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THE NEW FIRE CEREMONY: KINGSHIP & RENEWAL AS A TEMPLATE FOR PYRAMID CONSTRUCTION

SUMMARY

Since 1994 several new pyramids and pyramid complexes (e.g. Caral in Peru) have been discovered. At the same time new theories about Egyptian pyramids, whether by Mark Lehner, Zahi Hawass or Jeremy Naydler have been formulated. The former have proposed that the Giza landscape is more homogenous than previously proposed, whereas Naydler argues that pyramids not solely functioned as tombs, but primarily as venues for the Heb-Sed festival, which testified to the king's agility to rule the land. New observations in Peru have shown that here too, there were similar "*regeneration rituals*", which involved a new era, symbolised by a new fire ceremony. In Mexico, this was typified by similar ceremonies that occurred within e.g. the pyramids of Teotihuacan. In all cultures, pyramids are specifically linked with kingship, mark a centre of the world – sometimes linked with the capital of a nation. From these observations, one can create a hypothesis whether the Bosnian valley of the Pyramids could conform to this same template, with early indications suggesting the template fits onto the Bosnian pyramids.

Key words: new fire ceremony, regeneration rituals, pyramid construction, Bosnian valley of the Pyramids

ESSAY

In previous centuries, biblical calculations "allowed" experts to calculate the creation of the Earth to 4 004 BC. It is said that with the arrival of science, the boundaries of creation have been put back by billions of years, yet the dates of "*civilisation*" have roughly remained at 4 000 BC. Indeed, the work of British anthropologist Richard Rudgley, and specifically his book *Lost Civilisations of the Stone Age*, points out that our ancestors were far more advanced than commonly assumed. Equally, the works of Marija Gimbutas on "*Old Europe*", dated ca. 6 000 BC, remain equally largely unincorporated into popular history's timeline.

Though all of these are incontestable archaeological discoveries, they have been unable to shift the "*4 000 BC is the start of civilisation*" paradigm, despite the known facts that "*we*" have been around for tens of thousands of years before and that "*we*" have repeated evidence of civilisations much older than 4 000 BC – specifically "*Old Europe*", a civilisation that existed in the very vicinity of the Bosnian pyramids.

Over the past two years, whenever I have seen people confronted with the possibility of a Bosnian pyramid, they reacted either by querying why no-one else before Sam Osmanagich had noticed what a pyramid was "*obviously*", or stated they did not see how there could be pyramids in Bosnia.

Until ca. 1 500 AD the length of the River Nile was believed to be the only region where pyramids could be found. With the discovery of America we learned that the Mayan civilisation had its own pyramids. And that, it seemed, were the only two civilisations that were into pyramid building as a national pass-time, if not obsession.

But in the last decade, pyramids – big pyramids at that – have been found almost anywhere: in 1994, the existence of pyramids was confirmed in China, though they are more commonly referred to as “royal tombs”; then, archaeologists announced the discovery of a pyramid complex in Caral, Peru, which was actually older than the pyramids of Giza. None of these pyramids were located in far-off, inaccessible places: like the Bosnian pyramids near Visoko, the Caral pyramids were originally simply not seen for what they truly turned out to be.

The old status quo that it were only the ancient Egyptians and the Mayans that built pyramids has therefore been upset and over the past decade, hardly a month seems to have gone by without a pyramid being found; and almost each year, a gigantic pyramid or pyramid complex is found somewhere.

Over the past decade, the landscape of the pyramid debate has therefore radically changed and offers science a challenge. Today, I want to set out the challenge, as well as provide some of the answers that may be the key revelation of what the pyramids truly might be. I hope that it will stimulate debate and can become a “*foundation stone*” of what I have termed “*The New Pyramid Age*”, which is not a new era of pyramid building, but an era in which dozens of pyramids, worldwide, have been discovered, whereby known pyramids, such as those in Egypt and Mexico, have been subjected to expansive explanations by the likes of Linda Schele, Jeremy Naydler, Mark Lehner and Zahi Hawass.

Before doing so, the primary problem of the Bosnian pyramid is its size. Indeed, at least two pyramid shapes in the Bosnian Valley of the Pyramids are larger than the Great Pyramid of Giza. But what is less known is that with the discovery of the new world, the Great Pyramid of Egypt remained great, but no longer the greatest: the Great Pyramid of Cholula, in the Mexican state of Puebla, is now the largest in the world by volume. It has a base of ca. 450 × 450 m (1 476 × 1 476 ft) and a height of 66 m (217 ft) – making it smaller than the Great Pyramid in height, but it is its total volume, estimated at 4.45 million m³, which makes it almost one third larger than the Great Pyramid of Giza.

Of course, the construction methodology of both structures is vastly different. The Bosnian pyramids equally have yet another method of construction, forcing the conclusion that though they are all pyramids in shape, construction-wise, the very large pyramids are not uniform in engineering and construction approach. As a result, a larger size does not necessarily mean that more work went into the construction, or that a civilisation had to be “*more advanced*”.

Further detail about the pyramid of Cholula will provide further enlightenment about the Bosnian pyramids, as well as reveal how relatively modern folklore and stories can create insights into the original purpose of these structures.

The pyramid of Cholula remains largely unexcavated and at first sight appears to be a natural hill, rather than a manmade pyramid, surmounted by a church. The Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de los Remedios (Church of Our Lady of the Remedies), also known as the *Santuario de la Virgen de los Remedios* (Sanctuary of the Virgin of the Remedies), was built by the Spanish on the site of a pre-Hispanic temple in 1 594. It is this church’s presence that is preventing the pyramid as a whole to be excavated and restored to its original glory.

Still, archaeological excavations have occurred and some five miles (8 km) of tunnels have so far been uncovered inside. It has been established that the pyramid was begun in Pre-Classic times (2 000 BC – 200 AD) and enlarged four times. I will note that similarly, the top of the Visoko pyramid had more recent archaeological remains implanted on it, and, especially, that an extensive series of tunnels is equally located in the Bosnian Pyramid Valley.

As mentioned, the pyramid of Cholula also comes with an attached mythology that provides some insight into what the pyramid might have been used for. The Franciscan Diego de Duran visited Cholula in 1 585 AD and interviewed the town’s elder, who was said to be more than one hundred years old. He told de Duran how “in the beginning, before the light of the sun had been created, this place, Cholula, was in obscurity and darkness; all was a plain, without hill or elevation, encircled in every part by water, without tree or created thing. Immediately after the light and the sun rose in the east there appeared gigantic men of deformed stature who possessed the land. Enamoured of the light and beauty of the sun they determined to build a tower so high that its summit should reach the sky. Having collected materials for the purpose they found a very adhesive clay and bitumen with which they speedily commenced to build the tower.

And having reared it to the greatest possible altitude, so that it reached the sky, the Lord of the Heavens, enraged, said to the inhabitants of the sky, “*Have you observed how they of the earth have built a high and haughty tower to mount hither, being enamoured of the light of the sun and his beauty? Come*

and confound them, because it is not right that they of the earth, living in the flesh, should mingle with us.' Immediately the inhabitants of the sky sallied forth like flashes of lightning; they destroyed the edifice and divided and scattered its builders to all parts of the Earth."

The story seems like a new world version of the Tower of Babel, equally destroyed by God and equally resulting in our scattering *"to all parts of the Earth"*. The question that intrigues me most for the moment is the question whether this *"tower of Cholula"* was the pyramid of Cholula. Unlike the Tower of Babel, de Duran's story does not indicate that the Tower of Cholula was destroyed. Was the Pyramid of Cholula the structure that was raised towards the sky, so that man could enter it? It seems that within the local mythological landscape, this could indeed be the case, and it is the only logical candidate.

A link between fire and pyramid is in the very name "pyramid". It is also present in Teotihuacan, the largest-known pre-Columbian city in the Americas. It bloomed between 300 and 600 AD and covered ca. 20 km² (7.7 square miles), once holding a population of 200 000 people. The name was given by the Aztec centuries after the fall of the city and is translated as *"the place where men became gods"*; the original name of the city is unknown. Recently, the glyph that represents the city has been translated as *"the place of the precious sacrifice"*.

Teotihuacan was a place of pilgrimage in Aztec times; the Aztecs identified it with *The Myth of Tollan*, the place where the sun was created – and a site that popular authors – perhaps unfortunately – often link with Atlantis. According to another legend, it was where the Gods gathered to plan the creation of man and yet another legend stated that the complex was built to transform men into gods. Like Cholula, the sun, a *"tower to reach the gods"* and a point of creation seem to be required ingredients in any pyramid package. But Teotihuacan offers us an insight that will allow us to go beyond these initial observations.

When astronomer Gerald Hawkins investigated Teotihuacan, he discovered that the streets were laid out on a grid system, intersecting at angles of 89^o degrees, instead of 90^o you would expect to find. This could be a simple design flaw, until Hawkins realised that the grid was not aligned to the four points of the compass, but was instead twisted sideways so that the Avenue of the Dead ran north-north-east, thus pointing at the setting of the Pleiades. On May 17th, ca. 150 AD, the Pleiades rose just before the Sun in the predawn skies. This synchronisation, known as the heliacal rising of the Pleiades, only lasted a century. It is now suggested that it was this event that was at the origin of Teotihuacan and marked its foundation.

The sun and the Pleiades are important in the religious rituals of the New World. The Sun-Pleiades zenith conjunction marked what is known as the New Fire ceremony. Father Bernardino de Sahagun's Aztec informants stated that the ceremony occurred at the end of every 52 year Calendar Round. The Aztecs and their predecessors had carefully observed the Pleiades and on the expected night the constellation was supposed to pass through the zenith, precisely at midnight, the New Fire ceremony was performed. The story is in line with the legend that the gods gathered together at Teotihuacan and wondered anxiously who was to be the next Sun.

The conclave occurred at the end of the previous World Age, which had just been destroyed by a flood. Now, only the sacred fire could be seen in the darkness, still quaking in the wind following the recent chaos. *"Someone will have to sacrifice himself, throw himself into the fire" – they cried – "only then will there be a Sun"*. Two deities, Nanahuatzin and Tecciztecatl, both tried the divine sacrifice. One burnt quickly, the other roasted slowly. It is here that Quetzalcoatl's religious importance is explained, for it was then that he manifested himself and was able to survive the fire, ensuring a new World Age – ours.

At Teotihuacan, a subterranean passage leads from a natural cave (a feature it shares with the Great Pyramid of Giza) under the west face of the Pyramid of the Sun. It is believed that this cave played an important role in the New Fire ceremony. The cave opening points directly to the setting sun on May 19 and July 25, the key dates for Teotihuacan. The cave is seven feet high and was found to run eastwards for more than 91 m (300 ft), until it reached a point close to the pyramid's geometrical centre. Here it led into a second cave, which had been artificially enlarged into a shape very similar to that of a four-leaf clover. Each *"leaf"* was a chamber, about 18.3 m (60 ft) in circumference, containing a variety of artefacts such as slate discs or mirrors. There was also a complex drainage system of interlocking segments of carved rock pipes. This is strange, as there is no known source of water within the pyramid.

The *New Fire story of Teotihuacan* fits within a lost Aztec Codex, written down by Martin Matz from Mazatec Indians, who transmitted it for several centuries within their community. The text is known as the *Codex Matz-Ayauhtla*, or the Pyramid of Fire, and describes a series of legends, from the creation myth to the New Fire ceremony, which is the finale to the initiatory spiritual journey that is encoded into

the codex. The text underlines the essence of the Mayan's religious experience, namely that life is a spiritual journey to ascension – a return to God, the One who created the universe. The text states how the supreme deity, Tloque Nahauque, manifested itself as three forces – a duality functioning against a neutral background, from which the four prime elements were created.

Matz made the journey himself; he visited an initiatory site with his shamanic guide, where he took a hallucinogenic substance (in his case mushrooms), entered a cave at a specific moment in the calendar, and consequently was shown a landscape of pyramids, including one that was dedicated to the Moon. The initiate was then taught about the World Ages, the success of Quetzalcoatl, and how ascension and world ages were connected via the New Fire ceremony – and how they were performed every 52 years.

The American author John Major Jenkins has described this as “*the ultimate self-sacrifice that is the ritual death attending the mystic initiation into divine life in order to merge with Quetzalcoatl, which according to my reconstruction of the New Fire ceremony represents the Pleiades in the zenith with Sun at nadir*”.

It is clear that Teotihuacan formed a site where this New Fire festival was performed: the cave inside the Pyramid of the Sun, with its specific alignment, is primary evidence. But we also need to ask whether the pyramids of Teotihuacan were – could be – a visual representation of the hallucinogenic landscape that the initiates experienced. Was Teotihuacan a three-dimensional rendering of a landscape seen in a dream – literally?

Also, let us note that the purpose of the codex and the focus of many traditional religious doctrines is the transformation of man into God – which is what the name Teotihuacan signifies. But how was man transformed into God? Was the New Fire ceremony the literal burning of men, who died for ascension? It now seems clear that Teotihuacan too is indeed a “*Tower of Babel*”, or a “*Tower of Cholula*”: a place where men tried to become one with the gods.

Let us listen to the *Mayan story of creation*, which has survived the destruction of the Spanish invasion. It is contained within the *Popol Vuh*, a 17th century book of the history of the Quiche Maya. The focus is on the activities of the Twin Maize Gods and their family at the time of this Third Creation, which the Maya date to 3 114 BC. Many scholars now believe that August 12th, 3 114 BC marked a significant celestial event – though its exact nature remains elusive.

There are several parallels between the *Codex Matz-Ayauhtla*, describing the New Fire ceremony and the *Popol Vuh*. When playing ball, the Twin Maize Gods disturbed the lords of Xibalba, the Maya underworld. The Xibalbans summoned the Maize Gods to the underworld to answer for their disrespectful behaviour. There, they subjected them to a series of trials. When they failed these tests, they were killed and buried in the Ball court of Xibalba. The eldest twin was decapitated, his head hung in the tree next to the ball court, as a warning to anyone who might repeat their offence. It is the Mayan equivalent of the two contenders for the new sun who entered the Fire and perished.

Despite the stern warning not to meddle with the gods, the daughter of a Xibalban lord went to visit the skull, which spoke to her, spitting in her hand and thus making her pregnant. She escaped from the underworld and gave birth to twin boys, the Hero Twins, Hun-Ahaw and Yax-Balam, who themselves were summoned to the Underworld, after they had found their dead father's ball playing equipment. Like their father, they too had made too much noise, but they, unlike their predecessors, were not fooled by the trials of the lords.

After a long series of ballgames, the Hero Twins defeated the Lords of Death and resurrected their fathers, which were reborn as infants. They quickly grew to adulthood, and with dwarf helpers (indeed), woke up three old gods. Two of them became known as the Paddler Gods, because they paddled the Maize Gods to the Place of Creation. The third oldster, God L, was the patron of the merchants and warriors, and destroyed the Third Creation by a Great Flood. I will briefly point out the many parallels between both accounts: the ballgame vs. the Fire, the destruction of the Third Creation vs. the end of a World Age, etc. But above all, it involves yet another “*point of creation*”.

When the Gods arrived at the place of the New Creation, they sprang up from a crack in the back of a Cosmic Turtle. The crack is identified with the Ball court. But the Maya identified this turtle with the three stars of Orion's Belt – and we thus finally understand why the pyramids of Teotihuacan – if not Giza – were laid out in this form.

Once reborn, the Maize Gods directed four old gods to set up the first Hearth of Creation, to centre the new order. This was a hearth made up from three stones. The first stone was in the shape of a

jaguar, the second in the form of a snake and the third was a crocodile or shark. The first was set in a place called Na-Ho-Kan, by the Paddler Gods. The second stone was set on the Earth, but by whom is not known. The third was set in the sea by Itzamna, the First Sorcerer.

The Maya saw this hearth in the sky, as the triangle of stars below Orion's Belt (Al Nitak, Saiph and Rigel), with the Orion Nebula as the fire. And it is this hearth that was set up on August 12th, 3 114 BC – the day of creation – the date of a New Fire ceremony. 542 days later, on February 5th, 3 112 BC, the Maize Gods completed the Fourth Creation, by setting up the four sides and corners of creation and erecting the central tree – the world tree. This tree was the Wakah-Kan, or "*Raise up Sky*". It was a great ceiba tree in flower, because February 5th, the day of its erection, was also the flowering season for this popular Latin American tree. The tree's stellar equivalent is the Milky Way, leading us back to the Avenue of the Dead in Teotihuacan.

Teotihuacan might hence be a "*dream landscape*", but the temples of the Chichen Itza complex is the easiest location where one can enter into the mind of its builders – or, to be more specific, where we can answer that all-important "*why-question*", and see that it is a three-dimensional rendering of the Mayan creation myth.

The name Itza itself is derived from Itzamna, the chief Mayan deity that sat on top of the World Tree – like the musician of the Papantla Flyers. Itza functioned as a regional capital of the Maya from 750 to 1 200 AD. Chichen Itza's Mayan name means "*city on the edge of the water sorcerer's well*" and that well is the Sacred Cenote, the path the tourists will best remember for being lined with endless souvenir stands that lead to a round lake – which for some tourists has less appeal than the toilet facilities next to it. Still, it is the Sacred Cenote's presence that may have been the main reason why the town was built where it is – a fact that most tourist guides on the complex fail to underline some tours leaving out the Sacred Cenote altogether.

In one version of the myth, the Aztec built a temple on top of Snake Mountain for their patron god Huitzilopochtli, who then built a ball court at the base of the mountain, and in the centre he placed a hole, called an Itzompan, or Skull Place. It won't come as a surprise to learn that there is a Ball Court next to El Castillo. Indeed, the Ball court of Chichen Itza is both one of the most impressive and one of the best preserved.

The Ballgame had a sacred function, visualising with the Myth of Creation and Origin. The most essential message we should retain from it is that it was the visualisation of the story of the creation of the Fourth World; it thus should be seen as theatre, more than sport. Finally, nearby is indeed the "*Skull place*" – confirming that Chichen Itza was indeed built following the layout indicated by the creation myth.

When walking around Chichen Itza, one can see legends and mysteries come to life, painted against this stone backdrop. Like the inside of the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan, El Castillo contains a man-made cave, which was believed to be a passage to the Otherworld. On the "*mirror side*" of Chichen Itza, we find the High Priest's Grave, which was constructed over a natural cave and which has been described as a "*smaller version of El Castillo*". Pyramid's, sitting on top of natural caves, with artificial chambers inside, seems an integral part of pyramid construction, whether in the Yucatan, Teotihuacan, Cholula, Egypt or Bosnia.

What archaeologists have accomplished in the Mayan world over the past two centuries – and on many sites, in less than a century – is impressive. The buildings have been interpreted within their religious framework, that of the creation myth, which is intimately linked with an astronomical cult, in which key dates to do with the star Venus and its position to the Earth were of extreme religious and social importance.

Egypt was a "*child of Africa*", the child of shamanic tribes that had existed on that continent for thousands of years. Ancient Egypt was a concretisation of tribal shamanic knowledge. The tribe's shaman not merely focused on death, but also on the world of the living, which many cultures saw as preparation for death. The notion that life and death are not mutually exclusive but should be seen as an integrated whole can also be found in the innovative approaches of Lehnert and Hawass. They are slowly abandoning the old dogma that the pyramids were nothing but tombs. They may have been tombs, but it is now also more and more obvious that they performed a function for the living king – they were a temple, as well as a tomb.

This forces us to see the pyramid as places of initiation, rather than gigantic mausoleums. Such an interpretation was very much in vogue a century ago, mainly by people of Masonic ideology. But Freemasonry is, in essence, a stylised rendition of a voluntary death during the lifetime – an initiation.

Before Hawass and Lehner, the “*pyramid as temple of initiation*” debate – which makes the Egyptian pyramids conform to the pyramid template – was revived in 1982 by the Egyptologist Edward Wente and has been discussed by British author Jeremy Naydler. Naydler stated that “while scholars generally accept that this “*voluntary death*” was one of the central aims of the Greek and Hellenistic mystery cults, Egyptology has resisted the idea that any such initiatory rites or experiences existed in Egypt. In my opinion, this would make Egypt unique amongst all ancient civilisations – by the absence of such practices. It would mean that Egypt, of all ancient cultures, did not have a religion that allowed for the spiritual development of the soul which would be extremely odd, for all ancient accounts argue that Egypt was precisely the world’s authority on such practices.

Though it is without doubt that the *Pyramid Texts* focus on the king Jeremy Naydler argues that they focus mainly on his role as ruler – not as the deceased head of state. The *Pyramid Texts* thus become records of the rituals that the king performed, at key times of his rule, which Naydler has identified as his coronation and the Heb-Sed festivals, which was a renewal of his kingship that occurred at thirty year or less intervals. These rites confirmed the power of the king over this and the “*otherworld*”, the union of which was accomplished by the king, through which he established his divine rule over the land. Let us note that in this interpretation, the pyramid becomes a temple, and the inscriptions on its wall were not meant to be read by the funeral cortege, or by the deceased soul of the pharaoh, but by the living pharaoh, as he performed these rituals in the interior of the pyramid.

The Heb-Sed festival lasted five days and took place immediately after the annual Osiris rites, at the time when the Nile’s Flooding retreated, at the moment of the rebirth of the land, mimicking the creation of the world – and a new age. It is yet another clear parallel with the “*New Fire ceremony*” of the Maya, for the five days preceding the Heb-Sed festival, a fire ceremony called “*lighting the flame*” served to purify the festival precincts.

The most sacred parts of the rite occurred in a secret chamber – and the question is where this chamber was located. From the reliefs of Niuserre, the 6th ruler of the 5th Dynasty, we know that this chamber contained a bed (a couch?) though other depictions show that in certain cases a sarcophagus was used. Hence, the pyramids seem to have performed a function not only in death, but also in the life of the king.

So where does this leave the Bosnian pyramids? From the 6th to the 3rd millennium BC, the so-called “*Vinca culture*” stretched for hundreds of miles along the river Danube; in what is now Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia, with traces all around the Balkans, parts of Central Europe and Asia Minor, and even Western Europe.

The person largely responsible for the isolation of the “*Vinca culture*” was the great authority on late prehistoric Europe, Vere Gordon Childe (1892 - 1957). He was a synthesiser of various archaeological discoveries and tried to create an all-encompassing framework, creating such terms as “*Neolithic Revolution*” and “*Urban Revolution*”. In his synthesis, he perceived the “*Vinca culture*” as an outlying cultural entity influenced by more “*civilised*” forces. His dogmatic stance and clout meant that the “*Vinca culture*” received – and receives – only scant attention. Originally, interest in the signs found on pottery had created interest in some academic circles, but that now faded following Childe’s “*papal bull*”.

Interest was rekindled in the 1960’s (following the death of Childe), largely due to a new discovery made in 1961 by Dr. N. Vlassa, while excavating the Transylvanian site of Tartaria, part of the “*Vinca culture*”. Amongst various artefacts recovered were three clay tablets, which he had analysed with the then newly introduced radiocarbon dating methodology. The artefacts came back as ca. 4 000 BC and were used by the new methodology’s detractors to argue that radio carbon-dating was obviously erroneous. How could it be “*that*” old?

Traditionally, the Sumerian site of Uruk had been dated to 3 500 – 3 200 BC. Vlassa’s discovery was initially (before the carbon dating results) further confirmation that the “*Vinca Culture*” had strong parallels with Sumer. Everyone agreed that the Sumerians had influenced Vinca Culture (and the site of Tartaria), which had therefore been assigned a date of 2 900-2 600 BC (by the traditional, comparative methodology, which relied on archaeologist’s logic, rather than hard scientific evidence). Sinclair Hood suggested that Sumerian prospectors had been drawn by the gold-bearing deposits in the Transylvanian region, resulting in these off-shoot cultures.

But if the carbon dating results were correct, then Tartaria was 4 000 BC, which meant that the “*Vinca Culture*” was older than Sumer, or Sumer was at least a millennium older than what archaeologists had so far assumed. Either way, archaeology would be in a complete state of disarray or either some or all archaeologists would be wrong.

There is no debate about it: the artefacts from the “*Vinca culture*” and Sumer are very much alike. And it is just not some pottery and artefacts: they share a script that seems highly identical too. In fact, the little interest that had been shown in the “*Vinca culture*” before the 1960’s all revolved around their script. Vlassa’s discovery only seemed to confirm this conclusion, as he too immediately stated that the writing had to be influenced by the Near East. Everyone, including Sinclair Hood and Adam Falkenstein, agreed that the two scripts were related and Hood also saw a link with Crete. Finally, the Hungarian scholar Janos Makkay stated that the “*Mesopotamian origin [of the Tartaria pictographs] is beyond doubt.*” It seemed the “*Vinca problem*” had been resolved.

But when the “*Vinca Culture*” suddenly predated Sumer, this thesis could no longer be maintained (as it would break the archaeological framework, largely put in place by Childe and his peers), and thus, today, the status is that both scripts developed independently. This politically convenient conclusion, however, has stopped serious questions from being posed on the relationship between the “*Vinca Culture*” and Sumer – noting that Sumer came with a specific tradition of building ziggurats. The “*Vinca Culture*” was also millennia ahead of the status quo on mining, which – apart from open-cast mining – also means that expert knowledge in tunnelling was acquired by this culture.

Recent insights into “*Old Europe*” came about in November 2007, when it was announced that excavations at an ancient settlement in southern Serbia had revealed the presence of a furnace, used for melting metal. The furnace had tools in it: a copper chisel and a two-headed hammer and axe. Most importantly, several of the metal objects that were made here, were recovered from the site. The excavation also uncovered a series of statues. Archaeologist Julka Kuzmanovic-Cvetkovic observed that “*according to the figurines we found, young women were beautifully dressed, like today’s girls in short tops and mini skirts, and wore bracelets around their arms.*”

The unnamed tribe who lived between 5 400 and 4 700 BC in the 120-hectare site, at what is now Plocnik, knew about trade, handcrafts, art and metallurgy. The excavation also provided further insights into “*Old Europe*”. For example, near the settlement, a thermal well might be evidence of Europe’s oldest spa. Houses had stoves and there were special holes for trash, while the dead were buried in a tidy necropolis. People slept on woollen mats and fur, made clothes of wool, flax and leather, and kept animals. The community was also especially fond of children: artefacts that were recovered included toys such as animals and rattles of clay, and small, clumsily crafted pots apparently made by children at playtime.

It is but two examples that underline that “*Old Europe*” was civilisation millennia ahead of its neighbours. And “*Old Europe*” is a forgotten culture, as Richard Rudgley has argued: “*‘Old Europe’ was the precursor of many later cultural developments and the ancestral civilisation, rather than being lost beneath the waves through some cataclysmic geological event, was lost beneath the waves of invading tribes from the east.*” Indeed, Rudgley argued that when confronted with the “*sudden arrival*” of civilisation in Sumer or elsewhere, we should not look towards extra-terrestrial civilisation, or Atlantis, but instead to “*Old Europe*”, a civilisation which the world seems intent on disregarding and we can only wonder why.

Noting that the Bosnian Valley of the Pyramids is within the catchment area of “*Old Europe*”, the question there is whether “*Old Europe*” might also have been a pyramid-building civilisation. The presence of the Bosnian Valley of the Pyramids suggests a likely yes. At present, it is too early to provide hard evidence, but there is some suggestive evidence that “*Old Europe*” was interested in Old Europe.

Gimbutas wrote how the “*richly incised decoration on the Tisza altar from Kókény-domd may relate to cosmogonical myths. Its triangular front is covered by meanders and divided into two levels by a horizontal band of meandering lines. In the centre of the lower register two eyes and a nose are set in a triangle. Groups of parallel lines arrange in three form panels along each side of the altar. The decorative organisation suggests several levels of cosmic waters.*” Noting that in e.g. Giza, we have symbolism of how the Giza Plateau symbolised the primeval hill, which rose from the Waters of Chaos, noting that the altar displays triangles (the two-dimensional rendering of the three-dimensional pyramid), it at the very least shows “*Old Europe*” worked with the same cosmogonical material in its myths as the other pyramid-building cultures.

That the top of the Pyramid of the Sun is crowned by a medieval capital and a coronation site nearby at Mile is an interesting fact, as the Pyramid is thus linked with the role of kingship and might provide insights into how – elsewhere – the role of kingship, and especially his mastery over this and the “*Other World*”, was linked with the pyramid. In the Bosnian Valley of the Pyramids, we have a number of structures located along a river, with tunnels likely connecting the river to the pyramids. In Egypt, we have a similar design, with Valley temples and causeways (artificial tunnels) connecting to the Pyramid Temple higher up the plateau. All of these elements show that there is indeed a pyramid template, which definitely

has local variations, but also contains certain general rules – rules into which the Bosnian pyramids, and what we currently know about them, fit.