

# Nebra Sky Disc

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**In news**-An ancient object called the Nebra Sky Disc, which is thought to be the world's oldest concrete depiction of stars will be displayed in the British Museum in London.

## About Nebra Sky Disc

- The **disc was ritually buried along with two swords, axes, two spiral arm-rings and one bronze chisel near Nebra in Germany**, around 3,600 years ago.
- The burial of these objects is thought to be made as a **dedication to gods**.
- It was **discovered in 1999** by treasure hunters using a metal detector in **Nebra, a town in Germany**.
- The object, which has a **diameter of about 30 cm was found along with some other bronze-age weapons**.
- It is thought to be one of the most important archaeological discoveries of the 20th century and has been **associated with the Unetice culture that inhabited parts of Europe around 1600 BC**.
- **The Unetice culture comprised early Bronze Age communities** in central Europe including in Bohemia, Bavaria, southeastern Germany and western Poland.
- One of the distinguishing features of this culture was its use of **tin-bronze metallurgy**.
- Some of the metal artefacts made during this time by communities in the Unetice culture include ogival and triangular daggers with metal hilts, flanged axes, halberds, spiral arm-rings, solid bronze bracelets and varieties of pins.
- According to the Archaeology magazine, which is published by the Archaeological Institute of America, the **raw materials to make the disc were imported from as far as Cornwall in England**.
- **The knowledge required to create the object was**

**“entirely local”** and was drawn from observing the heavens from atop the Mittelberg mountain, which is near the modern village of Nebra.

- The magazine further notes that the bronze disc, which **depicts the world’s oldest representation of “specific astronomical phenomenon” had five phases over its history.**
- In the first phase, the disc illustrated the night sky with **32 gold stars, including the Pleiades, a hold orb representing the sun or a full moon and a crescent moon.**
- This illustration served as a reminder of when it was necessary to synchronise the lunar and solar years by inserting a leap month.
- **The object is being loaned to the museum by Germany’s State Museum of Prehistory in Halle that owns it and will be showcased** as part of an exhibition on Stonehenge, which will open in February 2022.

### **Origin of the disc and its purpose**

- The date of origin of the disc has been called into question by some archaeologists.
- For instance, in a paper published last year in the German journal Archäologische Informationen, archaeologists claimed that the disc is at least **1,000 years younger than thought**, which means it is from the Iron Age and not the Bronze Age.
- **The State Museum for Prehistory in Germany** subsequently disputed these findings saying that it was out of question for the disc to be **from the Iron Age.**
- While the exact purpose of the disc cannot be determined, hypotheses about its existence have imagined it as an astronomical clock, a work of art and a religious symbol.
- The disc has a value of about \$11 million and is thought by some to be one part of a pair, with the other part

still out there, waiting to be discovered.