

The Reburial Issue

Issue of how archaeologists and physical anthropologists treat human remains of their own and other cultures:

- Are burials an archaeological resource or is this desecration?
 - Confrontation between western colonialism / scientific determinism and differing cultural attitudes to the past, ancestors etc.
1. What are your own attitudes to death, the dead and the body.
Dramatic changes in western philosophy in 19th century and sanitisation of death. We are no longer confronted by this on a daily basis, other than in extreme cases (accidents). Is the body a scientific or even artistic resource? Does the absence of burial or disturbance of the dead represent desecration?
 2. Archaeology as a discipline: archaeology is part of a Eurocentric philosophy of science, humanity and the past. Derives from the Enlightenment, 19th century evolutionary theory, and is seen as all pervasive/cross-cultural. Archaeology privileges our own cultural and philosophical tradition at the expense of other viewpoints and cosmologies. It embodies a colonial perspective which views native populations as 'the other'.
 3. Reburial and repatriation: closely associated as part of a wider political agenda for native groups in USA and Australia. In many ways a means of expressing identity and assuming control over 'history' or the past.
 4. Legislation
USA: Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (1990)
Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Amendment Act (1987)
Keeping Places: compromise. Simulated burial in underground vault. Access, for research for example, is controlled or denied by Aboriginal community.
 5. Specific Examples: Crow Creek massacre, Kow Swamp Affair, Kennewick Man