

## ARCH 2500

## Antiquities Market

Goals: To understand the scope of the antiquities market.

To understand the market's impact on the archaeological record.

This exercise will allow you to explore the market yourselves. In particular, you should get a feel about the range of artifacts being sold, whether the sellers care about the archaeological record or the artifacts themselves, and whether they understand the legalities of selling artifacts.

1. Read the articles listed in the bibliography below. For each of the authors describe why they are in favor or against the antiquities market.
2. Go to an internet auction site, such as Ebay.com or Amazon.com. The Bruhns (2000) article lists many sites that sell artifacts. Locate at least two items for sale that are advertised as being authentic prehistoric artifacts. At least one of them should be an artifact that is on the expensive end. Print off the listing and description for each artifact, and attach this to the paper that you turn in.
3. Describe how you found the artifact listings. For example, what words did you search for or what categories you looked under? How long did it take you to find it?
4. If the description of the artifacts does not state the following information, e-mail the seller for the information. Be sure to turn in these e-mail conversations as part of the homework.
  - Do the sellers know anything about the details of the context in which it was found? This will give you an idea if they are interested in the artifacts themselves or in understanding the past in general. If they are interested in the object, very little contextual information is provided. If they have an appreciation for the archaeological record, they will be able to tell you where they found it and what it was associated or found with.
  - Is the seller familiar with the laws that govern the sale of artifacts like the one they are selling? Was the artifact found on private or public land? Collecting artifacts on public lands is illegal. But some sellers may be naive about the laws.
  - How does the seller know the age specified is correct? The seller should at least be able to give you a reference book that they used to identify the artifact.
  - Are there any differences between how the expensive item and cheaper item are presented by the sellers? Are there reasons why some artifacts are more expensive?

Since some sellers may not respond to your e-mails in a timely manner, you will probably have to contact more than just two sellers.

5. Search around on the auction site and see if they have an official policy on the sale of antiquities. Ebay's policies are at <http://pages.ebay.com/help/community/index.html>. If you cannot find one, you can e-mail the auction site and ask them what their policy is. This is

important because it gives you an idea of the scope of what they consider 'fair game'. After looking at their policy, discuss whether you think the policies are adequate or not, and why.

6. Given what you have learned from the readings and your experience searching the web, conclude your summary by addressing the following:
- Are sellers interested in the artifacts as objects or as part of the archaeological record? How can you tell?
  - What do you think the impact of this market has on what we can know about the past?
  - What can we do to discourage the illegal selling of artifacts or encourage the conservation of the archaeological record?

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Gardner, Randy

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Robbins, Elaine

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Toner, Mike

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