

International Greek New Testament Project

Guidelines on Manuscript Provenance

IGNTP committee members will ...

1. Publish editions of ancient texts in support of future critical editions of the New Testament observing the highest legal and ethical standards,
2. Increase public awareness of the illicit trade of antiquities,
3. Document and report illegal activity to the relevant government authorities,
4. Recognize cultural rights of religious and ethnic minorities (UDHR, art. 27),
5. Educate private owners about provenance issues,
6. Promote donation of antiquities to museums and research libraries or repatriation for poorly provenanced materials,
7. Uphold ethical standards when participating in academic associations (e.g. Society of Biblical Literature).

Cultural Heritage. Those material or intellectual elements of a culture which have survived the test of time, and which allow modern persons to encounter ancient culture.

Repatriation. The return of property in instances of disputed legal ownership, usually occurring after an official request from a foreign institution claiming legal ownership of the object based upon that object's known history.

Forgery. The act of either falsifying an object or knowingly misrepresenting an object for material gain. Market prices for artifacts function more like art or collectibles than commodities, incentivizing misrepresentation, theft and production of fakes.

Provenance. The known details of the "owner history" or "chain of custody" which demonstrates the legal ownership of the antiquity in question relevant to country of origin at the date of export. Although all manuscripts have provenance, in some cases, modern owners have purchased an antiquity with no owner history or with inaccurate documentation.

Provenience. The details of the archeological find spot which allow scholars to understand not only the artefact itself but also the larger context of the excavation site.

Looting. Looting may refer either to the illicit movement of manuscripts in wartime or to unauthorized excavations.

IGNTP committee members will not ...

1. Benefit financially or otherwise from personal participation in the antiquities market,
2. Withhold information related to the illicit antiquities trade,
3. Knowingly support the sale of unpublished and poorly provenanced materials in private collections by:
 - a. identifying texts,
 - b. assigning published identification sigla,
 - c. dating the manuscript,
 - d. highlighting features like colophons, writing styles, illustrations, or geographic origins