

**REFLECTIONS  
ON THE 6th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
FOR ARCHAEOZOOLOGY IN WASHINGTON  
(May 1990)**

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This International Conference in Washington D.C. (U.S.A.) was organized on behalf of the International Council for Archaeozoology (I.C.A.Z.) by M. ZEDER and B. SMITH. Details of the sessions are given in the "Scientific News, Meetings" section of this issue of *Anthropozoologica*.

The meeting brought together, for the sixth time (and for the first time out of Europe), the world community of archaeozoologists. About 350 researchers were registered, more than half of them from North America. The French community was represented by only eight archaeozoologists, but the North and Central European communities were rather well represented, with 71 registered scientists. For the first time, more than 10 archaeozoologists from Eastern Europe and USSR attended the Conference. From a general point of view, this Conference was remarkable for the widely dispersed geographical origins of the researchers (12 from Latin America, 14 from Asia, excluding the Near East), but it is not clear whether this resulted from the location of the Conference in America, from recent political events or whether there has been an evolution of the discipline of archaeozoology with its spread into more countries. However, it should be noted that Australia, Africa (with only 4 researchers excluding South Africa) and Mediterranean Europe (only 9 registrations) were poorly represented.

The opportunities for international scientific contacts were somewhat restricted by the holding of parallel sessions: sometimes four on regional (or continental) topics were held at the same time. Thus Europeans and Americans rarely attended the same sessions. However, the timetable was very strictly adhered to and changing from one session to another was thus very easy.

Several very successful workshops were held. Most of them were practically based and there were many demonstrations and non-formal discussions. They addressed developments in now well-established archaeozoological techniques such as taphonomy, skeletochronology and computer recording.

The *First Symposium on the Curation of Archaeozoological collections*, organised by E. WING, took place the day before the actual opening of the Conference. Nothing very new was discussed during this session, and some listeners seemed disappointed. However, it was useful to discuss the theoretical and practical issues concerning the preparation, preservation and use of collections. This first meeting should be the beginning of a more structured and varied debate between the scientists who have the difficult and important task of curation.

This sixth Conference, following those held in Bordeaux (5th; 1986) and London (4th; 1982) provided the opportunity to

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reflect on the evolution of archaeozoology. Classical topics such as domestication, hunting, breeding, taphonomy, meat yield and osteometry continue to be addressed, in all parts of the world. However, there have been some new and exciting developments in methodological approaches, particularly in skeletochronology and the use of stable isotopes (N15/C13). This latter technique has been in use for several years in the USA, South Africa, the Near East and Northern Europe. It is the only way yet found to answer questions that were impossible to answer previously, such as questions concerning the relative proportions of animal and vegetable food in the diet. The organizers of the Washington Conference, in programming a full and comprehensive session on this topic, clearly understood the importance of this topic in the development of archaeozoology. Let us hope that all our European colleagues will have the same understanding of its significance as those of Northern Europe.

Another important development concerns the increasing relevance of archaeology to zoology, particularly in coastal areas and on islands. It perhaps shows that archaeozoology has another importance, beyond its relevance to archaeology. However, it is also important for archaeology, as it allows the integration of history

and the study of man with modern biological debate.

The last, and perhaps the most important development observed at the Washington Conference was a more anthropological approach and a deeper and stronger integration of archaeozoological results with those of archaeology and history. This may have been partly as a result of the location of this conference in North America, but several European papers suggested that it is a more general phenomenon.

This 6th Conference showed that archaeozoology still has a difficult path to tread between strict scientific practice and a more anthropological approach. This was more apparent at this than at any previous Conference, the implication being that archaeozoology is still a young science, but in rapid evolution.

Unfortunately, the Conference ended with an announcement that the organizers have declined to produce a full publication of the Conference proceedings. Some, although it is not clear which and how many, of the sessions will be published separately. This seems to be a serious mistake, not only for those who came from far way to be heard in America, but also for the development of the subject.