

Building Big? Global Scales of Monumentality – an ethno-archaeological perspective

PhD course and international workshop, Kohima in Nagaland, India 12-24 March 2018.

Dialogues with the Past. The Nordic Graduate School in Archaeology

Time and place: Mar. 12, 2018 - Mar. 24, 2018, [Kohima, India](#)



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As being an exceptionally diverse and broad phenomenon, monumentality in its varying shapes and meanings has been a long-standing subject of prehistoric and historic archaeological research. Prominent prehistoric forms of monumentality include examples such as the well-known henge sites in Britain (e.g. Parker Pearson 2015); monumental enclosure systems (e.g. Andersen 1977) or different types of megalithic tombs (e.g. Laporte 2016). While monumentality has always been a phenomenon occurring in various societies all over the world, non-European case studies became slowly but constantly also present in the European research community (e.g. Kim 1982; Joussaume 1985; Laporte et al. 2011). Especially the use of comparative and ethnoarchaeological approaches could and already have served to expand the range of interpretation beyond a frame of mainly European and possibly unilateral viewpoints.

During decades of research connected to monumentality, very different theoretical backgrounds and approaches came to use. In European archaeology, analyses of aspects such as the importance of the cultural memory (Assmann 1999); the role of communication routes, visibility and territorial markers (e.g. Sauzade 2014), but also the connection with social

differentiation and stratification (e.g. Kristiansen 1984; Müller 2011; Artursson et al. 2016) have been of great influence. Further, factors such as an astronomic use and a strong influence of religious groups were connected to forms of monumentality (e.g. MacKie 1997).

Among these theoretical approaches, essential differences exist regarding the assessment of monumentality as a passive product of (for example) building activities, or as an active factor influenced by and vice versa influencing human behaviour and notions. Formal analyses are able to illustrate different forms of monumentality and are therefore essential. A useful extension on these analyses may include an interpretation of the specific meaning of the monuments and their (changeable) social role.

Following issues could be discussed during the course:

- What does monumentality mean in different societies? How could a comparative approach useful to answer archaeological questions on reconstructing social behaviour?
- Is it possible to connect the very different theoretical approaches on monumentality? How much are especially theories focussing on the organisation of labour and cooperation influenced by western-capitalist views on economy and labour organisation?
- How can a comparative approach that includes ethno archaeology be useful for studies on monumentality? Where can similarities and dissimilarities be found in broad studies on this topic?

Course work

The course will consist of both seminars and lectures. Before the course starts, each PhD student will prepare a paper for pre-circulation, addressing her or his research project in relation to the course theme. In the course seminars, each paper will be allotted ca. 45 minutes, beginning with the student presenting a 15-minute summary of its contents. This is followed with a 10 min commentary from one of the other PhD students (selected in advance), after which she or he will chair an open discussion on the paper for approximately 20 minutes.

The course will take place in Nagaland together with students and lecturers from Northeast India. Naga megaliths will be one aspect of daily experience.

Workshop “Hierarchy and Balance: the role of monumentality in European and North-East Indian Landscapes”

Subsequent to the PhD-course, an international workshop will take place, focussing on a comparative perspective on monumentality and its role for the respective communities.

Lecturers

Christian Jeunesse, Tiltok Thakuria, Luc Laporte, Colin Richards, Marco Mitri



(Photo credit: CNRS Alsace, North-Eastern Hill University, Academia.edu, uni-kiel.de, orkneyjar.com)

[Christian Jeunesse](#) (University of Strasbourg)

[Tilok Thakuria](#) (North-Eastern Hill University, Tura campus, Meghalaya)

[Luc Laporte](#) (University of Rennes)

[Marco Mitri](#) (UCC, Shillong)

[Colin Richards](#) (Orkney College. University of Highlands & Islands.)

The participating lecturers will each give a lecture, exploring different perspectives of monumentality based on their field of expertise, as well as participating as prime movers in the discussion of PhD presentations. The seminar days will be structured with adequate time for spin-off debates and networking opportunities in mind.

Credits

Approx. 1,5 month or 10 ECTS

Location, Travel and Costs

The Graduate School will finance and arrange travel and accommodation, as well as supply a daily allowance during the seminar for all participating PhD students who are part of the [Dialogues With the Past network](#). Two PhD students will share a room. The workshop is organized together with Nagaland University.

Registration

The Graduate school invites all registered PhD students to apply for participation. Please follow this [link](#) to apply for the course (in English only). From these applications, c. 20 PhD students will be admitted to the course.

For more information please contact: dial-past@iakh.uio.no

Important dates

Application for participation: **September 30, 2017**. Confirmation on your participation will be sent out shortly after this date together with a reading list.

Submission of working papers (10 pages, Times New Roman 12, Spacing 1,5): **February 12, 2018**.

Appointment of discussants: **February 19, 2018**.

Organizer

[Prof. Dr. Johannes Mueller](#)