

Foreword

To think about materiality and not just material culture is a good place to start
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Things exist and demand gestures. Man invents them, makes them useful and they participate in his survival and attend to his needs. Things are wielded by him as tools of subsistence, but they require, in turn, his artisanal touch: technique. Things shape the materiality of culture, but they are also shaped by meanings that go beyond their concreteness. The material elements of our culture and the relevance of their identity meanings are the objects of reflection in this Dossier. Whether *field* or *approach*, *domain* or *slant*, *platform* or *sub-discipline*, what we traditionally call *material culture* is an important object of history and is here dealt with as a fundamental *analytical perspective* of the social history of culture in a pluridisciplinary *dimension* that articulates materiality, mental repertoires, symbology, gestuality and identity.

Above all, the present Dossier, *Material Elements of Culture and Heritage*, aims to focus on material elements of culture as *documents* of social realities, that is, not as just reflections of those realities, but as part of their construction. Objects are therefore more than mere fetishes or simple holders of social meanings dislocated from their uses. In the words of Vânia Carvalho:

the artifact, like any document, should be understood in its intertextuality, that is, from within a broad set of statements that confer meaning and value and that induce and instrumentalize practices.²

Themes related to *material culture* have been recurrent in the field of History, always and everywhere privileging subjects connected with art,

1 In an interview given to *Estudos Históricos*, Rio de Janeiro, v.23, n.45, p.187-198, January-June, 2010.

2 CARVALHO, Vânia Carneiro de. Gênero e cultura material: uma introdução bibliográfica. *Anais do Museu Paulista*, São Paulo, v.8-9, 2000-2002, p.293-324, 306. Also REDE, Marcelo. Estudos de cultura material: uma vertente francesa. *Museu Paulista*, São Paulo, v.8-9, p.281-291, 2000-2002.

techniques, the social meanings of the everyday, domesticity or private life, commercial conduct, dietary processes, and human consumption, etc. While the search for definitive proposals for the conceptualization of the term has been less than effective, it always arises as a new possibility for historiography. To state the obvious (a parameter that cannot be neglected when dealing with the materiality of culture), we could sum things up by saying that *material culture* is the complex and dynamic repertoire of what mankind is able to produce, circulate and consume. Such dimensions of action not only signal the functionalities of human creation, but also denote the different meanings a community and/or society attributes to a given artifact over time.

The articles in this Dossier look to subsidize reflections on the theme and endeavor to demonstrate the amplitude of its perspectives in historical studies. Their main subject covers the material elements of culture – an expression more conducive to the notion that, in producing culture, man creates concrete things that are worthy of being historicized, presenting themselves as the sort of social identitary manifestation that we call *cultural heritage* – both material and *immaterial*. Under the latter term are subsumed the values, symbols, modes of production and techniques that derive – and, in our view, cannot be dissociated – from the materiality of life. In principle, there is no culture that one can divide into material and immaterial. More rigorously put, *immaterial heritage* is, basically, *experiential heritage*.

Our point of departure is that historians can take the concrete elements of culture, in themselves, as social expression, in the dynamic of economic interests and ideological convictions; as social representations of values and symbols of human relevancies. Each of these can be understood from the tangle of social relations that produces them. Conceived as the stuff of History, the *material elements of culture* become subjects of historical study and analysis; that is, they allow the historian to understand them and explain them as integrated with and formed within the socio-cultural relations of a given historical reality.

The recurrence of the theme in the field of history and the other social sciences allows for new and enriched perspectives, but, to stick to the last century alone, we might turn to the work of Fernand Braudel, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Giovanni Levi, and Daniel Roche, among others, and, more recently, to studies on the growing and dynamic consumption of products by societies from the 17th Century onwards, without forgetting that consumer items are an indication of tastes, social distinction, and strategies of sociability and power. Examples of this output would be the writings of John Brewer, Roy Porter, Lorna Weatherill, Woodruff D. Smith, Jan de Vries, Mary Douglas, Marshall Sahlins, Colin Campbell, Deyan Sudjic, Daniel Miller, Pierre Bourdier and Arjun Appadurai, to name just a few.³

3 Some works that refer us to the perspective of historical analysis: BRAUDEL, Fernand. *Civilização material, economia e capitalismo, séculos XV-XVIII*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1995. 3 vols.; HOLANDA, Sérgio Buarque de. *Caminhos*

As we are reminded by Daniel Roche, who recalls Karl Gottlob Schelle's reflections as he sought to "reconcile philosophy with the everyday", it is important to speculate on "the things of life" and strive to understand our relationship with them and our mediations with objects and with the world.⁴ For the author, the as yet vague notion of material culture "allows historians of all periods or cultural areas to relate a set of facts considered marginal in relation to the essential, political, religious, social and economic" in such a manner as enables us to see the "adaptations" men make in life, and "through which the natural reveals itself to be fundamentally cultural".⁵

Manmade objects cannot be dissociated from lived realities.⁶ In history, Marxist theorists constructed the first conceptual attempts to express that relationship as *material culture*. They tried to delimit the field within history by fixing its bounds, after Henri Dunajewski, around means of work (man and his tools), the goal of work (material wealth, raw materials), the human experience in production processes (techniques), and the use of material products (consumption). As Jerzy Kulczycki defines it,⁷ they also established another perception, simplifying the previous schema and limiting the field of material culture to the natural conditions and modifications that man imposes on his environment by generating products. Thinking upon material elements in culture-building, we cannot limit ourselves to the field of techniques, despite the Braudelian understanding that "everything is technique".⁸ Human relations in the use of tools for survival and production go beyond technical artifices. In the words of André Leroi-Gourhan, "It never occurred to us that whoever has the screw also knows alternate circular motion and that whoever uses the loom also uses the mill and the potter's wheel".⁹ To paraphrase Baudel, we could say that everything is human action and that techniques are indissociable from action/relations. Baudel himself completes our earlier reasoning, saying "Technique never walks alone".¹⁰

e fronteiras. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1994; LEVI, Giovanni. *A herança imaterial*. Trajetória de um exorcista no Piemonte do século XVII. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2000; ROCHE, Daniel. *História das coisas banais*. Nascimento do consumo nas sociedades do século XVII ao XIX. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 2000; a edição organizada por BREWER, John e PORTER, Roy. (eds.) *Consumptions and the world of goods*, London-New York: Routledge, 1994, with texts by Jean-Christophe Agnew, Joyce Appleby, T.H. Breen, John Brewer, Peter Burke, Colin Campbell, Patricia Cline Cohen, David Cressy, Jan de Vries, Cissie Fairchilds, C.Y. Ferdinand, Iaroslav Isaievych, Sidney Mintz, John Money, Chandra Mukerji, Jeremy D. Popkin, Roy Porter & Simon Schaffer; WEATHERILL, Lorna. *Consumer behaviour and material culture in Britain, 1660-1760*. New York: Routledge, 1996; SMITH, Woodruff D. *Consumption and the making of respectability. 1600-1800*. New York: Routledge, 2002; DE VRIES, Jan. *The industrious revolution: consumer behavior and the household economy, 1650 to the present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008; APPADURAI, Arjun. (org.) *A vida social das coisas*. Niterói: EdUFF, 2008.

4 ROCHE, Daniel. *História das coisas banais*. Nascimento do consumo nas sociedades do século XVII ao XIX. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 2000, p.11.

5 ROCHE, Daniel. *História das coisas banais*, p.12-13.

6 PESEZ, Jean-Marie. História da cultura material. In: LE GOFF, Jacques. *A História Nova*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1993, p.177-213, 186.

7 PESEZ, Jean-Marie. História da cultura material, p.188.

8 BRAUDEL, Fernand. *Civilização material, economia e capitalismo*, p.303.

9 LEROI-GOURHAN. Cf. PESEZ, Jean Marie. A história da cultura material. In: LE GOFF, Jacques, CHARTIER, Roger e REVEL, Jacques. *A Nova História*, p.124.

10 BRAUDEL, Fernand. *Civilização material, economia e capitalismo*, p.397.

We can distinguish the materiality of culture from mental representations and religious, political, philosophical, artistic thought and linguistic construction, etc., but we cannot separate them or deal with them in some reductive individuality. Based on this premise we might avoid the term *material culture* and adopt *material elements of culture* instead, just as we had rejected above the idea of a *material culture* and *immaterial culture* separated by some simplifying didacticism. In the process of experience, or, otherwise put, in the dynamic of human experiences through life, everything is culture, intrinsically composing whole repertoires of reality-building.

In these terms, historical research pursues not just the description of objects and techniques in a temporal process of change and abidance, but the interpretation of the temporally distinct social realities that use them. In the words of Daniel Roche:

Objects, the physical or human relations they create, cannot be reduced to a simple materiality, nor to simple instruments for communication or social distinction. They do not belong to the basement or attic alone, or even simultaneously to both, and we should replace them in networks of abstraction and sensibility essential to the understanding of social facts.¹¹

The understanding of social facts based on their materiality is, in sum, the object of reflection in the texts presented herein.

The material elements of a culture denote the everyday construction of life and, as such, have been objects of quotidian history. By this we mean not only the consumer habits and the products and services made and consumed, but also the meanings attributed to all the actions of the human being and to the instruments man creates in his relationship with the natural world, in the interests of survival and of meeting his needs, in developing his tastes and building the repertoire of his culture. In the analysis of this repertoire, materiality and immateriality are inseparable, even indistinguishable.

The increase in the gamut of products people have access to that has accompanied the process of globalized contact in modern times has, within the sphere of historical studies, stimulated thematic reflections on the material elements of culture. However, the materiality of earlier historical periods also motivates studies from new perspectives and foci.¹²

These artifacts of life are increasingly numerous, complex and produced at fast-accelerating speeds. The conservation of these objects over time – through use and memorialized safekeeping, associated with the meanings and values attributed to the them, evincing ways of living, of manifesting crafts

¹¹ ROCHE, Daniel. *História das coisas banais*, p.13.

¹² For example, studies on diet, family and heritage in the ancient and medieval worlds, of which we could mention, among others, REDE, Marcelo. *Família e patrimônio na antiga Mesopotâmia*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Mauad X, 2007.

and bodies of knowledge, of committing meanings and conducts to memory that do not want to be forgotten, in short, a collection of things and gestures, of experiences – configures heritages and forms of heritage-making, the other line of approach this Dossier takes toward the materiality of culture.

We live in a time of standardized interpretive processes of culture that culminate in bland impoverishments of cultural diversity. Paradoxically, records of so-called immaterial heritage surge from a broadening of the concept of cultural heritage, but, on the other hand, stimulate a didactic scrutiny that narrows our vision of the dynamic complexity of cultures. Interpretive and museological languages become a demanding field of knowledge that demands a creativity that underscores that dynamicity and diversity. Safeguarding legislation and educational practices demand the same degree of creativity, otherwise we would have an interpretive gesture toward cultural manifestations that negates that diversity. In the case of urban heritage protection there is a clear and measurable risk of homogeneity which the critic Henri-Pierre Jeudy tells us follows the same formula of patrimonialization, aestheticization, standardization and gentrification.¹³ In Brazil, we have examples of this impoverishing “globalization”, in which local singularities have been erased in favor of a uniform urban aesthetic that caters to a leveled/massified taste.

The textual contributions to this Dossier (for which we would like to thank their dedicated authors) are clear examples of this diversity of outlooks on the materiality of our experiences in history. On an axis of plotted theoretical and thematic reflections that aims to think of objects as material and identity goods, along with their forms of constituting riches, bodies of knowledge, consumables, tastes, techniques and, indeed, memories, these texts promote an essential dialogue insofar as their readings adjust syntopies and foster clashes between diverse lines of thinking.

The guest authors’ articles cover an axis that integrates methodological standards and interpretive narratives with problematics that are very much present in our time: the construction of family wealth, dietary practices, domesticity, interpretive processes of heritage and musealization, traditional tastes, water use, patrimonial education and the documental reading of the historian. All of the authors discuss thematic investigation and the problems facing the sources for the materiality of culture or memorializing languages in processes of heritage-making and musealization.

In *Heritages of a Slave Past: material culture and wealth in Minas Gerais*, Cláudia Eliane Parreira Marques Martinez associates investigations into ma-

13 JEUDY, Henri-Pierre. *Espelho das cidades*. Rio de Janeiro: Casa da Palavra, 2005. This book translates and conjugates two of the author’s studies: *La machinerie patrimoniale* and *Critique de l’esthétique urbaine*. Though contextualized within the European reality of the closing decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st, his reflections are still applicable to the problematic of heritage policies in Brazil.

teriality and wealth as a strategy for understanding the slave society in the face of abolition. The problem in focus is the reorganization of wealth and material standards in the wake of 1888. Following in the footsteps of Ulpiano Toledo Bezerra de Menezes, the author reads post mortem inventories as possibilities for “inflection in the circuit of the social life of the artifact”.

Material culture, domestic space and musealization, by Vânia Carneiro de Carvalho, is a study of the material dimension of social life and its forms of expression in the curatorial process at the history museum. The author sees the museum as a strategic instrument for fostering investigations on the domestic space, taken here as “a fertile place for the *incorporation* of forms of social distinction and gender through the use of objects”.

In *Culture, History, patrimony and museums*, Dominique Poulot reflects on the different forms of appropriating the idea of heritage in the modern world (18th Century onwards). For the author, the term *heritage* has, today, enormous evocative power and history museums are places where this evocation appears to accompany the flux of the contemporary production of artifacts. The museum, the space par excellence of historical interpretation and specific form, determines different ways of problematizing the material past, in which the materiality and intelligibility of the context walk hand-in-glove.

In *Craftwork culture: cultural heritage, history and memory*, Maria Eliza Linhares Borges presents an ethos founded upon artisanal forms of production and their strategies for regulation, the transmission of knowledge, expression of values, beliefs, behaviors and sociabilities that, in the face of industrial modes of production, are rendered “picturesque” and are subsequently sidelined by museums and visual culture. For the author, the memory of this culture is idealized “because it is folksy and nostalgic”, but she also recognizes that “the grammatical tense of the Culture of Crafts lasted far longer than one would imagine”.

In *The heritage of technical knowledge, between History and Memory: the case of the deposits of invention in France and England in the eighteenth century*, Liliane Hilaire-Pérez deals with the tension between History and Memory in the process of the patrimonialization of knowledge and the role of the “legal instruments” that, from the 18th Century onwards, heralded new ways of looking at heritage as something different to that found in collections, showcases and museums. Reflecting on concrete cases of a new legal practice in France and England, the author pits a new law regulating the knowledge economy and technical innovation-based markets against the memorializing role of knowledge-keeping and its importance as a reading of the identities of new technical communities, even with the participation of traditional trade guilds.

Following a line in the social history of alimentation that sees production, consumption and the construction of taste as integrated, Jaime Rodrigues analyzes the impact of industrialization, household incomes and advertis-

ing on dietary traditions in São Paulo state in the 20th Century. His article, *A history of practices in nourishment among workers in São Paulo city in two moments of the 20th century*, deals with the relationship between cooking and memory, especially in the domestic sphere, analyzing its material and symbolic vestiges – the materiality of the foodstuffs themselves, their packaging and promotional materials.

The history of technical design in the Brazilian colonial architecture, an article by Marcos Tognon, proposes a suite of procedures for the exploration of artistic and technical values in architectural design as important documental records. As sources, these “representations” are, the author contends, languages that are capable of clearly referencing the most distinct architectonic realities. He proposes four approaches that counterpoise the architectonic plan with the quotidian materiality of buildings.

The article by Jesús Raúl Navarro García, *Health and Landscape: a contribution to the renew of rural lands (the case of Pozo Amargo, Cuenca Del Guadaira, España)*, presents a process of interpreting the landscape (natural) heritage and material (cultural) heritage related to water use at thermal installations, in which the actions of the government and citizenry are part of an economic project. The article traces the history of this landscape-integrated materiality since the 18th Century as part of a tradition that connects idleness with the “animaic recuperation” of the visitor. The text raises an important reflection on the concept of landscape and theories on its role as historico-cultural heritage, as opposed to its natural-hydrological, Utopian, architectonic and material dimensions. The article offers an historical interpretation of the idea of well-being that brings man into harmony with the landscape, as argued by the anarchistic geographer Élisée Reclus.

The students presence: the interface between museums and schools in Brazil the 1950's, by Paulo Knauss, interprets the roots of renewal in the debate on museums and education as based on the experience of the 1950s and earlier events, such as in the foundation of the Natural History Museum in 1922 and the Mariano Procópio Museum in Juiz de Fora, which stand apart from the “science museums” created in the 19th Century. Knauss shows how the issue of the relationship between museums and education helped renew the concept of museums and the profile of the professionals staffing them in Brazil. The sources for his analysis are texts produced by intellectuals with ties to historical museums during the study period that were published in books or in journals and which dealt with the theme of museology as an educational tool. In this history of Brazilian museums during the 20th Century, the author perceives an attempt to establish contact between museological and educational institutions and the growing power of their inevitable dialogue.

Men build, name and confer uses upon things. Above all, as the saying goes, *if it has a name it must exist*. Inspired by this banal premise we have

striven to articulate, in this present edition of the Dossier, the thematic and documental strength of the material elements of culture and cultural heritage with the tools of memory, mindsets, symbology, technique and gestuality. In so doing, we follow the tradition of the Human Sciences and invite the critical input of our readers.

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