Enchanted Mountains

Sacred High Altitudes as Nodes of Transcultural Encounters

Mountains are, across the world and throughout different periods and cultures, outstanding sites of spiritual veneration, cultural significance and religious practice. They function as transcultural nodes where diverse religious traditions, trade routes, geopolitical claims to power, political interests and ecological discourses converge. Their distinctive natural character as places that are difficult to access yet densely charged with symbolism makes them exceptional arenas of human and more-than-human encounters. The global phenomenon of sacred mountains calls for new epistemic approaches in order to adequately grasp their significance within processes of global exchange. This requires a critical reflection on prevailing concepts and the equal inclusion of local perspectives. The workshop takes up this challenge and aims to develop comparative and interdisciplinary approaches that render visible this complex network of meanings, practices and transformations.

At the centre of the workshop lies the comparative exploration of the concept of the “enchanted mountain” across disciplinary boundaries. Which material, spatial and symbolic features contribute to the constitution of mountains and mountain landscapes as privileged sites of religious communication? How can the concepts of “sacred site” and “enchanted mountain” be examined across different highland regions in an interdisciplinary manner without losing sight of local and plural religious imaginaries? How do high-altitude sanctuaries function as interfaces of transcultural encounter and interaction? How are mountains constructed as sacred and cultural markers in global as well as local discourses, and how do these constructions change in response to shifts in political power, colonisation, environmental policy, mass movements, tourism and ecological crises? In this context, processes of reappropriation, protection measures and strategies of reinterpretation are also addressed.

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Venue:

Fürstenzimmer
Schloss Hohentübingen
Burgsteige 11
72070 Tübingen

Registration:

Registration for the online lectures (hybrid: Timothy Clack, Maria Cristina Biella) is possible until Friday, 04.12. at the address

enchantedmountains2026@gmail.com

EBERHARD KARLS
UNIVERSITÄT
TÜBINGEN



International Workshop

Enchanted Mountains

Sacred High Altitudes as Nodes of Transcultural Encounters

07.–08. December 2026

Organisation:

Eric Schwabach (Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Tübingen)
Raffaella Da Vela (Institute of Ancient History, Chair of Etruscology, University of Vienna)

Bundesministerium für Forschung, Technologie und Raumfahrt

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07.12.2026

09:30–09:45 Welcome

09:45–10:15 Introduction

Raffaella Da Vela *(University of Vienna)*
Eric Schwabach *(University of Tübingen)*

10:15–11:15 Participatory video & participatory session

Maja Tillmann *(Anthropology, Tübingen)*
Ritual visit to the papacha Huaytapallana

11:15–11:30 Coffee break

11:30–13:30 Panel I
Sacred Mountains and Imagination

Chair: Dr. Chris Tsui Shuen LAU (Japanese Studies, Tübingen)
11:30–12:10 *Eric Schwabach* (*Anthropology, Heidelberg / Tübingen*)
The Mountain in "Hindu" Imagination: Cosmology, Landscape, and Architectural Translation

12:10–12:50 *Pankaj Semwal* (Anthropology, Doon University, Dehradun, India)
The Char Dham Yatra and Badrinath: A Sacred High-Altitude Node of Trans-Himalayan Encounter

12:50–13:30 *Paulina Kaczmarczyk* (History, Innsbruck)
The High Altitudes of Northwestern Syria as Lived and Imagined Sacred Spaces

13:30–14:30 Lunch break

14:30–16:30 Panel II
Sacred Mountains at the frontiers

Chair: Dr. Chris Tsui Shuen LAU (Japanese Studies, Tübingen)
14:30–15:10 *Wulf Frauen* (*Anthropology, Tübingen*)
Enchanted Mountains in the (not only) Islamic Republic – Different Influences on Iran's Spiritual Landscape

15:10–15:50 Maria Six-Hohenbalken (*Anthropology, Vienna*)
"Enchanted" Kurdish Mountain Regions. Places of Encounter and Conflict, Spaces for Religious Performances and Reference Points for Memory Constructions

15:50–16:30 *Andreas Schorr* (*History, Ulm*)
3,000 years of worship on Dülük Baba Tepesi on the frontier between Anatolia and Syria

16:30–17:00 Coffee break

17:00–18:00 Evening Lecture
(public and hybrid)
Timothy Clack
(Anthropology/Archaeology, Oxford)
Sacred Experience on Kilimanjaro: Meanings, Memories, Materials, Myths

08.12.2026

09:30–11:00 Morning Lecture
(public and hybrid)
Maria Cristina Biella
(Etruscology and Italic Archaeology, Rome)
Between Nature and Monumentality: High-Altitude Sanctuaries and Cult Places in Pre-Roman Central Italy

11:00–11:20 Coffee break

11:20–12:40 Panel III
Enchanted Nature

Chair: Dr. Ria Litzenberg
11:20–12:00 *Annika Rebentisch* *(Archaeology, Tübingen)* & ***Harald Floss*** *(Archaeology, Tübingen)*
The Natural, the Human, the Sacred: On the Role of Mountains in European Upper Palaeolithic Art

12:00–12:40 Raffaella Da Vela (*Etruscology, Vienna*)
If the God was the Water: Enchanted Mountains in Iron Age Italy and the Cross-cultural Function of Sacred Resources (8.–4. Cent. BCE)

12:40–13:40 Lunch break

13:40–15:00 Panel IV
Connecting Mountains

Chair: Prof. Dr. Martin Bartelheim
13:40–14:20 Sophia Nomicos (*Ancient History, Münster*)
Mount Taygetos as a "sacred" mountain

14:20–15:00 Elli Papazoi (*Archaeology and Religion Sciences, Graz/Wien*)
From Isolation to Interaction: Rethinking Arcadian Mountain Sanctuaries from a Transcultural Perspective

15:00-15:40 Thomas G. Schattner (Archaeology, Gießen/Madrid)
Peak Sanctuaries in the West of the Iberian Peninsula: A Comparative Approach

15:40–16:00 Coffee break

16:00–17:30 Closing Keynote Lecture
Jon Mathieu
(History, Lucerne)
Comparing Sacred Mountains – an Interdisciplinary Challenge

17:30–18:30 Final Discussion Round Table