



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

September 17, 1997

Lynn S. Teague
Curator of Archaeology
The Arizona State Museum
The University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona 85721

Dear Ms. Teague:

Thank you for taking time to express your concerns over SAA's letter regarding the Southwest Region's "Prehistoric Cultural Affiliations of Southwestern Indian Tribes" document. In preparing the letter, we consulted with a number of individuals who were involved in the process leading to this document, both from tribal and archaeological perspectives. Our concerns are about the effects of the document as a whole; our letter was certainly not intended to champion any particular repatriation outcome. The letter was not stimulated by Hopi; indeed it was in preparation before we ever received a copy of the Hopi letter.

You ask what is the source of our concern. As you point out, notices of repatriation are published and are subject to appeal. While tribes can easily appeal the decisions, archaeologists outside the agencies or museums, in general, have no role in establishing cultural affiliation, or standing, other than through a lawsuit, to appeal decisions. Because the collection of evidence pertaining to cultural affiliation is an agency or museum responsibility, we must be concerned about the processes and results of agency and museum deliberations. Rather than pursue innumerable lawsuits contesting specific repatriation decisions (which we, of course, are not in a position to do anyway), it seemed to us appropriate to raise some serious concerns about the document that is poised to determine, to a large extent, many of these particular outcomes.

Finally, thank you for pointing out that the "cc" list for the letter included only the Hopi Tribe. The letter, in fact, was originally sent to many more individuals than were listed, including eight Arizona tribes. We apologize for the error in the "cc" list and agree that it looks a bit odd; it was simply due to a mistake in the office.

Sincerely,

Vin Steponaitis
President

Willam Lovis
Chair, Committee on Repatriation