

November 28, 2022

Senior Dean Tomás O'Sullivan
Trinity College
Dublin, Ireland

Dear Senior Dean O'Sullivan:

I write in my capacity as the president of the Society for Cultural Anthropology (SCA), one of the largest member sections of the American Anthropological Association. The board of SCA strongly supports the request by the community of Inishbofin, County Galway for the return of their ancestral remains. As you are aware, these remains were stolen from a graveyard in 1890 by Alfred Cort Haddon and Andrew Francis Dixon, and have been held for more than 130 years in the collections of Trinity College Dublin.

Alfred Cort Haddon has long been considered a founding figure in the history of anthropology. He also contributed directly to the scientific racism at the center of the discipline's colonialist origins and engaged in pseudoscientific methods that were used to endorse false notions of racial hierarchy and racial superiority. The pseudosciences of craniometry and phrenology were part of this legacy, and they motivated Haddon and Dixon to engage in the theft of human remains from the graveyard in Inoshbofin.

SCA is committed to recent efforts in the discipline to decolonize anthropology, and we view the institutional acknowledgement and rectification of past harms as key to these efforts. The theft of human remains is one clear-cut example of violence that was perpetrated in the name of anthropological and ethnological "science." As such, a necessary step toward addressing the legacies of violence and histories of harm is the repatriation of human remains and cultural objects to their communities of origin. For these reasons, we strongly urge Trinity College to comply with the requests of the descendant community in Inishbofin by returning their ancestral remains.

Respectfully yours,



Eleana Kim, President
on behalf of the Board of the Society for Cultural Anthropology