



#meeting14

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Meeting for Friendship amongst People

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From the Depths of Time

The Origin of Communication and Community in Ancient Syria

Rimini, August 24, 2014 – Reflecting the growing interest in archeology at the Meeting in recent years, the exhibit “From the Depths of Time,” curated by Marilyn Kelly Buccellati, Professor Emeritus at the California State University, Los Angeles and the Director of the Mozan/Urkesh Archaeological Project at UCLA was presented today at 5 pm in the D3 Auditorium. “Why should we care about such a remote past and, to recall the Meeting title, a peripheral one?”, wondered Kelly. She stated that “our past can be seen as a progression of roots that go deep in time for 70,000 generations,” and that the “theme of the exhibit is the cultural meeting-point between communication and community.”

Such a theme, through its reflection on language and writing, is also capable of shedding light on our current era, where communication and human communities express themselves through globalization and network. “The edges are closer to the center than what one would think,” Kelly insisted “and the abyss separating us from our past has become for me a launch pad, thanks to the work by the architects and young collaborators on the exhibit”.

David Lordkipanidze, Director of excavations in Dmanisi and General Director of the Georgian National Museum (80 km from Tbilisi), described the Georgian site as a time machine, capable of providing information about the period in which the “homo” left Africa. Using images of the main findings, the researcher demonstrated that colonization outside of Africa cannot be attributed to an increased cerebral capacity, nor to better efficacy of the tools such people used. One image of a cranium without teeth was especially impressive. This man from Dmanisi most likely lost his teeth when he was still alive, and according to Lordkipanidze, “he had been kept alive by someone who was caring for him.” This represents therefore “the first documented example of human solidarity in history, i.e., the capability to form groups is an added value in evolution”.

Thomas Gamkrelidze, Honorary President of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, Giorgio Buccellati, Professor Emeritus of Ancient Near East and History at the University of California Los Angeles, and Paolo Matthiae, Archaeologist and Professor Emeritus of Archaeology and Art History of the Ancient Near East at La Sapienza University, provided further evidence of how the so called “edges” have actually been at the center of our civilizational development. Speaking about the agricultural terminology and the means of transportation used, Gamkrelidze documented how the “proto-indoeuropean homeland must have been situated somewhere in the vast area around the Balkans and Northern Mesopotamia, up to the Iranian plateau.” In this way, traditional opinions placing the origin of the ancient indo-european dialects within Western Central Europe have failed. Such language didn’t originate and form at the heart of the Old continent, but rather, in those regions that first witnessed the birth of big cities.



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Matthiae and Buccellati “excavated” precisely such an area in Syria. The former discovered Ebla, a city dating back to the ancient Bronze age, 60 km from Aleppo; the latter, together with his wife Marilyn, discovered Urkesh, dating back to 4,000 b.C. These two discoveries gave back to “peripheral” Syria the central role it used to have in ancient times. Such important results have been revealed and broadcast at the Meeting. Matthiae highlighted the role of these two cities in the history of civilization, noting that they developed in completely different environmental contexts from Babylon and the Nile valley. “Urkish and Ebla,” concluded the archeologist, “demonstrated that humans triumphed over the forces of nature due to their capacity for adaptation, developing a model of the city and the state in any ecological context”.

(A.C./D.B.)

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