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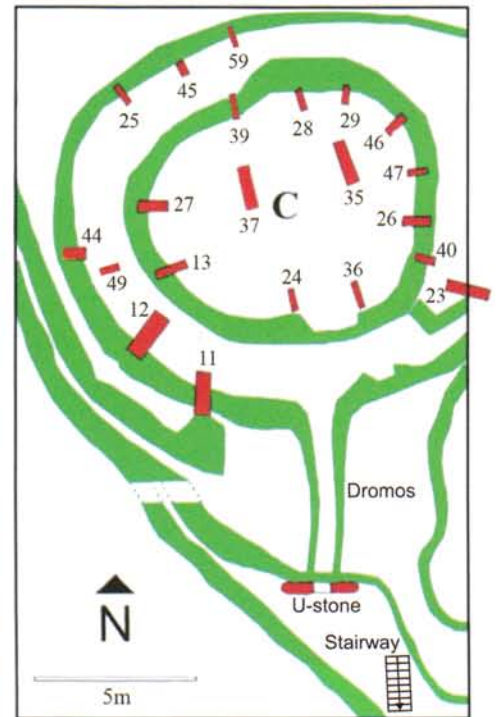
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GÖBEKLİ TEPE

A stairway to the circle of boars

The supposed entrance way is formed by two walls, made of conspicuously huge stones which are worked on all sides

by Oliver DIETRICH / Çiğdem KÖKSAL-SCHMIDT
Cihat KÜRKÇÜOĞLU / Jens NOTROFF / Klaus SCHMIDT



A few kilometres to the northeast of Şanlıurfa in southeastern Turkey lies the tell of Göbekli Tepe, with a height of 15 m, situated on a mountain range towering 750 m above the Harran plain. Its dating to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic is confirmed not only by characteristic flint tools, but also by C14 data. The oldest and most impressive layer III (10th millennium BC) is characterized by monolithic T-shaped pillars weighing tons, which were positioned in circle-like structures. The pillars were interconnected by limestone walls and benches leaning against the inner side of the walls. In the center of these enclosures, there is always a pair of two even larger pillars, with a height of over 5 m.

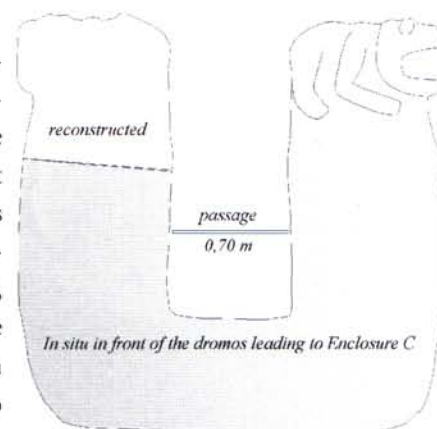
The autumn excavation campaign of 2012 added an interesting detail to one of the big layer III enclosures. Enclosure C shows a

number of concentric, interleaved walls with pillars, having a complete diameter of about 30 m. The floor was created by cutting and smoothing the natural bedrock. Two pedestals, about 30 cm high, were constructed for the central pillars, carved out of the bedrock while cutting and smoothing the floor. However, both of the central pillars were destroyed in prehistoric times. The smashed pieces were found in the lower part of the pit, but a virtual reconstruction was possible by laser scanning the single pieces, with the result showing a pillar with an original height of about 5m. The surrounding pillars of this enclosure present a number of reliefs, which are dominated by depictions of wild boars. The structure and layout of this peculiar enclosure changed significantly over time. An earlier entrance reminiscent of a dromos, for instance, was blocked by an apparently later wall. The supposed entrance way is formed by two walls branching off almost rectangularly towards the south and running nearly parallel to each other, made of conspicuously huge stones which are worked on all sides. Like a barrier, a huge stone slab protrudes into this passage. The slab has not been completely preserved, however it is safe to say that once it had been provided with a central opening closed by a stone setting, of which two layers are still preserved. At the southern side of the slab, looking away from Enclosure C and towards the visitor, there is a relief of a boar lying on its back below the opening of the door hole. The relief-carved porthole stone is accompanied by another building element. At first, in the south in front of the porthole stone, the plastically carved sculpture of an animal was excavated. A strong beast of prey with a wide open mouth could be recognized. Whether it is a lion or a bear cannot be decided, yet.



In front of the porthole stone placed immediately behind the U-shaped stone there is a relief of a boar lying on its back (DAI, by D. Johannes)

Only 80 cm away, we found a similar counterpart whose probably sculptured head, however, had been severed and is lost. When the excavation went on it became obvious that the second, eastern column, together with its western counterpart, belonged to one gigantic, monolithic, U-shaped object. Obviously, together with the porthole slab, it marked the entrance of Enclosure C. A new element in this entrance situation is a stairway with (so far) eight steps discovered in the most recent excavation campaign this autumn. It seems possible that it was constructed to bridge a depression in the bedrock and lead up to the original entrance of Enclosure C, but further excavation work in the area will be needed to understand the situation more completely. ■



Only partly excavated megalithic, U-shaped porthole stone. to the beast of prey on the western part there was most probably a counterpart on the eastern side, which has been lost (DAI, by D. Johannes, reconstructed by K. Schmidt)