

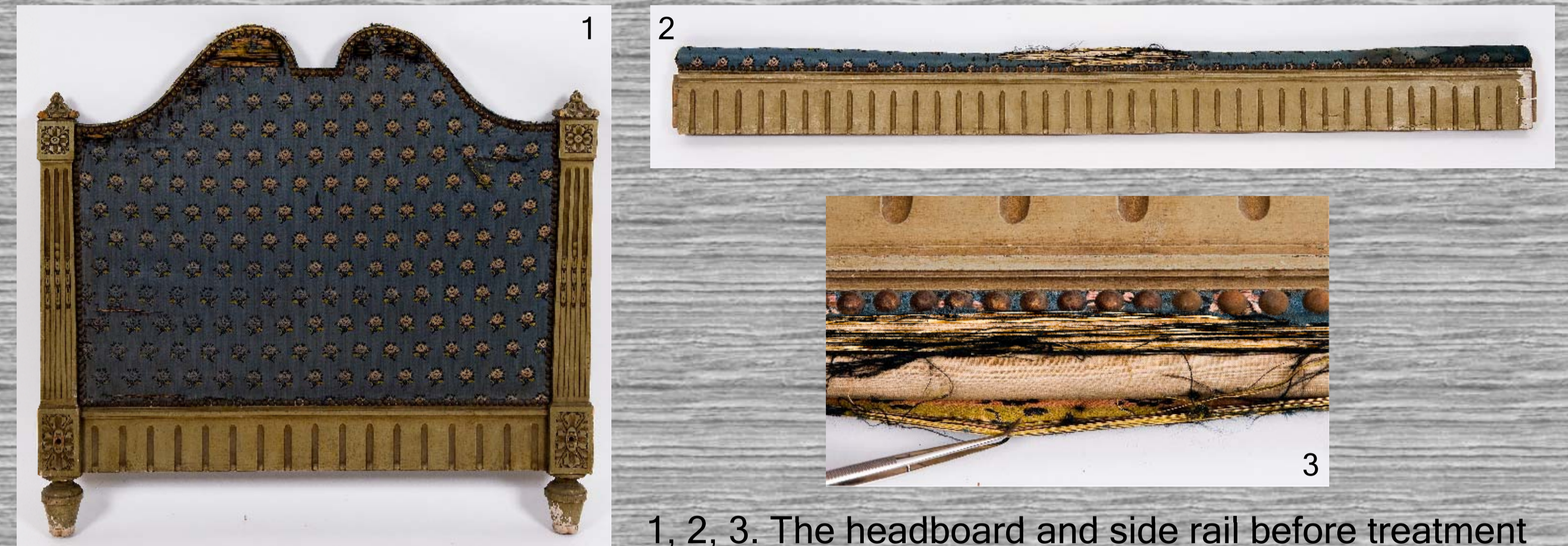
The challenge of conserving furniture with missing parts: the case study of a bed from the Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens, Greece

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The bed is stored at BCM's Textiles Storage. It has a beech wood frame and mixed silk and cotton upholstery, secured with metal tacks. It originally consisted of 4 parts, but one of the side rails was missing. The wood suffered from insect infestation and the varnish was oxidised. Areas of loss due to mechanical abrasion disfigured the upholstery.



1, 2, 3. The headboard and side rail before treatment

Options for replacing the missing side rail for display, ranked according to the degree of intervention:

Option 1: minimum intervention.

To use a beam made of Plexiglas®, HD Plastazote®, or stainless steel, to support the structure of the object for display, without attempting to restore it aesthetically.

Option 2: medium intervention.

To make a new side rail, using a silicon rubber mould and a hard casing of either plaster or fibre-glass. Then resin would be poured into the mould and after solidification a compatible fabric would be attached. The bed would be restored aesthetically, using appropriate materials.

Option 3: maximum intervention.

To make a new side rail, using compatible materials (beech wood, silk fabric, stainless metal tacks). This method would produce as similar a copy to the original as possible from an aesthetic viewpoint.

Conservation:

- It was decided not to separate the upholstery from the wooden frame
- Insect infestation was treated with elimination of oxygen
- Areas of loss in the upholstery were supported with silk fabric and overlaid with nylon net
- The oxidised varnish was removed using acetone
- The original missing rail was located at BCM's Wooden Artefacts Storage



4. Varnish removal



5. Area of loss supported with silk fabric



6. The relocated side rail

Conclusion:

In general, the conservation was beneficial. It also enabled the relocation of the missing side rail, which turned out not to be upholstered. Therefore, Option 1 would provide the less misleading interpretation of the object. This case study proved that minimum intervention is the safest way to treat objects.

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Indicative Bibliography:

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