



8 October 2014

## A Statement from the AIA

The Archaeological Institute of America has learned with grave concern that the AIA St. Louis Society has sold a collection of Egyptian artifacts entrusted to its care. These artifacts were allocated to the St. Louis Society in 1914 in return for support given to the excavations at Harageh directed by Sir Flinders Petrie. Contemporary documents confirm that these objects were distributed with the understanding that they went to a public collection. They were intended to benefit the citizens of St. Louis by helping them to understand the record of past human achievement. The decision to sell these objects after a century of custodianship contravenes this expectation. Fortunately, most, but not all, of the objects were purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

The AIA believes that it is the responsibility of all to protect and preserve the record of the past for the benefit of people today and in the future. This stance is clearly stated in our public policy documents. Disposing of artifacts through a public sale puts those artifacts at risk of being removed from public access.

The “American Institute of Archaeology, St. Louis Society, Inc.” is a chartered society of the AIA yet, as a separately incorporated 501(c)3 non-profit organization, operates independently. The decision of its Board of Directors to sell the objects was taken without consulting the AIA or the Society’s members, many of whom have expressed consternation at what has happened. This action has damaged the reputation of the St. Louis Society and of the AIA as a whole. Furthermore, it undermines the AIA’s continuing efforts to safeguard our archaeological heritage worldwide. The AIA made every effort to determine a solution that would enable the objects to remain in St. Louis. Unfortunately, the St. Louis Society rejected such an outcome. The AIA reserves all rights to take any action or actions available to it to address this situation.

The AIA reaffirms its commitment to preserve the material evidence of the human past for the benefit of future generations. This requires that objects obtained through official excavations be curated in institutions that are committed to long-term preservation and display of such materials for the benefit of all.

The Archaeological Institute of America