

## **CULTURAL LIFE OF CAVES**

**FROM PALAEOLITHIC SHAMANS TO SEVEN SLEEPERS**

***International Symposium***

**January 18-21, 2012**

**Pera Museum, Istanbul**

**Suna-İnan Kiraç Foundation, İstanbul Research Institute, İstanbul (Turkey)**

**in collaboration with**

**Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World, Brown University (USA)**



## SYMPOSIUM THEME

Caves are unorthodox places, places that fire our imagination in distinctive ways with a mixture of fear and desire. In most cultural contexts, they are primordial sites of shelter and ritual practice, going back to the darkest reaches of human history. With their threatening darkness and pagan mystery, caves offer alternate realms to the luminous and polished spaces of our civilized everyday life. Conversely, “here in the grotto” wrote Victoria Nelson recently “you are inside the magical simulacrum of the universe” writing about the Italian grotesque gardens (2001): the grotto is the “heavenly cave” there. Yet, the deep and unfamiliar spaces of caves connect us to worlds other than our own, the underworld, the endless karstic corridors of a subterranean watery universe, the world of the ancestors and deities. As monuments built by natural forces, they offer us a chance to adhere to geological temporalities and the mytho-poetic deep time. After all, caves hosted the famous Seven Sleepers of the Eastern Mediterranean Christianity and Eshab-ı Kehf of Early Islam, offering human bodies a sweet drift into centuries of oblivious sleep. Travelers take shelter in caves and their stories overlap with animal companions who often protect them, as in the case of Prophet Muhammad and Abu Bakr’s story of the spider web in the Cave of Thawr near Mecca. Caves provoke fascination with their miracles, hidden secrets, glittery lakes, sculptural virtuosity of their geological formations, and often get transformed into cult places of the most archaic type, as in Minoan Crete, Hittite Anatolia or among the Maya, who made sacrificial offerings to the maw of the earth monster.

This interdisciplinary conference will bring together scholars in the humanities and the social sciences to reflect on the rich cultural life of caves and caved spaces throughout history. By definition the conference will offer cross-cultural perspectives on the various ways through which societies imagined, took shelter in, altered, painted, fantasized about, desired and feared the caves around them. As in Byzantine Cappadocia, man-made caves imitating natural caves were conceived as spaces of worship as well as shelter. From Palaeolithic rock art to Minoan and Mayan sacred caves, from sites of pilgrimage such as Ashab al-Kahf to Plato’s allegory of the cave, we invite scholars to discuss the cultural perceptions of, and human engagement with natural caves, ritual practices associated with them. We also hope to address the historical processes in the making of man-made caves and rock-cut architecture for dwelling, shelter, burial or worship. Approaches that particularly emphasize bringing together geological, environmental, speleological research with indigenous knowledges, oral histories, ethnographic and historical accounts as well visual representations of caves are particularly encouraged. Proceedings of the event will be published as a joint publication of the Joukowsky Institute Publications and Suna and İnan Kiraç Foundation, İstanbul Research Institute Publications.

## PROGRAM OF SESSIONS

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JANUARY 18 WEDNESDAY EVENING, 6 PM.

OPENING ADDRESS

***“The Cultural Life of Caves”***

Ömür Harmanşah

Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World

Brown University

***Opening Reception***

7-8 pm

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JANUARY 19 THURSDAY, 9 AM -12 PM

**SESSION 1. ARCHAEOLOGY OF CAVES**

**Moderator:** [Mehmet ÖZDOĞAN](#), Professor, Department of Archaeology, Istanbul University

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9:00-9:15 Welcome remarks

[M. Baha TANMAN](#) Professor, Department of History of Art, University of Istanbul

9:15-9:45 ***Caves, Ritual Violence, and Darkness in Classic Maya Society***

[Lisa J. LUCERO](#) Associate Professor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

10:00-10:30 ***The Prehistoric Rock Paintings of the Latmos Mountains and their Relationship to the Stone and Rain Cult on the Peak of the Mountain Range***

[Anneliese PESCHLOW-BINDOKAT](#) Deutsche Archäologische Institut-Berlin

10:45-11:15 ***The Sinkhole Sanctuary at Şangır Mağaza: Ritual Continuity and Agricultural Settlements***

[Peri JOHNSON](#) University of Pennsylvania

11:30-12:00 Moderator's response and discussion

**Lunch** (12-2 pm)

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JANUARY 19 THURSDAY, 2-5 PM

**SESSION 2. CAVES AND THE LONG-TERM ENGAGEMENTS WITH PLACE**

**Moderator:** [Gülru TANMAN](#) Istanbul Research Institute and Pera Museum

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2:00-2:15 Opening remarks for the Session

2: 15-2:45 ***Tigris Tunnel and the Assyrian cave monuments***

[Andreas SCHACHNER](#) Director of Boğazköy-Hattusha Excavations, German Archaeological Institute, Istanbul

3:00-3:30 ***An Empty Point: Caves as contested landscapes in Late Antique Syria and Asia Minor***

[Felipe ROJAS](#) Postdoctoral Fellow in Archaeology, Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World, Brown University

3:45-4:15 ***Rituals and brotherhood in caves and rock chapels in Skyros.***

[Cornelia ZARKIA](#) Lecturer, Department of Architecture, University of Thessaly

4:30-5:00 Moderator response and discussion.

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JANUARY 20 FRIDAY, 9 AM -12 PM

**SESSION 3. CAVE STORIES, CAVE MYTHOLOGIES**

**Moderator:** [Oya PANCAROĞLU](#) Associate Professor, Department of History, Boğaziçi University

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9:00-9:15 Opening remarks for the session

9:15-9:45 *Searching for the Footprints of Buddhism in Western Asia: Caves Temples in Tahtabazar (Turkmenistan), Marageh (Iran) and Ahlat (Turkey)*

[Erdal KÜÇÜKYALÇIN](#) Researcher, Asian Studies Center, Boğaziçi University

10:00-10:30 *Cave phenomenon in the Sufi architecture*

[M. Baha TANMAN](#) Professor, Department of History of Art, University of Istanbul

10:45-11:15 *A Comparative look to the shrines dedicated to the cult of the Seven Sleepers in Anatolia and Tunisia*

[Kayahan TÜRKANTOZ](#) Associate Professor, Department of Architecture, Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts

11:30-12:00 Moderator's response and discussion

**Lunch** (12-2 pm)

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JANUARY 20 FRIDAY, 2 PM -4:30 PM

**SESSION 4. MAN MADE CAVES**

**Moderator:** [Ömür HARMANŞAH](#) Assistant Professor of Archaeology, Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World, Brown University

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2:00-2:15 Opening remarks for the session

2:15-2:45 *Local Perspectives on Franchthi Cave*

[Anna STROULIA](#) Assistant Professor of Anthropology Department Of Sociology, Anthropology And Criminal Justice University of Southern Indiana

3:00-3:30 *Artificial caves in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century leisure architecture. A case study; garden grottoes in Ottoman Thessaloniki*

[Vasilis COLONAS](#), Professor, Department of Architecture, University of Thessaly

3:45-4:15 *Physical Geology (Art in Deep Time)*

[Ilana HALPERIN](#) Independent artist, New York

4:30-5:00 Moderator's response and panel discussion

**Reception** (5-7 pm)

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JANUARY 21 SATURDAY, 9 AM-12 PM

**SESSION 5. HOLY CAVES AND HEALING WATERS OF ISTANBUL**

**Moderator:** [Feridun ÖZGÜMÜŞ](#), Associate Professor, Department of Fine Arts, Istanbul University.

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10:00-10:45 *Agiasmas of Istanbul and Healing*

[Mebrure DEĞER](#) Professor Emeritus, Department of Deontology and History of Medicine, Cerrahpaşa Faculty of Medicine, Istanbul University

11:00-12: 00 Closing remarks followed by Panel Discussion

[M. Baha TANMAN](#), [Ömür HARMANŞAH](#)

**Lunch** (12-2 pm)

2:00-5:00 pm **Site visit: Holy Springs of Istanbul**

7:00 pm **Closing dinner reception**

**Sunday: departures**

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## ABSTRACTS

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### **1. Caves, Ritual Violence, and Darkness in Classic Maya Society**

Lisa J. Lucero

While caves in ancient Maya cosmology served as places of creation, abundance, material wealth and sources of water and maize, they were also viewed as conduits for the supernatural and places in which the plagues of life were disposed. Some Maya at present believe that evil spirits inhabit some caves, which are often associated with isolated and unprotected—that is, dark—areas where the dead reside. These beliefs about caves, in combination with evidence for ritual violence against people and the lack of ‘proper’ postmortem treatment (i.e., not being covered or protected, not positioned, no grave goods, evidence for trauma), may indicate that people not accorded appropriate burial rites were not allowed to become full-blown ancestors; they were caught between the worlds of the living and the dead either as punishment or to fulfill a task of some sort. Yet some ‘proper’ burials (i.e., buried or covered, positioned, grave goods, no trauma) are found in caves, particularly in areas with natural light or incomplete darkness. In this case, decedents were prepared to become ancestors. This presentation will focus on the seemingly dichotomous nature of Maya caves—their sacred yet dangerous qualities. Through an analysis of the physical and cultural aspects of caves, I explore how these two concepts intersect via the location of offerings, human remains and iconography with particular regards to dark vs. light areas.

### **2. The Prehistoric Rock Paintings of the Latmos Mountains and their Relationship to the Stone and Rain Cult on the Peak of the Mountain Range**

*Anneliese Peschlow-Bindokat*

The Latmos, the mountain range in Western Turkey which is nowadays called Beşparmak on account of its serrated silhouette, was one of the holy mountains of Asia Minor. Its just under 1400 m (4439 ft) high peak, widely visible from all sides, was the site of an ancient stone and rain, and thus fertility cult. The old Anatolian weather and rain god, whose place was later taken by Zeus, was probably worshipped here from the Neolithic period on. Apart from the weather god, just like in other mountain regions in Anatolia, an indigenous mountain god was venerated here who was to live on in Greek mythology in the shape of the young hunter and shepherd Endymion, sleeping in a cave on the mountain, the beloved of the moon goddess Selene. The difference in rank of these two deities finds expression above all in Hittite art in the weather god Teššub standing on two mountain gods. The situation is similar in the case of Latmos. The mountain peak, as the centre of worship of a stone and rain cult, embodies the

mountain god and is at the same time the seat of the weather god. The rock paintings, whose dating to the 6th and 5th millennia B.C. may be regarded as certain, refer to both. Above all their distribution around the mountain peak and their close link to the weathering in caves and niches typical for the rock of Latmos, are arguments for the assumption that the paintings are to be seen in close connection with the religious concepts that are associated with this mountain range. Their unique themes and imagery, which are not to be found in any other place in the world, are to be understood as an expression of a fertility cult.

### **3. The Sinkhole Sanctuary at Şangır Mağaza: Ritual Continuity and Agricultural Settlements**

Peri Johnson

In the early summer of 2010 a flatbed semi brought a mining excavator to a sinkhole, Şangır Mağaza, in the karstic mountains of the northwest of Konya Province, Turkey. Several months later the Yalburt Yaylası Archaeological Landscape Research Project surveyed the looted and scarred sinkhole. The excavator's 4 m wide bucket had cut through the deep deposits of a Hellenistic and Roman sanctuary replete with the remnants of feasts, figurines, and other dedicatory offerings. The earliest finds recovered from the looted levels are contemporary with the Pergamene king Eumenes II's grant of city status to Tyriaion, the nearest settlement located on the the primary road stretching from the Aegean across the Anatolian Plateau. The fluorescence of the sinkhole sanctuary conforms to the process of a typical Hellenistic city foundation with the selection of a city council, the endowment of a gymnasium, and the patronage of Şangır Mağaza, a sanctuary defining the borders of the territory. What is typical is always elusive, however, and the sinkhole is a place bearing memories outside of urban politics and economies. The Yalburt Project has encountered a prosperous Hellenistic agricultural presence in the landscape that is the product of settlement trends begun in the Iron Age and a ritual landscape with continuity of place from Late Bronze Age. This paper introduces the the sanctuary as participating in the urbanization of the area, but focuses on the particularities of ritual practice at the sinkhole and the connection between the sinkhole and nearby contemporary rural settlements, particularly the excavated settlement at Yalburt Yaylası, 3 km distant from the sinkhole and the location spring with a sacred pool enduring from the Hittite Imperial period.

### **4. Tigris Tunnel and the Assyrian Cave Monuments**

Andreas Schachner

On of the headwater streams of the Tigris runs for nearly 1km through a mountain massif in the Taurus Range of Eastern Anatolia. At the spot where the river leaves the cave archaeological remains document a long lasting human presence at the place, lasting from the pottery Neolithic times until the Byzantine period. The most spectacular monuments are inscriptions and rock relief of the Assyrian period. Combined archaeological and philological study of the remains at the site as well as the textual evidence indicate that Birkleyn – as the place is called today – has functioned as an open-air sanctuary for at least the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> Millennium BC for both the indigenous people of the mountains of Eastern Anatolia and the Assyrians. Despite a Byzantine “intermezzo” during which a large fortified settlement guarded the

strategically important pass the mental tradition of this place as one of the certain magic and numinous importance prevailed throughout history. The paper analyzes the position of the Tigris Tunnel and its monuments on the background of the geographical constants and the cultural and religious beliefs changing through time.

## **5. An Empty Point: Caves as contested landscapes in Late Antique Syria and Asia Minor**

Felipe Rojas

How do you empty the hollow? How do you silence the muted? How do you obscure what is already dark? Many early Christian thinkers of rigorist leanings faced these paradoxical questions as they tried to reinvent the sacred topography of the countryside. Constantine ordered pagan idols destroyed or dragged defeated to his new capital, purportedly as objects of mockery; at the same time he sent emissaries into every recess and every cave to rid them of their unholy content (Vita Const. 3.57.4). Although according to his biographer Eusebius the emperor was spurred by the single motivation to celebrate Christianity, shattering (or reclaiming) statues is a very different activity from purging caves of ancestral associations. Early Christian bishops incited their flocks to rage against temples of idols and their effigies, but how did they deal with natural landscapes? How did they proceed against territories that, though unaltered by human hands, were rife with pre-Christian significance? How did they subdue mountains, springs, and trees? Above all, what did they do about caves?

## **6. Rituals and Brotherhood in Caves and Rock Chapels in Skyros.**

Cornelia Zarkia

This paper will present the case of six rock and cavernous constructions on the island of Skyros, which for centuries have been used as chapels. These small caves inside the mountains of Skyros were used initially as shepherds shelters. We can only guess approximate the date of change of use. The new use has imposed some changes in the shape and form of the cave, as the typical church requires specific locations and orientation, but often these requirements are bypassed and the chapel operates with informal arrangement. The original shape of the cave is formed by either digging or supplement to build. The care of these churches and the organization of the annual ritual is in the hands of special societies or clubs, called "brotherhoods. The "brotherhoods" are usually founded the past centuries and a written statute governs them. The members, called "brothers", respect some kind of ritual hierarchy, they have regular obligations and they can heir or donate society". The annual ritual is the festival in celebration of the saint to whom the chapel is dedicated. Of course, there are special cases when the chapel is operating after a vow. The reasons for creating "brotherhoods" have now disappeared, but it is certain that these customary clusters still touch the islanders who do not lose opportunity to participate in organizing the annual festival.

## **7. Searching for the Footprints of Buddhism in Western Asia: Caves Temples in Tahtabazar (Turkmenistan), Marageh (Iran) and Ahlat (Turkey)**

Erdal Küçükyalçın

This paper contains the summary of a field trip made by the author as a member a team of Buddhist history experts from the 'Central Asia Research Group' of 'Center for Buddhist Cultures in Asia', Ryukoku University. The structural similarities between the cave churches and settlements in Cappadocia and the cave temples in Eastern Turkey, Western Iran, Southern Turkmenistan are striking and deserve more scholarly attention. Further common features shared with sacred spaces of grottoes in Bamiyan, Ajanta, Bezeklik, Kyzyl, Kucha, and Dun Huang as well as many others throughout Asia, have the potential to raise questions on the uniqueness attributed to each site. Is it possible that such stylistic similarities point to links and continuities rather than mere coincidences? What lessons can we learn from the locations selected or the techniques used to create these caves? How can we interpret the consistent reusage of such sites as sacred spaces by various faiths throughout the history? Most of all, can we talk about a "cave-people" who specialised in carving techniques and production of necessary tools, and who travelled and dwelled in certain areas? New approaches and new questions are certainly needed in the field. Our existing level of knowledge which tends to assume remote sites to be isolated phenomena occurring within different cultural environments may have to be revised in accordance with new data. Structural continuity of cave settlements through cultural boundaries is indeed a promising field of research which has the potential to alter the world history as we know it. This paper aims to be a small step towards that direction.

## **8. Cave Phenomenon in the Sufi Architecture**

M. Baha TANMAN

Throughout history, almost every mystical tradition had its practices aiming to put the disciple in contact with the spiritual world through auto-inspection, and among the spaces used for this purpose, it is not astonishing to find the caves before all else. In the history of Islamic mysticism, one can detect from the very early period the use of the caves as retreat spaces by the Sufis. This practice was inspired undoubtedly both by the deep-rooted tradition of the use of the caves by the prophets of the monotheistic religions, especially by the cave in Cebel-i Nur (the Mountain of the Divine Light) near Mecca where Muhammad had his first revelation, and on the other hand by similar practices found in pre-Islamic mystical schools. In parallel to the transformation of the mystical schools into Sufi brotherhoods and the creation of specific buildings serving as focuses of the communal life, as well as of the mystical teaching, the spiritual retreats were codified by the masters, and some small spaces were conceived for it in the architectural program of these buildings. Bearing different names like *halvet*, *halvethane* or *çilehane* according to the period, region or the nature of the brotherhood, these retreat cells can be seen as the "architectural heirs" of the caves. In fact, while some of these cells were built as architectural units in the Sufi centres, some others were carved in the rock adjacent to the building or under the ground beneath it like "man-made caves". In the frame of this communication, we would like to study the development of the cave phenomenon in the Sufi

architecture from its beginning up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century through concrete samples found in a vast geography from Central Asia to North Africa.

## **9. A Comparative look to the shrines dedicated to the cult of the Seven Sleepers in Anatolia and Tunisia**

Kayahan Türkantöz

All around the Islamic world, from Andalusia to the Eastern Turkestan, we encounter many shrines dedicated to the memory of the Seven Sleepers. In Anatolia, there are three different shrines devoted to the cult of the Seven Sleepers. The one at Ephesus in the Aegean region was built during the early Byzantine period and has been venerated since its foundation only by Christians. While the two others near Tarsus, not far from the Mediterranean coast, and around Afşin at the eastern border of Central Anatolia, were built during the Turkish period and visited especially by Muslims. We had the opportunity of studying these Anatolian shrines and the one situated at Chenini in southern Tunisia. The common features of all these shrines are the existence of a grotto, believed to be the resting place of the Seven Sleepers, and of a religious building attached to it, serving as a praying space for the visitors. The shrine at Afşin, built during the Seljukid period, and taking place on a caravan road, is adorned by a large architectural complex around. The mosque at the shrine in Tarsus was built in the second half of the 19th century by the mother of Sultan Abdülaziz. The shrine at Chenini in Tunisia is composed of a multi-domed mosque connected with a grotto and surrounded with a cemetery. The aim of this communication will be the study of these shrines, their common features, as well as their differences concerning the general layout, building material, architectural concept and the decorative program.

## **10. Local Perspectives on Franchthi Cave**

Anna Stroulia

Franchthi Cave is one of the most systematically studied and published archaeological sites in Greece. For the last five decades archaeologists have been analyzing the excavated remains and piecing together what life was like for the cave's prehistoric inhabitants. In this paper I turn away from the archaeologists and their representations of the cave's remote past to shed light on some of the contemporary non-scholarly experiences and understandings of the site. I focus on the perspectives of those who live in the vicinity of the cave and have been in constant visual, conceptual, and/or physical interaction with it. Local perspectives to Greek archaeological sites have until recently remained unexplored. They are, however, complementary to the stories constructed by archaeologists on the basis of microscopic or statistical analysis and contribute to a more holistic understanding of archaeological sites. Most importantly, listening to local voices is necessary if archaeologists are to develop a long overdue dialogue with those who live in proximity to the sites they study.

## **11. "Artificial caves in the late 19th-20th century garden architecture.**

### **A case study; grottoes of late ottoman Thessaloniki.**

Vassilis Colonas

The creation of artificial caves (grottoes) was an introduction of Mannerist style to Italian, and then to French, gardens of the mid 16th century. The outside of such grottoes might be architectural or designed like an enormous rock or a rustic porch or rocky overhang; inside one found a temple or fountains, stalactites and even imitation gems and shells. In the 19th century, when and rock-gardens became fashionable, grottoes were designed in several landscaped parks in Europe, (Buttes Chaumont, Paris), but also along the riversides of Bosphorus (Emirgan). Grottoes were also designed as parts of garden complexes of palaces as at Ludwig's II Linderhof palace in Bavaria which contains an evocation of the Venus grotto, as an illustration of the First Act In Wagner's Tannhauser. Following these examples the ottoman dynasty had introduced the grottoes in the gardens of its palaces or places of leisure, Beylerbey being the most famous among them. This communication aims to present the influence that artificial caves had on the design of public and private gardens in late ottoman Thessaloniki, a meeting point of this "eclectic" tradition and the legacy of Art Nouveau in garden architecture, as it was first shown by A. Gaudi in its Parc Guell. The municipal hospital gardens, mansions in both the historical center and in the Hamidie district outside the south-eastern walls of the city and even tombs in the catholic cemetery illustrate this local version of a wide spread European model.

## **12. Physical Geology (Art in Deep Time)**

Ilana Halperin

Physical Geology explores our desire to make corporeal contact with geological phenomena. A re-visitation of historical geological art processes such as lava forging and cave casting has led to the development of 'physical geological art works in slow and fast time' - art objects formed within a geological, or deep time context. A recent manifestation of the project includes the creation of limestone cave casts in Fontaines Petrifiantes, made through the same process that forms stalactites in a cave. Within my work, drawing parallels between very personal events – for example when I was born or when my father died, with the birth of a volcano - allows for a space to think about our place within the geological time continuum from a more intimate perspective. Physical Geology extends these links into new geological terrain. Someone approached me and said; I have been thinking about your work, I came across something that I think you might be interested in - a collection of body stones. Body stones? Body stones - gall stones, kidney stones - they are all made of geology. From this conversation grew an unexpected line of enquiry, the idea that we as humans are also geological agents – we form geology - like volcanoes, producing new landmass on a micro scale. This presentation explores the nature of new landmass of a cultural, biological and geological nature - from petrifying caves and geothermal pools to a collection of body stones more animal than mineral - or perhaps somewhere in between.