

**MONUMENTAL EARTHEN
ARCHITECTURE IN
EARLY SOCIETIES**

TECHNOLOGY AND POWER DISPLAY

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE XVII UISPP WORLD
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Foreword to the XVII UISPP Congress Proceedings Series Edition

Luiz OOSTERBEEK
Secretary-General

UISPP has a long history, starting with the old International Association of Anthropology and Archaeology, back in 1865, until the foundation of UISPP itself in Bern, in 1931, and its growing relevance after WWII, from the 1950's. We also became members of the International Council of Philosophy and Human Sciences, associate of UNESCO, in 1955.

In its XIVth world congress in 2001, in Liège, UISPP started a reorganization process that was deepened in the congresses of Lisbon (2006) and Florianópolis (2011), leading to its current structure, solidly anchored in more than twenty-five international scientific commissions, each coordinating a major cluster of research within six major chapters: Historiography, methods and theories; Culture, economy and environments; Archaeology of specific environments; Art and culture; Technology and economy; Archaeology and societies.

The XVIIth world congress of 2014, in Burgos, with the strong support of Fundación Atapuerca and other institutions, involved over 1700 papers from almost 60 countries of all continents. The proceedings, edited in this series but also as special issues of specialized scientific journals, will remain as the most important outcome of the congress.

Research faces growing threats all over the planet, due to lack of funding, repressive behavior and other constraints. UISPP moves ahead in this context with a strictly scientific programme, focused on the origins and evolution of humans, without conceding any room to short term agendas that are not rooted in the interest of knowledge.

In the long run, which is the terrain of knowledge and science, not much will remain from the contextual political constraints, as severe or dramatic as they may be, but the new advances into understanding the human past and its cultural diversity will last, this being a relevant contribution for contemporary and future societies.

This is what UISPP is for, and this is also why we are currently engaged in contributing for the relaunching of Human Sciences in their relations with social and natural sciences, namely collaborating with the International Year of Global Understanding, in 2016, and with the World Conference of the Humanities, in 2017.

The next two congresses of UISPP, in Melbourne (2017) and in Geneva (2020), will confirm this route.

Introduction

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The theme of the symposium is the archaeology of earthen architecture in pre- and protohistoric cultures, with an emphasis on constructive techniques and systems, and diachronic changes in those aspects. The main interest is in monumental architecture (not domestic), where it is better possible to appreciate the building strategies that show raw earth to be as noble a material as stone or wood, but with its very own characteristics which required the development of original solutions and construction techniques. The scope on monumental buildings also allows analyzing the political, social and economical factors that made such architecture a recognized expression of societal values and political power.

Many researchers, worldwide, are now interested in this topic, and their contributions are helping to reappraise the importance of this type of architecture, often considered inferior to its stone counterpart. Much of the investigation is centered on the civilizations of Mesopotamia, China and Perú, where major raw earth building traditions existed, that have been the object of study for a long time and are thus well published. The present symposium gathers six contributions from lesser known traditions, reaching from Neolithic Italy to present-day Morocco. The research interests of the papers are a sample of the wide variety of topics that can be broached from the study of earthen architecture. Baltus' Mississippian paper and Daneels' Mesoamerican one are similar in the way they link the act of building with sociopolitical strategy and ritual practice embedded in a particular worldview. The enclosures described by Tunzi and Quero in Italy and Gregorio in Brazil, though literally worlds apart in space, time and social context, represent two cases of fundamental archaeological research to ascertain the function of these little understood constructions. The work by Sanjurjo and Montero is a groundbreaking contribution to archaeometry, demonstrating that mud-bricks can be dated by thermoluminescence, allowing to define the moment of construction of buildings. Finally, the more anthropologically oriented work by Ramirez in Morocco correlates settlement pattern with sociopolitical organization, to propose the existence of a segmentary system surviving in a present-day oasis.