

Hierarchy and Balance: The Role of Monumentality in European and Indian Landscapes

Maria Wunderlich, Tiatoshi Jamir, Johannes Müller (Eds.)

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Special edition 5 / 2019

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Preface of the Speakers of the CRC 1266*Wiebke Kirleis, Johannes Müller*

In the context of an Indian and German workshop and a Graduate School course of scholars interested in megaliths and societies, a joint publication of contributions was planned as a sign of cooperative work on monuments and societies both in Europe and India. Consequently, the papers published here are a joint effort of the editors from Kohima and Kiel. While after gaining a first impression of a mosaic of very valid contents, this book might be handled as a kind of informative tool on mainly North East Indian megaliths, primarily concerning new questions on material culture, megaliths and societies in the mentioned spatial frame. The publication represents the cooperation of the Kiel Graduate School "Human Development in Landscapes", Nagaland University, the Kiel Collaborative Research Center "Scales of Transformation: Human-environmental Interaction in Prehistoric and Archaic Societies", and the Nordic Graduate School "Dialogues with the Past".

As the speakers of the CRC, it is our pleasure to particularly thank Tiatoshi Jamir and Maria Wunderlich, who successfully merged the contributions to the book presented here. For the organization of the Kohima workshop and the Graduate School course, we especially express our thanks to Julianne Rustad, Tiatoshi Jamir and Maria Wunderlich. Our gratitude is also extended to Maria, Tiatoshi, Agnes Heitmann and Eileen Küçükkaraca for their scientific and technical editing.

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Preface

Maria Wunderlich; Tiatoshi Jamir, Johannes Müller

The title of this special issue, *Hierarchy and Balance: The Role of Monumentality in European and Indian Landscapes*, derives from a workshop which was held in Kohima, India between the 17th and 18th of March 2018. Proceeded by a PhD workshop called 'Building Big? Global Scales of Monumentality – An Ethno-archaeological Perspective', the aim of this workshop was to bring together the perspectives of European and Indian archaeologists on the broad fields of megalithic construction and monumentality. The contributions of this proceedings issue reflect the diversity of case studies which were presented during the workshop, thus offering a promising insight into different areas and traditions of megalithic construction.

Within this volume, two different case studies, which cover different contexts of prehistoric monumentality within modern-day Europe, are included, as well as different methods which can be used in order to investigate monuments. Within his article, 'The Concept of Monumentality in the Research into Neolithic Megaliths in Western France', Luc Laporte offers a discussion of terms such as 'megaliths' and 'monuments' from a perspective on French research. France constitutes one of the regions with the highest diversity and longest time span of megalithic building activities and thus provides an excellent case study of the diverse and ever-changing methods, interpretations and narratives connected to the research of monumentality. Knut Rassmann, with his article 'Non- and Minimally-Invasive Methods to Investigate Megalithic Landscapes in the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage site (Ireland) and Rousay, Orkney Islands in Northwestern Europe', focuses on the possibilities of the application of new and non-invasive methods within a framework of the interaction of social, economic and environmental factors in a specific landscape.

Nine of the contributions included in this special volume are dedicated to specific case studies and traditions of megalithic construction in India, focusing mostly on the area of Northeastern India. The articles of Mepusangba and Yabangri Changkiri ('Megalithic Monuments of Nagas: An Ethnographic Study') and Ditamulu Vasa ('Ideology and Symbolism of Traditional Architecture: A Case of House Structures and Social Stratification of Chozuba and Runguzu Villages, Chakhesang Naga') focus on different aspects of recent megalith building activities in Naga societies. In this regard, specific aspects, such as the interconnectedness of house architectures with megalithic construction and social inequality, as well as the diversity of megalithic construction practices within a small area, are important results. Three further contributions also focus on the areas of Northeastern India, but with a regional focus on communities in Mizoram and Manipur. While Potshangbam Binodini Devi focuses on 'Manipur Megaliths: From Menhirs of Social Status to Commemoratives', the article by Malsawmliana offers 'A Typological Classification of Megaliths of Mizoram'. The article by Salam Shyam Singh: 'New Discoveries of Petroglyphs in Vangchhia: A Preliminary Study', in

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turn, focuses on a specific and still understudied aspect of megalithic remains. Also set in the same broader area, but with a slightly different focus are the contributions by Hemendra Nath Dutta ('V-Shaped Columns in Kachari Monolithic Rajbari Site at Dimapur in Nagaland: Its Architectural and Social Reflections'), Tilok Thakuria ('Stone Jars of Assam, Northeast India: A Comprehensive Overview') and Marco Mitri ('Exploring the Monumentality of Khasi-Jaintia Hills Megaliths'). A broader framework is lastly integrated by a study on 'Megalithic Builders of Odisha: Living Megalithic Tradition among the Munda Communities, Sundargarh District', by Subodha Mendaly. All these different contributions shed light on the immense diversity and variability of monumentality and megalithic construction within modern-day India, as well as the entanglement of diverse social spheres, such as factors of inequality, house building and traditions, and aspects of economic strategies.

Comparative approaches are located at the heart of different branches of archaeological discourses and provide meaningful opportunities to critically reflect and broaden specific research traditions and common understandings. Monumentality and megalithic monuments provide an excellent case study in this regard, since they are a worldwide phenomenon covering various regions as well as prehistoric and historic contexts. Thus, they are suited for reflections on specific perspectives influencing branches of research, as well as common narratives. Within CRC 1266, reflective perspectives are a deeply entangled facet of research on processes of transformation. As a fundamentally integrative and interdisciplinary research program, the CRC focusses on the interconnectedness of case studies and the broader meaning of entangled aspects, such as landscapes, environmental factors, societal factors and meanings. A comparative and reflective perspective was the main driver for the organization of the course and workshop from which this proceedings volume developed.

The PhD course and subsequent workshop in Kohima in 2018 was realized in cooperation with the 'Nordic Graduate School in Archaeology – Dialogues with the Past' and the Department for History and Archaeology, Nagaland University.

We would like to express our gratitude for the immense support that we received from all the parties involved, first of all the Nordic Graduate School and here especially Julianne Rustad for all her efforts and success in the realization of this cooperation. Both the workshop and this publication received further financial and logistical support from the Collaborative Research Center 1266 ('Scales of Transformation: Human-Environmental Interaction in Prehistoric and Archaic Societies'), as well as the Graduate School GSC 208 'Human Development in Landscapes'. Nagaland University, represented, among others, by Prof. Dr. Tiatoshi Jamir and Dr. Ditamulu Vasa, greeted the European PhD students and researchers with warmth and friendship, thus providing an environment for fruitful discussion and engagement from everyone involved.

English editing for this volume was carried out by William Huntley, whom we would also like to thank. Agnes Heitmann (Institute of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Archaeology, Kiel University) realised all layout and graphic design work with greatest care and highest quality. Finally, we would like to thank the publisher, Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, for the opportunity to publish this volume.