

Meryl Defours

“The Levantine Megalithic Building Techniques: Introducing an innovative methodology”

Meryl Defour (doctoral candidate at the University of Geneva) will present an innovative methodology for studying the megalithic architecture of Menjez in Akkar, Lebanon. Their study is part of the joint project between the University of Geneva and the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures (2022-2025), co-directed by Tara Steimer-Herbet and Zuzanna Wygnanska, entitled "MEG-A - First megalith builders in the northern Levant".

Twenty-four monuments from Menjez have been studied since 2018. The main objective is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the unique Levantine megalithic construction techniques and to re-establish the "chaînes opératoires" by determining the sequence of actions taken by the builders. This ground-breaking methodology originally developed for a study of the Western European megalithic monuments, notably in Brittany, France, has been applied and customized to suit the Levantine context, specifically focusing on the distinctive basaltic monuments of Menjez and its surrounding areas. By using photogrammetry as a tool, the researchers are able to de-construct the megalithic architecture by analysing the different components of these monuments. Moreover, it is then possible to describe monoliths according to their place within the monument and their geological and geomorphological features. Our work has led us to consider the symbolic aspect expressed in the megalithic architecture of Menjez. Employing this innovative methodology not only yields concrete answers regarding the typology of these monuments but also dramatically reshapes our perception of their construction. It establishes a precise relative chronology for the various architectural phases and, most significantly, reveals the hidden details of the raw material supply chain.