

CAVE REMAINS AND ROCK ART

A sidebar to the first slide show.



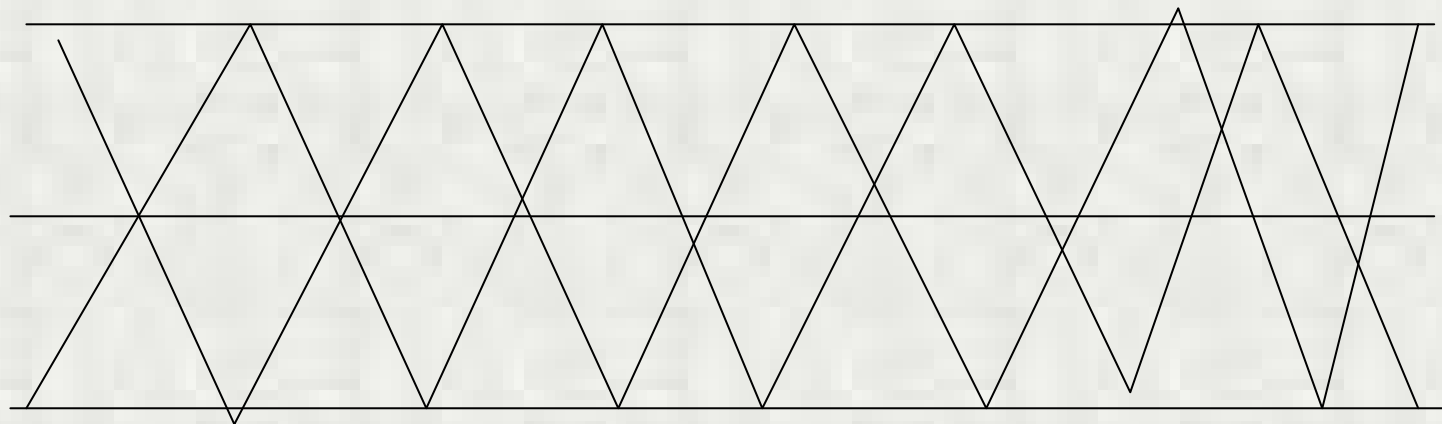
The following slides give links to web sites showing examples of evidence involving cave paintings and burial sites. These sites, among other things, allow virtual tours of some of the cave paintings, and they provide links to other similar sites. There are also some research papers involving burial sites.

(Clip Art)

ANCIENT CAVE DRAWINGS AND OTHER ANCIENT ART

The oldest rock art found to date appears to be this one from South Africa dated to around 70,000 years ago. Some people are interpreting it as abstract art and are reading very modern thought into the people of 70,000 years ago. On the other hand, as others have pointed out, it could be just doodling. The link is...

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/1753326.stm>



It looks a little bit like this – but more complex. Given my background in physics, I think it looks like two waves trying to interfere with one another(!)

ANCIENT CAVE DRAWINGS AND OTHER ANCIENT ART

The Cave of Lascaux – This is a famous example of many drawings (15,000 yrs to 17,000 yrs old) in an ancient cave system:

<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arcnat/lascaux/en/>

These are mainly animal pictures, possibly telling stories, with little interaction with humans. But check out “The Shaft”. (If you can’t find it, try the site map.) Is that guy dead? If so, what killed him?

The Cave of Chauvet – This is a much older one, 30,000 yrs to 32,000 yrs before the present.

<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arcnat/chauvet/en/>

There are many animal drawings, the remains of cave bears, and a lot of human handprints on the walls as well as some footprints in the floor.

Here is a Database of old European cave and rock art:

<http://www.euopreart.net/>

This one, called the Pech Merle Cave, also in France, contains a drawing called the “wounded man”. It might even be one; take a look and see what you think. They do not give a date for the wounded man picture, but most of the art in this site seems to be dated at 20,000 to 25,000 years ago including pictures of a bison and horses near the wounded man. However, a nearby bear picture was dated to only 13,000 years ago. Here is the link to the virtual tour of the cave.

<http://www.quercy.net/pechmerle/english/visite.html#8>

P.S. What is that thing above the wounded man’s head that seems to be grabbing him? Is that what wounded him? Is he really wounded or just badly drawn?

This one contains a picture that they call the “slain man”. Take the link below and then click on “Virtual visit” toward the left.. To see the “slain man” just point at the red dot right above where it says “Feline Chamber”. Here is the link:

<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/archeosm/en/fr-cosqu1.htm>

This is called the “Cosquer Cave”, and it contains drawings dated between 27,000 and 19,000 years ago.

If that slain man was slain by other people, then it might be a drawing of violence older than almost all similar depictions. But take a close look. Is that even a picture of a man? The caption describes it as a “figure lying on its back with legs and arms up in the air”. It just looks like random lines to me, although that might be a head in the lower right crushed under something.

ANCIENT CAVE DRAWINGS AND OTHER ANCIENT ART

Prehistoric art was by no means limited to Europe. We have already seen an example from North America. Here is an example from ancient India:

<http://www.kamat.com/kalranga/rockpain/betaka.htm>

You can see plenty of hunting scenes, one with a deer with trees or maybe grass in its stomach, but also one of a deer with an elephant in its stomach. There are some other “stomach shots” (or maybe these are something else completely). I don’t really know what they mean. There is one of a guy walking a dog, another of a lot of people dancing, and another of a bunch of people closing in on a deer. I don’t see any people fighting, but the one of a guy with a shield is suspicious. The author does say that “As the civilization progressed there were fights among tribes.” and mentions pictures of warfare not seen on this page.

However, see the next slide for more on this group of pictures including a developmental timeline.

Some of the same pictures from the previous slide as well as others clearly showing warfare (including a timeline) can be found here:

<http://www.kamat.com/kalranga/rockpain/timeline.htm>

A larger view of the Bronze Age picture of two people, apparently warriors, facing one another with swords and shields can be found here:

<http://www.kamat.com/kalranga/rockpain/index.htm>

Guide to the timeline used in this site:

Upper Paleolithic (Last part of stone age) ≈40,000 to 10,000 yrs ago

Mesolithic (some people carve this out of part of early Neolithic starting ≈10,000 yrs ago – term is not universally used.)

**Neolithic ≈10,000 to Bronze age (or after Neolithic to Bronze age)
EARLIEST DEPICTION OF A WARRIOR WITH SHIELD IN THIS GROUP OF PICTURES.**

Bronze Age (earliest use of bronze ≈3,000 BC but later many places)

Early Medieval (usually 5th – about 10th century AD, but from the context they may be thinking about an earlier period here.)

Here is an example of a research paper that contains a technical description of what is often found when human and animal remains are found in a cave. Cave burial seems to have been common in prehistoric days, and this tells something of what happens afterwards. For example, there is a lot of damage due to carnivores. They have tried to find evidence of deliberate cutting and did find such evidence in one case, but the cutting probably happened after the individual was dead. The dates are uncertain in this case, but are thought to be not older than about 4000 BC.

The reference is:

Chamberlain, A.T. 1999 Carsington Pasture Cave, Brassington, Derbyshire: a Prehistoric Burial Site. *Capra* 1

and it can be found at

<http://capra.group.shef.ac.uk/1/carsing.html>

The web site at this link describes a project to find and study a large number of ancient burial sites in Wales dating between 4000 BC and 1000 BC. It describes this period as “...a long and dramatic period of human history which began with the first steps towards a settled farming economy by groups of hunter-gatherers, and ended with a period of rapid technological change coinciding with the emergence of a powerful warrior aristocracy...”. It is interesting to notice the large number of sites that have been discovered and classified reflecting just how curious modern people are about such things and how much work they will do to try to get it right.

The link:

<http://www.cpat.org.uk/projects/longer/pfr/pfr.htm>

This is an abstract of a paper describing the condition of two young people buried about 24,000 years ago. There does not appear to be any violence involved, but there were abnormalities in the skeletons. The abstract at least shows a good example of how such things have been studied. Though intended for professional researchers in this field, the abstract gives some idea of how ancient remains are studied.

The link:

http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&list_uids=15197816&dopt=Abstract

There are some links on this page which lead to more abstracts and more links, so it is possible to explore the subject for quite a while. Some of the papers in the immediate links talk about stress seen in skeletons due to living in ice age conditions and various bone diseases. There is one case of a skeleton with fractures, though it may have had a bone disease that promoted them. There is one case of unexplained cut marks on a Neanderthal bone.

Here is an abstract that suggests how the throwing habits of ancient people might be studied. At some point in history, spears were invented and were used in hunting. It is possible that early modern humans had spears and knew how to use them while Neanderthals did not. This might have been part of the advantage that early modern humans had that allowed them to use the environment more efficiently and eventually beat the Neanderthals in the contest for the territory.

This abstract does not come to any firm conclusions about this. It just suggests a way to study it by comparing ancient skeletons and their abnormalities with those of modern athletes who throw things a lot.

I am including this just as an example of how such things might be studied in detail. Here is the link:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19004469>

The small sample of evidence shown here is, in fact, too small to prove anything. It fits the more general reported pattern that war-like violence developed slowly in ancient artwork. It also fits the idea that ancient human remains did not need warfare as an explanation for the cause of death, at least earlier than around 12,000 years ago. That date is later in some parts of the world. A few cuts on a bone can have many explanations and is not the same as actual war, which is a fight between opposing groups.

I have looked at a lot of such reports and have not seen anything that seriously suggests warfare much earlier than the above dates. Of course, prehistoric just means before writing, which started in the 3000's BC (4th millennium BC). War was pretty common by then.

So there was prehistoric warfare. But there was little if any Paleolithic (before 10,000 BC) war and what there was took place very late in this era.

END OF THE SIDEBAR

