

Authenticity, Essentialism and Challenges for Archaeology in the 21st Century

Koji Mizoguchi
Kyushu University

Globalisation and ensuing fragmentation in virtually every sector of human communities lead to the spread of chronic anxiety, dis-communication and cynicism in our daily lives. As a systemic response, something stable and solid is sought in our epistemic terrain. The rise of interests in the past, heritage and the traces of the lives of the ancestors, observed across today's world can be partly explained from this. Cultural heritage can be referred to and function as anchoring points in this fluid world. However, if they are referred to as something transcendental, whose substance being perceived as the essence of the existence of particular interest groups, that will worsen the situation; that will enhance dis-communication, anxiety and hatred. Archaeology, since the late 1980s, has been functioning as an arena in which epistemic-ontological implications of authenticity, essentialism, relativity and constructivism are debated about. This presentation examines the implications of the debate, and considers the potentiality of each of these concepts/standpoints, and proposes a way forward in the practice of archaeology and cultural heritage management.