

Megalithic Monuments and Cult Practices

Fourth International Symposium

10th-14th October 2024

South-West University, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

The Symposium is supported by the South-West University project Four International Scientific Symposium Megalithic Monuments and Cult Practices

Dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the Faculty of Arts



Prophesying From the Chasm in the Earth: Between Lesbos and Thrace

Prof. Vanya Lozanova-Stancheva, DSc.
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Bulgaria

The paper deals with the problematic situation posed by the image of a beardless youth seated with stylus and tablet in hand before a speaking (prophetic?) head on an attic red-figured kylix from the collection of Rafeale Baron (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Corpus Christi College, inv. No 25). It is associated with the two passages of Flavius Philostratus (Philostr. Heroicus 703-704 and Philostr., Apollon. Tyan., 4.14), who reported briefly on the Heroon found a long time ago in his native island Lesbos that was famous (according to him!) with the head of Orpheus giving oracles. The two passages are the only evidence mentioning the prophetic head of Orpheus and its possible cult centre somewhere on Lesbos. The analysis of the scarce written sources and artefacts suggests that the whole "Lesbian" story of Philostratus is fiction, a forgery. All narratives about Orpheus' mantic cult on Lesbos put the figure of Orpheus and the legend about his death in a close association with Ancient (mythological) Thrace.

The steady mythological core and the ritual complex associated with the underground mysterious sanctuary (mound or cave) with a prophesying anthropo-demonized oracle (the "prophet of Bacchus") could have served as a mythological paradigm in the connection of the metropolis (Mytilene) and the apoikia (Aenos at the mouth of Hebros) followed by the lesbian writers.

Structure, symbolism, cult practices and functions of the Thracian rock sanctuary "Mitrovitsa" from the Western Rhodope Mountains

Prof. Vasil Markov, DSc.

South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Bulgaria

In Thracian antiquity, the rocky peak of Mitrovitsa on the Dabrash Hill in the Western Rhodopes Mountains in Bulgaria was sacred. It rises above the eastern bank of the Mesta River, near the village of the same name. The sacred territory is 1.5 kilometers long, along a high mountain range. The "up" and "down" positions are analyzed. The symbolism and functions of the cult structures (rock altars and rock arches), as well as the associated silhouettes, have been investigated. The analysis is placed in the context of known similar monuments in Thrace and in the Balkan-Anatolian region.

Sacred Rivers in the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean

Assist. Prof. Irina Shopova, PhD

*Institute for Balkan Studies with Centre of Thracology "Prof. Alexander Fol",
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria*

The author traces the development of the mythological image of the river in Ancient Greece and Ancient Thrace and outlines the possible cultural influences between the ancient Eastern Mediterranean region and the ancient Eastern civilizations in Mesopotamia, Egypt and Iran.

History and Culture of Ancient Thrace. Ritual Landscapes of the Rhodope Regional Unit (Klisetjik, Karmi Kaya)

Stavros Kiotsekoglou, PhD

Democritus University of Thrace, Greece

Two Cave-Sanctuaries dedicated to the Great Mother Goddess (Kyveli), flank a solar observatory and a Sanctuary of the Sun that is worshiped together with the Great Mother Goddess, on the eastern slope of the Kasambalou Burun rocky hill of the Klisetjik Petrota site. In this location we found thrones, balanced rocks, rock-cut graves, cairn graves, stone mushrooms, serpentine rock formations, labrys (axe), repeated carved eye sockets. The carved eyes sockets sanctify the rock by embodying the Great Mother Goddess in her eternal home, like the carved mask on the sky-long rocks of Karmi Kaya or a Rock Destined to protect the ancient settlement of Petrota. Through their practices, people inscribe their world view on the landscape, as well as their history, their views on social organization, religious behavior and burial practices. Like scenography in theatrical productions, the landscape is an integral part of the ceremony and helps to clarify its meaning. Religious or funerary rites can be seen as a "stage", an almost theatrical representation of feelings of worship towards the deity or mourning for the deceased and his dependence on the deity.

The article is dedicated to Professor Vasil Markov and his research team.

Megalithic Rock Complexes – Some Problems of Research and Interpretation

Assoc. Prof. Alexey Gotsev, PhD

National Institute of Archaeology and Museum at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria

In the mountainous regions of Southern Bulgaria, rock phenomena are found, which are of particular interest to researchers. These monuments, associated with the rock and human intervention on it, and also with constructions of huge chunks of rock that seem artificially created, raise a number of questions of all kinds. Despite all the ambiguities and conventions regarding these objects, perhaps it is appropriate to introduce the name Megalithic Rock Complexes (MRCs). This designation includes the main characteristics of these monuments and at the same time distinguishes them from other archaeological sites. During the archaeological research of a part of the MRC, materials from two different chronological periods were discovered - Late Chalcolithic and Late Iron Age. The reasons for this phenomenon, the possibilities of modern science, the various interpretations are examined in a critical light.

Rock Art in Southern Levant Dolmens

Prof. Gonen Sharon¹, PhD, Uri Berger²

Tel-Hai Academic College, Israel¹, Israel Antiquities Authority, Israel²

Thousands of dolmens are scattered throughout the southern Levant in Lebanon, Syria, Israel, and Jordan. These megalithic burials, dated to the early stages of the Bronze Age, are an understudied and little-understood phenomenon of Levantine Archaeology. Unlike in Europe and other parts of the world, rock art has rarely been reported from Levantine dolmens, despite more than 150 years of research and hundreds of excavated dolmens of the thousands of megalithic structures recorded. A fortunate discovery in 2012 of engraved features on the ceiling of the central burial chamber of a giant dolmen in the Shamir dolmen field has changed current knowledge. The dolmen, a multi-chamber megalith constructed using over 400 tons of huge basalt slabs and rocks, is evidence of the existence of a hierarchical society during the Levantine Intermediate Bronze Age “Dark Ages.” Since this finding, additional rock art has been discovered, including a panel of horned animals in a dolmen in the Meshushim field and an engraved human face upon the capstone of a dolmen in the northern parts of the Hula Valley. Here, we will present the latest discoveries of Dolmen rock art in the Levant in the context of their significance to the broader phenomenon of the mysterious megalithic burials of the region.

**An Enigmatic Dacian Site in the Curvature Carpathians:
The Cățina Valley- Piatra Rotării**

Prof. Valeriu Sîrbu, PhD, Sebastian Matei
Institute of Archaeology "Vasile Pârvan" Bucharest, Romania

The mountain on which the vestiges are located has steep and rocky slopes on three sides, with access possible only from the northwest, where it connects with other transmontane roads. Numerous pits for posts, structures for beams, rock levelings, and steps, all carved into the rock, demonstrate the existence of numerous constructions and arrangements. The inventory belongs to the Dacian era (2nd century BC - 1st century AD). Through the ensemble of discovered vestiges, we appreciate that this was an important Dacian cult site.

Belantash - Legends and Reality

Chief Assist. Prof. Borislav Borislavov, PhD
*National Institute of Archaeology and Museum at Bulgarian Academy of
Sciences, Department of Thracian Archaeology, Bulgaria*

Belantash is a large rock plateau located in the Central Rhodopes. The scientific results of the regular archaeological excavations of the Belantash Rock Sanctuary are of great importance for clarifying both the cult practices of the Late Chalcolithic and the Early Thracian times - from the middle of the 2nd to the 1st millennium BC.

The Seven-Eight Year Calendar Adjustment in the Context of Parallel Astronomical Events

Assoc. Prof. Alexey Stoev, PhD

*Space Research and Technology Institute at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,
Bulgaria*

The work presents an attempt to model the astronomical phenomena described by the two chroniclers Georgius Syncellus and Theophanes the Confessor. In the reconstruction, an eight-year shift was registered in the years in which the appearances of comets, solar and lunar eclipses were recorded, and their appearance on the celestial sphere according to the observations of the planetary constellations, which justifies the eight-year calendar correction.

Rock-cut Monuments and Megaliths as Calendar Sanctuaries in Prehistory

Assist. Prof. Mina Spasova, PhD

*Institute for Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,
Bulgaria*

This work presents some aspects of the genesis and chronology of the rock-cut monuments and megaliths, as well as the astronomical practices performed on their territory. Furthermore, an attempt is made to answer the question: "What did landscape features and visual possibilities mean to observers of the celestial sphere during day and night in prehistory"?

Star Formations on a Rock Located in the Land of the Village of Osikovo, Devin Municipality

Prof. Penka Stoeva, PhD

*Space Research and Technology Institute at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,
Bulgaria*

One of the archaeological sites in the territory of the village of Osikovo, Municipality of Devin, is located in the Dabat area (the Oak). It is a rock with round small holes carved on it in different configurations. Settlement structures and ceramics from the 1st millennium BC have been found there. It is suggested that the ancient inhabitants may have represented their knowledge of the stars and their diurnal and annual movements as well as the starry sky in general.

Construction of a Rock-Cut and Megalithic Museum Structure of National Importance on the Territory of Bulgaria

Angel Manev, PhD

*Space Research and Technology Institute at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,
Bulgaria*

The proposed study analyzes the possibilities of building an archaeological park based on well-studied rock-cut monuments (rock sanctuary, megalithic site) with astronomical content. An overview of the possible places and territories for the construction of such museums was made. The creation of a national program for the inclusion of the rock-cut and megalithic culture in the educational system of Bulgaria is discussed. The social effect is also evaluated.

Village Boundaries and the Mythical Symbolism

Assoc. Prof. Katja Hrobat Virloget, PhD
University of Primorska, Slovenia

The paper will present the research on the mythical and folklore meaning of village boundaries, which concentrate especially on boundary landmarks or geodetic marks. The mapping of narrative traditions in the landscape has shown that the traditions indicating the contact with the world beyond concentrate exactly on the village boundaries, on one side it can be narrative traditions, on the other it can be ritual tradition in the form of “dead resting sites”. Especially interesting is the location of the mythical archaic being of Baba/Hag on village boundaries, usually in the form of a stone monoliths.

Sacred space. Visual aspects

Assoc. prof. Dimitriya Spasova, PhD
South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, Bulgaria

This paper will present the some visual aspects of sacred space. As a model is used the Gotse-Delchev Basin in South-Western Bulgaria. The Gotse-Delchev Basin is promising because it is surrounded by the dominant peaks of the Pirin, Rhodope and Bozdag mountains, prominent in the landscape. Ethnographic data recorded in the settlements located at the foot of these peaks, combined with archaeological artifacts, allow generalizations about how even today the sacred space is perceived, honored and inhabited by supernatural mythical creatures or Christian saints.

Founding Megaliths

Bernie Taylor – Independent Researcher

USA

The ethnographic record indicates indigenous peoples worldwide have observed celestial alignments with natural geological formations such as mountains and rocky outcrops. The Eurasian rise of megaliths would presumably have been preceded by such indigenous celestial observational practices. This paper explores possible origins of megalithic celestial observations in natural geological formations as depicted in Upper Paleolithic cave art.

Stones and Megaliths in Estonia

Research Prof. Mare Kõiva, Andres Kuperjanov

Estonian Literary Museum, Department of Folkloristics, Estonia

The presentation summarises, analyses and structures the stone-related beliefs and stones of Estonians at the coastal area of the Baltic Sea that are associated stones, offering stones and cup marked stones, stone strongholds, stone circles, the stone ships, stone cist graves, stone mounds. The part of labyrinths, and megaliths have been covered with soil and opened for public during half of century. Remarkable part of bigger stones is connected with the local giant lore. Based on the published works of Estonian authors, as well as on field materials gathered during the expeditions, and distribution maps two groups of beliefs are singled out: belief and cults associated with stones of natural (divine) origin, and beliefs, folklore and data associated with stone constructions of man-made origin. Various forms of the use of stones and (new) human made stone constructions, reinvented labyrinths and stone circles created by new religious movements in different parts of Estonia have attracted attention, where various rituals and trainings are carried out. The processes of sacralisation and desacralisation at the stone sites in Estonia occurring at the present stage of development are considered.

People and Ethnicity: Dimensions of Bulgarian (P. Mutafchiev's and V. Mutafchieva's Concepts)

Prof. Nonka Bogomilova, DSc

*Institute for Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,
Bulgaria*

The report describes and comments the concepts of the known Bulgarian historians P. Mutafchiev and V. Mutafchieva (also a famous writer) regarding the people and the ethnicity as important and dynamic ingredients of the Bulgarian historical development, and as the same time as “the beaten” in history. The complicated and controversial relationships between these important ingredients and the ruling leaders are emphasized.

**Investigations and Scientific Impact of the “Arch” Rock-Cut
Geoarchaeological Site, Eastern Rhodopes, Bulgaria**

Prof. Ruslan I. Kostov, DSc

Bulgarian Geological Society, Bulgaria

A review is made on interdisciplinary studies of the “Arch” geoarchaeological site in the Eastern Rhodopes, Southern Bulgaria. The rock-cut “Arch” site is a giant vertical natural rock structure of marl-limestone composition, which has been modified in prehistoric times to fit a symmetrical outline. Linked to this geoarchaeological site are several small caves inhabited since the Paleolithic, as well as a number of the enigmatic rock-cut trapezoidal niches

First interpretative Photo Survey with Drone in the Coastal Megalith Site of Pietra Tara, (Monte Gallo Palermo). Zone VI - Tara II

Francesca Mercadante, geoarchaeologist
Geoarchpa, Italy

In 2023 the disastrous fire in the Monte Gallo Palermo, Oriented Reserve, burned all the vegetation that covered the coastal megalith site of Pietra Tara, located on the northern slope of the Promontory. The site, discovered in 2004, has been the subject of 20 years of investigations, which have determined that it belongs to Mediterranean megalithic architecture. Extended approximately 50.00mq. on a slope of groundwater debris on the coast overlooking the Tyrrhenian Sea, it has landslide carbonate blocks adapted to monoliths/menhirs around which the hut fabric is inserted, with dolmenic hypogea, anthropomorphic monoliths, dolmens. The site has been divided into two Zones, the Upper Zone and the Lower Zone. Until the disastrous fire of 2023, the Alta area was densely covered by vegetation and inaccessible. The drone flight following the fire largely revealed the areas no longer covered by greenery, fully showing the built fabric of the site for the first time. This report gives a first interpretative photo analysis of the Tara II Zone, in relation to the monoliths, hypogea and huts present there.

Phrygian Rock-Cut Monuments: Their Function in Phrygian Society

Prof. Lynn Roller, PhD
University of California, Davis, USA

Discussions of Phrygian rock-cut monuments consider their date and connection with the Matar cult, yet rarely examine them in a wider Anatolian context. Unlike contemporary Anatolian kingdoms, the Phrygians did not use rock-reliefs to advertise power and kingship. We want to examine why Phrygian practice created monuments that were highly visible, yet largely anonymous and placed in obscure settings.

Evolving Cosmological Concepts: From Ur (2200 BC), over Hattusa (1200 BC) to Athens (400 BCE)

Eberhard Zangger, PhD
Luwian Studies, Switzerland

The evolution of cosmological ideas is outlined using the example of three outstanding relics. The Ain Samiya Goblet (2200 BC) depicts the cosmovision graphically without words. In the rock sanctuary of Yazılıkaya in Hattusa, the Hittite cosmovision was carved in stone. Several figures bear short textual legends. Finally, Plato's Timaeus provides a detailed written documentation of the world view in Classical Greece (400 BC).

The Cults in the South Eastern Thrace: The Case Study of Perinthos Ancient City

Prof. Zeynep Koçel Erdem, PhD
Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Turkey

The territory of south-eastern Thrace has been home to a wide variety of cultures and belief systems since Prehistoric times. Archaeological research reveals concrete evidence of these systems. Perinthos/Herakleia (Tekirdağ Marmara Ereğlisi), located on the northern Propontis coast, where excavations started in 2021, was one of the largest and most important ancient cities of Eastern Thrace, which served as the provincial capital during the Roman period. The earliest traces of these belief systems date back to prehistoric times in the settlement and its surroundings which have been inhabited for a long time even until today. The land in question reveals a rich cult system such as the beliefs of prehistoric communities, Thracian tribes, Greeks who came with the colonial movement, and later on the Romans, as well as foreign cults like Egypt were mixed and fused. In our presentation the gods and cults of Perinthos and its surroundings will be discussed until the end of the Roman period in the light of the information in ancient sources, epigraphic and archaeological findings and the belief systems of the south-eastern Thracian lands will be discussed from a general perspective.

The Eternal Chasing of the Sun

Assist. Prof. Adriana Sarbova, PhD

*Institute for Balkan Studies with Centre of Thracology "Prof. Alexander Fol",
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria*

This poetic title expresses an architectural, but also social phenomenon of creating (megalithic) installations or sacred spaces whose main goal is to frame the Sunrise or the Sunset. Typical for the sacred architecture of ancient cultures (including Ancient Thrace), this “chasing” and aligning with the Sun seems to occupy the imagination of contemporary artists and architects as well. The article offers an analysis of several ancient and contemporary spaces, whose concept is to provide architectural frame for observation of the Sun. No matter the time gap and the building specifics, they can be perceived as parts of a cultural process and probably as a ritual, best expressing the idea of the immortality.

Megalithic Structures and the Universal Connection: Memories from the Collective Unconscious

Prof. Evie Holmberg, PhD

Independent Researcher, USA

In his book: Meetings with Remarkable Men G. I. Gurdjieff -one of the most influential spiritual teachers of our times- speaking about his father he calls him an “Ashokh”. “this name” he says “was given to the local bards, who composed, recited or sang poems, songs, legends, folk-tales, and all sorts of stories”. In Gurdjieff’s descriptions these “Ashokhs bear very similar characteristics to the Homeric Rhapsodes, the singer-composers of poems bearing archaeological information thousands of years before their time. The interesting portion of Gurdjieff’s testimony, however, is that his father at some point was reciting and singing the “legend of the Flood before the Flood” which, according to him, was relating to events that took place before the events narrated in the Epic of Gilgamesh and ultimately before Noah’s flood.

There is no limit to the depths which human consciousness can reach when it connects with its universal source, or, as Carl Jung has put it, to the collective unconsciousness. In reference to “the Flood before the Flood” ancient sources such as Plato make reference to the legend of Atlantis, dating it at about 10.000 years before his time. But then we now know through scientific evidence that there were actually floods around roughly those times, such as for example the flooding of the Black Sea which was originally a lake and did not contain salt water until about six thousand B.C.

There is a common thread behind all these floods that are so old as to antedate Noah’s: it refers to tales about beings who hold a status between gods and men, whether they are called giants, titans, Nephilim, anunnaki, heroes or semi gods. These beings usually help mankind by revealing innovations improving their life conditions and they are associated with the building of mega structures with spiritual/astrological and not utilitarian intent. In most of these tales these beings are punished by the gods for sharing privileged information with the humans.

In fairly recent scientific experiments connected with artificially induced extra or outer body experiences in volunteers (through administering to them larger than the naturally produced DMT, or subjecting them to special radio waves) most reports of the participants related contacts with what they considered “alien” beings who were “anticipating” their arrival and were eager to examine them, instruct them or help them.

In this paper I will examine three megalithic monuments; Gobelki Tepe -a Neolithic archaeological site in the Southeastern Anatolia region of Turkey dating from about 10000 -9500 BCE, Karahan Tepe in an area near Gopelki Tepe and dating around the same time, and Karahunj in Armenia - around 8000years old and considered by researchers one of the oldest astronomical observatories. The aspect I wish to investigate is the extraordinary layout and shape of these buildings as well as the intent behind their construction and use.

Cromlech of Mezora (2nd. Part) Investigation 2024 and Heritage Preservation

Prof. José Nicolás Balbi, PhD

Colchester Archaeological Group (UK), Argentina

The Mezora cromlech in northern Morocco has been the subject of archaeological astronomy study in recent years and whose updates were part of the Archaeoastronomic work carried out together with Isabella Leone and presented at the Third International Symposium of Megalithic Monuments and Cult Practices in 2020. On this occasion I have continued with the investigation of both the site itself and its surroundings and I propose not only the Archaeological study on the construction of the site and its morphology but also a summary of the heritage care that should be carried out on this site. archaeological, especially taking into account that it is currently inhabited and nearby. This work is the second of three parts and will try to make sense of the succession of functions with which the people of the area used it: burial place, solar cult temple, and the possibilities of its use in the form of other sacred aspects, meeting point, marking of political borders and part of the prehistoric system of social mobility and trade in North Africa. The final investigation in the field of the surroundings of the site and the places of origin of the construction materials push us to understand and discover new architectural and functional relationships in this exciting archaeological and cult site in North Africa.

Ritual and Secular Uses of Carved Structures? Parallel Activities on Kastro Rocks (Lemnos Island)

Christina Marangou, PhD

Independent Researcher, Greece

Besides probable symbolic uses of Kastro rocks in ritual contexts and performances, some anthropogenic features suggest an exploitation of physical rock characteristics for practical reasons, the intentional activities of daily life.

Carved alterations in some parts of the site, besides or instead of ritual practices, may also reveal possible profane uses of artificial structures. Transcendent pursuits may conceivably coexist with material functions.

Thrones in Megalithic Sanctuaries in Thrace – Symbols of the Cult of the Ruler

Assoc. prof. Metodi Manov, PhD
National Institute of Archaeology & Museum, Bulgaria

Until now, not enough attention has been paid to a very important type of megalithic monuments. In the intended report, several rock-cut thrones from several different megalithic sanctuaries in Thrace – known and unknown – will be presented. An interpretation will be presented in the light of the cult of the ruler in ancient Thrace.

The Megalithic Temple of Cefalù (Sicily)

Nadia Gugliuzza
Independent Researcher, Italy

Oriented with the equinoctial sunsets, the megalithic temple of Cefalù, located on the western side of the limestone promontory dominating the omonymous village in the middle of the northern coast of Sicily, sink its roots during the IV millennium b. C. and is characterized by a thousand-years old cult that led, in the Medieval age, to transform it in the little church of Saint Venera.

From Barrows Cape to Skyscape: the FBC long Barrows from the Kujawy Upland, Poland

Prof. Stanislaw Iwaniszewski, PhD

National School of Anthropology and History, Mexico

In the southeastern part of the Kujawy Upland, there are a number of sites with Funnel Beaker Culture unchambered long barrows. These are monumental structures that consist of elongated earthen mounds, flanked by stone rows and sometimes with additional wooden ritual structures. These structures were usually built in elevated, drier locations and provided a view of the surrounding landscape. As the surrounding areas became more deforested, the long barrows became more visible. Additionally, the strategic selection of locations for these tombs allowed for deliberate orientation towards the four cardinal directions and the phenomena observed in the sky. This could have contributed to the establishment of new concepts of social space.

The concept of celestial affordances has allowed us to reinterpret the meaning of the word "skyscape." The term "skyscape" refers to the sky as an area of human activity and is an essential component of the environment in which people reside (Silva 2015:2). This perspective helps us to examine how a "skyscape" becomes a part of people's daily lives and how they learn to use celestial features and events to deal with their daily life. The skyscape is created in parallel with the landscape as a result of the activities that connect humans with their celestial environment.

The paper delves into the skylscapes of FBC long barrows located in the Izbica Kujawska microregion. This includes Obalki, Wietrzychowice, Gaj, and Lubomin Poduchowny. The research suggests that the directions of these structures were linked to celestial horizon events

Archaeoastronomy and Pareidolias: Study of Rock Art in the Semi-Arid North of Chile

Ricardo Moyano, PhD¹, Patricio Bustamante²

University of La Serena, Chile¹, Alura Heritage Foundation, Chilean historical and geographical society, Chile²

Pareidolia is defined as a psychological phenomenon where a vague or random stimulus is perceived "incorrectly" as a recognizable and potentially sacred form by one or more individuals. As a concept and part of a larger theoretical framework (landscape studies and phenomenology), it has sparked interest and controversy in archaeology, particularly archaeoastronomy, over the last twenty years. Works mainly carried out in the Semi-Arid North of Chile account for its explanatory potential in the study of rock art, encompassing aspects never before developed by traditional archaeology, including not only human subjectivity and intersubjectivity but also alternative pathways to explaining origin myths, landscape forms (sky/earth), and comparative cosmologies. In this paper, we present evidence of possible symbolic associations between rock art from sites of the El Molle cultural period (300 B.C. - 800 A.D.) and astronomical phenomena, specifically those related to the management of solar horizon calendars and the representation of lunar cycles, as a basis for the social and political organization of pre-Hispanic societies in the Andes, Chile.

The Inhabitant of k'atunscape: A Megalithic Monument of the Classic Mayan Renewal of Time

Hans Martz de la Vega, PhD Student¹, Miguel Pérez Negrete²
*National School of Anthropology and History, Mexico¹, INAH Guerrero
Regional Center, Mexico²*

The Classic Period Maya (250-900 AD) had a political organization rooted in worldview and time cycles. Time was cosmic order and its registry gave coherence to the universe. This record of time was made through a complex meshwork of calendrical cycles and regular celebrations. It is known as the Long Count and it started from a fundamental unit that was the day (k'in), which was a living being, deeply linked to a variety of myths. Thus, the cycles and their entities governed all existing things. The fourth cycle was perhaps the most important of the long cycles, the k'atun or 7200 days, since after its ending, carved stelae of the rulers in turn were raised in the places of greatest power. The cycles were related to a complex geopolitical organization, which in Tikal, one of the most powerful cities, had its maximum expression. In this case, in addition to raising the mentioned k'atun ending megalithic monument (stela), they built a representative stage of the katunic world. In other words, a large architectural complex that was used for twenty years, built especially for the stela that contained the inauguration date, the king and outstanding iconographic elements. There are at least seven of these sets at the archaeological sites of Tikal and Yaxhá, Guatemala. This is a unique aspect in all of the classic Maya and that only happened in Tikal and Yaxha, as far as we know. Thereby, we based on Tim Ingold's ideas of meshwork and the life of lines, Felipe Criado's xscapes and Fabio Silva's skyscape, to propose that the contexts of the k'atuns, that we will describe as a "k'atunscape". The other ritual component related to the end of k'atun was the k'altuun ("covered stones, or wrapped"); consisted in covering and wrapping megalithic stelae and monuments, leaving a kind of bundle that left a part of the context hidden from view. We will discuss the meaning of the time wrapping for the mayans and, finally, the intrinsic relationship between the rulers or ajaw and the elements and beings of the cosmos through time as a fundamental tool for the exercise of political power it is also proposed.

Orientation of pre-Islamic temples in Arabia Felix

Themis Dallas, PhD
University of Thessaly, Greece

Southwest Arabia has been the home of ancient civilizations that have left behind —often impressive— temples, dated in the 1st millennium BCE. The purpose of the present paper is to try to distinguish possible solar, lunar or astral properties of the temples —and by extension of gods— by studying the orientation of the structures. This is done by remote methods. About 40 temples have been identified in Google Earth satellite photographs (with the help of the gazetteer available at the Digital Archive for the Study of pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions). Their preliminary archaeoastronomical study does not reveal significant astronomical orientations. However, the Yemeni culture includes an extensive tradition of almanacs since the Middle Ages, and we speculate that this may be somehow a revival of older traditions. Unfortunately, no sources reveal such a custom in Pre-Islamic times.

Archaeoastronomy of a Few Megalithic Complexes of Jharkhand in East India

Subhashis Das
Independent Researcher, India

For the tribes in the state of Jharkhand in India raising megalithic burials on the dead is a continued tradition since antiquity. But a few of the megalithic complexes expose geometry and astronomy in their construction. The positioning of the complex and its stones reveal their orientation towards cardinal points, the sunrises and sets of the solstices and equinoxes. My study and research discloses as to why such astronomical megalithic complexes were constructed in prehistoric times.

Astronomical Bases of Symbols of Power: Eagle, Scepter and Orb

Assoc. Prof. Alina Paranina, PhD
Herzen State Pedagogical University, Russia

The methodological basis of the study was the navigation concept of world information modeling (navigation - orientation and movement). The core of the concept is astronomical nature of the sign: instrumental astronomical orientation is the source of signs of space and time. Based on a comparative analysis, it is shown that the prototypes of the scepter, eagle and orb could be the gnomon of the sundial, its shadow and elements of the geometry of the celestial sphere.

The Megalithic Complex of Rego da Murta (Alvaiázere, Portugal)

Alexandra Figueiredo, PhD
Instituto Politécnico de Tomar, Portugal

The Rego da Murta megalithic complex is made up of 14 monuments, in a space of approximately 1 square kilometer, featuring corridor dolmens, menhirs and atypical structures essentially framed between the ancient Neolithic and the early Bronze Age. In this poster we intend to present the main characteristics recorded in the deposition behaviors carried out in dolmens I and II of Rego da Murta, as well as some studies associated with them.

The Dolmen of Azurrague (Ourém, Portugal)

Alexandra Figueiredo, PhD
Instituto Politécnico de Tomar, Portugal

The Azurrague dolmen is the only known monument in the municipality of Ourém (Portugal). The intervention work began in 2024, with some interesting data already being recorded regarding the interpretation of the observed contexts and exhumed data. This poster will allow for a first

unprecedented analysis of this archaeological site and its relationship with the phenomenon of megalithism observed in neighboring municipalities.

On the Specific Orientation of the Medieval Church Ravna near Provadia

Assoc. prof. Lyubomir Tsonev, PhD

Institute of Solid State Physics, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria

In the vicinity of the town of Provadia, near the village of Ravna, there are the remains of a medieval Bulgarian monastery that functioned in the 9th-11th centuries. It was an important educational center in the First Bulgarian State. The orientation of this temple has never been explored until now. Our research has shown that the temple has a completely atypical orientation. It is aimed at a rock sanctuary of prehistoric character. For this reason, it is recommended that this sanctuary be studied more carefully.

Megalithic Monuments from the Area of the Zhrebichko Village, Bratsigovo Municipality (Bulgaria)

Assoc. prof. Angel Yankov, PhD

Regional Ethnographic Museum – Plovdiv, Bulgaria

The passage describes the ancient megalithic monuments near the village of Zhrebichko, situated on the northern gentle slopes of the Western Rhodopes. This area offers breathtaking panoramic views and is renowned for its picturesque sunrises and sunsets. The abundance of rhyolite rocks with various shapes has given rise to megalithic landmarks such as “The Portal” and “The Eyes”. Additionally, several stones in the areas of Dabravata, Paskovite Kamani, and Nyamcha are held in high reverence. The local topography has sustained ancient beliefs and practices, making former cult places in the areas of St. George, the Cross, or the peak of St. Elijah significant for Christians as well. Consequently, some refer to the area as “The Ancient Holy Mountain”, “The Rhodope Jerusalem”, or the “Cross Forest”.

Phrygian Region Rock Monuments and Their Use in Touristic Ceramic Souvenir Design

Research Assist. Kamuran Ak, PhD
Afyon Kocatepe University, Turkey

Phrygia; It is a civilization that spread to the lands of the provinces of Kütahya, Eskişehir and Afyonkarahisar and has left traces to this day with its historical ruins and ancient artifacts. In addition to historical artefacts such as rock settlements, necropolises, rock churches, altars and ancient roads within the borders of Afyonkarahisar in the Phrygian region, ceramic remains discovered during surface excavations and vessels exhibited in museums show the variety of objects made from clay in this region. In addition to these movable elements of tangible cultural heritage, ceramic souvenir designs have been developed to increase the recognition of the region by turning them into souvenirs that reflect the immovable elements. It is planned to contribute to tourism by promoting the region with ceramic souvenirs reflecting the historical urban textures, monuments and archaeological sites of the Phrygian region: Aslantash, Ayazini Rock Church, Aslankaya and Yuchlerkayas regions. Ceramic magnets are designed as souvenirs with the idea of being simple, accessible to everyone and can be bought as gifts and exported outside the region. In order to increase the desire of tourists and people from outside the region to visit the Phrygian region, promotion was aimed by providing coordinates and a brief introductory information on the souvenir packaging.

The Study of the Circular Enclosures of Central Europe as a Milestone in the Establishment of the Lunisolar Calendar

Romain Ravigno, PhD Student
Sorbonne University, France, University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain

Research aimed at establishing the milestones of a history of astronomy during Protohistory, and more particularly the establishment of a lunisolar calendar, focuses on the transition period between the end of the Neolithic and the beginning of the Bronze Age. Thus, paleogenetic research carried out by

the Max Planck Institute shows a mixing of populations related to two distinct cultures in Central Europe during this period. During the Neolithic, two cultures, the Stichbandkeramik Kultur (STB K) and the Lengyel Culture shared the construction of circular enclosures for ritual purposes. However, these enclosures seem to focus on different astronomical events; solar for STB K and lunar for the Lengyel culture. At the end of the interbreeding phase highlighted by researchers, the Bronze Age enclosures (like Pommelte) are oriented towards lunisolar events. Is it then legitimate to see in this phase of genetic crossbreeding, a synthesis of the astronomical knowledge brought together by these two cultures?

Megaliths in Brezovo Municipality. Modern Web Technologies in the Service of Promotion and Representation

Prof. Valeria Fol, DSc¹, Assist. Prof. Oleg Konstantinov, PhD²

University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, Institute for Balkan Studies with Centre of Thracology "Prof. Alexander Fol", Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria¹, Sofia University, Bulgaria²

The number of relatively recently documented megaliths in Sarnena Sredna Gora is increasing every year. One can hypothesize that there was a political and religious centre on the territory of today's Brezovo since the second half of the 2nd millennium BC, which continued to function until the territory was included in the Roman Empire. In addition to scientific documentary and analysis, the report also reflects the technological and design work of the authors in the name of the popularization of the subject through modern web technologies.

Should we do anything? (Bulgarian Megalithic Monuments and What We Can Do about Them).

Milena Lozanova

Independent Researcher, Bulgaria

The considerable number of megaliths are only part of the various types of cultural sites spread throughout Bulgaria. But are they significant? Should we prioritize them? To answer, we have to keep in mind our knowledge, interests and resources. Is it time to decide their faith? Or not yet? So, what can we do now? Preserve what we have left for future generations. Gather data. Create sustainable strategies for the development of areas with high concentrations of megaliths.

The Museum of Prehistoric Anthropology of Monaco: A Century of Archaeological Research and Heritage Preservation

Elena Rossoni-Notter, PhD

Museum of Prehistoric Anthropology, Monaco

Founded in 1902 by Prince Albert I of Monaco, the Museum of Prehistoric Anthropology is a research institute that operates across the entire spectrum of archaeological work. The institute is also heavily involved in scientific publications, the development of exhibitions and educational outreach. We will introduce you to the ongoing research programs, as well as the most recent publications and exhibitions led by the museum. It will be intriguing to learn about the significant role the team plays in the preservation of archaeological heritage.

Exhibitions of Prehistoric Finds in Turkish Museums – A Case Study

Prof. Ergün Lafli, PhD
Dokuz Eylül University, Turkey

In this online presentation I will attempt to present current exhibitions of prehistoric finds in Turkish state museums, based on examples of Göbeklitepe in the Archaeological Museum of Şanlıurfa, prehistoric finds in three large museums of Izmir and several prehistoric exhibitions, including finds from Çatalhöyük and Hacılar, in the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara. The aim of my presentation will be to display Turkish museological methods of exhibiting prehistoric heritage of ancient Anatolia and to discuss the most recent international approaches to the scientific exhibitions. At the end of my talk, I will offer some suggestions concerning a better presentation of material.

Meteor Strikes Recorded in Prehistoric Art: from Göbekli Tepe to Lascaux

Martin Sweatman, PhD
University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Earth has endured an episode of coherent catastrophism over the last 20-30 thousand years or so. This means strikes by comet fragments were much more common and violent during this period than the long-term average. Over most of this time, humans were unable to record these comet strikes in writing. But, it seems they were still able to record what happened to them, and when, with a form of proto-writing that involved constellations and precession of the equinoxes. Here, I describe evidence for two cosmic impacts recorded on stone; Pillar 43 at Göbekli Tepe and the Lascaux Shaft Scene. Each is an artistic masterpiece designed to endure. The impact described at Göbekli Tepe is probably the well-known but controversial Younger Dryas impact. This, it seems, was a pivotal moment in pre-history, as it ushered-in the agricultural transition in the Fertile Crescent. The impact probably recorded by the Lascaux

Shaft Scene is currently unknown. Nevertheless, it appears to have had an equally dramatic effect on the hunter-gathers of south-west France. One that took millennia to recover from. Both these cosmic impacts seem to be described using almost the same kind of proto-writing and similar constellations. Are there other prehistoric examples waiting to be decoded?

Stone Terraces of Gunung Padang Site as Modification of Highland Resources for Past Ancestor Worship

Lutfi Yondri, PhD

National Research and Innovation Agency of Indonesia

The stone terrace of the Gunung Padang site is located at the top of the mountain. A few years ago, it became a polemic as the oldest pyramid in the world. Based on the results of archaeological research, no data were found to support this conclusion. From archaeological thinking, stone terraces in the prehistoric era were known and described as places for religious practices. The stone terrace is recorded as one of the structures built by modifying the surrounding materials (columnar joints) by prehistoric people living around the site in the past. Geologically, Gunung Padang is part of an ancient volcano that produced stone blocks or columnar joints around 1-2 million years ago. Descriptively, the stone terrace of the Gunung Padang site consists of five terraces, starting from the well as a place of purification, then at the top of the hill there are five terraces. The five terraces from the well are connected by stone stairs which are also made of columnar joints. This paper aims to explore how past communities modified the natural resources of the mountains for their religious needs in ancestor worship in the past.

Megalithic Culture of Central India: Location, Typology, Customs and Relationship

Assist. Prof. Virag Sontakke PhD
Banaras Hindu University, India

The emergence of the Megalithic culture during the Early Iron Age is one of the most significant episodes in the protohistoric period of ancient India. In north India, megaliths have been commonly reported from the Vindhyan scarp landscape of north Madhya Pradesh, the central-southern part of Chhattisgarh and the eastern part of Maharashtra. Each region mentioned has its own geographical backdrop, environmental setting, and different pockets of megalithic communities with separate typologies. Archaeological research has demonstrated that Central India is one of the most significant geographic areas for megalithic monuments, but very few studies have been undertaken so far. The megaliths of each region in Central India seem to possess distinct characteristics, unique patterns, customs, rituals, and personal identities. A few peculiarities appear to be common to each group. However, in the absence of a robust comparative study, it has been difficult to determine whether each region of central India possesses its own unique megalithic culture and follows similar cult practices or if there are commonalities and differences amongst them. In this paper, I attempt to address the detailed studies and discuss observed similarities, divergences and the unique qualities of the megalithic remains of Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha and Chhattisgarh of central India.

Astral Symbols and Sacred Spaces: Mithraic Influences on Early Christian Symbolism and Architecture

Reza Assasi, PhD

Toronto Metropolitan University/Centennial College, Canada

Archaeological findings at Dura-Europos, Syria, have revealed the earliest known Christian church (circa 233 CE), situated within a culturally diverse setting that also contained a synagogue and a Mithraeum. This setting underscores the varied religious landscape, where Mithraism, linked to the Persian god Mithras, existed alongside early Christianity. This study delves into the architectural and iconographic similarities between Mithraic and Christian sites, examining Mithraic cosmology's influence on early Christian art and architecture. The design of the Mithraeum, with its vaulted, cave-like structure and tauroctony, indicates significant architectural and ideological impacts on Christian spaces. Through a comparative analysis of artifacts and architectural designs, this research suggests that Mithraic concepts considerably influenced early Christian symbolism and the perception of sacred spaces, demonstrating a shared tradition of astral symbolism and sacred geometry. This analysis illuminates the spread of Mithraic elements in Roman religious practices and the intricate blending of cultural and religious elements in shaping early Christian identity and spatial concepts.

The Others: The Pits, Disks and Oven Rocks on the Eastern Thrace

Prof. Engin Beksaç, PhD
Independent researcher, Turkey

The Thracian territories contain rich cultural heritage and some of the most interesting cultural monuments from the early prehistoric and protohistoric and historic periods. An important part of them is well-known. However, the most important part is unknown to the common people and scholars. And even, the researchers and pseudo-researchers did not and/or cannot pay any attention to these most interesting megalithic (rock-cut) monuments of the Eastern Thrace. Some of them call and identify them very wrong. The author encountered them for a very long time during his survey programs, in the Eastern Thrace especially. Despite they were not of great interest and importance before, we have a better knowledge of their importance within the framework of the cultural and especially, cult heritages of the Thrace. Similar monuments exist in Bulgaria and all the other neighboring countries. Although these monuments have begun to attract attention and be researched in Bulgaria and other neighboring countries, we are still at the beginning of research in Turkey.

These monuments are in different, but related groups of monuments. And even they are related to the rock-cut sanctuaries and shrines, and the dolmens too. They include the pits, discs and oven rocks, as most interesting cult monuments, in a general context. We aim to introduce them generally, into the academic and public milieu.

Some Rock-Cut Monuments in the Ancient Region of Lydia

Umut M. Doğan, PhD

Edirne Museum of Archaeology, Turkey

The region defined as Lydia in the Ancient Period was located in Western Anatolia. Its capital was the city of Sardis, located within the borders of today's Manisa province. The Gediz River (Ancient Hermos) formed the center of the region. There are megalithic structures in the Upper Bakırçay Valley, where the Bakırçay River (Ancient Kaikos) originates, which forms the northern border of the region, and in the city center of Manisa, which forms the center of the region. This study aims to identify the rock monuments concentrated in two points of the region, to interpret their characteristics in terms of cult practice, and to discuss their possible relations with the surrounding cultures and especially with the megalithic monuments of the Thracian Region. Based on short-term field observations and a literature review, this study is a preliminary report for future detailed research.

Megalithic Structures and their Role in Ritual Practice in Ancient Japan

Elena Solovyeva, PhD

Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, Siberian Branch of Russian Academy of Science, Russia

Ancient Japan is well known for its megalithic structures: stone circles of Jomon Period and megalithic monuments of Yayoi Period. Jomon stone circles are located mostly in the Eastern part of the Japanese islands; they are considered as important part of social and religious rites, several of them as some kind of astronomical calendar tools. The Yayoi megalithic structures are represented by dolmens in the Western part of Japan. Thus, speaking of the megalithic structures of the Yayoi culture, we primarily imply burials with dolmens. Despite the fact that during the Late-Final Jomon period, stone structures were used in burial practices on the territory of Kyushu Island, the tradition of constructing dolmens goes back to the time when the population migrated from the Korean Peninsula.

The Megalithism in Central Portugal

Alexandra Figueiredo, PhD
Instituto Politécnico de Tomar, Portugal

In the central region of Portuguese territory, numerous traces of funerary deposits in caves coexist with contemporary depositions in megalithic monuments. There appears to be a continuity of ritual practices, with cave deposits originating from ancient communities persisting alongside the construction of megaliths, suggesting similar cultural behaviors. Given the karstic nature of the region, organic materials are well-preserved, offering valuable insights into the adoption of these new architectural structures and the socio-cultural dynamics of the communities involved. In this presentation, we will discuss various archaeological sites, their contexts, chrono-cultural characteristics, and outline proposals for interpretation for the Alto Ribatejo region.

The Mounds of the Necropolis in Salve (Lecce) and the Beginning of Megalithism in South-Eastern Italy

Ida Tiberi, PhD
Biblio-Museum Hub of Lecce, Italy

Until a few years ago, Apulian megalithism included three architectural typologies: dolmens, menhirs and “specchie”, all dating back to the Bronze Age (2nd millennium BC). The dolmens, covered or not by mounds, are characterized by a single chamber that opens directly to the outside or by a corridor or a gallery covered with slabs leading to the chamber. The menhirs are long monolithic parallelepipeds set in the rock which do not exceed, in Puglia, a height of 4 meters. The “specchie” are monuments characterized by a circular mound that in some cases covers a stone cist located in the center (piccole specchie). Recent researches carried out by the University of Salento have shown that megalithism, in this region, dates back to the Copper Age (4-3th millennium BC). Indeed, in the territory of Salve, in the south of Puglia, a

necropolis characterized by 90 mounds scattered over an area of about one hundred hectares was found. The mounds have an elliptical shape and are, on average, 4-7 meters long, 3-6 meters wide, and 0,70 meters high with some of them measuring 22 x 18 x 1 meters. Twelve mounds of this necropolis have been excavated and nine of them revealed a ritual or funerary function. They are characterized by a floor of large stone blocks or a stone cist in which inhumed human remains or vases containing cremated human remains accompanied by pottery, shell and bone objects had been placed. The excavated mounds are dated to a period between 3,500 and 2,300 BC. The multidisciplinary study of the necropolis involved the analysis of pottery, bone and shell artefacts, human remains and anthracological finds among the remains of cremations. Anthracological analysis allowed the reconstruction of the phases of the cremation rituals not directly visible on site, such as the lighting of the pyre and the collection and transport of the burnt remains contributing to the reconstruction of the role of plants in the funerary rituals of the Apulian communities of the Copper Age. The burial mounds of Salve have few comparisons in Italy both from an architectural point of view and for the practice of incineration. Their discovery contributed to the knowledge of new aspects of ritual and funerary practices during Copper Age and on the beginnings of megalithism in Italy.

Prehistoric Rituals on Hellenistic site. Archetypes of Faith through History

Dejan Gorgievski, archaeologist
Museum of Kumanovo, Republic of North Macedonia

The oldest findings from the well-known rock sanctuaries at Pelince and Kokino can be dated in the early bronze age, but, it seems that both went out of use in the transitional period. And although we don't have any indications on the way rituals were practiced in the Iron Age, it seems that not much has been changed. The newly found evidences from the Hellenistic site near the above-mentioned sanctuaries, speaks that very similar rituals took place in the 4th – 3rd c.B.C. The rock was still observed as a special place to

perform activities connected with fertility and the underground world. The small constructions build on the site are very similar with the constructions that were in use 2000 years before, at Kokino and Pelince.

**Thracian-Greek Relations in the Region of the Aegean Coast
Between Hebros and Nestos (6-4 CBC) in the Light of
Archaeological Research**

Chrysoula Plioka, PhD student
South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, Bulgaria

The article offers an overview of the problem of Thracian-Greek relations in the region of the Aegean coast between Hebros and Nestos (6-4 CBC) in the light of recent archaeological research at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century.

Rock Sanctuaries from the Central Rhodopes, Smolyan Region

Hristina Valchanova, PhD student
South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, Bulgaria

The article presents unpublished archaeological findings from the territory of the Smolyan region, discovered during field surveys. According to the classification commonly used in literature, these findings belong to rock sanctuaries situated on mountain peaks and isolated rock formations. One particular object of interest is still utilized by local residents as an active “living” healing place.

Distribution of Megalithic sites and Burial Practice in Adwa River Valley of North-Eastern Vindhyas, India

Dheeraj Sharma, Research Scholar¹, Assist. Prof. Virag Sontakke, PhD²
Banaras Hindu University, India¹, Banaras Hindu University, India²

Northeastern Vindhyas has the most favorable geographical settings for megalithic culture. The abundant availability of stones, iron deposits, plenty of water and forest cover played a vital role in the subsistence and settlement of the megalithic communities in this area. One of the major pockets of megalith monuments are encountered in the Adwa River valley, located in the upper Vindhya region. The area is dotted with several megalithic cemetery sites and habitation deposits. The previous work in this area focused only on reporting of the megalithic burial sites and general typology. A few trial trenches have also been conducted in this area, but no detailed report has been published yet. Due to the absence of detailed research on megalithic monuments in this area, the basic information is missing. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the megaliths in the Adwa River valley, the current researcher conducted a thorough survey of the area and identified the megalithic burial as well as habitation sites. To understand the personality of megaliths of this region systematic documentation of megalithic sites, landscape analysis, typology, intra-site relationships, settlements, land-use patterns, probable resource exploitation, ethnoarchaeological work, customs and traditions and comparisons with adjacent regions have been conducted. This paper presents the promising results of the new exploration conducted by the researchers.

Megalithic Burial Customs in North-Eastern Vindhyan Region, India

Deepesh Singh, PhD Student
Banaras Hindu University, India

The North-Eastern Vindhyan region stands as a pivotal archaeological landscape, drawing significance from its strategic geographical location that has been inhabited by humans since prehistoric times. Burial practice is consisting one of the significant customs found in this vast region as a form of megalithic burials, existed in the protohistoric period. Megalithic burials are commonly observed in this region on outcrops, barren grounds, hilltops, slopes, and the banks of tributaries. Megalithic burials were documented in this region during the colonial period. After post-independence, some burials also excavated, yet comprehensive data on these megaliths remains lacking. The megalithic research in this area was mainly exploratory in nature lacking detailed work. The research area, endowed with abundant natural resources like perennial water bodies, fertile lands, ample boulders, dense vegetation, and mineral wealth, notably iron. In light of the favourable ecological conditions, no comprehensive analysis typology, locational patterns, site hierarchy, ecological adaptations, and resource management, despite its favourable ecological conditions. The present paper is focused on recent detailed documentation work on the megalithic distribution in North-Eastern Vindhyas, in which discussion will encompass aspects such as the Megalithic custom of Vindhyan region, types of megaliths, their construction techniques, the utilization of mineral resources, location analysis and more.

Adana Dolmens and Their Regional Relations

Assoc. Prof. Bakiye Yökmen Edens, PhD

Çukurova University, Turkey

Throughout the ages, Adana has been a region of transition between Levantine and Anatolian cultures. We know the importance of dolmens as evidence for discussions about the socio-cultural structures of past communities. Within the scope of these discussions, I introduce the dolmens of Adana, together with those of southern Anatolia, as they contain important information about the Levant-Anatolia transition.

Geographical Location and Natural Environment of the Thracian-Greek Topoi of Faith

Chief Assist. Alexander Portalsky, PhD

South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Bulgaria

The Balkan-Anatolian faith is attached in unity with the nature, it is inseparable from the environment, as the appearance of the divine, the decisive for the life of the ancient man, the theophany, manifests itself not only as a result of ritual actions, but also in certain sacred places. These places (topoi of faith) are in a similar environment. Southeastern Europe and Asia Minor have 4 or 5 Köppen humidity zones for agriculture and livestock. This is a unique variety in such a small area. However, there are very similar cult sites on them, which have a very similar geographical location – they are located on mountain slopes, in belts according to the altitude and according to the degree of sacredness.

On the Way to the South. Early Cult Architecture in the Southwest Thracian Lands

Prof. Diana Gergova PhD
National Academy of Arts, Bulgaria

The three monuments of early megalithic architecture in South Pirin /Teshovo, Gaitaninovo and Paril/, published on this forum not long ago, together with the already known water temple near the village of Garlo and the ornamented stone stelae from Razlog, outline the southwestern Thracian lands as a specific region, in which newly emerging aspects in the beliefs of the Thracians and their predetermined architectural appearances, as well as the questions surrounding their historical interpretation, become more visible. While some architectural solutions and ornamental motifs show an undeniable connection with the cultural traditions of Northern and Central Europe, others show their integration and presence in the culture of the Eastern Mediterranean world. A complex of historical, mythological and modern archeometric data give reason to attribute these monuments to the problem of the so-called “Sea peoples”, some of which are assumed to have European and Thracian origins. Descending to the south along the river valleys, they also leave significant evidence of the way of formation of the ancient religious thinking of the Thracians in its early stage during the Late Bronze Age.

Visual Connections between some of the Mountain Sanctuaries of Thracians in the Dabrash Ridge, Western Rhodopes Area

Assoc. Prof. Anton Genov, PhD

South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Bulgaria

This text examines the documented visual connections between several important sites in the westernmost parts of the Rhodopes, which can be interpreted as open-air sanctuaries. They have been explored through field surveys in the area conducted by the University Research Center for Ancient European and Eastern Mediterranean Cultures at SWU "Neofit Rilski". Between the main sanctuaries in the area, visual links were evidenced, which raise questions about the role of sanctuaries not only as cult centers but also as strongholds and communication points of the local Thracian tribes. The examined sites are almost unknown to science and have not been studied by archaeological excavations so far. Despite the fact that most of them have suffered greatly from treasure hunters, I believe that in these mountain centers of the Western Rhodopes there is great potential to supplement the fragmented knowledge of Thracian culture and in particular the tribes of Southwestern Thrace.

Exploring Weaponry and Cultural Dynamics in the Kurgan Burial Traditions of Northwest Iran

Zahra Kouzehgari, PhD

Associate Researcher, University Lumiere Lyon 2, France

The archaeological surveys and excavations in northwest Iran have revealed widespread kurgan burial traditions that extend from the southern shores of Lake Urmia to the Araxes River and the western coast of the Caspian Sea. Based upon comparative analysis of associated material, particularly pottery, these burial mounds have been chronologically dated to the Early Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age (ca. 3000-700 BCE). Recent studies of the surface structure of these mounds and burial graves have revealed the presence of distinct cultural groups within these kurgans. The present paper aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the weaponry discovered within these burials, in order to gain insight into how these cultural groups are distributed and their significance in the region on a spatial and chronological scale. These findings reflect complex cultural dynamics and interactions in northwest Iranian kurgan burial traditions.

Virtual Tour for Presentation of Rock-Cut Sanctuary Kara Tash in Southwestern Bulgaria

Assist. Prof. Anastas Ifandiev, PhD
South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, Bulgaria

The documentation and display of tangible cultural heritage objects through the use of modern digital technologies is an important and active field of research for scientists across a range of scientific disciplines. These studies' interdisciplinary approach opens up new avenues for cultural heritage presentation that are both beneficial to science and visually appealing to the general audience. Virtual tours have become a common and appropriate way to display museum collections, architectural landmarks, and gallery exhibitions remotely. Rock sanctuaries and other outdoor monuments are less frequently treated with this technique. The present study is devoted to the process of creation of a virtual tour of one specific object - the Kara Tash cult complex in the Western Rhodopes, Bulgaria. The created visualization can contribute to making the monument more accessible and raise awareness of little-known objects like this one.