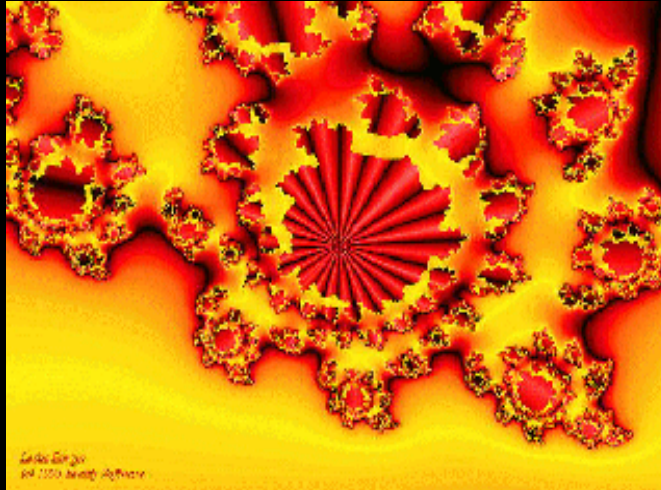


THE ORIGINS OF MYTHOLOGY IN THE UPPER PALEOLITHIC CULTURES OF EURASIA



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"When man created language with wisdom,
As if winnowing cornflower through a sieve,
Friends acknowledged the signs of friendship,
And their speech retained its touch." Rg Veda 10.71

"Whatever is happening is happening for good...."
Krsna to Arjuna in the Bhagvad Gita

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The Origins of Mythology

When in prehistory does mythic reality intrude upon the human consciousness? When do 'human' first find the Dreamtime, walk the trails of past and future time and live to tell the tale and hunt another day? How early *can* mythic perception begin? From the late *Homo erectus* site of Becov in Czechoslovakia c. 250,000 B.C. has come a quartzite rubbing stone and a striated piece of ochre lying on a floor with a spread of red ochre powder. This ochre is not conclusive evidence for ritual use because it can be used to tan hides, staunch insect bites and treat stomach wounds and so may have no metaphorical significance (Marshak 1991: 381, Blanc (1961). Others have seen evidence for ritual cannibalism in the details of the damage (interpreted as *deliberate*) around the *foramen magnum* at the base of skulls in *Homo erectus* individuals from localities separated by vast distances: Peking and Europe. Individuals of interest from Europe include several specimens of archaic *Homo sapiens* c.250,000 years ago and Neanderthals from the site of Monte Circeo in Italy. Debate over what their skull damage actually implies has gone on for nearly a century with no resolution. Some Neanderthal tribes did bury their dead, and at Shanidar in Iraq this was done with flowers (Soleki 1971). It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis* had a conscious conception of an afterlife and deliberately designed burial rituals to facilitate the passing from this 'world' to another realm. But the details of their narrative and rites will forever elude us because the Neanderthals did not create any pictorial art or iconographic vocabulary. A good introduction to the problem of the ultimate origins of religion may be found in Pfeiffer (1982)

Many researchers have noted the occurrence of mythic iconography in the cave art and sculpture of the European Upper Paleolithic.¹ See Campbell (1988), Gimbutas (1991) and Jelínek (1975) for examples of such discussions. However these books provide little in the way of interpretation and analysis beyond noting similarities with the mytho-poetics of the Neolithic and later times. They infer meaning for the Upper Paleolithic by the process of backward extrapolation. Such a process is filled with pitfalls because it assumes a mind set in Upper Paleolithic cultures equivalent to the later time period that is used as the base line for backward extrapolation. Neolithic mythologies were lived out within the context of the agricultural revolution, permanent settlements that

¹ The major cultural regions of this period in Europe are the Mediterranean (eastern Spain, Italy), Franco-Cantabrian (France - particularly the cave-rich Dordogne area, northwest Spain), Central Europe Czechoslovakia, Germany) and eastern Russia.

practiced agriculture and an animal husbandry that followed upon the domestication of several species. Furthermore by the seventh millennium B.C., several settlements in the Near East had attained the stature of towns with stratified proto-urban societies and populations of several thousand. Activities in the Neolithic which bear little relationship to the lifestyles of tribal hunter-gatherers in the Upper Paleolithic include a minor role relegated to big game hunting (and thereby the eclipse of the associated myth and rituals), metallurgy, weaving, pottery and the concentration of wealth and trading activities in towns where a class structured society may be reliably inferred. *If we take society to be structured by mytho-poetics, then the myths and rituals of the Neolithic might be assumed to be quite different in philosophical content than those of the Upper Paleolithic, whatever iconographic similarities may be catalogued by archeologists. If backward extrapolation is unacceptable, then the more conventional position that mythic narratives 'reflect' human created history and societal structures leads to the same conclusion of an unavoidable philosophical-religious gap between the Upper Paleolithic and later times.*²

Surprisingly, research indicates the gap to be much smaller than imagined, in spite of the ecological and cultural dissimilarities between the Upper Paleolithic and Neolithic. Neolithic myth has its origins in the Upper Paleolithic; it did not manifest *de novo*. Important similarities must exist but their discovery must be approached with caution. The form mythic narrative embodies contains a structure generated by the specifics of social structure, food procurement strategies, local ecology and the history of 'the people'. Upon the skeleton and primary foundation of universal archetypes is built layer upon layer derived from group specific narrative and ritual that allows the initiated access to sacred time. Only when undertaking such journeys, can human beings reach their potential and tap the resources of supranatural dimensions.

² Cutting across differences and regardless of which societies are being compared, are the archetypes. As defined by Jung (1991), archetypes are those timeless, immortal images of fundamental psychic processes that continually re-appear in cultures of the most outwardly diverse taxonomies. Important cross cultural similarities in archetypes have been thoroughly investigated. This observation does not contradict the differences presumed to characterize the myths of the Upper Paleolithic and Neolithic because mythic narrative is not populated solely by archetypes. Much mythic content reflects the history, ecology and specific traditions of the 'people' This content is layered upon a foundation that is formed from the continual re-emergence of universal archetypes. A complex diversity in narrative and genealogy is thereby anchored to cross cultural, universal 'truths'.

One researcher stands out as having chosen to tackle Upper Paleolithic symbolism on its own terms. Alexander Marshak (1991) did not bring Neolithic or Classical narrative to his analysis, although when his methods yielded similarities to such data, they were noted. His conclusions are based primarily upon what the imagery itself yields when scrutinized in *isolation* without reliance upon the metaphors and narratives provided by cultures that had writing, and indulged in intellectual philosophy. Some of his insights are, in retrospect, not unusual. Others would have been difficult to imagine before his research was published.



Overview of the Upper Pleistocene

The term 'Pleistocene' refers to a geological era while the appellation 'Paleolithic' designates a culture in which stone tools predominate. The last ice age was a succession of glacial retreats and advances punctuated by brief warm periods known as interglacials. Professional geologists call this period the Würm glaciation. It began perhaps 125,000 years ago and ended in most regions by 10,000 B.C. At times of maximum glacial advance, it produced some of the coldest temperatures the northern hemisphere has ever endured. During the first two thirds of the Upper Pleistocene, the Neanderthals evolved and dominated the human populations of Europe, the Near East and North Africa. They are given formal subspecies status by paleoanthropologists - *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis*. They were of stocky body build, with facial features that we would not deem attractive today: brow ridges; big, forward thrusting noses, and large, elongated skulls. Neanderthals were not primitive or stupid, contrary to the popular portrayals of only a few years ago. Much of their body shape can be explained as an adaptation to living in both caves and outdoors in an arctic environment. Eskimos also show a stocky body build with short arms and legs compared to other races. The average brain size of Neanderthals was actually a bit larger than our own! They were big game hunters, utilized fire to stay warm, made many types of stone tools and wore skin clothing. There is a controversy as to whether or not their vocal anatomy could support the complex vocalizations necessary for spoken language. However, it is difficult to imagine how the complexity of their material culture could be

taught and passed on without verbalization. Of their more abstract thinking we know next to nothing; the recreations in popular novels and films are based on speculation and surmise, not archeological evidence. However, it is clear that they buried their dead and, in at least one locality, did so with flowers (Leakey 1981; Soleki 1971; Wolpoff 1980).



About 30,000 years ago, Europe saw a rapid intrusion of a taller, more slender people whose skull anatomy was identical to our own. They are termed fully modern humankind: *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Their geographic origin is still not clear, although most theories suggest the Near East and/or North Africa. The earliest racial variants of our own species, which are designated archaic *Homo sapiens*, evolved in sub-Saharan Africa at least 250,000 years ago. We have no idea of the skin color of either Neanderthals or modern *H. sapiens* because no fossilized skin has been found and that would be the only source of direct evidence. It is generally surmised that both subspecies would have been light skinned in Europe because that maximizes the amount of vitamin D that can be synthesized in a climate with reduced intensity of sunlight. Obviously, modern man evolved dark skinned races in the tropics, perhaps to minimize the danger of second or third degree sunburn. The culture that *Homo sapiens sapiens* brought into Europe (or quickly evolved once there) exhibits a complexity heretofore unseen in tools, clothing, habitation and art. This complexity is adaptive because many more solutions may be brought to bear upon the problems of survival in a harsh climate. These first totally modern humans also created the first art which articulated a variety in form and imagery of amazing complexity as will be explored in this document. The inference seems unavoidable

that the brain of *H. sapiens sapiens*, even though slightly smaller than that of the Neanderthals, was reorganized and rewired by evolution (mutations) in a manner that promoted the creation of new, highly complex behaviors (Blumenberg 1983). There is little evidence for conflict with the Neanderthals and in that sense, Jean Auel's novel *Clan of the Cave Bear* and the film based on her novel, are accurate. The Neanderthals disappeared rapidly in most localities within in a few thousand years after *H. sapiens sapiens* entered their territory, perhaps due to a combination of intermarriage and quiet cultural extinction. There seems to be no fossil evidence for Neanderthals after 22,000 B.C, most populations had disappeared as such a few thousand years earlier.



Cultural Chronology of the Upper Pleistocene

Marshak (1991: 96-97) presents a good chart which summarizes the progression of cultures throughout the latter part of the Upper Pleistocene which this diagram is based upon. The Aurignacian began c.30,000 B.C. and the Final Magdalenian ended in all regions by c. 11,000 B.C. Within this span of the Upper Paleolithic, the timing of each culture is variable. For example, the Gravettian mammoth hunters did not appear in each culture region at the same time.

UPPER PALEOLITHIC CULTURE

CULTURE REGION

EAST	CENTRAL	FRANCO- CANTABRIAN	MEDITERRANEAN
Soviet Union	Czechoslovakia Germany	France Northwest Spain	Eastern Spain Italy

CULTURAL PROGRESSION



Lunar Calendars

The evidence for the creation and extensive use of lunar calendars throughout the Upper Paleolithic is very solid. Beginning with the Aurignacian Culture which began about 32,000 B.C., there are many examples of clusters and sets of marks whose periodicity matches the lunar cycle. These marks may be crescents or lines, often with a varying thickness that correlates with a particular lunar phase. The sequences and sets of marks are frequently laid out in serpentine patterns which are evocative of a Snake deity. However this arrangement of marks may be nothing more than the most convenient way to pack a long sequence into a small area and may *not* be evidence for the conscious manifestation of a 'deity'. Many of these calendars are on small pieces of stone, bone or antler and appear to have been made in such a fashion so as to be easily carried.³ Thereby does the difficulty and pitfalls of symbolic interpretation become apparent before this essay has barely begun. Do the serpentine patterns have any mythic meaning? Why carry a lunar calendar around camp, and/or on journeys and hunting trips? I will defer the attempt at uncovering mythic metaphors until a later section of this paper.

The phases of the moon as depicted in the sets of marks is inexact, as it must be unless all nights were perfectly clear. However, the arithmetic counting skill implied is obvious. The recognition that there are phases of the moon and seasons of the year which can be counted may have led to the first formulation of mathematical sets (Baring and Cashford 1991: 20). Although Marshak equivocates, an important question has arisen that demands an answer. Why construct cumulative sets of individual, rotational marks, each of which has integer value, if the sum is meaningless at best and merely decorative at worst? Marshak's repeated emphasis on the evolutionary breakthrough of 'time factored notation' is a 'red herring' and does not recognize the central question. Time factored notation in the Upper Paleolithic may appear astonishing to a former science journalist who once worked with NASA. Time itself is an objective real phenomenon that exists without qualification, a physical property of the 'world' that does not depend on human consciousness or perception to exist.⁴ Relativistic physics has established this beyond

³ See particularly the illustrations of those from the Aurignacian sites of Abri Lartet (France) and the Abri Blanchard (France) (Marshak 1991: Fig. 11-14; 1-10).

doubt. All animal activities are time factored, simply because time passes, the future is forever arriving. The reality of time factoring is objective physics and does not depend upon human awareness or consciousness. Until Marshak's work, many archeologists believed the sets of marks he chose to study were nothing but the aimless doodles of bored toolmakers. What Marshak (1991: 90) has uncovered is the intuitive discovery of mathematical sets and the application of those sets to the construction of a calendar. That these lunar calendars have meaning is unavoidable. Bone is the preferred medium because it allows for easy transport and preservation of the calendars for future contemplation. Later study is further ensured if the calendar is inscribed upon an object of utilitarian or ritual value. Indeed, many lunar calendars are found on such objects confirming this decision as deliberate in order to maximizing their long term survival.

By the time of the two Late Magdalenian eagle bones found at Le Placard (France), which were made c.15-13,000 B.C., this lunar notation had evolved in complexity and we see vertical lines with an appended 'foot'.⁵ Feet made by one point were attached to vertical lines for which four different points were used. Verticals and feet together define a complex lunar phrasing.⁶ Here, Marshak sees both counting and sums. "At this point we *must* assume that *if* these Magdalenian series are notational, then the man making the long counts of 43 plus 43 for a sum of three months (or a count of 86); and the man using the system of one-to-one double tracking (one foot usually made on one vertical), *knew how to use numbers of a sort and sums*, though he probably used a system of counting that was not ours. He apparently also knew that lunar periods were of a certain length and were repeatedly regularly, as well as that phases were roughly predictable within a day or two. ... I therefore assume a long slow development of observational and notational knowledge over a period of some 20,000 years from early Upper Paleolithic to Late Magdalenian" (Marshak 1991: 159).⁷ One example does not establish the widespread creation and use of lunar calendars of

⁴ Proton decay in the nucleus of the atom will occur regardless of whether or not we are around to study it. If the tree falls in the forest and there is no one there to witness, it has, nonetheless, fallen. Etc.

⁵ Marshak (1991): Fig. 43-46.

⁶ Ibid: Fig. 49-51.

⁷ Marshak's chauvinism here seems to be unconscious. Women could easily have inscribed and/or used these lunar calendars for a variety of reasons.

this complexity. However, *nine* other lunar notations of this sort have been found on bones from various late Magdalenian sites in France.

The next problem is to determine exactly what is being notated. Calendars are made for use as references against which to notate events whose location in time is important. An empty calendar has no cultural significance in terms of the history of the clan, past or future. As a further aid in determining the time of the year, events notated against a particular lunar phrasing mightn also include an accurate depiction of seasonal changes in the antlers, horns and coat of reindeer, horses, bison and ibex. Upper Magdalenian lunar notations often occur on bones with animal and mythic imagery. In theory any event of importance, be it grounded in the everyday 'world' of profane time or located in sacred time and space, is a candidate to be notated. A hypothetical list of such 'objectively' important events, which need make no *specific* reference to myths of later ages, would include human birth, maturation-initiation, mating, and death; animal/plant/ resource periodicity and weather cycles.



Seasonal Faunal Imagery

Important seasonal characteristics of local fauna, such as development and migration (fish and seal runs) were recorded on lunar calendars. Such images need not be 'hunting magic' nor have any metaphorical content. They could be 'merely' the earliest documented observations of natural history, with a distinct bias towards depicting food resources and those events that determined availability of local resources. Two seals are engraved on an Upper Magdalenian baton found at Montgaudier (France) which is only a short walk from Le Placard.⁸ This site is more than 100 miles from the sea today and was much further back from the coastline during the end of the last ice age when sea levels were lower. Yet Upper Paleolithic seal hunts are documented in the archeological record of the Dordogne which is more

⁸ Marshak (1991): Fig. 60 - 65.

than 100 miles from the seacoast. Are these animals a mythic image unrelated to those 'real' seals swimming off the coast and their use as food? Is the baton, which is a sacred and to be passed between tribes for trade or ritual reasons contain mythic or nonmythic images? The same baton also contains two serpents, one male (with a visible penis) and the other female. Is this a depiction of the divine brother-sister pair who create the universe as cosmic snakes? Or are they just a pair of common grass snakes? An adult male salmon with a morphology typical of spawning time (hook on lower jaw) is also engraved on this baton as are 'sketches' of ibex, flowers and seedlings. And, there is no lunar calendar present. Overall, the imagery on this baton is that of the renewal of food resources in the spring, an important documentation of critical local resources that respond to the seasons and their own migration cycles. The hole in the baton most likely served for attachment to a belt with a leather thong (Marshak 1991: 169-172).

Many other examples of such natural history records have been found. From the Final Magdalenian at La Vache in the French Pyrenees has come a bone knife, or polishing tool, on which there is a composition depicting the faunal associations typical of September., Late summer/early fall is found on one face while a spring composition occupies the other surface.⁹ The September scene shows a bison bellowing in early fall rut. The branches or conifer leaves in the scene are without flowers. Nuts, seeds and cones are also depicted. The spring composition shows a doe with sketches of ibex and flowers in association with serpentine lines. From the Upper Magdalenian site of Fontarnaud à Lugasson (France) has come a bone fragment with a spring scene, an antlered stag with flowers.¹⁰ From the Final Magdalenian site of La Vache (France) comes a bone fragment with a goat and saiga antelope facing each other with a bird in between.¹¹ At the Upper Magdalenian site of Raymondén (France) a bone fragment has been found depicting a spring scene with three kids (?goat ?ibex) and small, flying birds above them. The reverse side shows two adult caprids.¹² Another spring scene is depicted on a bone disc from the late Middle Magdalenian site of Laugerie Basse in the Dordogne where one face of the disc depicts a cow and the obverse a calf. A second bone disc from the same site depicts a fawn

⁹ Ibid: Fig. 66-67.

¹⁰ Ibid: Fig. 68.

¹¹ Ibid: Fig. 70.

¹² Ibid: Fig. 72.

resting on one side and a stiff-legged fawn on the other.¹³ A bone found at the late Upper Paleolithic site of Paglicci (Italy) shows a snake stealing eggs from a bird's nest.¹⁴ None of these examples is accompanied by a lunar calendar but several others are. From the final Magdalenian of France, an ivory plaque from La Vache shows a molting bison and is accompanied by a lunar notation which indicates the two months of the spring-early summer molt.¹⁵ Marshak's examination of almost every collection of Paleolithic art revealed many late summer images of bison, ibex and stag in rut and seasonal images of bison and musk ox molting. Images were also carved of bull bison butting and, in one instance, two mammoths doing likewise. Bears and cave lions are almost never depicted, perhaps because their ferocity when stalked made them unusually dangerous to hunt. They were, as a result, rare dietary items.¹⁶ They had great importance, however, as totemic and clan symbols and guardians of the cave. The evidence for a Bear Ritual incorporated into an initiation process for young men will be discussed below. Cave lions would be important because they function as 'spotters' for human hunters because as large predators, they follow herds of game.

One could assume nothing more than artistic invention in the creation of these compositions. However there is a temptation to introduce mythic interpretation from Neolithic times. Backward extrapolation is not entirely a misleading exercise because later myths have origins which must lie within earlier cultures that did not possess writing. The problem for researchers is not to *automatically* assume 'what you see is what you get'. The same symbol can have widely divergent meanings in different cultures. **Archetypes may be cross-cultural realities but metaphors rarely are.** In the Neolithic, both the curved horn of the saiga antelope and that of the ram would be metaphors for the cosmic snake of eternal renewal which was always associated with the Goddess of Death and Regeneration. But are such connotations valid for the people of France at the end of the last Ice Age, several thousand years before the onset of the Neolithic? Perhaps the attribution of such meaning is not entirely fallacious. These late Upper

¹³ Ibid: Fig. 73 & 74.

¹⁴ Ibid: Fig. 77. Detailed analysis revealed that the nest was engraved over the duck and that later the snake image was added (Marshak 1991: 184).

¹⁵ Ibid: Fig. 84.

¹⁶ But see Marshak 1991: Fig. 121b & Fig. 122.

Paleolithic hunter-gathers are sensing, intuitively, that the endless renewal of life in the spring is often accompanied by the reappearance of snakes and that the shedding of a snake's skin is a prelude to the emergence of a reinvigorated, energized reptile. The curved horns of male sheep and antelopes signal male virility, which was further emphasized symbolically during the rutting season.¹⁷ *If such thoughts were possible for late Paleolithic humans, then symbolism and simple metaphor, in the sense of one to one correspondences, are in evidence and are being consciously employed. Furthermore, such thinking reveals the intuitive discovery of an area of symbolic mathematics called 'mapping', although there is obviously no conscious intellectual, formularization here. These cognitive creations are the essential first step on a path that leads to the anthropomorphism of natural phenomena and complex mytho-poetic narratives which detail the lives and adventures of the gods. The discussion below will establish the very high probability that people of this era could think and reflect in this manner. A metaphysical context was part of their conscious deliberation and it appears to have structured many artistic creations.*



The Earliest Mythic Images

From the Late Magdalenian site of La Marche (France), comes a bone baton with a pregnant mare accompanied by a lunar calendar for 11 months, which is the equine gestation period. That the image depicts more than a straightforward observation of a pregnant mare is indicated by the more than one dozen 'spears' that point toward the throat and belly of the horse.¹⁸ Were pregnant wild mares killed in a life renewing ritual, either literally or symbolically? Were they sacrificed to the moon, be it personified or not?

¹⁷ There is a widespread consensus among researchers that Upper Paleolithic hunter-gatherers had no conscious understanding of mating as the essential prelude to pregnancy and birth.

¹⁸ Marshak 1991: Fig. 88 & 89.

A bone from the Upper Magdalenian site of Les Eyzies (France) contains fascinating images done in a 'quick sketch' style. To the right of what may be alder trees, nine humans carrying either sticks or spears approach a bison.¹⁹ Are they a hunting party or participants in a ritual? Is a mimed sacrifice hinted at (Marshak 1991: 206)? The trees are bare so late autumn or very late winter is the probable season.

From the Upper Magdalenian site of Raymondén, which is very near Les Eyzies, comes a bone slate with a bison head attached to what is either a schematic spinal column, harpoon, or feathered lance. Above and below are human figures and in front of the bison's head are two unattached human feet. One human figure carries an object over his shoulder which is either a broom or a feathered lance. The composition is done in a 'sketchy' style and in front of this figure are outlines that are difficult to identify. They might be spears, spatulas or huge leaves.²⁰

Also done in the 'sketch' style, is a spring summer scene engraved on a bone found at the Upper Magdalenian site of La Madeleine (France) which shows two humans between two horse heads carrying sticks or spears. To the left is a huge eel drawn over linear sets of marks which might be rain or water but their analysis reveals sets of marks which are a lunar calendar for two months. The microscope suggests the 'sticks' might be 'brooms' or symbolic plants. The entire bone was covered with red ochre.²¹

From the Spanish Late Magdalenian site of Cueto de la Mino comes a broken baton with notational sets and quickly sketched images. Two ibex heads and four plant forms can be identified, each with their own notational sets and each drawn in a different style. One of the ibex heads is crossed out.²² The ibex is a sign for early spring and thus the calendar on the baton starts in early February and ends at the half moon of July. There may be no metaphor here because the crossing out of the ibex might be the record of a spring kill with no mythic connotation implied.

¹⁹ Ibid: Fig. 94 & 95. The symbolism of the alder tree is ancient and is explained in detail in Graves (1960: 169-173). My mention of this reference in no way implies that such metaphor was in operation among the people who engraved *this* scene.

²⁰ Ibid: Fig. 96 & 97.

²¹ Ibid: Fig. 96-99.

²² Ibid: Fig. 102 - 104.

Marshak (1991: 218) sees here “the integrated beginnings of arithmetic, astronomy, writing, abstracted symbolism and notation.” Such a conclusion seems unwarranted. There is no arithmetic here; set theory yes but little evidence of arithmetic operations. Writing, even in an embryonic form, is not present and there may be no abstracted symbolism. Astronomical knowledge, however, is certainly in evidence. What *is* impressive is the integration of a time scale (lunar calendar) with moments of significance; “images appear as signs above their associated sets of marks” (Marshak 1991: Fig. 104). Conceptually, this baton is the ancestor of Greco-Roman calendars, the Scandinavian rune clock, the English Clogg Almanac, the Siberian (Yamut) calendar and the record sticks of American Indians (Marshak 1991: 218).

More mysterious are several paintings from the well known caves in the French Dordogne at Lascaux which depict animals accompanied by quickly sketched plant forms, some of which are attached to their bodies. Most researchers quickly identify them as spears but I agree with Marshak that they do not look like spears or phalluses; they are curved and branched.²³ I also agree with Marshak’s heavy criticism of those who see sexual connotations in nearly every symbol in these caves.

Not far from La Vache is the cave of Marsoulas within which is a painting whose composition combines bison, horse, plant forms (?feathered lances) and notational sets.²⁴ One bison has a sign within it that could be an abstracted human hand. Are that sign and the bison causally related in meaning?

From the Late Magdalenian site of Lorthet (French Pyrenees) comes an engraved piece of antler whose slender boat-shaped form could not have been a tool. The imagery is dominated by a forked tongued viper which is either pregnant or has just eaten a large meal. There are two plant forms above, and two rows of schematized birds, above and below the snake. The bottom series of birds have huge eyes suggesting newly hatched chicks. The temptation to indulge in backward extrapolation here is irresistible. Do we have here the Cosmic Snake as the Goddess of Fertility and Creator of Life? Are we viewing the earliest representations that intuitively recognize that the Great Goddess was multiplex and had many manifestations. Do we have here separate Bird, Snake and Eye Goddesses? See Crawford (1991) and Gimbutas (1989, 1991).

²³ Ibid: Fig. 105 - 107.

²⁴ Ibid: Fig. 108.

At the Middle Magdalenian site of Labastide in the French Pyrenees comes an engraved stone depicting a fish with renewed belly (to indicate pregnancy) below which is a snake. Several sets of darts were drawn over the animals. There are three sets of arcs along the edge of the stone.²⁵ Marshak notes that snakes are almost never depicted killed with darts in Paleolithic art. Are we looking at the precursors of the Fish and Snake Goddess (cf Gimbutas 1989)?

Marshak does not speculate in this manner but he does ask the question: "Were the animals renewed to be 'rekilled' in a series of rites or ceremonies?" (Marshak 1991: 230). Rituals involving the 'symbolic' hunting of animals could be performed several ways. 1) The ritual artifact could be a small, portable bone, stone, slate or baton which was carried about, consulted and marked whenever necessary. 2) Caves were entered because the ritual objects were the nontransportable cave paintings and their location determined the site of the rituals. Many animals in cave art show spears or darts over the body that were added to the image at various times. Some also show duplication (renewal) of body parts added over time. Cave rites would be physically difficult to perform and time consuming because many chambers containing the art are well back from the mouth and difficult to enter. Furthermore we must mention the likelihood that caves were consciously selected as sites for the most important rituals (and their associated pictorial art) because they were seen to be the womb of the Goddess as Earth Mother. Cave art was likely reserved for only the most important ceremonies (Marshak 1991: 231).

"The most important document concerned with 'killing' and symbolic weapons is an engraved bone [horse pelvis] from Paglicci, on the eastern coast of southern Italy, which comes from the late Upper Paleolithic" (Marshak 1991: 231). The rear face of the bone shows the head of an adult bovid with the small head of a calf. The main face depicts a running horse above which the head of a deer was added later. Perhaps as many as 20 spears are in, and around, the horse.²⁶ The cave itself contains paintings of two pregnant mares in red and also red paintings of human hands. "The horse did not represent a particular horse intended to be a victim on some day of hunting but was intended as a generalized image whose meaning was continuous. He represented a class and, to that extent, perhaps also a *myth*" (Marshak 1991: 232-

²⁵ Ibid: Fig 117 - 119.

²⁶ Ibid: Fig. 120.

233, italics mine). The abstraction of the specific to the generalized, the creation of categories, is the first all important step in conceptualizing a philosophy or metaphysics which rests upon a recognition of suprahuman forces that can be at least partially understood. In later times, these classes will become anthropomorphized as attributes of all-embracing deities, an evolutionary process that culminates in the Classical Cultures of Europe and Asia.

On the walls of the Aurignacian Cave of Les Trois Frères in the French Pyrenees is an engraved panel depicting a ritually renewed bison (second tail added) which was 'killed' many times with spears and overmarked with two zigzags strongly suggestive of serpents.²⁷

Virtually all Upper Paleolithic compositions that contain mythic imagery are executed in a 'quick sketch' style, a striking feature of their execution that Marshak does not comment upon. Such consistency implies that a tradition bound story known throughout a culture lay behind the choice of style because stylization, with its resultant simplification and abstraction, *sufficed in spite of the loss of information content*. If it did not suffice, the simplification would backfire and obscure, confuse and muddle communication. A tradition bound context seems to have determined the choice of artistic style. The repeated use of this 'quick sketch' approach in this context is evidence for a well known mythic content with a wide cultural currency which allowed itself to be abstracted.



The Bear Cult

The ritual killing of bears in the spring or in the late fall survived into the 19th century in the French Pyrenees and into the 20th century among the Ainu on Sakhalin and the Japanese island of Hokkaido (Ohnuki-Tierney 1974). Perhaps Paleolithic images of killed bears from the French Pyrenees represent bears killed in such rituals. Adjacent to Les Trois Frères is the Massat where an engraved

²⁷ Ibid: Fig. 121.

baton of deer antler was found that shows the head of a bear spouting blood in which are embedded spears (darts).²⁸ Forward of the head are the eyes and beak of a water bird, as if to indicate their arrival in late spring at the same time as bears come down into river valleys to feed on salmon and thereby expose themselves to be caught for the spring bear ritual.

Also near to Les Trois Frères is the Magdalenian cave of Montespan. There are a variety of engraved animals on the walls and horses sculpted in clay on the floor. "...the headless statue of the bear rises from the floor ... The animal is crouching, lying on its stomach; the forepaws are stretched out in front, the claws [on the right paw] are clearly indicated. The hindlegs are gathered under the body ... The surface of this 'dummy,' which is rather roughly made, is smooth as if worn by rubbing with a supple skin drawn over the clay surface. This wear is more marked near the neck; the head is there, was never modeled ... In the centre of the neck is a deep hole driving inwards, and signs that a wooden stump once supported a young bear's skull [that was] found nearby, between the bear's paws. The body of this bear was stabbed by more than 30 javelin thrusts of a various sizes, entering very deeply" (Breuil 1952: 238). Although there is disagreement as to the exact nature of the wear and holes on the bear's body, it seems indisputable that we have here a statue from the Paleolithic bear rituals.

From the Upper Paleolithic site of Pechialet (French Dordogne) comes a small stone with a fascinating image engraved in the 'quick sketch' style. Two men are hunting or teasing a standing bear but they carry no weapons.²⁹ Is this a record of one event in an initiation rite in which initiates ceremonially dance with a bear? Or, is this a depiction of the ceremonial baiting of the bear who has come to earth as a messenger from the gods as was done within Ainu ceremony?

²⁸ Ibid: Fig. 123.

²⁹Ibid: Fig. 149.



Cosmic Serpent and Mythic Horse

The horse was central to myth in the Upper Paleolithic. Long before the domestication of the horse and the emergence of Indo-European culture, it occupied a central position in mytho-poetics.³⁰ The horse is often associated with fish and pregnant mares figure as prominently in Upper Paleolithic art as do stallions. The myths involved, therefore, cannot have a distinct male bias such as those of the later Indo-Europeans who emerged from southwest Russian during the Neolithic. Furthermore, a spectacular question is raised concerning the

³⁰ There is a possibility that the horse was domesticated in the Middle Paleolithic (!) in at least one *Neanderthal* locality and in the Upper Paleolithic in the Dordogne region of France. The evidence has to do with a controversial analysis of the wear on fossil horse teeth and details of engraved horse images (Bahn 1976, 1978, 1980; Cook 1980; Littauer and Bahn 1980). If true, a question of considerable magnitude is raised. How and why was this knowledge lost for several thousand years only to be rediscovered anew by the Kurgan Culture of southwest Russian in the fifth millennium B.C.? We can sidestep the debate because the direct evidence for the primacy of the horse in Upper Paleolithic myth does not rely upon the possibility of its domestication. The unique contribution of the Indo-Europeans to horse mythology seems to be extreme chauvinism.

asvamedha, the Indo-European horse ritual, which is best known from ancient India, that conferred sovereignty upon the king. Does the rite have origins in the Paleolithic? Does this particular process by which divine power is transferred to the human ruler originate in the mytho-poetics of the Upper Paleolithic? Such a hypothesis is not as far fetched as it might seem at first glance. The Bear Cults that survived into the 19th century in the French Pyrenees, and into the 20th century with the Ainu of Japan, are extraordinary survivals derived from Paleolithic times.

A more difficult puzzle is why the horse is central to these myths? Why not the bear or lion which were rarely eaten yet also viewed in mythic terms? The nature and frequency of the Bear Cult bears witness to the mythic stature of the bear but no comparable ritual is known involving cave lions. Perhaps the key variable is the mythic deity's behavior when incarnated in animal form. Lion cubs in rare incidences can be calmed down, made somewhat docile and raised easily in confinement. There is no possibility of making a half grown lion a village pet, while that can frequently be done with a bear, albeit with a careful eye out for unpredictable outbursts of aggression. Furthermore, the cave lion was quite rare throughout the Paleolithic; the cave bear was common by comparison in the megafaunal complexes of ice age Europe.

The choice of the horse may have involved a combination of factors. In the wild, their fleetness and grace would have been impressive and emotionally magnetic. The physical danger they presented in close quarters was minor compared to the ferocity of an aroused bear or the killer instincts of the predatory lion (and lioness). The Bear Cult in Paleolithic times may well have been used as an initiatory test for manhood as much popular literature suggests and some archeological evidence supports. However, the Ainu conception is quite different. In Ainu culture, the bear was a visiting god and had no part to play any initiation ceremony (Ohnuki-Tierney 1974). In any case, the horse could be tamed and then approached to be handled, used as a draft animal or possibly ridden, although there is no strong evidence that this was done in the Upper Paleolithic (but see footnote 29). Within a powerful mythical context, horses could be calmed enough (or perhaps even tranquilized with herbal drugs) to participate in the transference of divine power to the king in ceremonies that involved a magnetic immersion in the most powerful of mythic forces: copulation with the deity. Transference of sexual fluids is *the* most potent transference of fertility and life sustaining powers and need only be mimed at close quarters. A mare is much more manageable than a stallion at close quarters and thus the concept of a Great Goddess (as opposed to God) who transfers sovereignty is reinforced and the possibility of a homosexual interaction, which could

never carry the potency of opposite sex power transference, is avoided. It is not necessary to domesticate the horse, in the usual sense of inducing enough docility for the animal to be ridden or used a draft animal, in order to calm a mare enough to participate in the investiture of leadership ritual. Bears were caged and calmed for long periods until the day of ritual when they would be deliberately aroused. The controversial evidence for the domestication of the horse in the Upper Paleolithic need not be accepted for some form of horse ritual to exist that transformed a human chieftain into a semi-divine being by transferring power from the Goddess to her appointed consort on earth via the most powerful of sexual/fertility metaphors. There is virtually no evidence in Upper Paleolithic art for the anthropomorphization of the horse deity. When deities revealed themselves in animal form, conceptualization and imagery remained embedded in the animal morphology and ecological phenomena of the natural world. However, the Goddess also revealed herself directly in human form as will be discussed later.

Do the images which have survived from the Upper Paleolithic support this hypothesis? Abstract plausibility is no test for confirmation and we have, once again, walked into the quicksand of backward extrapolation. One caveat may be stated at the outset. As already explored above, if the imagery under scrutiny has no mythic context, then we fall back to an explanation that involves only the detailed recording of natural history for the biological and ecological information coded therein.

Consider the cultural and ecological environment in which these peoples lived. They were very unintelligent and most likely utilized their environment in far more sophisticated ways than we in the twentieth century are able to do. Survival depended on a method of teaching the essentials of life from generation to generation. Concrete and abstract symbolism brings forth the metaphors which allow for the dissemination of information and the repetition of important information necessary for survival. A connection between the everyday and mythic worlds emerges when we examine concrete and abstract images. For example, the Cosmic Snake which lays the Cosmic Egg of the Universe may be seen to have a very real and extremely important correlation in human life. When a baby is born, the umbilical cord pulsates with the waters of life (blood) until the cord is cut and the baby separates from the mother. The placenta is expelled from the uterus, still connected to the umbilical cord. As a snake sheds its skin, so does the womb shed its lining. The womb, like the Cosmic Egg, brings forth life and is therefore sacred. In many tribal cultures, even today, the placenta is buried in the earth as a

regenerative symbol and is therefore a metaphor for those snakes who live in chambers underground.³¹

A small stone has been found at Les Trois Frères which shows an engraved salmon within which is the head of a mare or colt.³² Is this evidence of a primal Fish Goddess (manifestation of the Goddess as Life Giver) giving rise to the Mare Goddess? A Fish Goddess could impregnate a Horse Goddess, or mate with a Horse God, and bring forth the Cosmic Serpent which will then lay the Cosmic Egg from which springs the universe. (The Cosmic Serpent may be male, female or androgynous.) Or, is this image merely a natural history record of spring when fish are returning and mares are giving birth? I have no doubt that this speculation will strike many readers as verging on the outrageous. However, as you will read below, the direct iconographic evidence for mythic statements of equal complexity in the European Upper Paleolithic is not hard to find.

In the Upper Perigordian rock shelter of La Colombière (France), which was a campsite for reindeer hunters, nine, hand-sized (i.e. easily carried), engraved pebbles have been found.³³ One shows a wild stallion with serpentine arcs within its body. Is this a representation of the Snake Goddess and Horse God whose mating will produce the Cosmic Egg from which the universe comes forth upon 'hatching'? Another pebble at La Colombière depicts a woolly rhinoceros (engraved over a headless reindeer) whose horns have been ritually renewed and which has four spears in its belly.

The Gravettian hunters of central and eastern Europe were mammoth hunters who roamed the steppes and plains of this region which had an extremely harsh climate during the last ice age. They often constructed teepees and houses from mammoth bones. In keeping with the principal discussed above, their imagery rarely depicted their main dietary item. From the Upper Magdalenian Pekarna Gravettian shelter in Moravia (Czechoslovakia) comes several decorated bone knives.³⁴ Three knives show horse imagery. One contains three horse heads on one face associated with four sets of linear dots. On the obverse face of this knife

³¹ L. Blumenberg 1993: personal communication.

³² Marshak 1991: Fig. 124.

³³ Ibid: Fig. 128 & 130a,b.

³⁴ Ibid: Fig. 135 & 136.

are an antelope and bison head associated with a schematic serpent, wavy tri-lines and sets of linear dots. Another knife shows a horse with a triple arc on its body, a tri-line suggesting water, sets of dots and other signs difficult to interpret. An overview of the elements comprising such images makes it almost impossible not to ascribe some metaphorical significance to the composition. To *not* do so, would require one to ignore all but the easily identified animals which are rendered in a naturalistic style.

From the Late Magdalenian site of Abri Mége (French Dordogne) has come an antler baton with two holes engraved with important imagery.³⁵ On one face is a doe's head with three abstracted serpentine images behind one ear. Behind the doe is a stallion which has been ritually 'killed' and a pony or colt. Two small human figures which appear to be masked shamans in robes have been included, one to the rear of the doe and the other to the rear of the stallion. The doe certainly indicates spring, the stallion and colt denote summer. On the other face are three swans (head and snake-like neck), two of are in the midst of the spring mating dance, and there is another shaman also.

A deliberation conflation of bird-snake symbolism seems to be in evidence. In Neolithic times, the hybrid Snake-Bird Goddess was ubiquitous (Gimbutas 1989). Upper Paleolithic batons are assumed to have ceremonial function in that no utilitarian use can be imagined for their form. They are usually described as scepters which were carried by chiefs to symbolize their authority. Marshak's research suggests another function which lies within the realm of mytho-poetics. Hanging from belts by a leather thong which went through a hole at one end, these batons were easily transportable tablets on which were encoded mythic metaphors. Furthermore, their function was not static, they were not the bearers of passive imagery to be looked at, contemplated or simply enjoyed. The imagery on the baton was sometimes notated against a lunar calendar and often altered from time to time as seen in the ritual killing of animals by the addition of spears to their images, or in their periodic renewal by the addition of duplicate body parts. Although we can never know the words spoken, thoughts contemplated, mythic context or 'ultimate meaning', these compositions have revealed the mechanical steps in certain rituals. Was the owner of the Abri Mége baton a shaman who performed a year long series of rituals (Marshak 1991: 263), the baton containing critical symbolism that was manipulated during those rites? Another feature of this baton which indicates its importance to its

³⁵ Ibid: Fig. 138.

owner is that the animals are not drawn in the 'quick sketch' style so common with engraved compositions but are executed in a finely articulated, naturalistic approach. When a calendar is present, it might serve as either a reminder when certain rituals are to be performed or as a record of those acted out in the recent past; the former function seems most probable.



The North German Reindeer Ritual

In Late Magdalenian times, c. 12,000 B.C., in what is now Schleswig-Holstein, a reindeer hunting culture known as the Hamburgian occupied the region. These people made almost no art and they produced no depictions of reindeer. A hunter's summer campsite has been excavated near Hamburg beside an ancient lake. On the ancient lake floor, a reindeer doe skeleton was found with an 18 lb stone in its rib cage. Antler growth indicated May or June as the time when the reindeer was ritually killed and hurled whole into the lake. Three nearby lakes yielded 30 such ritually sacrificed reindeer (Marshak 1991: 266).

Similar rituals persisted for several thousand years. In the same region c.8,000 B.C., the Arhensburg Culture who were also reindeer hunters, performed the same reindeer rites. In a lake, a stake seven feet tall and five feet thick was crowned with a reindeer doe skull from an individual 16 years old. These people also made a reindeer antler ax which became a common tool throughout Germany and Scandinavia in the succeeding Mesolithic-Maglelose cultures. The Ahrensburg ax was a woodworking tool and the sets of marks upon it might be a lunar calendar.³⁶



³⁶ Ibid: Fig. 142 - 145.

The Upper Paleolithic Shaman

Human figures in Upper Paleolithic art are rare, yet several general characteristics of their images are apparent. None of these figures have weapons and therefore it appears no hunters or warriors are depicted. All are executed in the 'quick sketch' style and many wear ceremonial, symbolic dress. It seems unavoidable that shamans, who are ubiquitous within tribal cultures, are being depicted.

Three examples from Les Trois Frères are males with exposed genitals. One wears antlers and a tail; the other two wear bison masks. All are in a dance-like pose.³⁷ The depiction of ithyphallic men is a generalized symbol for fertility comparable to the pregnant woman.

A Magdalenian composition from Laugerie Basse reveals 'quick sketch' humanoid figures with bird-like heads reaching towards a fish. Two isolated arms were added to the composition after the figures were engraved.³⁸ Do we see here a ceremony conducted by masked shamans? Or, a rendition of the Bird and Fish Goddesses? Or both, in that the ceremony makes manifest these goddesses on earth? It is not necessary that the people performing such ceremonies be intellectually aware of the metaphors contained in their costumes, songs, dance or ritual. When deities descend to earth and take up temporary residence within ritual participants, sacred time is revealed on earth as a total immediate experience. Intellectual contemplation is hardly essential to understand or contact this experience, indeed it may be irrelevant.

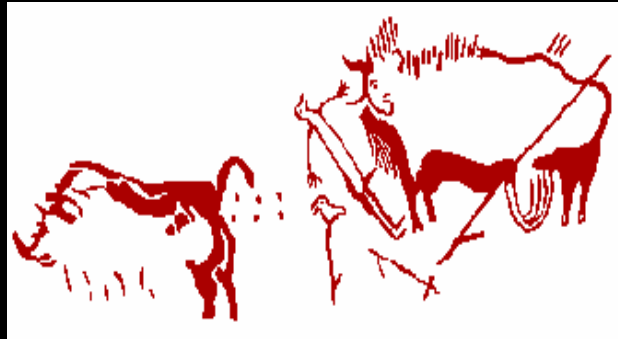
The site of Mas d'Azil (near the French Pyrenees) has yielded a bone disc which has an image on one face of a masked dancer who is opposed to the paw of a bear with an associated horse image. On the other face is a naked dancer with a stick on its shoulder baiting a bear.³⁹ This figure is ithyphallic and has a dog-like or bear-like face suggesting a mask or spirit guardian/clan totem.

³⁷ Ibid: Fig. 150.

³⁸ Ibid: Fig. 151 & 152.

³⁹ Ibid: Fig. 153.

From the Late Magdalenian site of La Vache in the foothills of the French Pyrenees comes a thin bone fragment which Marshak (1991: 275) believes is the remains of a ritual object; it shows no signs of wear. It is too narrow to have 'faces' and is engraved all around the surface. Six hunched over horned figures with bird heads follow a stallion which has a spear in its stomach and blood spurting from its nose.⁴⁰ One figure is ithyphallic. Quite noticeable are the two styles of engraving in this composition; the presumed human figures are done in 'quick sketch', the stallion in a careful naturalistic manner. Are the figures hunched over because they assumed a reverential attitude? A crude pentagon above them might be the sun or moon. Under the horse's tail is a bear image facing front. Other later additions include a fish and a wounded (?) auroch under the horse's head. Three angles at the right might be water symbolism.



I'll conclude this section with a description of the most famous depiction of a shaman known from the Upper Paleolithic, the one image that has been most widely reproduced and discussed, although not all researchers agree that it represents a shaman. In the famous Lascaux Caves, which encompass a period of time which ranges from the terminal Aurignacian to early Magdalenian (20,000 - 15,000 B.C.), is a small chamber at the rear of the Main Gallery which can only be reached by descending a 16 foot shaft. A blackened stone forms a lip to this shaft and remains of the rope that must have been used for the descent have been found. In the chamber is a large 6' 6" painting which depicts a naked bird-headed man, who is ithyphallic with a bird-headed staff beneath him. He is stretched out before a wounded bison with lowered head, spear through its abdomen and entrails spilling out.⁴¹ The bison is

⁴⁰ Ibid: Fig. 154.

realistically drawn, the shaman is quickly done in a stylized manner. "The position of the shaman's hand points between the horns of the bison, who apparently turns his head to gaze upon his wound, a wound of such finality as to be his death. Could it be that the shaman - notably the only human figure in the whole cave - has gone to contact the soul of the bison in his death-moment, to learn from this animal the mystery of death and rebirth? Is this an image of a shaman in a trance who during his 'soul journey' battled a mythological bison? Is the figure not a flesh and blood shaman of the tribe but a mythological ancestor - a Dreamtime ancestor - killing a mythological bison? (cf. Marshak 1991: 278). Human men with bird masks ('bird heads') are found in several Upper Paleolithic compositions. Are they shamans dedicated to the Bird Goddess?⁴² To the left of these figures is a two horned rhinoceros moving to the left. The dung of the rhinoceros [which is to the left of the shaman] directly facing the bird [on the shaman's staff] is given such prominence as to suggest that, even in the act of apparently passing out of the life cycle, the dung still contains the seeds of fruit or grain that will begin a new cycle" (Baring and Cashford 1991: 37).

⁴¹ Ibid: Fig. 155.

⁴² Marshak (1991: 278-279) indulges in a tenacious critique of the dangers of cross cultural comparisons, backward extrapolation and whether or not mythic images can be derived from trance states. Pitfalls abound when reference is made to such matters but to dismiss *all* such procedures as misleading is unnecessarily conservative and renders a very large data base of anthropological observations useless. Yes, caution must be exercised in such analysis. Some cultures that employ trance states did not develop complex mytho-poetics, as Marshak points out, but others certainly did. Everything has a beginning and an origin. Each myth in each society is not a *de novo* creation unconnected to past history. The record of human culture is *not* a warehouse of disconnected, unrelated facts, stories and dreams. Respect for raw data and what it reveals when contemplated in isolation is a professional, rigorous *beginning* to all research, a procedure to be adopted by all. Gratuitous comparisons that are merely notations of similarities that have no causal or structural meaning are to be avoided, however difficult the task. However, to *end* one's studies denies the interconnectedness of all human history and cultural development.



The Primary Deity

What is usually described as female imagery but may be, in fact, more complex: it is the rendering of a pair of breasts attached to a slim phallic-like neck and sometimes a slender phallic-like torso as well. There is much evidence to support the thesis that the earliest conceptions of *the* primary deity are neither male nor female, but androgynous (cf. O'Flaherty 1980) and these figures support this proposal. From the East Gravettian site of Dolní Věstonice (Moravia) comes one such figurine whose surface is covered by sets of marks whose arrangement "gives us a perfect 'lunar month,' going from day of invisibility to first crescent to full moon and again to first crescent..." (Marshak 1991: 190).⁴³ Are we going too far in our interpretations to see a primal androgynous Moon Deity here that was believed responsible for Fertility and Life Giving? Is the usual assumption that hunter-gatherers

⁴³ Marshak 1991: Fig. 161 & 162.

of these times had no understanding of the reproductive function of sex false? In these figurines we have a form that is totally concentrated upon the depiction of male and female fertility within a single body.⁴⁴ A series of eight small beads from this same site belong to this category for they are in the form of large pendulous breasts attached to a phallic-like neck.⁴⁵ The marks on their surfaces have not been deciphered.

Another category of form is the sculpting of the female genital area, with obvious vulva often rendered naturalistically, at the base of a long phallic-like torso. Examples include a mammoth ivory pendant from Dolní Věstonice⁴⁶ and a baton from the Middle Magdalenian site of Le Placard (France).⁴⁷ The androgyny is very apparent as it is in those sculptures of the second type and the symbolization of an androgynous primal deity of Life Giving and Fertility is apparent. The Placard baton is covered with engraved lines whose meaning has not yet been deciphered. Extreme stylization within this approach is seen in the late Upper Paleolithic ivory figurine from Mezherich (Ukraine) on which the deeply incised vulva was renewed three times and a two armed cross was incised on the torso.⁴⁸

Genesis in the Old Testament views the creation of Eve as both a necessity and a problem. The first and most serious 'fall from grace' was the separation of primal androgyny into two sexes who, when isolated, are forever incomplete and alienated. The birth and separation of male from female, or vice versa, does not define either sex as inferior but it does establish the end of a cosmic era and the beginning of a new epoch. This archetypal evolutionary transition is nearly universal in the mythologies of the world. When Wholeness, which is primal androgyny, comes to an end in metaphysical alienation, the existential dilemma and the endless search to recreate primal wholeness begins. This follows upon

⁴⁴ I would like to thank my wife Leslie for calling attention to the likelihood that the earliest conception of the primal deity *in tribal societies* could have been androgynous, in part because the social structures of most tribal societies are neither overtly patriarchal nor matriarchal.

⁴⁵ Marshak 1991: Fig. 164.

⁴⁶ Ibid: Fig. 165.

⁴⁷ Ibid: Fig. 166 & 167.

⁴⁸ Ibid: Fig. 185. Marshak fails to recognize this figurine as another example of a vulva at the base of a phallic-like torso.

the 'origin of consciousness in the breakdown of the bicameral mind (cf Jaynes, 1976). That search encompasses an enormous range of possibilities, from those that require no training or special knowledge and thus open to anyone (such as sexual intercourse - 'making love' or the taking of easily obtainable drugs) to experiences so difficult to obtain they are accessible only to the most advanced spiritual adepts.⁴⁹



The Goddess

Female images are common throughout the Upper Paleolithic from the Aurignacian Period onwards, in contrast to the rarity of male images. As animal imagery is not simply hunting magic, female imagery is not simply fertility magic.

"When we look at the female images, therefore, we are faced with a host of questions. Which *aspect* of the female process or myth is being depicted, symbolized, or given story? Is it the menstrual, the pubertal, the copulative, the pregnant, or the milk giving? Is it a specialized or a general aspect of the myth and story? Is the general image of the mother 'goddess', [the first ancestor] of the tribe? Or is [that first ancestor], the female aspect which is related to birth and rebirth in all life and nature and, therefore, to a 'female property'? Is it related to biological or seasonal cycles? Is the image related to the lunar cycle via the story of birth, death and rebirth and also by comparisons between the lunar and menstrual cycles? Was the image made to be used once for a specialized purpose and as one aspect of the wider myth, or was it a

⁴⁹ The nostalgia of present-day intellectual Unicameral Minds, for the state of psychic unity that is believed to be possessed by the 'noble savage', is a thread of philosophy with a history more than two millennia deep. Few of these fantasies are accompanied by the sober realization that the Unicameral Mind is forever conscious, and has acquired an extraordinary creative process that depends upon a dialogue with the 'analog I' (Jaynes 1976). The *price* we pay as Unicameral Minds is severe loneliness and alienation from ourselves, others and the gods. The *prize* we gain is a much greater understanding of the 'world'. The *challenge* is not to attempt a retreat to the now unobtainable earlier state of the Bicameral Mind, or to become immobilized by our alienation, but to integrate our understanding, loneliness, fears and loves within our creativity. A serious measure of happiness is then possible.

long-range image? The possibilities are large" (Marshak 1991: 283). Such are the metaphors which can be manipulated by the artist. Where lies the *reality* of the complete myth is a different matter and a problem not amenable to the usual sort of analysis. Marshak is repeatedly befuddled when attempting to confront this interpretative challenge but in all fairness, we must remember that he is a laboratory archeologist and not a mythographer or historian of religion.

Female imagery from the Upper Paleolithic falls into several rather distinct categories. Rather uncommon are realistic depictions of full breasted and possibly pregnant figures as seen in the broken mammoth ivory torso from Aurignacian site of Brassempouy (France)⁵⁰. A naturalistic torso of a young pregnant woman carved in hematite has been found in the East Gravettian site of Petrkovice (Moravia).⁵¹ A famous and tiny (2") mammoth ivory head of a young woman was found at Dolní Věstonice that exhibits superb realism with details of hair style and features that suggest a portrait.⁵² There appears to have been a sculptural tradition of naturalism which may have been devoid of metaphor or mythic context and intentionally produced naturalistic portraits.

There also seems to be an abstracted sign for pregnancy and/or fertility that was used in many localities in France during the Upper Paleolithic. It is a 'P'-like sign, that occurs in several closely related variants that resemble 'p', 'P', and 'p' either of which may be drawn 'forward' or 'backward'. These signs appear on the walls of the cave of Tuc d'Audoubert (sister cave to Les Trois Frères) in a small chamber on whose ceiling is a small crudely engraved horse surrounded by more than 80 'P' signs.⁵³ These signs form a semi-circle around the horse and were made by many different tools at many different times. Some have been ritually renewed as well (Marshak 1991: 394). Returning once again to Les Trois Frères, we find an engraved horse over which was engraved 14 'P' signs, twelve of which belong to one group.⁵⁴ This horse has been ritually renewed by the addition of a second back and tail, also a number

⁵⁰ Marshak 1991: Fig. 160.

⁵¹ Ibid: Fig. 173.

⁵² Ibid: Fig. 174.

⁵³ Ibid: Fig. 237.

⁵⁴ Ibid: Fig. 196.

of stomachs and there is a double angle sign on its rump. Marshak (1991: 328) sees fourteen separate rituals or years represented here. It is interesting to note that both these horses and their associated 'P' signs are in small chambers with difficult access suggesting a very private ritual, perhaps reserved for only a few very advanced adults who may have comprised one small group.

In the southern Spanish cave of La Pileta, there is a wealth of cave art whose dating ranges from the Solutrean of the Upper Paleolithic to Neolithic times. A small chamber large enough for two people contains many paintings but the central image is a pregnant mare. She and a cow are overlain with double line marks made in both red and black and executed over a long period of time by different hands.⁵⁵ Do these signs indicate a ritual killing as Marshak (1991: 330) suggests or an identification that relates directly to pregnancy? This chamber is also very difficult to enter, particularly for a pregnant woman.

Another category of form which employs female symbols is what Marshak (1991: 294-295) terms the 'vulva disc', an apt description of a circular form with gouged line that unmistakably resembles the female vulva. Examples include a disc made from a mammoth tooth found in an East Gravettian grave at Brno (Moravia)⁵⁶, a pebble found at Polesini in Italy and a series of carved and engraved images found from Hungary to France.⁵⁷ Many female figurines of the Upper Paleolithic wear heavily braided cord. In the Neolithic, such a pattern is taken to be symbolic of cosmic snakes and flowing water. Are the females wearing these cords priestesses, female shamans or depictions of the Goddess? Did this adornment serve to mark a mature, fertile or pregnant female (Marshak 1991: 378)? Note also that a baby's umbilical cord resembles a heavily braided or twisted rope and the wearing of a braided cord would be a further symbol of the Goddess' all important fertility.⁵⁸ A torso fragment of a clay fired figurine found at Pavlov (Moravia) shows a hip belt made of heavily braided cord.⁵⁹ A female figurine from Kostenki in the Ukraine shows a heavy corded twine that is roped both over and under her

⁵⁵ Ibid: Fig. 197.

⁵⁶ Ibid: Fig. 168.

⁵⁷ Ibid: Fig. 168a & 169.

⁵⁸ L. Blumenberg 1993: personal communication.

⁵⁹ Marshak 1991: Fig. 226.

shoulders. This same figure also wears collar, elbow and wrist bracelets of twined material and is both fat and pregnant.⁶⁰ The so-called 'Venus' figurines made by the Gravettian hunters of the Russian plain also show personal decoration of twined cord. A Gravettian mammoth ivory figurine from Avdeevo in the Ukraine wears a head band, body band, arm bands, bracelets and possibly cap all made of twined perishable material.⁶¹

The site of Dolní Věstonice has yielded additional spectacular artifacts. A small figurine sculpted from a mixture of clay and burnt bone that was then fired, shows important characteristics. It is armless with pendulous breasts and pronounced buttocks; the vulva is noticeably absent as are realistic facial features. Elongated slits replace eyes and there is a single line to represent the nose.⁶² Marshak (1991: 300) describes the face as mask-like and traditional (?) but is confused as to exactly what is portrayed. Gimbutas (1989) suggests that such depictions are those of a masked figure, likely a priestess during the enactment of a goddess ritual during which she may incarnate the goddess. The exaggeration of life bearing anatomy (breasts which give milk, the womb, and the buttocks - which are themselves egg-shaped) serves to emphasize the Goddess as Life Giver and bringer of Fertility (cf. Gimbutas 1989).⁶³

Most mysterious is the unique depiction of a female from the East Gravettian site of Predmost in Moravia. This image is a complete figure engraved on a mammoth tusk in an abstract geometric style in which ellipses composed of five concentric lines are the basic design element. The head is triangular in outline with horizontal and vertical areas 'blocked out' to indicate brows, eyes, cheeks, nose and mouth. The totality of the composition strongly suggests a mask.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Ibid: Fig. 227.

⁶¹ Ibid: Fig. 228.

⁶² Ibid: Fig. 171.

⁶³ Additional research has revealed that these Moravian Goddess figurines and many thousands of others that usually depict animals are made of nothing more than loess, wind deposited silt and water. They are deliberately only partially fired so as to render them highly likely to shatter when put in a fire. Soffer, et. al. (1993) conclude that these figurines were deliberately exploded as one act in an important ritual.

⁶⁴ Marshak 1991: Fig. 176 & 177.

From the late Magdalenian site of Fontalés (France) comes a foot long limestone slab with two quickly engraved female figures. One has a circle within her abdomen. Also present at this site are the head of a stag, a second and possible stag head and bird (?goose) head, each associated with sets of complex linear marks.⁶⁵ Is this one figure with an egg inside the rendition of a pregnant woman or the Goddess nurturing the Cosmic Egg? A similar composition is seen on a stone slab from the late Magdalenian sites of Lalinde and La Gare de Couze both in France.⁶⁶ Such impressionistic images are found over a wide area from the Dordogne of France to Germany north of the Alps. From the Final Magdalenian site of Hohlenstein in Bavaria comes a stone slab with 11 such female figures.⁶⁷



From the late French Magdalenian site of Abri Mège in the Dordogne comes another 'one of a kind' female image. Engraved upon a bone point is a figure that is nearly impossible to describe. This figure, which Marshak (1991: 315) calls "the abstracted goddess", had a tiny head, fiddle-shaped body, squared shoulders, and double oval vulva. What is especially striking, however, is the presence of meanders or serpentine

⁶⁵ Ibid: Fig. 180.

⁶⁶ Ibid: Fig. 182 & 183.

⁶⁷ Ibid: Fig. 184.

forms and chevrons on the body, a circumstance which immediately calls to mind fundamental symbols of the Goddess in Neolithic times (Gimbutas 1989). Meanders and serpentine forms symbolize the waters of life, the goddess's life giving fluids (moisture, rain) and the cosmic serpent of eternally renewing life. This figure *appears to establish* that these symbols of the Goddess have their origin in the last Upper Paleolithic hunter-gatherer cultures of the Dordogne region of France! For all his distaste for cross cultural comparisons and backward extrapolation from the Neolithic, Marshak (1991: 314-315) cannot resist the compelling message in this image. "Could it be that the origins of the time-factored, multi-storied agricultural 'mother goddess' appear in the Upper Paleolithic, thousands of years before agriculture? *Could the time factored lore and rites of the 'goddess' be one of the cognitive, intellectual threads leading to and preparing the way for agriculture? Could these decorated images from Mezin represent this broad general aspect of the female myth [emphasis mine]?*" Yes, of course, and Marshak should be proud, for it was his research, conducted persistently and alone for more than two decades that has established such origins for an early, important female deity.

In 1992, the excavation led by Emmanuel Anati at Har Karkom (Mt. Sinai) in Israel's southern Negev desert made an extraordinary find. Har Karkom is believed to date to c. 28,000 B.C. In an open area of about 800 yd², were more than 40 statues about three feet high, 15 were still standing. These statues originated as stones chosen for their natural anthropomorphic sculptural qualities, which were then emphasized by deliberate carving and dressing of the stone (Anati 1993: 38-39). In a photograph accompanying the news report, the head of one statue is clearly seen and the resemblance to that of the Neolithic Bird Goddess is striking (Gimbutas 1989)! Such portrayals are believed to be those of priestesses wearing bird masks who serve the Great Goddess.

On the cave wall of the Upper Perigordian site of Laussel in France (Dordogne) is a famous relief sculpture. The female figure is stout with pendulous breasts but not pregnant. Her left hand is on her abdomen and her right hand holds a bison horn with 13 incised lines.⁶⁸ The bison horn is much like a lunar crescent and there are, of course, thirteen lunar months in a calendar year. With her head tilted towards the womb, this appears to be an acknowledgment of the relationship "between the waxing phase of the moon and the fecundity of the human womb. In this way, the pattern of relationship between the earthly and the heavenly

⁶⁸ Ibid: Fig. 202.

orders is acknowledged" (Baring and Cashford 1991: 6). She was originally painted in red ochre and there is a 'Y' mark on her thigh. "The phases of the moon were the same for Old Stone Age man as they are for us; so also were the processes of the womb. It may therefore be that the initial observations that gave birth in the mind of man to a mythology of one mystery informing earthly and celestial things was the recognition of an accord between the two 'time-factored' orders: the celestial order of the waxing moon and the earthly order of the womb" (Campbell 1988: 68). Then again, perhaps not because the scientific facts of human development during pregnancy are not believed to have been understood at this time. Indeed perhaps they were only first understood by a handful of brilliant physicians in ancient Egypt.

Nearby are reliefs of animals and the broken figure of a man who looks as if he is about to hurl a lance. Does this scene depict the Mistress of the Animals surrounded by her flock and overseeing the hunt? "... then it is possible ... that the 'goddess' with the horn is a forerunner of later Neolithic, agricultural variants. She was the goddess who was called the 'Mistress of the Animals', had a lunar mythology, and had associated with her signs, symbols, and attributes, including the lunar crescent, the crescent horns of the bull, the fish, the angle-signs of water, the vulva, the naked breasts, the plant, flower, bird, tree and snake. This later goddess was associated in story with a consort or mate who was also part of the seasonal and calendric mythology, a hunter of bull and lion, stag and ibex, as well as of mythical animals whether in the labyrinth, the depths or in the sky. In the story, this hunter was often the 'sun' to the goddess' 'moon'" (Marshak 1991: 336). A Mistress of the Animals could contain the Goddess as Life Giver, particularly if depicted with full breasts, possibly pregnant, and associated with the cosmic waters of life, the life renewing serpent, fish, bull, plants and flowers. Her most favored animals become her epiphanies, her manifestations in the 'world': bull, horse, stag and ibex. Ceremonies would be structured on a timetable provided by the only possible reliable and understandable reference calendar - the moon.⁶⁹ Some ceremonies would be conducted in a 'womb', the most inaccessible chambers of the deep inner recesses of caves. Other rituals would be outside under the sky with arms raised. Food giving and life giving would also be celebrated by ceremonial hunting and sacrifice. Initiation would include combat with her

⁶⁹ The women of Siberian tribal peoples keep a lunar calendar to track pregnancy which is 10 lunar months. The Yurok Indians of California also had a 10 month lunar calendar to track pregnancy. They dropped a stick into a basket each day. A 'month' stick went into a second basket until a count of 10 was reached. Apparently, they could predict births to within a day (Marshak 1991: 337, footnote 19).

epiphanies, for then the Goddess's power and strength would flow into the young men as they passed the test for adulthood. The Bear Cult discussed above is a prime example of mytho-poetics structuring a ritual. We must remember that the Bear Cult need not be considered simply a test for masculine of strength and courage but could also have provided the ritual context during which the Bear Goddess transferred some of her power to those worthy of receiving it.



The God

In the early 1990s, the earliest therianthrope figure known to history was an extraordinary lion-headed human executed with great sophistication and advanced technique that comes from the Aurignacian Period at Hohlenstein, Germany, c.30,000 B.C.⁷⁰ This same site produced a stylized, graceful ivory sculpture of a horse. The aesthetic sophistication and metaphoric complexity of the imagery was married to the highest level of professional craftsmanship and the result is breathtaking; it serves to denote a fully developed style at 30,000 B.C.! Where are its precursors and how did it develop? Such depth of creativity and sophisticated sculptural technique does not emerge *de novo*; there must be a chain of development that stretches back in time. The concept of a major *male* deity appears to be as ancient as the Goddess herself contrary to the usual analysis of such matters, although his depiction (manifestation) is very rare.



⁷⁰ Marshak 1991: Fig.231.

Burial Rituals

An extraordinary glimpse into how these images were utilized is provided by the burial of a male Gravettian hunter excavated at Oelknitz (Germany) that dates from c.14,000 B.C. A headstone made of sandstone was incised with a single vulva⁷¹. Also deposited in the grave was a slender female figurine in a style that emphasized the torso and buttocks, as typified by the coal figurines and pendants found at the German Upper Magdalenian site of Petersfels⁷². These constitute yet a third manner of utilizing female symbolism and metaphor in sculpture. It seems hard to escape the conclusion that the Goddess was invoked during these burial rites for continued protection and life as the hunter journeyed beyond the 'world'.

A further indication as to how various objects might be combined into a complex ritual metaphor is provided by the burial of an 18 year old male from the late Tardi-Gravettian site Arene Candide in the Maritime Alps of northern Italy. The grave and skeleton (i.e. body) were covered with red ochre and yellow ochre was used under the chin. On his skull was a cap made of seashell beads from which hung pendants of deer canine teeth, each of which was carved into an abstracted goddess image with pronounced buttocks and flat belly. Near his upper arm were four batons, three of which were covered with complex sets of marks made over a long period of time (?lunar calendar). Near the upper part of this young man's body lay a decorated stone pendant in the shape of the goddess with pronounced buttocks. Near each knee was a quickly carved stylized goddess figurine which showed no wear thus indicating it was made immediately prior to burial (Marshak 1991: 317). The Great and White Goddess is also the Goddess of Death and Regeneration (cf. Gimbutas 1989, Graves 1966) and that alone suffices for her presence in the grave. In this time and place, we can surmise there was no male deity of equal prominence or else he would have been present also. Yet goddess figurines emphasizing the buttocks are metaphors for the containment of life force, births to come, fertility and life giving. The Goddess of Life Giving is also here to ensure a rebirth, a transmigration of the soul and a continuation of life force in the widest sense.

⁷¹ Ibid: Fig. 168b,c.

⁷² Ibid: Fig. 156 & 157.



Asvamedha

The use of the Sanskrit term for a sacred horse ceremony in much earlier times in Eurasia is perhaps presumptuous in this discussion, but it is meant to indicate a ritual between humans and the divine in which the deity manifests through a horse or similar animal. For a thorough discussion of the *asvamedha* ritual in ancient India, see Blumenerg From the Magdalenian IV layers at Laugerie Basse comes a 4" piece of reindeer bone which was a fragment of a larger composition. The scene depicted is extraordinary and the possible metaphors are among the most spectacular survivals from the Upper Paleolithic. Beneath the hind legs and phallus of a bull is a naked pregnant woman lying on her back with a hand raised as if in adoration. She wears a beaded necklace and bracelet with six bands.⁷³ Marshak (1991: 322) believes this scene depicts a real woman participating in an actual ritual: 'what you see, is what happened'. However several possibilities come to mind and a number of questions follow most of which cannot be answered. Is this a rite of pregnancy? Is this a bull ritual, akin to the horse ritual, during which a female tribal leader must be symbolically impregnated by a divine bull in order to receive a 'mandate from heaven', in order to incarnate the semi-divine powers which are essential for effective leadership and nurturing of the clan? Does the bull incarnate a Sky God who is consort of the Great Goddess, who in turn manifests in the female leader of the tribe? In this case, the ritual would be a metaphor for the consummation of the divine marriage, although in the 'minds of the people' no metaphor would be needed because the actual event is at hand. In such a ritual need the Bison God be killed? Would impregnation be mimed or real? Is the scene possibly that of the cyclical death of the semi-divine queen at the time of transference of power to a new and younger leader? That would be analogous to the ritual killing of the king in early Neolithic times when he no longer possessed the virility and power to govern and nurture effectively. (The fact that the woman is pregnant speaks against this latter scenario.) But if there was a Bison God of such importance, why is his imagery so rare in the Upper Paleolithic? (This may be the only known sculpture depicting a bison god

⁷³ Ibid: 189.

in the Upper Paleolithic.) Does this fragment of reindeer bone come from the *only* late Upper Paleolithic locality that had such myths and therefore practiced the ritual suggested? Or, is the explanation much more prosaic in that the juxtaposition of the woman and bull bison is merely fortuitous? There are incomplete portions of two rectangles to the left of the ritual scene which suggest pens or cages for animals. If any of these proposed variations upon the scenario is true, male thunder-sky gods are *not* the sole invention of the Indo-Europeans who first appeared in the 5th millennium B.C. This possibility is very important for it would challenge a large body of theory and analysis that places the origin of such deities, and the male dominated, aggressive, war-like societies they dominated, squarely in the Neolithic of southwest Russia. Imagine male deities co-equal in status with a supreme Goddess, their combined mytho-poetics structuring a society in which the power between the sexes was more or less equal.

On the obverse of this fragment is a horse's head with a renewed mane that might represent the outcome of a ceremonial ritual killing. There are marks on the muzzle suggestive of a halter or bit which might have been used to lead the horse to sacrifice.⁷⁴ Once again, we meet a tantalizing and unclear datum that suggests that the horse may have been domesticated in the Dordogne region of France during the Late Upper Paleolithic: see footnote 30.

Equally provocative are the images on an engraved bone found at the Middle Magdalenian site of Isturitz in the foothills of the Pyrenees. On one face are two naked, decorated females apparently in prayer. One woman has lost her head (due to bone breakage), is pregnant and wears both a necklace and ankle bracelet. She also has an arrow in her thigh. Her breasts are distinctly hairy. Behind her, is a hairy faced figure with breasts. The overall impression is not that of a man reaching for a woman, but either a woman wearing a mask or the deliberate portrayal in both figures of divine androgyny. On the other face of the bone are two bison, one is a bull with two arrows or lances in its thigh.⁷⁵ Do the two compositions on this bone refer to a ritual in which a pregnant woman was sacrificed, or marked (?tattooed) with a weapon, the same weapon that was used to kill a sacred bull bison?

⁷⁴ Ibid: 191.

⁷⁵ Ibid: Fig. 192. Marshak (1991) repeatedly calls such forms 'harpoons' but then wonders if these objects might be plants.

Also hinting at ritual are the hand prints which from Aurignacian times onwards occur on cave walls, often with joints missing, suggesting injury incurred during an initiation rite during in which finger joints were amputated such as was common with native Australians.

A bone fragment from the Late Magdalenian site of Le Morin (France) shows two hands with fingers upward and the hands open as in adoration.⁷⁶ Above the hands are inverted 'V's which might symbolize water or rain. Are we looking at a ritual invoking rain from the heavens? A tiny figurine carved in reindeer antler found at the Middle Magdalenian site of Laugerie Basse depicts a figure with arms raised in supplication or adoration.⁷⁷

Speculating upon the myths which give structure to these compositions is difficult indeed. The women in most rites depicted in the Upper Paleolithic are barefoot, naked and often pregnant. If the Earth (as Goddess) must be renewed or supplicated either in times of ecological crisis and/or on a regular calendrical cycle in order to forestall crisis, than what more potent nourishment, what more sacred food could she be offered than a pregnant female in which all physiological forces are devoted to life giving? The ritual offering could be a mare, but for the most powerful effect and greatest chance of success, a human female carries the greatest potency. To kill a mother and child simultaneously is bloodthirsty and sadistic in the extreme but the symbolic miming of a ritual that demanded human life has often sufficed in many times and places. It is well known that as Neolithic cultures evolved, a 'scapegoat' was chosen to take the place of the king during his 'sacrifice', then finally an animal substitute was deemed acceptable.

Men are often depicted as ithyphallic. The symbolism, as with pregnancy, is not intended to be erotic or sexual but that of life giving power. Male ungulates in rut, especially elk or bison where size and strength are apparent, would also be an appropriate metaphor. Unless erotic art for its own sake can be accepted as a concern of Upper Paleolithic artists, the depiction of the male erection and ejaculation is preposterous unless it had a symbolic meaning akin to female fertility symbols (enlarged breasts, 'cosmic egg' within the womb, enlarged buttocks to emphasize the womb). From the early Magdalenian site of Le Placard (France) comes a bone with a crudely caved bone phallus "and a

⁷⁶ Ibid: Fig. 193.

⁷⁷ Ibid: Fig. 190.

long, linear, liquid stream issues from the engraved vent" (Marshak 1991: 332).

From the Late Magdalenian site of Bruniquel (France) comes a broken baton in phallic form decorated with schematized fish and angles representing water.⁷⁸ The Upper Magdalenian site of George d'Enfer in the Dordogne region of France has yielded a broken baton in the form of a double phallus, yet the silhouette recalls the female vulva.⁷⁹ Symbolic images which are executed in duplicate or triplicate reflect an attempt to increase the mythic potency inherent in the form.

Gimbutas (1989) discusses the 'power of two' and 'the power of three' as common Neolithic examples of this principle. The male and female elements incorporated into the form of this baton result in androgyny; see the discussion above concerning the primal deity as androgynous. One phallus is sculpted as though it were a fish with eyes, head and tail. The double eyes of the other at the base strongly suggest testes. Do we have here the Fish Goddess with (?mating) her consort? Such a sculpture, when considered together with the bone phallus that depicts ejaculation, point towards a conscious understanding that reproduction involves both sexes and that male semen contains a substance that can cause pregnancy. Humankind in the Late Upper Paleolithic of the Franco-Cantabrian culture region may not have conducted deliberate philosophical discussions about such matters but they were understood and articulated in the art forms that were essential components of rituals. The Bicameral Mind (cf. Jaynes 1976) does not need intellectual discourse to be activated because it does not possess an 'analog I' with which to create self generated narrative. The Bicameral Mind 'simply' (!) lives out its mythopoetics in the articulation of daily life. A broken bone was found at the Upper Magdalenian site of La Madeline (France) upon which is engraved the head of a bear with trailing spinal column (a bison so depicted was discussed above) which in this example faces a phallic form that is strangely flower-like.⁸⁰ We seem to have the Bear Goddess facing male life-giving power; a lozenge-like form connects the bear's upper lip to the phallus.

⁷⁸ Ibid: Fig. 198.

⁷⁹ Ibid: Fig. 199 & 200.0

⁸⁰ Ibid: Fig. 201.



Continuity into the Mesolithic

Gimbutas (1989, 1991) and Marshak (1991) establish the continuance of these mytho-poetics into post-Ice Age societies where they would later adapt to the Neolithic Agricultural Revolution. Such continuity makes a statement about the collective unconscious, as defined by Jung (1991), and its overreaching unity. The form and nature of basic archetypes do not seem to change even when the environmental context of humankind undergoes a revolutionary change.⁸¹ Their *reality* seems beyond question, their importance to a well nourished psyche, both individual and collective, is established. The timelessness and cross cultural universality of archetypal presence implies a partial genetic basis, an hypothesis I shall explore elsewhere. The Indo-European peoples who succeeded the earlier cultures of the Neolithic likewise brought with them archetypes, some of which were new to human history. An *explicit* depiction of the sky-thunder god (patriarchal, aggressive 'father') may not have existed earlier. The boundaries within which archetypes express themselves may be set by Chaotic models in that there is extreme sensitivity to initial conditions which causes the (?genetic) mechanisms (modeled by sets of iterative equations) to produce great variation upon the major themes and structures. These genetic mechanisms may be said to oscillate, those oscillations that have sufficient adaptability to the 'real world' become activated and actualized.

The Mesolithic preceded the Neolithic and in some regions lasted for several thousand years. It was the transitional period to the Neolithic. For all but the tribes in far northern latitudes where the herds of big game

⁸¹ This observations would seem to explain a feature of contemporary American society. Much of the fundamentalist Christian 'Born Again' movement has chosen to locate in small towns and rural settings yet it does not articulate an in-depth *emotional* relationship with the surrounding ecology, yet alone an empathy with environmentalism. Natural beauty is appreciated in an off-hand manner. Their obsessive concerns remain focused on the '*other* worldly' problems of personal salvation and bringing Christ into the lives of as many people as possible.

continued, the Mesolithic was lived out in a more benign climate than the severe cold of the late Upper Paleolithic. Big game hunting was opportunistic rather than systematic and a much greater diversity of food resources were exploited. The Neolithic is defined by the presence of agriculture.

In the Dordogne and Pyrenean regions of France, a Mesolithic culture termed the Azilian follows the Late Magdalenian. The stylized images created by Azilian artists strike Marshak (1991: 343) as "decadent" reflexes making reference to an iconographic style of ages past. The ancient images the Azilians saw when they entered the caves of their region were *not* the fantastic animals of their own myths but those of a legendary past populated by the ancestors of cultures long extinct. The bison, mammoth, woolly rhinoceros and reindeer were all extinct in this region by the time of the Mesolithic. And the Mesolithic cultures of the Franco-Cantabrian culture region did not produce any monumental, polychromatic animal art.

Yet the myths and archetypes continued during the Mesolithic. From Austria to Scandinavia, the net, ladder, and zigzag were carved in amber or on ritual axes of antler and soapstone (see Gimbutas 1989).

Tèveic Island is now off the Brittany coast although it was connected to the mainland c.8500 B.C. The hunter and gatherers that lived there at this time sought deer, wild pig and birds. They also fished and gathered crustaceans and mollusks. Their graves reveal people bunched together, decorated with beads and red ochre and surrounded by tools. In one burial pile was a child's rib with 110 marks arranged in groups. A fish jawbone found in another grave was engraved on all surfaces with sets of marks that seem to record six lunar months. (A stone has been found in a *Neanderthal* grave in the Dordogne region of France that is marked in a fashion similar to that on the child's rib.)⁸²

As the ice retreated from northern Germany and Scandinavia at the end of the Upper Pleistocene, large areas of marsh, bog and meltwater lakes formed. The Mesolithic culture that evolved in this region is known as the Maglemose - 'bog culture' - and it was found from England to southern Russia. (At this time, Britain was connected to the mainland and the Baltic Sea was a freshwater lake.) These people hunted forest animals (deer, elk, bear, fowl), fished for pike and gathered nuts, fruit and shellfish. A palm size bear carved from amber has been found in a

⁸² Marshak 1991: Fig. 207 -211.

bog at Resen in Jutland (Denmark). The first characteristic that strikes an observer is that this tiny bear is obviously cute! It is covered with a geometric patterning of nets, ladders, and zigzags which are all basic elements of Goddess iconography (Gimbutas 1989).⁸³ Marshak's (1991: 354) analysis determined that the pattern on the right side of the muzzle was made months or years after that on the left. Furthermore, 15 different patterns made by 15 different tools are present on this bear. It was clearly intended to be kept, handled and used over time, most likely at special ritual events.

An engraved amber pendant from Sejlfod in Denmark is also covered with different patterns made at different times by different tools. One horizontal line has 16 vertical strokes with 16 feet. Thirty two is a good lunar month when the unavoidable imprecision of observing in cloudy northern latitudes is taken into account.⁸⁴

A ritual ax made from reindeer antler found at Ugerlose, also in Denmark, is reminiscent of the 'batons' made in the Upper Paleolithic. It shows no signs of wear from digging but is worn smooth by hand wear and discolored by what may have been hand oils or sweat. This may be a ritual ax and the central portion contains sets of marks that give a 12 month lunar calendar.⁸⁵ After the original calendar was inscribed, 9 additional marks were added to give a new total of 17 lunar months finishing at the half moon which is also a solar calendar for a year and a half, or a stellar observational year.

Marshak (1991: 363) believes the Neolithic cultures of northwest Europe are the direct descendants of the Maglemose cultures of the Mesolithic which, in turn, exhibit continuity with those of the Upper Paleolithic. **If true, the knowledge base necessary to construct the complex megalithic observatories and calendars which were built during the fifth through third millennium B.C. in northwest Europe relied upon principles first developed in the region thousands of years earlier and refined and advanced over millennia.**

⁸³ Ibid: Fig. 212 & 213.

⁸⁴ Ibid: Fig. 214.

⁸⁵ Ibid: Fig. 217 - 220.

The predominant early Mesolithic Culture of the Near East is the Natufian Culture of Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt c.8500 B.C.⁸⁶ A Natufian necklace composed of pendants in the form of two breasts is strikingly similar to those found at the East Gravettian site of Dolní Věstonice (Czechoslovakia) and at the megalithic site of Aveyron in France.⁸⁷ At the headwaters of the Nile is the Mesolithic site of Ishango which also dates to c.8500 B.C. An engraved bone found here contains sets of marks which are a lunar calendar. Ishango seems to mark the southern boundary of the geographical region encompassed by these mythic constructs.⁸⁸



In Conclusion

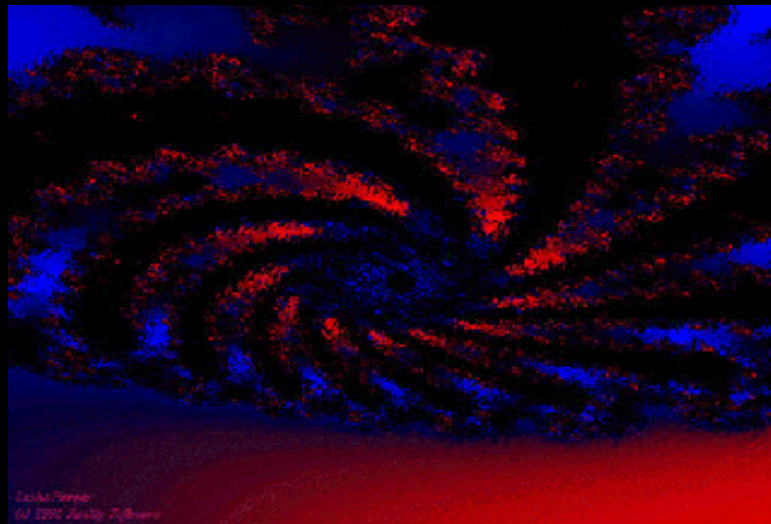
The question with which Alexander Marshak began his research more than 20 years ago seems settled. Dozens of images executed on a variety of forms portray scenes which have mythic content and thereby refer to a complex mytho-poetics that was expressed in the rituals of tribal cultures of Upper Paleolithic Eurasia. Rituals were accompanied by music played on flutes, and likely drumming as well (Pfeiffer 1982). A lunar calendar was created and employed as a time reference against which to notate important features of seasonal ecology and also to reference the Goddess and her rituals. Burial rites were performed in which the Goddess of Death and Regeneration had an important role. Ceremonies are indicated in which the transference of deity power to both males and females in the human realm occurred. Specifically, the origins of the *asvamedha* (horse) rituals in which the Goddess of Sovereignty empowers her human consort, or occasionally her human sister, are suggested by a number of compositions. Most

⁸⁶ As one of the primary locus for early agriculture, there was barely any Mesolithic Period at all in this region.

⁸⁷ Marshak 1991: Fig. 223.

⁸⁸ Ibid: Fig. 225.

unexpected perhaps is the single lion-headed figure found at the Aurignacian site of Hohlenstein in Germany from which two conclusions can be derived. 1) A powerful male deity existed in the Upper Paleolithic alongside the Goddess, although his appearance and cult ritual were uncommon by comparison. 2) The usual interpretations of the evolution of style and technique throughout the more than 20,000 years of the Upper Paleolithic may be wrong. Crudity of image, stylization and 'quick sketch' may not indicate poor artistic skills or an early primitive technique but were likely deliberate choices on the part of the artist who worked within a context of stylistic 'rules'. These conventions served ritual objectives and mandated that much imagery be executed in a fluid dynamic style so as to emphasize the emotional, dynamic, passion-filled, psychic content of mythic elements. Such attributes can be too easily hidden when great technique creates a naturalistic masterpiece whose realism awes the observer. In ritual, there are no observers.



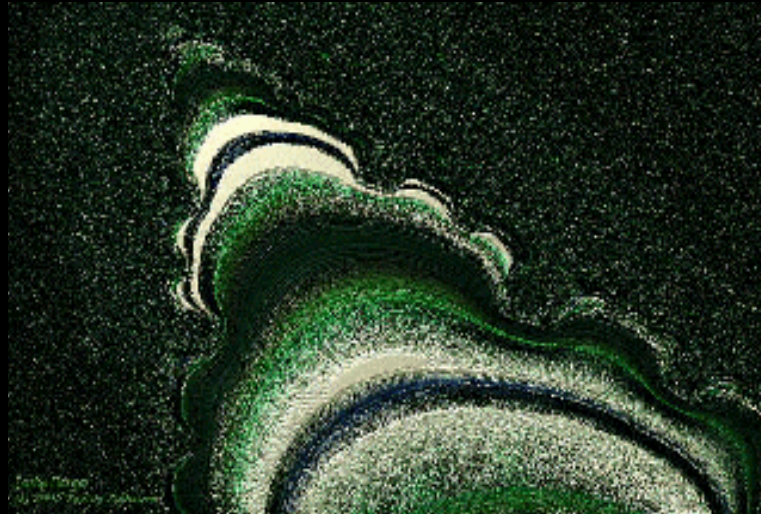
Our interpretative framework must, of necessity, make frequent backward extrapolations from the Neolithic or else we are left in a vacuum with nothing to say. Such speculation may, at times, be wrong but fully developed mytho-poetics is certainly in evidence in the Eurasian Upper Paleolithic. The original question now resurfaces. Where and when did the human mind first begin to find sacred time and communicate with the gods? Certainly earlier than the late Upper Pleistocene! Do the *Neanderthal* burial rites hold the key to the mystery which will be forever unsolvable because they left no symbols to decode, no metaphoric images to puzzle over?

Certain localities seem to have concentrated the sacred, if we can place statistical confidence in the concentration of mythic imagery found at these places. The caves at Lascaux have long been pointed out as such a 'power center'. Those at Les Trois Frères (France) and Dolní Věstonice (Moravia) seem also to have been such localities. This circumstance generates important questions. Why was humankind's first explosion of mytho-poetic iconography and imagery so concentrated in the Upper Paleolithic of Eurasia? Fully modern *Homo sapiens* had occupied all the continents (except Antarctica of course) at the time of the European Upper Paleolithic, yet only in Eurasia have we found this deepest and most complex development of mythic imagery that is so striking. An ice age environmental hypothesis is weak because East Asia was subjected to both glacial advances and retreats. Is the concentration of mythic metaphor in Eurasia merely due to 1) favorable preservation conditions that existed in the local ecology and caves; and 2) the intensity of archeological research in the region which springs from a Western European intellectual tradition? Yet, could not ritual objects of equal complexity be made in other environments from highly perishable materials? Comparably complex, mytho-poetics may have existed throughout South and East Asia and the New World but was articulated in 'soft' media and is therefore not accessible as archeological evidence.⁸⁹ Or the ritual 'dance' to transcendental planes may have not have utilized any art at all; see the article in this series about the Matse (Blumenberg 1994, 1996, 2006).

In conclusion, let us briefly reference the genetics of behavior as yet another contributory variable. We can never know such genetic inputs with any precision and the genetic programs expressed cannot explain the whole story. Behavioral gene inputs are termed 'plastic' -genetic penetrance is incomplete and the ability to respond creatively to the environment is very wide. Brains create imagination and behavior and brains respond to the environment. The underlying neuroanatomy which is designed by genetics, is the foundation upon which such expression is built. The circuitry and potential complexity of neural activity *must* have been different from us in the populations that first explored the time track of past and future, and created the corresponding mythic elements during the latter half of the Upper Pleistocene. That 'difference' also refers to the ancestors, the presumed 'archaic *Homo sapiens* of late Middle Paleolithic times. This new neuroanatomy when stimulated by natural hallucinogens, and/or brilliant imagination-perception, generated *complex*

⁸⁹ Navaho sand paintings and kachina dolls immediately come to mind, as do the mandalas constructed for important Tibetan Buddhist ceremonies which are often made of sand; also the mythic paintings executed on bark by the Australian Aborigines.

myths, correspondingly complex narratives and rites. Rare exceptional individuals (i.e.brains), or perhaps almost all adults (cf Matse) contacted the gods and created the underlying philosophy necessary to structure major components and ritual activities of society.



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