POWER, SPACE, AND CULTURE
II
21-23 May 2025

ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS
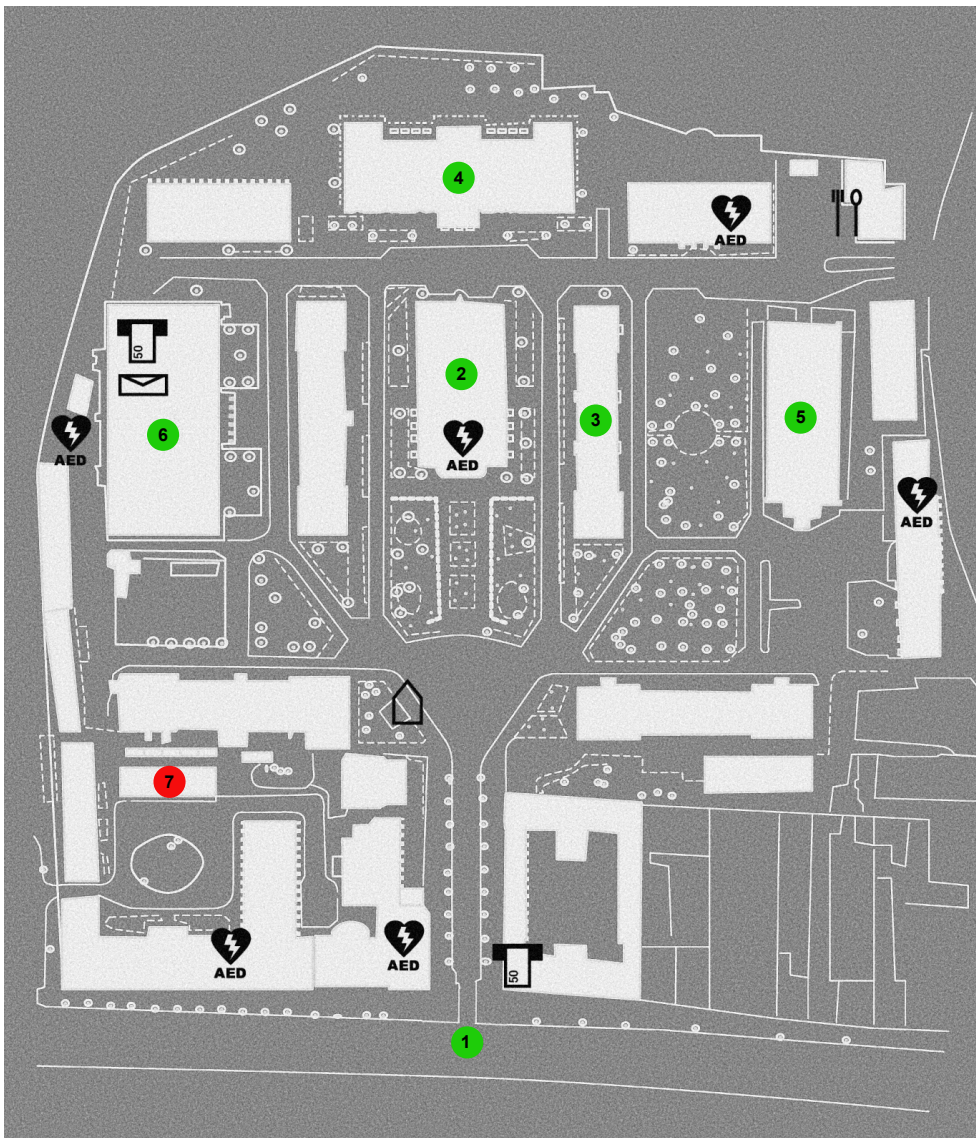
1 – Main gate of the University
2 – Old Library
3 – Faculty of Oriental Studies
4 – Rector's office
5 – Faculty of Archaeology
6 – Auditorium Maximum
7 – Venue of the conference

21.05 Wednesday		
09:15-9:30	**Registration and Opening**	
09:30-10:45	Nurit Peled-Elhanan	*Space in the Israeli culture of power and victimhood*
10:45-11:00	**coffee break**	
11:00-11:25	Zuzanna Augustyniak	*Hail to the New Emperor. Abyi Ahmed and neo-negusism*
11:25-11:50	Woldegiorgis Ghebrehiwot Teklay	*Contested Power and Authority: Spatial Dynamics of the Tigray War*
11:50-12:15	Weldehiwot Birhanu Aseffa	*Dying Without a Place: The Crisis of Burial Spaces in War-Torn Tigray, Ethiopia*
12:15-13:20	**lunch break**	
13:20-13:45	Olgierd Uziembło	*Space and time - meanigs of Tiananmen.*
13:45-14:10	Maria Skryśkiewicz	*The Home Unmade. Palestinian Homes and Families under Occupation*
14:10-14:20	**coffee break**	
14:20-14:45	Seare Hadush	*Gender and power: Challenges and inequalities of woman's role in Ethiopian villages , a case of Tigray, asgede woreda*
14:45-15:10	Aneta Skalec, Łukasz Suski	*Power Over and Power Of Greek and Egyptian Women in Ptolemaic Pathyris (Egypt)*
15:10-15:35	Kibrom Gebremariam	*Crafting Heritage: Pottery-Making, Gender, and Power Relations in Mekelle*

22.05 Thursday		
09:00-10:15	Wolbert G.C. Smidt	*Looking at space and power from a local perspective - decentralised space as a means to control power*
10:15-10:30	coffee break	
10:30-10:55	Kamil Kuraszkiewicz	*Kings in Space. The afterlife of Old Kingdom pharaohs*
10:55-11:20	Robert Mahler	*Is there a meaning behind spatial distribution of graves at the Cemetery A in Naqlun (Egypt)?*
11:20-11:45	Anastasiia Stupko-Lubczynska	*Interspatiality in the Theban Necropolis, Egypt*
11:45-12:10	Dániel Takács	*Joining the royal and divine cults in rock-cut temples of ancient Egypt*
12:10-13:30	lunch break	
13:30-13:55	Mearg Abay Abebe	*Manifestations of Power : Analyzing Architectural Features in Eastern Tigray, Ethiopia.*
13:55-14:20	Admasu Abebe	*The Memory of the Koyisha Palace and the Alteration of Ancestral Power in the Kingdom of Dawuro, South-west Ethiopia*
14:20-14:45	Kinga Turkowska	*Landscape of Memory in Addis Ababa: The Symbolic Power of the Tiglachin Monument*
14:45-15:05	coffee break	
15:05-15:30	Gidey Gebreegziabher Gebrekrstos	*Archaeological Heritage Site Under Threat: Addressing Looting and Illegal Excavations in Mai-Adrasha, Tigrai, Ethiopia.*
15:30-15:55	Desta Haileyesus	*Maryam Nazret: A great Aksumite and post-Aksumite period site in a hidden valley*

	23.05 Friday	
09:00-10:15	Frank Kammerzell	*Border Control and the Poetry of Power*
10:15-10:30	coffee break	
10:30-10:55	Krzysztof Jakubiak	*How do you create power without military might, is Hatra a good example?*
10:55-11:20	Andrzej Szotek	*The God King is reborn. The legitimation of power by the example of ancient Tyre*
11:20-11:45	Alula Tesfay Asfha	*Digital Preservation and Access to Sacred Orthodox Monasteries: Ethical and Technical Challenges*
11:45-12:10	Dobrochna Zielińska, Lucia Dominici	*The manifestation of kingship in urban space in the Kingdom of Makuria.*
12:10-13:30	lunch break	
13:30-13:55	Dawit Getu	*Ritual stones and sacred grove as instruments to contest and assert hegemony in Dimam: The kish lale of Dime*
13:55-14:20	Fesseha Berhe Gebregergis	*The Notion of Space and Authority in an African Agropastoral Society: The Dobəᶜa of Northeast Ethiopia*
14:20-14:30	coffee break	
14:30-14:55	Joanna Jurewicz	*Why Do We Need Image Schemas in the Study of Power and Space?*
14:55-15:20	Karel Innemée	*Some thoughts on an anatomy of Power and Authority*
15:30-16:30	**Roundtable discussion**	

Admasu Abebe
(Addis Ababa Science and Technology University)

The Memory of the Koyisha Palace and the Alteration of Ancestral Power
in the Kingdom of Dawuro, South-west Ethiopia

This paper aimed to examine how ancestral power is interconnected with space use in Dawuro society, specifically focusing on the Koyisha palace site and its alteration. Dawuro was one of the earliest unified kingdoms in the Omo Valley before the 11th century. It remained a centralized and independent kingdom that walled its boundaries between the 16th and 19th centuries. In the Dawuro worldview, boundaries are strongly protected by building walls/ditches at the border in combination with ancestral spiritual protection. Some spaces, such as mountains, gates, residences of kings and religious leaders, caves, and tombs, were regarded as residences (Dubusha) of ancestral powers in duality. They were space defined to perform ancestral rituals and "sacrificial system" of "ekka"/ yarshuwa'. In this regard, the Koyisha palace site provides us with local insights into the connection of space with dual ancestral powers. The palace was established in the 17th century and served as the political center of the Dawuro kingdom until the end of the 19th century. It is located on top of Koyisha (2400 m.a.s.l) . Its compound covers an area of 32 hectares of land. Ditches (3 m deep and 5 m wide) fortified the palace. It had three gates. Several material heritage remnants are observed above the ground on the palace compound, which was scraped from rocks and earthen works. These are seat benches (kings and public representatives), mortars, Gabata'a playing holes, horse riding yards, trees, war alarm drum sites, king's and his horse bath waters, and other ritual utensils scraped from rocks. In 1889, however, the Dawuro Kingdom was conquered by Emperor Menelik II under General Ras Wolde Giorgis and incorporated into the Ethiopian Empire. This incident led to the burning of the koyisha palace, and the deposition of the last Dawuro king. Hence, the ancestral political power transfer system through the hereditary line was altered. On the other hand, the local community used the palace space for prayers and public meetings as a sacred public place (Dubusha). While prayers are on the site, the elders orally trace the ancestral genealogy of all the Dawuro kings. This practice indicates that even though the political centrality aspect of the palace site was altered in 1889, the ancestral spiritual

authority aspect has continued. Therefore, this paper discusses how this dual conception of ancestral power contributed to the community engaged preservation of material heritage, memories and values in the palace compound in the changing Ethiopian state regimes. Moreover, it examines a missing link between the memory of palace of the Dawuro kingdom and the alteration of hereditary authority. Lastly, it suggests ethno-archaeological interpretation and analysis to understand the relationship between the material remnants scrapped from rocks/earthwork with ancestral spiritual and political authority.

Alula Tesfay Asfha
(Goethe University, Frankfurt/Mekelle University)

Digital Preservation and Access to Sacred Orthodox Monasteries: Ethical and Technical Challenges

The spatial organization within Orthodox Christian sacred spaces is a product of the intricate relationship between theology, tradition, and social hierarchy. This structure governs the accessibility and participation of various groups, including clergy, deacons, and the laity. Sacred spaces are carefully arranged, with the sanctuary, or Holy of Holies, reserved exclusively for ordained priests, while the nave is designated for lay congregants. Specific areas, such as those within Abune Penteleon, are accessible only to virgin deacons. In the case of the Aksum Zion Church, the Holy Sanctuary, which houses the Ark of the Covenant, is accessible only to a single virgin priest. This hierarchical arrangement of space has its roots in early Christian liturgical practices and, in certain cases, is influenced by pre-Christian indigenous traditions.

Recent advancements in digital technologies—such as 360-degree photography, photogrammetry, and 3D scanning—have introduced innovative ways to document and provide virtual access to these restricted spaces. Virtual tours of sites like the rock-hewn church at Wukro Cherqos, conducted by researchers, and the monastic complex at Gunda Gundo, present an opportunity for scholars and the public to explore these sacred spaces without physical disruption. These digital tools enable a more profound understanding of the historical and religious significance of these sites, offering an alternative to physical visitation. However, the use of such technologies raises ethical concerns, particularly regarding the violation of sacred boundaries, the consent of monastic communities, and the potential commodification of religious heritage.

The conservation and study of these sacred spaces require a careful balance between respecting religious traditions and fulfilling academic and public research objectives. Non-invasive methods like photogrammetry, Laser and LiDAR scanning have proven effective in documenting monastic architecture and artifacts while preserving the sanctity of the environment. However, the adoption of these technologies

necessitates close collaboration with religious authorities to ensure that the spiritual and cultural integrity of these spaces is maintained.

This presentation examines the technical, ethical, and theological challenges associated with digitally documenting and virtually accessing restricted Orthodox Christian spaces. Using Wukro Cherqos, Abune Penteleon, Gunda Gundo and others sites as case studies—sites where the researcher has participated in documentation and conservation efforts—it explores how digital tools can bridge the gap between preservation and accessibility, while addressing the concerns of monastic communities.

Zuzanna Augustyniak
(Univesity of Warsaw, Faculty of Oriental Studies)

Hail to the New Emperor. Abyi Ahmed and neo-negusism

In the presentation, the author analyses activity of the Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali in the context of Ethiopia's history and culture. His appointment as the Prime Minister was supposed to begin a bright new chapter in the history of Ethiopia, ravaged by disasters and political unrest in recent years. At the very beginning of his rule, Abyi presented himself as the 'people's choice' – hearing and understanding the needs of ordinary Ethiopians and trying to meet them. His first spectacular actions (e.g. the opening of the border with Eritrea and the release of thousands of political opponents from prison) earned him not only public applause (the so-called 'Abyimania'), but also the Nobel Peace Prize in October 2019, just over a year after taking office. However, Abyi's subsequent actions – most notably the war in Tigray – have shown that his political ambitions go much further than simply meeting the needs of Ethiopian citizens.

In an attempt to symbolically rebuild Ethiopia's power, Abyi looks to its glorious past for inspiration, treating history as a political tool. His recent, slightly less impressive – but no less commented on – actions are meant to evoke the spirit of Ethiopia's great emperors, especially Menelik II. It is therefore safe to say that Abyi Ahmed's ambition is not to be Ethiopia's best prime minister, but rather its new emperor. The association of these aspects of his politics with the activities of Egyptian President Sisi, described as neo-pharaonism, leads one to describe his 'reign' as neo-negusism.

Dawit Getu
(Addis Ababa University)

*Ritual stones and sacred grove as instruments to contest and assert
hegemony in Dimam:
The kish lale of Dime*

The political and ritual power of customary leadership is weakening and
being contested. Nevertheless, customary leaders strive to preserve their
deteriorating status, at times forging alliance adapting to changing socio-
political context, with varying degrees of success. In some context, they
engage in "cosmological contestation" discursively asserting control over
their locality.

This paper seeks to examine the dynamics of customary leadership of
Dime. It is based on an ethnographic fieldwork conducted among the
Dime from May 2020 to April 2021. The Dime, are a small cultivator
group in south Omo, southwest Ethiopia, which used to have
"hierarchically organized assemblage of seven smaller chieftainships".
The power of Dime customary leaders has been obstructed by deepening
state presence through infrastructure expansion, social service provisions
and administrative interventions, which deprived their political and
judicial powers. The expansion of Protestantism further challenged their
ritual authority. This is mainly manifested through the incursion of the
social and physical spaces. In response to such context, apart from
adaptive engagement, they exploited the sacred groves and ritual stones
(kish lale) to contend against infiltration in their spaces."

Desta Haileyesus
(Mekelle University)

Maryam Nazret: A great Aksumite and post-Aksumite period site in a hidden valley

The paper presents the results of a survey on the Maryam Nazret site, located in Tigray (Ethiopia), east of the Addis Ababa – Mekele road, at the southern bank of Gereb (river) Nazret. The site, overlooking the river and the Addi Awona valley, is rich in ancient structures and archaeological artifacts, including pot sherds. The main feature occupying the site is an Aksumite (possibly from 5th–6th c AD) building on the eastern side. A later structure upon it was a church, most possibly built by King Amde Tsion. It has monumental pillars and four domes still in a very good condition. The most recent structure, in hidmo style, is also in a good condition.

Immediately to the west and southwest of the church compound, there are hamlets. Recent archaeological surface survey documented part of possibly an ancient residential building extending beyond the present compound of the church. Built and monolithic pillars, slabs and a wall have been observed in the compound of residents immediately west of the western gate of the church, as well as other archaeological remians, such as a panel with cross design made of lime mortar and red brick and potsherds.

Gidey Gebreegziabher Gebrekrstos
(University of Warsaw)

Archaeological Heritage Site Under Threat
Addressing Looting and Illegal Excavations in Mai-Adrasha, Tigrai, Ethiopia

The archaeological heritage of Mai-Adrasha, located in the Tigrai region of Ethiopia, a site rich in archaeological and historical significance. However, this invaluable heritage is under severe threat from looting and illegal excavations, which have escalated in recent years. These illicit activities not only lead to the irreversible loss of priceless artifacts but also compromise the structural and contextual integrity of the archaeological sites, severing critical connections to the past. This paper focused on the socio-economic and political factors fueling these destructive practices. Key drivers include less awareness of the local community, weak enforcement of heritage protection laws, and low attention from the local government.

Through the analysis of case studies and an evaluation of existing legal and institutional frameworks, the paper identifies significant gaps in the protection of Mai-Adrasha's archaeological site. It proposes a comprehensive, multi-faceted strategy to address these challenges. This strategy emphasizes the importance of community engagement, recognizing local communities as vital stakeholders in archaeological site preservation. It also calls for enhanced law enforcement measures, international collaboration to curb the illicit trade of artifacts, and the integration of advanced technologies for site monitoring and documentation, both in the present and retrospectively.

The paper argues that the preservation of Mai-Adrasha's archaeological site is not merely a matter of cultural conservation but also a means of fostering sustainable development. By safeguarding the site, local communities can benefit from cultural tourism, educational opportunities, and a renewed sense of pride in their heritage. Ultimately, the study underscores the necessity of a collaborative approach that harmonizes the preservation of archaeological site with the socio-economic needs of local populations, ensuring that Mai-Adrasha's site endures as a source of knowledge, identity, and inspiration for future generations.

Łukasz Hajdrych
(Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań)

Who Were The Polish Witches?

Natalie Zemon-Davies argues that gender/sex relations are the power relations, meaning that every manifestion of power relations has its basis in gender relations and these are inextricably entwined. This argument seems to be especially true when thinking about historical witches and witch trials – that sex was the main determinant of who was accused of witchcraft (woman) and who was an accuser and judge (man). But when looking at specific cases, the picture becomes complicated and evidence shows that sex relations were not always the main determinant of who could be accused of witchcraft. In my speech I would like to show that in early modern Poland the image of specific alleged witches was created on the basis of a number of hierarchical elements (social strata, sex, morality, age) that shows tendencies in accusations: alleged witches were rather peasants than townsmen or nobles; were rather women than men; were rather known for immoral behaviour than living according to the rules; were rather adult than children. The model witch was therefore an adult peasant woman who lived in a manner that contradicted the accepted social norms. But, as is often the case with models, it turns out that they do not always reflect the reality of the past.

Karel Innemée
(University of Warsaw)

Some thoughts on an anatomy of Power and Authority

Power, Space, Authority, are terms that are used in different meanings, depending on the discipline in which they are dealt with. Power and authority play a role in sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, and their expressions can be studied in iconography, historical imagery, archaeology, just to mention a few disciplines. A multi- and interdisciplinary approach is vital for a proper understanding of some of these key-concepts in human civilisation. This paper is meant to raise a number of questions and come up with compatibility of a number of definitions.

Krzysztof Jakubiak

(University of Warsaw, Faculty of Archaeology)

How do you create power without military might, is Hatra a good example?

In the past, there were lots of ways to build a powerful city, state or kingdom. Usually, to become important in politics or culture, rulers had to build large armies, which made them want to expand. But there was another way to grow in power that was a bit different. Hatra, which is now in Iraq, is a great example of this. It seems to have been located on the outskirts of the area, and it gradually began to play a significant role in the region. Surprisingly, Hatra began to acquire this importance without a king, but only with stewards. The key, or impetus, to the city's development was the religious centre that was established and expanded here. It's remarkable how religion, and maybe even the special choice of location as one of the biggest religious centres in this area of the Middle East, show that development isn't just about military strength. It's fascinating how the strategic use of religion, or elements of worship, can lead to the creation of a significant religious centre. Sometimes, scholars affectionately call these places the Mecca of the pre-Islamic world. Such a centre can boost a region's prestige and importance, projecting an impression of strength rooted not in military might but in the power of faith.

Joanna Jurewicz
(University of Warsaw, Faculty of Oriental Studies)

Why Do We Need Image Schemas in the Study of Power and Space?

In this presentation, I will introduce the theory of image schemas and discuss its usefulness in analyzing the relationship between power and space. Image schemas are recurring dynamic patterns of sensorimotor experience that emerge from bodily interactions with the physical world. They are preconceptual and prelinguistic in nature, yet they serve as a fundamental cognitive framework that enables us to understand relationships between individuals and the surrounding world. Their impact on human cognition can be examined through the analysis of signs—both linguistic and non-linguistic, including artifacts and behaviors.

A key theoretical tool for reconstructing image schemas is conceptual metaphor theory, which posits that we comprehend abstract concepts in terms of other concepts, including image schemas. This perspective provides a systematic approach to studying how power structures and spatial organization are cognitively shaped and socially embedded.

From the perspective of power and space relations, the most relevant image schemas include VERTICALITY, CENTER-PERIPHERY, CONTAINER-CONTENT, SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, and FORCE. In this presentation, I will analyze selected examples from contemporary Western political discourse to illustrate how individuals in power organize space according to the logic of image schemas. I will also discuss the social implications of such spatial structuring.

Kibrom Gebremariam
(University of Warsaw, Mekelle University)

Crafting Heritage: Pottery-Making, Gender, and Power Relations in Mekelle

This study examines the pottery-making tradition of Mekelle, Ethiopia, through an integrated ethnoarchaeological and socio-cultural approach, highlighting the complex interplay between craft production and power relations. Moving beyond the materiality of clay, the paper situates Mekelle's pottery within broader discussions of heritage, identity, and socio-economic dynamics, drawing on the theoretical insights of cultural heritage and power relations. It explores how pottery production is deeply embedded in gendered labour divisions, economic marginalization, spatial dynamics, and the negotiation of authority within both local communities and formal heritage frameworks. The analysis further reveals how processes of urbanization, market-driven commodification, and state-led heritage interventions shape and sometimes constrain traditional practices. By foregrounding the experiences and perspectives of Mekelle's potters, particularly women, the paper argues for a more inclusive and community centred approach to heritage preservation that acknowledges the informal and embodied knowledge systems sustaining pottery traditions. Ultimately, this research contributes to broader debates on the politics of cultural heritage, emphasizing how craft traditions serve as sites of both cultural continuity and contestation.

Frank Kammerzell
(Humboldt-Universität, Berlin)

Border Control and the Poetry of Power

The border stelae from Semna (Berlin ÄM 1157) and Uronarti (Khartoum Inv. 451) stand as a powerful testimony to the Egyptian perception of borders, identity, and imperial authority during the Middle Kingdom. Often analyzed within the framework of historical and political discourse, the two monuments are re-examined in this paper through the lens of poetry and literary studies. By integrating insights from contemporary poetry research, this study highlights the performative and affective dimensions of the Semna inscriptions, emphasizing how poetic structure and rhythm functioned as tools of persuasion and commemoration.

Furthermore, this paper engages with perspectives from critical translation studies, emphasizing the challenges inherent in rendering poetic texts from a dead language like Ancient Egyptian into modern European target languages. The translation of poetic texts requires not only linguistic precision but also a sensitivity to cultural and literary nuances, particularly regarding the role of phonetic similarities in rhythmization. The Semna Stelae, with their rich poetic structures, demand an approach that acknowledges the creative and interpretative dimensions of translation, recognizing that every act of translation is also an act of transformation.

By applying modern literary methodologies and translation theory to ancient inscriptions, this paper sheds new light on the Semna Stelae's function as both political declaration and poetic performance. It ultimately reveals how poetry—ancient and modern—shapes narratives of power, belonging, and historical memory.

Kamil Kuraszkiewicz

(University of Warsaw, Faculty of Oriental Studies)

Kings in Space. The afterlife of Old Kingdom pharaohs

The pharaohs of the Old Kingdom (2686–2160 BCE) not only aspired to spend the posthumous eternity among the stars, but also successfully impacted and arranged the earthly space for their subjects (pun intended). The paper will present an overview of the religious beliefs related to royal afterlife and the way royal funerary complexes were designed to facilitate achieving it (among them, that built for Netjerykhet in Saqqara has a special place, being not only a device of resurrection, but a self-contained model of universe). Moreover, although royal funerary complexes were built for the kings, they also impacted the sacred landscape of the necropolis, becoming a reference point and a focus of the cemeteries of courtiers and officials who – in a sense – mimicked the earthly society and its structure. All of this illustrates how the Egyptian kings in addition to ruling the state ruled also, quite literally, the space.

Robert Mahler

(University of Warsaw, Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology)

Is there a meaning behind spatial distribution of graves at the Cemetery A in Naqlun (Egypt)?

The monastery in Naqlun is the oldest monastery in Fayum that is still functioning today. It was established at the end of the 5th or at the beginning of the 6th century CE when the first buildings of the so-called central complex, constituting the core of this semi-anchoretic monastery, were built on the upper terrace. Numerous hermitages were scattered in the neighbouring hills and on the lower terrace. According to 9th century sources, Nekloni was a thriving community with 120 monks and 200 lay people living there in the 7th century CE.

The watershed came with a fire that consumed the central complex, very likely in the 10th/11th century CE. The structures on the upper terrace were then only partially rebuilt and in the middle of them graves of a new cemetery were soon introduced. Cemetery A in Naqlun was formed between the 11th and 13th or even 14th century around the church, the so-called building A, which it seems became the focal point this cemetery's layout.

In the current paper we explore the position of these graves both in relation to each other and to the ruins of the monastery's central complex. By combining the cemetery layout with the distribution of selected traits – the kind of coffin, type of raw materials used in the clothing fabrics, identified based on a microscopic analysis of the textiles, and the life stature of the deceased – we are attempting to reconstruct the rationale behind the decisions of the actors living in the past to bury their dead in the places in which they were found. As we can offer no simple explanation to the phenomena observed, we discuss a few plausible explanations and raise new questions to be investigated further. This research was funded in part by National Science Centre, Poland 2022/47/D/HS3/02162."

Mearg Abay Abebe
(University of Warsaw, Wukro Museum, Tigray, Ethiopia)

Manifestations of Power: Analyzing Architectural Features in Eastern Tigray, Ethiopia

In Northern Ethiopia's history, power is manifested or represented through various architectural features such as palaces, monuments, and burial places. This study documents and analyzes the manifestations of power through architectural features in the Eastern Tigray area, which is crucial for understanding the historical, cultural, and social contexts that have shaped the built architecture . It also explores how architecture serves as a medium for expressing authority, identity, and societal values.

The study conducted a comprehensive survey of significant structures in the area, employing both qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate their design elements, spatial organization, and symbolic meanings. It aims to uncover the underlying narratives conveyed by these architectural features regarding power dynamics within the region. This contributes to a deeper understanding of how physical spaces influence human interactions and societal hierarchies. Furthermore, this research offers valuable insights into the relationship between architecture and power, emphasizing the role of built heritage in shaping collective memory and identity.

Nurit Peled-Elhanan
(retired from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and David Yellin Academic College of Education)

Space in the Israeli culture of power and victimhood

The talk explores the multimodal ways in which schoolbooks legitimate Israeli ethnocracy and its goal – the Judaization and the de-Arabization of the space. Schoolbooks legitimate the marginalization of Non-European Jews, the exclusion and expulsion of Arab citizens from their lands and the military colonialism of Palestinians in the occupied territories. Using visuals such as maps and graphs, photographs and caricatures, and racist verbal discourse, Israeli schoolbooks present these settler-colonialist practices as the best practices for the good of the nation, or at least for the dominating Jewish ethnicity, and as the only means to prevent another holocaust.

Seare Hadush
(Mekelle University)

Gender and power: Challenges and inequalities of woman's role in Ethiopian villages,
a case of Tigray, Asgede woreda

This research explores the intersection of gender and power in Ethiopian villages, with a specific focus on the challenges and inequalities faced by women in Tigray's Asgede Woreda. Despite their critical contributions to agriculture, household income, and community development, women in this region often experience limited access to decision-making opportunities, resources, and leadership roles. Through qualitative and quantitative research methods, including interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys, this study examines the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers that perpetuate gender disparities. The findings reveal that entrenched patriarchal norms, limited access to education, and unequal resource distribution significantly hinder women's empowerment. The study concludes by advocating for targeted interventions, such as policy reforms, community-based education programs, and initiatives to enhance women's participation in leadership and economic activities, to promote gender equality and empower women in Asgede Woreda and similar contexts. This research contributes to the broader discourse on gender and development, offering insights into the transformative potential of addressing gender inequalities in rural Ethiopian communities."

Aneta Skalec, Łukasz Suski
(Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences/
University of Warsaw)

Power Over and Power Of Greek and Egyptian Women in Ptolemaic Pathyris (Egypt)

Pathyris, located about 30 km southwest of Luxor in the Gebelein micro-region of Egypt, is renowned for its large collection of Greek and Demotic papyri, discovered in archives maintained by municipal authorities, temples, and individual families, and dated to the Ptolemaic period (332–30 BCE). These documents illustrate repeated attempts by the municipal authorities to Hellenize the town, ultimately resulting in a bilingual community where Greek and Egyptian practices, institutions, and languages coexisted.

One of the key topics that can be explored thanks to this wealth of written material is the unique intersection of Greek and Egyptian traditions in shaping the roles and agency of women. This paper examines the dual concepts of power over and power of Greek and Egyptian women in Ptolemaic Pathyris, focusing on their legal, economic, and social standing. The legal autonomy of Greek women was generally constrained by Greek customs that favored male guardianship. In contrast, native Egyptian women retained significant legal independence, particularly in property ownership and contractual rights, owing to long-standing Pharaonic traditions that granted them legal parity with men in many respects. By analyzing legal documents and administrative records, this study highlights how Pathyrite women navigated overlapping systems of power, revealing both their constraints and avenues for influence within the local context of Ptolemaic Pathyris."

Maria Skryśkiewicz
(University of Warsaw)

The Home Unmade. Palestinian Homes and Families under Occupation

Home can be understood as a relation between a material form and a set of feelings and cultural meanings. It is lived personally but construed socially and politically; authority affects porous nature of home on every level – material, imaginary and emotional.

In the West Bank, the architecture of occupation is not merely a manifestation of power or a tool for exercising it; it actively transforms landscapes, lives, discourses and the sense of place. This transformation significantly impacts the concept of home, particularly in settler colonial narratives regarding the Occupied Territories.

I wish to describe key components of architecture and occupation practices that influence Palestinian housing and everyday life in the West Bank. These include, among many other separation walls, checkpoint network, "by-pass roads" and illegal Israeli settlements, as well as demolition orders, collective punishments, military training in the camps.

Diverse sites will be presented to observe the whole spectrum of how occupation manifests itself. These include houses under the threat of demolition, refugee camps and "illegal" Bedouin villages, specifically the cases I examined in my research. I hope to present some of the ways Palestinians developed in order to survive.

Given the above examples, I wish to put forward the conclusion that as oppression intensifies, the Palestinian home becomes increasingly distorted, which complicates the relationship between Palestinians and their sense of belonging to a place."

Wolbert G.C. Smidt
(Friedrich Schiller University Jena and Mekele University)

Looking at space and power from a local perspective
Decentralised space as a means to control power

Power and space is often looked at from a perspective of leadership, be it kings, autocrats or modern government bureaucracies regulating the use of space – but when we combine it with the aspect "culture", things may turn back on their feet. This paper suggests that looking at very local contexts, the question what is power and its organisation in space becomes surprisingly complex. Examples are presented from years long ethnohistorical and anthropological field research in Ethiopia, with focus on Tigray. The contextualisation within the wider historical Ethiopian region reveals a local "silent" tradition of power control and power balance, which seem to contradict deeply enrooted historical discourses about Ethiopia being an ancient Empire with strict hierarchies, led by nobility and a king of kings (which should in any case be seen with a grain of salt, as the histories of neighboring kingdoms and republic-like peasant and nomadic entities, which had been annexed by Ethiopia in the late 19th century sometimes tell other stories). In a local, rural context an interesting dichotomy can be observed: While narratives and formula of politeness strongly refer to hierarchies, daily life is surprisingly void of strong hierarchies, while research shows a very high degree of traditions of autonomy and self-organisation – up to de facto self-rule of wide regions recognising state-power or the power of kings often only nominally (or even not any more), which can repeatedly be observed in Ethiopian history, repeated even in recent years. This dichotomy of discourses seems to have its roots in a complex structure of the Ethiopian state, which relies on peasant's autonomies and self-organisation often only loosely controlled by the state – while the state demands allegiance. The questions resulting out of these observations are put into a dialogue with examples of local, rural space organisation in several areas: Case studies of different villages and regions show a widespread tendency of a highly decentralised organisation of village space. Mapping villages lead to the question: Where are the centres? Cult places are scattered outside settlements, administration centres are traditionally absent, meeting places under trees are not linked with any important buildings or dominant families, water irrigation systems, grazing areas and farming land are

regulated, partitioned respectively distributed based on complex systems involving the entire community, village associations of different kinds exist, which – often informally and not controlled by any administration – decide on current issues, in history even law was not controlled by representatives of higher authorities, but by rural communities. Modernisation is characterised by a slow establishment of institutions (including buildings which are concrete sign of spatial re-organisation) which make the delegation of power from village assemblies to administrations and hierarchical leaders possible. In short, this paper suggests that a deep look into space organisation in a local cultural context helps seeing highly complex systems of self-organisation and power control which are, it seems, results of socio-political wisdom rather than of lack of development.

Anastasiia Stupko-Lubczynska

(University of Warsaw, Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology)

Interspatiality in the Theban Necropolis, Egypt

The methodological background for this paper is a theory of intertextuality, saying that texts stay in a dialogue with one another, transposed to the level of the spatial dialogue between the monuments. The place examined will be the necropolis of ancient Thebes in Egypt (modern Luxor, West Bank), with its focal point called nowadays Deir el-Bahari. While the archaeological evidence indicates this place was used from the Old Kingdom (ca. 2300 BC) till the Middle Ages, we will focus on two relatively early periods of the place's biography, namely on the reigns of Mentuhotep II and the female pharaoh Hatshepsut. It was during the reign of these two rulers, ca. 2000 BC and ca. 1500 BC respectively, that the location saw the most substantial transformation of its landscape. The monuments built by these rulers, primarily for their commemoration, ultimately become the reference points, lieux de mémoire for later generations.

We will examine paradigms and motivations for returning to the same place several centuries later. Also, we will consider the role played by the natural, artificially transformed, as well as ritual landscape, and the impact these factors had on the self-fashioning processes, those processes that stood behind a choosing of a place for one's mortuary monument, and further, that shaped its architectural form, and ultimately, its decorative repertoire.

Taking this case study as an example we will argue that (1) the concept of authority in Ancient Egypt was built largely upon a reference to the "glorious Past", and (2) that the model of such references, even though best visible in the royal funerary architecture triggering the landscape transformations due to the access to all the needed resources, echoed likewise in the non-royal sphere, and even (3) that the bottom-top way of influence cannot be excluded."

Andrzej Szotek
(University of Warsaw, Doctoral School of Humanities)

The God King is reborn. The legitimation of power by the example of ancient Tyre

Over the centuries, various systems of reinforcing royal power have been developed around the world. Some used brutal violence to intimidate subordinates. Others resorted to using divine power to legitimise their own power. This was a better solution because, just as violence begets violence, which at some point could cause riots, the element of power associated with the god was unquestionable. An example of this solution was the cult of Melkart in ancient Tyre.

Melkart was the most important deity of ancient Tyre. His very name referred to the institution of royalty. The god of the storm, also associated with the maritime sphere, navigation and shipping, he was the protector of the city. His partner was the goddess Ashtarte, a fearless warrior associated with the cult of fertility.

In addition to this, Melkart also acted as the deity of vegetation, and the cycle of his life and death determined the seasons. The most important public festivals were established in connection with these events. The moment of the divine resurrection marked the beginning of a new year in the kingdom (the month of Peritia). The king of Tyre not only participated in the annual festivities, but during this time he and his consort became Melkart and Ashtarte. This presentation will show how the annual cyclical nature of such festivities had the key effect of continuously consolidating royal power and consolidating it with the cult of the deity, which spread throughout the Mediterranean, from Lebanon in the east to Cadiz in the west. The power of this combination can also be seen in the fact that every year a delegation from Carthage came to Tyre to offer sacrifices to this deity, who was the king of Tyre, and to the king, who was the deity of Tyre.

Dániel Takács
(University of Warsaw,Faculty of Oriental Studies)

Joining the royal and divine cults in rock-cut temples of ancient Egypt

The legitimacy of royalty in ancient Egypt largely depended on their divine origin. This ideology was expressed in numerous ways amongst which the building of temples featured prominently where kings could exhibit details of their relationship to the divine.

Hatshepsut, the female pharaoh of the 18th dynasty was in a particularly difficult situation due to her rare position as a co-regent of a child pharaoh and as a woman on the throne at the same time. To support her own position as the head of the country, she had to be innovative in inventing new ways to symbolize the divine origins of her unique status which was often manifested in novel architectural solutions.

One of these solutions was the construction of a few rock-cut chapels (speos), a temple type that was not particularly prominent prior to her, to emphasize her connection to a female divine element close to kingship, the goddess Hathor in her role of the 'Eye of Ra'. The cult of the goddess and the myth of the 'Eye of Ra' were embodied in the form of the speoi, a connection that will be explained in this paper. By promoting the format of the speoi perhaps she even laid the ground for a future ideological element where the rock-cut cult places were somehow more suitable to provide space for the divine aspect of the king than free standing, stone-built structures. The paper will present examples of speoi from the Ramesside times as well where these aspects are even more visible than in the times of Hatshepsut.

Kinga Turkowska
(University of Warsaw, Faculty of Oriental Studies)

Landscape of Memory in Addis Ababa: The Symbolic Power of the Tiglachin Monument

This presentation explores the intricate relationship between urban space and political power in Addis Ababa, centered around the Tiglachin (Our Struggle) monument. Erected in 1984 during the Derg regime, the monument commemorates the joint Ethiopian-Cuban victory in the 1978–79 Ethiopian-Somali war. Its strategically prominent location within the city allows the monument to serve as both a visual and ideological emblem of socialist Ethiopia.

The site features a towering obelisk crowned with a hammer and sickle, flanked by relief walls that depict the revolutionary struggles under Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. Additionally, it includes commemorative plaques honoring Cuban soldiers and is set amidst green space and a fountain. While many monuments from the socialist era were dismantled following the fall of the Derg in 1991, Tiglachin has remained intact, albeit in a state of neglect. However, since 2018, the site has undergone renovations and now attracts numerous visitors.

This presentation critically examines how monuments like Tiglachin reflect evolving narratives of national identity and political legitimacy. It poses several important questions: How do monuments symbolize state power in Ethiopia? How has the significance of Tiglachin transformed under successive governments, shifting from a representation of revolutionary triumph to a vehicle for reimagining national unity? Why has the monument been preserved despite the controversial legacy of the Derg? What relevance does it hold for the residents of Addis Ababa today? By situating Tiglachin within the larger context of memorialization and urban politics, this presentation investigates its role as a lieux de mémoire —a site where contested memories are created, repurposed, and reinterpreted by both political authorities and the public."

Olgierd Uziembło
(University of Warsaw, Faculty of Oriental Studies)

Space and time – meanigs of Tiananmen

In discussions of modern Chinese politics Tiananmen seems to reappear very often in very diffferent shapes. In the western discourse until very recently Tiananmen seemed to be a reoccurring theme, very often negatively received by the Chinese counterparts – the underlying meanings of this vast space in the heart of Chinese capital and capital part of Chinese self image are diverse and sometimes irreconcilable. The space that hosts the foundation myth ofthe Chinese Peoples Republic, at the same time associated with one of the greatest tragedies in recent times needs proper analysis of its semiotic presence, as very often misapprehensions that cause a lot of tensions in western-Chinese communication. Famous square's visual presence in propaganda from coins to state TV , as well as in the Internet communication will be presented along with closely related internet meme phenomenon of the Tank Man. The study will concentrate on visuality and its role in meaning making on both sides of the miscommunication, as well as implications of the various interpretations of the same space::power interface.

Weldehiwot Birhanu Aseffa
(Department of Anthropology, Institute of Paleo-environment and Heritage Conservation, Mekelle University, Tigray, Ethiopia)

Dying Without a Place: The Crisis of Burial Spaces in War-Torn Tigray, Ethiopia

Burial areas are not only resting sites for the deceased but also symbolic manifestations of kinship systems. In the Tigray region of Ethiopia, burial practices are deeply embedded within the religious beliefs complemented by customary funeral rules. The burial spaces and associated systems symbolize the dignity of the deceased, the collective belongings of the families, and social order. However, the armed conflict in Tigray (2020-2022) caused not only atrocities but also disruption of burial spaces and practices. Even though some studies are conducted on the impact of conflict in Tigray, their focus is on health and legal aspects, providing limited attention to burial practices. This study aims to examine how the war affected the burial practices and its sociocultural implications for the community in Eastern Tigray. I have conducted fieldwork from August to December 2024 using anthropological methods of data collection, including observation, interviews, and case studies with war survivors, families, and community leaders. I have employed theories of symbolic violence and collective memory to examine the burial spaces as contested areas of power and their significance in maintaining cultural identity. Findings show that during the recent war, civilians were targeted and denied culturally appropriate burial processes. The deceased were left unburied for days or buried in mass graves outside of the sacred sites. Access to the burial sites was contested as spaces of power and exclusion, denying the deceased the right to rest in peace. These challenges, therefore, affect rituals, kinship ties, and societal structure, which further results in family destabilization and trauma. This study urges further research on the subject to gain deeper insights and contribute to post-war rehabilitation activities, as well as broader scientific debates on conflict, space, power, and culture.

Woldegiorgis Ghebrehiwot Teklay
(Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Ludwig Maximillians University, Munich)

Contested Power and Authority: Spatial Dynamics of the Tigray War

The war between the Ethiopian federal government and the Tigray regional administration (2020–2022) was not merely a military conflict over national power; it was more of a contest over regional power, space, and authority, impacting Tigray's political and territorial dynamics. The federal government mobilized all regional state paramilitary forces along with Eritrean soldiers, while the Tigrayan leadership, backed by its constituents, resisted through military and political strategies. This presentation examines how power has been established and consolidated during and after the war, particularly through military occupation, administrative restructuring, and the reconfiguration of territorial control. The Ethiopian federal government and its allies have employed both military force and bureaucratic measures to assert dominance over what they call ""contested"" spaces, while Tigrayan resistance movements have engaged in counter-strategies to reclaim authority. These spatial dynamics are not only physical but also symbolic, with competing narratives shaping perceptions of legitimacy and governance.

This presentation further explores the evolving nature of authority in the war-affected region of Tigray, analyzing how governance structures have shifted in response to the conflict. The war has led to the erosion of traditional state authority, while new power hierarchies have emerged, shaped by military actors, local administrators, and external influences. The boundaries of governance continue to be redefined, blurring the lines between federal, regional, and local control. Moreover, power is being legitimized through various mechanisms, including legal frameworks, state narratives, and diplomatic interventions.

This presentation describes the power dynamics in Tigray since the start of the war, focusing on who controls what in practice, rather than on legal frameworks or normative expectations. It does not discuss what ought to be or what the constitution dictates, but rather provides a descriptive factual account of the realities on the ground, irrespective of legal provisions or expectations.

Dobrochna Zielińska

(University of Warsaw, Faculty of Archaeology)

The manifestation of kingship in urban space in the Kingdom of Makuria

There are no texts that explain the concept of kingship in the Kingdom of Makuria, which existed between the 6th and 14th centuries in the territory of Nubia (Sudan). In order to understand the nature of this state and its authorities, we have to look at its material culture, especially its art. This paper presents some of the ways in which kingship was expressed in urban space and discusses its conceptual aspects.