WAC-9 Further Deferred... But Something to Keep US Going!

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The continuing threat of the COVID-19 virus and the ongoing rise in infections, causing in some people very serious symptoms, has led to a further review of prospects for WAC-9 in Prague. WAC President Koji Mizoguchi and the WAC-9 Academic Secretary report below the decision to defer the Congress until July 2022, which will still take place in Prague as advertised on the back page of this issue.

WAC recognizes that there are those whose planned contributions may be worthy of an earlier circulation and wishes to retain some momentum in the organization. To assist with maintaining WAC members' interactions within and between the global archaeological community, it is planned to provide a *WAC-9 Virtual Pre-congress* in 2021. In addition, especially for those who may not be able to take part in a purely online event, *Archaeologies* plans to offer the opportunity to publish short Special Issues. Each issue will be built around contributions to one or more sessions within particular Themes of the Virtual Pre-congress and edited by the session organizers. Full details of these—both the Virtual Pre-congress itself and the *Archaeologies* Special Pre-congress Issues—will be made available shortly. We at *Archaeologies* look forward to meeting with you all—albeit virtually at a distance—next year!

In Other News

COVID-19 continues to dominate the global news driving other issues from the headlines. Meantime, continuing conflicts—and revivals of others such as over Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan—remain unresolved. In previous issues—all since the last WAC Congress in Kyoto—we have reported and commented upon damage and destruction of cultural heritage in Iraq, Turkey, Gaza, Syria, Australia, Guatemala and the USA as well as disputes over claims between Macedonia and Greece and ongoing genocides against Indigenous peoples, especially in Amazonia. None of this has stopped while (in the wealthy global North especially) we

have been concerned with protecting archaeological jobs during lockdown periods and creating virus-safe environments for continuing work. It may serve us all good to read a recent collection of short papers in our sibling-journal the *African Archaeological Review* (volume 37[3], 2020) taking an explicitly global-South perspective on the COVID-19 pandemic and how it can encourage reimagining and reimagining archaeological practice.

With the expansion of the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) to eradicate racism across the globe, more people are protesting and forcing the removal and destruction of Imperial and Colonial Era statues that commemorate an era of enslavement and genocide. In 2015, a South African protest movement ‘Rhodes Must Fall’ decapitated the statue of white supremacist and industrialist Cecil Rhodes. The BLM, other organizations, and protestors have toppled and defaced US confederate statues—insisting on their removal across the country and the renaming of landmarks. In 2020, the movement to remove and deface such monuments has spread to Belgium, Portugal, France, Brazil, and the UK. In England protests against monuments to Edward Colston in Bristol, where Colston was remembered as a merchant and philanthropist rather than as a slave-trader, became the ‘Colston Must Fall’ initiative and resulted in the pulling down of his statue and its throwing into the river (Figure 1). Similar action against other monuments is planned, while the British government has taken steps to defend existing statues. All this brings to the foreground global questions about how we memorialize the past and what should be kept and what should be discarded. WAC has formed a taskforce to compile a statement of support for the Black Lives Matter movement on behalf of archaeologists globally, which we will publish in due course. The task force will also suggest a series of actions to the WAC Executive Council and members, including the support of an Inter-Congress on Racism.

In the last issue we reported on the loss of the Juukan Gorge sites (Figure 2) in Pilbara, Western *Australia* by the mining firm Rio Tinto Zinc together with the response of the Indigenous communities affected, other Indigenous groups across the world and the cultural heritage community at large. In September this year the BBC—among other news outlets—reported on the resignation of Rio Tinto’s chief executive and the impending departure of other senior officers, including the heads of the iron ore and corporate relations divisions of the company, who will also lose significant amounts in unpaid bonuses. The Australian Parliament is currently also examining the case. One response is the draft Western Australian *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill* designed to improve the protection of Aboriginal Peoples’ cultural sites but this has been heavily criticized by the Australian Archaeological Association and the Australian Indigenous Archaeologists’ Association. The archaeologists point out that as drafted the Bill gives no greater involvement in decision-making over relevant regulation to the

Figure 1. 'Colston Must Fall': the statue of slave-trader Edward Colston is cast into the River Avon in Bristol, England. Source: Google Images

Aboriginal Traditional Owners of places than at present, which is what allowed the destruction of the Juukan Gorge sites. Definitions of what constitutes Aboriginal Cultural Heritage is also ill-defined, providing ongoing potential loopholes for those determined to benefit from the loss of cultural places.

Interestingly, the embarrassment of the Pilbara episode has not deterred a commercial partnership in which Rio Tinto holds a majority share from proceeding with plans for the Resolution Copper Mine in Tonto National Forest Arizona, USA. The mine will desecrate and destroy the site of *Chich'il Bildagottee* ('Oak Flat' in English; Figure 3), which is sacred to the Indigenous Western Apache nation. The site lies within the Reservation of the San Carlos Nde-Apache Nation and is recorded as a Traditional Cultural Property on the US National Register of Historic Places, which gives it protection under US Federal law. A recent amendment to another piece of US Federal legislation allows transfer of the site to the mining company, in return for the transfer of other lands to the Tribe. This other land

Figure 2. Juukan Gorge, Pilbara, Western Australia. *Source:* Google Images

would not carry the religious and cultural significance of the site lost. It is not clear if appeals by the Tribe and the related White Mountain Apaches have fallen on entirely deaf ears and we await news.

Elsewhere, in *Bosnia-Herzegovina*, a country with a recent history of cultural destruction in conflict, a project designed to enhance cultural value and contribute to the local economy appears to have achieved the opposite. The area of Peć mlina—a region considered suitable for ‘adventure tourism’ such as rock climbing—includes Ravlic Cave, occupied during the Neolithic period from 6000BCE to around 1500BCE and subject to unfinished excavations from 1978 to 1980 and again from 2008 to 2010. Funded by the European Union, work on the cave to develop its attraction to visitors includes an entrance gate based in concrete, construction of a concrete path which passes over excavations into the interior of the cave and which culminates in a concrete viewing platform, the installation of electrical lighting with wires buried underground, thus potentially disturbing deposits including human remains, and other construction work involving the use of heavy bulldozers (Figure 4). It seems that none of those involved in managing the project had a background in or experience in archaeology, and therefore, these works could go ahead without clear understanding of their impact on significant remains. This brings home the point that good intentions are never enough: there is also a need for expertise and knowledge tempered with the judgement.

We are grateful to Evangelos Kyriakidis, John Welch and Josip Mikulic for bringing these News Items to our attention.

Figure 3. *Chich'il Bildagotee, 'Oak Flat', Arizona, USA. Source: Google Images*

This Issue

In this issue, and reflecting the journal's dedication to global coverage and, especially areas of the globe less commonly represented in Anglophone academic literature, we offer contributions from every inhabited continent except Europe and North America. Collectively they cover themes of community engagement, material culture, archaeological practice, and the colonial history of the discipline. All but one of our lead authors falls within the category of 'early career researcher': Juliana Machado is an established Professor, while Shaun Adams—albeit an experienced field archaeologist—has only recently completed his PhD; Asmita Basu, Mandela Peter Ryano, D Rakiba Boulanki Bello and Chrstian Joy Baloto Rodil are all current graduate students. We are pleased to be able to represent archaeology not only as a wide-ranging global discipline but also to help in the professional development of new scholars.

Shaun Adams and colleagues combine the study of human remains with community archaeology among Indigenous people in northern Australia, neatly bringing together aspects of archaeology not commonly related. The work demonstrates not only the value of such collaboration—which will be recognized by many of our readers—but also that such collaboration is possible even in the sensitive area of human bioarchaeology.

Juliana Salles Machado and her colleagues also present a community project with an Indigenous people, this time from Brazil among the Lak-lânô Xokleng. Comparing locals' perceptions of stone and pottery

Figure 4. Ravlic Cave, Bosnia-Herzegovina. Concrete path constructed into cave over excavation and unexcavated remains. *Source:* Josip Mikulic

objects—especially issues of status—with the ‘scientific’ classifications of archaeologists, they achieve a deeper understanding of continuing tradition as a strategy to affirm cultural identity and guarantee survival into the future. Issues arising involve a consideration of notions of materiality and the agency of nonhuman actors, as well as how history is constructed and maintained.

Asmita Basu introduces a distinctive intangible cultural heritage in eastern India. The paper locates this within the context of commercial good practice leading to a sustainable heritage that benefits and enhances the status of the local community. The paper serves to challenge some of the assumptions we tend to make about the gulf between culture and commerce: it offers a bridge across that gulf.

D Rakiba Boulanki Bello and Xiaodong Zhu analyze the construction of an official message-stick from Benin, West Africa (ancient Dahomey) which serves also as a symbol of royal prestige and forms part of the ‘hidden history’ of Africa. The dominant material in the object is a particular wood and the status of the object is obtained in part from the ritual associations of the tree from which it derives, but the use to which the tree is put also serves to give the tree its importance to the culture where the object has its use. As such it is an example of ‘material culture’ in the sense of ‘culture represented in material form’—an object of interest not so

much because of its physical qualities but the associations and meanings it carries.

Also in Africa—across the continent in Tanzania—Mandela Peter Ryano and colleagues reexcavated the site of a stone-built town on the coast and established its origins as significantly earlier than previously identified. Findings establish extensive trading and other connections across the Indian Ocean and serve once again to contribute to Africa's 'hidden' deeper long term histories.

Returning closer to where we began geographically, Christian Joy Baloto Rodil presents an analysis of the emergence and development of archaeology in the Philippines as a hybrid of western and locally developed forms. As everywhere, archaeology was adopted as one means of creating a national identity but by incorporating Indigenous and antiquarian approaches within an overarching 'scientific' model, the argument is made that Philippine archaeology is distinctive and has moved progressively away from its western origin. The trajectory thus mapped has had consequences for the current conduct of archaeology in the Philippines and the future direction of Philippine archaeological research.

We commend these papers to you.

The Editors

St. Petersburg, FL, USA and Birmingham, UK

21st October 2020

14 October 2020

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

On 19 March, 2020, the WAC Council made the difficult decision of postponing WAC-9, originally scheduled to take place between 5 and 10 July 2020, for one year to 4–9 July 2021. Retrospectively, we had not yet fully realized how unpredictable and dangerous this novel Coronavirus actually was. Since then, the virus has fully revealed its elusive and deadly character and has inflicted tremendous harm to human lives and confusion, disturbance and destructions to our communities and our societies.

Now, many countries and regions of the world are entering into or already in the middle of the second wave of its spread, and various measures that involve the restriction of face-to-face meetings, that some of us experienced in the form of the 'lockdown' of society at the height of the first wave, are considered or have already been re-implemented. Worsening of the situation is feared as the northern hemisphere is heading for the winter, but no one knows exactly how the situation will become nor how long before the pandemic will have been contained to the extent that allows us to resume 'normal' lifeways including international traveling.

With much regret, and in response to the recommendation made by the WAC-9 LOC, as the result of the continued COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic and the uncertainty and unpredictability of its unfolding, the Council of the Archaeological Congress has unanimously endorsed the further postponement of the Ninth World Archaeological Congress, which was re-scheduled to be held in Prague, Czech Republic, between 4 and 9 July 2021.

As a result of the further postponement, WAC-9 will now be held a year later from the originally postponed date, *between 3 and 8 July 2022* in Prague, Czech Republic.¹ This endorsement was not reached lightly. We looked into a range of possibilities, including organizing WAC-9 completely online and holding it in 2021. However, the most important constitutive characteristic of WAC as a democratic archaeological world community obliged us to retain the in-person component of the Congress for the purpose of organizing the Assembly, that comprises of the representatives elected from all participating countries and has power to change the statutes, elect the Executive Officers, and decide the venue of the next International Congress. Disappointing as this may be, but we had to prioritize your safety while still keeping the constitutive characteristics/pillars of WAC as a democratic archaeological world community alive.

We are still discussing with the LOC as to how to respond to various challenges and needs to reduce the inconveniences caused by this further postponement. A package of measures shall be announced as soon as the decision will have been made.

We are also exploring the possibility of organizing an online pre-congress, and possibly, separate online inter-congress(es) sometime next year. We shall keep you informed of the progress of those matters as much as possible.

This virus transcends animal and human boundaries, spreads across all the sociocultural, socioeconomic, sociopolitical and socio-ethnic boundaries, and that divides and closes down human society. This virus spreads through the infrastructural systems of globalization and destroys global solidarity. This virus is itself a contradiction, and therefore embodies and exposes the contradiction of this world. I, in the capacity of the President,

thank you very much indeed for your understanding and patience, and plea for your commitment to make WAC-9 2022 an arena for sharing ideas for and discussing about better archaeologies for the (hopefully post-COVID-19) future.

Sincerely yours,
Koji Mizoguchi
President of the World Archaeological Congress

1 The International Congress (see Article 6 of the Statutes <https://worldarch.org/statutes/>) is one of the most important pillars defining WAC's existence as a democratic world archaeological community. The Assembly, which is held during the International Congress, is our highest decision-making body. Comprised of the representatives elected from all participating countries, the Assembly has power to change the statutes, elect the Executive Officers, and decide the venue of the next International Congress. To further highlight the significance of the International Congress, the final plenary held at the end of each International Congress discusses and adopts resolutions that mandate the WAC Executive and the WAC Council to work toward their implementation while in office. In other words, the WAC speaks through the International Congress to realize its objectives, of the reduction of inequality, and the realization of social justice through the practice of responsible archaeologies.

14 October 2020

WAC-9 further postponed

Jan Turek, Center for Theoretical Study, Joint Research Institute of Charles University and Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague, Czech Republic

Dear WAC members, dear colleagues and friends, on behalf of the WAC-9 LOC I have to regrettably inform you that due to continuing COVID-19 pandemic we have no choice but to change the schedule of the congress once again. The WAC Executive Board and WAC Council have unanimously endorsed such decision. The new dates for WAC-9 are 3rd–8th July 2022.

Based on a recent release by the World Health Organization (WHO) the global number of new cases per week has remained stable at 2 million for the past month (reported situation in mid October), with a cumulative total of over 34.8 million cases. Over 1 million deaths have now been reported globally, of which the majority were reported in the Region of the

Americas (55%), followed by Europe (23%). In the past week, the regions of the Americas, South-East Asia, and Europe account for 91% of new cases. Israel registered the highest incidence of 3717 new cases per 1 million population and the rate is still growing. Globally, the highest percentage of cases have been reported in the 25–39 age group, with approximately 50% of cases in the 25–64 age group. However, the percentage of deaths increases with age, and approximately 75% of deaths are in those aged 65 years and above.

In several countries, the number of new cases is rising again, and in many (most notably within the European Region) the second wave is dramatically exceeding previous peaks; this can be partly attributed to enhancements in surveillance capacities over time. In other countries we have seen a gradual decline in new cases from earlier peaks: in August, for example in Brazil, Colombia and Peru. In India and the Philippines, the number of new cases appears to have stabilized, but they are still reporting high numbers. There are also examples of countries that have consistently shown an increasing incidence as their first wave continues; these include Indonesia, Iraq, and Myanmar, although Indonesia is reporting a slight drop this week. South Africa and Australia are examples of countries that have successfully managed to reduce the number of new cases and have seen large reductions from earlier peaks.

So these are the epidemiological facts. Perhaps as much as our physical health is endangered, so is our spiritual well-being and psychical stability. So words of wisdom and compassion are needed more than ever: Pope Francis in his *ENCYCLICAL LETTER FRATELLI TUTTI* (October 3rd 2020) said on fraternity and social friendship: “the COVID-19 pandemic momentarily revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person’s problems are the problems of all. Once more we realized that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together. As I said in those days, the storm has exposed our vulnerability and uncovered those false and superfluous certainties around which we constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities.”

While His Holiness Dalai Lama said that the virus “will change basic human nature.”

Head of the World Health Organization Tedros Adhanom Gebreyesus reminds us that: “History will judge us on the decisions we do and don’t make in the months ahead. Let’s seize the opportunity and bridge national boundaries to save lives and livelihoods.”

Hoping for Better Times and How to Bridge the Gap

It is more than obvious that under the current situation it is impossible to organize an on-site face to face congress. After long negotiations we have decided that instead of turning our 2021 congress into something purely virtual, we organize a hybrid WAC-9 in 2022. We hope in two years, the majority of us will be able to attend the global meeting in Prague in person, however for those who for any reason would not be able to travel there will be an online platform for distant participation.

We have been also discussing how to bridge the gap of another year without WAC meeting and so the idea was born to organize a WAC-9 Virtual Pre-congress. This is going to involve several Key-notes emphasizing current issues in global archaeology as well as specialized discussion platforms developing the topics related to the spirit of WAC. This virtual meeting will be also promoting the academic program of WAC-9 2022 and will be accessible free of charge. We will keep you informed about further details soon.

So we have some new WAC events to look forward to!

I wish you all good health and strong faith in a better future!

Yours Sincerely

Jan Turek, WAC-9 Academic Secretary

Prague 14th October 2020

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