



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

November 10, 2014

Mr. Michael Fuller
Acting President
Archaeological Institute of America, St. Louis Society
c/o AIA
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Boston, MA 02215-2006 USA

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) wishes to express its deep concern regarding the recent sale by the Archaeological Institute of America, St. Louis Society, Inc., of a number of ancient Egyptian artifacts. This action by the St. Louis Society constitutes a stark violation of the ethics of the science of archaeology.

SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to the research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With more than 7,000 members, SAA represents professional archaeologists in colleges and universities, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. SAA has members in all 50 states as well as many other nations around the world.

The objects in question, collectively known as the Harageh Collection, were entrusted to the St. Louis Society in 1914 in return for that organization's support of the Egyptian excavations directed by Sir Flinders Petrie. They were intended to be placed in a public collection for the benefit of the people of St. Louis, specifically by broadening their knowledge of the human past. We understand that pressing financial concerns played an important role in the decision to dispense with these relics, but neither that nor the fact that most of them were purchased by New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art in any way lessens the gravity of the course of action taken by the St. Louis Society.

The SAA has always strongly opposed the buying and selling of objects out of archaeological context. As noted in our Principles of Archaeological Ethics, commercialization "...is contributing to the destruction of the archaeological

record on the American continents and around the world. The commercialization of archaeological objects - their use as commodities to be exploited for personal enjoyment or profit - results in the destruction of archaeological sites and of contextual information that is essential to understanding the archaeological record.”

We strongly support the statements of the governing board of the Archaeological Institute of America in this matter. We urge the St. Louis Society to heed the advice and counsel of the governing board and to stop selling or otherwise disposing of archaeological objects and materials.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeffrey H. Altschul". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Jeffrey H. Altschul, Ph.D., RPA
President

CC:
Andrew Moore