sabah Museum Seminar and Conservation Workshop held in conjunction with its 25th Anniversary celebration in July 1990.