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## Main content

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Archaeological theory and the politics of cultural heritage By Laurajane Smith Routledge 2004. ISBN 0-415-31833-5 (paper). Pp. xi+260. Price GBP22.99.

Recent disciplinary histories of Cultural Resource Management (CRM) have noted that the 1980s was a major period of growth in private, professional archaeological consulting practice in Australia (e.g. Byrne et al. 2001; Colley 2002), and the period during which it developed its contemporary character and approach. But if the 1980s was the decade of growth for consulting archaeology in Australia, the 1990s must be seen as the decade in which Archaeological Heritage Management (AHM) developed a sense of critical self-reflexivity. While conference sessions and papers on archaeological consulting projects had long been a feature of the annual conferences of the Australian Archaeological Association and the Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology, it was a series of conference sessions run as part of the 'Women in Archaeology' conferences from the early to mid 1990s which, in particular, pointed increasingly to the hegemonic position of processual archaeology in AHM in Australia, and the politics of power in contemporary CRM (see introductory chapters and papers on CRM in Du Cros and Smith 1993; Balme and Beck 1995; Casey et al. 1999. Byrne's work has also had a significant impact on this field, e.g. Byrne 1993; Byrne et al. 2001). Several of the authors of papers in these conferences went on to produce more fully worked out monographs based on some of the ideas which were emerging from this milieu (e.g. Du Cros 2002; Colley 2002), which can also be credited with stimulating major advances in community archaeology in Australia and elsewhere in the world. The intellectual roots of Archaeological theory and the politics of cultural heritage can be at least partially sited within this movement, but there are a number of points on which Smith's book stands out from the other work which has emerged from this scene. Certainly,...

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approach to cultural heritage promoted by international organizations, namely the UN Council of Human Rights and the UNESCO. By looking at cases of heritagization - that is the material To investigate into the politics of heritage is less about the how a thing called heritage deems to be preserved than to ask what is this heritage we are talking about. By moving from an epistemological to an ontological dimension, the relationship between human rights and cultural heritages shifts towards the understanding of heritage/rights system. developments in archaeological theory and methodology were particularly useful for the design of my doctoral investigation. One the one side, since the last decade several scholars have begun to archaeological heritage matters. In Chapters 5 to 7, a historical perspective on the development of CRM discusses how processual discourse, tied to a powerful conservation ethic, has played a role in establishing archaeology as a technology of government. Through its association with processualism, CRM uses archaeological knowledge to 'depoliticize' issues around identity. The emphasis that of power and politics. The practical solutions to the problems of Indigenous CRM put forward by Smith revolve around archaeologists' actions - they should be theoretically more reflexive, actively debate the action of archaeology, and critically engage with the wider contexts and consequences of theoretical development and practice.