REFLECTIONS ON ARCHEOLOGICAL HERITAGE AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES: THE CASE IN CHILE[1]

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ABSTRACT

This article is an attempt to awaken archeologists to the new demands there are within different groups of society regarding archeological heritage, specially the indigenous peoples involved. It also analyzes the new world context within which heritage policies are found and how archeologists have had to adapt and focus their objectives and methods. A brief comparative analysis is made and the Chilean situation is explained, specially as regards the new conditions that have come about as a result of recent legislation on indigenous topics and the environment and how work has been done with indigenous people from the State's viewpoint.

KEY WORDS

Indigenous archeological heritage –heritage policies

INTRODUCTION

At the onset of the 20th century, humanity was undergoing a process in which certain states of a colonial character controlled – with relatively little opposition – almost all ethnic cultures and minorities within their territories whilst they fought among themselves over world trade and attempted to obtain whatever raw and energetic materials were vital for their development. This situation meant that there were innumerable injustices which led to many cultures disappearing and, with them, their centuries' old wisdom, plus two world wars and a cold war lasting several decades that finally ended with the collapse of one of the political and economic models of organization in the struggle for world domination.

The 21st century has begun differently, with an explosion of cultural diversities, an expansion of the essential values of democracy, the need to attain peaceful coexistence between peoples, of a new organization of states and a strengthening of cultural identities that were either hidden or almost extinct. As a matter of fact, there are many uncertainties regarding how the new world order will be structured and also how to avoid any modification of the positive progress made in universal human rights matters in the light of certain cultural rights oriented by religion.

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Disintegration and the ethnic wars in the former Yugoslavia, instability for the inhabitants of the Caucasus, the drama still unfolding in many African countries, the no-sign-of-a-solution as regards the Israeli-Palestine situation and the recent attack on the Twin Towers in New York with the ensuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, have all been powerful blows whose consequences are difficult to analyze.

The core of the matter though is that our world is very different to the one we knew two decades ago. Different groups of people have indeed made great strides in economic and political integration that, hitherto, had seemed impossible, such as we have seen in the European Union. On the other hand, intensive migrations over the last few decades had radically changed the ethnic map of many cities and regions in the world due, mainly, to the inequalities in access to development and the increasing poverty of many countries.

Archeology, as a concept and as regards research, has been crisscrossed by these facts both negatively and positively. On the one hand, archeology did in fact incorporate into its work a large part of the technological progress made and it did tear down old theoretic precepts. Furthermore, it was able to consolidate a group of professionals open to taking part in and creating new theoretic and methodological orientations and who were willing to face the new realities of their reasons for research. But on the other hand, the new values that many societies have placed on cultural diversity have enabled many races to regain their past and heritage, generating a new situation, in constant change, that is conflictive at times for the development of archeology.

In this work I shall try to express my reflections regarding this, particularly from the Latin American perspective. Very important for this work were my two decades' experience with different indigenous groups and communities from diverse countries, as well as being able to take part in different debates on the subject matter. For that reason, the opportunity provided by the Getty Institute for Conservation to organize a panel on "*stakeholders*" during the last World Archeology Congress (2003) was a godsend for sharing experiences.

ETHICS AND GOVERNANCE WITH REGARD TO HERITAGE

Culture – in its widest sense – is the result of human creation. It could be defined as a series of distinct, spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that mark a particular society or social group. So, culture enshrines not only art but also language, lifestyles, scientific and technical creation, types of sociability and recreation, the way in which human beings relate to their environment and the manner in which a society expresses its feelings, values and view of the world.

Cultural heritage is made up of tangible cultural parts (objects, buildings, places) and intangible (languages, beliefs, customs) which have been handed down throughout history. It is the legacy we have received from our ancestors and a testimony to their very existence. The importance of heritage stems, fundamentally, from its contribution toward forming a race's identity. Identity consists of the essential element that enables people to gather

together around a common national project; this being understood as a civil community that could include different races whose basic principles and values are shared between them. A proper relationship between cultural heritage, national identity and a national project is key to achieving a harmonious and long-lasting development.

In order to resolve their problems, human beings need to tackle projects and the feeling of belonging to a group and its heritage is a central feature. Certain researchers have pointed out the fact that there is usually a correlation between underdevelopment and ignorance of one's own cultural heritage. To be actively able to manipulate its destiny, society needs to be conscious of its past and its problems. Heritage, then, as a result of different cultural and historic traditions, expresses the diversity of the land and its people. A consciousness of diversity enriches people's lives when it incorporates in them a knowledge of experiences, values, techniques and lifestyles that are different from our own, widening reference points and enriching their own knowledge. Moreover, knowledge of and respect for cultural diversity contributes toward strengthening tolerance, valuing differences and fostering fraternity between human beings. Cultural diversity contains the keys to past, present and future societies. For that reason, we must learn to value cultural diversity and avoid confrontation in order to foster a profound and fruitful coexistence.

In this sense, it is necessary to widen an understanding of the heritage that is still dominated by aesthetic and historic criteria, whilst forgetful of incorporating others. In many cases, priority has been given to heritage linked to power groups, to masculinity and supremacy to the detriment of what is every-day and mundane, paying more attention to what has been written rather than what was spoken and paying greater heed to what is ceremonial and sacred rather than the secular. In this context then, the new debate between archeology and gender is very interesting (Nelson, S. 1997).

Research into, identifying and exporting heritage, specially archeological heritage, have been topics for discussions at all latitudes. Doubtless to say, the majority of persons acknowledge that a society is heir to all cultural accoutrements that its ancestors created and which belong to its culture. But societies have a history; one that concerns a territory whose borders change as well as its occupants, either with migrations or the arrival of other races with whom there follows integration, assimilation or overt domination. On the other hand, heritage has frequently been considered as war booty or simply destroyed in order to destroy all trace of the existence of earlier societies that occupied that particular territory. Hardly any society has been free from such practices, either in the past or the present.

Nowadays, more and more persons and states share certain principles of mutual respect that must be made extensive to all societies. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, more recently, the Convention of the UNESCO point that way. However, the task is not easy and there exist very complex historic and philosophic aspects : ethnic rivalry, religious struggles, political confrontations and historical debts for past wars which are a difficult burden to shoulder and resolve.

For decades now, with certain exceptions, depending on countries and historic contexts, archeologists have been building up a pleasant academic refuge that has been respected by the community. It was a time for discovery and exotic trips motivated by a desire to

understand the past and collect treasures that were collected and exhibited with a lot of success in our country's museums. Curiosity for what was ours and foreign was the dominant factor that fed upon the scientific appetite and the community's imagination.

However, the reality is different for archeologists today, depending on wherever they work in the world. At least we can mention two basic processes in the change : a part of the archeologists have had to come on stage and take part in the debate from a point of view of the environment, the economy and the development in relation to archeological heritage, where decisions are taken by teams of professionals from different fields of thought, at times with great pressure brought to bear on them by circumstances. These decisions lead to certain projects under development being modified substantially, not being done at all or being done at the expense of the destruction of the heritage itself. It is the archeology of environmental impact studies, it is the archeology contracted by companies or by public services, it archeology with deadlines (Neumann and Sanford 2001; Cabeza 2001).

On the other hand, the power of indigenous peoples is being rebuilt as well as that of the diverse non-urban communities who ignore their identity but who have a heritage that provides force and sustenance for their political projects, strengthening their social cohesion and differentiating them from a nation's society in general, giving way to economic initiatives such as tourism and arts and crafts. It is in this context then that not a few archeologists have been surprised to see that they are not so welcome as before or that they are rejected outright; that their projects come to a full stop and that their scientific interpretations are criticized because they contradict local beliefs.

Some archeologists have refused to acknowledge such changes. Others have simply been spectators of them, realizing that they are not capable or that they were not trained for a field archeology marked by social, ethnic, political and economic contingencies. Still other archeologists, as a result of more failures than successes, have had to walk this tightrope alone, facing their colleagues' mistrust and the conflicts that research into and conservation of heritage holds today. The challenge is : how do we exchange information and viewpoints; how do we face, in its different dimensions, this matter constructively, from the academic, government and indigenous world and the communities that are nowadays claiming a right to take part in the decisions (Stapp et al. 2002; Sullivan, 1995).

Experiences in Australia and Canada in this field are very important but hardly known by other countries as yet, specially as regards native communities taking part. The situation in the United States regarding it is very valuable because of the contradictions there exist between what is public and what is private and, particularly, because of their accomplishments in the interpretation and management of archeological sites in protected areas. In Europe, the situation is different, but no less interesting, regarding the way in which local identities have been able to take over their heritage and the State has taken a backseat as regards its administration. In Latin America, always a hotbed for innovation or unashamed copying, the situation is very diversified, but the initiatives already begun by Mexico, Peru, Argentina and Brazil are of utmost importance for understanding what is happing in the region.

The underlying topic should not be who is the owner or who is the more legitimate heir to such and such cultural assets but rather, how are we going to be capable of recognizing the diverse values of such assets and use them properly so that everybody's identity is reproduced in an atmosphere of respect and harmony for all concerned. More than centering discussion on the ownership of the heritage, the problem lies in how we can better conserve that archeological heritage for everybody and, at the same time, that it serve to provide cultural sustenance, force and acknowledgment for its closest heirs. For that, the setting up of common policies of conservation, research, education and diffusion is of vital importance and toward that goal we must move, in spite of the logical conflicts that arise (Zimmerman *et al* 2003).

ARCHEOLOGICAL HERITAGE AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CHILE

Chile's heritage shares a large part of the problems and provisions previously mentioned. The territory we call Chile was discovered thousands of years ago and many human groups have inhabitant it, developing their own cultures over the centuries. Several of them have since disappeared, sometimes displaced, whilst others were annihilated or conquered. In the 16th century, a new invader and colonizing force came as a deep shock to the region; conquest and colonization were dramatic; ancient cultures disappeared, millions of persons died as a result of this contact which led to the crossbreeding of peoples and cultures that are the mosaic of what America is today.

It is within this context that the complexity of archeological heritage must be understood as regards its origins, ownership, functions and conservation. As a matter of fact, pre-Hispanic archeological heritage was created and therefore belongs, first of all, to the legitimate heirs of the original cultures in Chile. But, understanding Chile as a civil community that groups together different races that all live in the one same territory and whose inhabitants are mostly mixed-race, the concept of the ownership of such archeological heritage widens to make all of the population heir to and accountable for such heritage. Here we come across a noticeable difference on a demographic scale when we compare ourselves to the United States or Australia, for instance, where there never existed cross-breeding to the extent it existed in Chile or in any other country in Latin America where even the indigenous population is in a majority.

In this context, Latin American states, led by groups of European origin, have fought permanently to build up nation-states, ignoring - save a few exceptions – the ethnic diversity and the ancient past of the populations they found. For that reason, both in colonial times as well as during the Republic, there has been an attitude and even a policy of contempt for and destruction of that past and all it represents. Independence gave way to a new political scene and the search for or creation of our own roots upon which to build a different future.   For many years, the intellectuals idealized a romantic view of indigenousness, but the contradiction between "savagery" and "civilization" was inevitable and the policy of extermination and conquest was reinforced in the interests of building a

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national society which was as indistinguishable as possible from a cultural point of view. In some countries, such as Mexico, the ideal of a Spanish-indigenous nation of half-castes was embellished upon whilst in others, such as Argentina, a nation of European immigrants devoid of any indigenous peoples was conceived.

In Chile, the State set about the task of building a nation where the indigenous populations would be assimilated into a Western-style way of life and education was one of the pillars of that initiative. The high number of indigenous peoples – the Mapuches – and four centuries of Spanish coexistence with that culture produced a special concoction which has been simmering until today now that that race is vigorously clamoring for a political clout that for decades had gone unsuspected. Something similar, but with its own characteristics, occurred with other indigenous races that have survived, despite all efforts toward miscegenation, such as the Aymaras and Atacameños in the north and the Rapanui on Easter Island who, through territorial annexations, were incorporated into Chile at the end of the 19th century.

The recent upsurge of archeology in Chile has been marked by the same facts mentioned in relation to environmental impact studies and the ever-increasing influence of indigenous cultures on archeology's daily affairs and in the decision-making processes regarding where archeological heritage is heading. The State has had to face these matters directly and pragmatically with different results, few resources and decisions handed down by mediocre authorities rather than as a result of consistent and well planned public policies. On the other hand, universities, except for certain exceptions, have remained on the sidelines, surprised by what has happened and the force of the indigenous movements and by the evolution of the private archeological market. Responses as regards an analysis of the situation, what action should be taken and training future professionals in archeology, have been due more to individual rather than structural efforts and they have come from certain personalities rather than from the university system as such (Navarro 1998).

In this context, some archeologists have been tempted to split archeology into two unequal categories : one scientific and the other motivated by development projects. Also, some of them have preferred to distance themselves from the indigenous conflicts and their claim over control of the archeological sites on their land or anywhere else in the country. On the other hand, some researchers who have devoted their lives to archeology have been unjustly accused by indigenous leaders who ignore the role that they and their research have had in revitalizing their past and cultural identity and in the creation of museums.

The return of democracy to Chile at the beginning of the nineties made its mark on this situation with the enacting of two laws: one concerning indigenous peoples and the other concerning the environment. Both legislations created their own administrative structures and ways in which to handle citizen participation, hitherto nonexistent. In the first case, it was thought better to handle the indigenous movement and its representative structures at a level of each race and which was recognized through a council that would formulate public policies and take the main decisions. Consolidating such institutionalism has been dificult, both because of a rejection by some indigenous sectors who wish to take a more radical approach aimed at recovering land and territorial independence, as well as because of the more obvious contradictions of a political, cultural and economic nature between society

and the State. The most frequent clashes were those stemming from forestry industries, the construction of dams and the control of water rights. In the second case, the situation is similar to that of many developing countries, because the public institutionalism that is created for the environment (1994) is trapped by the neo-liberal economic model that both the private as well as the public sector have come up with for their activities when they impact in different ways the natural and the built-up environment they also consider as being their heritage.

THE NATIONAL CORPORATION FOR INDIGENOUS DEVELOPMENT (CONADI) AND THE NATIONAL MONUMENTS COUNCIL (CMN) OF CHILE

The CMN and the CONADI are responsible for protecting our heritage, both legally and technically. Both institutions signed an agreement on cooperation in 1995 aimed at working joint strategies and projects related to the heritage of indigenous people. For that, it was vital for them to understand that the challenge was common to them both and that, united, they would achieve to a greater extent the objectives defined in their respective legislations the Law concerning National Monuments (1970) and the Law concerning Indigenous Peoples (1993). For further information regarding this, please refer to www.monumentos.cl.

This agreement covers the preparation of a survey of archeological, architectonic, historic and symbolic heritage of all indigenous peoples; a complete study of what indigenous cultural assets have to be protected by the National Monuments Law; agreements on policies for protection, conservation and preservation for all time of such heritage and it enables each to obtain advice on matters relating to cultural heritage. There is also an understanding in each institution that although archeological finds belong to the State according to law, their administration could be in the hands of different institutions and, as a matter of fact, in the hands of the indigenous peoples themselves or whatever institutions they set up for that purpose aimed at keeping them in better condition.

However, there are problems : permits for undertaking archeological digs that are not duly coordinated with the indigenous communities or non-authorized encroachments by the communities onto archeological heritage that negatively affect it. In the majority of these cases, no harm was intended and it was rather a question of ignorance of the regulations and a lack of advice or the way in which the persons or institutions involved were politically handled.

This agreement has been maintained despite changes in the CONADI authorities. This new institution's work has been difficult because it must respond to indigenous demands ranging from support for local development projects and the acquisition of land and water rights to resolving serious conflicts concerning squatters on land and political demands for territorial or cultural independence. On the other hand, the last few governments in power have had views with certain ideas on their relations with indigenous people, caused both by different internal views of the problem as well as due to political opposition criticizing the

decisions taken, a lack of severity when containing certain conflicts or the approach itself when it came to resolving these matters which was considered wrong.

Our own action has been affected by these views, often contradictory. Rather than applying the logic of what was politically correct, we have exercised activities aimed at applying a policy whose grounds were ethically realistic (ethical realism), opening up conversations in stages and gradually transferring responsibilities within prevailing legislation. This meant having to face romantic notions both from within the indigenous communities as well as from inside the State, but also having to face indigenous groups who thought that their political objectives could only be attained by bringing pressure to bear on the State. There are also groups of businessmen or owners of land, hitherto indigenous, who believe that defending their own interests – even to the extent of using force – is perfectly legitimate if the State or the Courts are unable to satisfactorily settle indigenous demands. Interesting discussions on these problems, both cultural as well as political and economic at a world level, can be found in the documents published by the Getty Institute for Conservation (De la Torre and Mason 1999; De la Torre 2002).

We find an example of such conflicts and their possible solution in San Pedro de Atacama in the north of Chile. This town has a complex reality that is in permanent flux : an immense cultural heritage and a community that is increasingly and ethnically being revitalized. There, the concepts of the appropriation of heritage as one element of identity have been shaken. However, the conflicts have gradually been subdued : the community was invited to take an active part, action was agreed upon between the different institutions dealing with heritage such as the local Museum, the CONADI, the communities and the National Forestry Commission (CONAF) that administers national parks. This meant developing projects for administering archeological sites of interest for tourists by the communities in consultation with the CMN and the CONADI, the undertaking of archeological research projects and properly protecting such heritage. Over time, the communities themselves have discovered that the search for joint solutions was more self-satisfying and more long-lasting than any conflict could ever be.

In the case of the Mapuche peoples located in urban areas and in the south of Chile, the focus has been on approaching with patience with much discussion, the core topic surrounding their cultural identity : defending their ritual sites and cemeteries which were not legally protected as archeological or historic monuments so, in fact, they might be affected by infrastructure projects such as dams, roads or electricity lines. Due to the larger amount of population, dispersion and distrust of what the State is doing, many meetings have had to be held including indigenous professionals acting as mediators within the communities. Fortunately, several of these ceremonial sites are now national monuments and the communities thus endowed have discovered certain benefits which they have shared among themselves. But this requires time and determination.

On Easter Island, whose archeological heritage is known worldwide, the situation has been very difficult because of this island's characteristics – located in the Polynesia, almost 4,000 km from continental Chile. There exists on the island a feeling of the great cultural and geographic divide there is between us. The local community has known how to revitalize their culture on the basis of their archeological past and the oral memory or a

record of their traditions made by researchers or visitors. Also, perhaps with greater force than elsewhere, their archeological heritage is the basis for their economy, so they are conscious of the need to protect and control it. There, the strategy has been one of creating a local structure with the help of both the Island authorities and the participation of the community who also take part in taking decisions. This decentralization has been positive, generally speaking, with specific problems arising when certain leaders wished to go forward quicker than is materially possible.

CONCLUSIONS

The world context and the greater political clout of indigenous peoples, communities and interest groups is something that has to be faced by those of us who devote our time and effort to archeological heritage, either for reasons of research or administration. From an ethical, cultural and economic point of view, communities have rights over their heritage that we must all respect. Therefore, those of us who are working toward getting to know and protecting such cultural assets cannot take refuge in science, in legislation or in the State. Our role is to foresee these problems and seek creative and all-encompassing solutions. We must understand the conflicts and their causes, keep conversations going, accept the fact that our proposals could be rejected or that they fail in the short term but, once corrected with the help of the local community, they might be successful. We have to tread carefully and not exacerbate disagreements, but also remain firm in our convictions that peaceful understanding is the best way in which to resolve demands that, sometimes and for many years, had been put off or at times silenced.

It is not an easy task and there are different views as well as contradictory political, ethnic and economic interests involved. Cultural assets and specially archeological heritage is riddled with such interests. For that reason, those of us professionals working in heritage, both as archeologists as well as conservers, have an increasingly important role in planning and taking decisions where different persons have to have room in which to express themselves and share ideas. We must also bear in mind that the community does not have one sole voice, that there are different interest groups that often go as far as fighting for the supremacy of their approaches. For that reason, education and proper public information is very valuable. Many problems are due to the ignorance of our projects by the communities and to a certain haughtiness and standoffishness on our part that has led to such attitudes as expressed in : "we know what is better for heritage". Archeological heritage has different values and scientific value is one of them, but there is also a cultural and religious value that a community places upon it and we have to find the common ground where all of us can coexist.

Archeological heritage can be a bridge for understanding between cultures with mutual respect and within the guidelines of universal principles. As a matter of fact, there are no special recipes; every situation will be different and people's experiences will be vital when

it comes to resolving conflicts and acknowledging the different values and interests that harmonize or contradict heritage.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that peace and cooperation are stronger than resentment or ignorance, that discovering our heritage and using it respectfully and jointly, enables us to grow; acknowledging the fact that although the past is full of injuries that still separate us, we still have a future to be shared.

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