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The Strategy of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt Facing Historical Cycles of Oppression and Legitimation

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Abstract

This study analyzes the strategy of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Egypt facing cycles of repression and legitimation throughout its history. The analysis suggests that the strategic shift into a political activity has proved to be effective, but only for a short period of time. President Morsi must have assumed that the MB in Egypt was closer than ever to achieving its strategic political goals, since for the first time in its history it founded a legitimate political party and won the elections. Reviewing the strategy of the MB in Egypt may lead to describe it as pragmatic. However, the unique nature of the MB as a political movement with a religious affiliation - an Islamic political movement, may challenge the pragmatic nature of its strategy. Thus, the alleged pragmatic strategy of the movement may eventually serve a strategic radical goal rather than lead to moderation.

Keywords: Muslim Brotherhood, strategy, pragmatism, radicalization.

1. Introduction

The toppling of the regime in Tunisia in January 2011 as the result of an uprising of the people of Tunisia was an unprecedented event in the Arab world and it triggered massive support demonstrations in many countries throughout the Arab world, including Jordan, Libya, Yemen, Algeria, Egypt and later Syria. These demonstrations not only supported the change in Tunisia, but also called against the ruling regimes. This turmoil in the Arab world and specifically in Egypt increased the academic interest in the movement of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Egypt – the largest opposition group in Egypt in recent decades.

The MB was founded in Egypt in 1928 by Hassan El-Bana out of a sense of deep frustration from the influences of the British colonial rule on Egypt. As El-Bana described it, the Muslim society became corrupt, withered, and inferior under the British rule. Thus, the movement was founded in purpose to spread and to implant Islamic believes and values among the people and its vision was the retrieve of the superiority of Islam under the *Caliph* rule (Arabic for "Islamic head of state"). The movement was responsible for the assassination of Prime Minister Mahmud Fahmi al-Nuqrashi in 1948, and later in 1981 one of the movement's factions was responsible for the assassination of President Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat.

The political goals of the movement include changing the regime system through building an Islamic society and state in Egypt and to spread the message of Islam in the world in order to establish a global Islamic nation. This Islamic order will be built gradually through a long-

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term process beginning with building and educating the new Muslim individual, family, and society in the Muslim world. The next stages include gaining power through elections, creating an Islamic state, releasing Islamic states around the world from foreign occupation and uniting them into the global Islamic nation.[1]

- The repressions of the MB throughout its history made it change its strategy and turn to the political arena to pursue its strategic goals.

- Analysis of the strategy of the MB suggests that the strategic shift into a political activity has proved to be effective, but currently, only for a short period of time.

- The alleged pragmatic strategy of the MB movement may eventually serve a strategic radical goal rather than lead to moderation.

The MB has often been considered as the first wide-ranging, organized, and international Islamic movement of modern times. It has not been designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) by the US Secretary of State. However, the importance of the movement of the MB in Egypt is derived from the fact that since its establishment this movement supplied the ideological foundation for terrorist organizations all around the world (for example, Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, Hamas). Additionally, many terrorist organizations grew out of the MB which operated inside and outside of Egypt. Furthermore, between the mid-1940s and 1950 the MB did use terrorist tactics against the Egyptian government and the civilian population.

Thus, the case of the MB in Egypt is relevant to the academic debate regarding the potential transformation of a terrorist or extremist movement into a political party. On the one hand, there is the "inclusion-moderation" hypothesis[2] that explains the behavior, ideology, and strategy of Islamist movements. It assumes that the integration of the anti-establishment parties and movements can lead to the moderation of their ideology, behavior, and strategy. On the other hand, another approach claims that even if the movement will become integrated within the Egyptian democratic system, it will only use these opportunities to pursue a more radical agenda.[3]

Therefore, this article aims to analyze the strategy of the MB in Egypt facing the cycles of repression and legitimation in the history of the movement, since its foundation in 1928, through the dramatic events of the "Tahrir protests" of 2011, the toppling of President Mubarak's regime and the historic rise of MB's President Morsi in 2012. That historic victory was short and has ended with the rise of President A-SiSi in 2014. This article examines the strategy of the MB in Egypt throughout almost ten decades and provides comprehensive evaluation of the MB's strategy and explores whether the integration of the movement in Egyptian politics may result in its moderation or may in fact lead to radicalization.

2. The strategy of the Muslim Brotherhood since its foundation

2.1 *1928 until the early 1940s*

In the first period from 1928 and until the 1940's the movement concentrated its efforts in the establishment of the social movement by propaganda and preaching all over Egypt to increase recruitment, to spread its ideas, and to build its networks. At that time, the MB did not

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[1] Aboul-Eneim, Y. (2003). Al Ikhwan al Muslimeem: The Muslim brotherhood, *Military Review*, *3*, 26-31.

[2] Clark, J. A. (2006). The conditions of Islamist moderation: Unpacking cross-ideological cooperation in Jordan. *International journal of Middle East studies*, *38*(4), 539-560.

[3] Khalil, M. (2006). Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and political power: Would democracy survive. *Middle East*, *10*(1), 44-52.

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act in violent measures and did not separate itself from the Egyptian society. In the viewpoint of the MB at that time, the solution to the situation of the Muslim world was composed of two stages. The first stage included the expulsion of the Western imperialism and the rejection of its ideas. The second stage included the purification of Islam of all foreign influences to return the original message of Muhammad. When these stages were fulfilled, it would have been possible to renew the glory of Islam and to rebuild the Islamic *Caliphate* ("dominion of a successor"). The Islamic order in Egypt was considered as only a middle stage in the achievement of the strategic goal of rebuilding the Islamic *Caliphate*. Thus, the short-term goal of the MB in that period was to expel the British rule and to begin the establishment of an Islamic order in Egypt that would abolish the existing separation of the religion from the state and would apply the law of *Sharia* (Islamic law) as the constitution of Egypt.[4]

The MB was formulated as a social movement for a specific purpose using nonviolent tactics to accomplish its agenda. At first, the group was simply an Islamic revivalist movement. Thus, the initial strategy of the movement in that period was to achieve their goals gradually by winning the hearts of the people as a preparation for the establishment of an Islamic state. The main components of the strategy included preaching, education, guidance, social activities and building educational institutions that would educate the young generation in the spirit of an Islamic lifestyle. The group established primary and secondary schools for boys and girls as well as technical schools for workers. There were also Qur'an classes and basic skill classes for the illiterate. Many of the Brotherhood's members were recruited from these institutions. As part of its program, the MB set up urban projects that provided jobs for the unemployed and the poor and set up industrial and commercial enterprises that could compete with Egypt's non-Islamic entrepreneurs.

Soon, the MB won the support of the middle classes, who were equally disappointed with the government, the economy, and the continued foreign occupation. While students were being recruited, the MB was also recruiting workers. The movement formed labor unions among workers in many different trades. In its union activities, the MB spread its Islamic ideas among workers.[5]

Al-Banna emphasized the idea of preaching and the use of nonviolent measures. Additionally, he supported the Egyptian parliamentary system[6]. On March 1938, the MB condemned the current Wafdist campaign against the government and in response the Palace publicly embraced the MB and gave them funds, hoping to gain support among the Egyptian people through the support of the MB in the government.[7]

The preliminary strategy of the MB then was to use peaceful measures to change the political order. The MB wrote a letter to King Fuad in 1933, which was ignored. In 1936, al-Banna wrote a letter to King Farouk, the prime minister al-Nahhas Pasha to make them reject the Western influences and to adopt an Islamic reform. These letters were ignored as well.[8] Later that year, Egypt signed the "Anglo-Egyptian Treaty" that granted the local Egyptian government

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[4] Mitchell, R. P. (1993). *The society of the Muslim Brothers* (Vol. 9). Oxford University Press, USA; Aboul-Eneim, 2003.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Moussalli, A. S. (1993). Hasan Al-Banna's Islamist discourse on constitutional rule and Islamic state. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, *4*(2), 161-174.

[7] Lawrence, B. (1998). *Shattering the myth: Islam beyond violence*. Princeton University Press; Rinehart, C. S. (2009). Volatile breeding grounds: The radicalization of the Egyptian Muslim brotherhood. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, *32*(11), 953-988.

[8] Al-Husaini, I. M. (1981). *The Moslem Brethren, The Greatest of Modern Islamic Movements*. Westport, CT: Hyperion Press.

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greater autonomy and control. Up until 1938 al-Banna urged King Farouk to dismantle the corrupt political parties in Egypt. In late 1938 and early 1939, the palace cut funds to the MB because they were suspicious of their activities.

As time progressed, the militant groups that al-Banna created within the Muslim Brotherhood were created for purposes that are more violent. The Rover Scouts were first formed in 1931 by al-Banna and their purpose was to keep order at the Brotherhood's meetings, to march in parades, or to escort al-Banna in public. The Battalions were created in 1937 as a personal army of God. Their training was akin to that of a professional army. Lastly, the Secret Apparatus was created in approximately 1939 or 1940 as a Special Forces part of the Battalions. All these groups were loyal to al-Banna and were commanded by him.

2.2 *The age of terror: 1940s until the 1950s*

Al-Banna gradually radicalized his believes until the point terrorism was considered as a legitimate alternative for achieving the MB goals. The MB has developed a political orientation that was very anti-Western and opposed to secular politics. The early writings of al-Banna indicate that he believed that only through prayers and faith the goal of reforming society would be fulfilled. Later, shortly after the creation of the MB in the early 1930s, al-Banna made *Jihad* one of the ten principles that Muslim Brothers must commit to become part of the MB. Finally, in the late 1930s, al-Banna considered *Jihad* as obligatory for every Muslim.[9]

In 1945, when al-Banna ran for parliament, the election was rigged, and the MB lost their seat in Ismailiya. After this defeat, the MB assassinated Prime Minister Ahmad Mahir Pasha. Mahmud Fahmi al-Nuqrashi who took over on 25 February 1945 accused the MB of this assassination. Al-Banna and several other Brothers were arrested but the attorney general later released them. Consequently, al-Nuqrashi had the MB under surveillance and restricted their ability to meet although he later revoked this order and then quickly reinstated it. Al-Banna stated that the Brotherhood was directing all its actions toward the Islamic government who should have implemented the Brotherhood's reforms. Additionally, al-Banna warned al-Nuqrashi that he would call for jihad and lead it himself.[10]

Therefore, at the mid-1940s the MB began the use of terrorist tactics. As the MB had been creating militant sectors within the movement since 1931, by the mid-1940s it had operated the secret military wing, the Secret Apparatus, which initiated terrorist attacks against the Egyptian government and the civilian population. Demonstrations and protests in the streets were organized and the MB was calling people to arms and al-Banna continued to call for *jihad*.[11] In 1946 the MB were blamed for attacks in Cairo and Alexandria and the civil war between the Brotherhood and al-Nuqrashi began shortly afterward. In 1948, the MB fought under the Arab League in the Arab Israeli war that began on 15 May 1948. The MB had approximately 75,000 militant members by the late 1940s and had developed an army that infiltrated the Egyptian army with intentions to overthrow the Egyptian government.[12]

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[9] Rinehart, 2009.

[10] Haag, M. (2005). *The timeline history of Egypt*. Barnes & Noble; Eickelman, D. F. (2002). *The Middle East and central Asia: an anthropological approach*. 4th ed., Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc; Rinehart, 2009.

[11] Al-Husaini, 1981.

[12] Nobel-Konig, L. Terrorism's effectiveness: Examining terrorism strategy in achieving political goals. In: Sazonov, Vladimir, et al. (Eds.). *Cultural crossroads in the Middle East: The historical, cultural and political legacy of intercultural dialogue and conflict from the ancient near east to the present day*. University of Tartu Press, 278-314.

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When al-Nuqrashi found out that the Brotherhood had been participating in combat units the Egyptian government began to fear the growing strength of the Brotherhood and recognized the danger the group posed to state security. Consequently, al-Nuqrashi imposed military law and outlawed the MB in December 1948. He claimed that the group had plotted revolution against the government and had repeatedly carried out terrorist attacks. The movement was outlawed and was declared as an illegal organization. Al-Nuqrashi banned the Brotherhood and all its publications. He also ordered that all their documents were seized. In response, the MB assassinated El-Nuqrashi in December 1948.[13] Al-Bana was assassinated in retaliation in 1949.

The MB was forced underground as it tried to regroup after the loss of its founder and leader. After the Wafd party regained power in 1951, the Brotherhood was temporarily allowed to resume activities under the restriction to cultural, social and spiritual services alone.

2.3 *The oppression under Gamal Abdul Nasser's regime (1954-1970)*

The relationship between the MB and Gamal Abdul Nasser's "Free Officers' Movement" began in 1946. When Nasser and al-Banna met in 1948, al-Banna was convinced that Nasser could achieve a large basis of support in the military for a revolution in Egypt and that the cooperation between them will advance it faster than an independent struggle of the MB for an Islamic revolution. Sharing many of the same goals, the MB gave their support to the "Free Officers' movement" in the early 1950s in its attempt to overthrow the government. The Officers succeeded with the MB's help and set up a government under the leadership of Nasser in 1952. However, by 1953 the MB realized that the "Free Officers' movement" vision of the state of Egypt was of a secular state, in contrast to the MB's vision of an Islamic state. Once in power, Nasser offered the MB only a position in the Wakff office (the office responsible for religious affairs) and an appointment to function as Egypt's Mufti (spiritual leader and judge). Furthermore, Nasser was subjected to pressures on the part of the "Free Officers' movement" that refused to fulfill the vision of al-Banna's Islamic state. Nasser's regime was secular and was based on the ideas of nationalism and socialism.[14] Nasser's signing of an agreement with the British rule in 1954 signified the beginning of a crisis between his regime and the MB as well as the beginning of one of the darkest times in the history of the movement.

On 26 October 1954, one MB activist tried to assassinate President Nasser as he delivered a speech in Alexandria. Considering this failed assassination attempt, the movement was severely oppressed by Nasser. Several hundred MB leaders and members were arrested, and many were tortured. The property of the MB was burned by mobs. The movement was once again outlawed, and its organization was prohibited. Consequently, many of its members went underground and fled to neighboring Arab countries. The Egyptian government continued to violently repress the MB in the following years as the leaders of the MB were arrested, persecuted, and executed. By 1965, thousands of MB members were arrested and tortured. Those who went underground were again faced with the task of rebuilding the organization while consciously avoiding confrontation with the government.

Facing this repression, the MB movement began to splinter into moderate and radical factions. Both factions retained the same goal (that is, the creation of an Islamic system of government in Egypt) but disagreed on the means of attaining this goal. More moderate and traditional members of the MB supported the idea that political activity is the only affective option to change the existing political order in Egypt, and thus they should operate within the existing

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[13] Brynjar, L. (1998). *The society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement, 1928-1942*. Reading, UK: Ithaca Press; Rinehart, 2009.

[14] Aboul-Eneim, 2003.

political system. Radical members, however, believed that the attempts to change the system from within were futile. These members, inspired by the writings and leadership of Sayid Qutb, supported only the option of an armed struggle.

Nasser had severely repressed the MB and tried to eradicate them. However, his attempt was unsuccessful because the MB movement was too deeply imbedded in Egyptian society and would eventually reemerge. Despite its severe repression, the MB movement continued to attract members from the lower and middle classes and began to rebuild its power base. They quietly criticized the government but strongly and consistently denounced violence and criticized the armed struggle of the radical Islamic groups.[15] This strategic shift to political activity and the idea that it was no longer legitimate to use violent measures to change the regime system was a crucial element in the survival of the MB movement.

2.4 *Partial Legitimation under Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat (1970-1981)*

Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat, the Vice President during the presidency of Nasser, succeeded him as Egypt's president after Nasser's death in 1970. Sadat initiated a process of political and economic liberalization that by 1976 allowed the activity of institutionalized political parties in Egypt.

The situation of the MB movement under Sadat's rule improved greatly. Sadat negotiated with the MB's leadership in prison that eventually led to the release of most of the movement's imprisoned members with the permission to renew its public activity and its publications. Sadat encouraged the emergence of an Islamist movement in Egypt, believing it would be socially conservative and he gave them considerable cultural and ideological autonomy in exchange for political support. However, Sadat continued to support the policy that banned the political organization of the MB movement and extended the order prohibiting their transformation into a political party.[16]

The strategy of the MB in that period included reorganization and political participation in the political process. The MB managed to integrate into the Egyptian political arena through their representation in parliament, bypassing the political parties and the nongovernmental organizations laws that banned the organizing on a religious basis.

The crisis in the relationships between President Sadat and the MB emerged in 1977 after Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and peaked in 1979 after the signing of a peace agreement between Egypt and Israel. The peace agreement with Israel made the MB organize massive nonviolent demonstrations in Egypt and publicize criticism against Sadat which led once again to the incarceration of MB leaders and members. On 6 October 1981 one of the movement's factions was responsible for the assassination of President Sadat. Sadat was succeeded by his Vice President, Hosni Mubarak.

2.5 *The oppression under President Mubarak's regime (1981-2011)*

The presidency of Hosni Mubarak began in 1981 and lasted for three decades, which can be divided into three central periods: The first period between 1981-1990 is regarded as the continuation of Sadat's liberalization process and the beginning of a limited process of democratization in Egypt. The second period between 1990 and 1995 was a period of crisis, while the Egyptian government struggled against a wave of terrorism inflicted by extreme Islamic

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[15] Aboul-Eneim, 2003; Mitchell, 1993.

[16] *Ibid.*

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organizations. The third period began in 1995 and consisted of Mubarak's extensive political reforms and ended in 2011 with the fall of Mubarak's regime.

During the first period during the 1980s and until the beginning of 1990s the MB focused their strategy in rebuilding its wealth and power. The movement gathered assets as banks, schools, factories, and mass communication organizations. In addition, the MB identified the professional organizations as an important source of supporters and in the 1990s they gained control of the powerful doctors', lawyers', and engineers' syndicates. They returned as a force in university politics as well.[17]

At the political arena, the MB found more ways to continue to bypass the constitutional limitations that were inflicted on the movement since 1954 which banned its participation in elections as a political party. Their strategy included the formation of alliances with other legitimate parties and running with independent candidates. In 1984 they formed an alliance with the Wafd Party and won 58 out of 488 seats in parliament. In 1987 they formed an 'Islamic Alliance' with the Labor Party and won 17 percent of the general vote, making this coalition the major opposition to President Mubarak's National Democratic Party.[18] The formation of this Islamic Alliance was a major advancement in the spreading the MB's political agenda openly.

Despite the authorities' awareness of the movement's political and social activities, since Mubarak came to power and until the 1990s his government turned a blind eye, or consciously disregarded, the MB activity. Mubarak's new regime aspired to keep the MB movement out of the violent Egyptian Islamic movements section. Additionally, the government needed legitimacy for its democratization process, which would be difficult to achieve without the support of the MB, the largest opposition group in Egypt, in the legislation initiations of Mubarak. Indeed, the MB did not object to Mubarak's second term in 1988.[19]

However, in the beginning of the 1990s Mubarak's attitude towards the MB had changed and the period of crisis and confrontation had begun. There were several factors that contributed to this shift. First, Egypt suffered a wave of violence and terrorism in the early 1990s inflicted by extreme Islamic organizations such as Al-Jammat al Islamia and Al-Jammat al Takfir and Al-Hajara. Second, the rise of the MB's power and popularity in Egypt was considered as a threat by Mubarak and he used this instability to weaken the MB and to generate crisis in their relationship that would allow him to restrict their activity and to pursue them, especially considering the upcoming elections in 1995. Third, Mubarak's success in defeating the extreme Islamic movements made the inclusion of the MB in the political process unnecessary anymore, since the fear that the MB would otherwise join the extreme section was no longer relevant. Thus, the period of the oppression of the MB had begun and lasted until 2011, while Mubarak made efforts to disconnect the movement from its power sources (their civil institutions and associations) and to weaken it by restrictions and extensive arrests.

In 1995, even with many of its leaders and most efficient organizers in prison, the movement had 150 candidates competing in 17 governorates. It was the first time in the movement's history that they had such many candidates and covered such a large geographical area. However, only one MB member managed to become a parliament member.[20] In the elections

[17] Nedoroscik, J. A. (2002). Extremist groups in Egypt. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *14*(2), 47-76.; Yohannes, O. (2001). *Political economy of an authoritarian modern state and religious nationalism in Egypt*. London: The Edwin Meller Press.

[18] Nedoroscik, 2002.

[19] Yohannes, 2001.

[20] Nedoroscik, 2002.

of 2000 the MB's independent candidates gained 17 mandates and, in the elections of 2005, they gained an unprecedented representation in the Egyptian parliament of 88 members (20%).

The MB's actions reflect the central guiding line of the MB's strategy during Mubarak's presidency which was to use legitimate means to gain power, support, and influence. The MB managed to use the new political space that was created during the liberalization and democratization process to gather the Egyptian people's support and sympathy. This strategy allowed the MB to return as a major force in Egyptian society and politics despite their persecution and the restrictions inflicted on their activity.

2.6 2011-2013: A historic victory following by a historic defeat

The protests of February-April 2011 in Egypt were not the result of the planning or the organizing by the MB movement. Furthermore, the movement was careful not to take active participation in the protests until it was clear that it was not an expendable opportunity but an historic turning point in the history of Egypt which might allow the MB to advance their political goals. Shortly after the fall of Mubarak's regime the MB officially registered its political party "The Freedom and Justice Party" (FJP) and took power in June 2011. Its leader, Mohamed Morsi, became Egypt's first freely and democratically elected president.

Gallup poll of June 2011[21] found that 89% of the Egyptian public were willing to participate in what 91% of them believe will be an honest and fair election. Freedom of speech has been a top political aspiration as 92% of Egyptians include freedom of speech as a provision if they were drafting a new constitution for a new country. At the same time, religion remains important to most Egyptians (96%), and 92% say they have confidence in religious institutions. However, most Egyptians express little interest in recreating their country in the image of Iran as less than 1% say the Islamic Republic should be Egypt's political model. Most Egyptians (69%) think religious leaders should provide advice to government authorities, as opposed to having full authority for determining the nation's laws. Most importantly, the poll found that the support rate of the MB political party in June 2011 was only 15% of Egyptians. Clearly, the support for the FJP has increased dramatically in the upcoming months.

The MB after the age of Mubarak was the most organized political power among the Egyptian public. Additionally, the movement's comprehensive socio-economic infrastructure place it in a comfortable starting point compared to other forces that participated in the Tahrir protest. In the first two rounds of the parliamentary elections held in November and December 2011 the MB won approximately 40% of the votes in the first round and approximately 47% of the votes in the second round. At that time, it was considered as a great victory to the movement and as an important strategic milestone.

However, after only one year in power, Morsi was toppled through a military coup backed by popular protests in June 2012. This failure is rooted in a combination of political, economic, and social factors. The MB has failed to make the needed transition from a vocal opposition movement to a ruling force. The MB moved abruptly from being an opposition movement for almost eight decades, to become Egypt's ruler without the ability to adjust its ideology and behavior to this drastic change. In addition, the MB encountered tremendous

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[21] The poll, conducted in April 2011, surveyed 1,000 Egyptians aged 15 and older between late March and early April, and quoted a margin of error of 3 percentage points.
http://www.abudhabigallupcenter.com/147896/Egypt-Tahrir-Transition.aspx#1.

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political, social, and economic challenges that required fundamental changes in the movement's discourse and strategy.[22]

Morsi's government was not inclusive, and it created alienation of large publics among the Egyptian people. Morsi's government failed to address the profound economic crisis that Egypt has suffered in the past decade, including high unemployment, inflation, and a widening wealth gap. In addition, Morsi's government made some controversial moves, such as granting the president powers through a constitutional declaration and an attempt to promote an Islamist-leaning constitution. The MB was designated an illegal organization again at the end of this revolutionary episode. The current regime under President Al-Sisi maintains significant control over the political landscape, with limited space for opposition.

3. Conclusions

The review of the history of the MB movement shows that President Nasser and his successors, Anwar Sadat and Mubarak, have alternatively repressed and demonized the MB in Egypt or tolerated it as an opposition. The repressions of the movement made it change its strategy and turn to the political arena to pursue its goals, rather than continue the use of violence. This strategic shift allowed the movement to transform itself into a political entity and to remerge in Egypt as a political movement instead of disappearing.

Analysis of the strategy of the MB movement since its establishment suggests that the strategic shift into a political activity has proved to be effective, but currently, only for a short period of time. President Morsi must have assumed that the MB in Egypt was closer than ever to achieving its strategic political goals, since for the first time in its history it founded a legitimate political party and was able to participate in elections, after decades of being prohibited to organize politically.

According to the approach of "inclusion-moderation," the MB in Egypt would be a part of a democratic order, as the movement has become a moderate movement in recent decades, and its objective is to advance the idea of creating an Islamic state in Egypt not by a revolution but by a gradual political process and by winning the votes of the Egyptian voters. This is considered as a supportive indicator of the calculated moves and gradual advancement in the strategy of the movement. The fact that the leaders of the Islamic Jihad around the world relate to the MB in Egypt with contempt and abhorrence, for what they believe the MB's temptation of thousands of young Muslims to be inducted to the ballot box instead of to the holy war (Jihad) allegedly supported these claims.[23]

On the other hand, another approach claims that the movement has never abandoned its aspirations to pursue a more radical agenda. Furthermore, there have been no substantial shifts in the attitudes or the agenda of the MB, but only marginal changes that have not touched on the main vision of the MB, namely, to establish an Islamist state. Consequently, according to this approach, it is almost impossible to assume that the MB's Islamist party would accept the values of a democratic and liberal society since those are, in fact, in total contradiction with its own proclaimed values.[24]

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[22] Al-Anani, K. (2019). The Inclusion-Moderation Thesis: Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*.

[23] Leiken, R. S., & Brooke, S. (2007). The moderate Muslim brotherhood. *Foreign Affairs*, *86*, 107-121; Al-Anani, 2019.

[24] Khalil, 2006.

In 1994 the MB issued a publication "Our Testimony" in which the movement declares its commitment to political activity and denounces violence:

"…Thus, as the Muslim Brotherhood, we reiterate our rejection of any form of violence and coercion as well as all forms of coups which destroy the unity of any nation… The Muslim Brotherhood dissociates themselves totally, without any hesitation, from all kinds and forms of violence and we denounce terrorism of any form and from any source…"[25]

However, the MB's claims concerning its commitment to political activity with no support of any form of violence arouses criticism among scholars. This criticism claims that the MB movement conceals its extreme views and if you listen carefully, you will hear the movement's two voices. One voice in Arabic that is aimed at the Muslim and Arab audiences around the world, which highlights anti-Western messages and support terror organizations. The second voice, in English, is aimed at all other audiences, which highlights messages with terminology of human rights.[26] The MB's media speaks with rather an intermittent voice, delivering an incoherent message whose tone is changeable and fluctuating and that cannot be claimed to truly represent the heterogeneity of the group.[27] The debate over the use of violence represented one of the main points of disagreement between two groups within the MB. On the one hand, the historical leadership led by Mahmoud Ezzat rejected any use of violence and insisted on peaceful methods as the only approach to be followed. On the other, the new leadership adopted a more pragmatic approach that permits the use of violence within certain limits to weaken the current regime and drain its forces.[28]

Thus, as for the notion whether the MB is a moderate or extremist movement, there are divergent views, often shaped by the historical, political, and social context in which the MB operates. The group's willingness to engage in electoral politics and its emphasis on gradual, non-violent change are seen as indicators of a moderate stance, as well as the MB's official rhetoric that often emphasizes Islamic principles alongside modern democratic values, such as pluralism and social justice. However, the MB's founding ideology, which sought to establish an Islamic state governed by Sharia law, contains inherently extremist elements. The perceived duality in its approach — publicly espousing democratic values while allegedly harboring more radical, anti-democratic objectives creates ambiguity that may challenge the movement's true intentions.

Al-Anani[29] claims that "the case of the MB shows that in fact, it was repression, not inclusion, that played an important role in shaping the Brotherhood's ideology and behavior, particularly under Mubarak. The Brotherhood improved its stance on political pluralism, individuals' freedoms, and women and Christians' political rights to broaden its support, improve its relationship with other political factions, and enhance its political gains."

According to the theory of pragmatism the meaning of a concept is a matter of the practical effects of acting in accordance with it.[30] Thus, pragmatism is a method of establishing the meaning of concepts in terms of the experiential consequences of applying them,[31] and as Rorty

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[25] "Our Testimony," Issued in 1994. http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=4185.

[26] Nobel-Konig, 2020.

[27] Mellor, N. (2017). *Voice of the Muslim Brotherhood: da'wa, discourse, and political communication*. Routledge.

[28] Fahmi, G. (2018). *The debate over the use of violence within the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt after 2013*. European University Institute.

[29] Al-Anani, 2019.

[30] Bacon, M. (2012). Pragmatism: an introduction. Oxford: Polity Press.

[31] Peirce, C. S. (1997). *Pragmatism as a principle and method of right thinking: The 1903 Harvard lectures on pragmatism*. Suny Press.

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described it more simply, pragmatism is about what are the most effective ways of achieving what we want to achieve.[32] Schwartz & Galily argue that the willingness of the MB to participate in the democratic process is a compromise and a concession to the seizure of power by force. When it is possible and convenient the MB sometimes acts within the framework of the law, and sometimes undermines it. Most Islamic movements in Arab countries are persecuted by the regime, so they must recognize reality by joining the government and usually operate within the framework of the law, otherwise they will not exist.[33]

Reviewing the strategy of the MB in Egypt throughout its history may lead to describe it as pragmatic. However, the unique nature of the MB as a political movement with a religious affiliation – an Islamic political movement, may challenge the pragmatic nature of its strategy. The term *Sabra* (in Arabic "patience" or "endurance") is valued in Islamic teachings and in the political context the meaning is a long-term strategy that will lead to the desired strategic goal, which is in the case of the MB, an Islamic state. The basic understanding was that on its way to concur the West, the movement needs to use as many as possible modern tools that do not contradict the Islam. Thus, the alleged pragmatic strategy of the movement may eventually serve a strategic radical goal rather than lead to moderation. The debate over the movement's moderate versus radical aspirations is likely to continue as the political and social landscape in Egypt and the broader region evolves. In the end, the Egyptian people will decide their future and what will be the role of the MB in this future.

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Revolutionary Constitutions: The History, Economomocracy, and Cycle of Money in the Formation of Greek Independence

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Abstract

This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the three revolutionary constitutions of Greece: Epidaurus (1822), Astros (1823), and Troizina (1827). The study explores the influence of Enlightenment ideas and foreign constitutions on these foundational documents, highlighting their role in shaping the political, social, and legal framework of the newly established Greek state. Key differences in legislative procedures, emphasis on individual versus civil rights, and the evolution from provisional governance to a more structured state are examined. The paper also considers the potential application of economomocracy and the cycle of money as innovative economic tools in the context of 19th-century Greece, illustrating how these concepts could have addressed the economic challenges of the era.

Keywords: revolutionary constitutions, Epidaurus, Astros, Troizina, Greek independence, enlightenment, economomocracy, cycle of money, constitutional history.

1. Introduction

The revolutionary regiments were those of Epidaurus, Astros, and Troizina. The Constitution of Epidaurus in 1822, the Constitution of Astros in 1823, and the Constitution of Troizina in 1827. It is worth mentioning that the Constitutions in question did not take place over a long period. The reasons are that it seems that the state of war prevented their implementation and that the Constitution of Kapodistrias, in 1827, was introduced. The Enlightenment influenced the revolutionary Constitutions since its ideas seem to run through their provisions. There was an orientation that provided for the safeguarding of fundamental rights. In addition, there were provisions for the organization of state power. Since the Enlightenment had a key influence on the revolutionary constitutions, it was to be expected that they would be influenced by foreign constitutions that were based on the Enlightenment idea.

Afterward, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789 and the subsequent French Constitutions, namely those of 1791, 1793, and 1795, seem to have influenced the provisions of the Revolutionary Constitutions. Also, the American Constitution, of 1787, had a substantial influence on the Greek Constitutions, which was to be expected, as the United States Constitution itself was influenced by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. That is, the organization of the executive branch was one of the first issues emphasized in

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the new Constitution (Βλαχόπουλος, 2022). In the following sections, the revolutionary Constitutions are analyzed, and a comparative dimension is given to them.

2. The Constitution of Epidaurus

The Constitution of Epidaurus took place on 20 December 1821, and in this way, the Constitution of 1 January 1822 was adopted by the First National Assembly. The Constitution of Epidaurus was also called the Provisional Constitution of Greece (Χατζής, 2019). The normative scope of this Constitution, although influenced by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, is nevertheless not characterized by features of simple copying and transferring provisions from outside constitutional provisions (Μουρτοπάλλας, 2023). The revolutionary constitution in question set out how national power was to be organized through the Administration, namely the Executive and the Parliamentary bodies. It appears that both houses are equal in passing laws. Both the parliamentary needs ratification of its decisions by the executive and the executive needs ratification of its decisions by the parliamentary in the process of law making. After all, there is one parliament and the executive has two bodies, the executive and the parliament, each of which needs the cooperation of the other. Thus, the representative system of the Constitution of Epidaurus was established. The parliamentary body consisted of elected persons, from various parts of Greece, appointed according to the electoral law. Those who elected the parliamentary body were the elders. The elders were the electors of each district and could elect one deputy per province. The qualifications for eligibility were to be a native or to reside within the province in which the candidate sought election (Σύνταγμα, 2024).

The executive consisted of five persons, who were not members of the parliament, through an assembly, where the officials of the administration and the ministers were elected. (Σβώλος, 1998). The term of office was short, i.e., one year. Independence of functions was achieved through the aforementioned procedure, where members of the parliamentary and members of the executive body came from different electoral procedures. It is worth noting that, nevertheless, the parliamentary and executive bodies needed to work together when passing a law (Σύνταγμα, 1822). It should also be noted that it provided for a judiciary, i.e. the tripartite separation of powers existed.

Social contracts safeguard the values of natural law, namely freedom and property. This seems to be emphasized in the first Greek Constitution of the Revolution. The Constitution of Epidauros explicitly provides for security and property in its provisions. Liberty and property are concepts fundamental to the safeguarding of the natural rights of man. While egalitarianism was prominent in the first revolutionary constitution.

3. The Constitution of Astros

The Constitution of Astros was submitted on 29 March 1823, at the Second National Assembly of Astros. The National Assembly largely retained the Constitution of Epidaurus and made a few amendments to it. Afterward, due to the irreversibility of the original Constitution's provisions, the Constitution of Epidaurus was called the Law of Epidaurus. The changes that were made, however, concerned the executive power, namely the right of veto in the legislative process. As predicted, the parliamentary body and the executive body made decisions by mutual agreement on the laws. What was achieved by the Law of Epidaurus is that it changed the veto from an interruptible to a suspensive veto. Whenever, the suspensive nature of the executive's non-agreement, in any case, led to the ratification of laws, in that it was not a mere postponement to the future for the ratification of a law, but also its ratification. The reason is that if there was a disagreement between the parliament and the executive, then after a second disagreement two months were allowed to elapse. If there is also a disagreement on the third bill, the result is that

the position of the parliamentary body, which is the proposer, prevails. So, a major difference between the Constitution of Epidaurus and the Law of Epidaurus is that the parliamentary body was strengthened during the legislative process. That is, the legislative power of the executive was weakened, and thus the confusion of powers between the functions of the Constitution (Σύνταγμα, 1822).

It should be noted that the number of members of the executive remained at five. That is, the executive is composed of the same number of persons both in the Constitution of Epidaurus and in the Law of Epidaurus. As regards the number of members of the parliamentary body, in both revolutionary constitutions the number of members was determined by the provisions of each law (Σβώλος, 1998).

Subsequently, the natural rights of the social contract, namely property and freedom, were extended beyond the Greeks to foreigners. He also made explicit reference to freedom in combination with slavery, which existed at the time in question (Σύνταγμα, 1823). The explicit reference to isonomy remained. In other words, all the essential characteristics of a social contract were inherent in the provisions. Something which was also found in the Constitution of Epidaurus. The Law of Epidaurus was the connecting link between the other two Constitutions of the revolutionary period since it has elements from both Constitutions (of Epidaurus and Troizina), such as the one Parliament, with its two bodies, the parliamentary and the executive (as well as the judicial) and the changes it brought about in the veto of the executive (later the unicameral government).

4. The Constitution of Troizina

The Constitution of Troizina was adopted in May 1827 by the National Assembly of Troizina, i.e., the Third National Assembly (Σύνταγμα, 1827). This revolutionary Constitution strengthened one of the two bodies, in this case strengthening the legislative power, and reducing the diffusion of powers. In other words, the five members provided for the executive ceased to exist, and their place was taken by a single person, thus paving the way for government, from Kapodistrias (Παυλόπουλος, 2023).

There is an explicit reference for the first time to revolutionary constitutions since there is a reference to popular sovereignty since sovereignty derives from the people and is exercised in favor of the people. While the reference to egalitarianism remained.

The number of members of the Parliament continues to be determined by law in the case of the Troizina Constitution. The difference, however, is in the term of office of the members of parliament, which is no longer a single term, but a three-year term (Σβώλος, 1998).

The legislative procedure differs from that of the Constitution of Epidaurus and remains similar to that of the Law of Epidaurus. Namely, there is the veto procedure by the executive, in this case, the Governor. Otherwise, the suspensive effect of the veto, of the Law of Epidaurus, continues to exist over the interruptive effect of it, which existed in the provisional Constitution (Σβώλος, 1998; Σύνταγμα, 1823). What is changed concerning the Law of Epidaurus is that in the Constitution of Troizina, a clear period is given for the ratification of a law, namely fifteen days. But in case this is not accepted, it is returned within fifteen days for rewriting and resubmission. If after the changes again it is not accepted by the Government, then within another fifteen days it is returned. Ultimately, it is resubmitted to the Government, where it now becomes the law of the land. In the case of the Law of Epidaurus, the only clear time frame is that of the two-month return to the last and third submission of the law in question, from the Parliament to the Executive.

One difference between the revolutionary constitutions is the priority that the Constitution of Epidaurus and the Law of Epidaurus give to civil rights, without this meaning that they do not also focus on individual rights, especially the Law of Epidaurus. On the contrary, the Constitution of Troizina emphasizes individual rights. This stems from the emphasis that the constitutional (or constitutionalist, depending on one's perspective) legislator places on the first provisions of the Constitution.

For example, in the Constitution of Epidauros, the legislator on the general rights of the inhabitants of the territory of Greece focuses on the safeguarding of the political rights of Greeks (Σύνταγμα, 1822). The same is done in the Law of Epidaurus (Σύνταγμα, 1823). In both Constitutions, the reference to this matter is made in paragraph b. of both Constitutions. In contrast to the Constitution of Troizina, where the first reference to rights is made in par. 5 thereof and touches on the rights of the social contract, i.e. natural rights, thus the individual rights of man, as recorded both in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, 1789 (Σύνταγμα, 1827).

In any case, the Administration was of prominent importance in the formation of the Greek state and this is highlighted by the constitutional (or constitutional legislator's, depending on his approach) commitment to the reference to the Administration in the provisions of the revolutionary Constitutions. This shows the need to organize a newly established state after a long occupation of a state for centuries. Section C of the Constitution of Epidaurus is entitled "On the Formation of the Administration" (Σύνταγμα, 1822), as is Section C of the Law of Epidaurus, which bears the same title, without variation. Chapter E of the Constitution of Troizina is entitled "On the Constitution of the Greek State." It appears that there is now a transition from the concept of administration to a constituted and well-established state structure, that of the polity (Μουρτοπάλλας, 2023; Μπάρκουλα, 2008; Σύνταγμα, 1822, 1823, 1827, 2024).

5. Hypothesis if economocracy and the theory of cycle of money had applied
to the Greek case

In the early 19th century, Greece embarked on a path of nation-building amidst the backdrop of the Greek War of Independence. The revolutionary constitutions of Epidaurus (1822), Astros (1823), and Troizina (1827) were foundational in shaping the nascent Greek state's political and legal framework. These constitutions were heavily influenced by Enlightenment principles and the revolutionary ideas circulating in Europe and America at the time. They established fundamental rights, the separation of powers, and a framework for governance that emphasized both collective and individual rights (Revolutionary Constitution).

Applying the principles of economocracy and the cycle of money to the newly established Greek state in 1830 could have significant implications (Challoumis, 2018, 2019, 2024d, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2021b, 2022a, 2023d, 2023b, 2023e, 2023a, 2023c, 2023f). Economocracy, a system where economic decisions are made democratically by the populace, aligns well with the participatory ideals embedded in the revolutionary constitutions (Challoumis, 2021a). By ensuring that economic policies reflect the collective will, economocracy could enhance economic stability and social equity, fostering a more inclusive and prosperous society. The concept of the cycle of money, which emphasizes the continuous and balanced flow of money within the economy, could address economic disparities and stimulate growth. In the context of post-independence Greece, this would mean developing mechanisms to ensure that wealth circulates efficiently throughout the economy, reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development. The provisional constitutions laid a strong foundation for a democratic governance system in Greece. Integrating economocracy into this framework would involve enhancing the role of citizens in economic policymaking, perhaps through referenda or participatory budgeting processes. This approach would ensure that economic decisions are aligned with the needs and

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aspirations of the population, fostering a more resilient and responsive economic system (Revolutionary Constitution).

The use of non-productive money can reduce the public debt without burdening citizens with extra interest. This offers a viable solution for financing public programs and projects, according to the work "Economocracy versus Capitalism" (Challoumis, 2022b). Moreover, the revolutionary emphasis on natural rights such as liberty and property could be expanded to include economic rights, ensuring that all citizens have equitable access to economic resources and opportunities. This integration would not only preserve the democratic ideals of the revolutionary period but also adapt them to meet contemporary economic challenges. The revolutionary constitutions of Greece were pivotal in establishing a democratic and legal framework for the new state. By integrating the principles of economocracy and the cycle of money, modern Greece could build on this legacy to create a more equitable and sustainable economy. This fusion of historical constitutional principles with contemporary economic theories offers a pathway to a more inclusive and prosperous future for Greece.

6. Conclusions

The first two revolutionary Constitutions are called the provisional constitutions of Greece, as they took place in 1822 and 1823, i.e., within a very short period after the revolution. A notable difference between them and the Constitution of Troizina is that it is titled "The Political Constitution of Greece." In other words, the third revolutionary Constitution seems to have crystallized the normative framework of the provisions and the historical events of the time.

Both the Constitution of Troizina and its predecessor, the Law of Epidaurus, make explicit reference to many individual rights, i.e., they seem to acquire a more liberal dimension since they respect the rights of political philosophy, especially natural law. In any case, the revolutionary constitutions seem to be influenced by the historical dimensions of their time, as the revolution was a period of establishment of the Greek state, both in terms of the formation of its boundaries and its social, political, and legal identity.

Acknowledgements

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The Bulgarian Ethnic Model: "Secular" Religion, Denominational Admissibility and Territorial Tolerance

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Abstract

The so-called The Bulgarian ethnic model is a Bulgarian political philosophy that presents itself as a formula that theorizes the ethno-religious balance in the post-communist society. The paradigm was created immediately after the fall of the regime of the communist dictator Todor Zhivkov and became matter of a fierce discussion of often contradictory opinions. The promoter of the mentioned particular matrix was the emerging post-communist and pro-democracy academic Bulgarian community with their professional invention, not the politicians. The latter rather hindered the public dialogue, being dominant supporters of the various tendencies of the remnants of nationalism. It reflects not only a specific stage of the country's political development, but also the economic, social and folk-psychological momentum of the local society. Three main factors determine the specificity of the ethno-religious tolerance of the Bulgarian society. In the first place, it is the presence of de facto content oxymoron "secular religion" in the society at the expense of practically zero indoctrination of the religious practices. It is about the irreversible erosion of the public authority of the Christian and Muslim clergy. In the second place, we can note the wonderful stitching of the most statesmanlike, secular Christian denomination – Eastern Orthodoxy and the most tolerant Islamic orthodox school – Hanafi Sunnism. It is about a kind of interreligious harmony. Thirdly, the successful sustainability of the Bulgarian ethno-confessional balance is due to the so-called positional tolerance, relating it to the geographical distribution between the different religious groups.

Keywords: Bulgarian Ethnic Model (BEM), secular religion, denominational admissibility, territorial tolerance.

The collapse of the totalitarian regime in Bulgaria in 1989 came as a result of both the objective socio-economic collapse and the absence of the "underpinning" provided by the already collapsing USSR. Our country was probably the only member of the former socialist bloc in Eastern Europe to have entered the new post-communist era featuring strong internal political tensions of ethno-confessional nature. The collective crime of the communist rulers against the Bulgarian Islamic community, the so-called "Revival Process," eroded the foundations of the communist regime. There were approximately 360,000 Bulgarian citizens who had been ousted from the country and the effect of this triggered a grave economic and political quake, which in turn laid the groundwork for some utterly dire conditions while searching for an appropriate formula of the democratic state-constituting process.[i]

Firstly, Bulgaria was to recover from its foreign-policy isolation abroad, and, secondly, it was to look for an acceptable constitutional formula for the disturbed ethno-confessional balance. There were a number of factors that helped Bulgaria recover and become an example of how to come to internal harmony between individual religious and ethnic groups, after a period of more than 35 years of ethno-confessional tensions and after having closed the shameful page of this antagonism. The "therapy" began immediately after the state declared the "Revival Process" a crime. The long process went through several stages, but it probably ended with the unprecedented election of former GERB MP Vezhdi Rashidov, an ethnic Turk, as the Speaker of the 48th National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria.[ii]

In the 1990s, Bulgarian politicians, but mostly scientists, brought to the fore the formula of the so-called "Bulgarian Ethnic Model" (BEM). BEM was to outline the way to overcome the cataclysms, give the arguments and theorise the features of harmonisation between the individual groups. The Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS) tried to monopolise the dividends yielded from the already achieved stabilisation of the country. Their party leadership stated: "...Bulgaria became the only country on the Balkans that made a peaceful transition from communism to democracy. The Bulgarian ethnic model (BEM), the architect of which was Dr. Ahmed Dogan, is based on tolerance and togetherness and became the only convertible political product of Bulgaria. BEM was the necessary and mandatory condition for Bulgaria's membership in NATO and the EU. We can also see it today in the attitude of Bulgaria as a part of the EU towards the other candidates for EU membership."[iii]

Quite rightly, both politicians and scientists and public figures rejected such claims. The debate about the genesis of BEM began in the 1990s and saw its active continuation throughout the first decade of the 21st century. Experts with often mutually exclusive opinions such as Antonina Zhelyazkova, Mihail Ivanov, Evgenia Ivanova, Tsvetana Georgieva, Petar-Emil Mitev, Nikolay Tilkidzhiev, Maksim Mizov, Sonia Siromakhova and many others actively participated in it. In an interview of hers, the expert Sonya Siromakhova summarised very well the foundation of the controversial ethno-religious matrix. She said: "Always and everywhere, the ethno-religious model is above all the result of the efforts, the mentality, the character of the main, state-forming ethnic group. In Bulgaria, this is the Bulgarian ethnic group. If this ethnic group is tolerant, then we tolerate – and the Bulgarian ethno-religious model is created. If it is intolerant, if it is chauvinistic, it gives birth to odious persons. Of course, along with the exceptional role of the Bulgarian ethnic group as an integrator, consolidator, and gatherer of our country, we cannot but acknowledge it to one degree or another (albeit a much smaller degree) to the rest of the ethnic groups in our country: to the Bulgarian Turks, the Bulgarian Armenians, the Bulgarian Jews, the Bulgarian Roma, etc. But by no means should we think that the Bulgarian ethno-religious model is the main and only merit of any minority ethnic group, let alone any party like the DPS. An even bigger mistake, verging on a crime, is to consider that the Bulgarian ethno-religious model is the merit of Ahmed Dogan <...> it is a function, a consequence and a result of this model. Only thanks to this model of ours, Ahmed Dogan was able to create his party."[iv]

The first factor influencing the transformation of Bulgaria into a model of a successful concert of individual faiths is the specificity of the strength of the religious feeling of the Bulgarian people. According to a Gallup International Balkan survey in 2022, only 53% of respondents declared themselves religious. This is the lowest level among all other Balkan nations. At the beginning of 2024, the same sociological agency came to the conclusion that only 43% have confidence in the Church, 30.6% – in the new Patriarch Daniil, and the downward trend is completed by the share of people who frequently attend services – 19.7 %.[v] All this proves that religion in Bulgaria does not play the same role in society as it does in the neighbouring Balkan societies. Secularism has taken deep roots, which directly affects the genesis of the State. At the same time, neither the religious institutions nor the clergy would have the authority that can set any (positive or negative) significant political trend. Alongside with this, the absence of any

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imperial tradition of the state-forming process (unlike the former Yugoslavia) stimulated the easy overcoming of the consequences of the "Revival Process" and boosted the achievement of the sought-after ethno-religious balance. The creation of a specific "secular" religious matrix in our country would probably be also due to the specificity of Bulgarian communism and, in particular, to the aspirations of the former regime to discredit the local clergy (be it Christian or Muslim), with the presumption of the complete eradication or at least the marginalisation of the religious ingredients of social mores and customs. To some extent, this would explain the reason why Bulgarian citizens who were manipulated into joining Islamist terrorist organisations such as al-Qaeda and ISIS could be counted on one hand.

The second factor for the construction of the harmonious chorus of the individual ethno-confessional communities would be a peculiar kind of permissibility between the individual dominant denominations in the two large families, the Christian and the Islamic. In 2021, followers of Eastern Orthodoxy and the Sunni (Hanafi) variant would make about 75% of the country's population. The remaining minority groups (Catholics, Protestants, Armenians, Jews, Shiites and others) came to about 0.1%, as the trend of the "undecided" perceived as atheists is constantly increasing.[vi] The history and creation of states whose population mainly professes precisely these two major denominational trends proves that the hybrid statist construction in question has the most stable parameters, due to similar state-forming philosophies. The tolerance between the two denominations is defined by their genesis. For example, Eastern Orthodoxy is perceived by Muslims as the "authentic" Christianity, from which Catholicism separated in the 11th century. Not coincidentally, in the same 11th century, Saladin, who spearheaded the conquest of the Crusaders, ordered the destruction of all Catholic cathedrals in Jerusalem, and that the Eastern Orthodox (Armenian) churches be left behind. This peaceful coexistence is facilitated by the fact that all four autocephalous Orthodox churches (the Ecumenical, Jerusalem, Alexandrian and Antiochian) are located in territories populated mainly by Sunni Muslims. On the other hand, the Sunni Hanafi school of jurisprudence is perceived as the most tolerant, *ar rai*, relaying on the opinion in the law-enforcement process, which, to some extent, brings it closer (if compared to the other three Sunni and Shia schools) to the Roman legal system, based on the principles of human *ratio*, i.e., reason. There is truth in the assumption that the Hanafi school is practically a kind of syncretic legal thought that abrogated the Eastern (Arabic and Persian traditions in jurisprudence) and infiltrated it with many European legal components.[vii] A good proof in this regard was the attempt at reforms in the 19th century's Ottoman State, which entirely based its legislation on the school in question and subsequently named it as the dominant philosophy to the Islamic minorities across the Balkan Peninsula, including those in Bulgaria. Overall, if we were to summarise the profile of dogmatic reciprocity, Muslims perceive Eastern Orthodoxy as the "original" Christianity, and conversely, Christian legal experts are of the opinion that Hanafiism is the "most rational" Islamic jurisprudential system.

The third factor contributing to a well-functioning BEM is of a purely functional nature. In Bulgaria, tolerance is positional. The two large communities do live side by side, however in separate regions, districts and municipalities. This is how the so-called "mixed areas", where the Islamic and Christian communities switch places, are produced. Examples of this would be such areas as North-Eastern and South-Eastern Bulgaria, with Muslims being the dominant religion, and Turks being the leading ethnic group. And those are the areas where the DPS, which claims to protect the rights and freedoms of the Islamic minority, is in full or partial control of the local governments. The joint successful regional positional coexistence in Bulgaria has even become an attractive model for the activists of separate pro-Kurdish formations in neighbouring Turkey. Thus, in 2002, the leadership of the now defunct Rights and Freedoms Party, calling for a Turkish Federal State, came out with a message stating they would like their formation to govern regions with a predominantly Kurdish population, as the DPS governs its regions in Bulgaria.

BEM is a successful formula of fulfilled social harmony based on meaningful ethno-confessional characteristics and sustainable parameters of the Bulgarian post-communist political culture. The Bulgarian population's folk psychology managed to overcome the internal political adventures of the former totalitarian state, creating a matrix based on understanding, mutual penetration and, above all, tolerance with the clear awareness that Bulgaria is a common home for representatives of all ethnicities and religions inhabiting the lands of the country.

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Astronomical Observatories in Thrace: Archaeoastronomical Data as Indication of Ancient Sun-Related Spiritual Practices (3rd-1st millennia BC)

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Abstract

In the past rock-cut monuments were used for horizon or meridional observations of solstices and equinoxes. This study focuses on three of the better studied through the means of archaeoastronomy monuments in Thrace – Tangardak kaya, Harman kaya and Zaychi vrah (Cabyle). The additional carvings of Tangadak kaya womb-cave suggest that it was used not simply for Sun-observation, but also for ancient Sun-related spiritual practices during the winter solstice. Similar practices were used two millennia later in the Golyama Arsenalka Thracian Tomb's domed chamber, which shows that in Thrace there was a millennial continuity of ancient spiritual beliefs.

Keywords: Thrace, rock-cut sanctuaries, Thracians, Sun-related practices, archaeoasronomy.

1. Old Europe and the emergence of cult places

Several conditions were required for the emergence of long-term settlements in prehistoric times: mild climate, fresh water, fertile soil and materials for tool production. These conditions mostly correspond to the strip of the globe between 23° and 43° North latitude. The fertile valleys of Tigris and Euphrates, the Yellow River and the Yangtze, the Indus, the Nile, the Mediterranean coast and the mountainous foothills of present-day Syria and Iran are located in this vast and favorable territory.[1] During the Neolithic – late 7th millennium BC – farmers from Southeastern Anatolia started migrating to the Balkan Peninsula and would later establish the first cultures of Old Europe.[2]

The Chalcolithic Balkan cultures experienced incredible prosperity during the second half of the 5th millennium BC, when the earliest gold metallurgy center in the world appeared – the Varna culture.[3] At the end of the 5th millennium BC, the culmination of the climatic maximum caused a severe global ecological crisis to which the Chalcolithic population fell victim. This brought technological development to a halt not only in Bulgaria but over the whole region. But it

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[1] Stoev et al., 2023: 2-3.

[2] The term "Old Europe" was coined by Marija Gimbutas (1973) and indicated Southeast European lands during the Neolithic and Copper Age (c. 6000-3500 BC). See also Anthony, 2009.

[3] See Leusch, 2015.

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was mainly in the Chalcolithic that natural caves or holes cut in the rock, oriented in the plane of the meridian, appear to have been used for observations of solar culminations.[4]

The research interest of Bulgarian Thracologists in the role of the rock in ancient Thrace was marked by Ivan Velkov (1952), which he called "a cult of the Thracians". Since 1972, rock-cut sanctuaries and megaliths in the Bulgarian part of ancient Thrace have been actively studied by interdisciplinary teams, organized mainly by the Institute of Thracology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (now the Institute of Balkan Studies with a Centre for Thracology). Scientists have extensively studied dolmens and dolmen-like constructions in the Strandzha, Sakar, Rhodope and Eastern Balkan Mountains, as well as some of the most impressive rock-cut cultic complexes: Harman kaya, Tatul, Perperek, Belintash, etc.[5] But these complexes, like many others around the world, are not limited to a particular ethnicity and religious affiliation, but are marked by much deeper understandings related to faith and certain cosmogonic and natural principles.

The term "cult place" covers all categories of places of worship.[6] Cult places are believed to be of two types: outside the settlement (extra-urban) and within it. Intra-urban locations could be a priest's house, a palace, or a separate quarter. For extra-urban places, natural features such as cliffs, caves, and springs are assumed to be basic distinguishing features of the local cult. Sacred natural caves and rock-cut caves in the form of a womb (further called "womb-caves") are often thought to instill the notion of Mother Earth's all-creating function. But this view usually eliminates the other functions of the sacred sites – being places of initiation, we might assume they were used to make contact with the divine intelligence.[7]

2. Astronomical observatories in Thrace

When in c. 4500-4000 BC ancient people in Thrace started choosing sites for rock-cut astronomical observatories, they were interested in the number of clear days and nights within the tropical year, which determined the possibility of observing the heavenly bodies.[8] In the period between 5000-3800 BC average annual temperatures in Thrace were 2-3° C higher than today. Such climate ensured very good astroclimatic conditions for observations of the Sun near the horizon and allowed increased accuracy in determining the time of occurrence of its extreme positions on the horizon.[9]

Alexey Stoev et al. identified two groups of rock-cut monuments used for astronomical observations.[10] For the first group (Belintash, Zaychi vrah (Cabyle), Tatul, Harman Kaya, Buzovgrad, Tsarevi Porti, Markov Kamak, Lilyach, Kovil, Bailovo cave and Magura cave) ancient observers used the method of "horizon" astronomy because of the climatic optimum (stable average annual temperature and low humidity), with good visibility of the Sun, the Moon and

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[4] Stoev & Maglova, 2014: 1378.

[5] Fol, 2007: 140. The greatest contribution to the international popularization of sacred rock sites has been made by Valeria Fol: Fol, 2000; 2000a; 2003; 2003a; 2004; 2004a; 2004b; 2005; 2006; 2006b, 2006c and especially 2007.

[6] For the criteria defining certain location as a cult place see Renfrew, 1981; 1985: 18-21.

[7] Fol, 2007: 10, 18.

[8] Images of astronomical objects can be found on places from much earlier period. Solar, lunar and stellar images and solar calendars have been found in the cave complexes near the villages Baylovo and Lipnitsa (Sofia), Tsarevets (Mezdra); in the Topchika cave (Asenovgrad), and in the Magura cave (Belogradchik), dated 8000–6000 BC (Stoev et al. 2023: 5). For rock art of heavenly bodies see Coimbra 2012.

[9] Stoev et al., 2023: 2, 15.

[10] Stoev et al., 2023: 15.

bright stars on the horizon line at sunrise and sunset. In the second group (Zaychi vrah (Cabyle), Tangardak kaya cave, Lilyach and Parmakla kaya cave), observers used the method of meridional culminations of the same celestial bodies, as it was difficult to observe sunrises and sunsets on the horizon due to high humidity, precipitation and the predominance of cloudy days. From Fig. 1, it is evident that earliest prehistoric observatories (dated about 3000 BC) were designed for the observation of meridional culminations.[11]

This study will focus on three of the better studied through the means of archaeoastronomy monuments – Tangardak kaya, Harman kaya and Zaychi vrah (Cabyle).

No	Rock-Cut Monument Type of Observations	Orientation of the Facility	Observed Phenomenon	Archaeoastronomical Dating
1.	Tangarduk kaya cave meridional culminations	Winter solstice	Solar culminations	3000 BCE
2.	Harman kaya horizon observations	Summer and winter solstices and equinoxes	Sunrise, sunset	2500 BCE
3.	Zaychi vruh (Cabyle) horizon observations meridional culminations	Summer solstice and equinoxes	Sunrise, sunset, stellar and solar culminations	2200 BCE

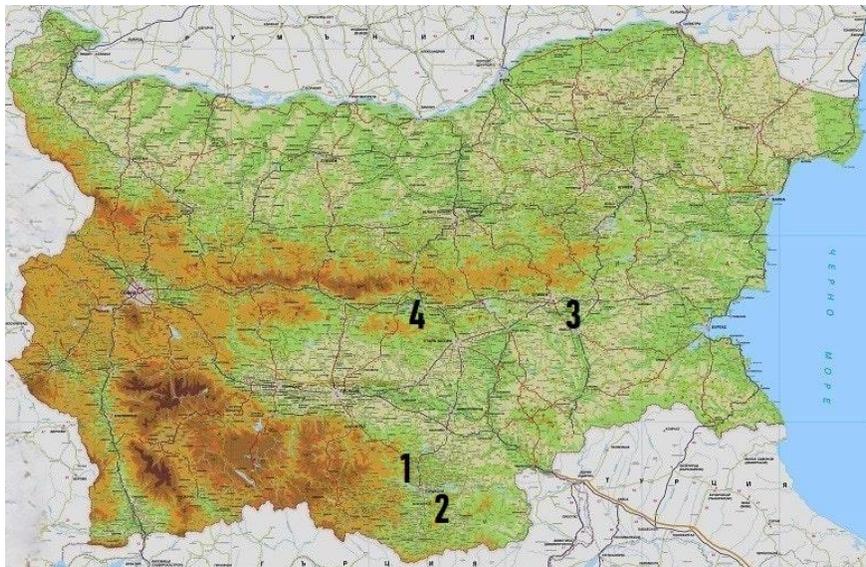Figure 1. Ancient astronomical observatories in Thrace (Stoev et al., 2023)

Figure 2. Locations: 1 – Tandargak kaya (The Womb), 2 – Harman kaya, 3 Zaychi vrah (Cabyle/Kabile), 4 – Thracian Tombs located in the Valley of the Thracian Kings.

3. Tangardak kaya (The Womb)

Tangardak kaya is a womb-cave, also known as The Womb or The Womb-Cave, and is the fist womb-cave found in Bulgaria in 2001. Since than similar caves have been found in twenty-five locations, some of which have more than one womb-cave. These natural caves, formed after natural processes of karst formation, are called "wombs" because of their shape. They are found all over the world where there are four climatic seasons. They form when snow melts and moisture

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[11] Cf. the full list with 13 observatories in Stoev et al., 2023: Table 2.

seeps into a crack. The water deepens the crack and gives it a droplet shape. A cross-section in the shape of a "spade" sign is formed, resembling a female genital organ.

Figure 3. Tangardak kaya womb-cave near the village of Nenkovo (Kardzhali)

Figure 4. Entrance of The Womb. Source: Kostadin Dimov

At some time the womb-caves in Thrace came to be used for Sun-related practices. They were shaped by human hand so that at some point the Sun could penetrate better into the interior of the cave. For south-oriented caves, such as The Womb, this is the winter solstice – when the Sun is at its lowest and penetrates the deepest. Most obvious is the additional treatment of Tangardak kaya, carved by ancient craftsmen a few meters inwards. Having in mind that the Sun is at its lowest only a few days a year for 10-15 minutes and is observable only if there are no clouds, it must have taken a long time not only to calculate the exact extent of the sun rays, but also to carve the cave with the imperfect tools of the age.

Figure 5. The Entrance is facing to the south.

Figure 6. The cave's bottom was shaped to fulfil a specific role (Stoeva et al., 2016)

Tangardak kaya is 22m long, the longest womb-cave in Thrace, with an average width of 1.5 m. It has a north-south orientation and an entrance to the south. In the central part of the cave, the ceiling is domed, resulting in an impressive acoustic effect: amplification of low sound frequencies and continuous reverberation (a loud noise repeated as an echo).[12] In the period between 3000-2000 BC the projection of the entrance aperture during the winter solstice reached 0.4 m from the base of what some call an altar and others – place for sacred initiation practices.
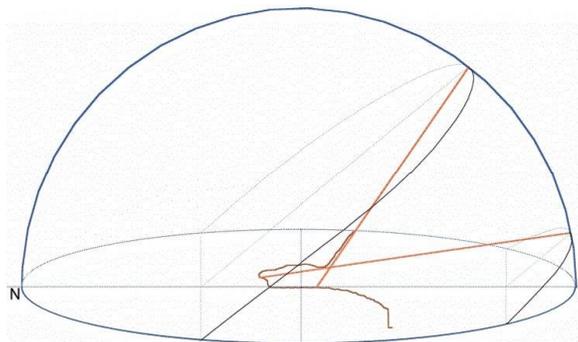

Figure 7. Vertical plan of the Tangarduk Kaya cave in the meridional plane. The light projection of the entrance could be used for defining the summer and winter solstices or for determining the longest and the shortest day of the year (Stoeva et al., 2016)

4. Harman kaya

The impressive rock-cut complex Harman kaya was studied in 1941.[13] The sanctuary developed on a low plateau around a small 7m long natural cave. In front of it the largest concentration of pottery is found, the earliest of which is dated to the Late Chalcolithic. At the foot of the plateau there is a 20 m long womb-cave (and the tallest one in Bulgaria) with traces of additional processing by a human hand. On the basis of the pottery found, Mikov concludes that

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[12] Stoev et al., 2001: 230-231. Fol, 2007: 92, 214.

[13] Mikov, 1941.

the site was in constant use from the late Chalcolithic to the 1st century AD.[14] The northeastern site of the rock complex is artificially leveled and was used as an observation deck. The eastern peripheral part offers convenient reliefs which, after a little further processing, were used as tool for Sun observation. Archaeoastronomical data dates the observatory to about 2500 BC.

Figure 8. Harman kaya womb-cave. Figure 9. The observation deck

Figure 10. The system for sunrise observation: 1 – summer solstice,
2 – spring and autumn equinox, 3 – winter solstice (Stoev et al., 2023)

5. Zaychi vrah (Cabyle/Kabile)

Cabyle was a Thracian royal city founded in the 4th century BC. The pottery discovered from the 10th-6th centuries BC proves that the settlement already existed in the early Iron Age, but the oldest cultural layer, although scarce, is from the Bronze Age.[15] Cabyle was situated on a plateau and had a rocky acropolis that also served as a sanctuary and observatory.

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[14] See also Stoev et al., 2003; Fol, 2007: 206.

[15] During the 5th-4th centuries BC Kabile and the Odryssians maintained active trade links with almost all urban centers in the Aegean and Black Sea coast (Vasilev, 1993).

Figure 11. Cabyle and the rock-cut sanctuary Zaychi vrah on the top of the mountain hill

The foundations of a public building, and two rectangular rooms, most likely of cultic nature, have been discovered on the sanctuary-observatory and also, according to some scholars, a rock relief of Cybele.[16] This makes Velizar Velkov posit that the name of the settlement derives from Cybele.[17] Artificially carved in the rock trenches, oriented East–West and North–South, were used for Sun observation during equinoxes. An additionally leveled rock, located in the northeast, allowed determination of the summer solstice. Archaeoastronomical data dates the observatory to about 2200 BC.
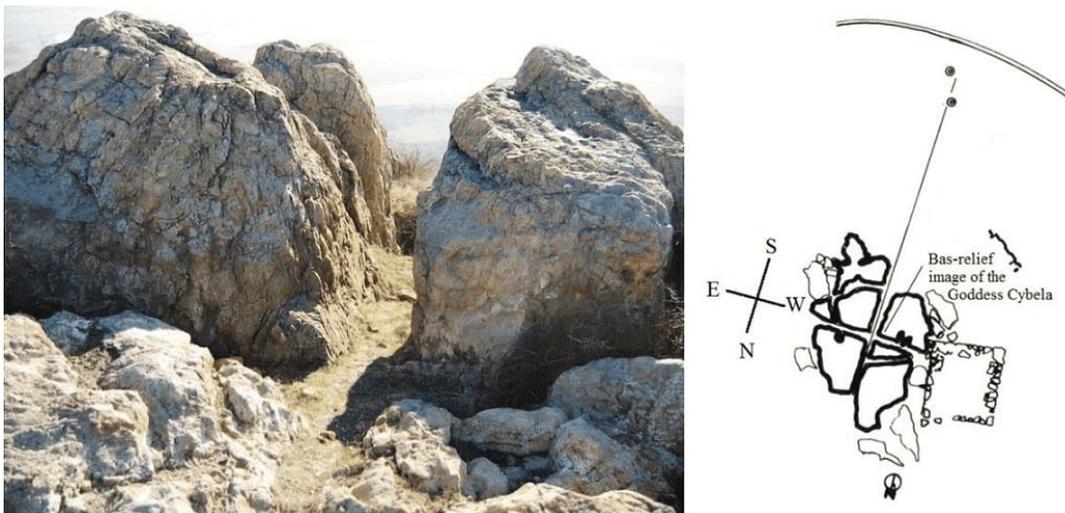

Figure 12. Rock trenches used for Sun observation during equinoxes

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[16] Velkov, 1982; 1986: 7; Naydenova, 1982.

[17] Velkov, 1982a: 14. See also Fol, 2007: 149.

6. Temples and tombs in the Valley of the Thracian kings

The research so far has shown that ancient rock-cut sites were used for Sun observation. But the additionally carved bottom of Tangardak kaya womb-cave is an argument in favor of the use of some, if not all, of the monuments as places for spiritual practices. This assumption is strongly in alignment with the archaeoastronomical data of Thracian tombs after the middle of the 1st millennium BC. Before finally turning into tombs, they were clearly used as temples – e.g., the domed chamber's doors of Golyamata Kosmatka Tomb (c. 450 BC) can be closed only from the inside, indicating that it was used for ritual purposes.
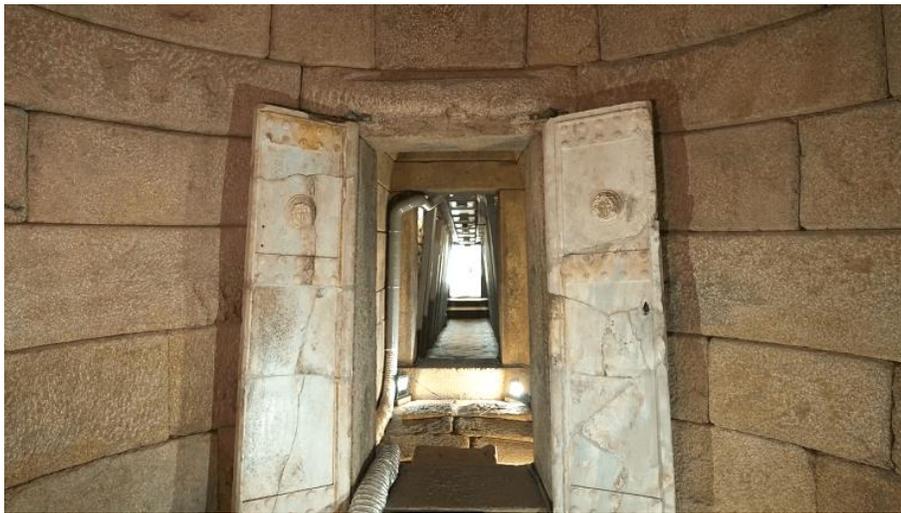

Figure 13. Golyamata Kosmatka Thracian Tomb: the doors
of the domed chamber can be closed only from the inside

Another example is the Golyama Arsenalka Thracian Tomb (end of 5th century BC): at the winter solstice sunlight reached the exact center of the putative solar symbol on the floor of the domed chamber.

Figure 14. Thracian Tomb Golyama Arsenalka's antechamber and domed chamber

Figure 14.1. Position of the sun at winter solstice

Figure 15. A putative solar symbol on the floor
of the domed chamber (Maglova & Stoev, 2014: 1392)

Investigations of the magnitude of the vertical angle at which the entrances of all major Thracian tombs (temples) in the Valley of the Thracian kings has a maximal projection, and is

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visible for an observer situated in the central ritual chamber, show this angle to be about 18.5°
(Figure 16). Beams of sunlight, at the culmination of the Sun, reach a specific place in the main
ritual chamber of the temple at the summer and winter solstices.[18]

№	Name of tumulus	Height of the entrance, m	Angle, degrees
1.	Ostrusha	1.55	18.4
2.	Golyama Arsenalka	1.74	18.5
3.	Helvetia	3.17	18.6
4.	Grifoni	2.17	18.3
5.	Shushmanets	2.96	18.5
6.	Golyama Kosmatka	2.50	18.4

Figure 16. Height of the temple entrance and magnitude of the angle at which the entrance of the
temple has a maximal projection and is visible for on observer situated at the central ritual
chamber (Maglova & Stoev, 2014: 1394)

This means that Sun-related practices were part of the spiritual belief system of the
Thracian tombs builders and were an intentionally sought after effect. The sacred solar force
related practices most probably lead to enlightenment and divine inspiration. Although
archaeoastronomy focuses on certain specific positions of the Sun as solstices and equinoxes, the
solar circles on several rock sanctuaries in Thrace – Paleokastro, Mochukovi Kamani (Elhovo),
Kamaka (M. Tarnovo) – some of them existing from at least the middle of the 3rd millennium BC,
show that Sun-related practices are attested also as an everyday tradition related to the sunrise.[19]
These practices were purely based on faith as a private and personal belief system – not a belief in
gods, but a belief in the divine that has dominion over all. The submission to, the acceptance and
awareness of a higher authority from which all originates and all will return to.

Just as many later philosophical societies, such as the Pythagoreans, Essenes,
Bogomils in Bulgaria and their ideological successors in France – the Cathars, the solar force from
the sunrise was used as a tool to reach a higher consciousness and connection with the one creator.
Some of these teachings believed that on certain days of the year, like the equinoxes and solstices,
this solar force was of its highest magnitude. And that might give us a different understanding of
the beliefs of the ancient people not just in Thrace, but all around the world.[20] The question of how
would they know this and who gave them this cosmic knowledge remains of utmost interest.

7. Conclusion

Archaeoastronomy studies the archaeological monuments of antiquity as living
testimony to certain knowledge of ancient peoples about the sky. But some sacred sites also reveal
part of the spiritual beliefs of the ancients. Tangardak kaya womb-cave and some of the Thracian
Tombs show that the solar cult in Thrace was not an agricultural cult, as 19th-century
anthropologists claimed, but was used most probably as a tool with the ultimate goal of
enlightenment and divine inspiration.

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[18] Maglova & Stoev, 2014: 1394.

[19] See Bondzhev, 2024.

[20] In recent years in Bulgaria more and more people start to follow the traditions of the Thracians. These
people, whom Western anthropology calls "neo-pagans" (cf. Magliocco, 2010: 4; see also Dimitrova, 2007),
believe that Thracians were bearers of ancient spirituality, sacralise nature and seek to restore their magical
connection with it. This also includes sunrise related practices. See also Troeva, 2018.

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