

The Politics of the Past

Workshop 1, Activity 5

Activity Outline

The subjectivity of archaeological interpretation can leave stories of the past open to manipulation. Archaeological and heritage experts therefore have an obligation to ensure that the stories told are as faithful to archaeological context as possible, and are not simplified to send political messages.

This activity encourages participants to develop new ways to address these issues from their own perspective through active dialogue. The result of this communication should be a policy document agreed on by the whole group.

Duration: c. 40 minutes

Participant Instructions

Participants will be divided into groups of c.5 persons for discussion. Each group should be as diverse as possible in order to encourage engagement with different perspectives.

With reference to what has been discussed in this workshop, assess what archaeologists, cultural heritage professionals, museum curators, and others can do to prevent the (mis)use of archaeological interpretations. Allow for an open conversation, but be guided by the following points:

- Do you think that this is relevant to cultural heritage in Kurdistan? Why?
- What can you do in your daily practice to make sure that this misuse does not happen?
- What do you think can be done to improve heritage practice to avoid this?

Using the table below, produce an ethical code on how to interpret the past, which includes the following categories:

- Essential requirements for an ethical interpretation of cultural heritage.
- Desirable practices.
- Non-acceptable practices.

Allow time for each group to report their ethical policies back to the room. This feedback should result in the production of diverse and creative ground-up solutions to the issues discussed in this session. The ultimate outcome of this activity should be the formation of a master policy document agreed upon by all participants.

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Ethical Policy Document for Appropriate Interpretation and Narrative Building

Essential requirements for ethical interpretation	Desirable practices for ethical interpretation	Non-acceptable practices for ethical interpretation