### Fabio Silva

Abstract. The term 'skyscape' is becoming commonplace among cultural astronomers and archaeologists alike, certainly in the United Kingdom but also further afield. However, not everyone uses it in the same way or with the same meaning. For some it is just another word for astronomy, whereas others use it to emphasise the relation between the sky and the landscape in the worldviews of many societies, past or present. This paper critically reviews these usages of the term skyscape and contrasts them with the original intent, by the author and his collaborators, to effect a change of emphasis within the practice of archaeoastronomy. Although originally published as a 2017 post in the Sophia Centre Press website blog, the key points raised here are still valid today.

The term *skyscape* was first used within the remit of cultural astronomy in 2006 by Jan Harding and collaborators in an article published in the *Archaeoastronomy* journal.<sup>1</sup> It was established in a session of the Theoretical Archaeology Group meeting of 2012, organized by myself and Nicholas Campion, director of the Sophia Centre at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.<sup>2</sup> But it was not until 2015 that it reached a wider academic audience.

Three significant events galvanized the term in 2015: Oxbow Books published a collection of papers delivered in that formative TAG session, titled *Skyscapes: The Role and Importance of the Sky in Archaeology.*<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the *Archaeoastronomy* module offered by the Sophia Centre

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Jan Harding, B. Johnson and G. Goodrich, 'Neolithic Cosmology and the Monument Complex of Thornborough, North Yorkshire', *Archaeoastronomy* 20 (2006), pp. 26–51.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> UK TAG 2012 programme, 'The Role and Importance of the Sky in Archaeology',

 $https://www.antiquity.ac.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/tag/TAG_2012\_programme.pdf$ 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Fabio Silva and Nicholas Campion (eds), *Skyscapes: the Role and Importance of the Sky in Archaeology* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2015).

Fabio Silva, 'Defining Skyscape', *Culture and Cosmos*, Vol. 26 no 2, Vol. 26 no 2, Autumn/Winter 2022, pp. 3-14. www.CultureAndCosmos.org

as part of its MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology was retitled *Skyscapes, Cosmology and Archaeology* and its curriculum redesigned to fall in line with this theme. And last, but not least, that very same year, the *Journal of Skyscape Archaeology*, co-founded and co-edited by myself and Liz Henty, published its first two issues.<sup>4</sup>

The term was met positively by archaeoastronomers and archaeologists alike, as evident in the positive response to the launch of the *Journal of Skyscape Archaeology*, which bodes well for its future. However, there is still some confusion about its meaning, with some archaeoastronomers thinking of it as a mixture of sky and landscape, which was and is not its intended significance. Here I would like to present and discuss the theoretical underpinnings of the term skyscape, including the motivation behind the term and how the two definitions in print fare against that motivation.

In his 1999 book Astronomy in Prehistoric Britain and Ireland, the archaeoastronomer Clive Ruggles, one of the leading figures in the field, wrote of *prehistoric astronomy* when discussing the way prehistoric societies engaged with the sky. Other terms often found in the archaeoastronomical literature include megalithic science, megalithic astronomy and ancient astronomy. In a more recent volume, Ruggles defined archaeoastronomy as a field concerned with 'every conceivable form of data that might provide insights into thoughts and practices relating to astronomy in the past.'5 This is a good, broad definition, yet it demonstrates a degree of anachronism. I am in no way criticising Ruggles himself, who has done more to bridge the gap between cultural astronomy and archaeology than anyone else, alive or dead. What I am critiquing here is the emphasis on the word *astronomy*, particularly when applied to prehistoric people, but equally generalizable to any non-western society. The problem is a simple one: does it make sense to talk of a prehistoric astronomy?

Astronomy is a very specific form of engagement with the heavens. It has a long history - it is usually considered the oldest of the natural

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Journal of Skyscape Archaeology, https://journal.equinoxpub.com/JSA/index <sup>5</sup> Clive L.N. Ruggles 2011, 'Pushing back the frontiers or still running around the same circles? "Interpretative archaeoastronomy" thirty years on', *Proceedings of the International Astronomical Union* 7 (S278) (2011): pp. 1–18, p. 1, <u>https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/proceedings-of-the-internationalastronomical-union/article/pushing-back-the-frontiers-or-still-running-aroundthe-same-circles-interpretative-archaeoastronomy-thirty-yearson/75CF1CC7D6956A22A5F269FA2A357EFC.</u>

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sciences – but in modern times it has crystallized as 'the study of the space beyond the Earth and its contents', as defined in the *Oxford Dictionary of Astronomy*.<sup>6</sup> Study implies a peculiar kind of interest in the subject matter, an almost detached interest. Indeed, this is strengthened by the exclusion in the above definition of the Earth and, therefore, of any possible relation between the Earth and space, or the sky. The emphasis of astronomy is on an objective reading of an external subject – the sky – itself devoid of meaning. This is achieved through application of the scientific method alone, which helps identify laws that are then formalized mathematically.

This description is filled with uniquely western characteristics: positivism, objectivity, lack of meaning, laws, and mathematics. However, not all societies, present or past, engage with the heavens in this manner, nor would they be interested in this particular form of engagement. Even within western society, most philosophers since Kant would disagree that the universe (i.e., the cosmos or reality) can be objectively described by mathematical, and hence conceptual, frameworks, let alone non-western peoples.<sup>7</sup>

Beyond western society, Campion has demonstrated in his 2012 book, *Astrology and Cosmology in the World's Religions*, that 'there is no human society that does not somehow, in some way, relate its fears, concerns, hopes, and wishes to the sky'.<sup>8</sup> This point is strengthened by the ethnographical record which attests that, for many societies, as Stanislaw Iwaniszewski put it,

important celestial bodies are perceived as animate entities and their motions in the sky are described in terms of social relations [...]. Human societies often people their skies with supernaturals, ancestors or mythological heroes to whom they become related through family ties, mythological narratives, political alliances or power relationships', as Stanislaw Iwaniszewski put it.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Ian Ridpath, *Oxford Dictionary of Astronomy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 36, <u>https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780199609055.001.00</u> 01/acref-9780199609055.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> See, for example, Peter Gratton, *Speculative Realism: Problems and Prospects* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), pp. 13–38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Nicholas Campion, *Astrology and Cosmology in the World's Religions* (New York University Press, 2012), p. 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Stanislaw Iwaniszewski, 'The sky as a social field', *Proceedings of the International Astronomical Union* 7 (S278) (2011): pp. 20–37, p. 31,

Astronomy, as defined by the modern West, excludes such forms of engagement.

This sharp contrast between western and non-western engagements demands that we question whether the interpretations of structural alignments to celestial objects have been influenced, either explicitly or implicitly, by the forced use of the word astronomy. Already from its early days, archaeoastronomy was characterized by unfounded claims of *megalithic science, astronomer-priests* and *prehistoric observatories* as epitomsied in the words of Alexander Thom and Gerald Hawkins, but it is important to realise that what all these interpretative elements have in common is that they relate to the modern concept of astronomy, namely to its method (science), its professional (the astronomer), and its institution (the observatories).<sup>10</sup> We've certainly moved on from this fallacious paradigm, yet how much are we actually still being influenced by it, as evidenced by our persistence in applying the word *astronomy* to non-western peoples?

The problems of forcing western terms to describe indigenous beliefs and practices are neither new nor restricted to archaeoastronomy: they are as old as anthropology. It has only been in the past few decades that it was recognized that applying western terms such as religion, magic, witchcraft and sorcery into other societies – as indeed most ethnographers were prone to do – was counter-productive to the anthropological enterprise<sup>11</sup> To overcome this issue, anthropologists have been advocating the use of *emic* terms, that is, terms derived from the very people they study, rather than those imposed on them by the ethnographers.<sup>12</sup>

We could, and indeed we should, use *emic* terms describing a society's relation to the sky whenever possible. However, in many cases (as indeed

<sup>10</sup> For Gerald Hawkins and Alexander Thom see Gerald Hawkins, *Stonehenge Decoded* (New York: Dorset Press, 1965); Gerald Hawkins, *Beyond Stonehenge* (New York, San Francisco, London: Harper and Row, 1973; Alexander Thom, *Megalithic Sites in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967); Alexander Thom, *Megalithic Lunar Observatories* ) Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1970).
<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Mary Douglas, 'Introduction: Thirty Years after Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic', in Mary Douglas, ed., *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1970), pp. xiii–xxxviii.
<sup>12</sup> Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2001 rev. edn), pp. 568–604.

https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/proceedings-of-the-internationalastronomical-union/article/sky-as-a-socialfield/B9B1D25A545AD17BB5BB519EF0E0ADF3.

for all prehistoric societies) an *emic* term does not exist or cannot be recovered. It is in these instances that I would advocate the use of a new, purpose-built and value-free, general term – for which *skyscape* is a good option for a number of reasons.

First and foremost, the term has a 'clean past', stemming from the art world where it represents 'a picture that includes an extensive view of the sky'.<sup>13</sup> The term is being appropriated, but not repurposed, for, even in its artsy crib, the term already implies a subjective representation, since any art form can be said to be a materialization of meaning. Second, it mirrors and recalls the term landscape. The landscape is an already well-established field of inquiry in both anthropology and archaeology and therefore provides a good counterpoint and framework for what we can do with the concept of skyscape.<sup>14</sup> I have elaborated on the comparable characteristics of skyscapes and cultural landscapes in the introduction to the *Skyscapes* volume, and elsewhere, and others have further developed the links between the two for which, see, for example, the article by Daniel Brown in *Culture and Cosmos* 17.2.<sup>15</sup>

Having a new term, however, is not enough, for it can easily be misappropriated, misunderstood, or misused. The point is not to affect a simple relabelling but to ensure that, by doing it, we permeate the field with a stronger interest in social issues, in how the skyscape is imbued with meaning, how it is intimately related to, and interpenetrates with, the beliefs and practices of people. In the process, a modicum of reflexivity, where we identify and critique the biases we bring to our research, should equally be part of the skyscape 'mission'.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Fabio Silva, 'The Role and Importance of the Sky in Archaeology: an introduction', in F. Silva and N. Campion, eds, *Skyscapes: The Role and Importance of the Sky in Archaeology* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2015), pp. 1-7 (p. 1).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> See, for example, Robert Layton, and P. Ucko, eds, *The Archaeology and Anthropology of Landscape* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999); Bruno David and J. Thomas, eds, *Handbook of Landscape Archaeology* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Daniel Brown, 'The Experience of Watching: Place Defined by the Trinity of Land-, Sea-, and Skyscape', *Culture and Cosmos*, Vol. 17, no. 2, Autumn/Winter 2013, pp. 5–24.

http://www.cultureandcosmos.org/issues/vol17-2.php

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> See, for example, Charlotte A. Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

As Bruno Latour put it, there is 'no good word anyway, only sensible usage'.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, before we attempt to define skyscape, or argue for a particular definition among several possible, we should specify what would constitute sensible usage for the term – a set of axioms, to borrow the term from mathematics. The need, identified above, is for a conceptual framework that: 1) is general enough that it can be applied across most, if not all, societies and, therefore, be inclusive of known *emic* terms, including astronomy and astrology; 2) brings meaning, thick description and social context to the fore; and 3) brings reflexivity into our terminology, theory, and method. These axioms will act as a guide as we look at, and compare, two ways in which scholars have used the word skyscape.

#### **Skyscapes as Cultural Constructs**

'...the sky is a natural phenomenon that is turned into a cultural skyscape through human agency.'<sup>18</sup>

This sentence, taken from the introduction to the *Skyscapes* volume, captures the definition of skyscape as a cultural construct. Such a skyscape is neither acultural, nor natural, nor anything else that doesn't involve agency. Humans conceptualize skyscapes: humans look up to the sky and derive or attach meaning to celestial objects; humans correlate those objects with other aspects of social life; they create art to represent their own views of the celestial objects; they build monumental structures with alignments to them; they tell stories about them. This is the view I originally espoused in 2012, even though it only reached print in 2015.

Skyscapes, therefore are indigenous conceptual frameworks that constitute a society's understanding of 'the heavens and the celestial bodies and how they relate back down to human beliefs and practices, to their notions of time and place, to their structures and material remains'.<sup>19</sup> This is the view also expressed by Iwaniszewski when he wrote that the 'sky is an aspect of the physical universe which is universally perceived by all

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: an introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 132.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Silva, 'The Role and Importance of the Sky in Archaeology: an introduction', p. 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Silva, 'The Role and Importance of the Sky in Archaeology: an introduction', p. 3.

humans, although *comprehended and structured in different ways*': he simply didn't have a word for it yet.<sup>20</sup>

The implication is that different societies 'see completely different skyscapes' even though they might see the same sky.<sup>21</sup> Ethnographical and historical examples abound – for instance, of different societies forming differently shaped constellations. A skyscape would be formed not only of those constellations (in addition to other celestial objects), but also of the socio-cultural elements associated with them: stories and myths, agricultural or environmental cycles, art, structures that align with them, topographic features marking their risings and settings, etc. The skyscape is meaning mapped into, or pre-existing in, the sky. Indeed, such a skyscape would be part and parcel of a society's worldview, of their cosmovision or cosmology, the part that specifically relates to the celestial objects.

There is a lot of good in this definition. Firstly, every society will have their own version(s) of a skyscape (axiom 1). Some societies might give it a name, or names, such as *sky*, *heaven*, *paradise*, *Duat*, *Asgard*, *Tlalocan*, *astronomy* or *astrology*; all of which are examples of skyscapes. Secondly, this definition of skyscape highlights its cultural, and therefore social, aspects (axiom 2). This is a significant step up from using the word *astronomy* which, as we saw, excludes these aspects. Thirdly, it puts agency at the centre of the debate, since it is through agency that skyscapes are constructed out of the 'raw material' of the sky. Agency, defined as 'the proposition that human beings think about the intentional actions they perform and the resources they need to achieve their ends',<sup>22</sup> is a very powerful concept in anthropology that, unfortunately, still hasn't found a foothold within archaeoastronomy, despite some very brave attempts.<sup>23</sup> And finally, it implies a level of theoretical reflexivity (axiom 3) not often

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Iwaniszewski, 'The sky as a social field', pp. 20–37, p. 30 [my emphasis].

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Silva, 'The Role and Importance of the Sky in Archaeology: an introduction',
p. 2.
<sup>22</sup> Timothy Darvill, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Timothy Darvill, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), <u>https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780199534043.001.00</u> <u>01/acref-9780199534043</u>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Iwaniszewski, 'The sky as a social field', pp. 20–37, p. 30; Stanislaw Iwaniszewski, 'The social life of celestial bodies: the sky in cultural perspective', in M.A. Rappenglück, B. Rappenglück, N. Campion and F. Silva, eds, *Astronomy and Power: How Worlds are Structured*. BAR International Series S2794 (Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2016), pp. 11–16.

found in archaeoastronomy, as it demands that the scholar not only pay lip service to the socio-cultural context, but actually attempts to contextualise any identified alignments or iconography of a celestial nature within the period and culture – without this, one is not identifying a skyscape, but merely a celestial target of potential interest to that society.

#### Skyscapes as Sky and Landscape

Some scholars, perhaps mistaking metaphor for metonymy, have been using the term skyscape to refer to the sky as a part of the landscape, as forming a union of sky and landscape, or to highlight the intersection of land and sky – the horizon. This conception of skyscape as the unity of sky and landscape was expressed for the first time in print by Daniel Brown in his *Culture & Cosmos* article previously mentioned. He wrote that the 'meaning for an alignment can now be negotiated within the landscape with emphasis on *its skyscape component*...',<sup>24</sup> which seems to imply that a given society actually conceives of sky and land as a unity. Indeed, both the sky and the land are elements of the world of every society, which

means we cannot ignore either one.<sup>25</sup> And some societies can conceptualize the sky as part of the landscape, as Fabiola Jara has suggested for the Lokono and Carib.<sup>26</sup> In other cases, the sky might be conceived to have characteristics and features similar to those of a landscape, such as containing fields, rivers and lakes. But this is far from being a universal feature.

Both the historic and ethnographic record are full of iconography, texts and tales relating to celestial objects in the absence of, or despite the presence of, the landscape. In his afterword to the *Skyscapes* volume, Timothy Darvill highlighted a key difference between the landscape and skyscape: 'Whereas the landscape is physically appropriated though modification and thereby turned into a dimension of *tangible* material culture, skyscapes *by contrast* are metaphysically appropriated through projection whereby *intangible* material culture is mapped onto the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Daniel Brown, 'The Experience of Watching: place defined by the trinity of land-, sea-, and skyscape', *Culture & Cosmos* 17, no. 2 (2013): pp. 5–24, p. 24 [my emphasis], <u>http://www.cultureandcosmos.org/issues/vol17-2.php</u>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Nicholas Campion, 'Skyscapes: Locating Archaeoastronomy within Academia', in F. Silva and N. Campion, eds, *Skyscapes: The Role and Importance of the Sky in Archaeology* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2015), pp. 8–9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Fabiola Jara, 'Skyscape of an Amazonian Diaspora: Arawak Astronomy in Historical Comparative Perspective', in C.L.N. Ruggles, ed., *Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy* (New York: Springer, 2015), p. 942.

heavens'.<sup>27</sup> There is a materiality to the landscape that is of a different nature to that of the skyscape: landscapes are accessible, can be tangibly manipulated; skyscapes only metaphorically or by non-humans. Phenomenologically they are also very distinct, particularly during the day: the sky is blue, grey, or black; the landscape green, brown, or grey. From this perspective, the skyscape might actually share a lot more in common with sea- or waterscapes: they are both blue during day, black at night; the sky has white clouds, whereas moving water typically forms white spume; water can reflect celestial objects both during the day and night; the Milky Way at night is similar to a river, and so on.<sup>28</sup>

The point is that, though some societies might see the sky and landscape as one, not all societies will do this, and even those that do might not attach particular value to that aspect of it. Therefore, and in the interest of generality of use (our first axiom), it is counter-productive to restrict ourselves *a priori* by considering the skyscape to be the union of sky and landscape. By doing so, we impose a reductionist framework to our academic inquiry, one that is not necessarily shared by the societies we study. In this sense, such a definition would be as flawed as using the term astronomy (which this definition actually excludes), and we would be back to square one.

By this I don't mean that we should stop studying the skyscape in its relation to the landscape. By all means, there is power and potential in looking at skyscape and landscape together, indeed most archaeoastronomical work of the past half century has inevitably been done in this way, as scholars were interested in rising and setting events that occur at or close to the horizon.<sup>29</sup> There is nothing wrong with such an approach, in fact the best research questions look not at a single but at a multiplicity of parameters. So, while such research projects are worthy endeavours, I do not see in them a need for rebranding.

Adopting this definition of skyscape would also fail to bring about the change demanded by axioms two and three: it might reduce some biases,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Timothy Darvill, 'Afterword: Dances Beneath a Diamond Sky', in F. Silva and N. Campion, eds, *Skyscapes: The Role and Importance of the Sky in Archaeology* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2015), p. 145 [my emphasis].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> For some thoughts in this direction, see Ilaria Cristofaro, 'Reflecting the Sky in Water: A Phenomenological Exploration of Water-skyscapes', *Journal of Skyscape Archaeology* 3, no. 1 (2017): pp. 112-126.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> See, for example, Fabio Silva, 'A Tomb with a View: New Methods for bridging the gap between land and sky in megalithic archaeology', *Advances in Archaeological Practice* 2, no. 1 (2014): pp. 24–37.

but at the cost of introducing new ones; nor would it add sufficient reflexivity to our scholarship. One of the main motivations with the introduction of the new term was to expand what has been done so far into consideration of other aspects of a society's worldview, aspects that are of much more interest to archaeologists, anthropologists and historians than just the identification of potential celestial targets of structural alignments. The skyscape can and should be looked at in connection to other aspects of society too: religion, ritual, ontology, magic, notions of time and place, etc.

#### **In Summary**

Skyscape was introduced as a neutral term intended to replace a valueladen one – astronomy – that has been anachronistically projected into societies where it has no place. Such ethno-projections reveal more about our modern biases than the societies we study, and their continued use, despite any methodological precautions and disclaimers, can be anchor points through which unconscious memetic viruses pass through the best methodological firewalls, potentially leading to interpretations that betray their otherwise unspoken presence. Even worse, they can prevent scholars from taking the leap into what Clifford Geertz called *thick description*, as if the scholar had been spontaneously and utterly destroyed by the virus before it got a chance to interpret and contextualize the identified structural alignment within the society that built and used the structure.<sup>30</sup>

Only in defining a skyscape as a cultural construct, can this act of relabelling fulfil its intended role as a theoretical rift meant to put theory and method at the forefront of our field, starting with reflexive thinking about the very words we use, as well as putting a stronger emphasis on social relations and cultural contextualization. When understood in this way, the term's application should not be restricted to the subjects of archaeoastronomy or skyscape archaeology: it applies equally across the entire field of cultural astronomy. It makes sense to use the word skyscape to describe and conceptualize the way in which a particular society engages with the sky, regardless of whether one is studying that society via its archaeological remains, historical texts, imagery or by interviewing or observing its members. The skyscape, in its original definition, is the broadest possible term for what we have been calling, perhaps uncritically, *cultural astronomy and astrology*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3–30.

Nevertheless, and despite fulfilling all three axioms, such a view of the skyscape still betrays a lack of engagement with the 'ontological turn' that has drawn attention to the ontological assumptions inherent in the way we research other cultures.<sup>31</sup> In effect, this issue is endemic to all of cultural astronomy: our terminology, methods and interpretations all work under a Cartesian substantivist ontology, wherein reality is composed of a single world (one nature), but many worldviews (many cultures), as Darvill highlighted in his afterword to Skyscapes.<sup>32</sup> This is yet another western imposition, albeit one that operates at much deeper, often unconscious, levels. We should therefore seek to frame skyscape in a way that, at least, acknowledges that other societies can have different ontologies, and at most, questions the very reality of what we call indigenous or prehistoric astronomy.33

#### Postscript

While preparing the current republication of this piece, I was made aware that the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology* included a definition of skyscape proposed by myself and Liz Henty by request of the dictionary editor. This definition fully embraces the points argued for in the above piece and, therefore, offers an opportunity to cap this matter.

skyscape. Used in the art world to refer to paintings and photographs that feature an expanse of sky, the term has gained traction in archaeology where it refers to the experiences and socially constructed meanings of the sky as part of a world that also involves landscapes and seascapes. Skyscapes include the celestial objects and their movements and appearance, meteorological phenomena such as clouds and weather-related features, and shades of colour, light, and darkness. Within a skyscape, objects and phenomena may be conceived of as animate beings with agency and social relations between themselves, the wider environment, and with

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> See, for example: Bruno Latour, We Have Never Been Modern (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); A. Henare, M. Holbraad and S. Wastell, Thinking Through Things: Theorising Artefacts Ethnographically (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, The Relative Native: Essays on Indigenous Conceptual Worlds (Chicago, IL: Hau Books, 2015).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Darvill, 'Afterword: Dances Beneath a Diamond Sky', p. 141.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> For more on this point see Fabio Silva, 'Skyscape Archaeology as Ontological Turn: Towards an Archaeoastronomy Rooted in Modern Archaeological Theory', in F. Silva and L. Henty, eds, Solarizing the Moon: Essays in honour of Lionel Sims (Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing, 2022), pp. 193-218.

people through their beliefs, practices, and notions of time, place, and space. Archaeologically, these connections can be glimpsed through architectural devices, structural orientations, common alignments, and material representations.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Timothy Darvill, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).