



“Sacred Places & Spaces: Prehistoric Perspectives”

A one day International Symposium under the auspices of the *Bina and Moshe Stekelis Foundation for Prehistoric Research in Israel* & the Department of Prehistory, Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

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| 8:30-9:00 | Refreshments | |
| 9:00-9:15 | Yossef Garfinkel | <i>Introductory remarks</i> |
| 9:20-9:30 | Ofer Bar-Yosef | <i>Bina and Moshe Stekelis – Personal recollections</i> |
| 9:30-10:15 | Ofer Bar-Yosef | <i>Nahal Hemar cave - A unique Middle PPNB storage and its Levantine context</i> |
| 10:15-11:00 | Dusan Borić | <i>Lepenski Vir between sacred and profane: A social archaeology of humans and non-humans among the Danube Gorges fisher-foragers</i> |
| 11:00-11:15 | Refreshments | |
| 11:15-12:00 | Mike Parker Pearson | <i>Stonehenge: creating a sacred space in prehistory</i> |
| 12:00-12:45 | Leore Grosman | <i>Sacred caves in the landscape during the late Natufian –Hilazon Tachtit cave as a case study</i> |
| 13:00-14:30 | Lunch break | |
| 14:30-15:15 | Moritz Kinzel | <i>Göbekli Tepe</i> |
| 15:15-16:00 | Steven Rosen | <i>Before Ozymandias: the Earliest Monuments in the Deserts of the Southern Levant</i> |
| 16:00-16:15 | Refreshments | |
| 16:15-17:00 | Mihriban Özbaşaran & Gunes Duru | <i>The hidden 'sacred' at Aşıklı – central Anatolia</i> |
| 17:00-17:45 | Nigel Goring-Morris | <i>Baiting the bull: The founding of a PPNB sacred place at Kfar HaHoresh</i> |
| 17:45-18:30 | | Summary remarks & discussion |

Dan Wassong Auditorium, the Rabin Building auditorium, Mt. Scopus campus, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Thursday 24th May 2018



Organizing Committee:

Nigel Goring-Morris

Anna Belfer-Cohen

Leore Grossman

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Abstracts:

Nahal Hemar cave - A unique Middle PPNB storage and its Levantine context

Ofer Bar-Yosef, Harvard University, USA

Nahal Hemar cave is a small dark cave that contained numerous well-preserved broken and torn organic remains dated to 9,900-9,500 cal BP. These include woven artifacts produced from flax ('napkins', head-gear, and numerous strings of various thickness). A broken basket yielded collagen and blood proteins of bovine origin (*Bos* genus) with a thick coverage of a plant protein, charybdin (*Charybdis* genus). Other organics are wooden beads, some painted red and green and a rich assemblage of bone tools (spatulas, points), as well as a special collection of elongated pointed flint blades with bi-lateral retouched notches near the proximal end (called Nahal Hemar blades). Objects made of plaster incorporate 'beads' attached to strings, and a fragment of a plaster statue. Several human skulls covered by a black material applied in a net pattern evoking a headdress – comprising a residue of lipids that were shown to contain benzoate and cinnamate derivatives together with triterpenic compounds consistent with an altered styrax-type resin. The triterpenoids proved to be chemotaxonomic markers of *Styrax officinalis*, a tree native to Mediterranean vegetation. Unique finds are broken, painted limestone masks and three bone figurines. A sample of recovered plant remains fall squarely among the domesticated species as well as gathered wild plants. Cultural comparisons demonstrate that many elements are similar to finds in the northern Levant (e.g. carnelian beads, the textiles) that demonstrate how the collection from Nahal Hemar is directly related to the Middle PPNB Levantine Interaction sphere.



Photo: ANG-M.

Lepenski Vir between sacred and profane: A social archaeology of humans and non-humans among the Danube Gorges fisher-foragers

Dušan Borić, Columbia University, USA

A growing theoretical sophistication of anthropological archaeologists in their accounts of past case studies requires one to scrutinize inherited conceptual categories of thought. “Sacred” is one of such categories. “Religion” and “belief” may similarly be considered “corrupted” and problematic concepts. Secularist and functionalist perspectives have too often limited our accounts of past ritual practices and beliefs, reducing them to familiar narratives. In such accounts “religious” and “sacred” as analytical categories have been separated violently from other facets of what once must have been a social totality. Could we attempt to provide accounts of premodern past realities without reducing them to certain modernist and overall secularist agendas?

With some of these theoretical questions in mind, the paper will review archaeological evidence of fisher-forager groups found in the Danube Gorges area of the central Balkans in the course of the regional Mesolithic period and up to the period when the first agricultural communities started interacting with the local foragers. The focus will be on the iconic sequence found at the site of Lepenski Vir, where during the phase of forager-farmer contacts there is a heightened level of non-ordinary material culture expression. Similar to other such unique archaeological sites worldwide, there has been a debate as to what extent can Lepenski Vir be considered “special,” with a proliferation of elements that may mark it as a sacred and spiritual center of these forager groups. To contribute to this debate, the paper contextualizes this extraordinary sequence in relation to other chronologically overlapping sites and the region’s landscape setting.



Photo: Lepenski Vir archive.

Göbekli Tepe

Moritz Kinzel, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Germany

The early Pre-Pottery Neolithic site of Göbekli Tepe (c. 9,500-8,000 calBC) numbers among the most important prehistoric excavations currently underway in Turkey. Its monumental buildings with their characteristic T-shaped limestone pillars are the central elements of an early ritual centre which dates to a period before the appearance of domesticated crops and animals. At the time of its discovery, Göbekli Tepe changed our understanding of this period. For the first time, there was indisputable evidence that hunter-gatherer groups erected megalithic structures, apparently as a setting for their ritual practices, thus implying that these communities had the knowledge, experience and social structures necessary for the realization of complex building projects. Following this discovery, it was argued that the emergence of religion may have been an incentive for Neolithisation (and not vice versa as previously suggested).

Since first excavations, which commenced in the mid-1990s, Göbekli Tepe has repeatedly been referred to as a solely ritual site (mountain sanctuary). However, fieldwork is now revealing a more complex story. New results suggest that a small population might have been residing at Göbekli Tepe from its earliest settlement phase (mid-10th millennium calBC). Although the existence of parallel domestic activities does not detract from the status of Göbekli Tepe as a significant early ritual centre, these new findings do mean that the function of the site must be reconsidered. Additionally, recent archaeological surveys are providing evidence for an increasing number of 'T-Pillar-sites' in the Sanliurfa region. These new results are presented, after which there follows a reappraisal of the character of the site within the context of its regional setting.



Photo: archives of the GT-Project at DAI.

The hidden 'sacred' at Aşıklı – central Anatolia

Güneş Duru, Galatasaray University, Turkey & **Mihriban Özbaşaran**, Istanbul University, Turkey

Recent research in Southwest Asia indicates that the concept of sacred/sacredness not only reinforced sedentary life and neolithisation processes but also triggered its emergence. In addition to being an economic transformation, the Neolithic has been discussed as 'the revolution of symbols' among the hunter-gatherer groups interacting around hunting centres, natural resources, etc., as exemplified in the Azraq and Urfa regions. By the end of the Epipaleolithic, from the Southern Levant to the North, materialised symbolism operated the memories, identities and languages of communities, whether as competition, display and the formation of oral narratives, a matter currently under debate within the scope of cognitive evolution.

While these processes are illustrated in Levantine material culture, the western extension of the region, central Anatolia, displays a different trajectory. The 7th mill. BC settlement at Çatalhöyük was inhabited by thousands of people with their unique and intense symbolic world, as reflected by rich representations of humans and animals in relief, wall paintings, figurines and burial practices. Yet not a single collective/communal building where groups gathered and shared practices and symbolism has been documented. Ian Hodder believes that the community did not need it. If so, then how and where did this symbolic world with such high-scale materialisation take shape? Did the community's common symbolic expression form spontaneously at the settlement?

Aşıklı, preceding Çatalhöyük by a millennium, contains hardly any materialised symbolism. Hundreds of people lived together for about a thousand of years. How did they manage? Why are there no explicit symbolic expressions? How did they manage to overcome conflicts? Is it possible that the entrancing environmental diversity of the volcanic landscape was perceived as a natural sacred world? If so, then why did they not materialise components of this fascinating geography? Did being a transitional community at a formative stage of sedentary life-ways lead them to feel and see themselves as part of the natural world? With these questions and the available data in mind, our presentation discusses relations of this outstanding site with the "sacred".



Photo: Aşıklı archive

Baiting the bull: the founding of a sacred PPNB place at Kfar HaHoresh

A. Nigel Goring-Morris, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Nestled in the upper reaches of a nondescript wadi draining the Nazareth hills of lower Galilee the small, secluded Pre-Pottery Neolithic B site of Kfar HaHoresh was used for from the beginning of the Early to the beginning of the Late PPNB, ca. 10,500 - 9,500 calBP. Set in what was then a bedrock embayment, the site underwent significant changes in scale and orientation during its occupation.

Initially a monumental quadrilateral stone walled and lime-plastered, but unroofed podium dominated the area. Other structures included probable terrace walls, installations, post-holes, pits and combustion features. Find densities were initially quite sparse. Under and around the podium single human adult interments were documented, as well as pits with animal remains, especially aurochs.

In later phases the monumental podium was replaced by a variety of smaller, partially walled, quadrilateral or oval plaster surfaced features, monoliths, pits, as well as numerous combustion features. Dense midden deposits indicate increasingly intensive use. While single primary burials continue, others are secondary, sometimes including multiple individuals (often carefully arranged) under the plastered surfaces, with females and children becoming more common. Skull caches and plastered skulls also occur.

Corresponding to the initiation and consolidation of a domestic village economy, the interpretation of Kfar HaHoresh site as a regional funerary and cult locality used by neighbouring lowland communities on a periodic basis will be evaluated. Emphasis will focus upon its founding phase during a period of significant socio-cultural and subsistence transformations.



Photo: Kfar HaHoresh archive.

Sacred caves in the landscape during the late Natufian – Hilazon Tachtit cave as a case study

Leore Grosman, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

After ca. 2,000 years of Natufian sedentary existence, there is evidence for a major shift in settlement patterns, and a change in the distribution and nature of late Natufian sites. During this time the population maintained their ancestral social structure and returned to the large early Natufian hamlets where they buried their dead, as evidenced by the growing number of secondary burials. Yet there is also the establishment of special burial sites, sacred places, such as Hilazon Tachtit cave in the western Galilee. The site was probably first visited for the interment of a special woman, a shaman, interred with unique grave inclusions and the associated remains of funerary feasting and other accompanying ritual activity. Investigations of the archaeological features and the material retrieved from the burial ground recognized properties representing the scheduling visits to the cave for several funeral events at a pre-arranged time. It is an example of a cave located in particular surroundings that probably served as focal point in a "sacred landscape". The small Hilazon Tachtit cave, placed on an escarpment, served most probably as a landmark of political power and spiritual meaning in the western Galilee at the that time. Exploration of the nearby environment and in particular the location of the numerous elements brought to the cave in addition to comparisons with contemporaneous sites will help understand the ritual life of the Natufian population in this landscape. The discussion will provide insights into the mechanisms for the maintenance of social complexity during the latest phase of the Paleolithic.



Photo: Hilazon Tachtit archive.

Stonehenge: creating a sacred space in prehistory

Mike Parker Pearson, UCL, UK

Stonehenge is an iconic prehistoric monument, built on Salisbury Plain in five stages between the Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age. Yet its origins lie far away and far back in time. The site itself was significant long before any stones were erected here. Pits for large posts and a large hunter-gatherer campsite nearby indicate that this locale was a persistent place of gathering from the Early Mesolithic 10,000 years ago until the arrival of farming 6,000 years ago. Britain's earliest farmers constructed burial mounds and cursus monuments within this landscape during the 1,000 years before Stonehenge's first constructional stage in 3000 BC. That first stage consisted of a stone circle within a bank and ditch, utilizing a natural geomorphological feature coincidentally aligned on the solstice sunrise and sunset.

Stonehenge's stones are not native to Salisbury Plain, having been brought from two groups of sources: sarsen stones most likely from the Avebury region 30km to the north and bluestones from west Wales 250km to the west. We are currently investigating the possibility that one or both of these stone sources were themselves sacred monuments, recombined into a single structure. Strontium isotope analysis of human and animal remains from Stonehenge and its surrounding complex of associated monuments reveals that it was a focus for long-distance movement of both animals and people from distant parts of Britain. There is also evidence that Stonehenge and Salisbury Plain lay on a major cultural boundary between territories – potentially a neutral zone – where groups came together from different parts of the island.



Photo: Adam Stanford of Aerial-Cam Ltd.

Before Ozymandias: the Earliest Monuments in the Deserts of the Southern Levant

Steven A. Rosen, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel

Following the initial introduction of domestic goats and sheep into the deserts of the Southern Levant, in the 7th millennium BCE, the fundamental re-conception of these societies, part and parcel of this basic economic transition, is accompanied by the evolution of new cosmologies most notably reflected in the construction of monumental cult sites. These sites can be roughly divided into two general types, large cairn fields and “shrines”. The two general categories are often spatially associated. Both types exhibit chronological and geographical variability reflecting changing cult practices over time and space. These, in turn, should probably be linked to evolving social and economic phenomena such as increased territoriality and hierarchy in social structure, and perhaps demographic change.



Photo: S.A. Rosen.