

Ethical Archaeologies: The Politics of Social Justice

Archaeology remains burdened by modern/Western values. Codified, these values harden into ethics with specific cultural and temporal foundations; indeed, ethics are contextual, shifting and negotiated entanglements of intent and practice that often conflict. Yet, archaeologists may uncritically mask these contexts unless they are adequately aware of the discipline's history and of their location in a globalised world order with its imprint of imperial, colonial and neocolonial values. A responsible and socially committed archaeology must historicise its ethical principles, showing how contingent they are and what kind of needs they are serving.

By adopting a global coverage that brings together academic activism for a historicised ethics, universally created lacunae surrounding disciplinary concepts, such as the archaeological record, stewardship and multivocality, as well as broader concerns of race, class and gender, can be discussed and acted upon. The four volumes comprising the *Ethical Archaeologies: The Politics of Social Justice Series* discuss historically based ethics in the practice of archaeology and related fields—anthropology, museology, indigenous and heritage studies, law and education—and highlight the struggle for social justice, in which the discipline can participate.

In this series we accept that social justice is broadly about equality and the right to freedom from any kind of discrimination or abuse. It is about seeking to transform the current order of the world, in which the hegemony of the Western cosmology still reigns with its ideas of individuality, linear time, development, competition and progress. Thus, social justice is also about the positioning in our research and disciplinary practices of non-modern values about life, time, past, place and heritage.

Hardened into reified principles, as they continue to be, ethical concerns have served to reproduce epistemic hierarchies and privileges. If archaeologists are content with what the ethical preoccupations of the last two decades have achieved, their trumpeted engagement with politics and justice is meaningless. If the ethics of archaeology continues to simply further embed disciplinary privileges, social justice is not a horizon of fulfilment. If ethics is just a disciplinary preoccupation, a

way of better accommodating the discipline to changing times, social justice is an empty expression. For these reasons, this series aims to position the values of equality and freedom from all discrimination at the centre of archaeological thinking and practice. The four volumes are not toolkits or guides for standardised, universal, ethical conduct, but critically informed, self-reflective discussions of ethical problems and potentials.

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