

## **Who are the Culturally Unidentifiable?**

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March 22, 2007

### **Introduction**

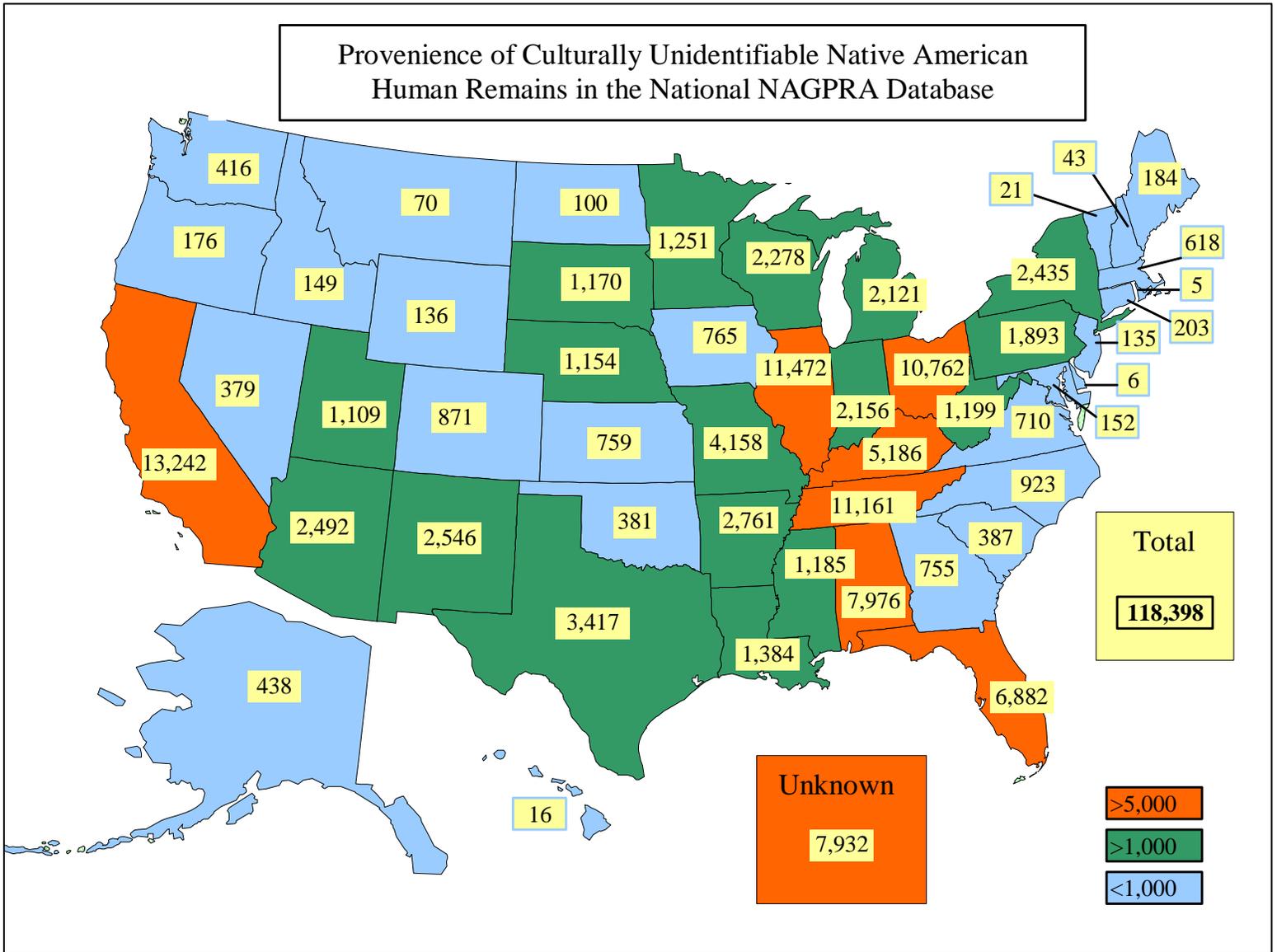
Pursuant to 25 U.S.C. 3003(a) each Federal agency and museum which has possession of or control over human remains is required to compile an inventory which identifies the geographical and cultural affiliation of items in its possession based on documentary evidence. The inventories provided by the Federal agencies and museums in compliance with 25 U.S.C. 3003(a) resulted in the classification of over 118,000 individuals as culturally unidentifiable. According to 25 U.S.C. 3001, cultural affiliation is defined as, “a relationship of shared group identity which can be reasonably traced historically or prehistorically...” between a current day federally recognized Indian Tribe or Native Hawaiian group. According to the reporting institutions and agencies 118, 833 Native American human remains cannot be found to have a group identity with any existing federally recognized Indian Tribe or Native Hawaiian Group.

This report compiles information regarding the culturally unidentifiable remains which are held in federally funded museums and Federal agencies across six states of the United States. The six states which are examined in this report account for 53,182 culturally unidentifiable remains, roughly 44.75% of all the culturally unidentifiable remains in the United States as of February 2, 2007. In addition to holding nearly half of the CUI in the United States, this group of states held a small number of culturally identified individuals. The six states of this study geographically comprises a swath of land which runs from the Gulf of Mexico to the Ohio River Valley.

The intent of this report is to give an in-depth description of CUI in these six states (Alabama, Florida, Ohio, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Illinois) from a number of perspectives to aid future consultation and identification efforts. The first round of inquiry focused on the provenience, modality, and age of the CUI. After completion of the preliminary inquest, a second round of investigation was conducted which analyzed the date of excavation, affiliated funerary objects found, and the quantity of remains uncovered. From the statistical data compiled in this report a greater understanding of the nature of the CUI population can be gained. It was not the intent of this report to attempt to determine cultural affiliation; the goal was merely to provide the National NAGPRA Review Committee with refined statistical analysis from which further discussion can be made regarding culturally unidentifiable individuals.

The figures used to create the tables and charts included in this report are derived from the inventories provided to National NAGPRA as of February 2, 2007. These inventory reports are available to the public on-line, via the National NAGPRA website, <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nagpra>.

## Distribution of Culturally Unidentifiable Remains across the United States



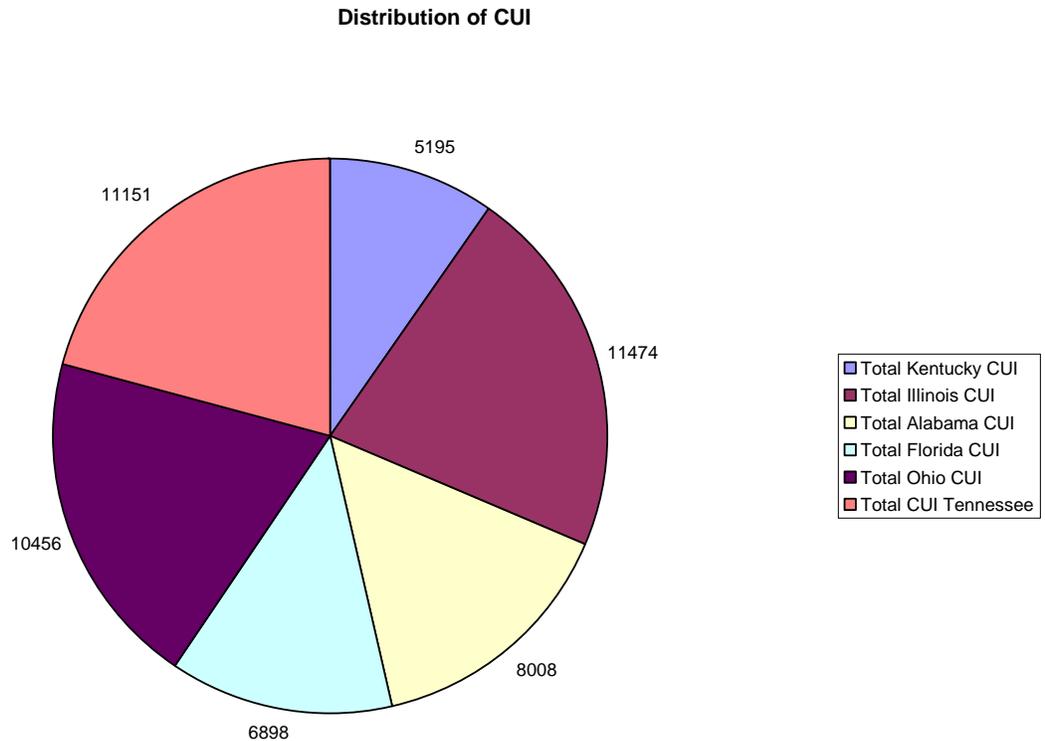
\* Please note that the figures on this map do not reflect the data which is used in this report, the above map was created using data before February 2, 2007.

## I. Provenience

The first section of this report examines the provenience of the culturally unidentifiable Native American human remains from the sample population; specifically investigating the current location of the individuals. Comparison of the state in which the individual was excavated, with the current location where they are held may provide clues as to why the remains have yet to be culturally affiliated.

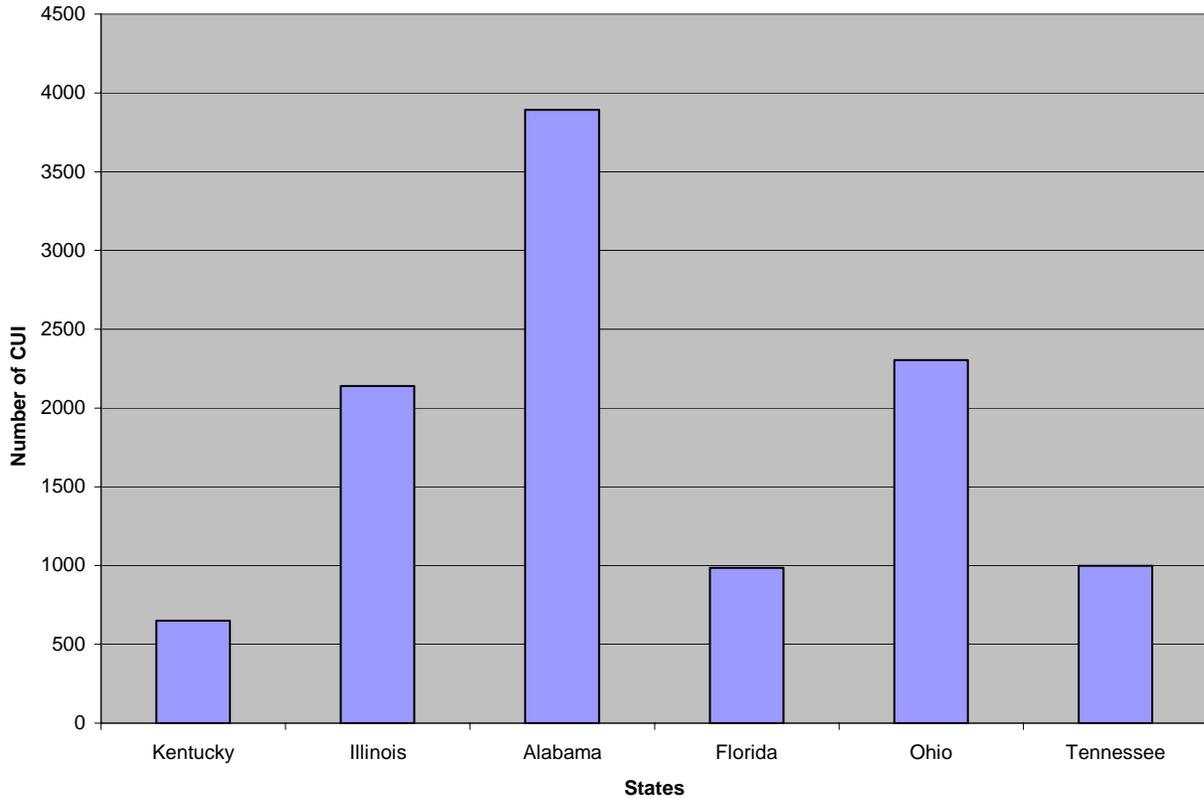
Assessment of existing data shows that the largest number of individuals determined to be CUI were excavated in Illinois, followed by Tennessee, Ohio, Alabama, Florida, and lastly Kentucky. Further analysis reveals that 21% of all the CUI in this report are currently located outside the state in which they were excavated. Examination of the current location of the CUI located out of provenience reveals that they are predominately held in Tennessee. Over 3,700 individuals who were excavated from Kentucky, Illinois, Alabama, Florida, and Ohio are located in Tennessee. Massachusetts currently holds the second largest number of individuals excavated from Kentucky, Illinois, Alabama, Florida, Ohio, and Tennessee with 3,595 individuals.

**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**

**Total CUI Held Outside State of Origin**



**Table 1**

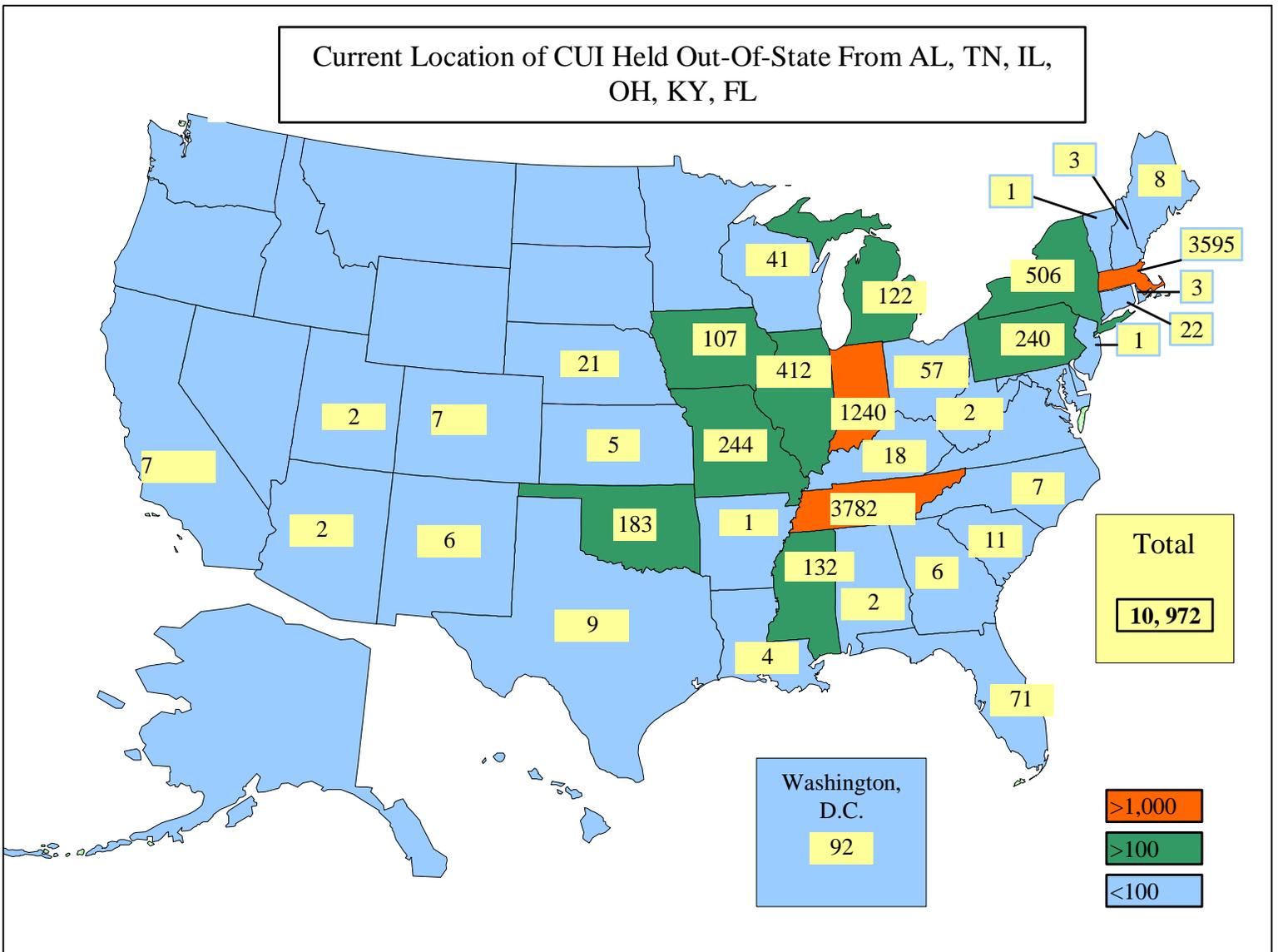
State	Total CUI Held Out-Of-State	Percent Held Out-Of-State	Average CUI Held Out-Of-State	Median CUI Held Out-Of-State
Alabama	3892	48%	353.85	4.5
Florida	987	14%	39	3
Ohio	2305	22%	144.06	5
Tennessee	999	9%	62.43	5
Illinois	2139	19%	101.85	5
Kentucky	650	13%	38.2	5.5

Completion of a distribution breakdown of the CUI held out-of-state from the study group across the United States shows that the average number of individuals held in each state appears to be considerable, averaging 123 CUI per state. However, this information is skewed significantly.<sup>1</sup> Outliers have affected the data for each state, meaning that one or two states possess an abnormally high number of CUI in comparison to other states in the set, causing the average number of CUI to be drastically higher than actually is the case. To eliminate the effect of the outliers on the data set the median number of CUI held out-of-state has been tabulated.

<sup>1</sup> Please note that the figures “Average CUI Held Out-of-State” and “Median CUI Held Out-of-State” examine the states which have federal agencies and/or museums which currently have possession over CUI which were excavated in either AL,FL,KY,OH,TN, or IL.

**Figure 3**

In total 10,972 CUI from the study group are currently held outside their state of provenience. Spread across 36 states these CUI account for roughly 21% of all culturally unidentifiable individuals in the sample population. Examination of the 36 states in which the CUI are located reveals a concentration of CUI in 17 of the 36 states. Concentrated within these 17 states is 59% of all CUI held out of provenience, accounting for 6,484 CUI in total. Proximity to the states in the sample population appears to be the key to understanding this distribution, as all 17 states in question border at least one of the states in the study group.

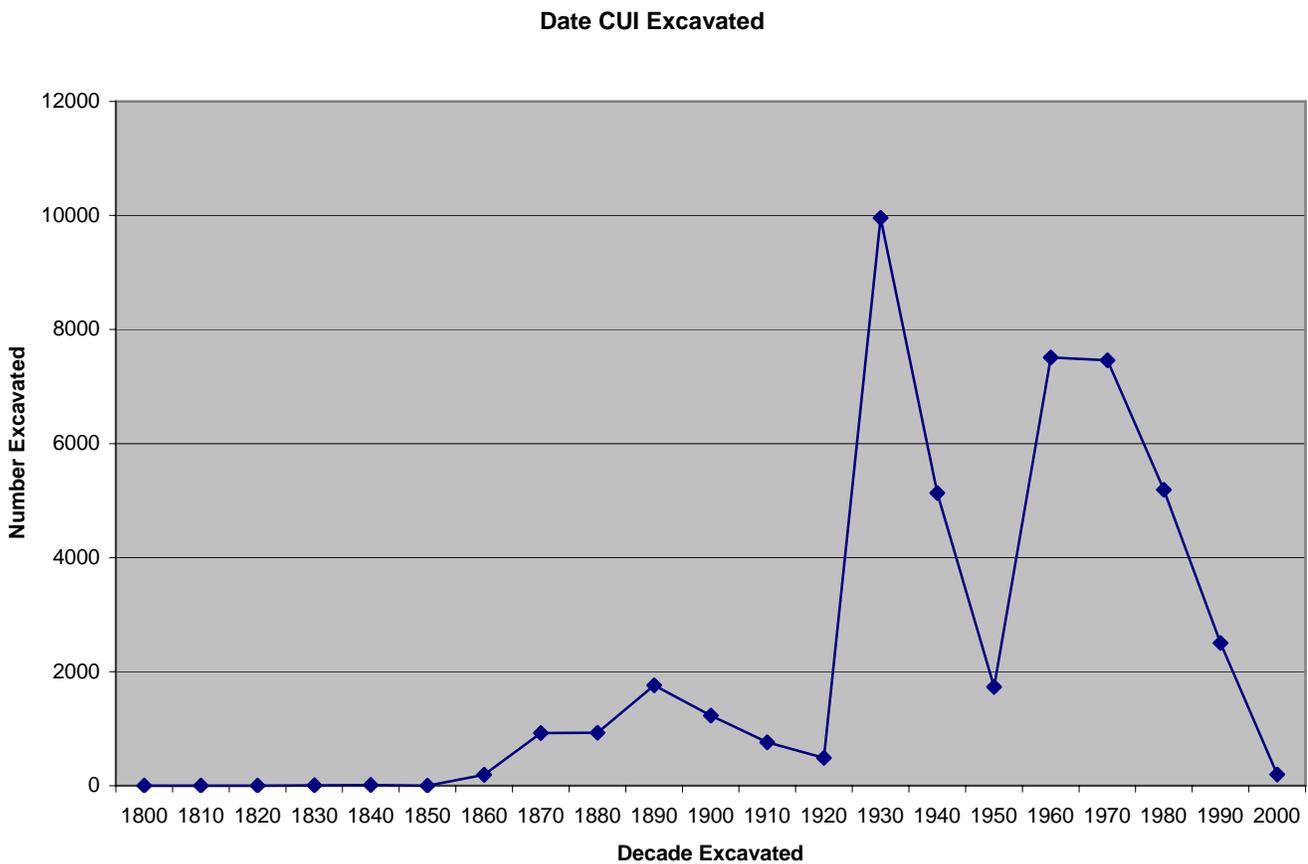


\*Please note that the total number of CUI shown for states that are a part of the sample group do not include the total number of CUI from their given state; the number pictured above reflects the number of CUI held from the other five states in the sample group.

## II. Date Excavated

Examination of when the culturally unidentifiable individuals were excavated may not assist directly in the interpretation of who the CUI are, however, it will assist in understanding why they have been determined to be culturally unidentifiable. Modern archaeology in the United States can trace its origins to the early 1800's; outlining the development of modern archaeology from its beginning allows for comprehension of period paradigms and research practices. Analysis of the date of excavation in comparison to research practices and period paradigms will allow for a better comprehension of why the individuals are CUI.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 3**



\*Please note that 7,218 individuals have no recorded date of excavation

As illustrated in the graph above, the number of culturally unidentifiable individuals spiked three times over the past two hundred years, once in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and twice in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first significant increase in CUI occurred from 1890 to 1899; of the Native American human

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the date of excavation was not always provided in the inventories produced by the federal agencies and museums. This is due in large part to poor documentation by both the institutions and individuals who excavated the remains, and the museum for not documenting when the remains came into their collection. In cases in which the date of donation was known that date was used by the museum.

remains excavated at this time 1,758 of them were found to be culturally unidentifiable. After the spike in the 1890's the number of CUI which were excavated each year made a steady decline until the 1930's. Between 1930 and 1939 the largest percentage of Native American remains were found to be culturally unidentifiable, roughly 9,957 individuals in all. Thirty years later, in the 1960's, another spike in the number of CUI would occur, as 7,508 persons would subsequently be found to be culturally unidentifiable.

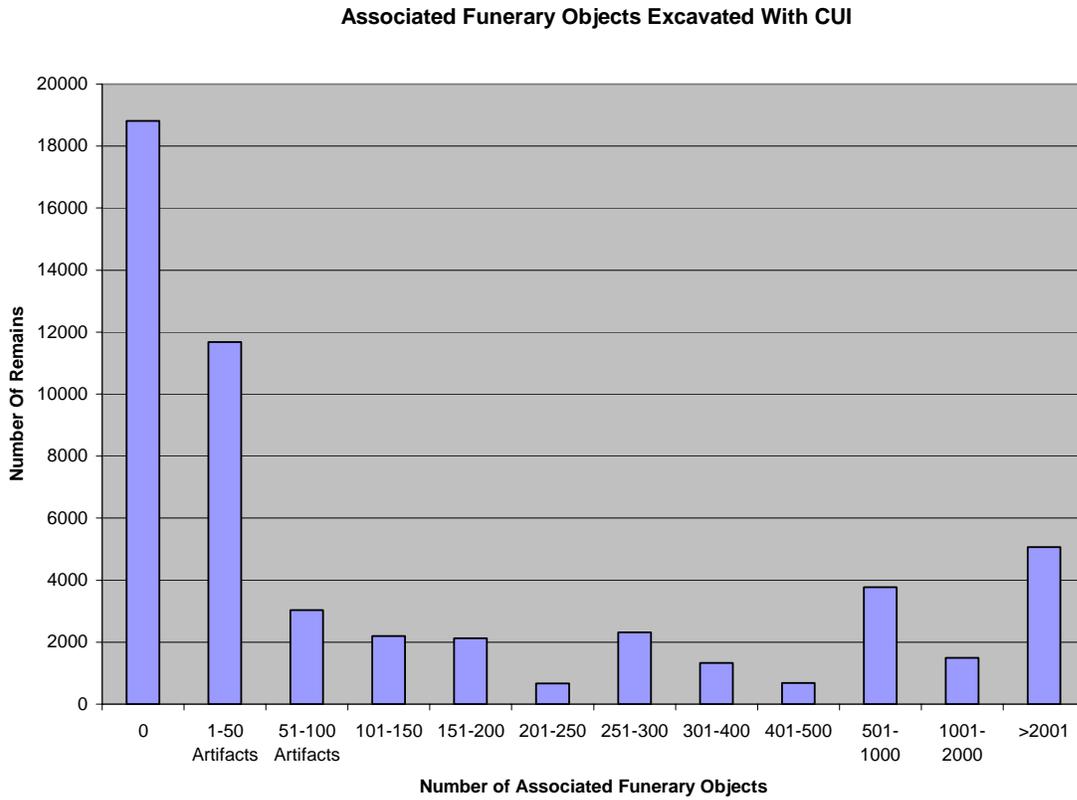
**Table 2**

State	Decade Most CUI Excavated/Recorded	Percent of Total CUI Excavated During Decade	Percent Date of Excavation Unknown
Alabama	1930-1940	63%	6%
Tennessee	1930-1940	31%	8%
Kentucky	1940-1950	43%	6%
Ohio	1960-1970	24%	6%
Illinois	1960-1970	22%	28%
Florida	1980-1990	19%	26%

### III. Associated Funerary Objects

Examining the number of associated funerary objects, items which as part of the death rite or ceremony of a culture were placed at the burial site, sheds light on the amount of information which is available to assist in the identification of the culturally unidentifiable individuals. Analysis of the data has found that 18,816 CUI, roughly 35% of the CUI in the study group, were excavated with no associated funerary objects. However, this means that 34,366 culturally unidentifiable individuals were excavated with at least one associated funerary object. Of the 34,366 that were found to have at least 1 associated funerary object 5,066 were excavated with over 2,000 associated funerary objects.

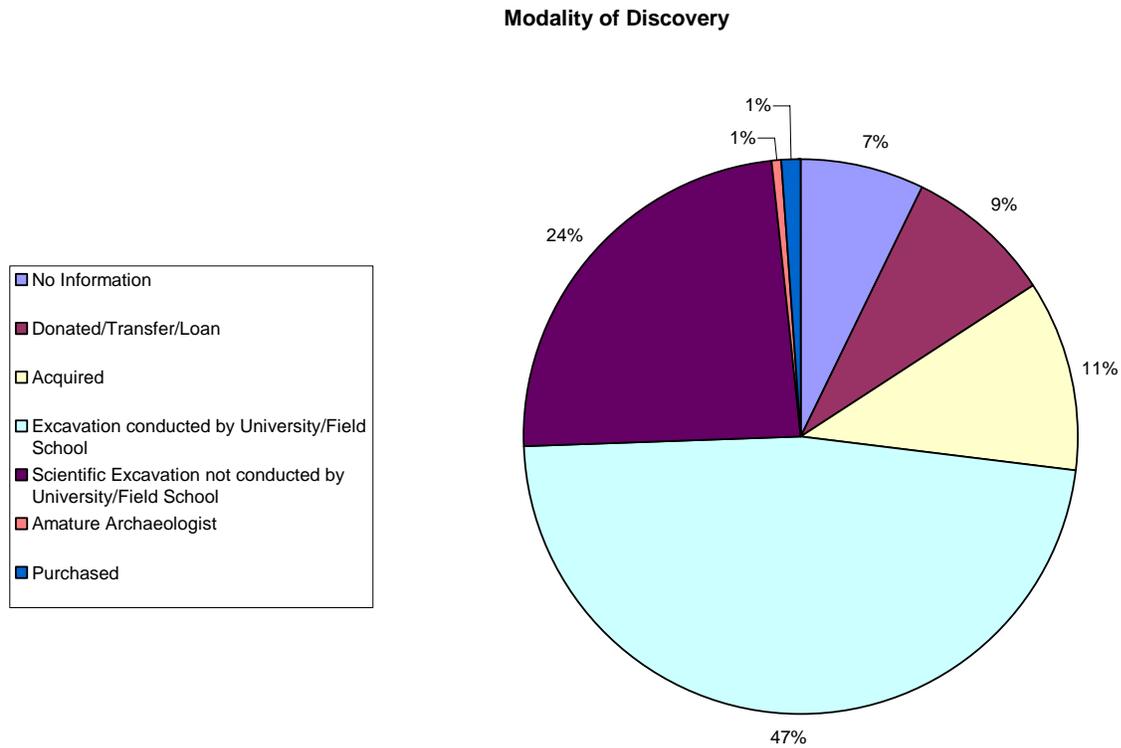
**Figure 4**



#### IV. Modality

Examination of the methodology used in the excavation of the CUI, as with the data of excavation, may not assist directly in the interpretation of who the CUI are. However, it will assist in understanding the auspices in which the remains unearthed. Investigation of the modality in which the CUI were excavated reveals that nearly half of the CUI, which were disinterred from the sample group, were done so in a scientific manner under the guidance of academia, either directly through a university or a field school.<sup>3</sup> The second largest group, scientific excavation conducted by institutions other than university/field school accounts for roughly a quarter of all the CUI in the sample population. It is important to note here that 71% of the culturally unidentifiable remains were excavated in a scientific manner, not by amateur archaeologists.

**Figure 5**



<sup>3</sup> The number of CUI excavated in a scientific manner by universities and field schools is inaccurate and shown to be lower than actually is the case. This is due in large part to the practices of higher education institutions in transferring their holdings to other museums. As a result of this, the proper collection history is not provided in the inventory summary and the CUI appear under categories such as donation or acquired, instead of scientific excavation conducted by a university or field school as is a more accurate description.

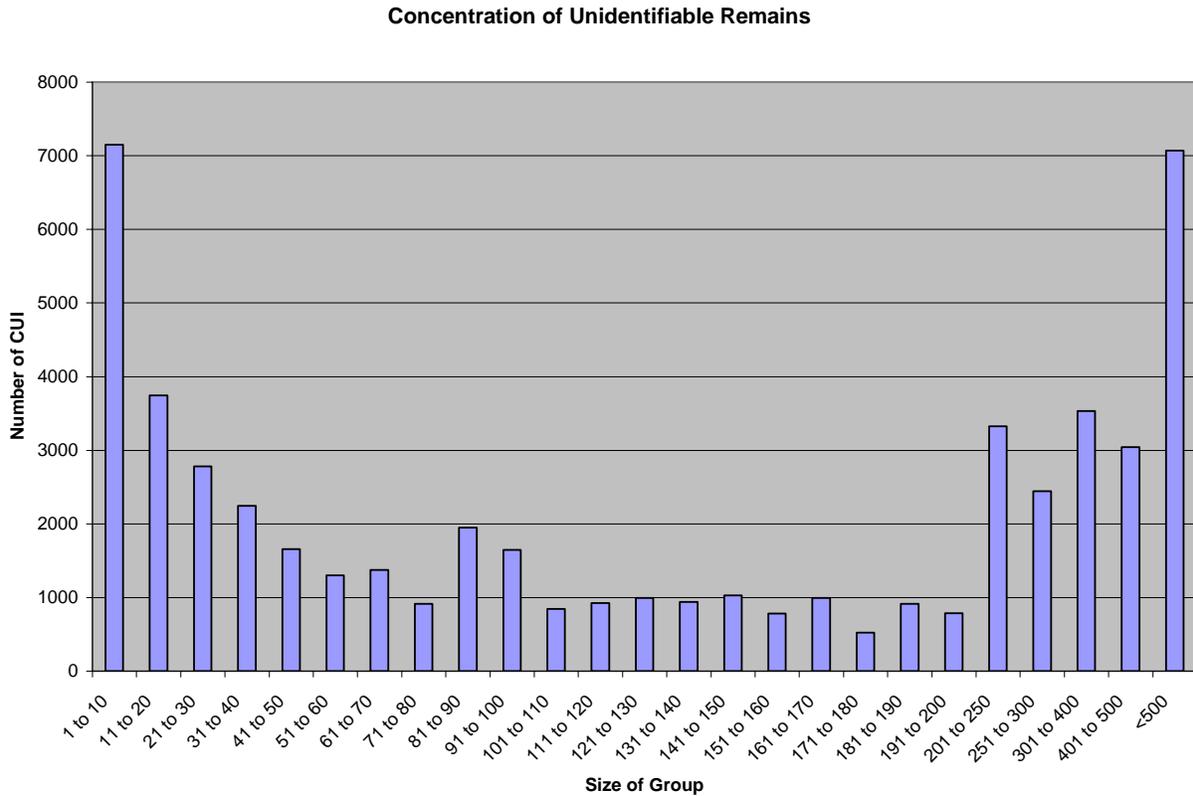
**Table IV**

State	No Information	Donated	Acquired	Scientific Excavation By University/Field School	Scientific Not Conducted by Academia	Amateur Archaeologist	Purchased
Alabama	70	52	105	7627	152	2	0
Kentucky	86	202	69	4819	7	11	1
Tennessee	802	224	1429	7981	708	2	5
Ohio	455	491	2	2770	6526	102	110
Illinois	2053	3290	960	767	3902	47	455
Florida	421	287	3385	1274	1384	144	3

**V. Size**

Reflecting upon the concentration of CUI which were found at each site, the data reveals that majority of the CUI were found in either small burials that comprised between 1 and 10 individuals or they were buried in mass graves which held more then 500 individuals.

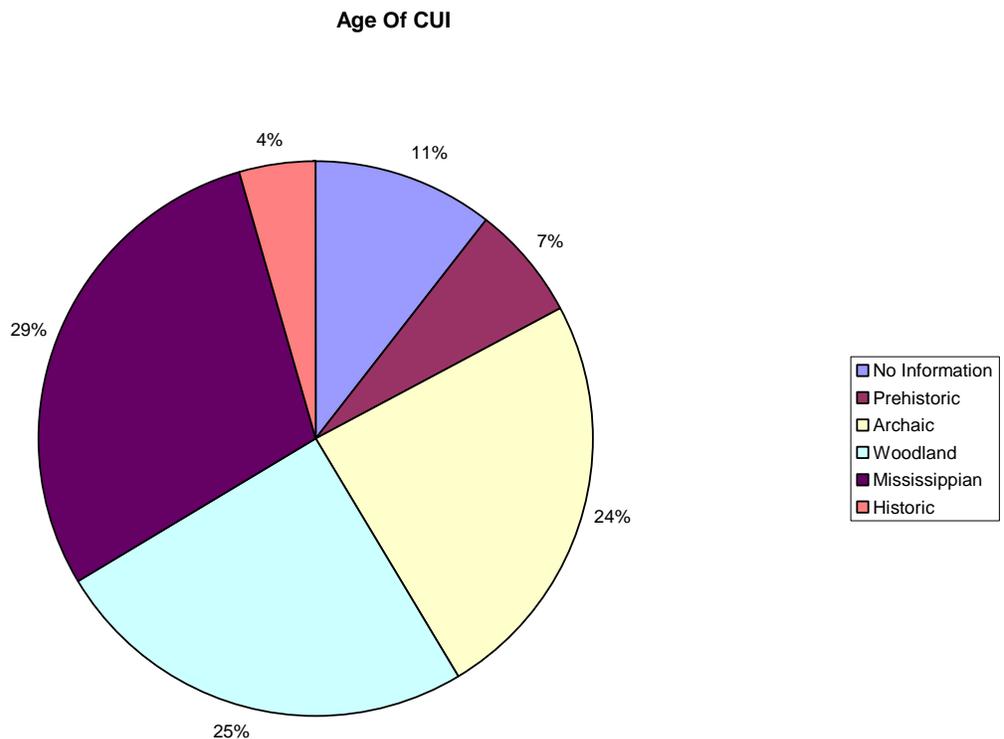
**Figure 6**



## VI. Age

**Figure 7**

Examination of the time period when the CUI were believed to have been alive presents a near even spread of CUI between 8000 B.C.E. and 1400 C.E. The largest percentage of CUI has been dated to the Mississippian period, which spanned from 1100 C.E. to 1400 C.E.<sup>4</sup> In total 15,554 of the 53,182 CUI from the study group were alive during the Mississippian period. The second largest group, the Woodland period, had a projected total of 13,252 CUI. Only 3,478 of all the CUI from the sample population were believed to have been alive during the prehistoric period; only a 3% difference separates the number of individuals that lived during the prehistoric period and those who lived in the historic period, which spanned from 1500 C.E. to 1715 C.E. Currently a total of 5,678 CUI have not been associated with a time period, accounting for 11% of all the CUI.



<sup>4</sup> Please note that each state does not have the same begin and end date for the Archaic, Woodland, and Mississippian period. In order to compile this data a general date range was applied to all of the states: The Prehistoric date used ranged from 15,000 B.C.E. -8,000 B.C.E. the Archaic period date ranged from 8000 B.C.E. to 1000 B.C.E. the Woodland period used a date range from 1,000 B.C.E. to 1,000 C.E. while the Mississippian period used a date range from 1100 C.E. to 1400 C.E. the Protohistoric and Historic periods were combined into the Historic period for this graph, the date range used for this figure spanned from 1500 C.E. to 1715 C.E.