European Archaeological Heritage Prize

The European Archaeological Heritage Prize for 2003 has been awarded to Dr. Viktor Trifonov for his outstanding contribution to the restoration, protection and presentation of a unique group of prehistoric megalithic tombs in a recreated cultural landscape in the Zhane Valley in Western Caucasus, Russia.

Winner of the Prize in 2003

Dr. Victor Trifonov

The committee presents the following motivations for awarding the prize to Viktor Trifonov:

The project: "Prehistoric Megaliths in the Western Caucasus" integrates in a ideal way basic research with restoration and public presentation – not only of individual megaliths but of their original landscape and settlement. This is achieved by integrating a program of basic research including landscape history and settlement studies with excavation and restoration. In this way the megaliths are situated in their original contexts. Also restoration principles are based upon an integration between carefully planned excavation and reconstruction with the aim of understanding the original building methods of the megaliths. In this way restoration can be carried out in an authentic way based upon archaeological documentation and with no use of modern materials. Finally the project includes a program for establishing an archaeological park of 200 hectares around the megaliths where the original vegetation will be recreated, based upon environmental research. When completed it will be possible to experience a fully reconstructed prehistoric environment and its burial monuments based upon modern archaeological principles of research and restoration.

These results have been reached within the last seven years, and the project is still running. Before starting Viktor Trifonov carried out a study of principles of megalithic restoration and landscape reconstruction in Europe and participated in such a program in Denmark. His project took current concepts and methods one step further by creating a fully integrated project within a local region, based upon international co-operation and participation. It also includes a database of 3000 megaliths in the Western Caucasus and a recording of their condition and construction according to current European inventory standards. In Russia the project stands as a landmark for good heritage practice in a period of rapid social and economic changes that often destroy prehistoric monuments. The reconstructed megaliths have already attracted much local and public attention and visitors, thereby increasing the awareness of protection and restoration of archaeological monuments in the region.

By awarding the prize to Victor Trifonov the committee wishes to support an innovating ongoing project and the institutions supporting it: first and foremost the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, the Russian Ministry of Culture, and the State Committee for Protection of Cultural Heritage (Krasnodar area, Russia) and several research foundations.

We hope in this way to ensure that the project can fulfil its goal of establishing an official archaeological park, and we wish to stimulate similar projects in Russia and elsewhere in Europe that integrate basic research, protection, heritage management and public presentation within the framework of an archaeological park. In this way the prehistoric monuments are recontextualised within their original environment and thus become more meaningful to the visitor.

With the support of the above mentioned Russian State Institutions Viktor Trifonov has developed a project that the EAA committee for the European Archaeological Heritage Prize considers an outstanding example of integrated heritage management. On this background we award the European Archaeological Heritage Prize for 2003 to Viktor Trifonov and wish him success in completing the project.

The EAA Committee for the European Archaeological Heritage Prize,
consisting of:
David Breeze, Scotland,
Jurgen Kunow, Germany,
Sebastiano Tusa, Italy,
Katalin Wollak, Hungary and
Kristian Kristiansen, Sweden (Chairperson)