n May 1971, I was gifted a membership to the SAA by art historian Merle Greene Robertson, who took me on my first research expedition to Central America. Archaeology has been a lifelong passion, but that initial experience solidified my desire to investigate the ancient Maya in particular. By 1975, when I succeeded in publishing an article in *American Antiquity*, the SAA had become a center-post for both myself and my collaborator, Diane Chase, as we were transforming from undergraduates to graduate students and ultimately into professional archaeologists. The organization has continued to be a focus for our lives and, much like our continuing archaeological work in Belize, the SAA has played a central role in our academic development over the last half century. The Society has provided a consistent venue in which to meet and talk with other colleagues about new finds, fieldwork, and issues of common concern.

For the last six years, I have served as the chair of the SAA Committee on Ethics and have also had the privilege of serving on the Task Force on Revisions of the SAA Principles of Archaeological Ethics: Stage Three, the latter having been charged with continuing the work of task forces Stage One and Stage Two. These activities have afforded me the opportunity to meet and interact with many colleagues outside of my primary area of Mesoamerican archaeology and have also opened my eyes to the diverse ethical issues faced by archaeologists in a wide variety of venues. In Mesoamerica, archaeology is guided by strict permitting guidelines and supervised by government institutions that are concerned not only with quality research but also with public education and the stabilization of sites for tourism. Laws and requirements within these countries differ in some respects from those within the United States, meaning that there is often not a single universal solution or viewpoint to any ethical dilemma. Different laws, legal systems, and perspectives must be honored and considered.

When I entered the field of archaeology in the 1970s, archaeologists from the United States, but working outside the United States, viewed themselves and their research in privileged positions relative to countries in which they were working. Diane and I had strong negative reactions to this view of fieldwork, instead seeing ourselves as both guests and collaborators within foreign venues. We endeavored to work within the parameters and confines of the country in which we were carrying out fieldwork, and in consort with local archaeological representatives. We also were pleased to be able to provide experience and education to Guatemalan and Belizean archaeologists at the US institutions of higher learning with which we were associated. In this way, we saw ourselves as helping the broader field of archaeology, while also providing the tools for local archaeologists to craft their own future.

One of our own rules of thumb has always been to offer advice and counsel only when it is requested and to never attempt to impose any solution without explicit input and guidance from the local experts; listening, consultation, and collaboration are everything. Yet, not all archaeologists follow these guidelines. I am very concerned about the damage that can be done to the broader field of archaeology when nonlocal researchers feel that their beliefs and ideas should just be imposed without consultation from all the local stakeholders. In my estimation, actions like these harken back to archaeology’s colonial past and constitute a form of “new colonialism” that can deny the agency or self-determination of local peoples.

I appreciate that the SAA is both a US and an international organization, offering opportunities for archaeologists worldwide. As my own experience demonstrates, the SAA fosters different forms of volunteering and action, all of which make archaeology a stronger and more viable field.

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