Editorial

Liz Henty, Fabio Silva and Erica Ellingson

The philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) conceived human life as a series of seven-year cycles from birth to death (Steiner 1996 [1907]). The first cycle, which starts at birth, represents the early stages of growth where the child severs the umbilical connection with the mother and steps out into his/her unique life. An analogy can be drawn between Steiner's conception and the early years of the *Journal of Skyscape Archaeology*. The aim in our first issue was to augment the existing archaeoastronomy and cultural astronomy with new ideas, so forging a new and unique path in skyscape archaeology. In this, the journal adapted what we had learned from our past mothers while critiquing and scrutinising their lessons, thereby developing a multidisciplinary voice which would encompass those elements within a society that may reflect the influence of the skylines above, whether in the past or in the present. To do this we needed to bring to the foreground archaeology, history, anthropology and philosophy, as we set out in our very first editorial (Silva and Henty 2015).

Little did we imagine that our enthusiastic idea of creating a new journal to marry the fields of archaeology and archaeoastronomy would become so successful. Without the support of our editorial board, our publishers at Equinox and all the scholars who represent the full spectrum of specialisms to be found in our interdisciplinary domain, the journal could not have been realised, and we want to thank each and every one of them. Research articles which shed new light on old findings or open up previously under-researched areas have been our primary focus, but the field has also been substantively enhanced by the Theory and Method papers we have published. In addition, our Forums have the advantage of bringing interested scholars together to thrash out thorny problems in our research domain, and their insights and perspectives are invaluable in opening new windows. Because conference and book reviews shed light on the current state of the field they are also an important aspect of our work.

The journal has now been published for seven years and this issue therefore marks a significant milestone in our growth as it now stands at the beginning of the next stage of maturation. Returning to Steiner's scheme of life, the second seven-year period commences with the body fighting against childhood illnesses and fever before transitioning towards a renewal of energy more committed to meeting the challenges of life.

Covid analogies aside, this is also the period where children stop learning by imitation and start to engage emotionally with the content of lessons and the individuality of the teacher. It is a time when children “need to grasp hold of the world and its causal connections through thinking” (Zech 2019). It is this branching out into the wider world that will characterise *JSA*’s next phase, whose seeds have been sown over the past few years and are already starting to sprout.

In the wider circles of academia we are proud to announce that, as of this year, the *Journal of Skyscape Archaeology* is now indexed on SCOPUS in addition to Google Scholar and the European Reference Index. We now have two impact metrics to share with you. Firstly, SCOPUS has attributed *JSA* a CiteScore of 0.1. This low value is symptomatic of the fact that SCOPUS only started indexing our articles last year, thereby missing five years of *JSA* publications. However, this ranking will surely rise at a steady pace in the coming years. A more realistic assessment of impact is that provided by Google Scholar which, based on materials published in the last five years, has given *JSA* an h5-index of 6 and an h5-median of 8. These figures are comparable to those obtained by other leading journals in the field of cultural astronomy, thereby demonstrating that our much younger journal is already having similar impact.

Education continues to be a priority, and we told you about the *JSA*/Sophia Centre awards in our last issue. We received a number of strong applications and we are delighted to announce the winners: Yuqing Chen, a PhD candidate at the University of Durham, with a project titled “How Did Astronomical Phenomena and Associated Prehistoric Cosmology Differ between China and Europe?”; and Hilda Natalia Sánchez, now a graduate of University of Wales Trinity Saint David, with a project titled “Do Heavenly Bodies Have a Role in the Muisca Myth of *Bachué*, as Seen from the Villa de Leiva Archaeological Site and the *Iguaque* Sacred Lagoon?” We wish them good luck with their projects and look forward to seeing the results of their research published in *JSA* in due course. In addition, we want to remind readers that we have not yet reached the deadline for the Lionel Sims Award and this will be announced on our social media as soon as it has been decided.

These awards were funded by the proceeds of the 2020–2021 “Skyscape Archaeology Keynote Lecture Series” organised by *JSA* in collaboration with the Sophia Centre, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, a review of which we published in the previous issue (Romain 2021). So successful was this series of lectures that a second series has been arranged, now also in collaboration with Bournemouth University. This started in November 2021 and will continue to run monthly until 13th April, 2022. Interested parties will find more information on our website. We hope this series will generate enough income to repeat the Student Research Grants and the Lionel Sims Award next year.

In this issue we are delighted to bring you two new Research Articles and two Theory and Method papers, alongside our usual book reviews. **William F. Romain** looks at Cahokia, a Native American city located in present-day Illinois. In his article, entitled “Following the Milky Way Path of Souls: An Archaeoastronomic Assessment of Cahokia’s Main Site Axis and Rattlesnake Causeway”, he investigates the role of the Milky Way as it transverses the main site. He suggests that both the site and the long earthen causeway are aligned to the Milky Way, the latter as a metaphor for the passage of souls into the

land of the dead. In a broad-ranging study he uses astronomic, ethnographic, archaeological and iconographic data to support his hypothesis. In our second research article, **H. Natalia Sánchez** takes us to an important prehistoric site in Colombia in “Archaeoastronomy in the Villa de Leiva Archaeological Site, a Reinterpretation”, where she presents an analysis of standing stones there. Her work updates previous studies with a thoughtful consideration of how alignments may have been affected by some of the stones having been moved or removed. Her measurements of eastern alignments are put into context with a discussion of the traditions of present-day indigenous people, providing another chapter in the ongoing conversation about the definition and significance of the equinoxes. As announced above, she is one of the recipients of the JSA/Sophia Centre awards.

Rigorous statistical analysis of quantitative measurements is a pillar of our research methodology and in the first Theory and Method paper of this issue, “Analysis of Structures’ Orientation in Archaeoastronomy: Methods for the Quantitative Statistical Assessment of Peaks in Composite Probability Distributions”, **José M. Abril** describes new approaches to assessing alignment measurements which are drawn from multiple different underlying distributions. He illustrates these methods by analysing the alignments of medieval Spanish churches, where some may have been carefully orientated towards specific narrow ranges of the horizon, while most others faced more broadly towards a general quadrant of the sky. His analysis shows how we can untangle more complex patterns of human intention from our increasingly larger and more detailed datasets. Turning from the technical to the cultural, the articulation of cosmovisions and cosmologies among indigenous groups is an important branch of anthropology that any skyscape archaeologist should be interested in, as they may teach us about non-modern, non-Western ways of relating to and conceiving the world around a given society. In “Cosmo-Logics in Contemporary Lowland South America”, **Alejandro M. López and Agustina Altman** step away from the anecdotal comparative approaches of the past and, instead, seek to identify and understand commonalities in the systems of logical thinking that underlie such cosmologies. They do this by focusing on Lowland South American groups, especially from Argentina.

Unfortunately there have been few in-person conferences this year, although SEAC was able to host their 28th conference in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria, as a blended mixture of live and Zoom talks. The EAA conference remained fully online and included an archaeoastronomy session hosted by Stanislaw Iwaniszewski. Because of the different nature of these events, many attendees pick and choose just a few sessions to tune into, which has meant we are unable to bring you full conference reviews as normal. Nevertheless our book reviews section thrives and in this issue we are able to bring you four new reviews to whet your appetite. The first is by **Kenneth Brophy**, who critiques Euan W. MacKie’s *Professor Challenger and his Lost Neolithic World: The Compelling Story of Alexander Thom and British Archaeoastronomy*, a book which has been published posthumously. MacKie will always be remembered for swimming against the tide of orthodox archaeology and this book combines his biography of Alexander Thom with his own autobiographical notes, as Brophy points out. Our second review is **Carolyn Kennett**’s assessment of Peigin Doyle’s *Pathways To The Cosmos: The alignment of megalithic tombs in Ireland and Atlantic Europe*. Based on the 2018 Dublin conference of the same name, it summarises the talks

and is beautifully illustrated throughout with high quality photographs and diagrams. The next review is by **Ingrid O'Donnell**, who thoughtfully digests Nancy Gonlin and April Nowell's *Archaeology of the Night: Life after Dark in the Ancient World*. This volume derives from two symposia held respectively in Denver and Orlando, USA. Whereas standard archaeology books tend to focus on daytime activities, this book in contrast focuses on the nighttime and why this knowledge is important for understanding peoples of the past. Our final review is by **Liz Henty** who looks at *Advancing Cultural Astronomy: Studies In Honour of Clive Ruggles*, edited by Efrosyni Boutsikas, Stephen C. McCluskey and John Steele, to see whether the title lives up to its name. Our notices include an important software update on skyscapeR by **Fabio Silva**.

With sadness we received news that Lionel Sims passed away in October 2021. Lionel was Emeritus Head of Anthropology at the University of East London. He had been a member of the *JSA* editorial board from our very inception and authored a number of articles and Forum contributions. An avid supporter of the deeper integration of archaeology, anthropology and archaeoastronomy, Lionel was an inspiration for all of the *JSA* editorial team. Though he will be missed, his legacy will endure and will be celebrated in an upcoming festschrift (Silva and Henty, forthcoming).

We would also like to add our tribute to the astronomer Michael Hoskin who has died recently. He was a Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge, Emeritus Fellow of St Edmund's College, Cambridge, Honorary Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and held medals of the American Astronomical Society and the European Society for Astronomy in Culture. He was also a pivotal figure in the history of archaeoastronomy through founding the *Journal for the History of Astronomy* in 1970, which from 1979 to 2002 also included the *Archaeoastronomy Supplement*. After his retirement he began a programme of over 3000 archaeoastronomical surveys in Mediterranean Europe, the results of which were published in *Tombs, Temples and their Orientations* (2001).

Despite this sad news, we hope that you enjoy this issue and all that remains is to wish you all the very best for the holiday season and we will be raising a virtual glass to hope you all have a wonderful New Year.

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