

ICME Newsletter 50, May 2008

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1. WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

At the end of the month of May, I will be attending the ICOM Advisory Committee meetings in Paris. Board member Barbara Woroncow will also be attending. We will be discussing varied subjects including the progress of ICOM's new long-range plan and the 2010 Triennial in Shanghai.

On the subject of the long-range plan, I'd like all members think of how ICME can extend collaborations with other International and National Committees of ICOM or other related professional organizations. In this issue of the ICME newsletter, you'll read a synopsis of the recent meeting of the Museum Ethnographers Group in England. Another collaborative effort ICME is entering into is the Wiki initiative with regards to digitizing ethnographic collections (see below). I just returned from Denver, Colorado, and the annual meeting of the American Association of Museums. There I was able to observe the workings of ICOM-US, the board of our national committee of ICOM. I also met a number of colleagues who are active in different aspects of ICOM both American and from other nations. Several American colleagues expressed interest in joining ICME. This meeting further reinforced the outreach that ICME can be making in terms of collaboration.

One area of collaboration can be in publication. You might have seen the International Journal of Intangible Heritage, published by the National Folk Museum of Korea. I now serve on their editorial board. They are actively seeking articles that address issues and concerns of intangible heritage based on recent research. In addition to articles, they have expanded their publication to include photo essays and exhibition and book reviews. I encourage each of you to visit their website and consider making a contribution. www.ijih.org

In terms of the future meeting in China, I invite each of you for your input. We have no ICME members in China, nor information about ethnographic museums or collections in the Shanghai area. Do any of you have connections there that will help us strengthen the content of that meeting? I have been reaching out to my network of anthropologists and will continue to do so that we can plan the most informative meeting we can have there.

Immediately following the Advisory Committee the Wiki group will be meeting to make more concrete plans for their project (see Newsletter 49 for details). They are seeking a few ethnographic museums that are willing to serve as pilot sites for this digitization project. If any of you would like to get involved, please contact me. Speaking of meetings, please plan to attend and participate in the

upcoming 2008 ICME meeting in Jerusalem. This year's gathering promises to be a rich mix of presentations, papers and visits to museums all centered on the interrelated themes of Pilgrimage, Migration and Diaspora.

The block of hotel rooms will be held only until mid summer, then the rates will rise, since Jerusalem is a very popular place to visit, by tourists and people making pilgrimages. By registering early, you will be able to save money on the fees and help us plan for the details of the meeting. I look forward to seeing many of you at our annual meeting in November!

With warmest regards,

Annette B. Fromm: president@icme.icom.museum

2. 2ND CALL FOR PAPERS FOR 'PILGRIMAGE, MIGRATION, DIASPORA

The call for papers for the ICOM-ICME Annual Meeting in Jerusalem, Israel, November 16 - 19 (20/21), 2008 has been extended until the end of May. So those of you who consider giving a paper still have time!

"MIGRATION, DIASPORA, PILGRIMAGE"

People move. Some movement is voluntary - better economic and political situations are sought. Other movement is involuntary. Through the processes of migration and in the diaspora, many people keep alive their identity through the continuity of language, social structure, traditional culture, and belief systems. Part of this latter cultural expression leads people to return to their places of origin to reverence sites they consider to be holy or to hold power. Many as individuals and as groups return from the diaspora to their places of origin in the process of pilgrimage. The sites to which they return might be sacred or they might be secular. Nonetheless, pilgrimage is a process that crosses many lines of meaning.

Museum of ethnography and ethnology hold material culture, which speaks to the origins of many peoples. What is the role of museums of ethnography and ethnology in these processes - migration, diaspora, pilgrimage? Do research and collecting policies and public programs bring light to these processes with reference to communities in which the museums are located? On the other hand, have museums become sites of pilgrimage for those who cannot make return visits home? Do museums of ethnography and ethnology work with community leaders to help members keep alive their traditional culture, beliefs and memories?

ICME invites papers discussing "Migration, Diaspora, Pilgrimage" for the 2008 Annual Conference. Paper proposals of up to 300 words should be submitted to: president@icme.icom.museum
[More information here.](#)

3. REPORT FROM THE MEG CONFERENCE 2008, 'ETHNOGRAPHY AT HOME'

By Inbal Livine

The theme of the 2008 MEG conference 'Museum Ethnography at Home' stemmed from the project currently being run by the Pitt Rivers Museum (host institution of MEG 2008) titled 'The Other Within: An Anthropology of Englishness at the Pitt Rivers Museum'. A key aim of the project is to use the 40,000 plus English collections in the museum, and their associated documentation, to understand the construction of the idea of 'Englishness'. Yet to many people, the Pitt-Rivers and other such institutions are viewed as recording the exotic and unfamiliar, which begs the question; is our own past, our 'English' past, something familiar and understood or, in the words of Lesley Poles Hartley, is the 'past a foreign country'? A recurring idea in many conference papers was that of E.B Tylor's 'Survivals'(i), the legacy of which seems to have lead us to view our past as something foreign and unconnected, where the characters that inhabited our home then (then being a fluctuating term for any number of measurements of time), are 'others' and we are not insiders in their world but outsiders. The 'Englishness' of the Pitt-Rivers Project did not stop the conference papers from being hugely varied (ii) with their ideas as to what 'Ethnography at Home' could be. Papers covered mainland Europe, Canada and Cuba as well as the British Isles. The title of the Pitt-Rivers Project and the ideas of E.B Tylor were relevant to many of the papers. The Sessions started with Ollie Douglas' paper on the collecting of Robert Craig Maclagan, who was influenced by ideas such as E.B. Tylor's survivals and Darwinism and collected and interpreted the dead and dying traditions of Argyll. This paper raised interesting questions on the approach to recording lost traditions and whether or not the anthropologist and his informants were 'inventing' traditions to some extent. Chris Wingfield's paper on 'defining the self and collecting the other at the centre of the Empire' looked at the ideas laid out by Douglas' paper but on the world stage. Wingfield suggested that English identity in the 19th century was formed as part of the Empire, not as a distinct place and thus 'Englishness' as a construct is quite complex. Coming back to Tylor, he suggested that he was working in a similar way a colonial might collect the 'other' outside of England, and to understand his work and the ideas of 'survivals' in an English context, it is necessary to understand colonialism.

Seemingly in contrast, the work of Frederic Mistral in Provence, as read by Veronique Dassie and Dominique Serena, was to create a direct link to the past and build a positive image of 'self' in Provence through the objects that were beginning to go out of use, as a counter-measure to the force of industrialisation, which would support and bolster his regionalist notions. In fact, these items are the 'other' to the younger generation today, who are strangers to their own culture and now need a museum to help reinterpret them. Mistral was attempting to re-establish a sense of place and identity in Provence. Elizabeth Edward's paper on 'Visualising English Histories' looked at how in early 20th century England, the rise of pageants attempted something similar. In conjunction with the rise of amateur photography, they sought to re-enact an invented past which mixed national and local history with myth and folklore. Often involving the whole community and set in historic landscapes, they attempted to literally connect the players to the past, establishing a past and present identity. Angela McClanahan's paper on how ethnography and ethical philosophy have been played out over a proposed wind farm site in Orkney, shows how, as with pageants, people's experiences with the past help to define them in the present. In Orkney, the ideas of the 'authenticity' of the landscape setting versus the dynamism and resilience of the 'authentic' Orcadian community creates a continuous dichotomy where ethnographic knowledge can be implicated with contested and ongoing community actions and interactions on heritage issues.

Invented traditions based on a known past also came out in Barbara Knorpp's paper on 'Heimat' museums and notions of home in Germany. She looked at how, following the formation of Germany, there were strong attempts to create an artificial national identity amidst so many regional ones.

These museums evoked a sense of nostalgia for home and a vague and veiled collective past based on natural history and archaeology. All these papers in some way looked at 'the other within' but what if the past we seek to untangle isn't our own? Michelle Flikke's paper on working within the Cuban museum system looked at the pitfalls of trying to implement one's own ideas on methodology and interpretation on someone else's 'home', where a host of complex and unwritten rules on history and society are unknown to the outsider. In contrast to this, Kathryn Burnett's paper on working in her home of the Isle of South Uist looks at how a researcher contends with being an insider and an outsider - being a native resident and a visiting academic attached to a 'foreign' institution. Nathalie Hamel's study of the Cloverdale Collection, a collection made under very unique circumstances by one man who sought to represent and invent a common history for French and British Canadians, shows how a collection made by an English Canadian could become a central part of Quebec folk history and the Quebec national art collection. Cloverdale's collection is a good example for looking at how the collector looks at the 'other' and how this then impacts on the late life of the collection away from its initial context.

In her paper on the place of Laver in Welsh identity, Kaori O'Connor uses her position as an outsider to unravel the internal complexities that exist in regard to Welsh identity. She talked about what isn't in Welsh museums (laver) rather than what is. O'Connor's paper also raises an interesting point about how ethnography can study and understand the intangible. Food, as seen in O'Connor's paper on Wales, is one such area. Another is memory. In Rosemary Eshel's work with the Libyan Jewish community in London she discussed whether or not objects could embody memories brought from another time and place and how we then use these objects to allow personal stories to be kept in a more tangible way. The significance we imbue in certain objects was also central to Lynne Heidi Stumpe's paper on the veneration of Christian relics and their display within a museum setting. She looked at how relics are venerated and cared for at St. Winifred's Well museum and Stonyhurst College and the different ways in which we view relics compared with ethnographic human remains. Another strong theme within the conference, again within a British context linked to the ideas of E.B. Tylor and his contemporaries, is that of folklore and the collecting and documenting of traditions undertaken by the Folklore Society in England and others elsewhere. Tabitha Cadbury looked at the history of the folklore collections at Cambridge, which include the collections of the Folklore Society. Her assessments of the collections show that there wasn't, and possibly still isn't, a consensus of what 'folklore' actually meant at Cambridge and so the boundaries of the term were left to constantly shift. Instead of representing English or British 'folk' culture, the collection reflects a way of thinking in the late 19th century in relation to the study of one's own culture.

Perhaps Jenny Brown's paper on the Beamish museum came most within the literal sense of 'ethnography at home'. She explored the attempts in the late 1940s to create an 'English' museum with a vernacular focus. What Beamish represents today is far more of a regional museum. In his final summing up session, Chris Wingfield talked about a recent campaign for a museum of British history, endorsed by the Prime Minister and yet what many of the papers have shown is that there is often no consensus within a small local community about what 'our' past is, let alone on a national scale.

This year's MEG conference showed that both 'home' and 'ethnography' are complex terms in their own right, even more so when coupled together and used to create a context in which to understand museum collections.

Museums historically promote the curiosity cabinet - the exotic and unfamiliar. The conference papers presented many interesting and conflicting ideas of ethnography at home; many suggesting

that historically at least, the home is often as foreign and distant as the other side of the world. The question is; is there a way that we as museum professionals can reconcile this 'foreign' past with how we understand and appropriate museum ethnography at home today. Many thanks to Alison Petch and all those at the Pitt-Rivers Museum for organising and hosting the conference.

(i)The 'Encyclopaedia Britannica' defines survival's as 'a cultural phenomenon that originates under one set of conditions and persists in a period when those conditions no longer obtain.' The term was first employed by the British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor in his Primitive Culture (1871)
<http://www.britannica.com/eb/topic-575456/survival>

(ii) In addition to the papers mentioned below, there was a 'work in progress/short papers' session including the following: Alice Little 'Captain Kennedy's Mandolin and other English Musical Accessions at the Pitt-Rivers Museum'; Inbal Livne 'A Reassessment of the life and work of Annie Royle Taylor'; Jonathan Zilberg 'The Acehnese Museum Conflict or does Aceh really need a \$7.5 million Tsunami Museum?'; Lyndsay McGill 'National Museums of Scotland Southeast Asian Collections'; Hilde Nielsen "'To the Ends of the World". Bringing the World to Norway and vice versa through Ethnographic Mission Exhibitions'; Len Pole 'World Cultures in Wales Project'.

4. REPORT ON THE VIRTUAL EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUM ETHNOGRAPHERS

Alison Petch, Pitt Rivers Museum University of Oxford

Email: alison.petch@prm.ox.ac.uk

5. BOARD MEMBER BIOS

Beate Wild,

Tel.: 0049-(0)30-83901-268 Fax: 0049-(0)30-83901-283

Mail: b.wild@smb.spk-berlin.de

Peter Bjerregaard

Phone: +4589424642 E-mail:

peter.bjerregaard@hum.au.dk

editor@icme.icom.museum

6. OBITUARY: AGNIET VAN DE SANDE

From the website of the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, Netherlands: Agniet van de Sande was the deputy director of Museum Volkenkunde. She was hit by a car when cycling in the green pastures around Utrecht with her husband Peter van Mourik a few weeks ago. She fought for her life and so did the doctors at the intensive care unit, but to no avail. Our beloved Agniet passed away in the late evening of May 19th. This is an enormous loss for Museum Volkenkunde. If anyone was, Agniet was the heart and soul of the museum. She was superb in motivating and inspiring people to give the best and more of their abilities to any difficult and challenging task. It was under her general management that the museum completely transformed and renovated its buildings and exhibitions in the 1990s and early 2000s. Later, she became involved as project manager also in the new Museum of World Cultures in Gothenburg. Flying out to Sweden for two days every fortnight she assisted Jette Sandahl in creating the magnificent African Horizons exhibition. At the same time she was acting director of Museum Volkenkunde with its director on sabbatical leave. There are so many more examples of Agniet's wonderful effectiveness and dedication which made great ideas become true. The upcoming Inclusive Museums Conference in Leiden is yet another example. We will so much miss her lovely and inspiring presence! And pledge to foster the memories of a great woman!
<http://www.volkenkunde.nl/agniet/>

7. UPCOMING CONFERENCES

June 6-9 2008, "New Worlds, New Sovereignties: A cross-community interdisciplinary international conference", Melbourne, Australia www.newsovereignties.org The conference will address pressing issues facing native title and related matters in today's globalised climate with the political shifts of the contemporary era. It will bring together distinguished international scholars, policy-makers and community organisations in an exchange of information that will make the fruits of rigorous specialised scholarship available to those responsible for delivering practical outcomes at the local level. At the same time, it will alert academics to the practical experiences and problems that should be informing our scholarship. Tessa Fitzpatrick Email: conference@union.unimelb.edu.au
<http://www.sru.uea.ac.uk/research-symposia.php>

July 5 to 7 2008, "1st Global Conference: Diasporas: Exploring Critical Issues", Oxford, United Kingdom www.inter-disciplinary.net/ci/transformations/diasporas/d1/cfp.html

July 5 to 7 2008, "4th Global Conference: Creative Engagements: Thinking with Children", Oxford, United Kingdom <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/ati/education/cp/ce4/cfp.htm>

August 26-20, "Biennial Conference EASA 2008", The 10th Biennial conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) ljubljana, Slovenia.
http://www.easa2008.eu/en/informacija.asp?id_meta_type=13

August 30, 31, Sept 1, 2008, "The 25th Conference on Shamanism and Alternative Modes of Healing", Dominican College Campus, San Rafael, CA 94901 This is a working conference, gathering together from a variety of indigenous cultures shamans, healers, scientists, anthropologists, teachers and artists. The purpose is to preserve and further the integrity of shamanism, including the exploration

of 21st Century shamanism, and share the latest insights in the field of alternative healing. Current topics include global warming and planetary healing. Email: roztaichi1@pacbell.net

30 August 2008 to 6 September 2008, "Intellectual Property & Intellectual Technology", Seattle - Alaska, Cruise from Seattle Washington, UnitedStates - Canada - Russia
<http://www.cruise.apollomuses.com/>

September 9-12, "Discovering the Power of Transformation", American Association for State and Local History 2008 Annual Meeting, , Rochester, NY <http://www.aaslh.org/anmeeting.htm>

October 22-26, American Folklore Society 2008 Annual Meeting, Louisville, Kentucky
<http://www.afsnet.org/annualmeet/index.cfm>

November 16 - 19 (20/21), "[Migration, Diaspora, Pilgrimage](#)", ICOM-ICME Annual Meeting 2008, Jerusalem, Israel

20-21 November 2008, "The Contentious Museum", The sixth biennial University Museums in Scotland, Aberdeen, Scotland. For further information contact: Neil Curtis, Senior Curator Marischal Museum, University of Aberdeen Marischal College Aberdeen AB10 1YS, Scotland

T: (+44) 01224 274304

F: (+44) 01224 274302

E: neil.curtis@abdn.ac.uk

8. WORDS FROM THE EDITOR

With this newsletter I am happy to announce that we finally have brought together a number of the papers given at the annual meeting in Vienna last summer. These papers are now accessible on the [ICME websiteeditor@icme.icom.museum](mailto:ICME_websiteeditor@icme.icom.museum)

Peter Bjerregaard

Dept. of Anthropology and Ethnography
University of Aarhus

Denmark