



# Eight thousand-year-old endangered rock-painted drawings in the Sacred Latmos (Beşparmak) mountains hosting Herakleia Ancient City, Turkey and mystical story of Selene and Endymion

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Dear Editor:

Physical, social and cognitive development of children is affected by the environment around them by observation of everyday life, starting with their family at home. Since ancient times, thus, it is no surprise that their socialization is most influenced by their parents, suggesting the role of their families in development of their values. Therefore, an evaluation of human life in ancient societies is crucial for pediatric neurologists, neurosurgeons and psychiatrists, who cure and care children, as did in the following narrative example upon the beauty of the young age that Selene, the goddess of the Moon, asks the father to preserve.

## The Latmos mountains with endangered rock rock-painted drawings

The Latmos Mountains (today known as “Beşparmak Dağları”) located in the Muğla and Aydın provinces in western Turkey, a region of divine love in mythology, is on the east coast of

today’s Bafa Lake in the ancient Caria region (Fig. 1a) (<https://www.latmos-felsbilder.de>). In his famous work Geographica (“Geography”), Strabo, Greek geographer and historian, who lived in Asia Minor during the Roman Empire, wrote the following for this region: “... various administrators had these times at various times ... Lydians, Ionians and then Persians and Macedonians and finally Romans ...” (Fig. 1c) (<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ed/Strabo.jpg>). Today it is possible to observe the traces of all these civilizations in the Latmos Mountains, including the ancient port city of “Herakleia-Latmos” (now Kapıkırı village) located on the lake shore in the west of Turkey, the most fascinating region both in terms of natural beauties and archaeology (Fig. 1b).

Geologically the Latmos Mountains consist of massive metamorphic rock formations that have undergone metamorphic transformations, including schist, granite and gneiss. As a result of their weathered appearance over time, some strange rock formations which are very similar to animals, domestic or wild, as well as human beings are observed in the Latmos, causing the appearance of “Geo-Park” (Fig. 2a–d) (<https://www.latmos-felsbilder.de>). In prehistoric times, the Latmos Mountains was a sacred mountain in Anatolia, and the ancient Anatolian weather god was worshiped together with a local mountain god upon its peak because it was accepted as the centre of weather and fertility rituals (<http://www.rupestre.net/tracce/?p=9840>). Later, the prehistoric weather god was substituted by the Hittite deity Tarhunt and finally by the god Zeus of Classical Greece (<http://www.rupestre.net/tracce/?p=9840>). According to the mythological story, the local mountain god lived as Endymion, the young shepherd and hunter in Greek mythology, and the lover of the moon goddess Selene, as described below in detail [1, 2]. Interestingly, the cultural heritage continued from the Neolithic period into the Ottoman Empire, inspite of occurrence of major socio-cultural transformations in this region with time. In 1994, a total of 170 sites of rock drawings of prehistoric archaeology in Anatolia (6th/5th millennia

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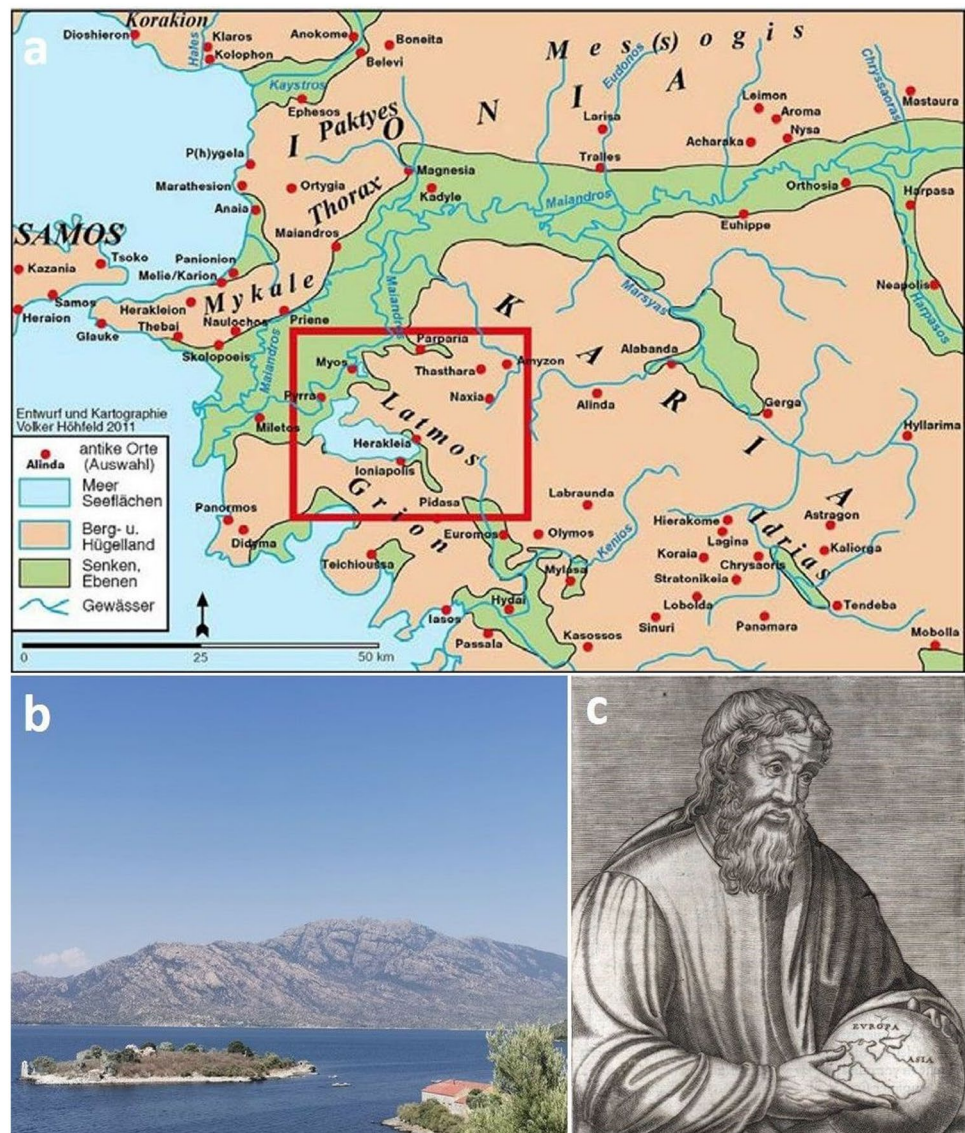
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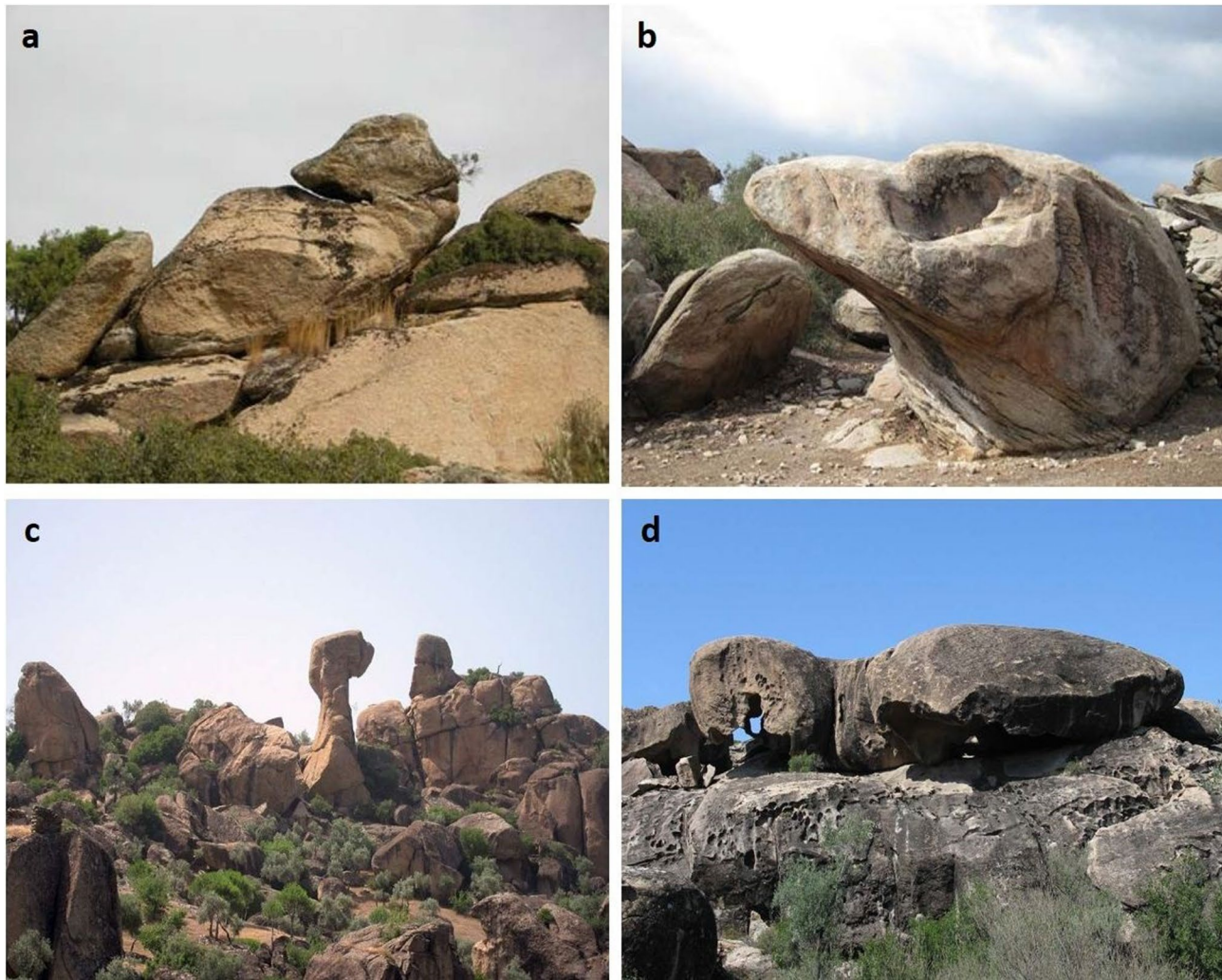
**Fig. 1** (a) A map of the Gulf of Latmus in antiquity in the west coast of Turkey. Please note the location of the sacred Latmos (Beşparmak) Mountains and its connection with Maeander River. Reprinted from [http://www.latmos-felsbilder.de/pdf/Aufruf\\_Latmos\\_eng.pdf](http://www.latmos-felsbilder.de/pdf/Aufruf_Latmos_eng.pdf) with permission of Dr. Anneliese Peschlow (<http://www.latmos-felsbilder.de>). (b) A photograph of Bafa Lake from the southern shore and the Latmos (Beşparmak) Mountains with the 1375-m-high peak, a geopark, having valuable natural, archaeological and geological heritage sites. c Geographer Strabo Strabo, depicted in a 16th-century engraving (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strabo#/media/File:Strabo.jpg>)



BC) were discovered by Anneliese Peschlow Bindokat, the German Archaeological Institute, in the Latmos Mountains (<http://www.rupestre.net/tracce/?p=9840>) (<http://www.latmos-felsbilder.de>). Interestingly, the main theme of these painted drawings is human beings and/or domestic animals, unlike those of the Ice Age with wild animals (<http://www.rupestre.net/tracce/?p=9840>).

According to anthropologists, it is important to note that rock painted drawings dating to the Neolithic period of life demonstrate the changes in ancient society with the onset of community-building by humans, called “sedentism”, in Gobekli Tepe and the Levant regions of Eurasia at least 12,000 years ago, unlike mobile lifeway with hunting and gathering, suggesting the beginning of the civilization. Thereby, the painted drawings in the Latmos

Mountains reflect an important step known as the “Neolithic Revolution” in western Anatolia [3]. More importantly, the theme of the rock depictions is the human being and domesticated animals, not as a single individual, but as a member of a community, husband and/or wife, or mother with/without her child, dancing or wedding ceremony of women and/or men (Fig. 3 and cover picture) (<http://www.latmos-felsbilder.de>, <http://www.rupestre.net/tracce/?p=9840>) [3, 4]. Very interestingly, that the main element of the rock depictions located around the mountain peak, which is the seat of the weather-and rain-god as the fertility worship center, is women without violence scenes, not males, suggesting predominance of the women in the ancient world (<http://www.rupestre.net/tracce/?p=9840>) [3, 4]. Among the rock depictions, the



**Fig. 2** Extraordinary weathered rock formations resembling wild animals such as duck (a), eagle (b), and tortoise (d) as well as human beings or superhuman primitive creatures such as monster (c), in addition to various inanimate objects including king seat in the Lat-

mos Mountains on the border of Aydın and Muğla, Turkey, producing an unique open-air museum. Reprinted from [http://www.latmos-felsbilder.de/pdf/Aufruf\\_Latmos\\_eng.pdf](http://www.latmos-felsbilder.de/pdf/Aufruf_Latmos_eng.pdf) with permission of Dr. Anneliese Peschlow (<http://www.latmos-felsbilder.de>)

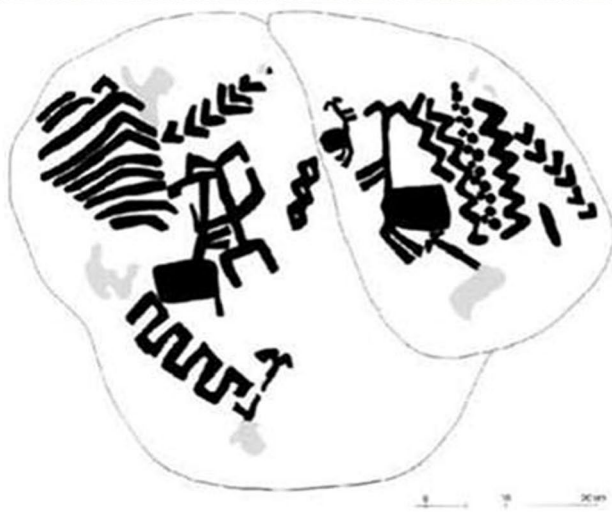
main painted figure within a hollow in the rock is a male with long clothes and his arms with clenched fists raised up and a T-shaped headdress compatible with horns upon his head, suggesting the personification of the weather god (Fig. 4) (<https://www.latmos-felsbilder.de>) [3, 4].

The Latmos Mountains remained a sacred mountain until the end of Medieval times, and it became the centre of monastic life for the Greeks, the Roman Empire and the Byzantine Empire during the following centuries. Following the conquest of Asia Minor by the Turks, the buildings, including “Yediler Monastery”, with frescoes painted drawings on the overhanging rock cliff scenes from

the life of Jesus Christ were disuse over the course of time (Fig. 5) (<https://www.latmos-felsbilder.de>).

### Story of Selene and Endymion

In an interesting story taken from Ozan Teokritos from Kos, one night while Artemis wanders through the skies with his silver car, he looks down and sees a young man sleeping at the foot of a hill [1, 2]. He quickly goes down and kisses him, is surprised when he sees the goddess in the face of the awakened teenager, the goddess declares



**Fig. 3 and Cover picture** Depiction on the ceiling painting of the prehistoric rock cave or chamber showing dancing or wedding ceremony of a family (women and/or men with their child) at Balıktaş, Milas, Muğla in the Latmos Mountains (*upper panel*). Copy of the depiction as black-and-white image (*lower panel*). Reprinted from [http://www.latmos-felsbilder.de/pdf/Aufruf\\_Latmos\\_eng.pdf](http://www.latmos-felsbilder.de/pdf/Aufruf_Latmos_eng.pdf) with permission of Dr. Anneliese Peschlow (<http://www.latmos-felsbilder.de>)

her love to him [2]. Then the goddess rubs the eyes of the young shepherd with her silver fingers and falls asleep after that night and comes every night and visits the sleeping boy [2]. The shepherd who is a shepherd is mortal but Artemis cannot bear his attractiveness and violates the laws of Olympus, that is, the Mountain of Gods [1, 2]. Anxiously, she takes the shepherd and hides him in a small temple she built on the foothills of the Latmos Mountains, infuses her eternal youth and continues to visit every night.

According to another mythological story, the shepherd's name is Endymion, and he is the son of Greek King Elis [1, 2]. In this version, Artemis plays the role of the moon goddess Selene. When he falls in love with Endymion, he pleads with his father, Zeus, who tells him what to do in a pleasant moment and gets permission to put Endymion to sleep forever [1, 2]. Handsome Endymion accepts and sleeps forever for the sake of staying young and handsome. Selene whispers in Endymion's ear with a sweet voice; "I will come to you with my own moonlight every night ..." [1, 2].

Today, the Beşparmak (Latmos) Mountains is where the moon shines most beautifully, and Bafa Lake is indeed a silver tray under the moonlight because Moon Goddess Selene pours her most beautiful lights here in the brightest way to see her handsome shepherd Endymion. However, no one can see Endymion anymore, the young shepherd keeps his eternal sleep in an unknown place in the Beşparmak (Latmos) Mountains and waits for Selene in the light of every month. Now it is obvious that their love has been spent in dreams beyond the truth, but life is real and valuable not to be spent with dreams ... Our mission is to protect this unique region to keep their memories alive forever.

**Fig. 4** A unique view of a rock painting within a hollow illustrating a male with long clothes and his arms with clenched fists raised up and a T-shaped headdress compatible with horns upon his head, reminding the mythological weather god  
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**Fig. 5** A photograph of the Byzantine fresco painted drawings of the thirteenth century AD depicting the crucifixion of Christ near the Yediler Monastery in the Latmos Mountains Reprinted from [http://www.latmos-felsbilder.de/pdf/Aufruf\\_Latmos\\_eng.pdf](http://www.latmos-felsbilder.de/pdf/Aufruf_Latmos_eng.pdf) with permission of Dr. Anneliese Peschlow (<http://www.latmos-felsbilder.de>)



## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** The authors have no conflicts of interest.

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