Archaeological Invisibility & Forgotten Knowledge. Ethnoarchaeology. Hunter-gatherers. Ephemeral cultural aspects.

5-8 Sept. 2007 Lódz University

Conference Themes

Vast amounts of cultural customs, traditions, material expressions and cosmological universes escape the trowels of archaeologists. The aim of the conference is to focus on this invisible web of prehistoric reality that formed the foundation of life and on exploring ways of integrating this with the hard and visible aspects of archaeological investigation.

Hunter-gatherer ethnoarchaeology represents an indispensable tool for exploring this invisible web and for breaking down archaeological theoretical barriers to gain an insight into the logic and dynamics of societies very different from our own. Bypassing rigid archaeological theory and postprocessual interpretation , sometimes disconnected from ethnic reality, the conference

will focus on recent and historical observations from small-scale cultures similar to those who created the archaeological record. Archaeology is the material embodiment of people's past behaviour; the insights gained from ethnoarchaeology therefore have the potential to be complimented by corresponding insights from cognitive archaeology concerning the processes involved in cultural understanding.

Forgotten knowledge can be found not only in living communities but also in the many hundreds of ethnographies that were written in the 19th and early 20th century in places as far distant as Siberia and Tasmania. Many of these lie unused and gathering dust in remote corners of libraries today often in non-mainstream languages. This forgotten knowledge could be exceptionally valuable but is largely not included as part of modern critical analysis or debate.

As globalization continues apace, fewer and fewer pockets of traditional tribal communities remain and this has created a sense of urgency in this important field of research. Leading ethnoarchaeologists from across the world will present papers while open discussion sessions will focus on key issues.

Themes:

- Ephemeral materials & working processes (e.g. processing of organic materials).
- Ideology & ritual and its interface with material culture and practical behaviour.

- Hunter-gatherer resource management strategies - Neolithic thinking in hunter-gatherer societies?
- Spatiality & territoriality - dwellings, settlements, landscapes, place names.
- Strategic dynamics or static thinking?
- Cultural universals and the human mind
- Knowledge transfer, knowledge transformation and tradition (upbringing, knowledge ownership etc).
- Rational behaviour and/or irrational behaviour? An eco-deterministic postlude
- Talking nonsense together - indigenous and industrial logics?
- Indigenous thinking & primitive pattern recognition.
- Emerging scientific methods and information concealed in prehistoric remains.

Presentations:

There are still a few slots available for contributions. For participants who want to offer a paper please send an abstract to ethnoarch@gmail.com before April 1st 2007. The header must be marked Abstract followed by the name of the contributor/s.

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