

# Bulletin

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## OF THE SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

### Reburial and Repatriation

Jeremy Sabloff, SAA president, has formed a Task Force on Reburial and Repatriation to review legislative initiatives and to advance the Society's position with the Congress and the media. Since its creation, the Task Force has worked closely with the SAA's Office of Government Relations, particularly on the historic preservation legislation, with reburial provisions, proposed by Senator Fowler and on the reburial and repatriation sections of the bill introduced by Representative Campbell. The Task Force is chaired by Keith Kintigh (Arizona St.) and includes Richard Ford (Michigan), Lynne Goldstein (Wisconsin-Milwaukee), William Lovis (Michigan St.), Vincas Steponaitis (North Carolina), and Phillip Walker (California-Santa Barbara).

The Society's position on reburial was adopted by the Executive Committee in May 1986, after a long period of study and careful consideration. This position maintains that both scientific and traditional interests in human remains are legitimate. It states that the disposition of human remains should be determined on a case-by-case basis, considering the beliefs and strength of the relationship of possible claimants to the remains and the scientific value of the remains. However, in cases where the remains are of a known individual, disposition should be determined by the closest descendants, regardless of scientific value. The statement encourages communication between scholars engaged in the study of human remains and the communities that have an affiliation with the remains.

Given the public debate concerning reburial, and because there appears to be some uncertainty within the profession about the Society's position, the SAA Statement Concerning the Treatment of Human Remains is reproduced below from the June 1986 Bulletin. Any questions or comments concerning this position should be directed to Keith Kintigh, Department of Anthropology, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-2402.

### SAA Statement Concerning the Treatment of Human Remains

Archaeologists are committed to understanding and communicating the richness of the cultural heritage of humanity, and they acknowledge and respect the diversity of beliefs about, and interests in, the past and its material remains.

It is the ethical responsibility of archaeologists "to advocate and to aid in the conservation of archaeological data," as specified in the Bylaws of the Society for American Archaeology. Mortuary evidence is an integral part of the archaeological record of the past culture and behavior in that it informs directly upon social structure and organization and, less directly, upon aspects of religion and ideology. Human remains, as an integral part of the mortuary record, provide unique information about demography, diet, disease, and genetic relationships among human groups. Research in archaeology, bioarchaeology, biological anthropology, and medicine depends upon responsible scholars having collections of human remains available both for replicative research and research that addresses new questions or employs new analytical techniques.

There is great diversity in cultural and religious values concerning the treatment of human remains. Individuals and cultural groups have legitimate concerns derived from cultural and religious beliefs about the treatment and disposition of remains of their ancestors or members that may conflict with legitimate scientific interests in those remains. The concerns of different cultures, as presented by their designated representatives and leaders, must be recognized and respected.

The Society for American Archaeology recognizes both scientific and traditional interests in human remains. Human skeletal materials must at all times be treated with dignity and respect. Commercial exploitation of ancient human remains is abhorrent. Whatever their ultimate disposition, all human remains should receive appropriate scientific study, should be responsibly and carefully conserved, and should be accessible only for legitimate scientific or educational purposes.

The Society for American Archaeology opposes universal or indiscriminate reburial of human remains, either from ongoing

excavations or from extant collections. Conflicting claims concerning the proper treatment and disposition of particular human remains must be resolved on a case-by-case basis through consideration of the scientific importance of the material, the cultural and religious values of the interested individuals or groups, and the strength of their relationship to the remains in question.

The scientific importance of particular human remains should be determined by their potential to aid in present and future research, and thus depends on professional judgments concerning the degree of their physical and contextual integrity. The weight accorded any claim made by an individual or group concerning particular human remains should depend upon the strength of their demonstrated biological or cultural affinity with the remains in question. If remains can be identified as those of a known individual from whom specific biological descendants can be traced, the disposition of those remains, including possible reburial, should be determined by the closest living relatives.

The Society for American Archaeology encourages close and effective communication between scholars engaged in the study of human remains and the communities that may have biological or cultural affinities to those remains. Because vandalism and looting threaten the record of the human past, including human remains, the protection of this record necessitates cooperation between archaeologists and others who share that goal.

Because controversies involving the treatment of human remains cannot properly be resolved nation-wide in a uniform way, the Society opposes any federal legislation that seeks to impose a uniform standard for

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determining the disposition of all human remains.

Recognizing the diversity of potential legal interests in the material record of the human past, archaeologists have a professional responsibility to seek to ensure that laws governing that record are consistent with the objectives, principles, and formal statements of the Society for American Archaeology.

Executive Committee  
The Society for American Archaeology  
New Orleans, Louisiana  
May 1986

(Reprinted from Bulletin 4[3]:7-8, June 1986).

## Foundation for American Archaeology

The fact that you are reading the SAA Bulletin tells us something about you. To begin with, you are vitally interested in archaeology and probably earn your living in the discipline in one capacity or another. Moreover, you very much want to keep up with the latest news about your Society.

You should be pleased, then, to learn that the Agnese N. Lindley Foundation in Tucson, AZ has offered the SAA a \$2,000 challenge grant for funds needed for legal fees to establish a Foundation for American Archaeology, search for a managing director and print brochures.

If you attended the National meetings held in Atlanta, you know that the SAA authorized the establishment of a Foundation for American Archaeology along the outlines presented in the March 1989 issue of the Bulletin.

The goal of the Foundation is to provide education to individuals, all levels of government that affect archaeology, and corporations concerned with archaeology. The Foundation will respond in various ways to the numerous opportunities that occur for education about issues of pothunting and concerns about reburial and the repatriation of artifacts.

There presently is no formal structure to address the many demands and opportunities to educate the public about the true nature of the discipline of archaeology. The public gets their information about archaeology from popular movies, and from sensational news accounts. The success of films and articles about archaeology indicates there is tremendous public interest in the subject which forms a natural constituency for support of archaeological research. The Foundation would tap this interest for education about the true nature of archaeology. The establishment of this

Foundation is essential, for the discipline has never faced such grave challenges nor such a receptive audience.

In order to put these ambitious plans in motion, George Gumerman was asked to chair a task force composed of Dena Dincauze, Brian Fagan, Mark Leone, William Marquardt, Stuart Struever, and Daniel Thiel.

We are pleased to report that their efforts are bearing fruit and the challenge grant is a giant step in the right direction. What is now needed is for the SAA membership to match the \$2,000 offered by the Agnese N. Lindley Foundation. Obviously \$4,000 is only a beginning, but it is a start.

This is a modest sum. A five or ten dollar donation or more from everyone who reads this will quickly match the requisite amount. Since you have already demonstrated your interest in archaeology by the simple exercise of reading this, you will surely want to help make the Foundation a reality by contributing toward the \$2,000 challenge. You are, after all, not only contributing to your profession but, in all probability, toward your own livelihood.

Checks of any amount should be made out to: The Foundation for American Archaeology, and sent to: Society for American Archaeology, 808 17th St, NW, Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20006.

## SAA Succeeds in Congress

by  
Loretta Neumann and Kathleen Reinburg  
SAA Office of Government Relations

Money and reburial have headed the list of issues Congress has been tackling over the last several months. The latter is discussed in detail by Keith Kintigh in this issue of the Bulletin (see page 1, "Reburial and Repatriation"). The following summarizes some of the issues for which the SAA has been lobbying.

SAA achieved several major successes in the fiscal 1990 appropriations for Interior and Related Agencies. In a year with tight fiscal constraints placed on legislators, the outcome for cultural resource protection programs in the federal agencies was surprisingly good. SAA sought and obtained \$18.2 million for the Forest Service cultural resource management programs. This is an increase of over \$2 million compared to last year. The Historic Preservation Fund was increased to \$32.75 million. Last year it received \$30.5 million. Special add-on funds were provided for several programs. The National Park

Service was given \$500,000 to pursue anti-looting efforts in the National Park Service and \$100,000 to begin preservation technology transfer. The Bureau of Land Management was provided \$200,000 for cultural resource law enforcement in the four corners area.

In addition, the Senate included language in the National Science Foundation appropriations report which encourages NSF to provide funds for archaeology research within the biological, behavioral and social science directorate. This is the first time that archaeology has been mentioned in the appropriations report and we hope to gain support for increases in funding of archaeology at NSF.

Senator Fowler (D-GA) introduced S. 1579, National Historic Preservation Policy Act on August 4. It would amend the National Historic Preservation Act, Historic Sites Act, Archaeological Resources Protection Act, and the Abandoned Shipwreck Act to strengthen the protection of historic heritage and resources, provide for treatment of human remains, develop training and education programs, strengthen state and tribal preservation programs, develop certification for archaeologists, and implement an artifact registration system. In addition, Senator Fowler introduced S. 1578, to create an independent historic preservation agency and national center for preservation technology. SAA worked on a number of provisions in these two bills to improve them with respect to archaeology.

The SAA testified in support of expanding the Chaco Protection System (S. 798) and establishing the Petroglyph National Monument in New Mexico (S. 286); designating the Amistad National Recreation Area in Texas (H.R. 967), reauthorizing the Bureau of Land Management programs (H.R. 828), and establishing the National Museum of the American Indian (H.R. 2668 and S. 978).

For information on these and other bills, call the Congressional Bill Status office, (202) 225-1772. To obtain copies of House bills call (202) 225-3456 or write to House Document Room, H-226 Capitol, Washington, DC 20515. For Senate bills, write to Senate Document Room, SH-B04 Hart, Washington D.C. 20510.

## Dues Increase Crucial to Future

The Society for American Archaeology is financially sound. Now that we have finished the long range study of the Society, and have a new set of Bylaws strongly endorsed by the membership, we are in a position to build for the next decade and more. Much of the dues increase announced in the last Bulletin will go to help build