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ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Decolonising knowledge-making on Iraq: empirical insights on archaeology and heritage education

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Abstract

Colonisation went hand in hand with appropriation of cultural resources, while postcolonial production of knowledge, extracted from other people's cultures in languages foreign to them, often dominates academic practice. This paper provides a critical perspective on the meaning of decolonisation basing on an in-depth conversation with Zahra Ali, an Iraqi sociologist engaged in racial capitalism and (post)coloniality debates. The maxims of the decolonising approach include rendering research beneficial to those researched, creating conditions allowing them to be in charge of their own agendas, theorising in and from Iraq as opposed to knowledge-making on Iraq and, finally, interacting with Iraqi knowledge-making and scholars as equals. The paper is further enriched by empirical insights on archaeology and heritage education in Iraq obtained from 25 oral history interviews with Iraqi heritage-sector stakeholders demonstrating several important findings. A profound gap emerges between cultural awareness levels in the pre-1990 and contemporary society with data showcasing 12 categories of pre-1990 heritage education strategies, only some of which are slowly being revived. The respondents disclose a strong reliance on education potential, while the paper suggests a holistic and inclusive heritage education methodology as a tool of social, ethnic, and religious cohesion in the sectarianism-torn Iraqi society.

Keywords

decolonisation, heritage education, Iraq , knowledge-making, archaeology

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