

The ArchaeoLore Group

Archaeology, Landscape, Social Memory and Place Names

<https://archaeoloreapfo.wixsite.com/archaeolore>

The ArchaeoLore Group Webinars 2024/2025

The aim of this series is to bring together researchers dedicated to the study of the following topics: archaeology, landscape, place names, and social memory (folklore, oral narratives, oral tradition).

We believe that the valuable insights of archaeologists, anthropologists, linguists, folklorists, geographers, historians, and others, would greatly improve the holistic study of the past. The perspective and research interests of our lecturers closely align with the goals of the ArchaeoLore Group:

- the study of human-environment relationships, cultural manifestations and beliefs, humanized landscape interpretation and social memory, as well as the protection of intangible cultural heritage through transdisciplinary analysis that will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the human experience, past and present
- to interpret cultural heritage through the study of archaeology, oral traditions, social memory, and place names, uncovering the connections between tangible and intangible heritage, revealing the ways in which cultural practices, beliefs, and stories are embedded in landscapes and passed down through generations
- to study the ways in which oral traditions, folklore and place names are linked to specific landscapes and archaeological sites

The ArchaeoLore Group webinars are an opportunity to share knowledge and provide a moment of productive interdisciplinary exchange, demonstrating the added value of collaborative research, providing the opportunity to engage in stimulating discussions and develop professional relationships with other researchers in the field.

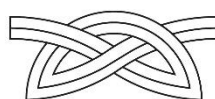
Organizers: Alexandra Vieira and Katarina Botić

September 2024 – May 2025, Tuesdays at 5 p.m. CET / 4 p.m. Portugal

Registration at: <https://forms.gle/dt7yM741g3eKHH4r6>

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CALENDAR

Moderator: Katarina Botić, Institute of Archaeology, Zagreb, Croatia

24.09.2024.

Katja Hrobat Virloget – Between archaeology and anthropology. Collective memory, liminal spaces, boundaries, and mythical landscape

22.10.2024.

Alexandra Vieira – Sacred Landscapes: The Christianization of the Landscape in the North of Portugal

19.11.2024.

Tõnno Jonuks – Biographies of sacred natural sites in Estonia - just a local history or potential research method?

03.12.2024.

Loredana Lancini – The big Giant is watching you: studying natural phenomena and landscape through oral tradition and mythology

14.01.2025.

Tomáš Klír – Archaeology and contact onomastics: Case studies from Central Europe

11.02.2025.

István Kollai – Europeanization of national historical consciousness through castle renovation projects

18.03.2025.

Marilena Papachristophorou – Lost palimpsests: searching for the memory of the past in East Aegean, Greece

22.04.2025.

Patrick D. Nunn – Remembering Sea-Level Rise and Island Creation in Australian and Celtic Cultures

13.05.2025.

Joana Valdez-Tullett – Rock Art, Landscape and the Prevalence of Collective Memory

24.09.2024.

Between archaeology and anthropology. Collective memory, liminal spaces, boundaries, and mythical landscape

Katja Hrobat Virloget

Associate professor, Head of the Department of Anthropology and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of Primorska, Koper, Slovenia (Vice-dean for scientific research)

The presentation discusses the possibilities of interdisciplinary collaboration between archaeology and cultural anthropology / ethnology. What has seemed some decades ago unthinkable, due to the elusiveness or inaccuracy of oral tradition perceived from the archaeological side, has recently provided new perspectives of understanding space, the key concept that links both humanistic disciplines. The paper shows some basic theoretical concepts, which enable the interdisciplinary collaboration between the two disciplines. The key elements which connect the two disciplines are space, oral tradition attached to it and collective memory. The traditional perception of space can offer some better understandings of some archaeological materials. The oral tradition embedded in the landscape can give us some understandings of the continuity of symbolic values of places, such as liminal spaces or elements of mythical landscape.

Katja Hrobat Virloget graduated from archaeology on the use of oral tradition in archaeology and made her PhD in ethnology on the concept of time and space in oral tradition of Karst. Currently Vice-Dean for Research at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Primorska, Slovenia, and Head of the Department of Anthropology and Cultural Studies She has recently received several prizes for her Slovenian book *V tišini spomina. "Eksodus" in Istra* (published in English by Berghahn Books as *Silences and Divided Memories: The Exodus and its Legacy in Post-War Istrian Society*), including a nomination for the Excellence in Research Award 2022 by the Slovenian Research Agency. Apart from the anthropology of memory and migrations, she continues her research on the interdisciplinary field between archaeology and anthropology. Currently she leads a research project *Ethnography of silence(s)* and she's included in the research project *Geodetic marks as material witnesses of geodetic networks development in Slovenia*, where she analyzes mythical and traditional meanings of village borders.

22.10.2024.

Sacred Landscapes: The Christianization of the Landscape in the North of Portugal

Alexandra Vieira

Polytechnic Institute of Bragança (IPB), Portugal; ICOMOS ICAHM

Christianization of archaeological sites represents a common phenomenon in European history, where ancient places of pagan cults or archaeological remains were reinterpreted and adapted by the Christian religion. In the context of the Iberian Peninsula, the Christianization process involved both the Church's deliberate action and the spontaneous initiatives of local communities. This phenomenon reflects cultural and religious transformation over the centuries, creating an overlap between ancestral pagan traditions and the new Christian faith.

Analysis of various archaeological sites reveals different forms of Christianization. In some cases, the Church has built Christian buildings, such as chapels or churches, on previous structures, often in sites associated with pre-Christian practices, such as Iron Age hillforts or prehistoric burial sites. For example, fortified hills of the Iron Age were reused in the Middle Ages with the construction of small churches, symbolizing the integration of the new religion in places of community importance. Another common manifestation of this process is the inclusion of Christian symbols, such as crosses in places with prehistoric rock art. These sites were resignified and integrated into the Christian imaginary.

Legends, oral tradition, and place names play a crucial role in interpreting archaeological sites associated with Landscape Christianization. For example, in several hills where chapels or churches are now, the legends mention appearances of saints or miracles that would have justified the construction of Christian temples on ancient places of pagan cults or archaeological sites. These stories often reflect a religious syncretism, in which pagan elements are reinterpreted in light of the new faith. Thus, legends or Christian place names not only preserve the memory of ancestral use of these sites but also illustrate how local communities have symbolically integrated those spaces into the Christian imaginary, reinforcing the process of landscape Christianization.

Alexandra Vieira is an archaeologist and researcher. She holds a bachelor's degree in History, Archaeology, 2001; PhD in Archaeology, 2015 (Faculty of Arts, University of Porto - FLUP). She is currently Professor at the Department of Arts and Humanities, School of Communication, Administration and Tourism - Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, an institution where she started working in 2003. Her work explores the relationship between archaeological remains and social memory through the study of legends, oral traditions and place names. She coordinates the ArchaeoLore Group project.

19.11.2024.

Biographies of sacred natural sites of Estonia – just a local history or potential research method?

Tõnno Jonuks

Research professor, Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu, Estonia

A tradition to study sacred sites as prehistoric monuments was settled in Estonia during the 19th century by scholars and intellectuals interested in folk culture. Since then, folkloristics has remained a dominating approach, recently seeking cooperation also with other fields, like biology or archaeology. As folk religion has been viewed as a conservative and static phenomenon, the sacred sites are approached as a common entity with large local variations.

This study will take a site biographical approach and explores four case studies – Kunda sacred hill, an offering stone in Tartu, Kassinurme sacred grove and Samma sacred grove – to understand better the microhistory of these places. I wish to demonstrate how dynamic the meanings of a site can be, how sacredness appears/is ascribed to and disappears over the centuries. I will also address the controversial picture of sacred sites which has evolved from using different sources. The understanding of sacred sites is even more blurred by authors of different publication purposes from academic research to national mythmaking or to advocate contemporary paganism. As a result of all this a complicated picture to the sacred sites has evolved which apparently needs more detailed and closer look.

Tõnno Jonuks is archaeologist, specialised in the archaeology of religion. His main research area is the Eastern Baltic, with special focus on Estonia. He has conducted various in-depth research on materiality of religion from the Mesolithic objects to the deposits left at sacred places nowadays. Sacred sites has been among his research topics for decades. Previously he has developed categories of sacred sites and addressed the issue of dating the sacred places.

03.12.2024.

The big Giant is watching you: studying natural phenomena and landscape through oral tradition and mythology

Loredana Lancini

Université catholique de Louvain (Belgium) and CReAAH (UMR 6566, CNRS, France)

Storytelling is a way people have been used for a long time to pass on to future generations important shared values, knowledge, and memories within a community. As the geomythological approach stresses, some stories bear unexpected information about landforms, catastrophes, and natural phenomena, suggesting that they encode memorable observations about nature and its manifestations worth to be remembered. In some traditional societies, such as in the Pacific Islands, oral tradition and mythmaking is still performed and it represents a perfect case study to highlight some interesting myths, legends, and place names recalling natural events, which will be presented in this contribution. We will show how uncommon natural features and dangerous natural hazards were explained and related to supernatural beings, how these long-lasting memories were preserved throughout the centuries and how they still hold some important information to build mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Loredana Lancini studied Classics and Archaeology. She obtained her PhD in Ancient History in 2022 at Le Mans Université (France). She studied volcanic geo-myths in both the Pacific Islands and in Greek-Roman World. She has been part for a long time of the archaeological excavations of the Diana Nemorensis Roman sanctuary in Nemi (Rome). Her current postdoctoral research is about divination practices in Roman Sanctuaries in Italy and the understanding of the relationship between sanctuaries and natural environment.

14.01.2025.

Archaeology and Contact onomastics: Case Studies from Central Europe

Tomáš Klír

Charles University, Faculty of Arts, Department of Archaeology, Praha, Czech Republic

Toponymy provides a significant insight into the history of the landscape. The analysis of toponymy in language contact areas is particularly attractive. It is possible to trace the relationship between different languages, when the language contact occurred and the social context of the language contact. It is also possible to determine whether the spread of a language occurred by migration or by language shift. Moreover, combining toponomastic and archaeological sources can produce really outstanding knowledge, sometimes radically changing traditional interpretations of prominent events in the past. With this aim in mind, the presentation will introduce case studies from the Slavic-German language contact area in Central Europe (Germany, Czech Republic) for the medieval period.

Tomáš Klír specializes in medieval archaeology, socio-economic history, historical geography, archaeology and linguistics, toponomastics. He is the author of four monographs (e.g. Peasantry in Late Medieval Cheb. Social mobility, migration and processes of desertification, 2024), the main author or co-editor of three collective monographs (e.g. New Perspectives on the Early Slavs and the Rise of Slavic. Contact and Migrations, 2020). He is a representative of the Czech Republic in the association of rural archaeologists (Ruralia, the Jean-Marie Pesez conferences on medieval rural archaeology), serves on the editorial board of the journal Praehistorica and on the editorial board of the monographic series Prague Medieval Studies (Karolinum). PhD in Archaeology 2009, Associate Professor in Archaeology (2020).

11.02.2025.

Europeanization of national historical consciousness through castle renovation projects

István Kollai

Marie Curie Fellow, Comenius University Bratislava, Bratislava, Slovak Republic

The Slovak collective remembrance was institutionalized throughout the 20th century from a “plebeian-peasant” perspective (Buzalka, 2018): symbols of late richness, feudal past, or earlier non-Slovak elites were not incorporated into the grand national narratives. However, numerous local heritage projects are initiated by private owners, local municipalities, academic experts and NGOs with the view of reinterpreting their own regions as having multiple historical connections towards various cultures and reinterpreting late multilingual and cosmopolitan elite as well as intelligentsia – castle owners, founders of institutions, personalities with artistic talents – as “our own, however non-Slovak”. My presentation aims to reveal this tendency of Europeanization of memory through fieldworks in Ostrá Lúka, village in Central Slovakia, where a small castle became a well-known heritage object throughout Slovakia. Its renowned position was gained first by historical novels whose scenes take place in the castle. The term “Europeanization of memory” is precise in this case because historical personalities relating to the castle (late castle-owners and local intelligentsia under their patronage) are positioned in-between Slovaks and foreigners, as “local Europeans” – and their built heritage is narrated as local value with European connectedness. The study intends to unfold, how this Europeanization of memory gains impetus from multiple actors, how they bolster it intentionally or unintentionally when renovating the depopulated mansion or when emphasising the late castle-owners’ relational network throughout the whole “Habsburg Central Europe”, how their narration is intermingled with emotion (proudness, dignity, feeling of prestige) when launching place-marketing campaigns or when hosting national media representatives. While the detachment of Slovak historical consciousness from the Western European cultural circle has become an ideological hotbed for various anti-Western populisms, a Europeanized Slovak historical narrative presents an important counterpoint against these populist ideas. From this perspective, Europeanization of remembrance can be considered programmatic, showing resilience even towards historiographic criticism in some cases. This kind of emotional resilience, or banal emotional driving force is also analysed, and it is conceptualized – together with the blurred boundary between in-group and out-group – as Europeanization of Slovak memory.

István Kollai (PhD) is a historian and economist, currently a Marie Curie Fellow at Comenius University Bratislava, Institute for Social Anthropology. From 2010 to 2015, he was the Director of the Hungarian Institute in Bratislava, afterward he started his academic career at Corvinus University of Budapest. He is the founder of Terra Recognita Foundation (NGO). His research interest can be categorized with memory- and heritage studies, focusing on how historical consciousness can have an influence on patterns of capitalism and nationalism. By the end of 2022, he is the researcher in a H2020 project, scrutinizing the emergence of neotraditional & neofeudal tendencies in Central and Eastern Europe. Currently, he investigates the embeddedness of Slovakian castle utilization projects into the local cultural landscapes.

18.03.2025.

**Lost palimpsests: searching for the memory of the past in
East Aegean, Greece**

Marilena Papachristophorou

Professor of Social Anthropology, Folklore and Orality Studies, University of Ioannina, department of History and Archaeology, Ioannina, Greece.

This paper is based on published and unpublished research in several insular units of the Aegean Sea in Greece. Oral traditions and vernacular practices usually preserve the memory of lost symbolic systems; a memory which is reflected on landscapes that echo collective representations through narrative maps and (religious) landmarks. Oral narratives however fade out with literacy, globalization and economies based on tourist industries at the cost of sustainability for the local communities. What remains in the author's view are (collective) bodily practices and dispersed verbal and material symbols. Through them, and with a lot of patience, fieldwork research can restore hypotheses of lost palimpsests.

Marilena Papachristophorou is Professor of Social Anthropology, Folklore and Orality Studies at the University of Ioannina, Greece [formerly Researcher at the Hellenic Folklore Research Centre of the Academy of Athens (1997-2009)]. She studied French and Comparative Literature at Sorbonne (University of Paris IV) and obtained her PhD in Social Anthropology and Ethnology from the École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris (1997). Her publications and research focus on Orality and Folklore studies, Fieldwork methodology, symbolic anthropology and collective memory studies. She specializes in insularities and the Aegean worlds. She is the author of *Sommeils et veilles dans le conte merveilleux grec* (Folklore Fellows' Communications no. 279/2002), *Myth, Representation and Identity : an Ethnography of Memory in Lipsi, Greece* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2013).

22.04.2025.

Remembering Sea-Level Rise and Island Creation in Australian and Celtic Cultures

Patrick D. Nunn

University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia

In many of the world's longest-enduring cultures, there are clear memories (contained in ancient stories) that recall the effects of rising postglacial sea level on coastlines. These stories typically focus on times when the shoreline was once further out to sea, when people occupied lands that are now underwater, and when what are today islands were part of the mainland. Some of these stories explain the human consequences of these profound changes and the anxiety that people at the time felt as a result of these.

Using examples from Aboriginal Australian and Celtic (Atlantic) cultures, this presentation focuses on stories about the creation of islands as a result of sea level rising across the necks of peninsulas, often cutting one group of people off from those with whom they had previously interacted. Some people evidently decided to stay on the (smaller) newly-created island while others are likely to have chosen to stay on the (larger) mainland from which it had been severed.

Key examples from Australia include Kangaroo Island (South Australia), the Wellesley Islands (Queensland) and the islands off the mouth of the Swan River (Western Australia). Key examples from Celtic coasts include the island of Jersey (Channel Islands, UK), the Îles Glénans (Brittany, France) and various sites in the Outer Hebrides group (western Scotland, UK).

These examples all demonstrate the capacity of oral (pre-literate) cultures to preserve information for several thousand years, requiring us to re-evaluate common notions about the limits of orality. Some of these stories are likely to be more than 7000 years old, showing that under optimal circumstances, it is possible for information to be preserved this long, suggesting that our understanding of the past might benefit from a more sympathetic reading of myth and legend. A final point suggests that trauma derived from people's anxiety about long-term sea-level rise may have become deeply embedded in the human psyche, the implications of which are explored.

Patrick Nunn is Professor of Geography at the University of the Sunshine Coast (Australia) and author of >360 peer-reviewed publications, many explaining how 'myths and legends' are likely to be authentic culturally-filtered memories of life-changing events witnessed long ago by our ancestors. His book *The Edge of Memory* (2018) makes the case for this and shows that some such stories recall events that happened more than ten thousand years ago. His latest book, *Worlds in Shadow* (2021), focuses on ancient 'stories' about submerged lands throughout the world and asks whether these stories have lessons for us today.

13.05.2025.

Rock Art, Landscape and the Prevalence of Collective Memory

Joana Valdez-Tullett

University of Glasgow / Wessex Archaeology (UK)

Rock art, or the addition of visual markers to hard rocky surfaces, is a worldwide practice known to virtually every chronological period. There has been much speculation about the reasoning or function of rock art, but it is generally agreed that it forms an important part of people's enculturation of their surrounding landscape. Although chronology is often a difficult matter to address, many rock art traditions encapsulate long continuities of creation. This is visible in the recurrence of location where rock art is created, the maintenance of symbols throughout many centuries and even millennia, or the techniques applied. The importance of rock art sites is also attested in the existence of oral traditions which in many cases are the reason for their prevalence in the landscape and prevalence in the local collective memory. It is this relationship between rock art and landscape that enables the maintenance of this long-term communal memory. This talk will explore the significance of this relationship and provide examples of how rock art, landscape and oral history are inter-connected through examples of European carving and painting traditions.

Joana Valdez-Tullett has been working with rock art since 2003, studying and investigating sites from a number of western European countries and periods, including the Palaeolithic and the Iron Age. Recently she has also been involved in research in western Asia. Joana's specialism, however, focused on the tradition of Atlantic Rock Art, about which she published the volume 'Design and Connectivity: the case of Atlantic Rock Art' (2019). Joana is interested in Digital Archaeology and often applies computational methods to her research which she combines with social perspectives. She is interested in making processes and relationships between people, landscape and rock art's role in prehistoric connectivity. Joana is currently a Research Affiliate of the University of Glasgow (UK) and a Technical Specialist at in the International Heritage Team at Wessex Archaeology.