

**The Ohio State University
Department of Anthropology**

Practices Regarding Authentication and Donation of Archaeological and Cultural Items

The OSU Department of Anthropology values our public, community engaged role in archaeological research and education and seeks to be ethical stewards of the past through our commitment to respectful and long-term conservation of archaeological materials. The practices outlined in this document primarily concern inquiries from the general public regarding the authentication or donation of 1) archaeological resources and related documentary collections and 2) cultural items.

- **Archaeological resources:** Using the definition from the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 as guidance, we define archaeological resources as being at least 100 years old and include “any material remains of past human life or activities which are of archaeological interest” such as “pottery, basketry, bottles, weapons, weapon projectiles, tools, structures or portions of structures, pit houses, rock paintings, rock carvings, intaglios, graves, human skeletal materials, or any portion or piece of any of the foregoing items.”
- **Related documentary collections:** We consider related documentary collections as any field notes, research notes, photographs, or other similar materials related to archaeological resources.
- **Cultural items (“cultural property”):** Using the definition from the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970), we define cultural items as “property which, on religious or secular grounds, is specifically designated by each State as being of importance for archaeology, prehistory, history, literature, art or science” and which belongs to one of the categories listed in Article 1 of the UNESCO Convention ([click here for full list](#)).

For inquiries related to the donation of anatomical collections, such as human skeletal remains, please contact: [Forensic Anthropology Services & Training \(FAST\)](#)

For inquiries related to repatriation assistance, please contact: repatriation@osu.edu

Authentications: The OSU Department of Anthropology does not provide identification, authentication, or appraisals of artifacts. For these services, we recommend contacting the [Appraisers Association of America](#), [American Society of Appraisers](#), or the International Society of Appraiser. If you have an archaeological item from Ohio, you may wish to connect with the [Ohio State Historic Preservation Office](#) or [The Ohio Archaeological Council](#).

New Collections and Donations of Materials: The OSU Department of Anthropology does not currently maintain a museum, and as such does not support a dedicated curator, or budget for curation and conservation of materials. Therefore, all donations of archaeological resources and cultural items must be carefully considered prior to acceptance to ensure they align with our goals and capacity for ethical stewardship.

The OSU Department of Anthropology will not purchase any archaeological resources or cultural items from private citizens. To have your personal archaeologically derived item(s) considered for donation to the OSU Department of Anthropology, please read the following statements, and complete the Donation Inquiry Form.

The OSU Department of Anthropology does not accept unsolicited donations of archaeological materials either by mail or in-person. Please note that unsolicited donations may be returned, disposed of, or retained at the discretion of OSU Department of Anthropology and The Ohio State University.

Categories of archaeological resources and cultural items eligible for review or donation:

The Department will consider accepting donations that are able to directly support research or teaching, in situations where long-term stewardship can be assured. The types of archaeological resources and cultural items which we may be considered for donation could include:

- Field notebooks / excavation records
- Casts / replicas
- Teaching collections
- Legally excavated archaeological collections, with documentation

Donations of this nature are considered on a case-by-case basis and should have a documented ownership history. The department will review any proposed donations to ensure that they adhere to best practices of ethical stewardship; see below for archaeological resources and cultural items which will not be accepted for donation. Please note that all donation proposals will be reviewed by the Department; following the review, donors will be notified whether the Department will accept or decline the donation.

Categories of archaeological and cultural items not accepted for donation:

In accordance with disciplinary best practices¹ and to practice ethical stewardship in accordance with legal and ethical reasons, the OSU Department of Anthropology will not accept the following items for donation:

- Archaeological resources, human remains, or cultural items found on public land, including lands leased by the federal government²;
- Archaeological resources, human remains, or cultural items with no clearly documented owner and/or collection history prior to 1970³;
- Archaeological resources, human remains, or cultural items entering the USA after 1970 without documentation of legal entry / export permits^{2, 3};
- Archaeological resources, human remains, or cultural items determined to have been funerary in nature, unless explicit permissions from lineal descendants or descendent communities is provided;
- Any cultural item which include the remains of any part of an animal considered to be an Endangered Species (including, but not limited to: eagle feathers, elephant ivory)⁴;
- Human remains from non-archaeological contexts fall outside the scope of the practices outlined in this document and should be directed to FAST (see links above).

Repatriation and NAGPRA: For any inquiries related to Native American human remains, objects associated with human remains (funerary items), sacred items, or objects of cultural patrimony⁵, the Department of Anthropology may consult with Tribal Partners and other Museum partners. In the event that Tribal Partners request that the department acquire the ancestors or cultural items in order to fulfil repatriation, the department will work with the university's designated NAGPRA representatives and Tribal Nations as appropriate. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

¹ See the [Pennsylvania Declaration](#) (1970), [UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property](#) (1970), Archaeological Institute of America, and [Association of Art Museum Directors](#) (2013).

² In accordance with the American Antiquities Act ([54 U.S.C. §§320301-320303](#)) and Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 ([16 U.S.C. §§470aa-470mm](#));

³ See [UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property](#) and Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act ([19 U.S.C. §§ 2601–2613](#)).

⁴ In accordance with The Endangered Species Act, The Migratory Bird Treaty Act, The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, The African Elephant Conservation Act, or the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora.

⁵ Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act