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# Conference Reports

## Principles for Partnership in Cross-Cultural Human Sciences<sup>1</sup> Research with a Particular View to Archaeology

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At a four day seminar held at Rüslikon, Switzerland from 28 September – 1 October 1994 by the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAHS) and the Swiss Liechtenstein Foundation for Archaeological Research Abroad (SLFA), Principles for Partnership in Cross-Cultural Research were adopted.<sup>2</sup> Archaeologists from all parts of the world participated as well as experts in anthropology, law and moral philosophy, interested in issues of intercultural relations. Lively discussions took place on responsibility of cultural professionals working in communities other than their own, knowing that the mere fact of their working in a community will effect changes in the cultural forms of that community, and questions as to their relations with their professional colleagues in those countries. The experts emphasized the importance of equal partnership with the local specialists where these are available, and their duty to undertake capacity-building where it is not.

There are many interesting items in the Principles, but one of particular note is the need for sensitivity to the views and beliefs of the community concerned, even where it may not be the legal owner of the site. The experts were clear that a community still has an interest in having its burial grounds respected even though it may have moved out of the area and the site may be legally owned by some other person who gives permission for excavation. It is unethical for a foreign scholar to undertake excavation without the informed consent of the community concerned.

The Principles adopted read as follows:

### Introduction

The Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAHS) together with the Swiss Liechtenstein Foundation for Archaeological Research Abroad (SLFA) staged an International Symposium on "Archaeology- a Voice in the Cross-cultural Dialogue between South and North" in Autumn 1994. SLFA had grown from an initiative within the academy. Looking back on an eight years' experience, the need was felt to issue a formal statement covering the ethical

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aspects of archaeological partnership and of cross-cultural research in general. The Boards of SAHS and SLFA are aware of similar needs and considerations within other national and international scholarly and professional organizations, as well as agencies concerned with cultural co-operation. They are convinced that such cultural collaboration constitutes not just an indispensable complement but rather a prerequisite of any successful development co-operation. Moreover, they believe that another condition of success is co-operation in the form of equal partnership.

Cross-cultural co-operation is a paramount means of preserving and enhancing cultural diversity. Both SAHS and SLFA believe that cultural diversity is as important and significant as biological diversity for maintaining the conditions of humane, peaceful existence of mankind.

Cross-cultural intercourse has to be based on mutual respect as supreme principle. However, examples such as the growing illicit trade in cultural objects show that this is not always the case. Therefore, it seems appropriate and timely to issue a set of guidelines for cross-cultural co-operation, in particular archaeological research, in order to formalize what has already become the concern and practice of many researchers. The following recommendations are addressed, in the first instance, to professionals in cultural fields, such as archaeologists, anthropologists, ethnologists, museum specialists, conservators, etc. Then, in the second place, to the respective professional organizations which hopefully will find ways and means to enforce the recommendations within their membership. In the third place the guidelines may be relevant for governmental authorities and non-governmental agencies.

SAHS and SLFA would be glad if their effort were of help beyond their national borders and became an object of debate, agreement, and concrete measures on an international level, to the extent still necessary. They are encouraged in this hope by the fact that the guidelines put forward below were discussed and adopted by participants in the symposium who came from all parts of the world.

SAHS and SLFA are aware, of course, of the existence of an impressive number of recommendations, guidelines, codes of ethics issued by various national, regional, and international professional associations, governmental and non-governmental organizations. In fact, many of the respective documents were consulted, and profit was taken from the reflections and statements therein. However, additional rules are needed to meet current needs, taking into account the changes and developments that have occurred since those documents were issued. Much of what was conceived and adopted before stands firm and serves as the ground on which the guidelines below have been constructed.

The following documents provided essential elements:

- the Hague Convention of May 14, 1954, concerning the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict;

- UNESCO’s Recommendation on International Principles Applicable to Archaeological Excavations, New Delhi, December 5, 1956;
- UNESCO’s Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Co-operation, Paris, November 4, 1966;
- UNESCO’s Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, Paris, November 14, 1970;
- UNESCO’s Convention concerning the Protection of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage, November 23, 1972;
- the Berlin Declaration on Loans and Acquisitions of Archaeological Objects by Museums, July 27, 1988;
- the British Institute of Field Archaeology’s Code of Conduct, September 12, 1988;
- ICOMOS’ Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage, Lausanne, 1990;
- the First Code of Ethics of the World Archaeological Congress, Barquisimeto/Venezuela, September 1990;
- the “Model for Archaeology 1991” of the Association of Swiss Cantonal Archaeologists;
- the “Definition of Archaeology” with its corollaries issued by the Association for Roman Archaeology in Switzerland, Martigny, November 5, 1993;
- the USA Society of Professional Archaeologists Code of Ethics, Revised edition, January 1993;
- the Resolutions adopted at the 1993 Carter Lectures on “Africa’s Disappearing Past”;
- the Society of American Archaeology’s draft Principles of Ethics in Archaeology, January 24, 1994.

## Preamble

1. *The history of culture is embedded in the history of nature.* The historical process, its phenomena, products, monuments, and vestiges in all their diversity deserve no less respect and care than non-human biological diversity within nature. Cultures consist of human concepts, practices and products. Expressions of cultures take many forms whose significance is never exhausted by their economic value.
2. *Cultural diversity is no less important than biological diversity.* The diversity and richness arising from the continuous process of cultural history are sources of great depth and a treasure beyond price. It is an indispensable resource of self-reassurance, orientation, adaptation, and of social life, the basis of humane existence for present and future generations. This diversity is valued in an environment of mutual respect and coexistence.

3. *Each culture has its own intrinsic worth which must be respected and preserved.* "Damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the world<sup>3</sup>. Accordingly, preservation of the cultural heritage is the collective responsibility of all peoples. This responsibility entails both duties and rights.
4. *All appropriate means must be taken to safeguard existing cultural forms and to allow for the creation of new ones.* In particular, research, education, and information programmes are to be designed and realized within each community so as to strengthen the appreciation and the respect of the cultural heritage, both created and received, by each people, by their neighbours, and their fellow peoples world-wide. International co-operation with regard to the documentation, the protection, the conservation, and the presentation of the cultural heritage in general is essential. International co-operation is one of the main means of promoting mutual understanding across cultural borders.
5. *A fundamental task of the human sciences is to promote understanding of the uniqueness of, and relations between, cultures and to enhance cross-cultural communication, negotiation, and agreement.* Those working in the human sciences collect, arrange and classify, analyze and interpret the various forms of culture. In doing this, they ought to comply with the following general principles.

## Principles for Cultural Co-Operation

1. *Culture is a dynamic process which gives rise to the richness and diversity of cultural forms. Each has to be preserved and enhanced for the benefit of future generations.* This principle must be upheld in spite of the recognition that cultural forms may also disappear.
2. *Knowing that the work of a professional from outside the community will inevitably affect cultural forms of the communities in which they work, professionals should not undertake such work without good reasons.*
3. *Professionals will seek to inform the communities of the implications of their work and obtain the consent of the people whose lives and beliefs may be affected.*  
*No such work will be undertaken without the formal approval of the competent authorities.*
4. *Professionals must not isolate cultural objects from the originating contexts which give them their cultural value, without the prior consent of the community affected or its culturally com-*

*petent representatives.* In such cases, objects are commonly linked with a specific purpose and are not to be used for other purposes (for instance dating, analysis of material, expertise), nor transferred to other places.

5. *Professionals shall contribute to making cultural forms accessible to as many persons as possible, while ensuring that respect for the culture is maintained.* Professionals must engage in teaching, information, and exhibition programmes designed to convey to the members of the concerned communities the significance of their cultural findings and the importance of their preservation. Contributing to mutual understanding and respect between cultures is an activity intrinsic to the human sciences.
6. *Professionals should establish, as far as possible, an equal partnership with colleagues from the cultural area they investigate, and whenever possible promote scientific capacity building within the communities concerned. They must strive for co-operation in research, evaluation and presentation of the research process and its findings.*
7. *Professionals should actively support community based, national, and international measures for the protection of cultural heritage.* They should facilitate international exchange, short-term and long-term loans of cultural objects.
8. *Professionals must not take any action which may contribute to illicit trade in cultural objects. In particular, they refrain from forming a personal collection of cultural objects in the field of their research.*

## Guidelines for Archaeologists Engaged in Cross-Cultural Activities

With respect and in addition to the above mentioned considerations and principles, archaeological research in foreign countries shall specifically comply with the following rules:

### A At the Service of the Archaeological Heritage

1. *Archaeologists do not seek objects as such, but scientific information.* The main object of archaeology is knowledge of past human existence based on interpretation of material remains and their context considered in the widest sense to include the natural environment.
2. *Archaeologists should protect and preserve the archaeological heritage.* Damage or destruction of archaeological objects and sites and their context must be limited to the strictly necessary and inevitable.

Where investigation may imply destruction or impoverishment of the archaeological heritage, it shall be conducted only where

- knowledge is requested by the cultural communities affected and where there is no other way of acquiring such knowledge; or when sites are threatened by development or natural events. Wherever adequate, non-destructive methods, such as aerial and ground surveys, and sounding, must be encouraged and preferred to complete excavation. Sounding and careful evaluation must precede excavation.
3. *Archaeologists must inform themselves about and abide by the legal and professional rules valid in their host country, and they must respect its corresponding professional institutions, with which they cooperate.*
  4. *Archaeologists must never lend their professional competence, directly or indirectly, to illegal and unethical undertakings. They must not evaluate or provide any expertise for such activities. They shall not purchase nor accept objects thus obtained either for themselves or for any private or public person or institution.*
  5. *Archaeological investigation should always strive for optimal performance. In emergency conditions, perfection may not be attainable. All excavations must however be fully documented.*
  6. *Archaeological excavations in foreign countries are legitimate and admissible only under the following conditions: 1. if investigation, analysis, interpretation, documentation, and publication are assured. 2. and if the objects found can be conserved and, by bilateral agreement, presented and/or stored in an appropriate place, preferably within reasonable reach of the communities concerned.*
  7. *Before beginning field work, archaeologists must discuss the maintenance of the site after excavation with the relevant authorities, give appropriate advice, and also prepare and take preliminary action. The safety of all sites must be ensured. As far as possible, they shall ensure that those sites are protected from looting. If proper maintenance cannot be guaranteed, the researched area shall be completely covered after excavation with the agreement of the competent authorities.*
  8. *"Archaeologists should consider maintaining untouched, partially or totally, a certain number of archaeological sites of different periods in order that their excavation may benefit from improved techniques and more advanced archaeological knowledge."*<sup>4</sup> This rule does not apply where remains are in danger of destruction or disappearance.

## B Consideration for the Communities Concerned

9. *When planning archaeological campaigns abroad, archaeologists must identify the communities whose cultural heritage is the object of planned investigations and gain their informed con-*

*sent*. In doing this, archaeologists take into account that the relationship between communities and their cultural heritage exists irrespective of legal ownership or formal official competence.

10. *Archaeologists must always take into account the respect the communities concerned have for sites, places, objects, and human remains.* In setting their research objectives archaeologists should endeavour to take into account possible interests, wishes, questions, goals and priorities put forward by the communities concerned.
11. *When dealing with material from foreign cultures, archaeologists shall respect the methods of the communities affected in interpreting, curating, managing, and protecting the archaeological heritage.* The information thus obtained is to be used as a valuable resource in their own interpretative and analytical work.
12. *Archaeologists working in a foreign culture must behave as carefully, circumspectly, and reservedly as possible, avoiding any sign of cultural bias.* They are aware that, by their very presence and sojourn, they themselves import alien cultural patterns and behaviour which may violate the life form of their hosts and induce conflicts.

### C Partnership

13. *Archaeological investigation in a foreign country should always take the form of equal partnership, particularly with the indigenous specialists.* In each project, an adequate part of the employed funds and time will be spent on capacity building with a view to establishing the necessary infrastructure and to training indigenous people in all fields related to archaeological activity, including museum work.
14. *Archaeologists working in foreign countries should, if requested, undertake consulting tasks in order to help their colleagues and the country's officials integrate archaeological developments in policies of social, cultural, and technical change, thereby facilitating the setting of priorities.*

They support the host country – on demand and within the range of their personal, material, and financial capacity – in assisting projects of technical, economic and social development by archaeological evaluation and consulting, the main object of which is to prevent archaeologically relevant sites, places, and objects from being unnecessarily impaired or destroyed.

### D Information, Documentation, Publication

15. *The process and the findings of archaeological campaigns in foreign countries must be documented, interpreted, and pub-*

*lished following international standards in a reasonably short time after completion of the excavation.*

Archaeological work and findings, particularly documentary records and primary field data, are of public interest, not commodities to be exploited for personal enjoyment and profit, and not private property. Not only because, as a rule, they are supported by public funds but especially because they are of public concern since they deal with social, political, and cultural history, and thus with the identity of the respective communities. Archaeologists may withhold their findings for a limited time which, however, must not exceed the period indispensable for sound scientific evaluation. They shall deposit a copy of their field notes with the competent authorities of the host community. They shall forward a preliminary report within two years of concluding field work, and a full and detailed record not later than eight years after the preliminary report. When applying for research grants or otherwise securing the financial basis of their research projects, they must take the necessary steps to that end. Failing timely publication, their material and findings are at the free disposal of the competent scientific community.

16. *Archaeologists shall inform the general public within the host country as early as possible by all suitable means (including publication, presentation, and through the mass media, lectures and guided visits) of the existence and, later, the results of an archaeological campaign. Information may be withheld if its publication might result in plundering and destruction of archaeological sites.*

Archaeologists working within foreign cultures ought to participate in the related information process. They are responsible, in co-ordination with the local antiquities authorities, for the publication of the results and their historical significance, marked by deference and respect, and for producing reports in a clear straightforward language understood by the communities affected.

17. *Archaeologists working abroad should ensure that the results of their investigations become known and that after publication field notes and data are made available to the professional community, and the relevant authorities in their own country and the international scientific community.*
18. *Archaeologists must fully inform the public, as well as the competent authorities, about pillage of and negligent damage to the archaeological heritage.*
19. *Archaeologists must themselves prepare, and assist the appropriate authorities to prepare, information on stolen cultural property, which is to be notified to appropriate national and international agencies such as UNESCO and INTERPOL.*



20. *Archaeologists engaged in cultures other than their own should work for international exchange and short-term or long-term loans of cultural objects, provided this is helpful for education, mutual understanding, historic and aesthetic enjoyment, or scientific purposes, and on condition that conservation requirements are fulfilled.*

*The participants of the International Symposium on  
"The Part of Archaeology in the Cross-Cultural Dialogue".*

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## Notes

- 1 The term 'human sciences' has been chosen to embrace humanities and social sciences. It corresponds to the German expression 'Kulturwissenschaften' meaning scientific investigation of human culture considered in the widest sense.
- 2 The Principles were adopted by 31 archaeologists, museum directors and officials of China, Denmark, Egypt, France, India, Japan, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, U. K., U. S. A. and Vanuatu.
- 3 The Hague Convention of 1954, Preamble.
- 4 Art. 9 of UNESCO Recommendation 1956.