

A Controversial Look into Archaeology

Archaeology can and will be controversial, either within the public eye or even between Archaeologists. Within the public, the main 'controversial' topic surrounding archaeology is whether it is considered graverobbing or not and within archaeology and archaeologists, there are many different controversial topics regarding the discipline. The discipline itself is really important in regards to the work archaeologists do on and off the excavation site, whether that be radiocarbon dating centuries old artefacts or even discovering something new.

Currently, within Archaeology, there is a controversial topic of interest with the supposed 27,000-year-old pyramid in Indonesia, the pyramid, said by "Indonesian geologist Danny Hilman Natawidjaja and his fellow researchers [...] which consists of five terraces, was built as a pyramid as much as 27,000 years ago."¹ However, "current estimates, in contrast, date the site to 5,000 B.C.E., at the latest."² If the site was dated to around 27,000 years ago then that would completely upend everything archaeologists thought they knew about the Palaeolithic era, as hunter-gatherers lived in "basic huts" and wielded "crude stone tools." In another article written by 'popular mechanics', there are "a robust range of leading archaeologists [that] seem perplexed on how the study ever made it past peer review [...] in the first place."³ With archaeology, it is always important to back up your statements with proof and with conviction as many other archaeologists may not believe your findings, archaeologists who discover something new may also want to carbon date their findings so then they are aware of when the artefact may have come from. "The team based much of their findings on radiocarbon dating from core drilling. The retraction says that the dating has no tie to human interaction [...] place not believed to have been inhabited at the time the paper's authors say humans were hand-forming the pyramid."⁴ Archaeologists who have been found to lie about their work can and will be shunned within the discipline of the Humanities, as archaeology can be such a controversial topic of conversation within the public eye.

On the other hand, archaeology can also be seen as controversial as it can be seen as 'graverobbing' even though archaeology as a whole is the "study of human history and prehistory through the excavation of sites and the analysis of artefacts and other physical remains" (*Oxford Languages Definition*) although there are no laws "that state when an artefact becomes historically significant [...] the general rule is that an item between 75 and 100 years old is a valued collectible."⁵ The difference between archaeology and grave robbing is when if someone were to try and dig up someone's grave to take an item from it, it is considered graverobbing and highly illegal, whereas if a professor, or an archaeologists "applied for and received a permit to excavate a site"⁶ then, and only then would it be considered as

¹ [Archaeologists Call Foul on the Purported Discovery of a 27,000-Year-Old Pyramid \(artnet.com\)](#)

² [Archaeologists Call Foul on the Purported Discovery of a 27,000-Year-Old Pyramid \(artnet.com\)](#)

³ [A Controversial Pyramid Isn't Actually 27,000 Years Old—and Now, the Mystery Deepens \(popularmechanics.com\)](#)

⁴ [A Controversial Pyramid Isn't Actually 27,000 Years Old—and Now, the Mystery Deepens \(popularmechanics.com\)](#)

⁵ [What's the difference between archaeology and grave robbing? | HowStuffWorks](#)

⁶ [What's the difference between archaeology and grave robbing? | HowStuffWorks](#)

archaeology. Some people argue that archaeology should be considered graverobbing as they feel “the dead should be left alone.”⁷ Although this isn’t a very strong argument against archaeology as a whole as people have died all over the world. Some people argue for archaeology not being considered graverobbing as it can help to “preserve the past”⁸ and “according to some archaeologists, it just depends on the laws, situation, and other factors as there is no blanket answer to this dilemma.”⁹ Many archaeologists also believe that you shouldn’t just “do archaeology for the sake of doing archaeology”¹⁰ just because they are “curious about what is inside”¹¹ a grave or a tomb. If an archaeologist did decide to look into a grave or a tomb because they were ‘curious’ then they would be looked down upon by other archaeologists as that is not what their work is about as it is about preserving the past and giving the people of the past a chance to have their story heard and talked about as it might have been lost for centuries, although there are many people who would disagree with this statement and would say that archaeologist should not be the one’s to tell these people’s stories as they are dead and deserve to rest in peace, archaeologists are doing their job in trying to help bring stories to the forefront and to become topics of conversation, either within archaeology or within the conversations of the public.

In conclusion, archaeology will always be considered a ‘controversial’ job both regarding the public and within the discipline itself as there are many laws in place to protect what archaeologists may be trying to dig up. Although the job itself is really important in day to day life whether that be due to architects trying to build a new home and accidentally discovering 100 year old artefacts underneath the soil that halts their work so archaeologists can come in and excavate or not. Archaeology, will always be an important topic of conversation either because of something controversial within the humanities or if archaeologists have discovered a new artefact that has been hidden for centuries.

⁷ [Is Archaeology Grave Robbing?. It is a delicate issue | by D David Thiessen | Aug, 2024 | Medium](#)

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