

Publication

Celestial Aspects of Hittite Religion Part 2: Cosmic Symbolism at Yaz111kaya

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Evidence of systematic astronomical observation and the impact of celestial knowledge on culture is plentiful in the Bronze Age societies of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Europe. An interest in astral phenomena is also reflected in Hittite documents, architecture and art. The rock-cut reliefs of 64 deities in the main chamber of Yaz111kaya, a Hittite rock sanctuary associated with H. attus

a, the Hittite capital in central Anatolia, can be broken into groups marking days, synodic months and solar years. Here, we suggest that the sanctuary in its entirety represents a symbolic image of the cosmos, including its static levels (earth, sky, underworld) and the cyclical processes of renewal and rebirth (day/night, lunar phases, summer/winter). Static levels and celestial cyclicities are emphasised throughout the sanctuary - every single relief relates to this system. We interpret the central panel with the supreme deities, at the far north end of Chamber A, as a reference to the northern stars, the circumpolar realm and the world axis. Chamber B seems to symbolise the netherworld.

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