



Abstract

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The Visible Dead: Dolmens and the Landscape in EBA Jordan

Overview:

Dolmens are usually described as part of a regional megalithic phenomenon that spanned the 5th-2nd millennia BC. However, this presentation assumes that most ‘dolmens’ are mis-identified. When strictly defined, dolmens better reflect a local funerary tradition of the 4th millennium BC.

Definitions:

The term *dolmen* includes a variety of features whose only similarity is their use of large stone slabs. This presentation defines a dolmen as a freestanding, rectangular chamber formed by two upright orthostats along each long side, and a single roof slab over the top.

Dolmens have often been conflated with cairns. This presentation defines a *cairn* as a large pile of small stones. Such features may have contained a low, cist burial chamber; others may simply be piles of field clearance.

Distribution:

Dolmens, as defined above, concentrate within a limited area of the east rift escarpment of the Jordan Valley, consistent with a local funerary tradition.

Chronology:

Recent dolmen excavations have yielded assemblages that date exclusively to the EB I (c.3700-3000 BC). This talk examines the close spatial relationship between dolmens and EB I settlement sites in a discrete geographical zone.