



PLEISTOCENE COALITION NEWS

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- Challenging the tenets of mainstream scientific agendas -

We at PCN want to thank everyone for making our 10th Anniversary Issue (Issue #61, September-October 2019) such a success and we thank everyone for writing us.

As most now realize, founding member and central figure of the Pleistocene Coalition, Dr. Virginia Steen-McIntyre's, recent stroke and other illnesses have become a concern for all those

Readers were taken by surprise with Tim Holmes' 'Paleolithic human dispersals via natural floating platforms, Part 1' last issue. In contrast to presumed ocean travel via sailing or paddling manmade watercraft Holmes suggested a third way has been downplayed in anthropology and readers responded, asking, "Why is this idea not better known?" Holmes is still working to finish Part 2.



A natural pumice raft



We can't overstate how unexpected for mainstream anthropology are the 50,000-year old profound technological discoveries at Denisova Cave, Siberia. They show the longtime doctrine that Paleolithic people were *not quite us* needs to be overhauled if not discarded altogether. Genetic scientists are now asking what might the Denisovans have looked like? See **Baldwin p.2**.



Engineer and rock art researcher, **Ray Urbaniak**, continues to intrigue PCN readers with compelling evidence and perspective regarding Native American prehistory. This issue, Urbaniak continues his *rare animal depictions* theme, this time, with evidence for pre-extinction portrayals of the giant ground sloth and mammoths. See **Urbaniak p.9 and p.12**.



who know her and work with her as well as for our readers. The loss of her crucial roles as writer, scientific advisor, core PCN editor, writer organizer, etc., while she recovers has also added to our other editors' responsibilities and difficulty in keeping up. As an all-volunteer staff we are doing our best to maintain the venue and appreciate your support both publicly and behind-the-scenes. Here are a few of your comments not yet posted on our homepage:

"Your excellent work is much appreciated."

"Beautiful. Superbly done!"

"Congratulations on your 10th Anniversary Issue. I found every article of interest and valuable to my own research."

"Really great stuff!"

"No doubt, very perceptive. Presses it home."

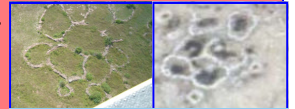
"Let me congratulate you on your successful publication of valid information of great wealth in the science and geophysics of the Pleistocene."

We hope you enjoy PCN #62!

Readers have been enjoying the online kudos section of our homepage. Some, however, have found the amount almost overwhelming and hard to believe such feedback can exist for a publication challenging mainstream consensus—such as what they were taught via media, school, or university. Lifelong connections to outright false or debatable information taught as fact are hard to break. That is why at PCN we recommend teaching critical thinking skills to children at an early age.



In Issue #61, the abstract and brief background were provided for a published paper called *The Impact of Fossils*—about how early humans could have been influenced by fossils—and how the paper was blocked by competitive researchers promoting low intelligence in early peoples. Comments from well-known experts were provided to show the censorship did not reflect objective opinion. This is the first main-text installment. See **Feliks p.14**.



From comparing aerial views of the Middle East

with South African circles over 6,000 miles away to providing brief overviews of concrete-making ancient cultures and the 12,000-year old origins of the 'Paleolithic swastika' Rocky Whipkey brings unexpected perspective to the famous megalithic site of Baalbek, Lebanon, which he visited in 2018. See **Whipkey p.5**.



In PCN 10 years ago

Along with other compelling articles in our Issue #2, Pleistocene Coalition founding member, Dr. Virginia Steen-McIntyre wrote her first



'In their own words' column. This is where she regularly exposed how the mainstream gets so tangled up trying to reconcile "facts" with their predetermined beliefs that the irony or understatement can be unbearable. Here researchers essentially say, "Despite the facts, we still believe what we believe." See **p.4**.

Denisovan news: Keeping these remarkable yet enigmatic people up front

By Tom Baldwin

"This time it is a jaw bone, and the man-



dible is like what the first



Fig. 1. Reminder of the startlingly-modern and sophisticated quality of 50,000-year old Denisovan technology and art.

group of researchers predicted."

In order to help correct our longtime erroneous picture of Paleolithic people, it is important to keep in mind

just how unexpected are the 50,000-year old discoveries at Denisova Cave, Siberia.

It wasn't that long ago groups of people called "prehistoric," now more commonly referred to as "Paleolithic," from *Homo erectus* to Neanderthals were thought of as *not quite us*. Due to the needs of the prevailing paradigm, Paleolithic people were presumed to be much less intelligent and sophisticated.

Many readers of mainstream science continue to hold this view even though the actual evidence as

I've regularly emphasized in *PCN* doesn't support the idea. This is one reason I like to remind our readers of what this group of people were capable of, their exquisite jewelry including artistic-quality beads and bracelets and sewing needles of a technological design equal to that in use today (**Fig. 1**). This is the most important aspect of the Denisova Cave discoveries.

Two new items our readers might find of interest

The first deals with Denisovan DNA. It is astounding what scientists can do with DNA today. Just yesterday I was watching a story on the television program *60 Minutes* where they were experimenting with changing a person's DNA to one that

viruses cannot copy thus rendering them immune to viral-caused diseases.

Another group of scientists was studying which genes do what, like determining eye color, skin tone, hair (or its lack), etc. The day may come when they can take a sample of one's DNA, put it through a computer and use it to make a picture of what a person looks like. Work along those lines is, in fact, being done today only the subject isn't modern people but one of our ethnic ancestors, the Denisovans.

The Denisovans are both the newest and most interesting branch on our collective family tree or genealogy. So, there is a great deal of curiosity as to what they may have looked like.

The challenge of creating a physical likeness of the Denisovans when all we have to go on are a few bone fragments and teeth initially seemed impossible. However, scientists, using DNA from those sources compared them with human and chimpanzee DNA. In the process they came up with a likeness of how they think the average Denisovan might have appeared (**Fig. 2**).

Despite how appealing, right up, we've got to note that other scientists decried the image and the scientific work that went into its construction. One article, in fact, was titled, "This Is Almost Certainly Not What Denisovans Looked



Fig. 2. Artistic rendering of a young female Denisovan based on DNA analysis. Maayan Harel (*PCN* crop).

Like" (*New Scientist*, Sept. 19, 2019) containing challenges by such as anthropologist John Hawks at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

It is interesting to note, however, that since the picture came out another Denisovan bone has been found. This time it is a jaw bone, and the mandible is like what the first group of researchers predicted in eight out of nine points.

* * *

Every archaeologist is anxious to be the first to find a complete or nearly complete Denisovan skeleton.

The problem is that of finding *any* skeleton as early man did not leave many for us to locate. Second, in most of the bones we do have, the DNA has degraded to the point of being useless for sequencing. Denisova Cave where the majority of Denisovan DNA has been found, is located in Siberia and is quite cool. In fact, the cave's year-round average temperature is in the 30's on the Fahrenheit scale. It is like a refrigerator inside and that is what has preserved the DNA in the bones found there.

Excavations at Denisova Cave, however, have located

> [Cont. on page 3](#)

Denisovan news: Remarkable and enigmatic people (cont.)

"This is one reason I like to remind our readers of what this group of people were capable of, their exquisite jewelry including artistic-quality beads and bracelets and sewing needles of a technological design equal to that in use today."

only a few pieces of bone and teeth. As noted, the cave is cold and probably, even in Denisovan times was a quite inhospitable place to live. Based on this view it has been speculated the human remains found in the cave are not actually those of cave 'residents,' but of the well-gnawed remains of Denisovans killed by hyenas and dragged into the cave to be eaten.

It must have been a tragic existence for them. To have the skill and know-how to produce the fantastic beads, bracelets, head gear, and advanced technologies we have discussed in previous articles and yet lead a life likely to be ended any time by a pack of hyenas. We are fortunate to live when and where we do.

Sorry if we got a little off track there. So then, back to the search for a Denisovan skeleton. The Chinese have a candidate or two.

Back in December of 2007, Chinese archaeologist Zhan-Yang Li, found a rounded skull cap in the bottom of his dig at Xuchang site in China. Over the next six years he and his team found 45 more pieces that when put together like a jigsaw puzzle yielded two partial crania (**Fig. 3**). One crania, called Xuchang 1, had a huge brain case with a volume of 1800 cubic centimeters. This is notable especially because it is on the upper end of brain size for modern human and even for Neanderthals.

The skulls have other characteristics that separate them from Neanderthals and

Homo sapiens. For instance, they have less protruding brow ridges, and their brain cases, while large, are low and broad. These early people have inner ears that are just like those of Neanderthals.



Fig. 3. Xuchang 1, China, skullcap and a partial crania found in 2007 by archaeologist Zhan-Yang Li. It had a huge braincase with a volume of 1800 cubic centimeters which is on the large size even for Neanderthals. They have other characteristics that separate them from both Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens*. Could these be Denisovans? Image from, "100,000 Year-Old Skulls Shed Light On The Origins Of Modern Humans." *Asian Scientist*. March 6, 2017.

Could these be Denisovans? The Chinese would like to think so, but they have yet to extract any DNA from the skulls that can be tested, so there is no proof.

The author of an article titled, "Human Skull Fossils from China Have Surprising Traits." *Discover*, March 2, 2017) writes the following about the Chinese skulls:

"It's not yet clear what this unique trait potpourri means for the bigger picture of human evolution. It does, however throw one more monkey wrench in the old school "Out of Africa" belief that our species did all its evolving on that continent before setting foot on other continents. Instead, Xuchang 1 and 2 seem to bolster the Regional Continuity Model, which suggests that modern humans evolved regionally, from one or more archaic humans."

So, then, things continue to move fast on the Denisovan track and continue to throw 'monkey wrenches' into many longtime cherished beliefs. The

Russians have more things to reveal that they have found in Denisova Cave. Stay tuned and we will try to keep you posted.

TOM BALDWIN is an award-winning author, educator, and amateur

archaeologist living in Utah. He has also worked as a successful newspaper columnist. Baldwin has been actively involved with the Friends of Calico (maintaining the controversial Early Man Site in Barstow, California) since the early days when famed anthropologist Louis Leakey was the site's excavation Director (Calico is the only site in the Western

Hemisphere which was excavated by Leakey). Baldwin's recent book, *The Evening and the Morning*, is an entertaining fictional story based on the true story of Calico. Apart from being one of the core editors of *Pleistocene Coalition News*, Baldwin has published 37 prior articles in *PCN* focusing on *H. erectus* and early man in the Americas. His articles on the Denisovan sophistication enigma include: [Denisovan bracelet: Advanced technological skills in early human groups is still resisted](#) (*PCN* #35, May-June 2015), [Those pesky Denisovans](#) (*PCN* #43, Sept-Oct 2016, our 7th Anniversary Issue), and [Update and review of 'modern level' Denisovan culture c. 40-50,000 years ago](#) (*PCN* #50, Nov-Dec 2017), and [Denisova Cave, Siberia: Art, craftsmanship, and telling DNA](#) (*PCN* #60, July-August 2019).

Links to all of Baldwin's articles on Calico, *H. erectus*, and many other topics can be found at:

http://pleistocenecoalition.com/index.htm#tom_baldwin

10 years ago in *Pleistocene Coalition News*

Dr. Virginia Steen-McIntyre's first "In their own words" column

(PCN #2, November-December 2009)

In their own words

In Current Research in the Pleistocene,* where they discuss heavily stained, permineralized skull fragments from the Guadalajara area of western Mexico, we find the following:



"One Chapala superciliary arch deserves specific mention due to its large size [PCN #62 addition, **Fig. 1.**]

"Studies by Solórzano show the bone resembles that in archaic *Homo sapiens* at Arago, France. In an unpublished 1990 report, Texas A&M osteologists suggest the brow's thickness and robustness comparable to those of KNM-ER 3733 (African *Homo erectus*). [PCN #62 addition, **Fig. 2.**]

"Our measurements show the central torus thickness is 13.3, compared with 8.5 mm for KNM-ER 3733; the lateral torus thickness is 11.5 versus 9.0 mm (Rightmire 1998).

"Thus for the sake of comparison, the brow is more like that of Zhoukoudian Skull XI (Asian *Homo erectus*), with a central torus thickness of 13.2 +/- mm; lateral torus thickness was not measured (Rightmire 1998). Modern brows are too diminutive to allow these measurements.

"The brow also shows pneumatization along its length.

"However, to reiterate the findings of the Texas A&M workers, these comparisons do not imply that pre-*Homo sapiens* were in the Americas.

*From *Current Research in the Pleistocene* 17, 2000: pp. 95-96.

Virginia started her "In their own words" column (http://pleistocenecoalition.com/#virginia_steen_mcityre) to show the discrepancies and irony often seen in mainstream writings regarding early peoples in the Americas.

This instalment is one from a large archive of materials

Virginia has assembled since the days of Hueyatlaco/Valsequillo, Mexico, suppression starting 50 years ago. The instalment that followed featured the suppressed Caltran's mastodon butchering site (now renamed "Cerutti") which by that time, 2010, had not yet been brought to the public even after 15 years. PCN continued promoting the Caltrans site until it was



Fig. 1. Photograph of possible archaic human supraorbital ridge, Chapala Basin, Mexico. Photograph courtesy of Frederico Solorzano. From privately-sent Valsequillo archaeology archive files from Virginia Steen-McIntyre (dated March 2006 revised and August 2009 revised).



Fig. 2. Possible human supraorbital ridge inset (dark brow in upper left) in a cast of a European *Homo erectus* skull, demonstrating how it might be derived from a similar specimen. Photograph courtesy of Frederico Solorzano. From privately-sent Valsequillo archaeology archive files from Virginia Steen-McIntyre dated 2006 and 2009.

Complete reference

Irish, JD, SD Davis, JE Lobdell, and FA Solórzano. 2000. Prehistoric Human Remains from Jalisco, Mexico. *Current Research in the Pleistocene* 17: 95-96.

finally taken up by PCN-reading archaeologists and the site was published '22 years' after it's discovery (see the definitive history in our [Cerutti Mastodon Site Special Issue](#)).

"However, to reiterate the findings of the Texas A&M workers, these comparisons do not imply that pre-Homo sapiens were in the Americas."

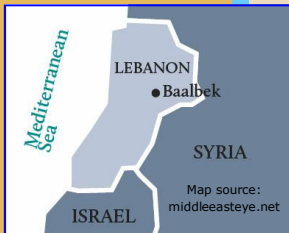
Putting megalithic sites into Paleolithic context: Baalbek, Part 2, Enigmas of construction

By Rocky Whipkey

"It gave me the immedi-



ate sense the massive Trilithon stones were



already in place long before the Romans... arrived... and then saw how convenient it would be to just build their Jupiter temple on top of them."

In [Part 1 \(PCN #61, Sept-Oct 2019\)](#), I introduced the famous megalithic site of **Baalbek, Lebanon**. The site features massive 1,000-plus ton quarried stones which, even today, are a complete mystery as to how they were transported and placed. It is also not known who did the oldest megalithic work or when.

Today, Baalbek sits overlooking the Beqaa plain (also known as *Bekaa*, *Biqâ* or *Be-cao*). The geology of this area shows its possible histories stretching back beyond the Pleistocene age of 2.8 million years ago. Within the last 1–5 million years this region has undergone what is called *uplift*. The affected land mass—which once lay under sea water—rose and created the Lebanon Mountains.

After such an uplift event large bodies of water would have remained on the now-created plain. One can clearly see the ocean connections at either end of the Beqaa Plain on any area map today. In fact, the name 'Beqaa,' is the Arabic plural of 'buqaah,' meaning a place with stagnant waters, and there is evidence of ocean waters having covered the Beqaa Plain in the geological past.

This information seemed worth exploring further and I wondered if Baalbek could, at one time, have been constructed to serve as a seaport of some kind when the water was deeper or at different distances from the site. Although perennially controversial, the megalithic site of Tiahuanaco in Bolivia which is presently two miles above sea level and c. 12 miles from Lake Titicaca is



Fig. 1. The region surrounding Baalbek using the Google Earth Timeline tool. Screenshot by the author, 2018, of what appear to be ancient habitations. It is very interesting how much these resemble the mysterious stone circles of South Africa. **Left Inset:** Helicopter photo of one such South African site taken by Michael Tellinger. **Right Inset:** Detail from the above Google Earth "mideast" picture in negative to bring out details making it easier to compare with Tellinger's South African photo.

believed by some to have once been much closer to the lake.

A useful online tool

Using the innovative Google Earth Timeline tool one can see how many archaeological sites around the world were laid out and how they appeared in the past. Not all locations are accessible with this tool. However, it's potential is high and one can also observe ancient habitations on a scale I am not sure people have studied before. **Fig. 1** is a Google Earth screenshot of the region. I noticed an uncanny resemblance to the stone circles of South Africa such as those researched by Michael Tellinger and others.

Back to the idea of Baalbek as a possible one-time seaport, after any disaster in the last 3 million years the area most certainly would continue to be highly fertile and, later, for lucrative trade once a location redeveloped. Also, there were, and still are usable waterways linking many of the areas within the Beqaa Plain today!

The uplifts created the Lebanon Mountains. The mountains then created a 'weather shadow' very similar to that of the Sierra Nevada region of the California and Nevada borders in the USA. These types of mountain ranges that run north and south—and usually created from an uplift event—apparently reduce the east side annual rainfall while capturing the oceanic moisture on their western slopes. Today the Beqaa Plain, which lies east of the Lebanon Mountains, collects an average rainfall around 22 inches while the Lebanon Mountains capture on its western slopes an accumulation of snow fall that can often exceed 3 ft.

Of course, water levels change periodically over time. According to circumstances they may become predictably higher or lower. In cultures such as Baalbek scientific observers no doubt learned to keep track of the changes including

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Putting megalithic sites into Paleolithic context, Part 2 (cont.)

"While swastika are, indeed, found

making astronomical observations that helped to re-establish when seasonal balances occurred.

historical details could have been preserved in religious oral traditions, myths and legends, or works of art.

pillars—are made from these same types of concretions and were not carved from solid stone as many might believe. After seeing the piece in person, I have no doubt that it is a pile of conglomerate concrete extrusions which are either tests or errors!



Fig. 2. Example of concrete work at Baalbek. Though the swastika pattern was known in Rome it is older in Asia and 12,000 years in Ukraine. It is found around the world including in Native American cultures. Photo: Rocky Whipkey 2018.

Who created the concrete at Baalbek?

In mainstream archaeology the Romans are given the historical right of ownership over this entire Baalbek platform despite notable incongruities (see my [Part 1](#)). The Romans did have a wide range of skills that included the use of concrete such as used at Baalbek in temple constructions. Concrete, no doubt, provided for easier assembly of the various facades like I mentioned in my first article.

Still, the question remains, why should we presume the use of concrete automatically means Roman construction? The Egyptians and Minoans, for example, millennia before the Romans used also such material as well.

The Paleolithic swastika

Questioning the presumption of Roman concrete at Baalbek also concerns some of the *bas relief* ornamentation. One such presumption worth questioning is automatic attribution to the Romans for the presence of 'swastika' patterns at the site such as seen in Figs. 2–3.

in Rome the design is

These observations could then be used for continental travel

sembly of the various facades like I mentioned in my first article.



Fig. 3. Close-up of left hand side seen in Fig. 2. Photo: Rocky Whipkey, 2018.

The concrete mass of what looks like stone in **Fig. 2** is actually a pile of several very ancient extruded conglomerate concrete 'mistakes' that have been piled one upon another and left as waste. I photographed these when I visited the site in 2018. **Fig. 3** shows a different angle and closer view of where they overlap on the left side. Notice the conglomerated appearance of this material. It is pertinent to point out that many of the construction materials at Baalbek—including some



Fig. 4. Sophisticated Pleistocene-age swastika-like patterns from the site of Mezin, Ukraine, carved into mammoth ivory 12,000–18,000 years ago predating Roman variations by 10,000 years. So, there is nothing inherently 'Roman' about the similar variants attributed to Romans at Baalbek.

patterns at the site such as seen in Figs. 2–3. While swastika are, indeed, found in Rome the design is cosmopolitan and infinitely older.

The enigma of Baalbek and it's possible beginnings being Pleistocene (see [Part 1](#) and reference to 12,000-year old Gobekli Tepe) is complicated by the swastika because the earliest are not Roman or even Neolithic but Paleolithic in age (**Fig. 4**). They date to

cosmopolitan and infinitely older. ...the earliest are... Paleolithic in age... 12,000 years old."

to calculate the surface areas or waterways available and basically do as we do today in regional planning.

If such occurrences took place during prehistoric times at Baalbek or such as Gobekli Tepe, i.e. before writing systems were developed, some geological or

graphed these when I visited the site in 2018. **Fig. 3** shows a different angle and closer view of where they overlap on the left side. Notice the conglomerated appearance of this material. It is pertinent to point out that many of the construction materials at Baalbek—including some

12,000 years old at Mezine, Ukraine, where the swastika is part of an elaborate pat-

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Putting megalithic sites into Paleolithic context, Part 2 (cont.)

"There is an unusual feature, how-

tern carved into ivory figurines such as birds.

(See e.g., Hancar, F. 1939-40. Zum Problem der Venusstatuetten im eurasiatischen Jungpaläolithikum. *Præhistorische Zeitschrift* 30-31: 85-156, Taf

represents one of over 100 symbols of the ancient god Vishnu. It is also considered a sun sign and, in the Western Hemisphere, a symbol of luck and prosperity among various Native American tribes.

vey and, in fact, may never be dated with absolute certainty. I would also include an astro-archeologist to interpret the local alignments which are found throughout these sites. I have no doubt these areas will contain astronomical viewpoints that no longer exist in today's skies but which can help suggest possible dates for when these sites were constructed.

I mention these things as I recently viewed a documentary of a European dolmen where radar discovered the original entrance. The different entrance appears 45 degrees out of the equinox entrance where the sun enters the dolmen and reaches the furthest point within the dolmen that is open today. Was this buried entrance open to an

Equinox at some distant time in the past?

There are probably no easy answers to these riddles. And to this day Baalbek's true identity is still elusive.



Fig. 5. Enigmatic solid stone staircase at Baalbek suggesting wheel tracks. Photo, Rockey Whipkey, 2018.

ever. Running up and down the staircase are what appear to be tracks of some kind as though they were created by wheels in concrete that later hardened."

VII, p 127 and Taf VIII, p 129; and Volkov, FK. 1909. Paleoliteskaya stojanka v Mezine. Tr XIV archeol sjezda v Cerigove, t III, 1909; F Vovk, *Paleolitichni znachidki s Mizeni*. Zap Ukr nauk tovaristva, k IV, as referenced and discussed in many modern papers and articles such as in White, John J., III. 2001. Ice Age Swastika from Mezin in Ukraine: Interpretation of a Basic Symbol of Mankind. *Midwestern Epigraphic Journal* 15: 73-78.)

They are generally believed to date back to 12,000 years ago. Not only is that firmly in the Pleistocene and dating contemporaneously with the 12,000-year old megalithic site of Gobekli Tepe, in Turkey, as noted in my Part 1, but other experts such as Dr. Olga Soffer, place the Mezine at 17,000-18,000 years old or Magdalenian Age (Soffer et al. The "Venus" Figurines: Textiles, Basketry, Gender, and Status in the Upper Paleolithic. *Current Anthropology* 41 Aug-Oct. 2000: 533).

The swastika was traditionally stylized in Asia where it

True Baalbek antiquity

There is a stairway located on a hillside at Baalbek considered part of the Temple of Mercury. It was, at one time, carved into steps from solid stone. There is an unusual feature, however. Running up and down the staircase are what appear to be tracks of some kind as though they were created by wheels in concrete that later hardened (**Fig. 5**). Perhaps they were intended as cart tracks. Surprisingly, I could not find any descriptions or commentary on this feature and wonder if such a feature is known anywhere else in antiquity.

It seems that to move forward in today's world of prehistoric archeology will require the use of a reputable geologist such as Dr. Robert M. Schoch. His corrective interpretation of the geological wear on the Sphinx was an outstanding use of geology, though still dated incorrectly, no fault of his own.

It is likely these megalithic locations will never be datable without a geological sur-

ROCKEY WHIPKEY was educated in the culinary arts, anthropology, and archaeology and has a deep interest in comparative religion, history, and early civilization. Among diverse occupations Whipkey ran and assisted in setting up lottery operations and facilities for the states of Montana, Vermont, and New Hampshire. In addition to once running for mayor of Helena—the historic capital of Montana—Whipkey has been involved in the politics of the city for many years including as a historic preservation commissioner. He visited Baalbek in 2018 to compare popular writings with his own firsthand observations.

Member news and other info

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Vesna Tenodi

Virginia's health and recent stroke

"I follow *PCN* religiously. I am very sorry for Virginia Steen-McIntyre's stroke. I empathize with her, recently having had one of my own. She is one of my heroes."

—One of the many kind messages recently received from our readers

We continue to receive messages of concern about Pleistocene Coalition founding member Dr. Virginia Steen-McIntyre.

For new readers to *PCN*, Virginia, at 83, is the last surviving original USGS, NASA associates (during Apollo), etc., team of professionals [suppressed by the anthropology community the past 50 years](#) for their many-methods dating of Hueyatlaco, Mexico, early man site to c. 250,000 years old.

Readers, coworkers, and others continue to express concern about Virginia's health and her major backlog of "1600" e-mails. Below is some paraphrased info from recent *PCN* issues:

As our regular readers know, in our severely reduced state without Virginia's crucial contributions including as writer, scientific advisor, manager of author submissions before sending to Layout editor, and her fine-toothed-comb copy editor skills we remaining editors—all volunteers—are not able to keep up in

timely fashion with each our circumstances while producing *Pleistocene Coalition News*.

We do our best to answer sometimes directly, sometimes in form letter and sometimes here in the pages of *PCN*. Virginia has been greatly missed by many people who regard her with the highest esteem.

Her general health has been an ongoing concern to those who know her or work with her. John spoke with Virginia recently and she is doing much better. However, along with catching up on years of domestic paperwork, she is still unable to keep up with her PC commitments and 1600 e-mail backlog. So, please do keep these things in mind if you have written Virginia but have not heard back even after months. Good news is that Virginia has 24-hour live-in help and several other helpers so she is well cared for. For other details see the prior two issues, e.g., Member news, [PCN #60](#), July-August 2019, and [PCN #61](#).

"Since it now appears... mainstream academics are going to have no choice but to accept what you've been saying all along... I just hope... it comes out... they refused to give your ideas serious consideration and stood in their way. ...History has a way of sorting it all out...although vindication sometimes comes too late to be enjoyed by the vindicated... I will continue to spread the word about *PCN* at every opportunity."
—*PCN* reader"



[Link to PCN #61](#)



[Link to PCN #60](#)



[Link to PCN #59](#)



Regarding Paleolithic human dispersals via natural floating platforms

In lieu of receiving Tim Holmes' Part 2 for this issue we can say [Part 1](#) garnered some anticipated interest (as did the whole [10th Anniversary Issue](#)). Among several questions asked, one was why has the general public heard so little about this theory before? A couple of quick answers to that would be, first, as we noted in the teaser, most researchers tend to focus on the more romantic notions of prehistoric people deliberately sailing or paddling their way across oceans on manmade watercraft. The idea that some could have floated between islands or even continents on mats of vegetation, etc., has been suggested often in recent decades but usually only in passing.

A second reason would be that the mainstream anthropology community does not have much interest in anything that could provide means for earlier peoples to make it to the Americas other than the Bering Strait because ancient dates in the Americas create instant problems for the long-taught-as-fact Out of Africa theory. I.e., they don't want additional means people could have made it to the New World hundreds of thousands of years ago.

Finally, *PCN* readers know well from Dr. Virginia Steen-McIntyre *et al's* 50-year suppression story onward that the mainstream community holds back any evidence suggesting early humans were just as intelligent as modern humans and ocean travel of any kind does just that. An important takeaway we've emphasized at the Pleistocene Coalition is that the public deserves a picture that breaks away from the dogma Paleolithic people were *half-way-there links* or that early migrations took thousands of years. All evidence and reasonable theories need to be put on the table. —*jf*

Giant ground sloths and rethinking the life expectancy of pictographs

By Ray Urbaniak Engineer, rock art researcher, and preservationist

"It is important to clarify that although the ... pictograph has been dated at 12,500 years it is possible giant ground



An April 1, 2019, article for the University of Exeter in England titled

"Major new study will rewrite history of human colonization of South America" states that the Americas were colonized sometime between 25,000 and 15,000 years ago. They go on to mention a pictograph featuring an extinct

giant ground sloth, *Megatherium*, which they date at 12,500 years old (Fig. 1).

It is important to clarify that although the authors say the pictograph has been dated at 12,500 years it is possible giant ground sloth in South



Fig. 1. Pictograph depiction of an apparent giant ground sloth, *Megatherium*, in the South American Amazon dated to c. 12,500 years old. Photo, University of Exeter.

link bones called dermal ossicles" embedded in their skin." He goes on to tell the tale of a naturalist who found a fresh piece of skin from one of these animals hanging from a tree, which was apparently found in a cave two years earlier. Grayson further notes that the "indigenous inhabitants recorded the existence of a strange, ugly, huge hairy animal. It was also reported that the Native peoples have mentioned similar animals to me, of whose existence their ancestors had transmitted the remembrance; and in the neighborhood of the Rio Negro [Patagonia], the aged cacique Sinchel, in 1875, pointed out the supposed lair of one of these animals." Grayson further explained the Indians reported a strange creature with "long claws and a terrifying appearance, impossible to kill because it has a body impenetrable to firearms and missiles."

resemble anything other than a long neck turtle. However, the photo doesn't appear to have been taken straight on but with the surface at an angle perhaps compressing the image. Since I have never seen a rock art side view image of a turtle I decided to see what the effect might be if I stretched the image vertically to compensate for the possible angle effect for



Fig. 2. Photograph of an unusual animal pictograph recently taken in the Grand Canyon by photographer, Bill Woodland. Used with permission.



Fig. 3. Since Woodland's photo of the enigmatic animal pictograph appeared to have been taken at an angle compressing the image I decided to try stretching it vertically to compensate. The result was a greater resemblance to the body of a giant ground sloth.



Fig. 4. Compare sloth with Fig. 3.

sloth in South America didn't go extinct until the end of the 19th century!"

America didn't go extinct until the end of the 19th century!

On pages 67-68 in Donald K. Grayson's 2016 book, "Giant Sloths and Sabertooth Cats," he states that the Mylodont ground sloths were characterized by having "small, pebble-

This ground sloth pictograph may indeed be 12,500 years old as they suggest. However, it is also possible there are other—relatively recent—depictions of giant ground sloth in this area of South America.

Recently, Bill Woodland (an Emeritus Professor at EMU), took a photo of an unusual animal in the Grand Canyon (Fig. 2). At first glance it doesn't

a better sense of what the image would look like straight on (Fig. 3). The effect is that the body appears similar to that of an Ice Age giant ground sloth (Fig. 4) without limbs (I have featured Ice Age animal pictographs from the Grand Canyon in several other PCN articles). It was the tail that primarily caught my attention.

> [Cont. on page 10](#)

Giant ground sloths; life expectancy of pictographs (cont.)

"Dating of the animal



Fig. 5. Top: Legless elk or deer. **Bottom:** Boat shaped Big Horned Sheep depicted without legs. Southwest U.S. Photos: Ray Urbaniak.

portrayed in Bill Woodland's Grand Canyon pictograph



Fig. 6. Top and Bottom: Two types of birds depicted without legs. Southwest U.S. Photos: Ray Urbaniak.

photo could give us a helpful indication as to whether it does indeed depict a giant ground sloth."

Without the limbs, most people would just eliminate the possibility that this represented a giant ground sloth.

That was my initial reaction as well, until I recalled that there is a tradition in this area of depicting various mammals and birds without limbs, e.g., **Fig. 5** and **Fig. 6**.

Some of the legless images have been explained by the different pigments used such as found in Australia's Kakadu National Park which is explained well in the following excerpt from a December 25, 2014, article on *The Conversation* website titled, *Pigments and Palettes from the Past: Science of Indigenous Art:*

"There are cases in Kakadu of whole colors falling off an image, resulting in, for example, birds

without legs. Some very old paintings have survived for thousands of years with every detail seemingly intact, such as those of the dynamic style and others of that period. These paintings tend to be monochromatic red, applied with haematite that is both very fine and non-responsive to humidity or chemical alteration."

These perspectives are by no means conclusive, but dating of the animal portrayed in Bill Woodland's Grand Canyon pictograph photo could give us a helpful indication as to whether it does indeed depict a giant ground sloth.

Life expectancy of pictographs

Just how long can pictographs survive? Pictographs can be bleached by the sun, chemically etched by smoke and bird droppings, physically abraded by blowing sand, and eroded by wind and rain as well as by changes in temperature and humidity including freezing and thawing. Pictographs can also be covered by soot from fires or the layer of rock containing the image can be popped off by extreme heat from fires. In addition to the above pictographs can also be attacked by lichen, molds and bacteria (e.g., **Fig. 7**). Insects such as mud wasps and birds such as swallows can build nests on top of them. Rock surfaces containing pictographs can even fall off during earthquakes, and sometimes layers just flake off over time.

I have done pretty extensive research over the years regarding the cave pictographs of France. It is my understanding that the only surviving *very old* pictographs in that country are those that were painted deep in caves that have a stable temperature and humidity and are not exposed to the elements. Any paintings near the entrances to the caves have disappeared. And there are some pictographs in caves that would certainly have vanished were they not covered by layers of natural calcite to protect them.

And, on the contrary, I have struggled with understanding how some of the pictographs in the Grand Canyon and

Dinosaur National Monument could have survived so long.

[Here are links to a few of my related PCN articles: [Ice age animals in SW USA rock art, continued: Another potential mammoth image](#) (PCN #41, May-June 2014); [Intriguing images from the Shaman's Gallery and some possible conclusions, Part 1](#) (PCN #32, Nov-Dec 2014);



Fig. 7. Lichen/mold attacking pictographs. Photo Ray Urbaniak.

[Rarely-depicted Ice Age animals in U.S. cave art](#) (PCN #59, May-June 2019); and [Rock art rebels—breaking with tradition](#) (PCN #57, Jan-Feb 2019).]

Certainly, the U.S. locations are drier climates than those in France. Still, the mere overhangs protecting the U.S. pictographs are not the same as being deep in a cave to protect them from the weather. I have not inspected them first hand to see, for instance, if they have a layer of calcite that has formed over them.

I had concluded that some of the Ice Age animal depictions weren't coated with calcite and that knowledge of them must either have been passed down through oral tradition (or portable art) then painted at a later date or that the animals survived much longer than is generally believed.

> [Cont. on page 11](#)

Giant ground sloths; life expectancy of pictographs (cont.)

"Also in in PCN #60 ..."



Fig. 8. SW U.S. rock art panel showing petroglyphs cut through a layer of calcite. Photo Ray Urbaniak.

I discussed support for the possibil-

Fig. 8 shows a panel which has petroglyphs cut through a layer of calcite. Had there

been pictographs on this panel before the layer of calcite formed those pictographs would have most likely survived.



Fig. 9. Australian pictographs purported to be c. 30,000 years old. However, exposure to the elements for so long makes this extreme date unlikely. *Brisbane Times*, November 6, 2019.

ity that the Nomadic Clovis people may have carried their artwork on their bodies in the form of tattoos."

I recently read an article about Australian pictographs which they say could be up to "30,000 years old." However, one of the photos in the article shows the pictographs near the edge of a shelter and apparently exposed to the elements (Rock art in Cape York may have been made by the earliest Australians. *Brisbane Times*. 11-6-19), **Fig. 9**. These obviously can't be 30,000 years old unless they had been continuously over-painted. In general, I dismissed the idea of painted art exposed to the elements being so old until archaeological steward Michael Griffin told me about

Finnish pictographs being up to 7,000 years old even though exposed to 'extreme weather' (**Fig. 10**).

What has given the Finnish pictographs such longevity is a clear layer of silicon dioxide, i.e. quartz, formed over the pictographs which has protected them from the elements. Quartz is much harder than calcite and is also clearer. (Calcite is made of calcium carbonate, a compound containing calcium, carbon and oxygen atoms. Quartz is silicon dioxide, a compound with one atom of silicon and two atoms of oxygen.) Still, there is a major difference between a date of 7,000 years and one of 30,000. So, I am still cautious regarding the Australian dates. Discussions of other chemical reactions that might harden into protective coating layers as well as ancient rock paintings preserved in more humid environments worldwide, can be saved for a more technical article later.

Back to more ancient dates, of special interest are pictographs discovered in tropical caves in Indonesia purportedly dating as much as 40,000 years old. These include fragments of pictographs still present near the entrances to the caves.

There are some pictographs in Alberta, Canada, that have survived because of a layer of calcite over them. They estimate the age at only 500-1000 years, but I think if they date the calcite layer the pictographs may prove to be much older.

Rock art in Libya follows a pattern similar to that of Egypt where some of the paintings were made when the climate was wetter and greener but is now arid desert.

In some deep caves in France, with damp walls, you can simply blow powdered red ochre onto the surface and it will survive. Still, shallow

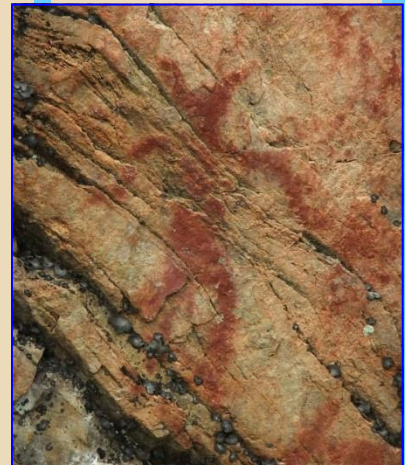


Fig. 10. 7,000-year old human figure preserved as a quartz-coated pictograph; Suomussalmi, Finland. Wikimedia Commons.

caves and beneath overhangs are another matter.

That brings me back to the color aspect and the quote regarding the Australian pictographs:

"These paintings tend to be monochromatic red, applied with haematite that is both very fine and nonresponsive to humidity or chemical alteration."

Obviously, the quality of the red ochre along with additives such as bone marrow can create a stable red pictograph that can survive in harsh environments with or without protective coating.

RAY URBANIAK is an engineer by training and profession; however, he is an artist and passionate amateur archeologist at heart with many years of systematic field research in Native American rock art of the Southwest and other topics. Urbaniak has written over 30 prior articles with original rock art photography for *PCN*. All of them can be found at the following link:

http://pleistocenecoalition.com/index.htm#ray_urbaniak

Dissecting a woolly mammoth petroglyph image

By Ray Urbaniak Engineer, rock art researcher, and preservationist



"I decided to have another look at the mammoth head and was surprised to find the image did indeed have a bulge in the portion of the 'trunk'



Fig. 3. Evenly curved trunk of modern elephant without bulge. Image: Public domain.

corresponding with the recent scientific findings."

About 12 years ago, when I first photographed the SW Utah petroglyphs seen in **Fig. 1**, I recall being highly intrigued by this portion of a larger panel. I felt certain it was something important. However, I didn't have a clue as to why that might have been or, in fact, what I was even looking at. I just knew it was different from any other petroglyphs I had ever photographed. (BTW, all petroglyph photographs in this article are my own. Photos of elephants and llama are all open source images.)

I also knew the panel was likely very old as it was about '30 feet' off the ground with no apparent way to get to it anymore (**Fig. 2**). In other words, when it was made it was probably at an easy access level. The landscape had to have eroded or settled over a long period of time on the likely order of many thousands of years.

Believing the complexity must have meant something, I would dig out my photos of this panel a few times per year to try and see what I was missing. Finally, about 5 years later, I realized the semi-circle part at the top looked like an elephant's *trunk*!

Later I realized the dome directly underneath could be the *head* of a woolly mammoth. And

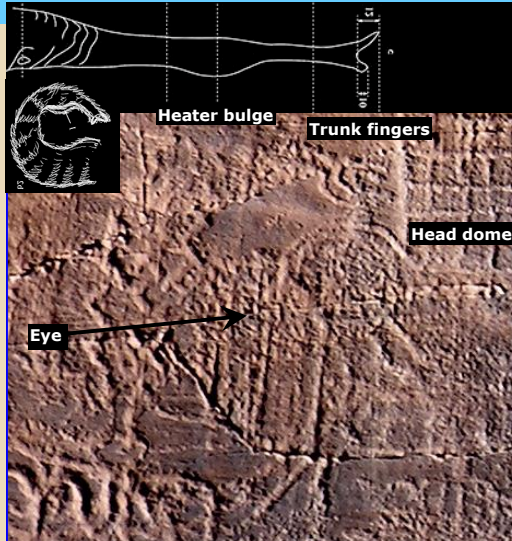


Fig. 1. The initial rock engravings that got my attention c. 12 years ago and proposed parts of left-facing mammoth portrait—part of a SW Utah panel about 30 feet above ground. Enhancement on the following page. Graphic aids: *The Siberian Times*. Photo: Ray Urbaniak.



Fig. 2. General region of panel with proposed mammoth image about 30 feet above ground level with no apparent way to get to it. This suggests to me the image is quite old presuming it was engraved when the ground was higher up. Photo: Ray Urbaniak.

there could be a couple of *atlatl* darts in its throat.

Later still, I noticed what appeared to be the eye. But even then I had some doubts that it was really a woolly mammoth. Then, recently (several years later), I read an article on woolly mammoth *trunk heaters* ("Did extinct woolly mammoths have 'heaters' to melt snow in their trunks?" *The Siberian Times*, 24 September 2019).

I decided to have another look at the mammoth head and was surprised to find the image did indeed have a bulge in the portion of the 'trunk' corresponding with the recent scientific findings. Again, see **Fig. 1**. The left part of the 'trunk' is hard to discern as it appears to have been over-pecked at a later date. I provide an enhancement on the following page.

The upper section of the curved trunk appears slightly bulging. If there were not a bulge the trunk would appear evenly curved (**Fig. 3**). Only then did I realize the two *finger-like projections* at the tip of the trunk were different from modern elephants which had made the trunk harder to identify. Note that the top *finger-like projection* in **Fig. 1** is longer just as with the mammoth trunk

from *The Siberian Times*.

> [Cont. on page 13](#)

Dissecting a woolly mammoth petroglyph image (cont.)

"Also, I say 'extinct' llama

I still didn't know what was going on in the lower 1/3 of the photo until I saw an image of a young elephant with

taining representations of both a llama and a mammoth. Also, I say "extinct" llama because they are not known to have survived in North America later than the end of the last ice age c. 10,000-12,000 years ago.

vation by many explorers such as Columbus, cook,



Fig. 4. Left: Lightly-outlined enhanced version of the SW Utah petroglyph compared with, **Right:** a modern baby elephant.

because they are not known

its mouth open and a fat pink tongue sticking out (Fig. 4).

feel I have confirmation as to a general age for the panel as likely over 12,000 years as well as adequate support for my woolly mammoth petroglyph dissection conclusions!



Fig. 7. Portrayal of an extinct llama seems the most feasible interpretation of the animal depicted on the left side of the SW Utah petroglyph panel. Petroglyph photo: Ray Urbaniak. Llama images: Public domain.

Magellan, etc., that various natives appeared completely unaffected by something before their very eyes because it was so far from their normal experience.

In conclusion, I believe this panel to include a very old detailed depiction of a young woolly mammoth



Fig. 5. Left: Lightly-outlined enhanced version of the SW Utah petroglyph compared with, **Right:** a modern Asian elephant.

to have survived in North America later than the end of the last ice age c. 10,000-

Next, I realized an accompanying image I had prior determined to represent an extinct llama with long fur was actually facing the image of the woolly mammoth! (Fig. 6). I provide a couple

now, even though it was impossible for me to see initially, since I never expected to see such a detailed image when I had never seen

head and trunk. If it is what I believe it is, then it is very likely the only detailed depiction of a woolly mammoth head and trunk found in North America to date!



Fig. 6. Being preoccupied with the details of the 'mammoth' image I didn't notice till later it was facing what I had prior determined to be an extinct llama image!

12,000 years ago."

of extra images in Fig. 7 to support my interpretation of the petroglyph panel as con-

anything like it before. The experience reminded me of the "Ships not seen" obser-

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The Impact of Fossils

A paper on Paleolithic fossil collecting and its possible influence on early humans, text pp. 109–111

By John Feliks

**"That the
Aborigines
observed**



At the Permian-age seafloor diorama, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago. The author's lifelong study of fossils began c. age 8. Photo May 1962 by V. Feliks.

such fossils may be echoed in myths relating that animals and plants were 'painted' on rock surfaces in primeval times."

The Impact of Fossils on the Development of Visual Representation

John Feliks. 1998. *Rock Art Research* 15: 109–134. [Submitted 1995, 1997, 1998. See [PCN #61](#) (Sept-Oct 2019) for the full story of the paper, experts' responses to its suppression, and what this serialized version hopes to fulfill.]

ABSTRACT

The origins of visual representation have been debated primarily in terms of human activity and psychology. This paper proposes that manmade representation was preceded by a natural, already quite perfected representational system, the products of which were observed and collected by early humans. The author suggests the following new hypotheses:

- 1.) Fossils were a means by which human beings came to understand the concepts of 'imagery' and 'substitution' prior to the creation of manmade images.
- 2.) Humans evolved their own forms of iconic visual representation (especially those in the medium of rock), having first been made aware of various possibilities via fossils.
- 3.) Many unexplained prehistoric artworks may be structurally and proportionally accurate depictions of fossils.

Because fossils are known throughout the world, the hypotheses have cross-cultural validity. Clinical studies offer the potential of analogical testability.

KEY WORDS

- Iconic recognition
- Depiction
- Prehistoric art
- Rock art sign
- Fossil collecting

INTRODUCTION

Based on discoveries made in a Mousterian occupation layer, Leroi-Gourhan suggested that the collecting of fossils by Neanderthal people represented early evidence of an order of thought which transcended the everyday needs of survival (1964: 75). He also interpreted this collecting of fossils as one activity which might be seen as a distant introduction to figurative art (1964: 69).

A decade or so later, Oakley began bringing attention to Acheulian period artifacts which contained embedded within them large fossils in central positioning. The central positioning of these fossils was the result of careful knapping by the makers of the implements as much as 250,000 years ago (1971, 1973, 1981, 1985). Hence, these artifacts indicated not only that fossils had been collected at that remote time in human prehistory, but also that they had received special treatment. Oakley considered such fossil-ornamented stone tools as important markers in the emergence of 'higher thought' (1981).

The idea that an awareness of fossils might reflect developments in human cognition has re-emerged in the present decade. White, for instance, considers the collecting of fossils by Neanderthal people as one activity showing the 'glimmerings of symbolic representation' (1993b: 61). He has also demonstrated that some of the earliest personal ornaments showing *complex* methods of production were made from fossils (1992, 1993a). Marshack (1991b: 57) suggests that the collecting and curation of stones and exotics may have been 'precursive to later depictive traditions.' Taborin (1993b:211) views the collecting of fossils by pre-Aurignacian people as a possible stage 'prior to the elaboration of true sociocultural

systems.' According to Taborin, shells [including fossil shells] represent one of the constituent elements in the 'externalization of ideas' (1993b: 212).

In this work, I will offer perspectives which support those of Leroi-Gourhan, Oakley, White, Marshack, and Taborin. However, I will approach the subject from a different direction; I will consider the act of fossil collecting by prehistoric people not only as a *sign* of higher intelligence, but also as an *influence* on such intelligence. I will discuss ways in which the mentality and creativity of early people may have been affected by the observation and collecting of fossils in prehistoric times.

The paper begins with fossil-based theories on what preceded the first manmade representations, collectively termed the 'natural representations theory.' What distinguishes this theory from others in the origins of representation debate is that it does not treat visual representation as a human *invention*, but rather as a human *imitation* of a pre-existing natural phenomenon already quite perfected and variably developed. I propose that the human concept of 'image' as iconic representation containable in solid mediums was a development *primed* by a critical cognitive realization imparted by fossils.

In Part II, I offer developmental chronologies elucidating the potential of fossils as stimuli in the transition from 'natural' to 'artificial' representation. Here, I propose that humans evolved their own forms of visual representation after having first been made aware of various possibilities via fossils. The many similarities between fossils and 'rock art' are explored.

In Part III, the 'fossil depictions theory' is presented.

> [Cont. on page 15](#)

The Impact of Fossils (cont.)

"What distinguishes this theory from others in the origins of representation debate is that it does not treat visual representation as a human invention, but rather as a human imitation of a pre-existing natural phenomenon already quite perfected and variably developed."

Here, I discuss the possible representational base for seemingly nonrepresentational Upper Paleolithic artworks. In addition, I suggest an alternative explanation for the representational base of certain Neolithic–Bronze Age 'schematic' artworks. I offer several comparisons of each of these with possible fossil referents. In many cases, the fossil taxa provided as referents are known from the very regions in which the rock artworks were created.

Before moving on to the body of the text, I wish to make two clarifications. Firstly, I will not be discussing the physical technologies of depiction, how they evolved, or the cognitive processes by which they were applied to depiction; these issues I leave to others. Secondly, I emphasize that I am not positing an all-encompassing theory, but rather, just one logical and very plausible perspective which should be explored for the sake of good science. Like Davis (1986b: 515), I believe that 'image making' by human beings probably had many 'unrelated' origins. Indeed, the 'archaeological record' as we know it indicates that image making began and ended again and again in many different geographic locations. From this perspective, I envision that the last word on the origins of depiction will lend validity to all reasonable theories, as well as demonstrate compatibilities and potential interactions between theories.

This paper is a broad, interdisciplinary, secondary analysis of the present data. Although theoretical, I believe that the perspectives presented herein warrant consideration by anyone sincerely seeking to understand the mentality of our prehistoric ancestors. If this paper succeeds in stimulating serious discussion on the subjects treated, regional investigations, clinical testing and new insights into 'abstract signs,' then it will have fulfilled its purpose.

PART I

PRIMING THE DEPICTIVE MIND:
AWARENESS OF FOSSILS AS
PRECURSOR TO DEPICTION

The 'natural representations theory'

Understanding imagery without creating imagery

The making of iconic visual representations is one of the most significant differences between human beings and all other living creatures. There is no evidence that any other animal species has ever invented such a device. Although some animals such as chimpanzees have learned to use representation, this has only been through human teaching (see Russon, Bard, and Parker 1996; Gould and Gould 1994; Donald 1991; Roitblat 1987 for overviews and references). But herein lies a conundrum; modern human beings, themselves, are also *taught* representation; they never 'invent' it on their own.

How, then, did mankind attain to an initial understanding of representation without the benefit of a teacher? A chronological distinction provides one possible answer: humans do not first learn representation by creating their own representations, but, rather, through exposure to *already-made representations*. Mere exposure to representations (e.g., Hochberg and Brooks 1962; Dirks and Gibson 1977) seems sufficient to teach human children that images of living things can exist in non-living materials. This is not something they innately know, but something they learn through exposure. By analogy, if, in the natural world of prehistoric people, there were *images* for which there could have been no doubt as to the identity of their living referents, then the concepts of icon and referent could have been learned via simple observation of the natural world.

natural representations

The earth contains abundant, ready-made examples of what are, for all practical purposes, complete representations—

fossils. Fossils 'represent' animals and plants which were once alive and may also be said to represent similar animals and plants which are still alive. Fossil invertebrates and plants are even more complete and accurate as representations than are the modern representations in photographs. I state this for three reasons: (1) Many fossils have the same three-dimensional quality as their living counterparts. (2) Fossils are often the same size as their living counterparts. (3) Many fossils contain so much intricate detail as to be virtual replicas of the living forms themselves, albeit, in a different *natural media*. It is this very fact that fossils exist in different media¹ than living forms that makes them 'representations' rather than undifferentiated examples of living forms.

That modern people trained in representation perceive fossils as representations is exemplified by terms such as 'self-illustrating phenomena' (Robin 1992: 130). Other evidence that the representational nature of fossils is fully accepted in modern society includes such long-used phrases as 'pictures in the rocks,' or 'stories told by stone.' This modern view of fossils is significant, in that it forces us to consider, retrospectively, what effect fossils may have had on the prehistoric mind as yet uninitiated in representational thinking.

three levels of reality in one moment

"The sense produced by symbolism is not the conscious sense of reason but the more subtle sense of unconscious association between things that are somehow assumed to be like" (Foster 1990: 536).

It is not uncommon to find living ferns growing right out of the ground which contains fossils of their ancient predecessors. In fact, when studying fossil ferns at many locations, shadows from the living ferns are cast upon the rocks, and may be mistaken for the

> [Cont. on page 16](#)

The Impact of Fossils (cont.)

"By comparing the fossils he

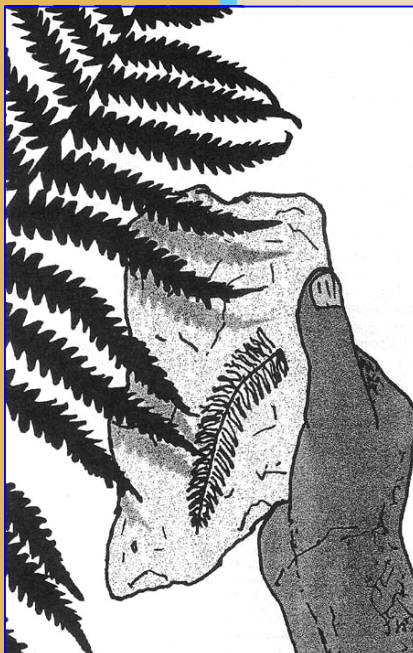


Fig. 1. Living fern, fossil fern and fern shadow observed simultaneously. [Computer assistance from Shekinah Errington and Gerry Hermann, 1995.]

saw in rock with living forms, early man would have learned the same lesson that modern children learn when exposed to photographs—iconic images of living things can exist in non-living materials."

very fossils one is seeking. In observing living ferns, fossil ferns and shadow ferns side-by-side, ancient man would have sensed a connection between them. He probably would have realized that all three are ferns, though one is soft and pliable; another, hard and inflexible; and yet another, clearly visible, though physically intangible. The critical point is that all three could easily be viewed simultaneously, thus encouraging association. By such experience, the mind of early man could have been opened

to the possibility of symbolic representation (**Fig. 1**).¹

Ferns (and other plants with pinnate leaf patterns) have long been common around the world. That Paleolithic people observed such plants is demonstrated by archaeological evidence dating as far back as the Acheulian. At the site of Stoke Newington, England, for instance, there were found abundant samples of the ferns *Osmunda regalis* ('Royal Fern') and *Aspidium Filix-mas* which had been collected by the site's inhabitants (Smith 1894: 288-92; Keeley 1980: 164). Fern fossils are as common as living ferns in some places. They have long been known from England (e.g., Phillips 1871). In France, fern fossils are found not far from Aurignacian sites containing early representa-

tional art (Abrard 1948; Fenelon 1951; Debemas 1974; Feyes 1975; Autran and Peterlongo 1980). The proposed fern/fossil experience may be echoed in the fact that a few prehistoric cave paintings, antler engravings, etc., in France and Spain appear to represent plants with fernlike leaf patterns (Marshack 1991a: 170-99; Bahn 1997: 156).

Well-preserved fossil ferns as well as living ferns are also known in many parts of another early art region, Australia (Laseron 1969, Whitehouse 1948). White (1990) provides photographs of Australian fern and other plant fossils which are so remarkable as to resemble paintings. That the Aborigines observed such fossils may be echoed in myths relating that animals and plants were 'painted' on rock surfaces in primeval times (e.g., Lommel 1967: 146).

iconic recognition

I suggest that the moment a prehistoric person first observed any well-preserved invertebrate, plant, or fish fossil, he would have grasped the obvious visual association between the fossil and its familiar living counterpart. In other words, he would have had the most basic experience of noticing absolute similarity between two physical objects in two completely different media of nature. By comparing the fossils he saw in rock with living forms, early man would have learned the same lesson that modern children learn when exposed to photographs—iconic images of living things can exist in non-living materials.

Credit to Paleolithic people for recognizing the iconic nature of fossils cannot be withheld if we accept that an oddly-shaped stone artifact from Berekhat Ram, Israel, was comprehensible as a 'human figure' to Acheulians (see Goren-Inbar and Peltz 1995,

Marshack 1997, etc.). When compared with the iconic accuracy of fossils, this 'figurine' looks very little like a human being. A similar comparison is made with the naturally-formed Makapansgat cobble thought to have been recognizable as a 'face' to australopithecines (see Oakley 1981, Bahn 1997, 1998; Bednarik 1998). If these two quite unique stone objects are accepted as iconic images recognizable by *Homo erectus* (or archaic *Homo sapiens*) and *Australopithecus*, then it must be admitted that abundant stone objects which are virtual replicas of living forms (fossil shells, ferns, etc.) would certainly have been recognizable by the same hominids as iconic images. In this light, I suggest that prior awareness of the iconic nature of fossils primed the capacity for 'mental projection' of human forms into oddly shaped stones.

*Continued in PCN Installment 2**

References for the 1998 paper up to this point only are on the following page. This Installment 1 represents pp. 109-111 (near the end of p. 111) of the 1998 RAR publication.

*Installment 2 begins with:

"Palaeo-cognitive and ethnographic analogy,"

"Potential clinical testing of the 'natural representations theory,'"

"Indigenous myths suggesting an awareness of natural representation," and

"The physical evidence: Observation and collecting of fossils during Paleolithic times" [includes references for invertebrate fossils collected by Paleolithic people as far back as 250,000 years].

¹ For more on shadows and the origins of representation see Oakley 1964: 129-30; Carrier 1984, 1986. For more on ambiguity of perception and the origins of representation see Davis 1986, Bednarik 1994a: 42.

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