

# RIVERS IN PREHISTORY

edited by

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Cover photo: Giant king fish (*Caranx ignobilis*) gather in preparation for a unique migration up the Mtentu river. The Mtentu river is one of few remaining pristine wildernesses in South Africa, so the Africa crew avoided using disruptive motor boats, instead paddling to the location each day in a canoe. Image elaborated by Cornelia Stancu.

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# A River Runs Through It: the Semiotics of Göbekli Tepe's Map (an Exercise of Archaeological Imagination)

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“In our family, there was no clear line between religion and fly fishing.” (Norman Maclean 1976)

## On the importance of water in past societies

The relation of humans with water is a universal cultural trait. According to Wagner (2003: 2), “our health is critically dependent on dietary sources of essential fatty acids, which are predominantly found in water environments”. In the 20th century, archaeologists paid attention to this relationship between humans and water, especially in the arid zones of the Earth, for example, Pumpelly (1908) and later Childe (1928, 1936), proposed the oasis model to explain the emergence of agriculture and the domestication of animals (Verhoeven 2004: 192). Other archaeologists also tried to explain the emergence of domestication due to the proximity to water (Price and Gebauer 1995: 7–8; Smith, 1998: 210), since “plants were first domesticated near rivers, lakes, marshes or springs” (Verhoeven 2004: 189).

Paleoeconomies were dependent of water resources (see Brown 1997: 282) not only because of the acquisition of food, but also because of trade exchanges. It is well known that there was a relation between site location and water sources (Jackson 1988; Dobrzanska *et al.* 2004; Byrd 2005; Gheorghiu 2006).

For example, in the 6th -5th millennia BC in Mesopotamia “early villages were concentrated on river levees at locations bordering swamps and marshes” (Pournelle 2003: 6), in this way the “[a]gricultural colonization of the southern Mesopotamian alluvium was made enduringly possible through exploitation by specialized communities of marsh fowl, fish, bitumen, shell, and reeds; by grazing herds on pastures left by receding flood backwash; and by trading boat cargoes with near river neighbours. Sixth- and fifth millennium settlements initially took localized advantage of productive riparian littoral ecotones (Pournelle 2003: 11).”

A survey of the geographic position of the early settlements in the Near East suggests that it is their relationship with water, which led to sedentism before the emergence of agriculture. In this region, in the area from the southern Levant to the central and south eastern Anatolia, in the 8th millennium BC, one can observe the existence of a relationship between sedentism (under the form of large

*tell* sites) and rivers, a large number of these sites being situated in river valleys (Verhoeven 2004: 229) and marshland (Byrd 2005: 262).

## The importance of rivers in the Near East

In many regions of the Near East, the state of the rivers depends on the season, varying from flooding torrents to temporary aridity. Despite these dramatic fluctuations in the flow, these rivers with wet and dry phases are, even in their dry periods, potential sources of food due to the existent amphibious and terrestrial biota (Williams 2006; Steward *et al.* 2012: 205). Steward *et al.* (2012: 205 ff) stress that dry riverbeds could be corridors for terrestrial biota, “increasing landscape connectivity” (Coetzee 1969), hence their importance for the hunter-gatherer communities. During the flooding season, rivers could produce major damages, which explains the strategy of protecting the domestic infrastructure of early settlements, visible as early as Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN) A (Bar-Yosef 1986: 161).

## A case study: Göbekli Tepe

In the present paper I will attempt to highlight the relationship between sedentism and the wet and dry economy of Göbekli Tepe, a PPN site from south-eastern Anatolia. In support of this idea I will bring iconographic and ecological data to demonstrate that rivers represented for the PPN hunter-gatherer populations not only a means of subsistence, but also an element of a cosmologic map, and, consequently, a constitutive element of the mythology of these populations.

For this purpose the paper will approach the PPN hydro-strategies, by discussing the existent archaeological record, and the data of the geographic and biotic context, in connection with the iconography of the site. Göbekli Tepe is situated in south-eastern Anatolia, in the plain of Haran, Urfa region, on a limestone plateau (Moetz and Çelik 2012: 697), in a dominant locale. Near the site there is a spring, and large cistern-like features, to collect rainwater (Hauptman 2011: 644; Hauptmann 1999: 79). The study of the hydrophilic plant remains collected from

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the site (see Neef 2003) confirms the existence of springs and streams in the past.

A specific feature of the site is the monumental T-shaped stone pillars. Recent discoveries in the region have revealed a series of similar sites with T-shaped pillars (Hauptman 2007; Erdogu 2009: 130). In the mountains around Urfa there are numerous sites with similar position and architectural features, including Hamzan Tepe, located on a high point of the Fatik mountain range (Moetz and Çelik 2012: 697). Sites with T-shaped pillars were also discovered between 1995 and 2005 in the plain. Among them are Nevalı Çori, or Urfa Yeni Yol/Yeni Mahalle, whose geographical position “on the north-western edge of the Harran plain and at the foot of the Fatik Mountains is radically different from that of Göbekli Tepe, Hamzan Tepe and Karahan Tepe [because there] are important ancient water resources nearby.” (Moetz and Çelik 2012: 698). Another PPN site with T-shaped pillars was recently discovered near the Doğu Cırp and Taşlık rivers (Moetz and Çelik 2012: 699), and a site with a similar positioning like the ones mentioned above is presumed to exist at Kilikish, where an anthropomorphic statue (Hauptmann 2000: 8, fig. 8-9) has been discovered.

Although there was a difference in function between all these sites due to their geographic positioning, a common trait was their propensity to limestone resources and accessibility to water (Moetz and Çelik 2012: 699-700). For the sites positioned on mountain peaks, their location was probably chosen by considering their visibility in the landscape.

Pustovoytov (2002) stressed that at Göbekli Tepe three main stratigraphic levels that belong to the PPN (starting with PPNA) were identified, a time span which corresponds with the beginning of the sedentism of the population and the beginning of domestication (Schmidt 2010: 245; Banning 2011: 636).

The site is characterized by a monumental stone architecture and sculpture, with a marked male symbolism, traits which lead to the identification of the site as being a cultic place (Peters and Schmidt 2004: 214). As early as the beginning of the archaeological research, Dr. Klaus Schmidt suggested that Göbekli Tepe functioned as an attractor for the hunter-gatherers from this region (Schmidt 1998).

Contrary to this identification of the site as a cultic place, Banning (2011: 619) insists on its domestic character basing his argumentation on the data from archaeological record which suggests sedentism, on analogies with other sites from Syria and Iraq (see also Watkins 2008: 161), and on the fact that current excavations did not reveal the entire architectural structures that surround the round enclosures with T-shaped pillars (see also Meskell 2011: 647).

The excavated architecture at Göbekli Tepe is represented by curvilinear enclosures (assumed to date back to PPNA), with T-shaped stone pillars [Fig. 1], and by smaller

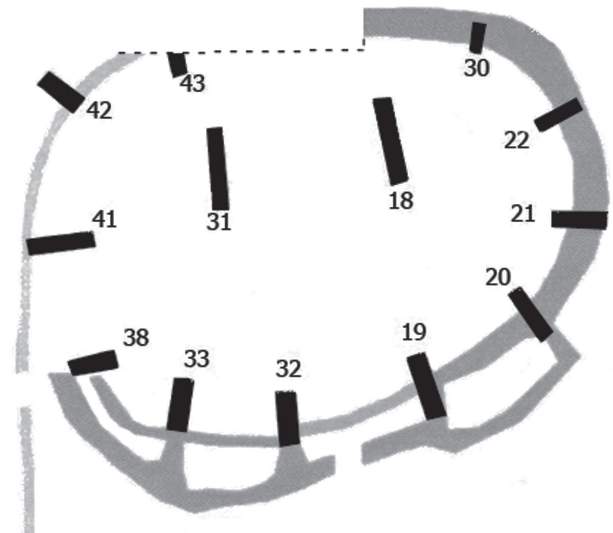


FIG. 1. ENCLOSURE D WITH T-SHAPED MONOLITHS (AFTER SCHMIDT 2012: 160, FIG.76).

rectangular architectural structures (dating from late Early/ Early Middle PPNB; Beile-Bohn *et al.* 1998; Schmidt 2001). The monoliths with a height between 3 to 5 metres were positioned in a radial shape on the interior perimeter (fixed by the ashlar walls built from recycled materials; Schmidt 2010: 241), and in a symmetrical shape in the centre of the enclosures. Those belonging to the PPNB layer had smaller dimensions (Peters and Schmidt 2004: 182). Hauptmann (1999: 79) considers that the T-shape of the monoliths' capitals was destined to support and fix a wooden roof structure, an idea reclaimed by Banning (2011: 629), which infers the existence of a covered or semi-covered space created by this architecture.

### Animals at Göbekli Tepe

According to Cauvin (2000), the adoption of sedentism and agriculture made dominant the human figure in the art representations. This could explain the syncretism of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic decoration, a characteristic of the PPN art from the region (Erdogu 2009: 130), dating back to the beginning of this process. In my approach I shall focus only on the interpretation of the zoomorphic decoration, which I consider to be obvious evidence of the relationship with water of the PPN communities. Zoomorphic symbols like those on the T-shaped pillars are to be found also in sites of different nature, like Çatalhöyük (Hodder 2005; Hodder 2006), being a characteristic of the early Neolithic of the Levant and of the south east Anatolia. At Göbekli Tepe, Peters and Schmidt (2004: 183 and 185) revealed a relationship between a large part of the zoomorphic iconography and the bone remains of the hunted animals. Among the animal species easily identified in the iconography, and in the osteological record, one can mention the fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), the leopard (*Panthera pardus*), the equids (*Equus hemionus*), the wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), the aurochs (*Bos*

*primigenius*), the goitred gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*), and the mouflon (*Ovis orientalis*). The iconography also shows a hyena (*Hyaena hyaena*), and different species of diurnal birds of prey and water birds, such as the common crane (*Grus grus*) and demoiselle crane (*Anthropoides virgo*) (Peters and Schmidt 2004: 207; Hodder and Meskell 2010), or bustards (*Otis tarda*) (Schmidt 2012: 173).

An ambiguous icon at Göbekli Tepe is that of snake-like animals. When they are depicted on the narrow frontal face of the pillars, these snake-like creatures are represented solitary or in groups of three to five individuals, positioned to move in a downward direction, in a “wave pattern” (Peters and Schmidt 2004: 184). The morphological differences between the length of the body and between the shapes of the head suggest the illustration of different species.

For example the animals with emphasized triangular shape of the head were identified as being vipers (Peters and Schmidt 2004: 183), although this trait is also characteristic of the Large-Headed Water Snake (*Natrix megalcephala*), or of the fish of genus *Silurus*. The cat fish *Silurus triostegus* which lives only in the Tigris and Euphrates basins (Ünlü and Bozkurt 1996; Coad and Holcik 2000) could reach up to 1 metre length and a weight over eight kilograms (Oymak *et al.* 2001). Cat fish represents a valuable source of food, because its meat is nutritious in terms of fatty acid composition and ratio (Cengiz *et al.* 2012). The cranium of the animal is rather triangular in shape (Ünlü *et al.* 2012: 121), the face is round and the head is larger than its snake-like body when it is seen from above. Its image (Morris *et al.* 2006) seems to be very close to that represented on some of the pillars.

The slender head and body of some other animals carved in low or shallow relief on the T-shaped pillars could belong to a snake-like fish from the family of *Anguillidae*, like *Anguilla anguilla* (Kara *et al.* 2010), or the Mesopotamian spiny eel *Mastacembelus mastacembelus*, which lives in southeastern Anatolia (Olgunoğlu 2011; Gumuş *et al.* 2010; Dağlı and Erdemli 2009).

Supporting this identification seems to be the positioning in small groups of the animals, which is specific to fish congregations during spring spawning, rather than to snakes, although in the osteological record there are few fresh water specimens of fish identified, except for a *Silurus triostegus* and a Cyprinid (Peters and Schmidt 2004: 206-7).

But an additional argument in support of the fish identification in the iconography could be the image on Pillar 1, with several snake-like animals caught in a net. This hermeneutical problem will be re-approached when we will discuss Pillar 33 of Enclosure D (Schmidt 2003: 6-7).

Arthropods are represented in the iconography by scorpions and by an animal identified by Schmidt (2012: 177-80) as

being a spider. The scorpion species *A. crassicauda* was common in Southeastern Anatolia region, especially in the Sanliurfa and Mardin provinces (Ozkan and Kat 2005); these animals are active during the summer months when high temperatures are prevalent, thus acting as evidence of a warm season.

### **Animals in landscape. A semiotic interpretation of the cartography of places**

All the above-mentioned iconography demonstrates an obvious indexical (see Chandler 2007: 42) visual strategy, if the animals are perceived individually, and a metaphorical one (see Lakoff and Johnson 1980), if they are perceived as a group belonging to a meaningful composition.

Assuming that the presence of the various species of animals acts as evidence of a specific ecosystem, the iconography acquires meaning and structure. Peters and Schmidt (2004: 211-212) already approached this semiotics of the landscape, by stressing that “[w]hile the combination of gazelle and Asiatic wild ass on P[illar]21 is indicative for dry, open landscapes, other species such as aurochs, wild boar and cranes are partial to moist, riparian habitats. Such a mixture of biotopes is found at the ecotone of steppe and river valley vegetation, and this must have been the case along most water courses in both the Euphrates and Tigris drainage regions.”

After analysing the art-compositions with animals from several prehistoric traditions, and comparing them with the reconstructed ecosystems, I conclude that part of the prehistoric

iconography refers not just to animals, but to ecotones or habitats, and therefore it could depict a liminal or transitional space (i.e. an ecotone is defined by a separation between species), or a homogenous space (i.e. a habitat is a common place of living of a population). In both instances the places evoked in a metonymical way by the presence of animals could be real or imagined (see also Ingold 2000: 118). This indirect method of representing a place or a landscape is explainable because of the cognitive, as well as technical, difficulties to depict in 2D or 3D a fragment of geography, a fact that favoured the evocation instead of the representation. All the ancient cartography is an example of such a visual rhetoric approach.

According to this perspective, we shall not see the decontextualized image of an animal, but rather the animal in its relationship with a specific place, which is its habitat, and consequently the iconography would not be zoomorphic, but topomorphic. Such being-in-the-natural-world vision could be applied even to the complex compositions with human characters and animals from Nevali Çori or Göbekli Tepe (as for example the “totem pole” found in 2010, see Schmidt 2012: 253, fig. 113), which could be interpreted as human activities performed in a geographical context indicated by the species of animals.

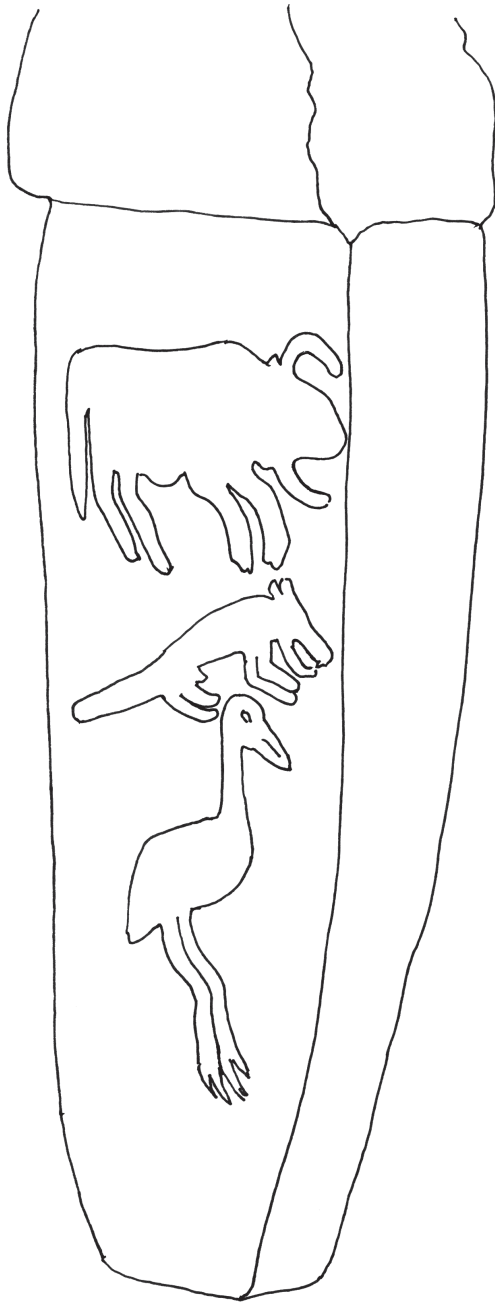


FIG. 2. PILLAR 2, ENCLOSURE A (AFTER SCHMIDT 2012: 117, FIG.46).

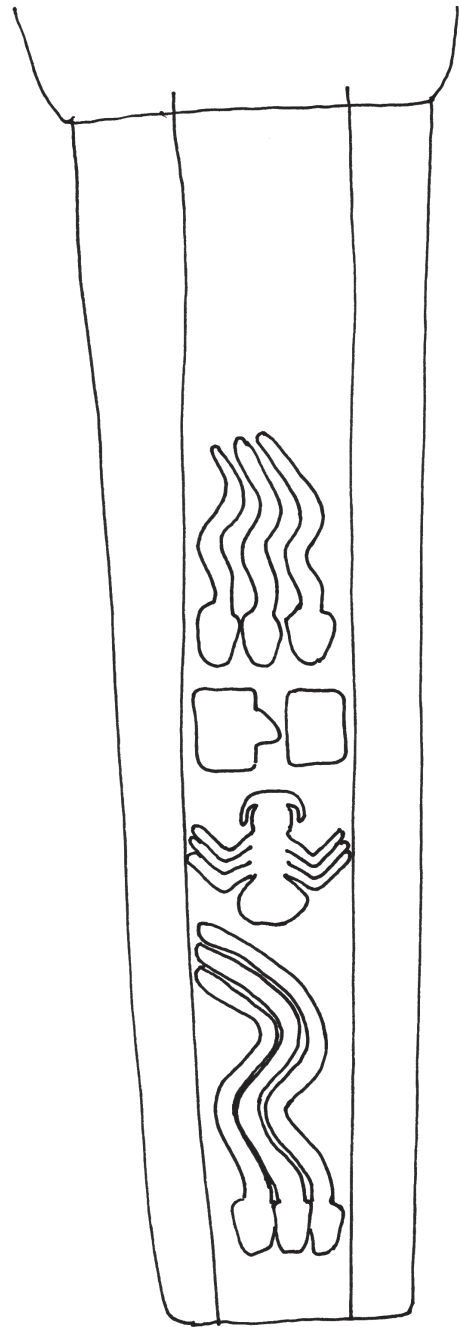


FIG. 3. PILLAR 33, ENCLOSURE D (AFTER SCHMIDT 2012: 179, FIG.91).

As each of the species depicted indicate a specific position in space or time, the visual rhetoric from Göbekli Tepe could be subsequently an (indirect) vision of a landscape, with indication of specific places and seasons, of the day or of the night.

For example, as *Bos primigenius* utilized forest and forest-steppe as favored habitat (Uerpmann 1987; see also Arbuckle and Özkaya 2006), its image could indicate also its habitat, therefore a composition, like the one on Pillar 2 (Enclosure A) lateral face, depicting three animals positioned one above the other (a bovid, a fox and a water

bird), could suggest a sequence of ecotones, with forest-steppe, river terrace and wetland. [Fig. 2].

Another example could be the already mentioned Pillar 33 (Enclosure D). Here, on the narrow side of the pillar a complex composition put together two groups of snake-like animals, an arthropod, and diverse iconic and abstract patterns carved on the edges of the pillar and at its middle. [Fig. 3]

My interpretation of this object will take into account the diverse proportions and shapes of the grouped snake-like

animals and of the arthropod, as well as their (opposite) position in the space of the composition.

First, the form and proportion of the snake-like animals: the upper group is characterized by a large head and a short body, which are specific morphological traits of the cat fish *Silurus triostegus*; the lower group present narrow heads and longer bodies, which characterizes the family of *Anguillidae*, such as the Mesopotamian spiny eel *Mastacembelus mastacembelus*.

Second, the arthropods with a short thorax, three and four bent feet turned upward, and with curved antennae, which moves in the opposite direction of the groups of animals could represent a narrow-clawed crayfish (*Astacus leptodactylus*), a native species in Turkey (Harlıoğlu and Güner 2006). The curved abdomen of the animal, which helps it to move backward, its narrow chelae and feet positioned in a V-shape form, as well as the antennae that can be positioned along the body of the animal, have analogies with the details of the arthropod from Pillar 33. The undifferentiated shape between chelae and feet in the carved image could be explained by the fact the chelae of the *Astacus* females remain isometric throughout their life (Romaine *et al.* 1977). When the water temperature is high, the young crayfish with no developed chelae, spawn (Balik *et al.* 2005: 298), therefore the offspring of the animal are an index for the summer hot days.

Third: the chevrons positioned on two narrow borders, on both sides of the upper part of the composition, as well as the series of heads of the snake-like animals in the lower part, delimit a space where the animals move, in a descending direction.

Fourth, the two rectangles with a link at the middle, resembling letter H, positioned at the centre of the composition, separates the small group of animals from the upper side from the larger one on the lower side, whose bodies, due to the lack of space, are represented on the lateral sides of the pillar.

In the perspective of the toposemiotics proposed, the four points of my argument lead to the conclusion that Pillar 33 (Enclosure D) is the representation of a riparian landscape, a river bed, bordered by vegetation, with swimming fish, crawling crayfish, and fish traps, filled with prey. This interpretation of the composition as depicting a slow-moving river is supported by the rest of the iconography from the same pillar: on the middle of the left side aquatic birds (cranes or storks, Schmidt 2012: 273) are depicted near the group of (trapped) fish, positioned near the H-shaped object (a net fixed with two poles). [Fig. 4] The theme of captured animals with a net appears on some pillars, to mention Nos. 1 (Enclosure A) and 12 (Enclosure C), so the barrier set in the middle of the river could be a schematic representation of a fish trap. This scene was interpreted by Schmidt (2012: 142-3), as representing “birds in a net”, but also “birds hopping on the rocks in [a] landscape”.

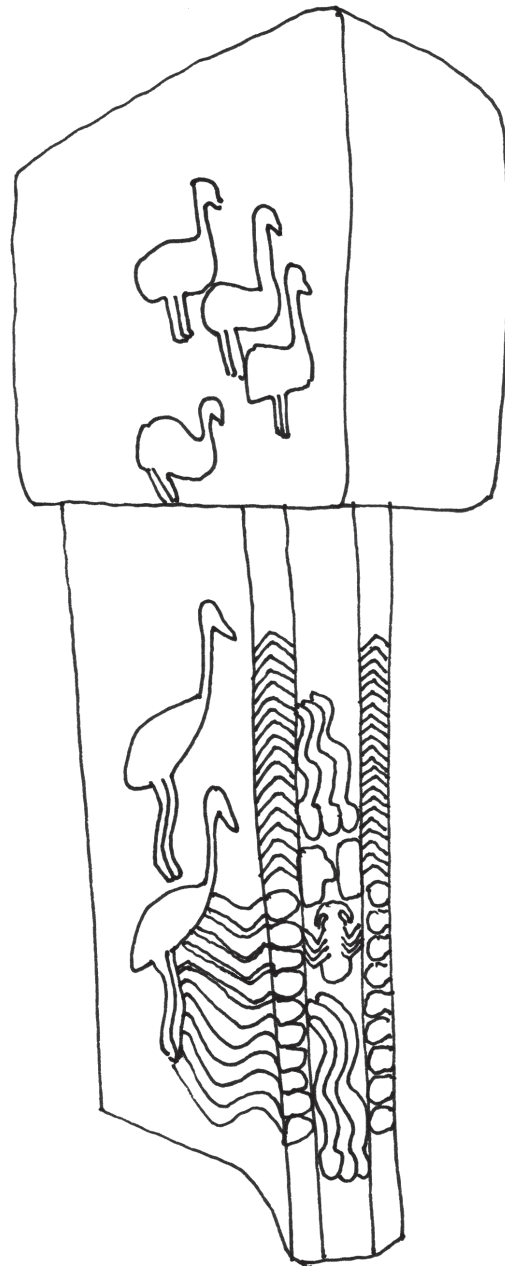


FIG. 4 PILLAR 33, ENCLOSURE D

On top of the image of aquatic birds which symbolize the river and the wetland, on the capital of Pillar 33, Enclosure D, a group of birds, identified by Schmidt (2012: 173) as being probably bustards (*Otis tarda*), a species specific for steppe life, symbolize the other side of the ecotone, the dry-land.

A similar landscape is to be found on a recently discovered pillar (see Schmidt 2012: 251, fig. 111), whose lateral composition presents aquatic birds and snake-like animals on the centre and lower part, and mammals on the capital,



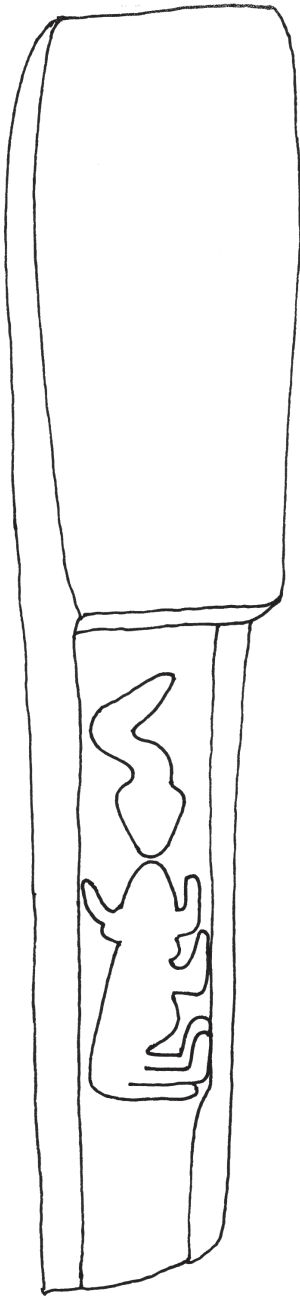


FIG. 5 PILLAR 20, ENCLOSURE D (AFTER SCHMIDT 2012: 167, FIG. 83).

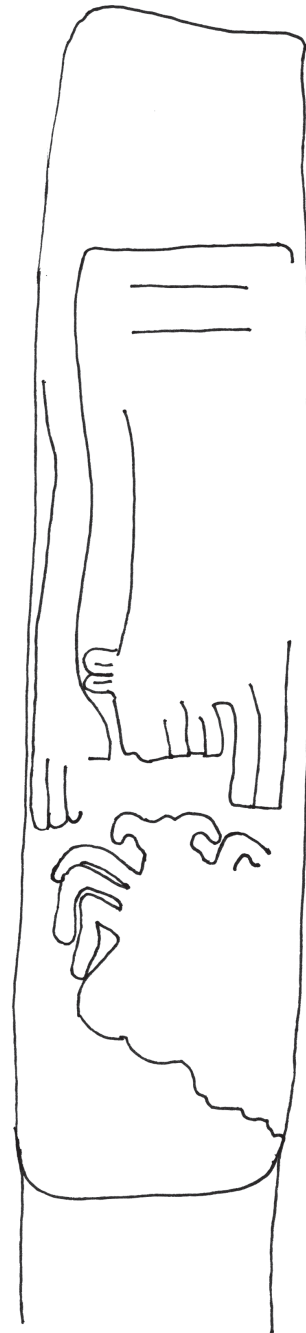


FIG. 6 PILLAR 43, ENCLOSURE D (AFTER SCHMIDT 2012: 245, FIG. 107).

i.e. the same ecotone at the one depicted on Pillar 33, Enclosure D.

The wet or dry valleys of the rivers could also be interpreted by the position of the animals-index on the narrow edge of the pillars. On the flooded valleys the animals, carved in low relief, are positioned vertically, on their side, suggesting the image of a carcass floating on the water. For example on Pillar 20, Enclosure D (see Schmidt 2012: 167, fig. 83), a short snake-like animal (a cat fish?) is confronting a bovid positioned on the side.[Fig. 5] On Pillar 43, Enclosure D (see Schmidt 2012: 245, fig. 107) a feline positioned on the side is confronting an arthropod (a

crayfish?). [Fig. 6] Both water animals are scavengers, the catfish being considered more a scavenger than a predator (Hickley and Chare 2004), eating dead fish and animals (Dinu 2010: 304).

The dry valleys could be called to the mind by animals' high relief (a felid on Pillar 27, Enclosure C) and mid-relief (an ox head – *bucranium* on Pillar 31, Enclosure D) positioned on the narrow side of the pillars.

An additional indexical interpretation of the animals would signal a temporal message: for example the presence of migratory birds or arthropods could indicate a determined



FIG. 7 THE JORDAN RIVER AT THE JUNCTION WITH THE DEAD SEA. PHOTO BY SIMINA STANC.

season (see also Peters and Schmidt 2004: 207), or they may have represented either day or night.

Every enclosure displays a series of independent places-landscapes, or the metonyms of a single large landscape, creating a sort of cosmogonic (for “cosmos” as “worldview” see Wason 2010) and rhetoric map. The positioning of animals moving in dissimilar directions on the T-shaped pillars in other sites like Karhan Tepe (see Celik 2011: 250, figs. 8-11), could indicate different places, or different perspectives of perceiving and deciphering the map/s.

### Maps and the rhetoric of images

Discussing about maps, Harley (1989: 11) stressed that rhetoric is “a universal aspect of all cartographic texts”, and “that rhetoric is part of the way all texts work and that all maps are rhetorical texts”, because “[t]he steps in making a map - selection, omission, simplification, classification, the creation of hierarchies, and ‘symbolization’ - are all inherently rhetorical.”

The rhetoric map at Göbekli Tepe, with its zoomorphic and anthropomorphic indexes aiming to communicate a sense of place is not unique in history; for example, in the Roman world all the cartography functioned in a rhetorical way using anthropomorphic and zoomorphic indexes. The Roman landscape was not representational, but indexical; for example the images of the sea, like the one from Leptis

Minus (Lemta Museum), or of the Nile River, were created with representative animals. A similar rhetoric using indexicality is to be found in the Byzantine cartography too. On the Madaba map (Clermont-Ganneau 1897-1898; Donceel-Voùte 1988; Donner 1992; Harwey 1999) the mouth of the Jordan River at its junction with the Dead Sea [Fig. 7] depicted with a fish swimming against the river’s course, this suggesting the abiotic salty waters of that place. In the same indexical way, the desert landscape of the left bank is evoked by a felid chasing a gazelle. On the river there is also depicted a barrier for boats under the form of an H-letter. [Fig. 8]

Similar rhetoric cartographic representations are to be found on a silver vase from Maikop, Russia, dating from the 3rd millennium B.C. (see Gimbutas 1991: 370, fig. 10-16). The globular surface of the vase is divided into sectors by vertical lines representing rivers, which are collected by a lake, whose shape was incised on the bottom of the vase. Two rows of animals are overlapped symbolizing different types of landscape: the dry steppe with lions and antelopes and the grassy lowland around the lake with horse herds coming for watering. In the foreground, a mountainous skyline is depicted very accurately, the iconic image being a second code of representation of the landscape on the same object. The river’s waves and whirls [Fig 9] are represented by a continuous line made of chevrons, like in the carvings on Pillar 33 at Göbekli Tepe.

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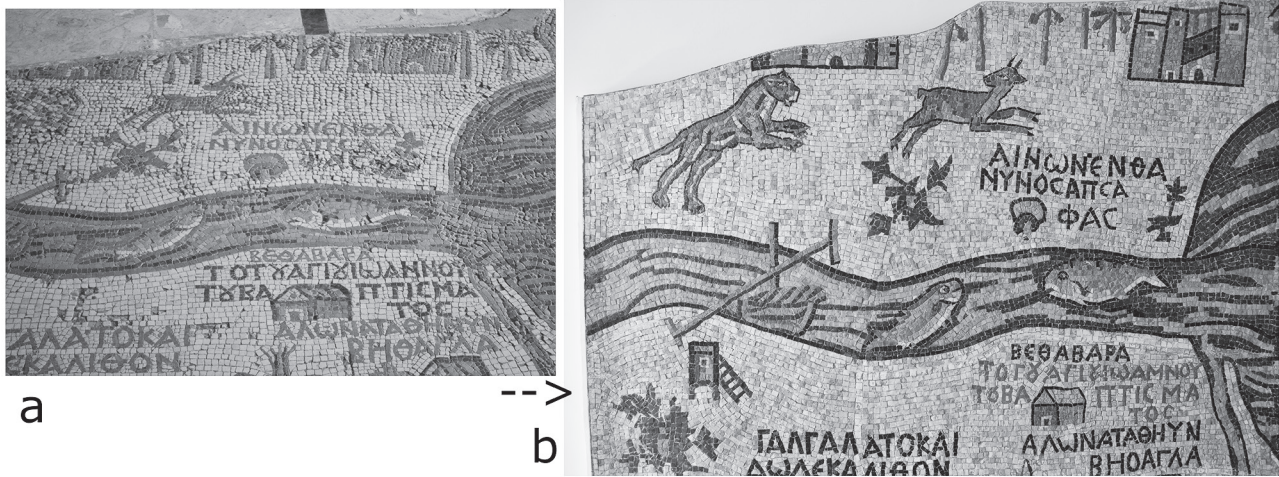


FIG. 8. THE MADABA MAP, A) THE ORIGINAL MOSAIC AND B) A MODERN INTERPRETATION WITH VERY CLEAR DETAILS AT THE RIGHT. PHOTO BY DRAGOS GHEORGHIU.



FIG. 9. VADASTRITA RIVER, SOUTH ROMANIA. PHOTO BY ALEXANDRA RUSU.

Even separated by millennia, there is an analogy between the rhetoric of the maps from Madaba and Göbekli Tepe, since both tried to approach a subject difficult to be represented in art; i.e. a river in a landscape.

**Reading the Göbekli Tepe map**

The radial structure of the enclosures infers a possible link between the geometric shape of the landscape (under the shape of mandala plans) and rituality (Gheorghiu 2008:

90). When studying the plans of religious buildings along human history one can observe a direct link existing between the geometry of the plans and the structured human actions, i.e. the rituals. At Göbekli Tepe geometry structures, in an analogous way, the movement of animals. The current interpretation of the round enclosures as sanctuaries (Schmidt 2010) seems justified by the reading of the iconography as a cosmogonic map, which would relate the local community to the surrounding landscape and the cosmos.

The orientation of animals on the T-shaped pillars is significant to read the Göbekli Tepe' cartography; here all animals, with the exception of arthropods which move backward, are implied in a descendent movement, in a general centripetal action, suggesting an anthropocentric and holistic reading of the map, with the audience situated in the centre of the built space. There is also the possibility of a discursive reading of each part of the map, and supporting this assumption could be the awkwardness of many of the images, which may have been destined to be visualized through a lateral illumination, rather than in direct light. In an artificially produced play of light and shadow (for a "nightly use of the enclosure" see also Schmidt 2012: 153), the animated images on the pillars generated a dramatic visual effect upon the audience, and, if the enclosures were roofed, the visual effect would have been even more dramatic. As suggested by the iconography, the core subject of this animated spectacle could have been the river, as part of a natural or imagined reality.

It is the general agreement that water played an essential role in the symbolism of traditional societies (see for example Durand 1960; Eliade 1996; Preston-Blier 1987), its symbolism being blended with anthropomorphism and zoomorphism, as one can see in mythologies, and ancient iconography. In this paragraph I will limit myself to a single example which I believe to exemplify the syncretic symbolism mentioned, "The Descent of the Ganga River", a monumental sculpture from Mahabalipuram in Tamilnadu, where the river is presented under an anthropo-zoomorphic form, and Earth is suggested by the presence of two elephants. This "solid metaphor" (Tilley 1999) of the "descent" from the sky of the half human-half animal embodiment of the river I would like to use as a final model for reading the syncretic antropo-zoomorphic symbolism to be found at Göbekli Tepe. Probably, for the PPN people rivers also descended from the sky. Maybe we will never know this with certainty, and the subject will remain only in the realm of archaeological interpretations.

But we move on altogether more solid ground when stressing that Göbekli Tepe could represent a map (for a list of world's oldest maps see Delano Smith 1987; for PPN see Meece 2006), where space is called to the mind indexically and metaphorically, and where running water was a significant constituent. The cartographic method used here was to envelop the surface of the stone pillars with compositions of images; thus, the content of each surface would offer complementary information to the other, to better understand the position of a place in the landscape, and its proxemics with the river or the dry-land.

We will never know if the map represented the geographic reality, or a mythical realm of the hunter-gatherers (Wilson 1988: 50), but whichever this reality was, a river ran through it.

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