STANFORD UNIVERSITY ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTIONS: Open for Interpretation

A GLOBAL COLLECTION
The Stanford University Archaeology Collections (SUAC) are a museum-style anthropology collection of archaeological and ethnographic artifacts. SUAC is dedicated to research, teaching, and outreach. The collection includes over 80,000 items possessing global scope and regional strengths and reflects the unique collecting history of Stanford University. Over half of the collection originates in North America, with important accessions in the archaeology and ethnography of the Bay Area and northern California, ethnography of British Columbia and Alaska, and archaeology of the Southwest, West Mexico, and Illinois. SUAC cares for smaller ethnographic accessions from the Southwest, Plateau, Plains, and eastern North America. Other accessions come from Europe, Asia, and Africa, with additional important collections from the ancient Andes and modern Pacific. Many additional places, peoples, and periods are represented. These materials manifest a range of complex histories and present-day significances.

A UNIQUE HISTORY
This diverse assemblage originated in the late 19th century with the Stanford family's personal collections. The collection greatly expanded after the founding of the University and University Museum in 1891. Acquisitions remained idiosyncratic and opportunistic throughout the 19th century. As colonial expansion disseminated across the country, California's dynamic social networks shaped new economic and political power, multicultural conflict, strategic tribal survival, and collecting cultures. After World War II, Stanford's then-new Anthropology Department made increasing use of the University's anthropological collections. During this time, the holdings grew through faculty and alumni donations, as well as campus and regional archaeology projects. A substantial portion of the University Museum's anthropological collection was formally transferred to the Anthropology Department after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. This collection, combined with campus and area archaeology assemblages, is now held by the Stanford Archaeology Center and stewarded by SUAC.

A LIVING LEGACY
SUAC's collections were recently re-installed on campus in an active curation space after many years in inaccessible storage. Use is ever-increasing through:

- Research: on cultural origins, ancient foodways, communities of practice, and collection history
- Teaching: on Andean archaeology, "Thinking through Things," California Native history, archaeology of religion, and more
- Exhibitions: curated by SUAC, students, and faculty
- Tours: for alumni groups, K-12 educational programs, campus guests, and others
- Tribal consultations: for any descendant community interested in collections
- Technology: via metadata improvement, social media, and a pilot 3D photogrammetry program

The SUAC collection serves multiple stakeholders and the Stanford Archaeology Center's mission to forward theoretical and ethical heritage practices. Staff and allies are working hard to raise awareness of SUAC's existence, accessibility, and scope. We believe this collection embodies the interconnected and ever-changing nature of living cultural collections. SUAC is now open for interpretation.