Informe 2

Politics and Archaeology: The Pratice of WAC3 In India

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The third edition of the World Archaeological Congress (WAC) was held in New Delhi (India), from December 4th to December 11th 1994. The WAC was born in 1986, as the organizers of the Sout-hamptom UISPP meeting decided (followed by archaeologists from the third world and other countries) to adhere to the sanctions imposed to the then apartheid regime of South Africa.

Politics were incorporated to the academic debate. The academic discussion of the relationship of archaeology and politics and society were one of the preferred topics of this new international organization, as it is reflected in several volumes of the resulting One World Archaeology series. Worldwide participation and non-restriction of academic discussion are two of the major aims of WAC.

Indian WAC3 was a demonstration of both the development of this process of broadening scopes of archaeology, and the limitations imposed by the practical political context of a third world nation.

Beginning with the academic side of the congress, the broad scope of archaeology prompted by WAC can't be emphasized more than what is reflected in the following list of themes discussed:

1. Concepts of time, including traditional and cultural concepts of time and how science based archaeology has affected our understanding of the past;

2. Archaeology as an indicator of trade and contact, including trade as a vehicle of religion and traditions, maritime trade, commerce and contact, the material evidence of trade and exchange (punctualizing on ceramics), regional perspectives on trade and contact (punctualizing on the Vijayanagar empire and hunter gatherer exchange in India and Southeast Asia) and trade, exchange and culture change (and specifically in Oceania);

3. Language, anthropology and archaeology;

4. Ethnoarchaeology, regarding theoretical considerations, case studies and their cultural settings, living traditions, peripheral groups and frontier cultures, and current responses by indigenous people;

5. State, city and society, discussing subsistence bases of the pre-industrial city, urban design and layout, cities in regional context, the urbanism in the humid tropics, the social, political, economic and ideological factors in urban origins and development, the legitimization of political coercion in the early state, the relationship between state and urban development, and the incorporation of heterogeneous groups within the state;

6. The Neogene and the Quaternery, specifying the environment and chronology, human evolution, colonization, palaeodemography, settlement and technology, and the archaeology of cognition;

7. Technological innovations and power;

8. Change in agrarian systems, in particular the broadening of concepts of change, the introductions, the intensification, and sedentism and subsistence;

9. Cultural property, conservation and public awareness, with a first part about heritage, conservation, management and protection, including world heritage sites and the International Committee for sites and monuments, heritage management in the face of modern life, ethics and other decision-making in heritage management, legal protection and enforcement, methods and techniques of heritage conservation, power through the control of information, and presentation, preservation, exchange and
control of archaeological information; and a
second session on education and the past,
including school education, the role of museums
and preservation organizations in public
education and outreach, and the multifaceted
aims of reconstruction sites (archaeological
evidence, "reconstruction" of sites, education
and public awareness);
10. Relationship between archaeological
theory and practice, with the treatment of recent
developments in archaeological theory, theory
and practice in archaeology and regional
traditions in archaeological theory;
11. Changing perspectives in historical
archaeology, exploring epistemological
problems (questions of definition of the
subject), the plurality of material culture (race,
ethnicity, tribe, class and gender), historical
archaeology and the representation of modern
identities (national, colonial, imperial), and
feminist historical archaeology;
12. The frontiers of landscape
archaeology: time, space and humanity;
spanning over landscapes of social power, of
ecological and economic management, and
conservation and possession of landscapes;
13. Archaeological manifestations of
religious traditions and institutions on society
and culture, specifying on myths, rituals and
practices, symbols and forms, customs and
traditions; and
14. Material culture and the body.
In addition, several symposia were
organized on the Indus civilization,
archaeological source material and the
reconstruction of history, rock art of Asia and
the Pacific, new archaeological discoveries in
Asia and the Pacific, recent advances in
archaeological field and laboratory
techniques, recent advances in
archaeometallurgy and maritime (underwater)
archeology. The inaugural session was
devoted to Indian archaeology, with the
participation of leader Indian scholars.
But the greatest surprise was met by the
delegates at the arrival
in the congress hall: a note by the
President of WAC was circulated, claiming for
the avoidance of discussing "the Ayodhya issue"
during the sessions of the Congress. As was
thoroughly explained by WAC authorities, this
was the result of the pressure impinged over
the Committee by the Indian organizers. The
"Ayodhya issue" refers to a case of
manipulation of archaeology by political
interests. An excavation was done in a temple,
and different interpretations arouse over ethnic
traditional ancient sources, in a context of
religious struggles. Violence was not absent,
including the death of many people, and an
anniversary of this massacre was expected
during the period of WAC meeting. Indian
organizers argued that the treatment of the
"Ayodhya issue" would have had unpredictable
results, maybe including violent reactions of
political-religious groups, with the consequent
danger for the personal security of the
delegates. Facing this situation, the WAC
committee decided the exclusion of the "Ayodhya
issue" from all the sessions and meetings of
the Congress. All the Congress meetings and
social gatherings occurred in a context of political
contestation towards the Congress, both in the
streets and in the news.
Not only the Congress was politically
manipulated, but the case was that an
international organization as WAC explicitly
committed with academic freedom was forced
to apply censorship on an academic issue (the
archaeological excavation of the temple and
its interpretation) under the pressure of
nationalists (both in the government and in
the organization of WAC3). Archaeology in
India, as the scientific discipline studying ethnic
origins, is subjected to political manipulation
in a context of ethnicity construction by the
national state and the different resistant
minoritarian groups. The language of power is
overarching and controls archaeology through
its potential to "demonstrate" ethnic
precedences. In relationship to a sensible issue
such as the one of Ayodhya, language of
academic discussion was silenced during
WAC3, only remaining the force of power.
WAC has greatly benefited today's
archaeology, in the direction of pluralism, the
breaking down of academic isolation in
peripheral countries, and the bringing into the
academic debate the social and political
contexts of its practice.
Allowing to be manipulated by particular
interests and restricting the debate is the best
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way to divorce the WAC organization from its own aims.

Even accepting that the decision of the WAC authorities preferred the assumption of responsibilities over the personal security of the delegates rather than over the political line of the organization, and that this can be understandable in context, the World Archaeological Congress should go through a pluralistic self-criticism if it pretends to perdure as what it was thought to be.

WAC deserves it.

Informe 3

O Centro de Pesquisas Informáticas para os Bens Culturais,
Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa

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1. À História da Arte, à Arqueologia e a todas as Ciências Humanas voltadas ao patrimônio cultural se apresenta hoje, reconhecidamente, a Informática enquanto um instrumento de grande potencial. Das muitas experiências que se sucederam, muitas em sedes universitárias, podemos já conferir atraentes resul-tados publicados, e, não apenas sob o nome de especialistas e técnicos do mundo eletrônico mas também sob o nome de notórios e simpáticos acadêmicos, como Jacques Thullier ou Eugenio Battisti.

Neste sentido, gostaríamos de informar-vos sobre um interessante núcleo de pesquisas informáticas da Scuola Normale Superiore de Pisa.

Hoje, no posto normalista da via della Faggiola, centro histórico de Pisa, quase sob a sombra da torre inclinada já intimamente conhecida, encontramos a sede do Centro de Pesquisas Informáticas para os Bens Culturais, e, entre literatos, arqueólogos, historiadores da arte, linguistas, técnicos e curiosos estudantes que a frequentam, podemos conferir alguns princípios que, justamente, os movem ao redor das grandes e pequenas máquinas de cálculo ali instaladas: o reconhecimento das potencialidades da pesquisa informática, em sentido técnico e aplicativo, para as disciplinas tuteladoras do patrimônio; a preocupação constante sobre os meios e procedimentos técnicos e logísticos neste sentido; a participação máxima, na especificidade do projeto em curso, de outras disciplinas que podem em muito contribuir nos projetos em desenvolvimento, e, destacamos aqui, o caso da linguística.

Atividades que, listadas brevemente sempre em função da fórmula patrimônio cultural/informática, vão desde a análise profunda de fontes textuais significativas para a história da crítica de arte à implantação de sistemas de catalogação e consulta em museus e departamentos de patrimônio públicos; da divulgação de avanços ora técnicos, ora conceituais e metodológicos para os interessados da área ao gerenciamento e distribuição de softwares de domínio público na Itália; e, sem esgotar este elenco, o nosso Centro estende as suas atividades até o apoio logístico e documentário em restauro de obras de incontestável valor artístico, como o precioso campanário na praça do Domo pisano.

E, testemunhamos, um Centro que não transcura um fundamental apoio aos programas internos, didáticos ou especificamente investigativos, desenvolvidos na Scuola Normale Superiore, sejam inclusive as singelas composições de índices para documentos estudados em teses e pesquisas restritas a cursos e disciplinas.

A origem do Centro de Pesquisas Informática para os Bens Culturais pode ser assinalada em 1976; a já afirmada Prof.ª Paola Barocchi, junto com um grupo de