Our Place: Our Place in the World

JOHN TEMPLETON FOUNDATION

SUPPORTING SCIENCE~INVESTING IN THE BIG QUESTIONS

Newsletter August 2014

Dear friends and colleagues

Trevor Watkins, Jörg Becker and Lee Clare

By a tragic coincidence, this issue of the Newsletter was in final preparation when we heard the tragic news of the sudden death of Klaus Schmidt. In addition to the deep shock and sense of loss that we are personally suffering, there are huge consequences for the Göbekli Tepe project, and, down the line, for our *Our Place in the World* research programme.

The situation of the Göbekli Tepe project demands the immediate engagement of an additional scientific support of the project team. There is the autumn field season that is scheduled to complete the archaeological clearance so that the construction of the canopies can proceed, as planned, in 2015. Additionally, the process of architectural and engineering planning and tendering for the permanent canopies is at a critical stage, requiring continual specialist input. Prof. Eichmann has asked Dr. Lee Clare to step forward and take on these responsibilities for an interim period with immediate effect (and for an as yet unknown length of time). Fortunately, it was already planned that Dr. Jörg Becker would take part in the forthcoming fieldwork season (beginning in mid-September) in order to complete the collection of samples for radiocarbon dating for the dating series that is part of the *Our Place in the World* programme. Thus, both our researchers will be able to support one another during the field season.

Inevitably, Lee's transfer to the Göbekli Tepe Project means the disruption of our John Templeton Foundation-funded programme. Trevor Watkins has been able to work intensively and closely with Lee and Jörg to ensure that their responsibilities to our project are sustained to the best possible effect. At the time of writing (while we three are still together in Berlin), it remains for Trevor to inform the John Templeton Foundation of the impact of the interruption to our project, and discuss with them how we are to manage the remainder of the project. Whatever the outcome of those discussions, we three know that we shall continue to feel the loss of Klaus Schmidt each day of our working lives for months and years to come.

Co-directors: Klaus Schmidt (†) and Trevor Watkins

Researchers: Jörg Becker and Lee Clare

Nevalı Çori 1990 – View to the ‚Cult Building' during excavation (after Hauptmann – Özdoğan 2007, Fig. on p. 31)

Front cover: Klaus Schmidt at Göbekli Tepe (Photo: Thomas Goldschmidt 2006, Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe)
Back cover: Urfa statue (Photo: Dieter Johannes 2008)

A Life for Prehistoric Archaeology in the Ancient Near East

Jörg Becker and Lee Clare

Klaus Schmidt at Göbekli Tepe (September 2007)

Prof. Dr. phil. Klaus Schmidt, prehistorian, director of excavations at Göbekli Tepe, and co-director of the John Templeton project *Our Place: Our Place in the World,* passed away on 20th July, aged just 60.

Klaus Schmidt was born on 11th December 1953 in Feuchtwangen, Franconia. From 1974 to 1983 he studied prehistoric archaeology, classics, and geology-palaeontology, first in Erlangen and subsequently in Heidelberg. It was during his time in Heidelberg that he came to participate at excavations headed by his university professor Harald Hauptmann at the site of Norşuntepe, in the Turkish Upper Euphrates region. In 1983 he obtained his PhD, his doctoral thesis focusing on the lithics from this site (*Die lithischen Kleinfunde vom Norşuntepe*). In the same year, he was awarded the travel scholarship of the German Archaeological Institute. Between 1986 and 1995, Klaus Schmidt was research associate at the Institute of Prehistoric Archaeology (*Institut für Ur- und Frühgeschichte*) at the University of Heidelberg, and research fellow of the German Research Foundation (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*).

Between 1983 and 1991 he became involved with research in an area that would later be inundated by the waters of the Atatürk reservoir, more specifically the Early Neolithic settlement of Nevalı Çori, again under the direction of Harald Hauptmann. It was the experience gained from working at this site which would influence the rest of his working life. For the first time, at Nevalı Çori, excavations revealed a cult building that was furnished with fantastic imagery which provided unprecedented insights into the mind of prehistoric peoples living in the 9th millennium BC. This period is synonymous with a developed stage of the Early Neolithic, in which, in the course of several hundred years arable farming and animal husbandry emerged, a process which would eventually culminate in our modern lifeways.

In 1999, following completion of his habilitation thesis, entitled *Functional analysis of the Early Neolithi Settlement of Nevalı Çori* (*Funktionsanalyse der frühneolithischen Siedlung von Nevalı Çori*), Klaus Schmidt was awarded the status of associated professor at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg.

From 2001 he was advisor (Referent) for Prehistoric Archaeology of the Ancient Near East at the Orient-Department of the German Archaeological Institute in Berlin. In 2007 he was appointed honorary professor at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg.

The stylized T-pillars and sculptures discovered at Nevalı Çori motivated Klaus Schmidt to search for other similar sites in the Southeast Turkish province of

Şanlıurfa. In addition to the discovery of Early Neolithic sites in the plain, east of Şanlıurfa (Gürçütepe), he also visited the site of Göbekli Tepe, which had been detected many years previously in the southern foothills of the Taurus Mountains. His important impulses for the interpretation of this site number among his greatest scientific achievements. The discovery of fragments of Early Neolithic sculptures, and the location of the site, led him to conclude that this was no 'ordinary' settlement site, but what appeared to be a '*ritual centre*' belonging to complex hunter-gatherers. It was only in the course of several subsequent transformation processes leading on from this stage that crop cultivation and animal husbandry would eventually evolve. In the last two decades of fieldwork, under the direction of Klaus Schmidt, excavations revealed buildings with richly adorned pillars and sculptures dating to the 10th and 9th millennia BC. Especially the earliest, monumental enclosures make this a site of unique importance for the study and evaluation of neolithisation processes and associated symbolic worlds. In addition to numerous scientific contributions, it is his book *Göbekli Tepe: A Stone Age Sanctuary in South-Eastern Anatolia*, (translated into several different languages), and written for the much wider audience, which has contributed to the growing popularity of this site, making it and Klaus Schmidt known well beyond the scientific community and stimulating scientific discussions enormously. However, it schould also be noted that the terms "*temples*" and "*gods*" have always been subject to some criticism and should not be taken at face value.

In addition to his work at Göbekli Tepe, Klaus Schmidt also directed research for the German Archaeological Institute in the 'Aqaba region of Jordan, where he undertook excavations together with Jordanian colleagues at Chalcolithic-Early Bronze Age tell sites. His excavation methods and archaeological astuteness culminated in important research results which have significantly improved our picture of prehistoric settlement in the Gulf of 'Aqaba. Mention should also be made of his scientific contributions to the study of materials from Predynastic Egyptian sites in the Nile Delta.

With the passing of Klaus Schmidt, we have lost one of our most eminent archaeologists. Through his foresight and his openness for alternative ideas and approaches, he enriched and enhanced scientific debate. He has provided us with the foundations for many years of research to come. His time spent in Turkey led a close bond with the country and its people. Nevertheless, throughout his life, he remained faithful to his Franconian home, frequently returning there to find peace and relaxation from his otherwise very active everyday life. Researchers the world over are mourning the loss not only of an international renowned and revered colleague, but also an inspiring teacher, and a loyal friend.

The German Archaeological Institute will always remember him with greatest gratitude and appreciation.

Klaus Schmidt at 'Aqaba (February 2008)

Recent Research 2013/14: Insights into a new Enclosure at Göbekli Tepe

Oliver Dietrich, Jens Notroff and Klaus Schmidt (†)

Recent fieldwork at the Pre-Pottery Neolithic hilltop sanctuary of Göbekli Tepe has been largely dedicated to essential provisions in advance of construction work on permanent shelters which are to be erected at the site in 2015 (*cf.* Dietrich *et al.* 2014). Sadly, as it turned out, work in the 2014 spring season was to be the final season led by Klaus Schmidt, who passed away suddenly in July 2014. Work in this last season focused on the excavation of areas in the so-called *Northwest Depression*, a low lying western part of the site, located to the north of the *Southwest Mound* (**Fig. 1**). The aim of these investigations, originally initiated in 2011, has been to ascertain whether these areas would also yield features, *i.e.* monumental circular enclosures of the PPNA (in some cases superimposed by smaller rectangular PPNB buildings), comparable to those previously encountered in the so-called *Southeast Depression*, the main excavation area of the site. As already indicated by geophysical surveys, evidence for monumental structures was certainly expected, and has meanwhile been confirmed through our fieldwork (*cf.* Becker *et al.* 2012; Dietrich *et al.* 2013).

In the 2013 excavation seasons, and in spring 2014, considerable progress was made in the excavation of five deep soundings. These are required for the foundations of the new permanent shelter in the *NW-Depression* which will be drilled into the natural bedrock beneath the site. In addition to large quantities of preserved organic material, important for radiocarbon dating, the excavation of these soundings has also led to the discovery of PPN features (channels for water?) carved into the natural bedrock. It is highly likely that these features are contemporaneous with the monumental enclosures at the site.

The most important feature discovered in *NW-Depression*, is a new enclosure currently under excavation in areas K10-24, K10-25, K10-34 and K10-35 (*cf.* Dietrich *et al.* 2014: 14 with Fig. 6 & 7). This structure is now known as Enclosure H, following the established scheme of naming enclosures in the order of their discovery (**Fig. 2**). In 2011, one of the central pillars and four pillars of the surrounding ring of this new stone circle were excavated. Even at this early stage, it was apparent that the central pillar had been toppled and broken in antiquity, thus mirroring the situation already encountered in Enclosure C. During the spring season of 2013, the ring-wall of Enclosure H was excavated in area

Fig. 1: *Göbekli Tepe: overhead view of the excavation areas (Photo: Erhan Küçük, DAI Orient Department)*

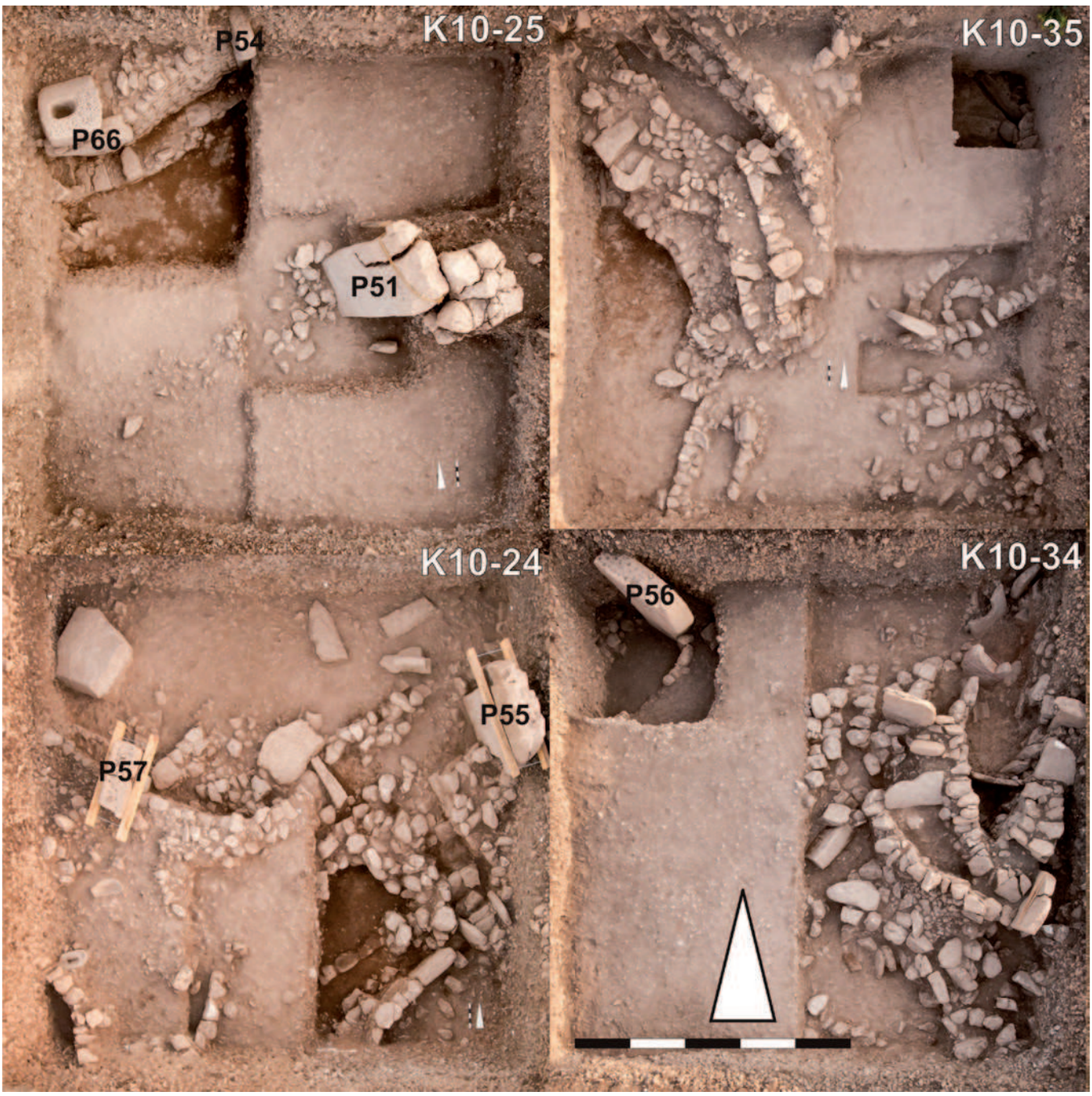


Fig. 2: Overhead view of Enclosure H, current state of excavation (Photo: Nico Becker, DAI Orient Department)

K10-24. The northern section of the trench clearly shows the outline of a large pit-feature that seems to have been dug to locate and damage the central pillars. Additionally, a large, newly discovered pillar fragment found in this area can probably be assigned to the second of the two central pillars. Post-use destruction of Enclosure H is further indicated by the remaining *in-situ* shaft fragment of a smashed pillar of the stone circle located between P55 and P 57. Further, the wall of the enclosure – with a niche and bench structure similar to those observed in other enclosures in the main excavation area – shows considerable signs of (post-use) disturbance.

Continued excavation work in the recent field seasons, has led to the discovery of additional monoliths, bringing the total number of pillars discovered in Enclosure H to six. In addition to the central Pillar 51 (**Fig. 3**), which carries on its western broad side the depiction of a large feline, there are five pillars discovered in the enclosure wall: Pillar 55 seems to be undecorated; here is the richly adorened Pillar 56; Pillar 57 with a newly discovered relief (comprising two antithetic snakes flanking a round object) on its front narrow side (*cf.* Dietrich *et al.* 2014: Fig. 7); and Pillars 54 and 66, recently excavated in the northern part of the enclosure wall (for the interpretation of such animal reliefs as part of the sybolic world of the Early Neolithic see for example Peters / Schmidt 2004 or Schmidt 2012).

Fig. 3: *Pillar 51, central pillar of Enclosure H depicting a large felid (Photo: Nico Becker, DAI Orient Department)*

Pillar 54 features raised lateral bands on its front narrow side, a depiction interpreted as representing a stola-like garment, already well-known from a number of pillars in the main excavation area. To the west of this pillar, beneath a large limestone slab with a deep cavity, Pillar 66 was discovered. Remarkably, this pillar deviates in orientation from the anticipated radial arrangement, *i.e.* facing towards the central pillar (P51). Instead it is situated almost parallel to the enclosing wall. The head of Piller 66 displays a notch not unlike those already observed on some of the pillars in Enclosure C.

In the course of geo-radar survey, a somewhat diffuse picture was recorded for the southern part of Enclosure H, perhaps indicating an overlap with another, apparently much larger enclosure. Excavation in this area has revealed a small part of a wall that appears to run parallel to the circular enclosure wall of Enclosure H, thus confirming the existence of a very complicated architectural picture. Between these walls a staircase-like structure has been discovered. Further work in this and adjacent areas will be needed to clarify this situation and to completely understand the relationship between these structures.

New Radiocarbon Ages from Göbekli Tepe

Jörg Becker and Lee Clare

As part of the *Our Place: Our Place in the World* project, funded by the John Templeton Foundation, 42 organic samples have recently been analysed at AMS-radiocarbon laboratories in Georgia (USA) and Poznań (Poland). These samples were collected during the 2011–2013 excavation seasons from soundings in the main excavation area in the *Southeast* and *Northwest Depressions*. Most of these samples were extracted from Layer III contexts, associated with the famous monumental Early Neolithic enclosures A–D and G (*SE-Depression*) and the new enclosures H and I (*NW-Depression*). The new ages fit well with the expected PPNA age (second half 10th millennium calBC), the only exceptions being a small series of ages made on animal teeth, most certainly due to insufficient amounts of preserved collagen for dating purposes (a general problem at Göbekli Tepe). A sample from the younger Level II, with an age of around 8600 calBC, also corresponds well with earlier ages made on material from associated Early Pre-Pottery Neolithic B contexts (*cf.* Dietrich 2011 and Dietrich *et al.* 2013). A first report of the results is currently in preparation for a high-ranking archaeological journal.

In the frame of the John Templeton project *Our Place: Our Place in the World*, two more series of radiocarbon samples will be collected and submitted for AMS-dating in the coming months. It is hoped that these new data will shed more light on aspects of site-internal chronologies at Göbekli Tepe, in particular whether excavated monumental enclosures were contemporaneous or not. Notably, when it comes to establishing absolute chronologies at Göbekli Tepe, there are numerous obstacles which need to be negotiated. These are directly related to the complex composition of the site; for example, many radiocarbon ages are made on organic materials extracted from the rubble fill of the structures; ergo, these data provide ages only for the fill material and not for the erection of the enclosures. Further, it cannot be ruled out that the fill contains significantly older material.

For the next series of radiocarbon ages, samples for which will be collected in the coming excavation season (September-October 2014), it is planned to take a closer look at the mud plaster in the dry stone walls and between the stone benches, as well as at the terrazzo floors. It is hoped that organic residues will be preserved in these contexts, thus providing us with ages closer to the erection of the structures, perhaps even allowing us to identify different building phases of the enclosures, as has been previously suggested by architectural studies (*cf.* Kurapkat 2004 and 2012: 158f. with Fig. 2).

Media-evolution and the Generation of New Ways of Thinking

The Early Neolithic Sign System (10th / 9th Millennium calBC) and its Consequences*

Ludwig Morenz

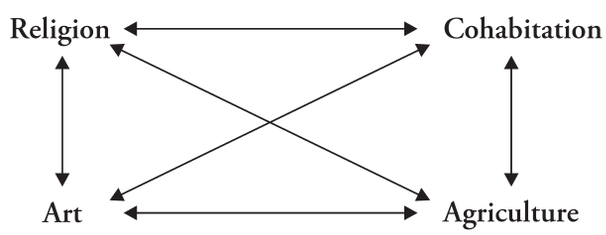
In the early 10th millennium BC, at the close of the last Ice Age, there began a development referred to by the visionary prehistorian Jacques Cauvin (1994) as the symbolic revolution of the Neolithic. This highly innovative period spanning some several centuries – the consequences of which are still felt today – was closely connected with socio-economic changes formerly attributed by the prehistorian Vere Gordon Childe to the so-called *Neolithic Revolution*. Although the term *symbolic revolution* (as it is used here) is more bold-associative than it is strictly epistemological, it nevertheless provides a high degree of explanatory potential, ultimately raising issues concerning the so-called Neolithic Package (Stordeur *et al.* 1996; Köksal-Schmidt / Schmidt 2007; Morenz / Schmidt 2009). This complex historical model, which in many respects is a simplification of available facts, includes not only technological and socio-economical elements but also cognitive components. Seen from the perspective of long-term historical development there are two preeminent aspects:

- plant and animal domestication;
- the replacement of hunter-gatherer subsistence strategies by productive modes of economy.

Additionally, at least in the case of the Near East, settlements grew in number and size and building density increased, culminating in higher levels of social complexity, another crucial factor for cultural evolution.

An equally important component was the formulation and fixation of symbolic worlds, expressed in material forms such as architecture, images and pictograms (*cf.* Donald 1991; Mithen 1996; Boyer 2001; Dunbar / Gamble / Gowlett 2010; Watkins 2004, 2008a/b, 2010). This not only provided people with a means of worldly orientation, such elements were also essential for the construction of identities and the development of a feeling of belonging and cultural affiliation among individuals living in ever growing Neolithic communities. Although the different domains were probably not as clear cut as suggested by earlier research, a clear thrust in cultural development can certainly be identified in the Near East during the 10th and 9th millennia calBC. This thrust led to considerable changes in prevalent *rules of knowledge*. Directly related to this development there also occurred what might be termed a *media revolution*.

At the same time, it was not necessary for the different components of the *Neolithic package* to all appear at the same time for them to be included; it was very often a gradual process, staggered over a considerable period of time. However, in the case of Upper Mesopotamia, many of the components did emerge in a strikingly short space of time during the 10th and 9th millennia calBC. In this context, a complex interplay can be assumed and discerned between art, religion, economy (especially the introduction of plant cultivation), and mechanisms of human cohabitation:



Cultural-poetic dynamos of the Near Eastern early Neolithic included the dispersal of domesticated plants (especially einkorn) and animals (sheep and goat in the 9th and 8th millennia calBC), new lifeways (transition to sedentary occupations and the construction of permanent settlements) and mentalities, and probably newly emerging religious concepts which found expression in ritual-oriented "art" (in the broader sense). A further important point, albeit only tangible at a relatively hypothetical level, concerns the question of related languages and language forms.

New ways of thinking appear to have become established in the early Neolithic. Language, imagery, symbolism and writing were all important mental tools in the formation of these new *Denkräume* (Aby Warburg 1988); they provided a means of symbolic organization of life experiences in the mediation of nature and spirit, passion and logos, and the rhythm of *„einschwingender Phantasie und ausschwingender Vernunft"* (transient fantasy and enduring rationality). Images and imagery were the perfect means by which worries and fears, but also hopes and wishes, could be either averted or expressed through their styling into specific shapes, thereby opening up entirely new perspectives – for producers and recipients alike – in the context of a less constrained interaction with these media. Notably, earliest indications of this world-defining process with its manifold symbolic linkages can be traced back to the Palaeolithic (cave paintings) and it is a development which is still continuing today. Nevertheless, new and fundamental impulses for the conquest of *Denkraum* through symbolic linkages emerged in the Near Eastern Early Neolithic and were developed further in the subsequent decades, centuries and millennia.

In contrast to simple *images*, the more specific *Bildzeichen* (Hans Georg Gadamer 1960, 1990) do not draw the observer's attention to their immediate aesthetic presence, they are much more than this; they

are hermeneutic agents referring to something "other"; they clearly surpass a function as mere depictions. The *Bildzeichen* usually exhibit a rigid and strongly culturally determined readability, especially in the way that specific information is codified. Although the signs used in this more or less new (irrespective of some Palaeolithic precursors), distinctively pictographic Neolithic phenomenon are clearly pictorial they not only codify the subjects that they portray but they represent in a very special way that something "other" which cannot be depicted. This is particularly apparent in the systematic *small signs* such as the bull's head or the combination of moon disc and crescent.

The concise nature of the signs, the strong standardisation of sign forms, and the systemisation of the sign repertoire are all quite remarkable. Therefore, in the case of Upper Mesopotamia it is perfectly legitimate for us speak of an Early Neolithic sign system in which the *small signs* (~pictograms) were used in exactly the same way in an extensive geographic area (*Grünes Dreieck*; *cf.* Aurenche / Kozlowski termed this region of Upper Mesopotamia *'Golden Triangle'*, where wild forms of several early domesticated plant species concentrate). Finally, the sites at which this sign system was in use were separated from one another by distances amounting to several days walk, *e.g.* Göbekli Tepe – Jerf el-Ahmar: approx. 150 km; Göbekli Tepe – Tell Qaramel: approx. 200 km. Subsequently, the question arises as to the nature of the cultural and communication communities and their interaction at this time (*cf.* Schmidt 2005). The uniformity of the early Neolithic sign system is reflected in the sign for snake (**Fig. A**).

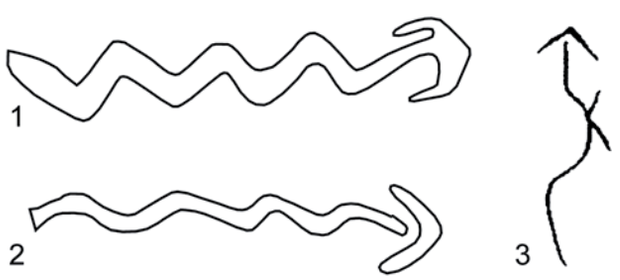


Fig. A: *Examples of snake representations from small sign carriers: 1: Göbekli Tepe (after Schmidt 2012: Fig. 114: left), 2: Jerf el-Ahmar (after Stordeur / Abbès 2002: Fig. 16:3) and 3: Tell Qaramel (after Mazurowski / Kanjou 2012: Pl. 79:5)*

Here it is the conspicuous form of the (horned) viper head and not the typical wavy line that is most striking in these snake representations; however, a certain tolerance of deviation in the final arrangement of these depictions also existed.

This sign system permits an extraordinarily high level of readability, making for clear and unambiguous messages, albeit that meanings were related in a purely ideographic manner; the phonetic dimension of language only became fixed in later millennia. An incised plaquette from Tell Qaramel dating to the 10th or 9th millennium calBC (**Fig. B**) carries the depictions of three snakes and several hand signs. The visible structure of the *Bildzeichen* on this plaquette, achieved through the addition of engraved lines, and the clear tendency towards a basic symmetry are quite remarkable for this early period.

Fig. B: *Fragmentarily preserved incised plaquette from Tell Qaramel (after Mazurowski / Kanjou 2012: Pls. 74:7 and 129:right)*

The repetition and the impressive sequencing of the *Bildzeichen* intensify the message. The schematisation of the signs and the well-managed structure of the image field are quite remarkable from a media-historical perspective, the latter – through its standardisation – even showing a family resemblance of this particular sign system with writing. In this respect, the usage of the horned viper and the hand should undoubtedly be interpreted as *Bildzeichen* (in the sense of Gadamer).

A third possible reason for the strong presence of the snake as a *Bildzeichen* in early inscriptions, *i.e.* in addition to our innate fascination with this animal and the threat it harbours to human life, lies in the nature of writing itself; a wavy (serpentine) line is one of the most obvious and natural graphisms. Having produced a wavy line by incising or drawing, the illustrator, and likely also the beholder, would want / would have wanted it to have a meaning. Notably, the media-philosophical-speculative origin of this *Bildzeichen* must be rooted in a time pre-dating Neolithic snake representations, especially considering that in the *Bildzeichen* the snake body is already characterised in a specific iconographic manner. Furthermore, if we speculate as to what may have actually provoked humans to produce first *Bildzeichen*, we might even – in a media-philosophical sense – (re-)

mythologise this animal: the snake as the natural and eternal *writing* animal. Its repertoire of motion and the tracks it leaves behind in the sand provide an impressive paradigm to writing, even suggesting readability. Indeed, snakes are not only known for their tracks but also for their unexpected appearance, culminating in the human preoccupation with the fundamental dichotomy between the visible and the presently invisible, and the unmistakably present and the latent or completely absent. Therefore, snakes compel people to heed even the smallest signs should something be more than it initially appears at first sight.

The hand itself is a polysemic sign and its interpretation varies in different cultures, *e.g.* the hand of God, the praying hand, the hand taking an oath or the severed hand of an enemy as a sign of triumph or victory. In combination with the snake depictions, as for example on the incised plaquette from Tell Qaramel, it might be interpreted as a *STOP-hand*. This plaquette is an archaeological milestone in our comprehension of text-history long before the appearance of writing in its strictest sense.

The readable imagery of the sign (*cf.* Fig. B, a detail from Mazurowski / Yartah 2002: Fig. 11:left on p. 306) = *NO!* or *STOP* (or similar) lies in the framework of the Early Neolithic sign system; at the same time, this same imagery can be followed through various steps, *e.g.* through classical antiquity and the Medieval period into our own modern cultures. If we take the opposite direction along the historical time axis, hand signs such as these can be traced back to (Upper) Palaeolithic cave paintings (Leroi-Gourhan 1964/5; *cf.* Wehr / Weinmann 2005). In contrast to the arbitrary signals (*Signal-Zeichen*), *e.g.* the accidental foot or hand prints made by humans or animals (meanings of which could nevertheless be usefully decoded by Palaeolithic hunters, *i.e.* reading before writing) the consciously produced hand print corresponds to an intentionally produced and meaningful *Signal-Zeichen*. "Reading" led to the discovery of the meanings of accidental signs, after which – at some time in the Palaeolithic – meaningful symbols began to be intentionally produced; hand and foot prints in particular would have played a pivotal role in this process. As such, in the history of symbols "reading" came before depiction; indeed, it is likely that consciously produced hand symbols were originally oriented on accidental hand and foot prints. Additionally, the "rejecting" or "repellent" hand gesture may even be inherited, *i.e.* an integral element of our human instinct-repertoire, though this is fiercely debated by behavioural scientists, and the specific gesture is certainly culturally influenced.

In the more or less pictographic usage of signs the HAND is characterised by a remarkably similar usage and with a high level of consistency of form spanning the millennia and different cultural spheres (*cf.* Morenz 2014: 85ff. with Fig. 34 on p. 95).

If the snake (as the personification of the readable image) and the hand (as the personification of gestural communication in the world of signs) depicted on the Early Neolithic plaquette from Tell Qaramel are among the earliest readable *Bildzeichen* in the strictest sense, then media-philosophical reflection and archaeological interpretation can be blissfully conjoined.

***Fig. C**: Enclosure D at Göbekli Tepe, central pillar 18, small signs on the narrow side of this pillar-being (Photos: Bertold Steinhilber)*

In a further step, the Early Neolithic sign system permits a more specific identification of the monumental anthropomorphic pillar-beings from Göbekli Tepe. These monumental pillar-beings can be analysed as a complex sign system comprising at least three different levels:

a) the anthropomorphic pillar-beings themselves as *large signs*;

b) the comparatively naturalistic animal reliefs as *medium signs*; and

c) *small signs* which include, for example, the bull's head or the combination of moon disc + crescent.

At this sanctuary site, this sign system is used to codify cultural text. It follows that Enclosure D (**Fig. C**) can be read in the following way:

a) stone pillars arranged in a circle with two central pillars = *Text*

b) anthropomorphic central pillar 18 with reliefs of arms = *large sign*

c) comparatively naturalistic depiction of a fox in the crook of the arm = *medium sign*

d) more readable *Bildzeichen* (combination moon disc + moon crescent) on the narrow side of pillar-being 18 = *small sign* (pictogram).

For this sign system even greater meanings can be drawn from the circles; accordingly, these can be read as hypertext:

– individual enclosures within the entire sanctuary
– sanctuary within the landscape and its relation to other places.

Other elements also feature in this Early Neolithic cosmos of meaning (*Sinnkosmos*); for example, on pillar-being 18 there is what appears to be a graffito, considerably smaller than the depiction of the fox, which shows a hunting scene with three dogs.

The small *sign moon disc + crescent* functions as a kind of name tag (in the sense of L. Wittgenstein), assigning an identity to the pillar-being; in more concrete terms we may speak of a moon-deity. Therefore, the sign system allows us to penetrate into the realms of sacral beliefs, and in doing so provides us with confirmation for the existence of personal deities in the Early Neolithic. This Early Neolithic sign system was not created for administration purposes, its usage lies firmly in the sacral sphere. In the frame of an archaeo-semiotic deep probing, three important stages in the development of notation techniques can be found to correlate exceptionally well with particular archaeological periods

Based on observations made at the Early Neolithic site of Göbekli Tepe it can be stated that as early as the 10th/9th millennia calBC there prevailed the clear necessity for specific labeling and the unambiguous closure of meaning in the form of "names" (*e.g.* through the usage of the *Bildzeichen* MOON DISC + CRESCENT or BULL'S HEAD). Not only this, but at this time a text had already been composed in the frame of the Pillar-being ensemble.

English translation: Lee Clare

Sight type	**Region**	**Area**	**Period**
Neolithic pictography	Upper Mesopotamia	sacral sphere	10th/9th millennium calBC
Figurative tokens	Mesopotamia	economic sphere	4th millennium calBC
Proto-Cuneiform	Uruk	economic and sacral sphere	4th millennium calBC

* Modified version of the English summary from the new publication by Ludwig Morenz as first volume of the new Studia Euphratica series: Ludwig Morenz, *Medienevolution und die Gewinnung neuer Denkräume. Das frühneolithische Zeichensystem (10./9. Jt. v. Chr.) und seine Folgen*. Studia Euphratica Band 1, EB-Verlag, Dr. Brandt, Berlin, edited by Harald Hauptmann, Ludwig Morenz und Klaus Schmidt, published August 2014 – ISBN 978-3-86893-105-1.

Workshop: The Construction of Neolithic Corporate Identities

Trevor Watkins

Two members of our group, Hans Georg Gebel and Marion Benz, asked Trevor Watkins to join them in organising a workshop to take place within the framework of the 9th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East in Basel, in early June 2014. The premise of the workshop was that the Epipalaeolithic-Neolithic transformation represents a momentous threshold in the long-term evolution of human sociality. And the challenge posed for the workshop was to identify and interpret the evidence that will help us to better understand that transformation. The workshop was open, and attracted a large audience. The format of the ICAANE allowed nine advertised speakers, but the organizers were at liberty to plan the timing so as to allow the active participation of all. The organising troika arranged the speakers into three groups, and each introduced a sub-section of the workshop (effectively allowing them to make their own contributions).

At the suggestion of Hans Georg Gebel at the conclusion of the workshop, it was agreed that the workshop should be translated into a publication, to be edited by the three organizers, and to be published in the SENEPSE (Studies in Early Neolithic Production, Subsistence and Environment) series, by *ex oriente*, Berlin. A fuller account of the workshop is being prepared for publication in a forthcoming issue of *Neo-Lithics*.

Database and Website

Jörg Becker and Lee Clare

The project database whicht collates Late Epi-Palaeolithic (Kebarian and Natufian in southern terms) and Early Neolithic (Pre-Pottery Neolithic A/B) archaeological finds and features from Upper Mesopotamia, Anatolia and the Levant pertaining to aspects of symblism and/or ritual is currently being incorporated into the main Arachne Database of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI). Upon its completion it shall be made accessible to all members of the JTF working group. Among other things this database shall aid us to a) generate a table of similarities, from which a socio-cultural network of relations among communities of the region can be constructed and analysed; b) understand better the relationships between monuments, sculptures, signs and ritual prefomance; c) determine the role of collective memory and collective identity among Pre-Pottery Neolithic communities in Upper Mesopotamia, Anatolia and the Levant during their long-lasting transitions from complex hunter-gatherer societies to village farming communities.

Currently, the final project database comprises nearly 2000 finds and more than 300 features from 160 sites in the study area (Upper Mesopotamia, Anatolia and the Levant). The database also includes radiocarbon dates for the featured sites (where these data are available).

This working step of incorporating our project database into the Arachne Database of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) also includes the construction of a project website with integrated blog facility, as well as links to relevant sites for our project.

Fig. 1: *Participants during the Early Neolithic workshop about corporate identities at the 9th ICAANE 2014 in Basel (Trevor Watkins, left, giving his introduction lecture) (Photo: Hans Georg K. Gebel)*

New Publications and short notes

In this section we would like to bring your attention to recent publications and developments which are of interest to our John Templeton Foundation *Our Place: Our Place in the World* project, most of them published as joint contribution of different members associated with our project.

- For the important site of Göbekli Tepe only the most significant contributions shall be mentioned, published by Klaus Schmidt and his team. In one contribution the arguments about the function of the central pillars are discussed in the frame of the Upper Mesopotamian Early Neolithic (N. Becker / O. Dietrich / T. Götzelt / Ç. Köksal-Schmidt / J. Notroff / K. Schmidt 2012: Materialien zur Deutung der zentralen Pfeilerpaare des Göbekli Tepe und weiterer Orte des obermesopotamischen Frühneolithikums. *Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie* 5, 14-43).

  A second article deals with the role of cult and feasting in the emergence of Early Neolithic Communities (O. Dietrich / M. Heun / J. Notroff / K. Schmidt / M. Zarnkow 2012: The Role of Cult and Feasting in the Emergence of Neolithic Communities. New Evidence from Göbekli Tepe, South-eastern Turkey. *Antiquity* 86, N° 333, 674-695).

  In a third contribution the sequence (or contemporaneity) of Layer III enclosures (PPNA period) is discussed: O. Dietrich / Ç. Köksal-Schmidt / J. Notroff / K. Schmidt 2013: Establishing a Radiocarbon Sequence for Göbekli Tepe. State of Research and New Data. *Neo-Lithics* 1/13, 36-41.

  In a fourth report new excavation results, in-cluding descriptions of newly discovered enclosures in the north-western depression, are presented: O. Dietrich / Ç. Köksal-Schmidt / C. Kürkçüoğlu / J. Notroff / K. Schmidt 2014: Göbekli Tepe. Preliminary Report on the 2012 and 2013 Excavation Seasons. *Neo-Lithics* 1/14, 11–17.

- Miguel Molist Montaña, director of excavations at Tell Halula on the Syrian Euphrates, has recently published (together with his team) two volumes of a new preliminary report about this important Pre-Pottery and Pottery Neolithic site: M. Molist Montaña (coord.) 2013: *Tell Halula: un poblado de los primeros agricultores en el valle del Éufrates, Siria (2 volumes)*, Memoria Científica, Madrid / Barcelona.

- For the well-known Jordanian Pre-Pottery Neolithic site of ʻAin Ghazal, Denise Schmandt-Besserat has edited a volume featuring contributions focussing a number of themes, including the impressive plastered statues and busts from this site, as well as its modelled skulls, mural and floor paintings, small stone and terracotta figurines, standing stones, as well as tokens: D. Schmandt-Besserat (*ed.*) *Symbols at ʻAin Ghazal, ʻAin Ghazal Excavation Reports, Volume 3*, bibliotheca neolithica Asiae meridionalis et occudentalis & Yarmouk University, Monograph of the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology, *ex oriente*, Berlin.

- Neolithic religion in light of finds and features from Çatal Höyük is the focus of a further publication which is certainly of significant interest to our own work: H. Whitehouse / C. Mazzucato / I. Hodder / Q.D. Atkinson 2013: Modes of Religiosity and the Evolution of Social Complexity at Çatalhöyük, in: I. Hodder (*ed.*) *Religion at Work in a Neolithic Society: Vital Matters*, Cambridge, 134-156.

- Kim Sterelny (Canberra) and Peter Hiscock (Sydney) have recently edited a special issue of Biological Theory journal (vol. 9/1, 2014) centring on *symbols, signals, and the archaeological record*. Several scholars discuss the structure of early human groups living in coordinated cooperation within symbolically marked worlds, operating within limits constructed by normatively structured groups.

- Several contributions relevant to our subject can also be found in the new festschrift in honour of Gary Rollefson, excavator of ʻAin Ghazal: B. Finlayson and C. Makarewics (*eds.*) *2014 Settlement, Survey and Stone. Essays on Near Eastern Prehistory in Honour of Gary Rollefson*, *ex oriente*, Berlin in collaboration with the Council for British Research in the Levant, London. These include: B. Finlayson: Houses of the Holy: The Evolution of Ritual Buildings; O. Bar-Yosef: Was Göbekli Tepe Culture a Chiefdom That Failed?; M. Özdoğan: The Neolithic Collapse, or the Transition from Pre-Pottery Neolithic to the Pottery Neolithic; K. Schmidt / Ç. Köksal-Schmidt: Like a Carpet of Snakes – Towards an Iconography of the PPN in Upper Mesopotamia; A. Belfer-Cohen / N. Goring-Morris: North and South – Variable Trajectories of the Neolithic in the Levant; D. Schmandt-Besserat; Figures with Raised Arms and Feet.

- Finally, we should also like to note an upcoming contribution by Marion Benz and Joachim Bauer entitled: On Scorpions, Birds and Snakes – Evidence for Shamanism in Northern Mesopotamia during the Early Holocene, which has been submitted to the *Journal of Ritual Studies*.

Conferences/Workshops

Last but not least, we would like to inform you about an international symposium that is currently being organized by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) in cooperation with the Deutsches Bergbau-Museum Bochum (DBM German Mining Museum) and with the support of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (DAI, German Archaeological Insitute), to be held at the Nevali Hotel, Şanlıurfa, Turkey, from 21th – 23th September 2014:

International Symposium
Bridging Continents – Earliest Neolithic Communities across Anatolia
Recent Research, Future Challenges

We know that southeast Turkey was part of the core area for the earliest large, sendentary communities and the emergence of a farming economy, the so-called Neolithic revolution (10th – 7th millennium BCE). Now we are learning about the extraordinary cult site of Göbekli Tepe, at the centre of communities across the region, each of which reveals its own architectural and symbolic achievements. For the first time, we are realizing that equally early settlements in central Anatolia were evolving socially and economically in parallel. We are also beginning to see, from excavations in western Anatolia and in European Turkey, evidence of the spread of the Neolithic way of life in the Aegean coastlands and islands and into mainland Europe. The mosaic landscapes of the Republic of Turkey were where this new way of life first emerged and from which it began its spread westwards until it had reached the whole of Europe. Recent palaeo-anthropological studies are yielding new and significant scientific findings, which illustrate just one of the potential areas where interdisciplinary cooperation in prehistoric research is enriching our knowledge of the early ties between Anatolia and Europe.

Beyond its importance for the heritage of humanity, Göbekli Tepe, situated in Southeastern Turkey, is an important location for the German-Turkish cooperation in prehistoric archaeology. The site is being studied by an interdisciplinary team of scholars funded by the DFG in the framework of a long-term project. Thus, it is consistant that this Early Neolithic cult site, which is on its way to becoming a World Heritage Site, will host an international symposium underlining the site's importance for research and cooperation, and further developing its outstanding potential. On-site observation and discussion offer the oppotunity to showcase and debate some of the pivotal questions.

Meanwhile, it has been agreed that this symposium shall be dedicated to Klaus Schmidt, in honour of his important scientific work.

(after Hans-Dieter Bienert, DFG)

References

Aurenche, O. / Kozlowski, S.K. 2001: Le Croissant fertile et le 'Triangle d'or, in: C. Breniquet / C. Kepinski (*eds.*) *Etudes Mésopotamiennes: receuil de textes offerts à Jean-Louis Huot*, Paris, 33-43.

Becker, N. / Dietrich, O. / Götzelt, T. / Köksal-Schmidt, Ç. / Notroff, J. / Schmidt, K. 2012: Materialien zur Deutung der zentralen Pfeilerpaare des Göbekli Tepe und weiterer Orte des obermesopotamischen Frühneolithikums. *Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie* 5, 14-43.

Boyer, P. 2001: *Religion Explained. The Human Insticts that Fashion Gods, Spirits and Ancestors*. London.

Cauvin, J. 1994: *Naissance des divinités, naissance de l'agriculture. La révolution des symboles au Néolithique*. Paris.

Dietrich, O. 2011: Dating the First Temples of Mankind. Comments on ^{14}C-Dates from Göbekli Tepe. *Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie* 4, 12-25.

Dietrich, O. / Heun, M. / Notroff, J. / Schmidt, K. / Zarnkow, M. 2012: The Role of Cult and Feasting in the Emergence of Neolithic Communities. New Evidence from Göbekli Tepe, South-eastern Turkey. *Antiquity* 86, N° 333, 674-695.

Dietrich, O. / Köksal-Schmidt, Ç. / Notroff, J. / Schmidt, K. 2013: Establishing a Radiocarbon Sequence for Göbekli Tepe. State of Research and New Data. *Neo-Lithics* 1/13, 36-41.

Dietrich, O. / Köksal-Schmidt, Ç. / Kürkçüoğlu, Ç. / Notroff, J. / Schmidt, K. 2014: Göbekli Tepe. Preliminary Report on the 2012 and 2013 Excavation Seasons. *Neo-Lithics* 1/14, 11-17.

Donald, M. 1991: *Origins of the Human Mind: Three Stages of in the Evolution of Culture and Cognition*. Cambridge, MA.

Dunbar, R.I.M. / Gamble, C. / Gowlett, J.A.J. (eds.) 2010: *Social Brain, Distributed Mind*. Oxford.

Gadamer, H.G. 1960: *Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, Tübingen (6th edition Tübingen 1990).

Gebel, H.G.K. 2004: Die Jungsteinzeit Jordaniens - Leben, Arbeiten und Sterben am Beginn seßhaften Lebens, in: B. Salje / N. Riedl / G. Schauerte / R.-B. Wartke (eds.) 2004: *Gesichter des Orients. 10000 Jahre Kunst und Kultur aus Jordanien*. Ausstellungskatalog Berlin / Bonn. Mainz, 45-56.

Hauptmann, H. / Özdoğan, M. 2007: Die Neolithische Revolution in Anatolien, in: C. Lichter, (*ed.*) 2007, 26–36.

Köksal-Schmidt, Ç. / Schmidt, K. 2007: Perlen, Steingefäße, Zeichentäfelchen: Handwerkliche Spezialisierung und steinzeitliches Symbolsystem, in: C. Lichter (*ed.*) 2007, 97-109.

Kurapkat, D. 2004: Die frühneolithischen Bauanlagen auf dem Göbekli Tepe in Obermesopotamien (Südosttürkei). Koldewey-Gesellschaft (*ed.*), *Bericht über die 42. Tagung für Ausgrabungswissenschaft und Bauforschung 2002 in München* (2004), 256-267.

Kurapkat, D. 2012: A Roof under One's Feet: Early Neolithic Roof Constructions at Göbekli Tepe, Southeastern Turkey, in: R. Carvais / A. Guillerme / V. Nègre / J. Sakarovitch (*eds.*) *Nuts & Bolts of Construction History. Culture, Technology and Society*, Vol. 3, Paris, 157-165.

Leroi-Gourhan, A. 1964/5: *La geste et la parole*. Paris.

Lichter, C. (*ed.*) 2007: *Vor 12.000 Jahren in Anatolien – Die ältesten Monumente der Menschheit. Begleitbuch zur Großen Landesausstellung Baden Würtemberg 2007 „Vor 12.000 Jahren in Anatolien – Die ältesten Monumente der Menschheit im Badischen Landesmuseum Schloss Karlsruhe, hrsgg. vom Badischen Landesmuseum*. Stuttgart.

Mazurowski, R.F. / Kanjou, Y. (*eds.*) 2012: *Tell Qaramel 1999-2007: Proto-Neolithic and Early Pre-Excavations 1999-2007*. Polish Center of Mediterranean Archaeology Excavation Series 2. Warsaw.

Mazurowski, R.F. / Yartah, T. 2002: Tell Qaramel, Excavations, 2001. *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 13 (2002), 295-307.

Mithen, S. 1996: *The Prehistory of Mind. A Search for the Origins of Art, Religion and Science.* London.

Morenz, L. 2014: *Medienevolution und die Gewinnung neuer Denkräume. Das frühneolithische Zeichensystem (10./9. Jt. v. Chr.) und seine Folgen*. Studia Euphratica Band 1, Berlin (edited by Harald Hauptmann, Ludwig Morenz and Klaus Schmidt).

Morenz, L. / Schmidt, K. 2009: Große Reliefpfeiler und kleine Zeichentäfelchen: Ein frühneolithisches Zeichensystem in Obermesopotamien, in: P. Andrássy / J. Budka / F. Kammerzell (*eds.*) *Non-Textual Marking Systems, Writing and Pseudo Script from Prehistory to Modern Times*, Lingus Aegyptia – Studia monographica 8, Göttingen, 13-31.

Peters, J. / Schmidt, K. 2004: Animals in the Symbolic World of Pre-Pottery Neolithic Göbekli Tepe, Southeastern Turkey: A Preliminary Assessment. *Anthropozoologica* 39 (1), 179-218.

Schmidt, K. 2005: „Ritual-Centres" and the Neolithisation of Upper Mesopotamia. *Neo-Lithics* 2/05, 13-21.

Schmidt, K. 2012: *Göbekli Tepe: A Stone Age Sanctuary in Southeastern Anatolia. ex oriente* e.V., Berlin.

Stordeur, D. / Abbés, F. 2002: Du PPNA au PPNB: mise en lumière d'une phase de transition à Jerf el Ahmar (Syrie). *Bulletin de la Société préhistorique française* 99/3, 563-595.

Stordeur, D. / Jammous, B. / Helmer, D. / Willcox, G. 1996: Jerf el-Ahmar: a New Mureybetian Site (PPNA) on the Middle Euphrates. *Neo-Lithics* 2/96, 1-2.

Warburg, A. 1988: *Schlangenritual. Ein Reisebericht.* Berlin (edited by U. Raulf).

Watkins, T. 2004: Building Houses, Framings Concepts, Constructing Worlds. *Paléorient* 30/1, 5-23.

Watkins, T. 2008a: Natural Environment *versus* Cultural Environment: The Implications of Creating a Built Environment, in: J. Córdoba / M. Molist / C. Pérez / I. Rubio / S. Martínez (*eds.*) *Proceedings of the 5th International Congress of the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, Madrid 3-8 April 2006*, Madrid, 427-437.

Watkins, T. 2008b: Ordering Time and Space: Creating a Cultural World, in: J. Córdoba / M. Molist / C. Pérez / I. Rubio / S. Martínez (*eds.*) *Proceedings of the 5th International Congress of the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, Madrid 3-8 April 2006,* Madrid, 647-659.

Watkins, T. 2010: New Light on Neolithic Revolution in South-West Asia. *Antiquity* 84, N° 325, 621-634.

Wehr, M. / Weinmann, M. (*eds.*) 2005: *Die Hand, Werkzeug des Geistes*. München.

Pendant with human face from Basta (Jordan), Late 7th millennium BC (after Gebel 2004, Fig. 3.1)

Our Place: Our Place in the World
is generously funded by the

John Templeton Foundation
300 Conshohocken State Road
Suite 500
West Conshohocken, PA 19428 USA

http://www.templeton.org/

Contact Address:

PD Dr. Jörg Becker / Dr. Lee Clare
German Archaeological Institute
Orient Department
Podbielskiallee 69-71
14195 Berlin
Germany

Phone: +49 (0)30 187711 225
Fax: +49 (0)30 187711 189

joerg.becker@dainst.de
lee.clare@dainst.de