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Revello Lami, M.; Palmero Fernández, M.

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EDITORIAL



Archaeology at the intersection between cognitive neuroscience, performance theory, and architecture: from psychoactive substances to rock art and bone shelters

We are pleased to present a collection of stimulating research papers that delve into various realms of scientific inquiry, shedding new light on captivating subjects. In this issue, we embark on a journey that spans the enigmatic presence of a mushroom cult in the Southern Levant, ancient divination practices, rock art research, and the symbolic significance of prehistoric architecture. These papers demonstrate the diversity and richness of scientific exploration and offer fresh perspectives on usually underexplored topics.

Estelle Orrelle opens our exploration with a thought-provoking analysis titled 'Identifying Iconographic Evidence for a Mushroom Cult in the Preliterate Southern Levant'. Orrelle traces iconographic evidence from late Holocene cultures to the Early Bronze Age in Southern Levant, suggesting the veneration of psychedelic substances and their integration into the iconography of material items. With a focus on rock art found in the Negev and Sinai deserts in Israel, this research highlights the symbiotic relationship between humans, ibex, and the cultivation and collection of mushrooms, offering insights into the intricate beliefs and practices of prehistoric societies.

Along the same lines, Giulia Frigerio's paper titled 'Apolline Divination: Hallucinogenic Substances or Cognitive Inputs? The Case of the Laurel' reiterates the fundamental role played by psychoactive drugs in ancient societies but also points the way to an emerging research field. The use of laurel in Apolline divination has long been a subject of scholarly debate regarding the potential influence of hallucinogenic substances on oracles in classical Greece. Through meticulous research, Frigerio challenges the prevailing notion of chemical alterations and instead argues for the cognitive impact of laurel in influencing the Pythia's mind during divinatory practices. This cognitive approach takes into account the object affordances and the human neural response, ultimately highlighting the profound impact of laurel on divination.

The potential of applying cognitive analysis to gain a better understanding of production and consumption of cave art lies at the core of David M. Witelson's contribution titled 'Performance Theory: A Growing Interest in Rock Art Research.' Witelson aptly points out the surprising lack of awareness among researchers regarding their colleagues' work within this sub-discipline. By exploring the intersections between rock

art and performance theory, Witelson underscores the potential for comprehensive engagements with performance theory to enhance our understanding of rock art practices worldwide. By reviewing a selection of performance theory approaches, this paper sets the stage for a more cohesive and formalized understanding of rock art research.

Finally, Varol Koç takes us back in time with his paper entitled 'Living Inside a Mammoth,' offering a captivating exploration of the archaeological and anthropological implications of mammoth bone heaps discovered in Central Ukraine. These ancient huts constructed from approximately 15,000-year-old mammoth bones provide a unique perspective on prehistoric architecture. Koç speculates on the communal efforts involved in transforming mammoth corpses into shelters, suggesting that such endeavors may have led to the development of more permanent structures. This investigation not only sheds light on the resourcefulness of early communities during the Ice Age but also raises intriguing questions about their cultural and symbolic significance.

The papers gathered in this volume contribute to push the boundaries of our understanding and invite us to reconsider long-established assumptions. From the cognitive impact of laurel in divination practices to the potential insights gained from comprehensive engagements with performance theory in rock art research, and from the resourcefulness of prehistoric communities in utilizing mammoth bones as shelter to the enigmatic presence of a mushroom cult in ancient cultures – the breadth and depth of these investigations are sure to ignite the curiosity of scholars and enthusiasts alike.

With this issue of *Time & Mind*, we hope to stimulate fruitful discussions, encourage interdisciplinary collaborations, and inspire further research into these fascinating subjects. As we delve into the realms of ancient practices and interdisciplinary research, let us embrace the spirit of scientific crossover and its limitless potential.

Martina Revello Lami

Department of Archaeological Sciences, Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University

 m.revello.lami@arch.leidenuniv.nl

Mónica Palmero Fernandez

University of Glasgow