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SPECIAL SESSION

Mila Simões de ABREU, *Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Portugal*
Contact email: msabreu@utad.pt

Damned dams, the decades after the Côa “affair”

Mila Simões de ABREU,
*Universidade de Trás-os-Montes
e Alto Douro, Portugal*
Contact email: msabreu@utad.
pt

Keywords: history, rock
engravings, open-air, dams,
Côa, Douro, Portugal

November 1994. News from north Portugal surprises the world of rock art research. Palaeolithic-style engravings in the open, not in darkness like Franco-Cantabric cave art. Figures of aurochs and horses carved on vertical schist surfaces on the banks of the Côa, a tributary of the Douro.

Urgent facts. A huge dam was being built here. There are several sites with many rocks and countless engravings. The rare figures could all vanish underwater within days.

A tough twelve-month struggle ensues. In 1995, a new Socialist government suspends the dam construction. In 1996, the government creates the “Parque Arqueológico do Vale do Côa”. Two years later, the area becomes part of UNESCO’s World Heritage List.

All this does not reverse Portugal’s dam-building frenzy, which has a long history. In the 1970s, the Tagus River Fratel dam floods a forty-kilometre-long area. It inundates hundreds of rocks with over six-thousand engravings. In the 1980s, the Pocinho dam on the Douro condemns an unknown number of engraved rocks to the same fate. From 2000 to present, dams like the Alqueva, Sabor and Tua continue the frenzy.

This paper summarises the matter and puts forward future options.

Schematic art and pottery decoration: the role of imagery in community social practices during recent prehistory on the northern plateau of the Iberian Peninsula

Maria Helena BARBOSA,
*Fundação para a Ciência e a
Tecnologia, Portugal; Centro
de Investigação Transdisciplinar
«Cultura, Espaço e Memória»,
Portugal*

Contact email: mariahelena.
lo.barbosa@gmail.com

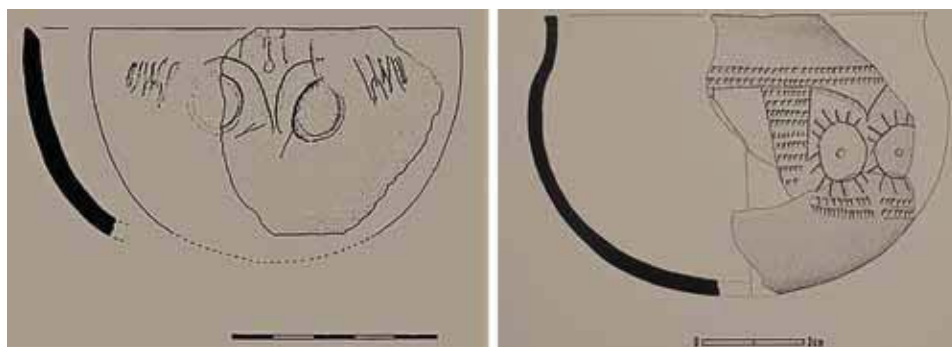
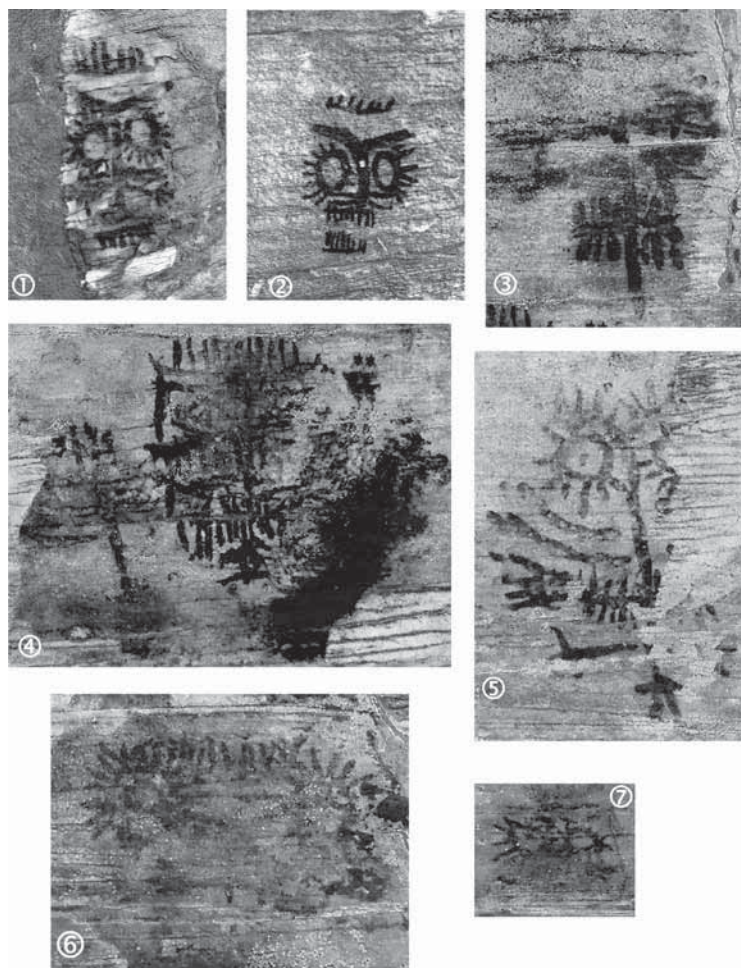
Keywords: anthropomorphic
representations, schematic
art pottery decoration, Iberian
Peninsula, recent prehistory

This paper reports on a project researching schematic art iconography and pottery decoration. The material is from the 4th to 2nd millennium BC on the northern plateau of the Iberian Peninsula. Today, this lies in the Meseta, Spain, and Trás-os-Montes, Portugal. Archaeological evidence helps show rock art sites and pottery have parallel developments. These relate to social changes and are elements of active material culture. They are motors of change of the ideological-cultural systems.

The author proposes an exercise that assumes such designs constitute a code. These acted as an active element in identity consolidation. Even so, that depended on when the community (political instances) allowed it.

The study focuses on motifs containing or accompanying human figures. It is possible to analyse these as “texts” that communicate or convey a meaning. It is a consequence of an orderly interaction of elements. Such components can bear meaning (signs) in different social instances of the community.

Thus, this paper explores the organic and spatial relation of the figures to each other. It traverses what goes on between them and the representation space. It is quite different from the starting point.



A study of prehistoric non-outlined human face rock art in Chifeng area, China and the application of microerosion dating method

Wu JIACAI, *Honder College of Inner Mongolia Normal University, China*

Contact email:
wujiacai321@sina.com

Keywords: Hongshan, rock art, human face image, dating, sites

Research on the rock art sites in 12 towns and villages near Chifeng was conducted over the past 15 years and over 10,000 rock paintings and engravings were discovered. This paper focuses on the distribution and the shape of non-outlined human face motifs. By using the microerosion dating method and experiments on the samples with favourable dating conditions, and making comparisons with unearthed relics, the author's data analysis on the age of the motifs indicates that the non-outlined human face images in Xiao Fengshan belong to the Neolithic age. This research represents a fundamental basis for future research on rock art dating in other areas.



Fig.1 - Rock art site in Xiao Fengshan, Wen Niute town.

Fig.2 - Rock art site at Ge Laoyinzi, Ke Shenke town

A prehistoric hunting scene in Alta Lunigiana

Angelina MAGNOTTA,
*Presidente dell'Archeoclub
Apuo Ligure dell'Appennino
Tosco Emiliano; Ispettore
Onorario, Ministero dei beni
e delle attività culturali e del
turismo, Italy*
Contact email: magnottaan@
gmail.com

Keywords: rock art, hunting
scene, bear, Alta Lunigiana,
Italy

A calcareous rock surface has a hunting scene with an animal that appears to be a bear. It brings to mind Mount Orsaro, which means 'Mountain of the Bears'. The engraved scene indicates the hunter used a trapezoidal axe to kill the bear. There is an acute-angle dagger with a thick handle behind the bear's head. This suggests someone will use the dagger to skin the animal.

The artist used direct percussion to engrave the weapons and bas-relief for the bear's head. Precise lines delineate the edge of the axe. Some segments, made by a blunt instrument, are parallel to those lines. This is most noticeable in the handle. The artist did this on purpose to give body to the object. In contrast, the thinner dagger has a finer finish. Both dagger and axe were objects of prestige. Yet, differing techniques suggest that society viewed the dagger with higher esteem.

The dagger has a similar shape to the Allensbach-Strandbad flint dagger, which dates from 3000 BC to 2800 BC. There is a question on comparisons with Remedello daggers.



Fig. 1 and 2 - Buttress of Mount Orsaro,
Lunigiana, Italy. (photo and copyright
Angelina Magnotta)

The rock art sites of Alcantara Valley

Maria Teresa MAGRO, *University of Catania, Italy*

Marco Stefano Scaravilli

Contact email: mariateresa.magro@virgilio.it

Keywords: rock sites, Alcantara Valley, Bronze Age

This research is the culmination of an analysis of the rock art of the Alcantara Valley. The Alcantara River, which forms the natural boundary between the provinces of Messina and Catania, has experienced a long history of frequentation across the millennia, in particular during the periods of prehistory and protohistory. Small groups of tombs dug into the rock, of the artificial Grotticella type, and numerous millstones are scattered throughout the valley. The chronology of such evidence is still uncertain since the graves were probably emptied in ancient times. The necropolises of Monte Olgari, Balsamà and Passo Moio were created in Medieval times, but it cannot be excluded that they may have been some original elements of these already present in prehistory. Rocca Pizzicata is rich in evidence of past human activities. The sandstone rocks, over the millennia, have been subjected to substantial weathering, especially from wind and water, which have shaped the forms which are present, some of them having human forms as well as some unusual animals shapes. The entire rock area has different levels, connected by passages that often have steps or footholds carved into the rock.



Shinkgelavun ritual and rock art of Northern Europe and Siberia

Nataliia MYKHAILOVA, Institute of Archaeology, The National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine
Contact email: janevic_a@ukr.net

Keywords: Siberian Evenki Shinkgelavun rite, shaman, deer, rock art

There are many complex scenes in the rock depictions of Northern Europe and Siberia. These include images of people and deer. Some scenes look like rituals (Alta, Glosa, Suruhtakh-Khaya). This study analyses them in the context of the deer cult. The cult formed in deer hunter societies and continued into later times. Research noted some subjects of rock depictions of Northern Europe and Siberia. It compared these with actions of the Siberian Evenki Shinkgelavun rite. The ceremony aimed to guarantee hunting success and deer reproduction. This ritual includes the shaman's hike to the Ancestral Goddess (giant deer female). The shaman then received deer and delivered them to the hunter's holding. After that, the shaman disguised hunters, who danced and imitated deer. They made brushwood figures of mating and doe in labour. Then hunters stalked, killed and dismembered a deer, and shared the meat among the fellows. The hide was hung out as a sacrifice.

Main elements of the rite: imitating deer, making deer simulacra, stalking, killing and dismemberment, joint eating, and preservation of the remains for further regeneration. The rock art reflects these actions.

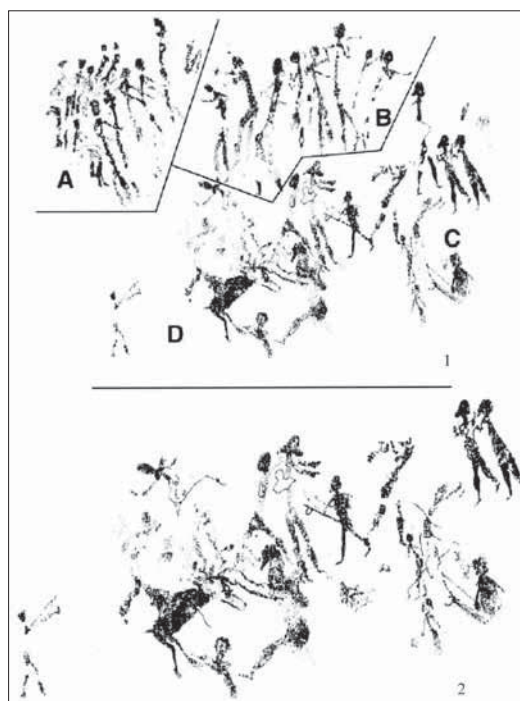
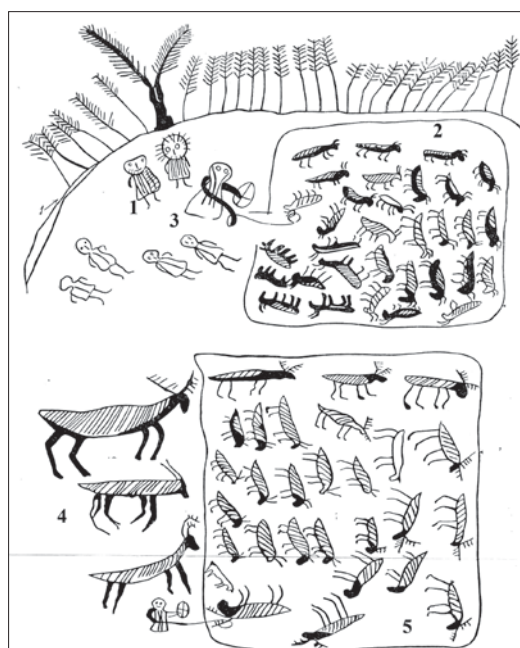


Fig.1 - Evenki drawing. XX cen. Shaman's hike to the World's Hostess: 1- Bugady-Eninteen with her husband; 2 - shaman with lasso; 3 -the fence with the deer - the ownership of Bugady Eninteen; 3 - the deer, which represent ancestral spirits Bugady (Анисимов, 1958).

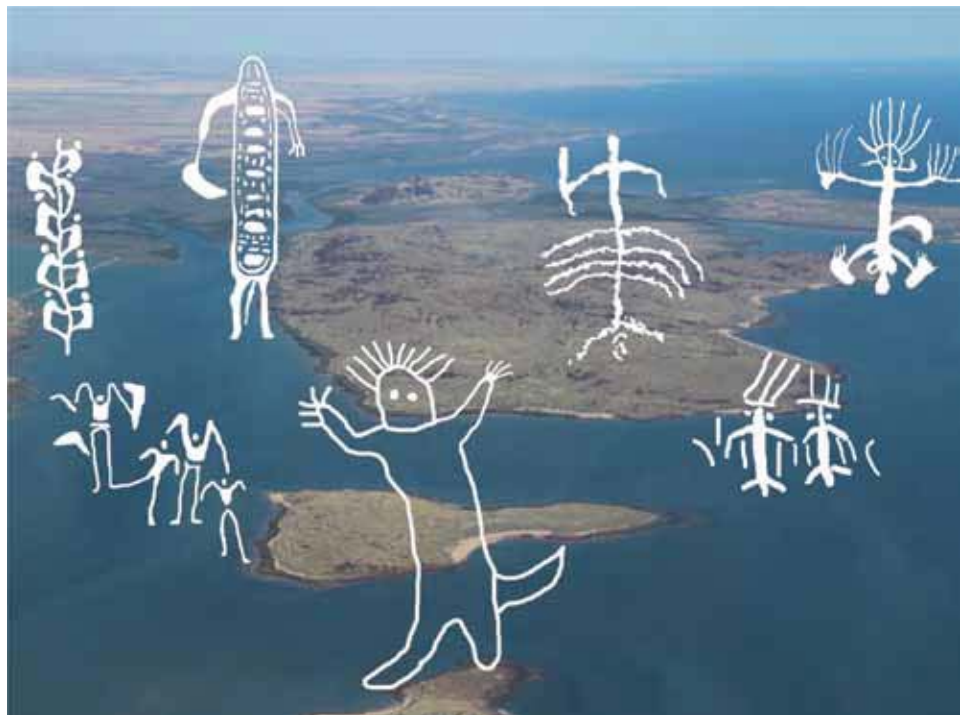
Fig.2 - Murieha rock painting (Spañe). The disguised man catching a deer, hunters and dancing people (Utrilla, 2005).

There be people in them there hills

The Dampier Archipelago lies on the north-west coast of Australia. It has a phenomenal array of petroglyphs. Estimates place these at over a million petroglyphs. Anthropomorphic images make up some 25% of the repertoire. Zoomorphic depictions have a similar percentage. The sheer diversity of human-like images spans many tens of millennia. These provide an insight into rock art production and human expression. Various themes are evident in the stylistic arrangement. Here we see hunting and ceremony scenes, as well as ritual and mythology. We also see what could be the earliest depictions of the human face. Some forms of anthropomorphic portrayal are unique to the archipelago. Others have stylistic comparisons across vast tracts of the Australian continent. In other motifs we see parallels with historic and current cultural practises. These show ritual continuity over some 5000 years. The richness in artistry is a hallmark of the Dampier Archipelago petroglyphs.

Ken MULVANEY, *Rio Tinto, Dampier, Western Australia*
Contact email: ken.mulvaney@riotinto.com

Keywords: Dampier Archipelago, human representation, sacred, secular



Rupestrian scenes in the Serrania de la Lindosa, Colombian East

Carlos A. RODRÍGUEZ M,
Guillermo MUÑOZ C. Judith
TRUJILLO T., *Gipri, Colombia*
Contact email:
gipri.net@gipri.net

Keywords: East Colombian,
Rock paintings, scenes,
everyday world, form and
content

Max Raphael in the work *Prehistoric Cave Paintings* (1945) warned that in this art there were no isolated figures, on the contrary, a lot of compositions. Which implies the rock art murals have to be thought of as thematic and conceptual assemblies. This suggests units of meaning, which in general would be linked in form and content. One of the moments in which it is possible to notice what is mentioned more clearly, is in the scenes or thematic groups. The central issue that will address this paper are the scenes in the pictorial sets of Cerro Tolima, Cerro Pinturas and El Guayabero, located in the Serranía de la Lindosa (Guaviare, Eastern plains of Colombia). Recent research has allowed us to study the formal and thematic recurrences present in the pictorial elaborations of this area of the country. The exhaustive documentation of each one of the murals allows to affirm that there are scenes in those murals. In some cases, these are representations that remember dance, in others, daily life, in particular, the attainment of food (fishing and hunting). This first approach will expose the different inferences to which it has been possible to arrive, without forgetting that the scenes object of this work are part of a broader set of rock art forms.



Fig.1 - Scenes of rock paintings in Serrania La Lindosa, Colombia. (photo Gipri)

Fig.2 - Scenes of rock paintings in Serrania La Lindosa, Colombia. (photo Gipri)

Discovery of Pleistocene 'portable art' in hominin bio-cultural contexts: evidence for early cognitive development of hominins in India

Anek Ram SANKHYAN, *Visiting fellow, Anthropological Survey of India, Kolkata; President, Palaeo Research Society and Palaeo Museum, Ghumarwin, India*

Contact email: arsankhyan@gmail.com

Keywords: Pleistocene, portable art, hominins, Narmada, Satluj, India

Asia has great promise for understanding early cognitive development of hominins. Even so, this potential remained almost unexplored in India. There was knowledge of some engraved ostrich shells. New discoveries of 'portable art', hominin fossils and Palaeolithic artefacts change this.

The finds are two bird figurines on stone, two pendants and a painted pebble chopper. Investigations recovered the painted pebble chopper along with Acheulian artefacts at Ghumarwin. The site lies on an ancient terrace called Sir Khad, a tributary of the river Satluj in Himachal Pradesh. This terrace also yielded an "embryo-shaped" stone pendant with two threading "eye holes".

A bone pendant and a tiny bird figurine on a chert flake came from the central Narmada valley in Madhya Pradesh. In association were other finds. These were a hominin humerus, two sacra (one male, the other, female) and Middle Palaeolithic stone and bone tools. They date to the later Middle Pleistocene Surajkund Formation some 70,000 years ago. Another tiny bird figurine on a thin basaltic crust was in situ at the hominin locality of Hathnora. This is in the Baneta Formation dated to around 40,000 years ago.

The finds are a first of the kind found in Pleistocene human bio-cultural contexts. They are significant to our understanding of early hominin cognitive development. Evolution of three-dimensional Palaeolithic art becomes clearer. Here we see the "explosive" beginning of graphic art in India.

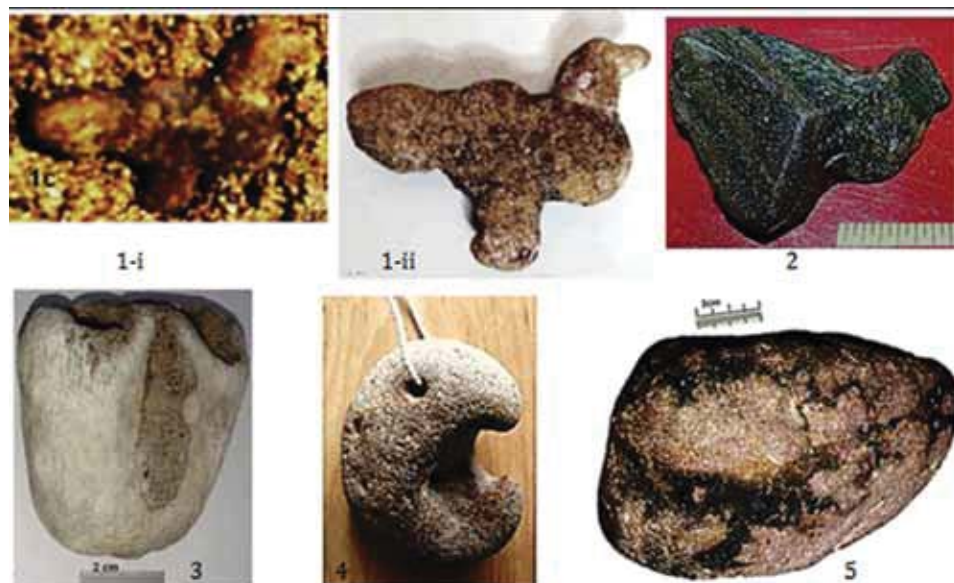


Fig. 1 i Bird figurine in buried context. 1 ii Bird figurine taken out. 2 A chert scraper in a bird shape. 3 Bone pendant. 4 "Embryo-shaped" stone pendant. 5 Painted Palaeolithic Chopper

Symbols for winter-solstice in Palaeolithic cave art

Northern cultures celebrated summer and winter solstices. Did Cro-Magnon people also do so? This research examines what one sees when watching the sun rising or setting. The author illustrates a plot of the sun traversing the horizon. It moves to a southern-most point (the winter solstice) and back. The result is an X-shaped sign linked to horse and lion figures in caves and Swabian ivory sculptures. X is a general sign for solstice and renewal of life. The lower part (^) that resembles an arrow also has connections with the horse. Here the horse equates to the sun, which returns after the winter solstice. Another illustration shows two horses moving in opposite directions. There are depictions of this symbol for the renewing sun in cave art: Chauvet, Pech-Merle, Font-de-Gaume... At Lascaux the sun-horse falls and turns. At Pair-non-Pair, the horse, lit by midwinter sun, only turns its head. The decorated rock shelters of Roc-aux-Sorciers, Cap-Blanc and Chaire-à-Calvin show three examples of sun-horses. All face south, but are only sunlit during winter. The ibex is another symbol of midwinter, which is when these animals rut.

Harald ULRICH

Contact email: haulrich@t-online.de

Keywords: solstice, sun-symbol, X-sign, horse

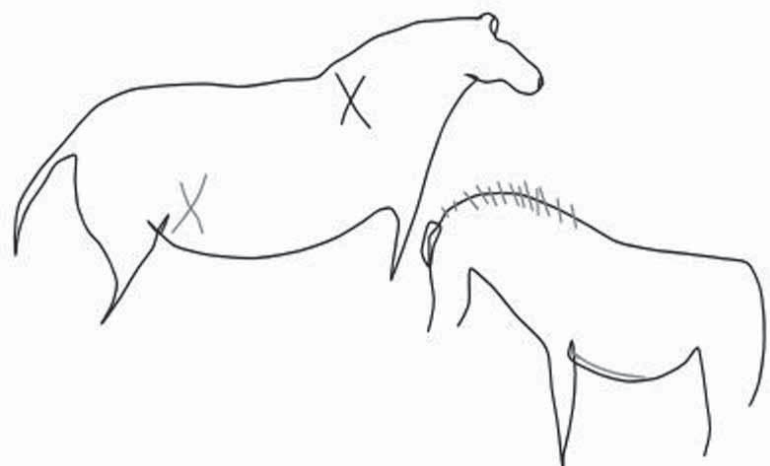
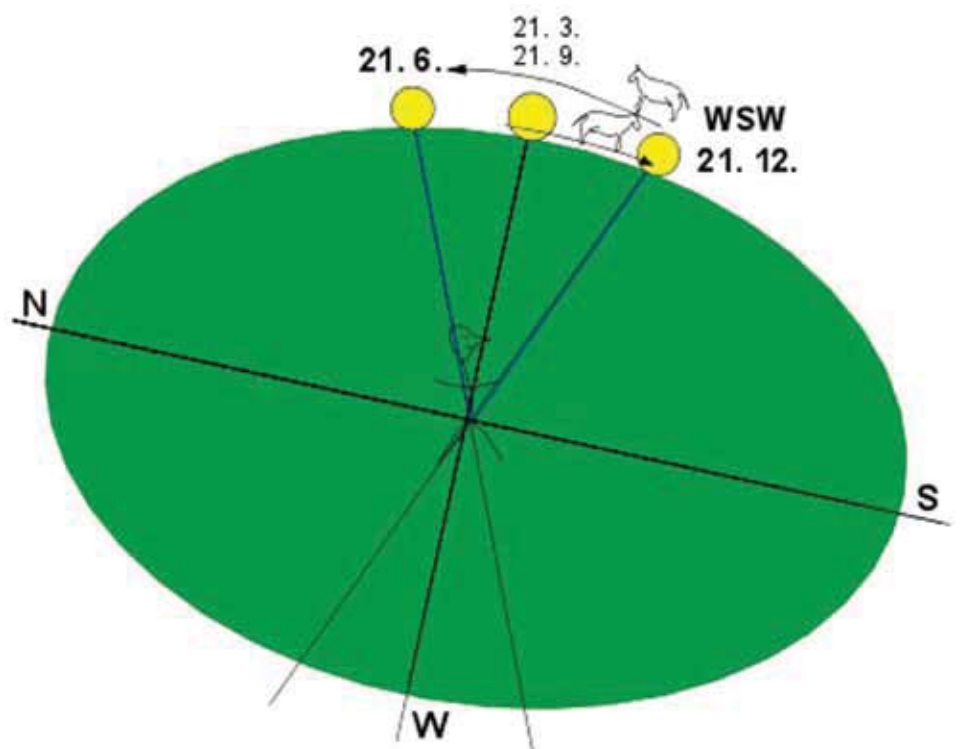


Fig. 1 - Watching the horizon on sunrise
 Fig. 2 - Two horses facing each other, with X-signs, from the deep end of the cave of Niaux. (after photo by J. Clottes)