

Göbekli Tepe

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Göbekli Tepe ("Potbelly Hill") is a Neolithic archaeological site near the city of Şanlıurfa in Southeastern Anatolia, Turkey. It includes two phases of use, believed to be of a social or ritual nature by site discoverer and excavator Klaus Schmidt. Its oldest layer dates to around 9000 BCE, the end of the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA). The younger phase, radiocarbon dated to between 8300 and 7400 BCE, belongs to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B. During the early phase, circles of massive T-shaped stone pillars were erected, classified as the world's oldest known megaliths, contemporary with other nearby settlements such as Nevalı Çori and Çayönü. In 2018, the site was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The tell or artificial mound has a height of 15 m and is about 300 m in diameter, approximately 760 m above sea level. More than 200 pillars in about 20 circles are known (as of May 2020) through geophysical surveys. Each pillar has a height of up to 6 m and weighs up to 10 tons. They are fitted into sockets that were hewn out of the local bedrock. In the second phase, belonging to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (PPNB), the erected pillars are smaller and stood in rectangular rooms with floors of polished lime. The site was abandoned after the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (PPNB). Younger structures date to classical times.

The excavations have been ongoing since 1996 by the German Archaeological Institute, but large parts still remain unexcavated.

Göbekli Tepe follows a geometric pattern. The pattern is an equilateral triangle that connects enclosures A, B, and D. A 2020 study of "Geometry and Architectural Planning at Göbekli Tepe"

suggests that enclosures A, B, and D are all one complex, and within this complex there is a "hierarchy" with enclosure D at the top, rejecting the idea that each enclosure was built and functioned individually as less likely.



Klaus Schmidt's view was that Göbekli Tepe is a stone-age mountain sanctuary. Radiocarbon dating as well as comparative stylistical analysis indicate that it contains the oldest known megaliths yet discovered anywhere, and that these ruins may constitute the remains of a temple. Schmidt believed that what he called this "cathedral on a hill" was a pilgrimage destination attracting worshippers up to 150 km distant. Butchered bones found in large numbers from local game such as deer, gazelle, pigs, and geese have been identified as refuse from food hunted and cooked or otherwise prepared for the congregants. Zooarchaeological analysis shows that gazelle were only seasonally present in the region, suggesting that events such as rituals and feasts were likely timed to occur during periods when game availability was at its peak.

Schmidt considered Göbekli Tepe a central location for a cult of the dead and that the carved animals are there to protect the dead. Though no tombs or graves have yet been found, Schmidt believed that graves remain to be discovered in niches located behind the walls of the sacred circles. In 2017, discovery of human crania with incisions was reported, interpreted as providing evidence for a new form of Neolithic skull cult. Special preparation of human crania in the form of plastered human skulls is known from the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period at sites such as 'Ain Mallaha, Tell es-Sultan (also known as Jericho), and Yiftahel.

Schmidt also interpreted the site in connection with the initial stages of the Neolithic. It is one of several sites in the vicinity of Karaca Dağ, an area that geneticists suspect may have been the original source of at least some of our cultivated grains. Recent DNA analysis of modern domesticated wheat compared with wild wheat has shown that its DNA is closest in sequence to wild wheat found on

Karaca Dağ 30 km away from the site, suggesting that this is where modern wheat was first domesticated.

With its mountains catching the rain and a calcareous, porous bedrock creating many springs, creeks, and rivers, the upper reaches of the Euphrates and Tigris was a refuge during the dry and cold Younger Dryas climatic event (10,800-9,500 BCE).

Schmidt also engaged in speculation regarding the belief systems of the groups that created Göbekli Tepe, based on comparisons with other shrines and settlements. He presumed shamanic practices and suggested that the T-shaped pillars represent human forms, perhaps ancestors, whereas he saw a fully articulated belief in deities as not developing until later, in Mesopotamia, that was associated with extensive temples and palaces. This corresponds well with an ancient Sumerian belief that agriculture, animal husbandry, and weaving were brought to humans from the sacred mountain Ekur, which was inhabited by Annuna deities, very ancient deities without individual names. Schmidt identified this story as a primeval oriental myth that preserves a partial memory of the emerging Neolithic. It is apparent that the animal and other images give no indication of organized violence, i.e. there are no depictions of hunting raids or wounded animals, and the pillar carvings generally ignore game on which the society depended, such as deer, in favour of formidable creatures such as lions, snakes, spiders, and scorpions. Expanding on Schmidt's interpretation that round enclosures could represent sanctuaries, Gheorghiu's semiotic interpretation reads the Göbekli Tepe iconography as a cosmogonic map that would have related the local community to the surrounding landscape and the cosmos.

Göbekli Tepe is regarded by some as an archaeological discovery of great importance since it could profoundly change the understanding

of a crucial stage in the development of human society. Some researchers believe that the construction of Göbekli Tepe may have contributed to the later development of urban civilization, or, as excavator Klaus Schmidt put it, "First came the temple, then the city."

It remains unknown how a population large enough to construct, augment, and maintain such a substantial complex was mobilized and compensated or fed in the conditions of pre-sedentary society. Scholars have been unable to interpret the pictograms, and do not know what meaning the animal reliefs had for visitors to the site. The variety of fauna depicted - from lions and boars to birds and insects - makes any single explanation problematic. As there is little or no evidence of habitation, and many of the animals pictured are predators, the stones may have been intended to stave off evils through some form of magic representation. Alternatively, they could have served as totems.

The assumption that the site was strictly cultic in purpose and not inhabited has been challenged as well by the suggestion that the structures served as large communal houses, "similar in some ways to the large plank houses of the Northwest Coast of North America with their impressive house posts and totem poles." It is not known why every few decades the existing pillars were buried to be replaced by new stones as part of a smaller, concentric ring inside the older one.

Why Göbekli Tepe Changes the Historical Mainstream Narrative

The site is unlike anything else out there, so we can't really compare it to anything. There's nothing as old and as complex anywhere else in the world.



If you ask anyone which ancient monument impresses him the most, chances are she or he will say the pyramids. It doesn't have to be the *Great pyramid*, but pyramids in general. That's because pyramids are considered some of the greatest achievements of humankind.

Pyramids were built on nearly all continents throughout our history. The most famous pyramids are those in Egypt, where the Great Pyramid is considered the jewel of Egyptian architecture.

Many other pyramids exist in Egypt. That of Saqqara-the Step Pyramid-is considered the oldest, while the pyramids at Meidum and Dahshur are considered of great importance since they represent the evolution of the Egyptian pyramid form.

Northern America is home to more than one thousand pyramids of different sizes. The Great Pyramid of Cholula, located in present-day Mexico, is the largest in the world in terms of volume.

The Asian pyramids are perhaps the most shrouded in mystery, and Europe (Greece) has some of the least known pyramids on Earth.

But in addition to pyramids, many other monuments are just as stunning.

In present-day Turkey rest the ruins of an ancient site that is unlike anything we have ever found.

There's nothing like it in the world, and we can't compare it to any known monuments in terms of size and history.

Göbekli Tepe is ancient

Built around 12,000 years ago, Göbekli Tepe lies mainly hidden beneath the surface after it was buried-for reasons unknown-by its builders thousands of years ago. The best part is that there are some parts of Göbekli Tepe that appear to be even older than the proposed 12,000 years.

The site is composed of megalithic stones; there are some 16 stone circles that have been discovered to date inside which the ancients placed massive t-shaped stones, most of which weigh around 10 tons.

These structures are intricately aligned and display advanced forms of geometry.

Dating back to the last Ice Age

This was done when our planet's northern hemisphere was covered in massive amounts of Ice Age glaciers. During this time, experts say that a group of hunter-gatherers began building what is now defined-for reasons I still can't entirely understand-the first megalithic temple on Earth.

We've uncovered only 5%

The site has been undergoing archaeological excavations for more than 26 years since the first survey in 1994. So far, we've uncovered no more than 5 percent, and experts say that it will take us decades before we uncovered the entire complex.

Strange carvings and a strange society

As we've explored Göbekli Tepe throughout the years, we've encountered some pretty strange things; not only did we find massive, megalithic stones, we have also come across strange carvings of humanoid figurines and animal carvings, as well as symbols.

Despite this, we have still not explained who built the site-was it really hunter-gatherers?-and why it was built.

Complex structures

There are two leading hypotheses when it comes to Göbekli Tepe; it was either a massive temple or an astronomical observatory. The inability to explain its purpose, exact age and building technique has led to a widespread public debate about Göbekli Tepe. Countless

theories have been woven around the site, from aliens to advanced, long-lost civilizations.

Some might say this is far-fetched, and I agree that we need not involve aliens in this.

Humankind has been innovative, advanced, and complex for far longer than we have been willing to accept. This leads me to believe that the culture that built Göbekli Tepe was not a society of hunter-gatherers. No, they were far more advanced than that, and the sole existence of Göbekli Tepe backs up this claim.

Incomparable

The site is unlike anything else out there, so we can't really compare it to anything. Furthermore, there's nothing as old and as complex anywhere else in the world, which makes it pretty difficult to study.

Whatever the case, many people believe that Göbekli Tepe was not just a temple and may have been used as a massive astronomical observatory. In fact, two things link Göbekli Tepe to celestial objects; one theory argues that there's a deeply rooted connection between Göbekli Tepe and the stars in the night sky, particularly Sirius. This is mostly because local populations worshiped the stars for several thousand years after.

Another claim, as revealed by best-selling author Graham Hancock, argues that there are carvings at Göbekli Tepe, which are linked to a comet that may have impacted our planet at the end of the last ice age.

If any of these claims are true, it would mean Göbekli Tepe was indeed a site deeply connected to the stars and hence served as a kind of ancient astronomical observatory.

We can't know what it served as

It may very well have been an ancient astronomical observatory. However, in the same way, Göbekli Tepe could also have served as a temple. So there's also a great chance that neither one of those theories is correct and that Göbekli Tepe was something entirely different.

For example, if experts find that the stone circles at the site were once roofed, it would make them unsuitable for astronomical observations. Also, archaeological excavations of the site suggest that some of the pillars of the site were "recycled" and transported elsewhere. Also, we can't know to what extent later societies may have rearranged some of the uppermost parts of the site. In other words, we can't conclude how much the site was altered in the not-so-distant past.

This has been explained by researchers:

"The original layout of Göbekli Tepe's monumental round-oval buildings (none of which have been entirely excavated) is still the subject of ongoing research. One should be aware that many of the T-pillars incorporated into the enclosures at Göbekli Tepe are not standing in their original positions, and the buildings underwent significant modification during their life-cycles."

What we do know confuses us

The imposing stratigraphy of Göbekli Tepe attests to millennia of activity. Many structures identified to this day have been found to date back at least 12,000 years, with evidence of even older parts of the site. This is precisely where the importance of Göbekli Tepe resides in. Göbekli Tepe predates, among other things, pottery, metallurgy, the invention of the wheel, writing, but, more importantly, agriculture.

We thought until very recently that people were incapable of constructing megalithic, complex sites until the appearance of agriculture and farming.

This is obviously not the case with Göbekli Tepe. The site's existence tells us that already 12,000 years ago; an organized, complex society lived in the region. This society was far more advanced than just hunter-gatherers.

No city

So far, archaeological excavations have revealed important clues about Göbekli Tepe, including facts such as;

- *Göbekli Tepe is the oldest monument of its kind.*
- *It predates everything we know about complex societies and their abilities to build megalithic structures.*
- *It has not been excavated entirely.*
- *The society that built it was far more advanced, and they very unlikely a mere hunter-gatherer society.*
- *To build Göbekli Tepe, around 1000 people were needed, at least. This tells us that, in addition to an organized workforce, people needed to sleep and eat. In other words, Göbekli Tepe could not have been built without the support of a developed city or settlement. No such city has so far been discovered at or near the site.*

Symbols found across the world

One of the most fascinating things about Gobekli Tepe, in addition to the massive stones, is the symbology present on the massive T-Shaped stone pillars.



One specific pillar-number 43-from enclosure D is particularly rich in decorations. On it, we have depictions of animals, such as scorpions and vultures, but more importantly, the bag symbolism.

The "handbag of the gods," as I like to refer to it, has been found on reliefs in Mesoamerica and Mesopotamia, making it one of the strangest symbols out there. What did ancient cultures in Mesoamerica have in common with hunter-gatherers in Turkey 12,000 years ago?

Apparently, nothing but some of Gobekli Tepe's symbols have been found on ancient sites across the globe.

America



Mesopotamia



Whether these are random coincidences or if there is a higher "purpose" is something I look forward to learning..

Written by Ivan Petricevic

Hi, my name is Ivan and I am the founder of Curiosmos, Ancient Code and Pyramidomania. I've been writing passionately about ancient civilizations, history, alien life and various other subjects for more than eight years. You may have seen me appear on Discovery Channel's What On Earth series, History Channel's Ancient Aliens, and Gaia's Ancient Civilizations among others.

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