

CULTURAL LIFE OF CAVES FROM PALAEOLITHIC SHAMANS TO SEVEN SLEEPERS

International Symposium

18 – 21 January, 2012

Suna and İnan Kiraç Foundation İstanbul Research Institute
in collaboration with
Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World, Brown University



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.

The symposium is free of admissions and will be conducted in English.

For detailed information:

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PROGRAM

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

JANUARY 19 THURSDAY, 9 AM -12 PM

SESSION 1 ARCHAEOLOGY OF CAVES

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

9:00-9:15 Welcome remarks

[M. Baha TANMAN](#) Professor, Department of History of Art, University of Istanbul and Head of the Scientific Committee, İstanbul Research Institute

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)

JANUARY 19 THURSDAY, 2-5 PM

SESSION 2 CAVES AND THE LONG-TERM ENGAGEMENTS WITH PLACE

Moderator: [M. Baha TANMAN](#) Professor, Department of History of Art, University of Istanbul and Head of the Scientific Committee, İstanbul Research Institute

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’s response and discussion

JANUARY 20 FRIDAY, 9 AM -12 PM

SESSION 3 CAVE STORIES, CAVE MYTHOLOGIES

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

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](#) Asian Studies Center, Boğaziçi University

10:00-10:30 *Cave Phenomenon in Sufi Architecture*

[M. Baha TANMAN](#) Professor, Department of History of Art, University of Istanbul and Head of the Scientific Committee, İstanbul Research Institute

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)

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

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 19th-20th Century Leisure Architecture. A Case Study; Garden Grottoes in Ottoman Thessaloniki*

[Vassilis 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 discussion

JANUARY 21 SATURDAY, 9 AM-12 PM

SESSION 5 HOLY CAVES AND HEALING WATERS OF ISTANBUL

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

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 discussion

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

Lunch (12-2 pm)