



WAC - 9 PRAGUE 2022

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Preview

I am proposing

Session

Theme

16. Landscapes, Forests, Groves, Rocks, Rivers, and Trees: Ontological Groundings and Seeking Alternative Theories

Title

Cave Ontologies: Why are caves significant to humans?

Organisers

ORGANISER #1

Ran Barkai (Tel-Aviv University, Israel)

I confirm this organiser will be a member of WAC in 2022: yes

ORGANISER #2

Kathryn Arthur (University of South Florida, United States)

I confirm this organiser will be a member of WAC in 2022: yes

ORGANISER #3

none

ORGANISER #4

none

Abstract

In the past and present, caves ignite our imaginations! Our relationships with caves began nearly 2 million years ago and throughout our history caves have been recognized as places of significance. Archaeologists generally perceive caves as suitable grounds for past burials, food preparation, and storage, as well as havens for shelters, art, and ritual. Furthermore, the environmental conditions within caves offer excellent preservation of materials that often do not survive well in open environments expanding opportunities to understand human-cave relationships.

Literature and philosophy, however, hint that there is more than practicality in human uses of caves. Circa 380 BE, Plato in his "Allegory of the Cave" implied that caves harbor intangible shadows of the human mind that represent the immaterial, unintelligible, and imaginary. Around 1909, Carl Gustav Jung had a dream about a prehistoric cave located underneath a two-story house, which inspired him to develop his theory about the collective unconsciousness and universal archetypes. In contrast to these musings, we contend that caves conjure and embody a wide variety of intelligible and real ways of perceiving the world.

We propose a session, during this International Year of Caves and Karst (International Science Council 2022), that examines a global history of perceptions and interactions with caves. Participants in this session will consider philosophy, Indigenous wisdom, literature, ethnography, ethnohistory, anthropology and archaeology to explore the conceptual, cosmological, and sensual mechanisms behind how and why caves attract human attention. We invite colleagues to join us in this journey to the bottom of the earth and the mysteries of the human experience.

Keywords

Caves, Ontology, Wisdoms, Sensual Mechanisms, Deep Time

Presenters

PRESENTER #1

Robin Skeates (Durham University, United Kingdom)

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Temporality and atemporality in caves

This paper reconsiders the temporality of caves. Existing archaeological literature on this topic has usefully contrasted, on the one hand, scientists' 'chronometric' measurements and divisions of past time at caves (e.g. the formation of anthropogenic cave deposits), and on the other hand, scholars' theoretically-informed thinking about past people's senses of deep time at caves (e.g. repeated, and often long-term, human reuses and memories of caves and ancestors). Both perspectives, however, tend to perpetuate conceptions of time as ordered, whether linear, cyclical or eternal. Instead, this paper argues that one way in which deep and dark caves are significant to humans is because they can contribute to distorted experiences and perceptions of time, which disrupt everyday rhythms and give freedom to human

creativity. Thinking about atemporality, then, should encourage archaeologists to identify the material remains of novel, abnormal, unrepeated and enigmatic human actions and thoughts in caves, and to incorporate these into their established narratives of cave dwelling and ritual.

PRESENTER #2

Jill Pruetz (Texas State University, United States)
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Cave use by chimpanzees and other nonhuman primates: Potential insights for human evolution
Abstract forthcoming

PRESENTER #3

Yafit Kedar & Ran Barkai (Tel-Aviv University, Israel)
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Cave intimacies: Earth, wind and fire in the Paleolithic
Abstract forthcoming

PRESENTER #4

Diego Garate (Universidad de Cantabria, Spain)
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Into the dark side: Speleological exploration of caves during the Upper Paleolithic, What for?

Caves and shelters have served as a home and refuge for humanity since times long before the emergence of Anatomically Modern Humans. It is not until the Upper Paleolithic when human groups enter the cavities in a systematic way. These incursions sometimes involve complex logistics and extensive prior planning to face important challenges (absence of light, climbs, jumps, slopes, hanging steps, etc.). Even so, people entered the confines of the caves, overcoming all kinds of impediments and demonstrating the control of caving technique as they progressed deeper into caves. On many occasions, these actions are evidenced by an archaeological record composed primarily of figurative art representations of engraved and painted animals on the walls of the caves. It is worth wondering why they chose those spaces deep in caves and difficult to access, and if they developed other types of activities in parallel.

PRESENTER #5

Jacques Jaubert (Université de Bordeaux, France)
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Further underground in the Paleolithic: From Bruniquel to Cussac and Magdalenian paleospeleology
Abstract forthcoming

PRESENTER #6

David J. Cohen (National Taiwan University, Taiwan)
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Hunter-gatherer interactions with the Early Pottery-producing cave sites of Late Pleistocene South China, 20,000-12,000 cal BP
Abstract forthcoming

PRESENTER #7

Michael Freikman (Ariel University, Israel)
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Touching the ancestors- usage of deep caves for ritual in Neolithic & Chalcolithic of Southern Levant
Abstract forthcoming

PRESENTER #8

Deimtrij Mlekuž Vrhovnik (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)
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Relational ontologies: Caves and human subjectivity of Mesolithic and Neolithic Europe
Abstract forthcoming

PRESENTER #9

Yulia Ustinova (Ben-Gurion University, Israel)
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Ancient Greek caves and archaeology of the senses
Abstract forthcoming

PRESENTER #10

Lisa J. Lucero (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, United States)
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Death and caves among the Ancestral Maya
Abstract forthcoming

PRESENTER #11

Kathryn Arthur (University of South Florida, United States)
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Caves as protective wombs sheltering Indigenous ontologies

For many Boreda of the Gamo highlands of southern Ethiopia, caves are perceived to be the wombs of the earth within their Indigenous ontology. Caves are infused with nature spirits, who activate the landscape. The hollowed female caves accept the male rain, rivers, and waterfalls that penetrate and move the earth and stimulate growth of the trees. Infused with nature spirits, the presence of caves assists in delimiting the 9 ancestral-sacred landscapes, a place people could physically see the activity of the spirit world. Caves are perceived to be wombs that birthed the first humans, portals for offerings to the spirit world when a child is born, and protective shelters during times of conflict. Archaeologically Boreda caves harbor late Pleistocene, historic, and present-day burials, activities, and rituals. This paper forefronts Boreda ways of knowing caves as intimately connected to their heritage and archaeological investigation.

PRESENTER #12

Holly Moyes (University of California Merced, United States)
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A Discussion: Why are caves significant to humans?

Abstract forthcoming

PRESENTER #13

none

PRESENTER #14

none

PRESENTER #15

none

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