

Lectures by the British Archeologist Guy Middleton

The Czech Institute of Egyptology is happy to invite you to three lectures by Guy Middleton, archaeologist from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. The lectures are going to take place in the Green Room, Celetná 20, Prague 1 on 24 – 26 April 2017.

Approaching collapse – narratives and genres | 24th April 2017, 17:30–19:30

In this lecture, we explore the ‘public face’ of collapse in the modern world as it appears in multiple genres from archaeology to film and literature, and from environmental writing to futurology. The argument is that the way we see collapse and the narratives we weave about it, often apocalyptic and catastrophic, are deeply influenced by our cultural inheritance and our contemporary concerns. As part of this collapse discourse, archaeological ‘facts’ have been taken and embedded in wider culture and society and are used by other writers, especially environmental writers, to teach lessons to or exhort the public to change their ways, yet these writers are often uncritical of the archaeological evidence and interpretations, narrow in their view of ‘facts’, and rely on out-of-date work. Archaeologists are not immune to these influences and processes, but have a responsibility to develop and share their own, often more nuanced work and ideas, which reveal more complex stories of collapse in which multiple explanations and narratives are possible.

Understanding collapse in archaeology – theories and explanations | 25th April 2017, 17:30–19:30

In this second lecture, the aim is to take a critical look at how archaeologists and others have defined collapse, described it, and have sought to explain it. Taking a long perspective across the twentieth century up to the present day, we shall encounter the ideas of many scholars, from Spengler and Toynbee to Tainter and Yoffee and Cowgill's books of 1988 – the 'annus mirabilis' for collapse studies – and from the rise of the environmental narratives, to Jared Diamond's bestselling *Collapse* and the reactions to it, and finally into 2017, in which at least five new books on collapse, all quite different in aims and scope, are being published. 'Collapsology' is emphasized as an increasingly developed sub-field of archaeology and history, with a vast literature, and as valid a focus as archaeological work on colonialism, gender, imperialism, state formation, or other areas.

Collapse in the Late Bronze Age Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean | 26th April 2017, 17:30–19:30)

In this final lecture, we look at a specific instance of collapse known from the archaeological record – that of the palatial Late Bronze Age of Greece and the Aegean. The competing theories will be introduced and recent responses examined, including the proposal that climate change caused collapse. One focus will be on how the period running up to the collapse has been characterized – as a period of crisis; another will be on the role of the Sea Peoples, known from Egyptian texts, in the events of the decades around 1200 BC and their place in the history of Greece and the wider Eastern Mediterranean region. We shall also consider recent proposals about the political geography of Late Bronze Age Greece and how these different views affect our conception of the c. 1200 collapse.