

Editorial

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Academic conferences are the lifeblood of any discipline, as they provide a platform to disseminate new research, discuss innovations and mull over old thorny problems of theory and methodology. Outwith the constraints of departments, timetables and curricula they offer ample space and time for the cross-fertilisation of ideas. Attendees generally are invigorated by the panel discussions and able to take that energy back to their own research or classroom. Sometimes conferences are aimed at specific areas where specialists can gain new perspectives on their specialisms, but many conferences aim at a wider participation where papers from different fields and sub-disciplines can give a broader view of what makes up the whole and their respective contributions to it. As you will see from this issue, skyscape archaeology is at an advantage, as it is equally at home in an archaeology conference as it is in an archaeoastronomy conference.

Whilst there is a developing new trend for creating online material such as podcasts and YouTube videos, the sad fact is that many papers, so alive at the time, get lost and forgotten by the date of the next conference. The best that one can hope for is that they will become included in published conference proceedings – though these can take many years to produce, with the danger that some of the research may be outdated by the time they come out. A case in point is the edited volume *Songs from the Sky: Indigenous Astronomical and Cosmological Traditions of the World* (Chamberlain *et al.* 2005). Remarkably, this book, which is the proceedings of the “First International Conference on Ethnoastronomy”, held at the Smithsonian Institution in 1983, had taken 22 years to come to fruition.

The *Journal of Skyscape Archaeology* is committed to publishing a range of related material to bring the best of this to a wider audience, in order to simulate the atmosphere of a conference, with papers, discussions and on-going debates. To this extent this, our second issue, has an overall conference theme.

“From Nineveh to Chaco: Calendars Through Time – Here and There” was a conference held in Pagosa Springs, Colorado (USA) on 12th–15th June, 2011. This multidisciplinary conference focused on timekeeping systems and how they have changed through time and across different cultures. Over the course of two days, thirty speakers presented their papers, which spanned the entire western hemisphere: from the ancient Near East to

the American Southwest, passing through Mesoamerica and megalithic Europe. Unfortunately, a "Proceedings" volume from this conference never materialised. However, *JSA* has been fortunate enough to have attracted three papers from this conference, which finally see the light of day with this issue. All three papers have been considerably expanded and updated with the latest material, which enhances their relevance today. We would like to thank Wayne Horowitz, James Walton and Kim Malville for having directed these papers to us.

Our first paper from the Pagosa Springs conference is titled "Crab Supernova Rock Art: A Comprehensive, Critical, and Definitive Review" by **E. C. Krupp**. The paper exhaustively reviews the evidence related to rock art depictions that have been interpreted as representations of the Crab supernova of 1054 AD in the American Southwest and beyond. Krupp concludes that all documented cases are ambiguous, "and the supernova interpretation of several of them is fatally flawed". The paper highlights the importance of reflexivity as well as cultural, artefactual and iconographic context in interpretations; something that we believe should apply not only to the interpretation of rock art representations but also structural alignments.

The second paper, by **Wayne Horowitz** and titled "The Mesopotamian Wind-Star Directions and a Compass Card from Uruk", looks at two cuneiform stone tablets in order to answer the question of how a first millennium BC Babylonian would locate him- or herself geographically. In the absence of modern technology, a Babylonian would recur to environmental and celestial features, such as winds, rivers, mountains, the Sun and the stars. This paper highlights the role of the skyscape as a complement to the landscape in the construction of a cultural geography.

We then move to Peru with **Steven R. Gullberg's** lavishly illustrated paper "Marking Time in the Inca Empire". Gullberg surveys the light and shadow effects produced by Inca structures and how they were used to mark the passage of time. The latter, important for subsistence and religious purposes, was marked by the use of carefully oriented structures which were complemented by solar pillars on the horizon. These structures, when examined in the proper cultural context, support a well-developed calendar system, illustrating the role of the skyscape in the development of calendars.

David Connolly reviewed the TAG 2014 day-long session entitled "Cosmologies in Transition: Continuity and Transformation in the Material Record" in issue 1(1) of *JSA*. So, to continue our conference theme, in this issue we are publishing a paper presented there by **Liz Henty**, "Continuity or change? A Microscopic -Scale Analysis of Monuments and Ritual in Aberdeenshire". This paper reviews general archaeological accounts of Scotland, which tend to demonstrate broad ideas of the Neolithic transition to farming and the subsequent economic changes in the Bronze Age, and compares their interpretation with a small-scale study conducted in Aberdeenshire.

Then we have reviews of some of the major conferences that have touched on topics of relevance to *JSA* readers. As promised, **Sanlyn Buxner** and **Danielle Adams** bring us a review of the tenth International Society for Archaeoastronomy and Astronomy in Culture (ISAAC) conference, entitled "Astronomy, Indigenous Knowledge and Interpretation", which took place in Cape Town (South Africa) last year. Closer to home, **Murray**

Cook reviews the “Archaeological Research in Progress” conference which took place in Edinburgh (Scotland, UK) on 30th May, 2015. Finally, **Pamela Armstrong** gives her impressions of the session organised by Daniel Brown at the National Astronomy Meeting held in July at Llandudno (Wales, UK). Here the morning session was given over to presentations but the afternoon session focused on practical demonstrations of equipment and software used in skyscape archaeology. Acknowledging that this methodology is lacking from the astronomy curricula, it was aimed at students with no previous experience of these techniques, and we applaud Daniel’s initiative here.

We are pleased to acknowledge the publication of Clive Ruggles’ edited three-volume *Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy* (2015), which contains 217 individual chapters penned by the leading scholars of this wide-ranging field, many of whom have been conducting research for decades. Here is the summation of their work, presented in a form accessible to new students of this enriching field. Reviewing this 2297 page work in a single 2000-word essay would be doing the book and our readers a disfavoured. Instead we have decided to concentrate on the theoretical issues and methodology in the two opening parts at the start of Volume 1 and this current issue **Liz Henty** reviews Part I, “Themes and Issues”. Part II, “Methods and Practice”, will be reviewed in our next issue.

Overall, this volume has the flavour of several conference proceedings rolled into one, where one is spoiled for choice as to which themed session to attend. Often, important conferences are too distant, too poorly advertised or too costly to attend, yet we cannot underestimate their importance to our field. We welcome advance notices of related conferences so we can pass details on to our readers.

We have to apologise to our readers for not including a Forum discussion on the Minor Lunar Standstill, as promised in the previous editorial. However, in order to give it the space it deserves, we are working hard to make sure it will be included in the next issue. On the other hand, we would like to thank our contributors for their patience through the peer-review process, our Editorial Board, especially Nicholas Campion for his generous support, and Equinox for producing such stylish copy. Finally we would like to introduce Caroline Denby, who has joined the editorial team as an assistant.

References

- Chamberlain, V. D., J. B. Carlson and M. J. Young (eds), 2005. *Songs from the Sky: Indigenous Astronomical and Cosmological Traditions of the World*. Bognor Regis, UK: Ocarina Books.
- Ruggles, C. (ed.) 2015. *Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy*. New York: Springer. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-6141-8>