

Presented in association with the 17th Congress of the International Association of Museums of Agriculture (AIMA)

François Sigaut and his Legacy

An encounter between rural heritage actors and human sciences researchers

Friday, 7 November 2014

At the MuCEM (Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée¹) – Marseille

François Sigaut († 2 November 2012), was a Research Director at the EHESS (École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris, France), where he contributed to consolidating, in the footsteps of predecessors such as A. Leroi-Gourhan and A.-G. Haudricourt, a new discipline that he termed “technology” (often translated in English as “history of technology” or “history of techniques”), conceived of as an independent branch of human sciences.

He was an atypical researcher, but had a considerable following in human and social sciences, at the crossroads of agronomy, the history of techniques, ethnology, archaeology, geography, anthropology... and he was also responsible for promoting institutions involved in conservation of both heritage and tools that bear witness to the material foundations of our culture from prehistory to our own day. François Sigaut was one of the founders of the French Association of Agriculture Museums (AFMA) and was President of the International Association of Museums of Agriculture (AIMA) at the time of his death. A member of the French Academy of Agriculture, he was President of the Association for the Study of the History of Agriculture (AEHA).

His work, which has enriched our knowledge in many fields and includes remarkable hypotheses of broad scope, is still not that well known outside of a limited circle of specialists.

Hence this encounter, which aims to make his work better known, discuss his hypotheses and encourage exchange among specialists from several fields as well as actors involved in rural heritage. The fact of organising the first encounter at the MuCEM, a new museum concept in which agriculture and ethnography collections stand side-by-side with collections and exhibits touching on all aspects of life in Euro-Mediterranean civilisations, is not a neutral choice: the organisers do not want this encounter to be confined in a “rural world” that may well no longer exist or in a backwards-looking conception of agricultures.

The meeting programme will be organised as a morning round-table, followed by an afternoon devoted to workshops on the 7th of November 2014:

¹ Read more : <http://www.mucem.org/en/lemucem>

*The round-**table** will encourage highly varied approaches and issues, taken up by researchers or actors who worked with François Sigaut: ethnologists, historians of agriculture and rural societies, archaeologists, agronomists, museum keepers, researchers from different cultural areas...

*A **series of workshops** that can be envisioned in relation to the following questions:

- **On older agricultural techniques:** what is the present state of research on François Sigaut's favourite subjects, such as the atlas of pre-industrial agriculture that he proposed in 1994 or the vast project of a history of agriculture that he formulated in 2001? How is the history of agronomy developing?
- **Food history:** "Couscous, bulgur and polenta"... and after that? Bread, beer... what are the new research lines? How do museums handle these subjects? Is it possible to renew approaches to the field?
- **History of agricultural collections and agriculture museums in the world,** honoured by the confirmed participation of directors of fine agriculture museums around the world (Canada, Poland, Romania, Estonia, etc.) and large associations such as the ALHFAM (Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums, North America).
- **The history of technologies and museums:** what can this new science contribute to museums and vice-versa?
- **François Sigaut's methods of observation and questioning:** What is their specificity and how can they be utilised to motivate research?
- **On the origins and future of humankind:** *Homo sapiens* or *Homo faber*? "What would we be without our tools?"
- **On the idea of Progress:** should the idea of progress be taken up by museums? Should a museum of Progress be created?

Each of these subjects will be accompanied by a bibliography and extracts from texts relating to François Sigaut's research to underwrite discussion and reflexion.

To register for the 7 November 2014 working day and request further information:

Visit the website dedicated to François Sigaut's work: <http://www.francois-sigaut.com/> (under the heading "encounters")

Write directly to: rene.bourrigaud@sfr.fr or jholtz@orange.fr

Also see the websites of the AIMA, the AFMA and the MuCEM