

# A Code of Ethics for Collectors of Ancient Artifacts

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This is a voluntary code, reflecting the personal conviction of those who adhere to it. It concerns actions now and in the future, and aims to inform both new and experienced collectors.

Although it is clearly in every collector's own interest to be able to separate the fake from the authentic, keep good records and care properly for artifacts, these guidelines are an attempt to go further by outlining common-sense standards to protect our *shared* interests, and particularly the finite and fragile archaeological resource.

## **(1) Protect our archaeological heritage and uphold the law**

- Only buy artifacts which you have reason to believe have been obtained and are offered in accordance with all national laws.
- Ask the vendor for all relevant paperwork relating to provenance, export etc.
- Take extra care if collecting particular classes of object which have been subjected to wide-scale recent looting.

## **(2) Check your source**

- Verify a vendor's reputation independently before buying. Assure yourself that they are using due diligence in their trading practices, and do not support those who knowingly sell fakes as authentic or offer items of questionable provenance.

## **(3) Collect sensitively**

- Consider the implications of acquiring items which may be of religious or social significance to others.

## **(4) Recognise your role as custodian**

- Do your utmost to ensure the wellbeing of the objects in your care.
- Consider the condition of artifacts prior to purchase and whether you will be able to carry out any necessary conservation or repairs. Any intrusive operation should ideally be carried out by a competent professional.
- Maintain and update records relating to each artifact, including its provenance. Make sure these records can be connected to the relevant object by a layman.
- Only buy from vendors who do the same.

## **(5) Keep artifacts in one piece and consider the significance of groups of objects**

- Do not dismember any item, or acquire a fragment which you believe to have been separated from a larger object except through natural means.
- Consider the implications of buying an item from an associated assemblage and the impact this could have on study.

## **(6) Promote further study**

- Liaise, where possible, with the academic and broader communities about your artifacts. Significant objects, in particular, should not be withheld from study. Try to find out more about the artifacts you own and their context.

## **(7) Dispose of artifacts responsibly**

- Do your best to ensure that none of the above guidelines are infringed by the way you dispose of your artifacts.
- Pass on all information about each piece, particularly its provenance, and include as much original documentation as possible (even if the prices are blacked out).
- Give an honest description of any repairs or restoration.
- Promote responsible custodianship to the new owner and other collectors.
- Give thought to the disposal of your collection in the event of your death, and leave clear instructions as to how it should be sold or donated.