

Two Million Years of Art in Human Evolution

AH 224 Paleolithic Art, Spring 2012

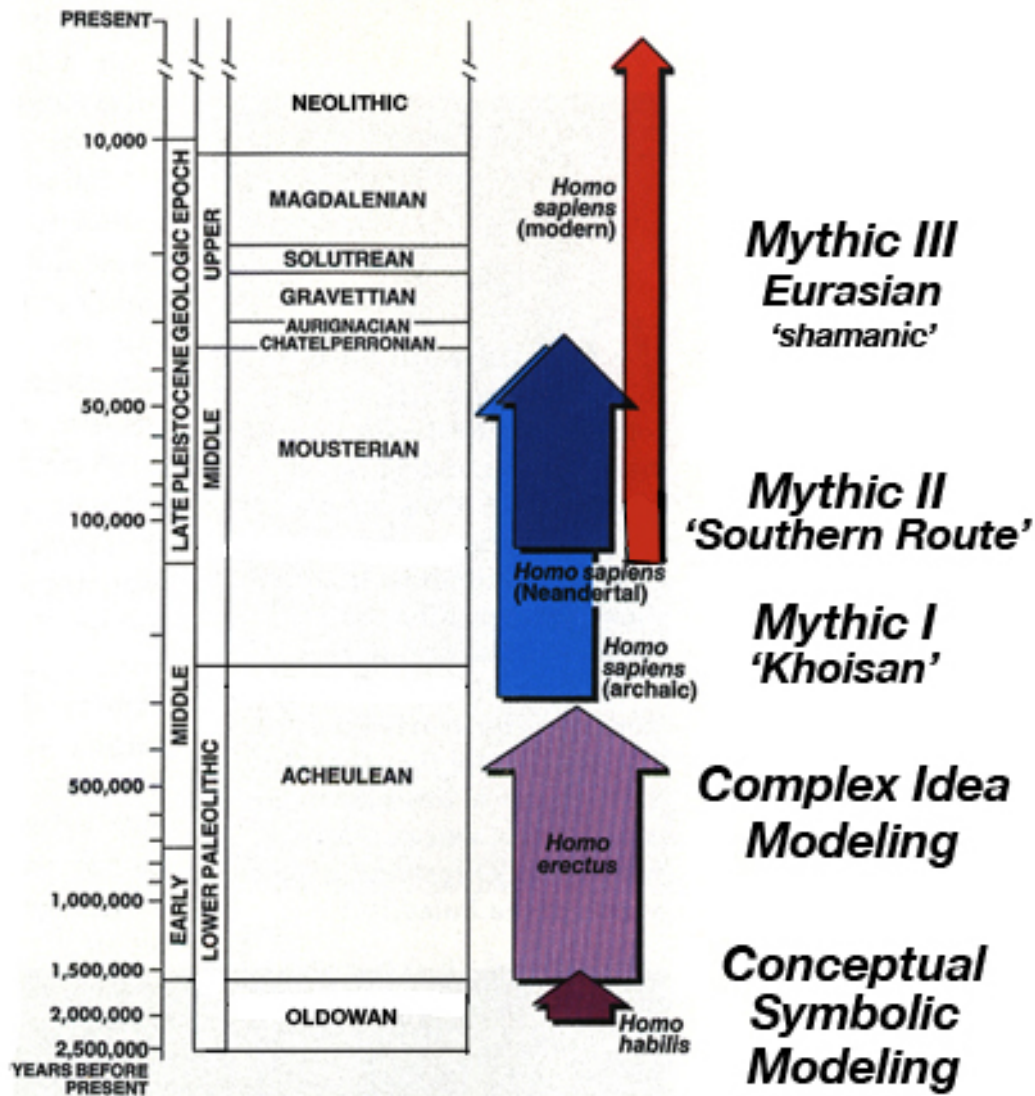
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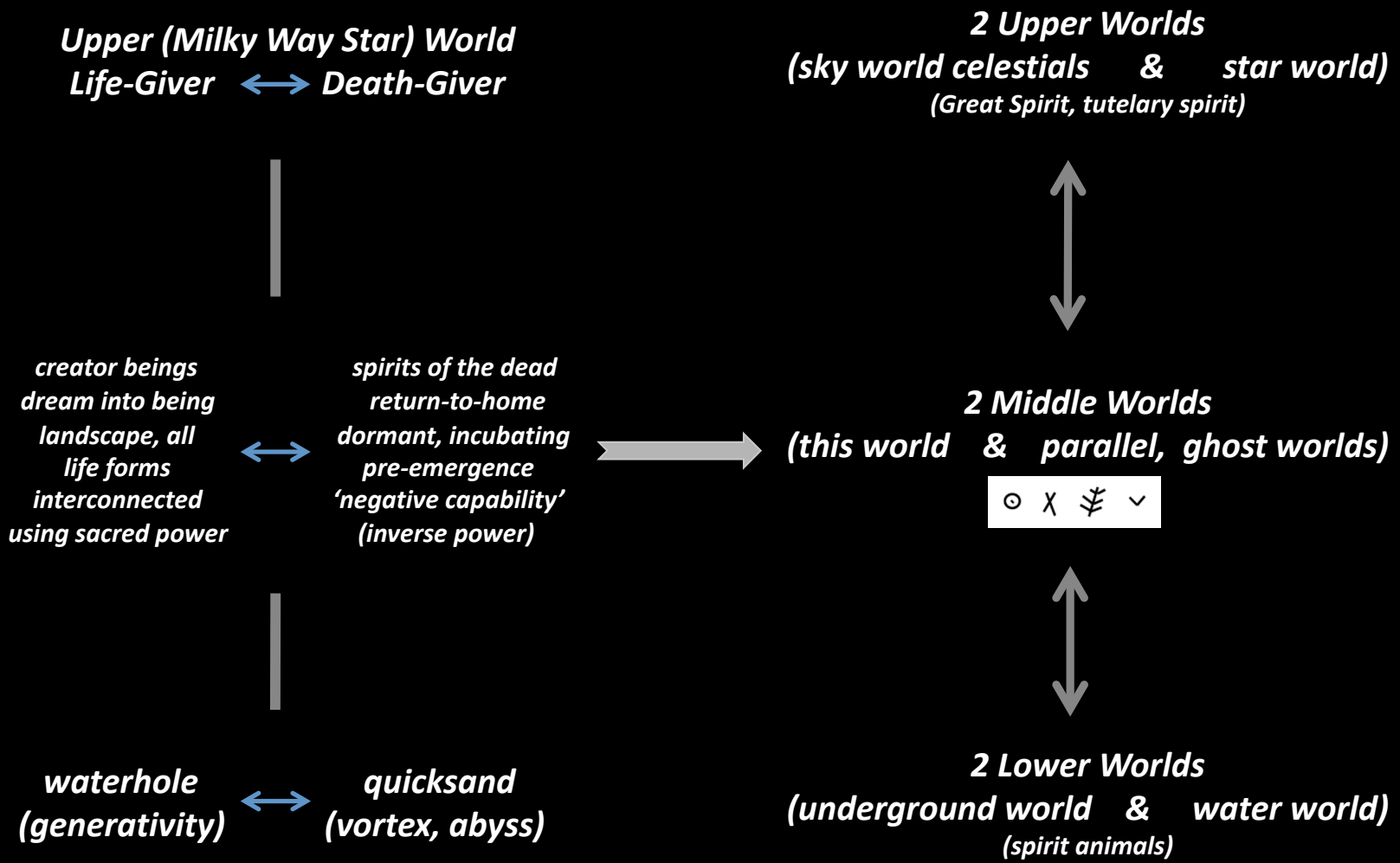
Director, Center for Research on the Origins of Art and Religion

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MYTHO-STRATIGRAPHY



**Upper Paleolithic / Later Stone Age
Palaeoart**



Meme #4 Upper Paleolithic / LSA: Mythic III

Shamanic, 'Laurasian' (M. Witzel)

6 Worlds Shamanism (Soul Journey, Soul Retrieval), Mother-of-Animals, Master-of-Animals
Cave/waters as emergence place; UP(E) arrays of female and male spiritual transformations

UP(E) GEOMETRIC SIGNS

Three categories of UP(E) painted and incised images:

- **Animals**
- **Humans (less than 10% of sites)**
- **Geometric signs** (Bahn & Vertut 1997)

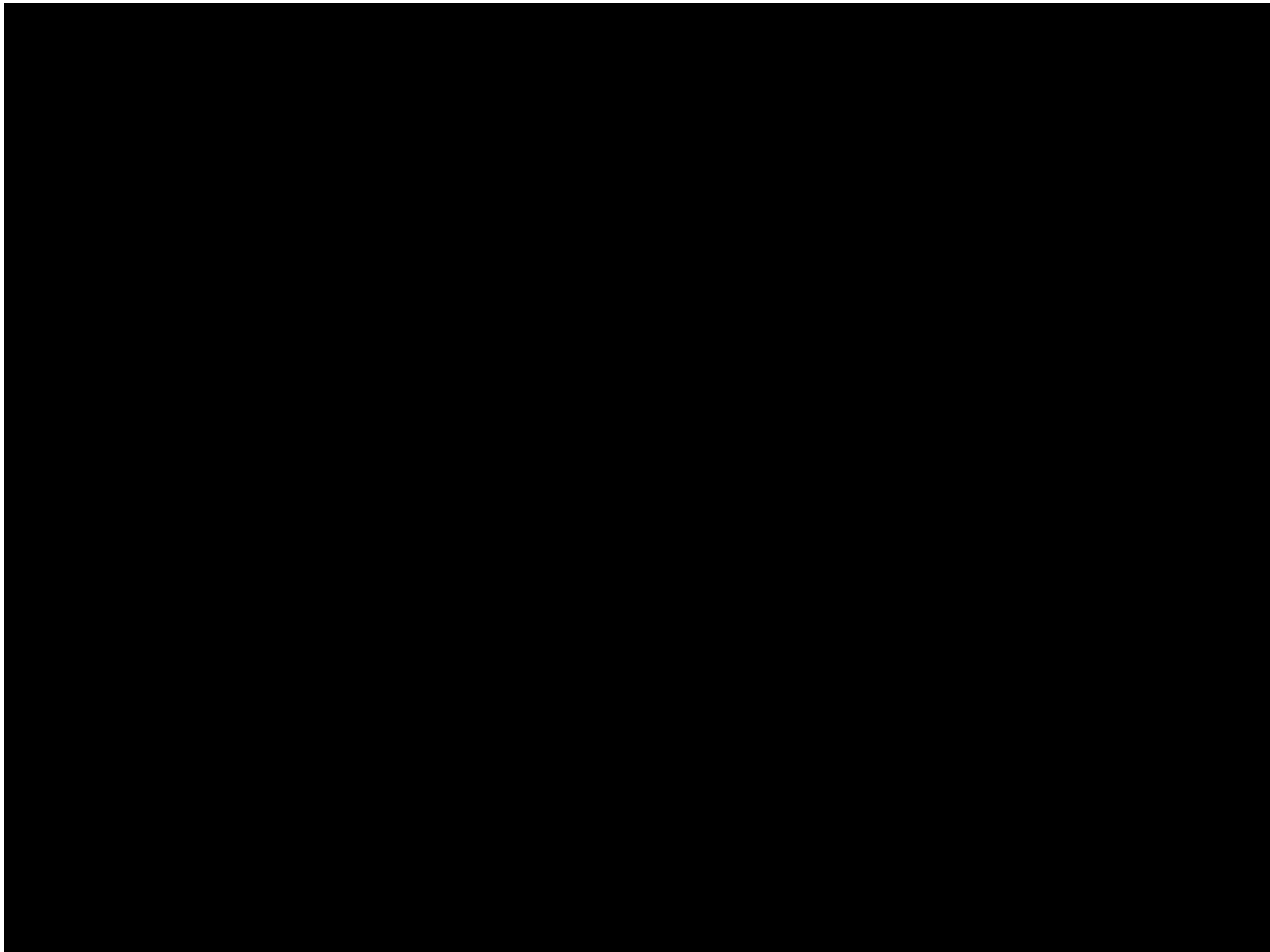
'147 out of 170 sites in France

70% of sign types remained in use over 25,000 year and no sign appears everywhere, so conscious decisions; were culturally meaningful; and if they did have significance they were being used to convey information. By Magdalenian repeated pairings and larger configurations occur' (Von Petzinger 2011)

DIVINATION:

UP(E) GEOMETRIC SIGNS







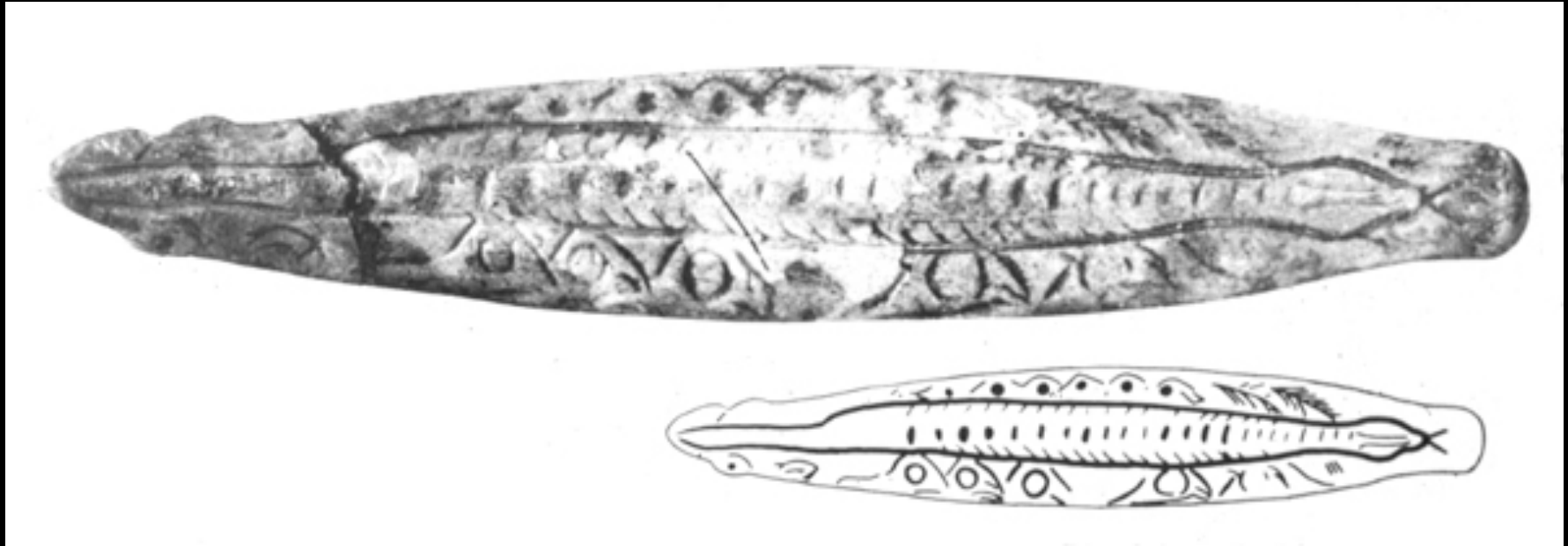
Deciphering Upper Paleolithic (European) Geometric Signs

Part 1: The Basic Graphematics

Summary of Discovery Procedures

A						
B						
C						
D						
E						
F						
G						
H						

Examples of Paired Signs – A. Leroi-Gourhan
(Leroi-Gourhan A. 1967. *Treasures of Prehistoric Art*: chart XXXIV)



The Upper Paleolithic (European) 'Rosetta Stone': Paired 'Tri-line' and 'Branch' Signs

Lorthet tri-line and branch, serpent and birds and newly hatched chicks

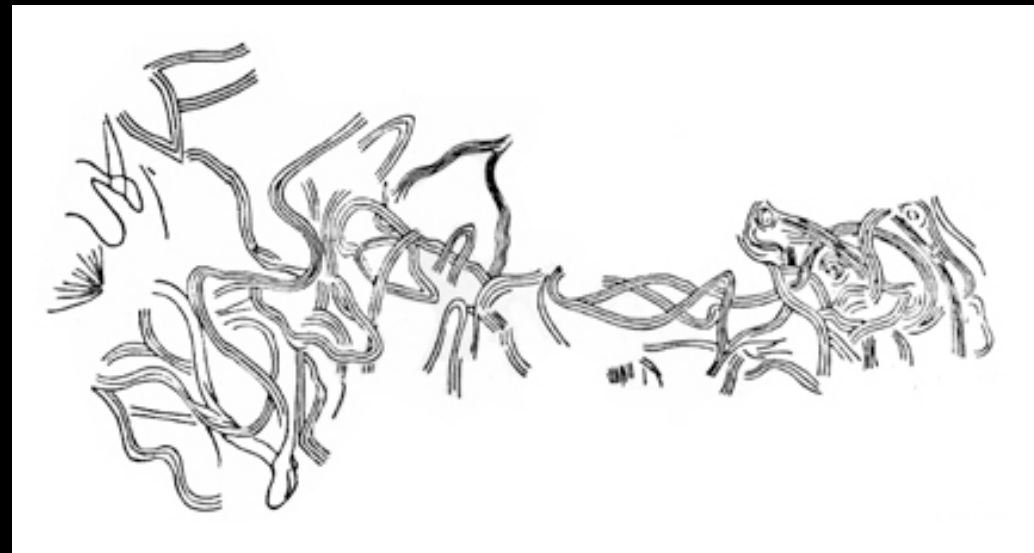
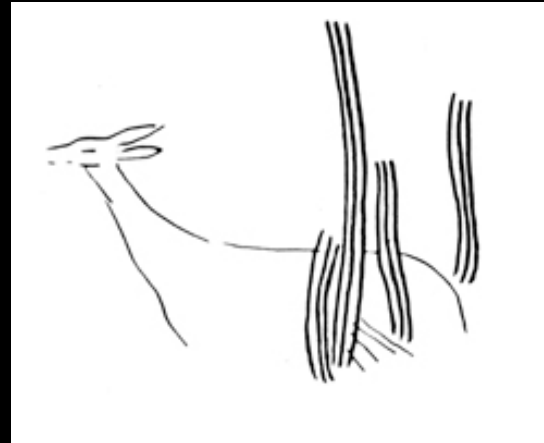
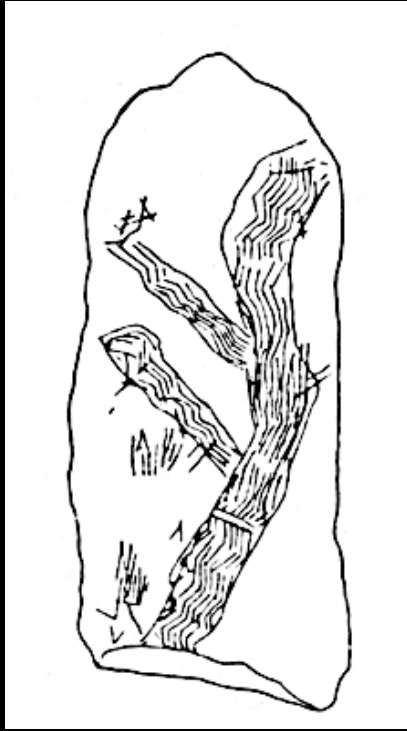
(Marshack A 1991. *The Roots of Civilization* fig 109a,b)

Semiotic interpretation: James Harrod



'Flow' Sign: Tri-Line = 'flow in undulating rhythmic movement of life in 3 worlds'

Le Placard tri-lines (Chollot-Varagnac M. 1980. *Les Origines du Graphisme Symbolique*: 54.937b)



'Flow' Signs: Tri-Line, Undulating Meander Line, and Zigzag (series of running angles or chevrons)

L: Romanelli, Final Epigravettian, 'core meander with two main branches marked with running angles symbolizing water'.

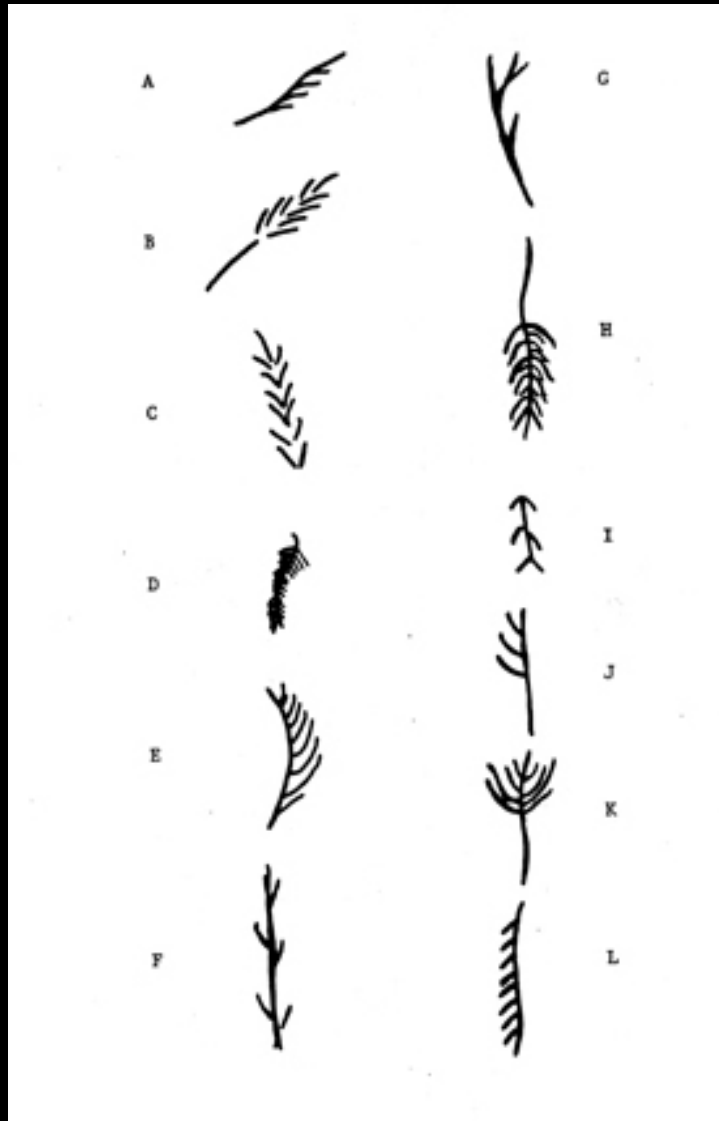
Marshack A. 1977. 'The meander as a system', pl. 41 after Blanc)

C top: Altamira tri-line. 'meanders traced in the clay with a toothed instrument and an engraved hind'.

(Marshack A. 1977. 'The meander as a system', pl. 27a,b after Breuil 1952: fig. 23, 24)

R top: Ardales horses with tri-line meanders, 'wavy lines water symbolism'. Marshack A. 1977. 'The meander as a system', pl. 45)

C bottom: Altamira, 'meanders in clay and the head of bull at right within meander'. (Marshack A. 1991. *The Roots of Civilization*: pl 27c, after Breuil)



'Branch' Signs: = 'sprout, emerge, give birth, hatch, grow out of, grow, unfold, unfurl branches, ramify, branch'

A-E Lascaux; F Marsoulas; G Cugnac; H Niaux; I Isturitz; J Altamira; K El Castillo; L La Pasiéga (after A. Leroi-Gourhan 1967 by Patricia Reis)



'Branch'-Signs

'Chinese' horse, Lascaux Axial Gallery

(silkscreen print D. Mazonowicz , cf. Leroi-Gourhan A. 1967. *Treasures of Prehistoric Art*: fig 81)



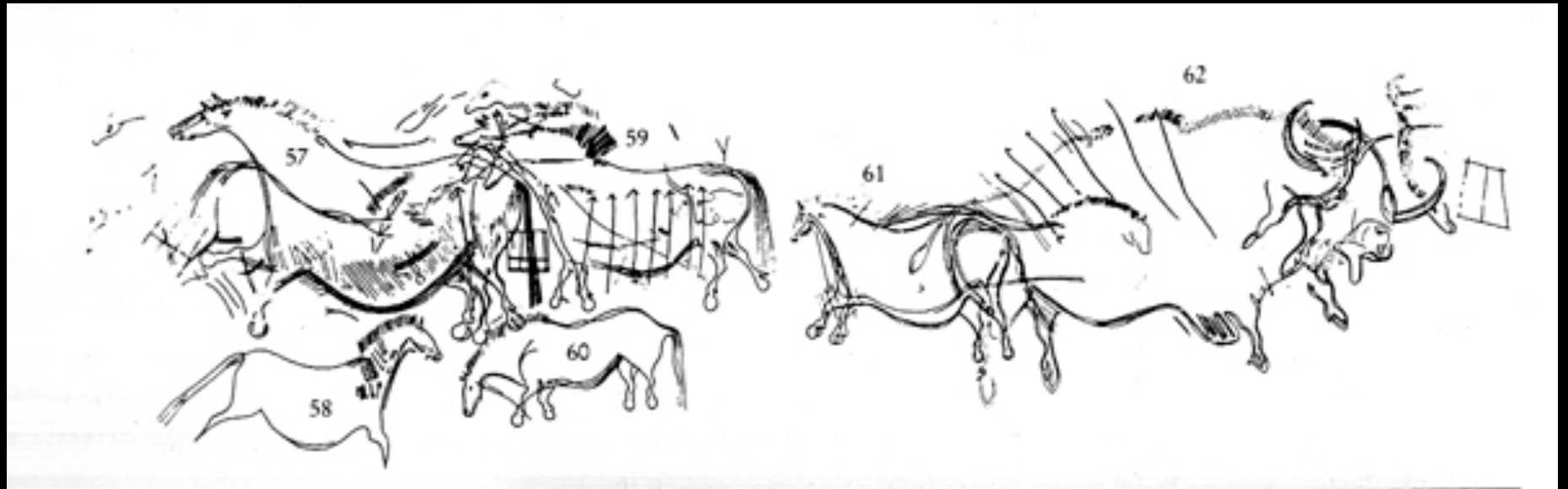
‘Contact, Cleave’ Sign: Single and multiple ‘Darts’ and ‘Stroke Lines’

= ‘Contact, cleave to, feel irrupting spirit energies within, be pregnant, gestate, double, split within, disreempt, die, be wounded, killed, sacrificed, be set apart, cross into the separate or other world’

L: Niaux 'wounded bison', (Leroi-Gourhan A. 1982. *The Dawn of European Art*: fig 74)

R: Paglicci, Apulia, engraved horse pelvis. ‘running stallion with 27 darts, 20 different points; 6-7 horizontal darts with no feathers’, (Marshack A 1991. *The Roots of Civilization* fig 120B)

Semiotic interpretation: James Harrod



'Contact, Cleave'-Signs: Single and multiple 'Darts' and 'Stroke Lines'

(also Y-signs and 2 bi-lines and grid on neck horse 58, possibly bi-line on 61)

= 'Contact, cleave to, feel irrupting spirit energies within, be pregnant, gestate, double, bifurcate, disremp, die, be wounded, killed, sacrificed, be set apart, cross into the separate or other world'

Lascaux, Nave, Panel of the Imprint. Ruspoli M. 1986. *The Cave of Lascaux: The Final Photographs*: 130 (after Glory).



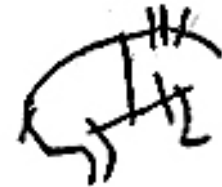
'Contact, Cleave'-Signs: Single and multiple Darts, Stroke Lines, Xs and Bi-Lines
(also 'breath' marks and possibly tri-line or paired X – tri-line)

Lascaux, Chamber of Felines. Ruspoli M. 1986. *The Cave of Lascaux: The Final Photographs*: 145 (after Glory).

Semiotic interpretation: James Harrod

My body is a spirit.

The character is intended to represent the body of a bear, with a line across the body, signifying one of the most powerful of the sacred Man'idōs or spirits, of the Midē' wiwin or "Grand Medicine Society."



I am about to walk.

Bear spirit, talking. The lines upon the back indicate his spirit character.

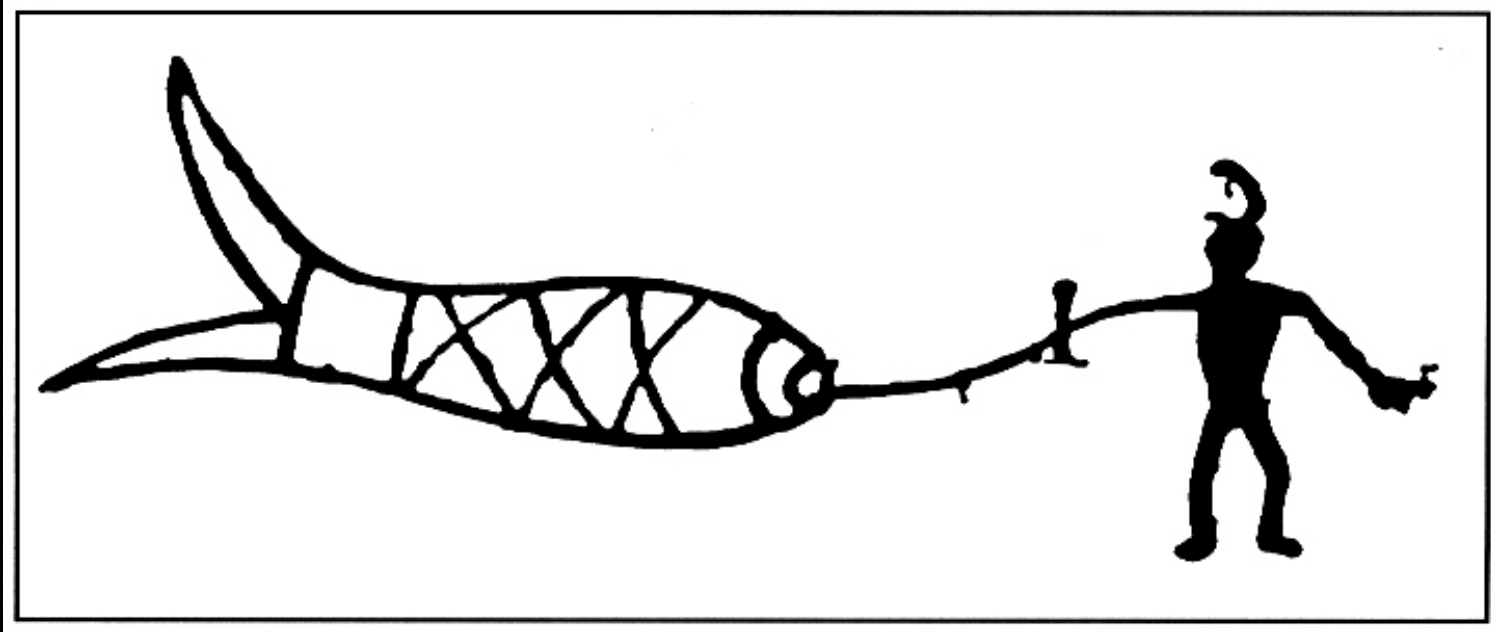
Anishinabe ('Ojibwe'), Algonquian. Midewiwin medicine society chant (on birch bark scrolls)

Anishinabe singers provided song translations of pictograms and shamans/precepts later provided explanatory comments,

top: White Earth, Minnesota, bottom: Red Lake

(Mallery G. 1888/1972. *Picture-writing of the American Indians*, Vol. 1: 233, 246)

Semiotic interpretation – comparison: James Harrod



'X'-Signs, Chinese Rock Art

Gongxian, Sichuan, China depicts a fisherman and fish, the latter with three Xs on its body, which may have a meaning still in use today: "very large!" Interpretation: Emmanuel Anati. Anati E. 1993. World rock art: The primordial language. *Bolletino del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici* 27.fig.112

or possibly more likely the X-like character component found in the Chinese characters for *yì* (cut, mow, shear); *yáo* (oracle line, sacrificial meat); and *shá* (kill). Interpretation: James Harrod

In hieroglyphic Egyptian the generic determinative "X" signifies "break, divide, cross" (Rittner RK. 1996. Egyptian writing. In P. Daniels and W. Bright (eds.) *The world's writing Systems*: 80). Interpretation: James Harrod



'Contact, Cleave'-Sign: 'Bi-Line'

L: Le Placard 1 double line; R: 5 pairs of double lines, 1 single line. Reindeer antler fragment. Solutrean.

(Chollot-Varagnac M. 1980. *Les Origines du Graphisme Symbolique* 54.937.L and 54.937.I)

Gimbutas M. (1989. *The language of the goddess*) decodes European Neolithic bi-lines as "progressive duplication, doubling, pregnancy, twinning, abundance, the power of two."

Semiotic Interpretation: James Harrod



'Contact, Cleave'-Sign: 'Bi-Line'

= 'Contact, cleave to, feel irrupting spirit energies within, be pregnant, gestate, double, bifurcate, disremp, die, be wounded, killed, sacrificed, be set apart, cross into the separate or other world'

L: Chauvet, horse with double line marking (Clottes J. 2003. *Chauvet Cave: The art of the earliest times*: fig 32?)

R: La Pileta (Malaga), 'painted pregnant mare with sequence of double wound marks, each set made at a different time'. ,
(Marshack A 1991. *The Roots of Civilization* fig 197)

Semiotic Interpretation: James Harrod



'Bi-Line'

= 'Contact, cleave to, feel irrupting spirit energies within, be pregnant, gestate, double, bifurcate, disremp, die, be wounded, killed, sacrificed, be set apart, cross into the separate or other world'

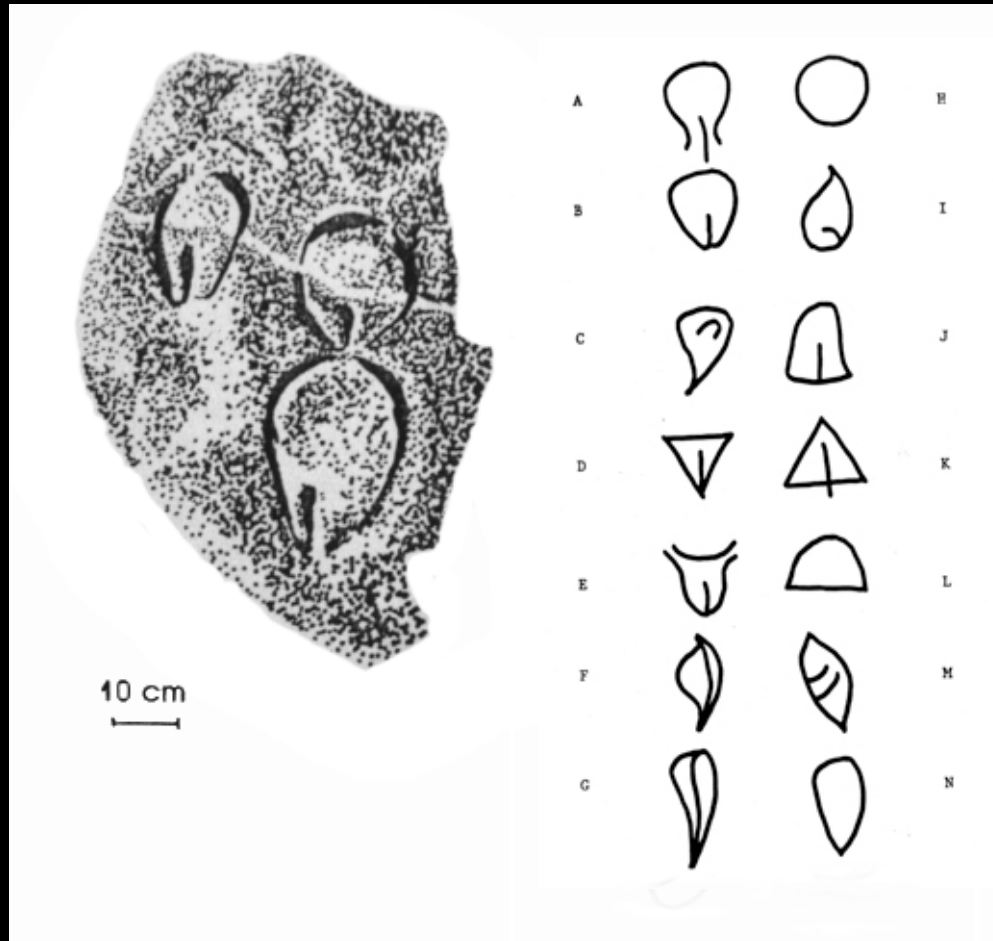
La Madeleine engraving on bone. (Marshack A 1991. *The Roots of Civilization* fig 99.)



Bi-Line and X's on Serpents: Contemporary, Bihar, India

Utchet Madhabhani, Bihar, India. 20th Century.

(Jayakar P. 1990. *The Earthen Drum*: 105, fig 87)

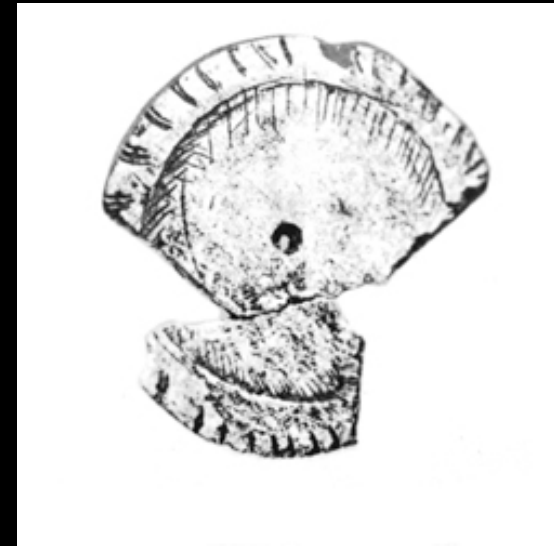
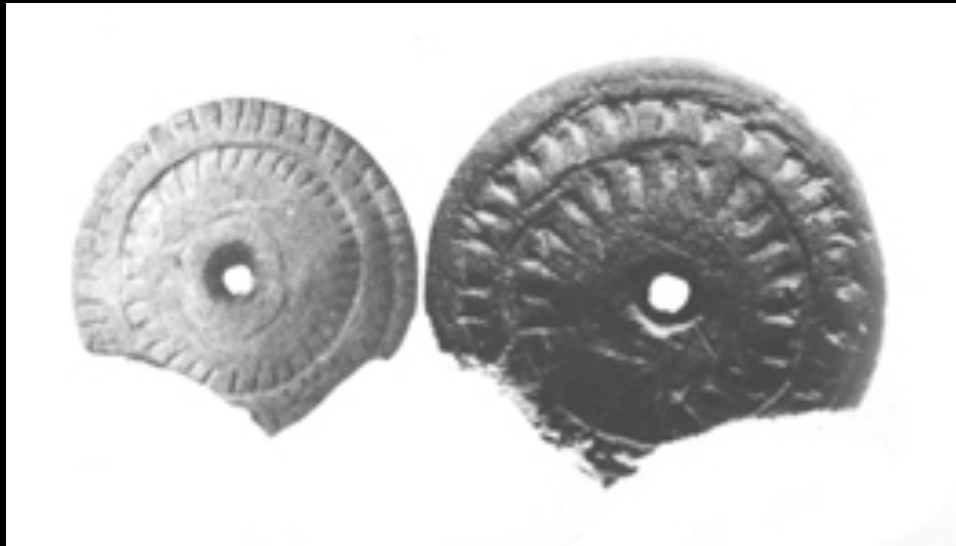


Aurignacian 'vulva-seed' ('uterus womb', 'teardrop') signs

L: Castelmerle, Dordogne H: 97.4cm. R: A Abri Cellier; B Abri Blanchard; C La Portel; D Bédeilhac; E Arcy-sur-Cure; F Ussat; G Les Combarelles; H Pech Merle; I Altamira; J El Castillo; K La Mouthe; L: El Castillo; M Ussat; N Isturitz.

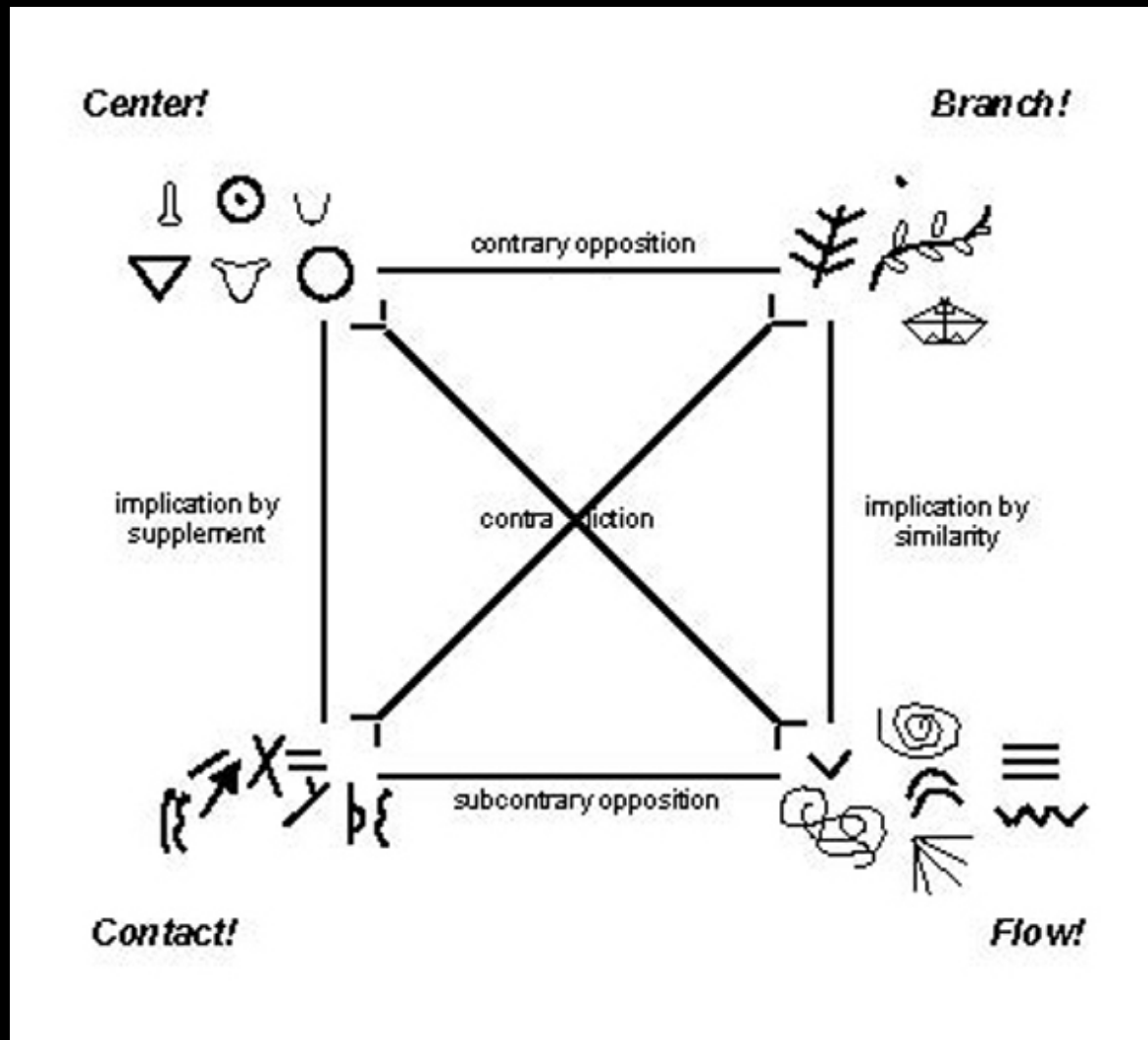
Drawings: Patricia Reis after A. Leroi-Gourhan; see also Gimbutas M. 'Monstrous Venus'. 1981: Fig. 1 and 2.

Interpretation: Marija Gimbutas, 'cosmic womb', 'source of the waters of life', 'of the sprouting of life', and 'giving of birth'
 James Harrod, 'teardrop' shape, 'source of all sorrow and joy of life', compare converse gendered Egyptian Atum who emerges from primordial sea as a mound (*benben*) and from own seed makes air and moisture, Shu and Tefnut, and from own tears creates humanity.



'Center'-sign = concentric circles, with holes or without

Isturitz and Mas d'Azil, Concentric circles with holes; possibly astronomic or calendrical
(Chollot-Varagnac M. 1980. *Les Origines du Graphisme Symbolique* : 223, 74.954 and 47.225)

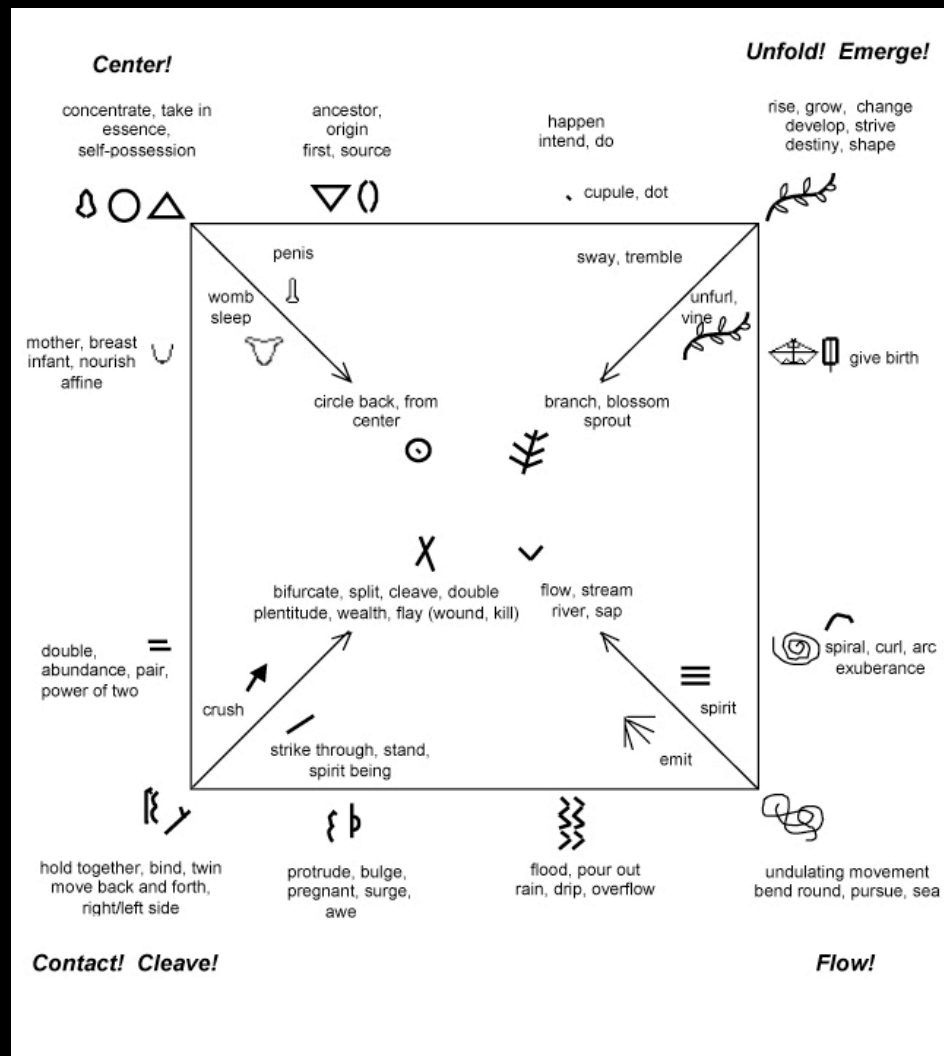


Upper Paleolithic (European) Geometric Signs

Semiotic ('Logic') Square, The Basic Grapho-Semantic Hypothesis

Gesture Movement-Forms symbolizing "Center inward!...Contact irrupting spirit energies!...Branch, grow!...Flow!"

Following A-J. Greimas' method of structural semantics, I allocate UP(E) graphemes by mutual inter-definition of shape according to an Aristotelian Logic Square (Harrod J. 2004 online. *Deciphering Upper Paleolithic (European): Part 1. The Basic Graphematics—Summary of Discovery Procedures: Diagram 2*)



Upper Paleolithic (European) Geometric Signs: Expanded Grapho-Semantic Hypothesis

Identification and allocation of graphemes after cross-mapping against Mary LeCron Foster's (1978, 1986, 1990) lexicon of 'primordial language' (PL). (Harrod J. 2004 online. *Deciphering Upper Paleolithic (European): Part 1. The Basic Graphematics—Summary of Discovery Procedures: Diagram 5 updated 2009*)



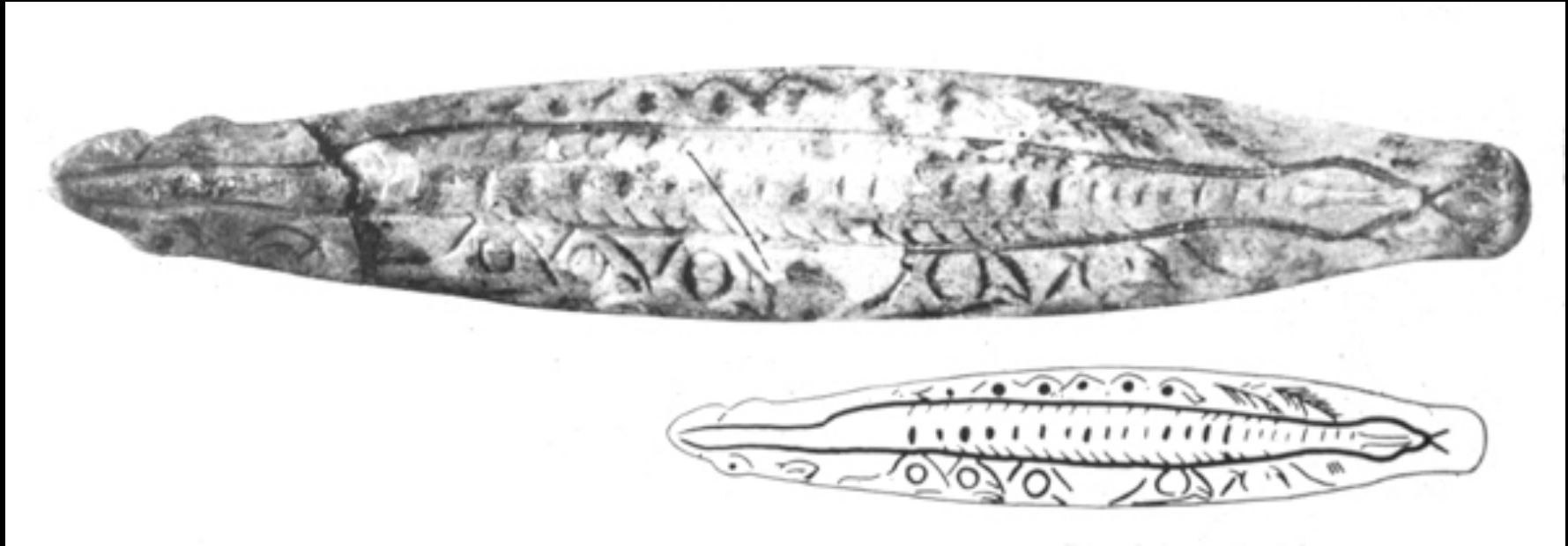
Paired X-Branch and ‘The Alphabet’ of UP(E) Geometric Signs (Chevron, Branch, X, Circle)

L: Le Placard, Magdalenian, pairing branch and X signs

(Chollot-Varagnac M. 1980. *Les Origines du Graphisme Symbolique*: 135, 55.054)

R: La Madeleine, Magdalenian, Signs Representing the Four Sign Clusters of UP(E) (Chollot-Varagnac M. 1980.

Les Origines du Graphisme Symbolique: 113, 20.058)

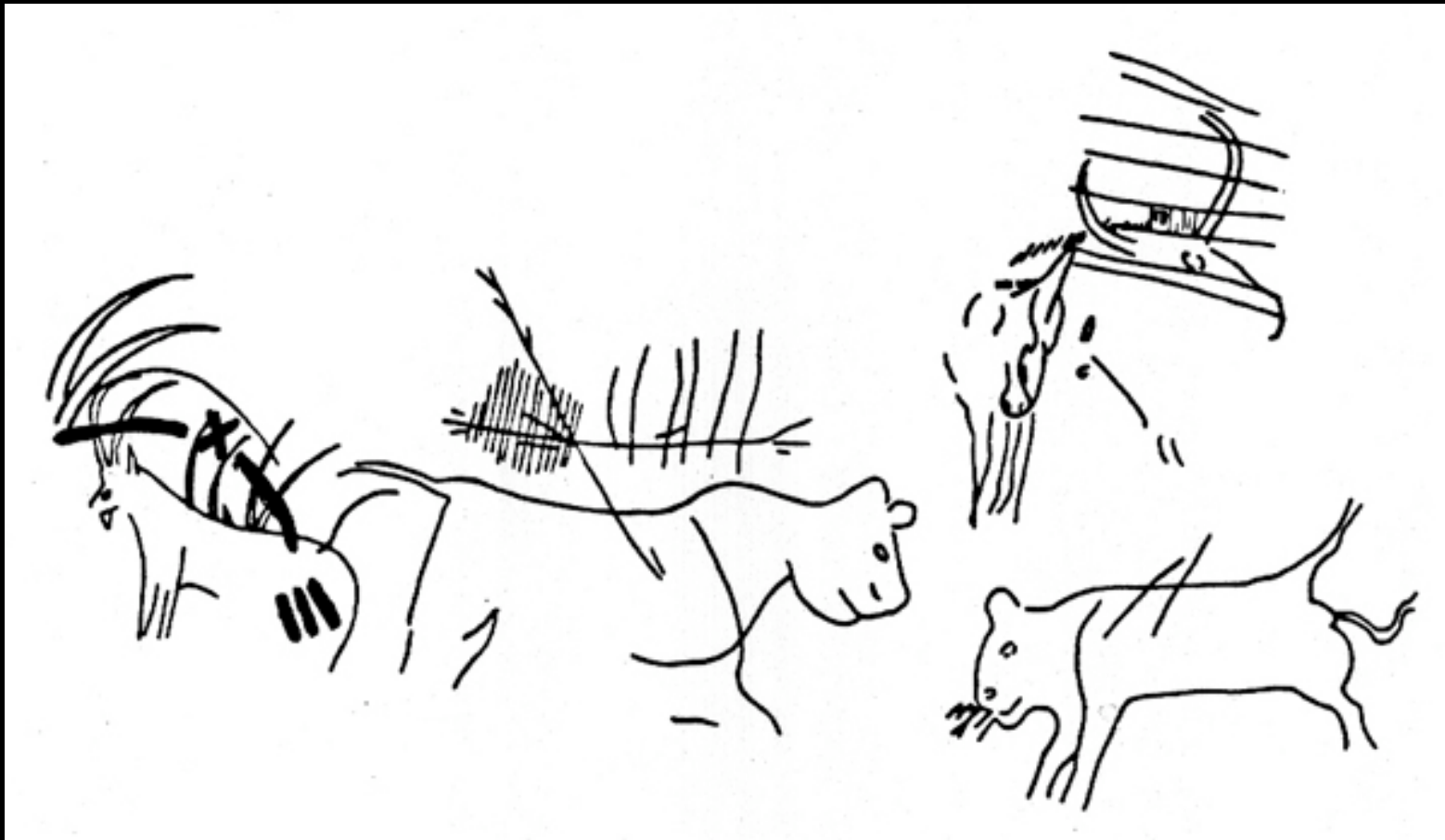


Reading Upper Paleolithic (European)

Lorthet tri-line and branch, serpent and birds and newly hatched chicks (Marshack A 1991. *The Roots of Civilization* fig 109a,b)

The Lorthet engraving says:

"Break out of your shell, hatch, be born, newly alive, striving to take shape, branch out, blossom, ramify with spring thaw life! and then follow the undulating self-movement of life, wise in the ways of danger, filled with the animating spirit of life in all three realms (upper, middle and lower)!"

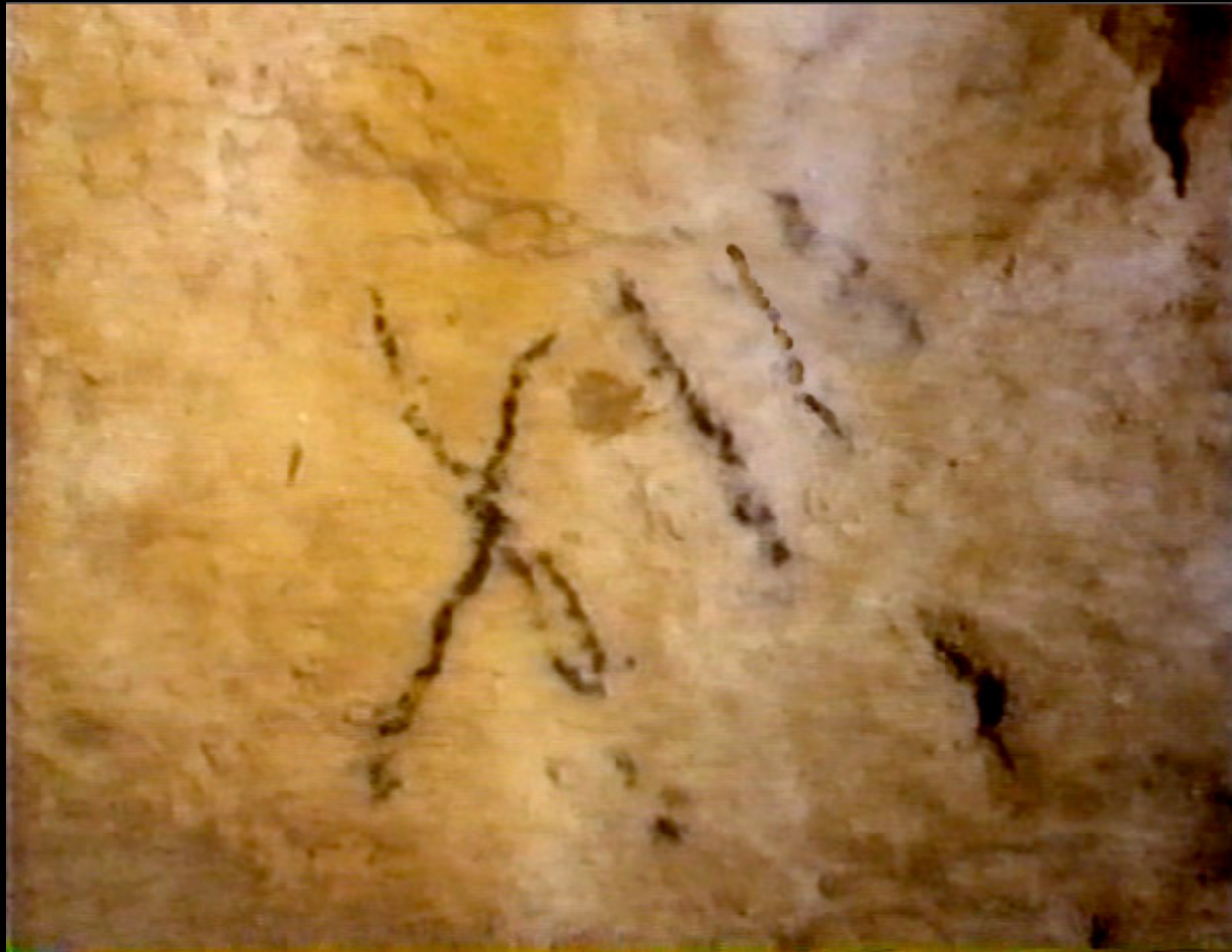


Reading Upper Paleolithic (European)

(Leroi-Gourhan A. 1967. *Treasures of Prehistoric Art*: fig 332)

The Lascaux Chamber of Felines engraving says:

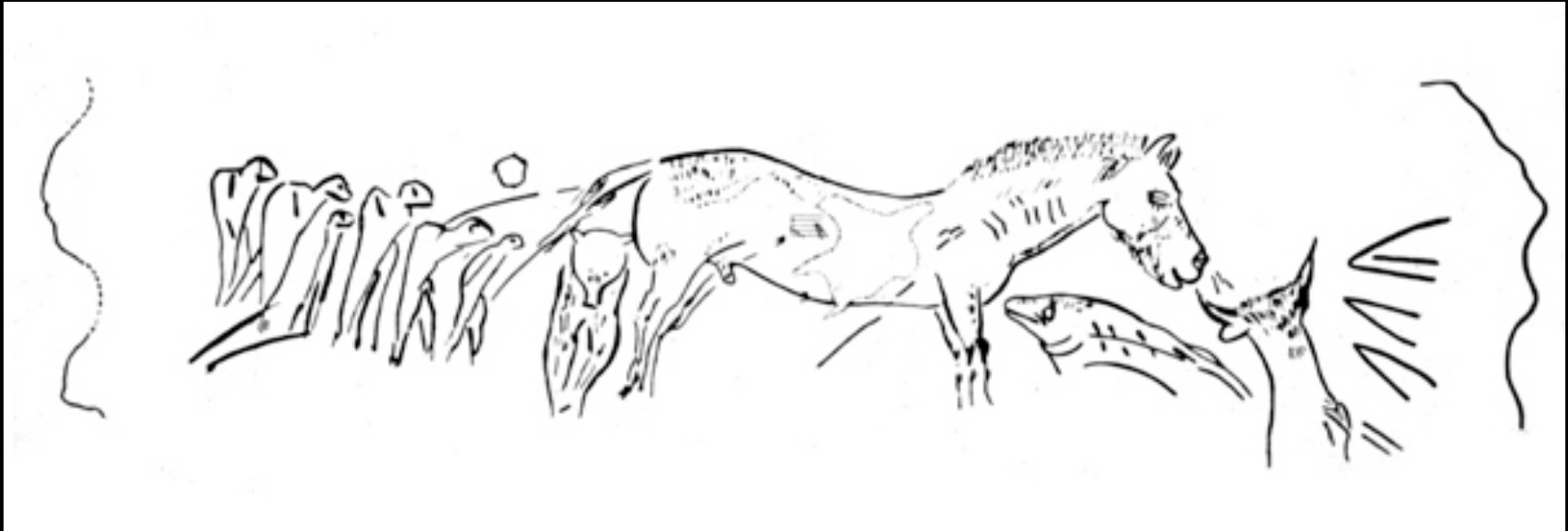
“Stand, contact your piercing wounds; listen to the spirit lion speaking to you, breathing over you, with healing and power! My body is a spirit; and my body is your body, spirit lion. Ibex knows; all these realms are spirit realms, Above, Below, and this Middle World, irrupting spirit energies within you as in these worlds. Feel lion spirit, ibex spirit and bison spirit energy irrupt into your life. Receive it, as I am offering my spirit to you. This is the heart of your sacrifice. Cleave to your wounds, and heal!”



Lascaux Chamber of Felines, X and III signs

Some renditions of the Chamber of Felines do not show clearly the X with line to Tri-Line in Leroi-Gourhan's rendition. Before dismissing the image as a projection, here's another X plus Tri-line from the same section of Lascaux

(frame from film: *Lascaux Revisité* 1989)

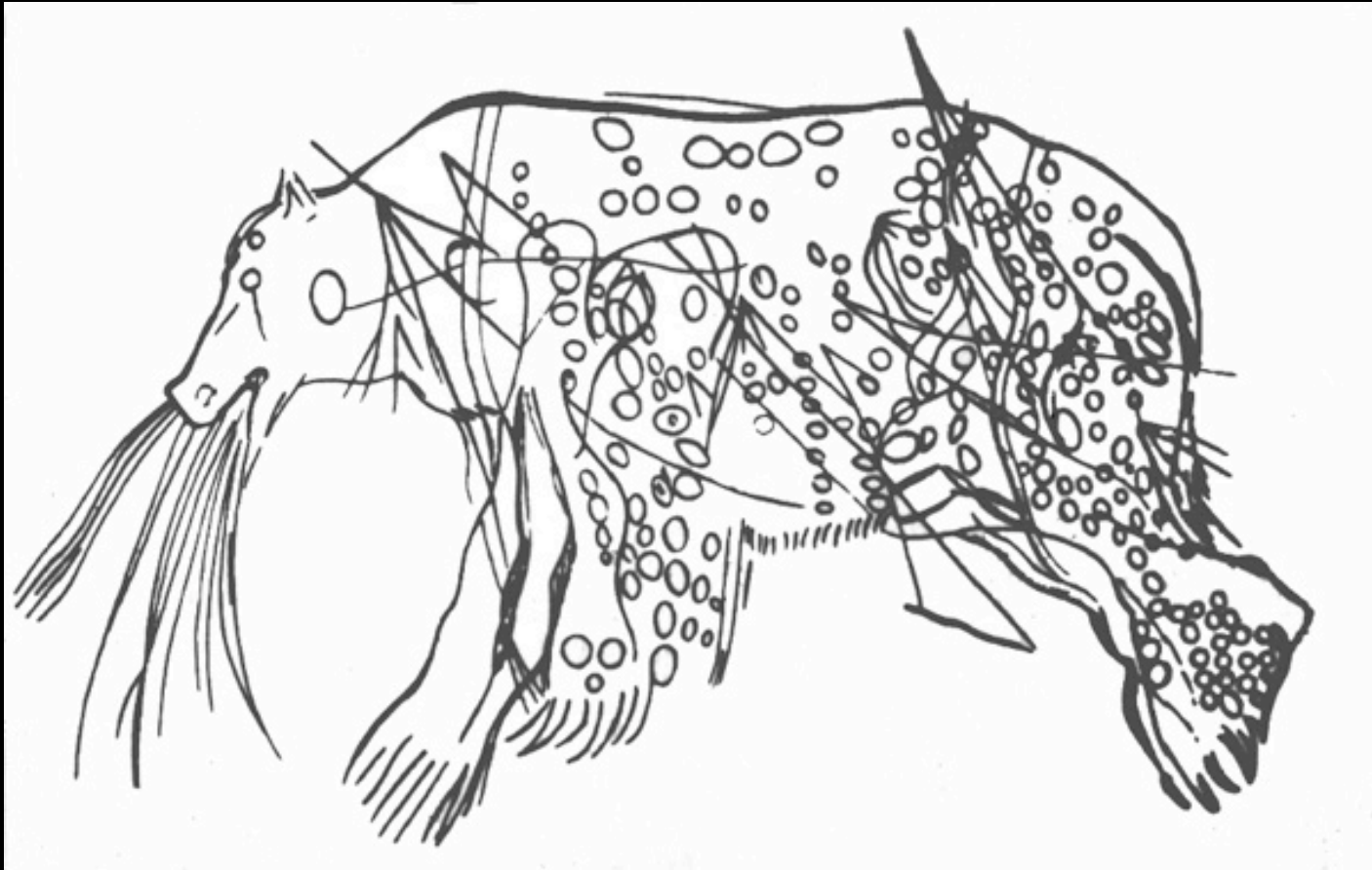


Reading Upper Paleolithic (European)

La Vache, Final Magdalenian, paired bi-line and chevrons on eagle bone (Marshack A 1991. *The Roots of Civilization* fig 154)

The La Vache engraving says:

“Separate, distinguish your other half, your higher power, cleaving to irrupting spirit stallion energy, feel your gestating inner abundance! and then flow with self-moving spirit energy, wind-like, stallion-like, radiant with light! This is the spirit stallion speaking.”



Reading Upper Paleolithic (European)

Les Trois Frères , Bear with circles (dots, cupules), chevrons or rays, and breath-lines (Marshack A 1991. *The Roots of Civilization* fig 121b)

The Les Trois Frères engraving says:

“Center inward, drawing into yourself, like a hibernating bear, into your self-nourishing, and generative potency!
and then come forth, as in spring thaw, manifesting your powers, radiantly! This is the bear spirit speaking,
breathing over you with healing.”

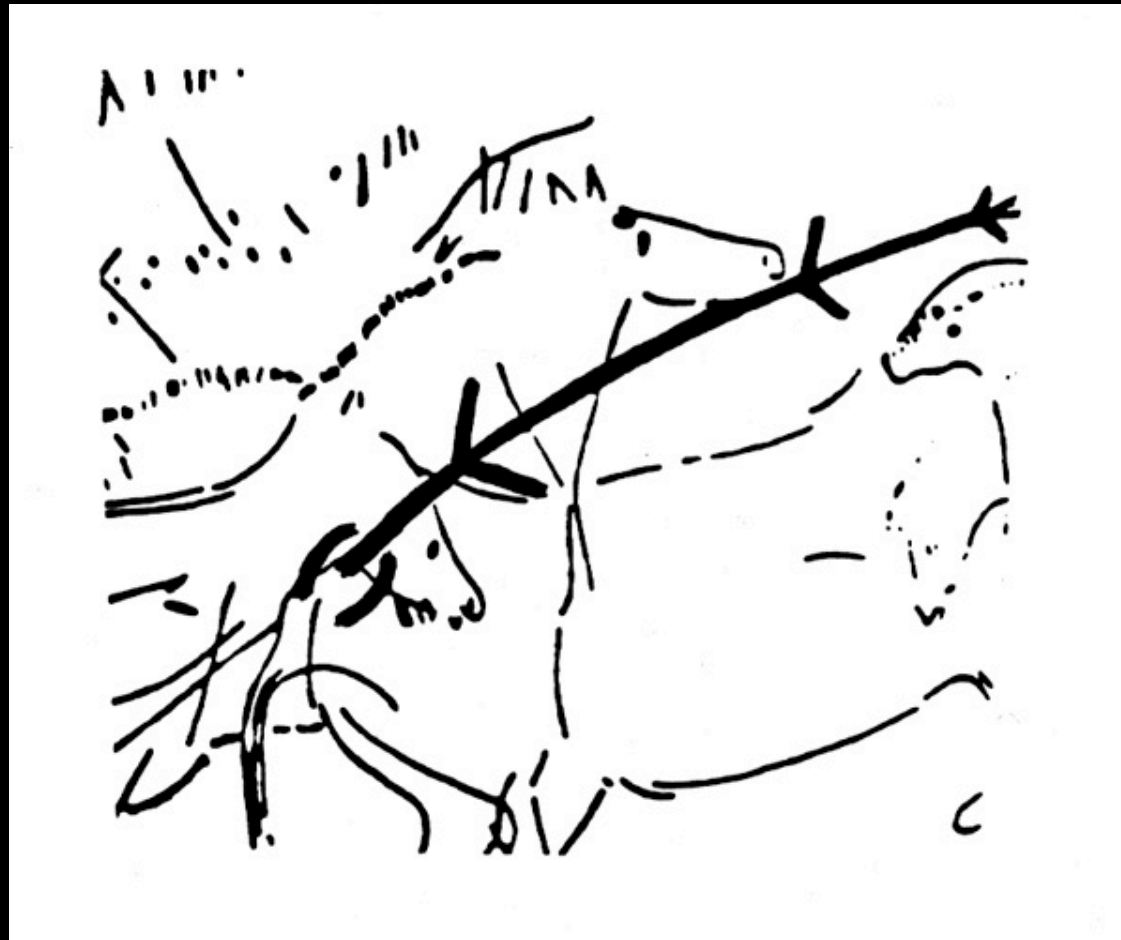


Reading Upper Paleolithic (European)

El Castillo, Middle Magdalenian, group is about 40 inches wide. 'Female signs in red, a male barbed sign in black',
Leroi-Gourhan A. 1967. *Treasures of Prehistoric Art*: fig 63)

The El Castillo painting says:

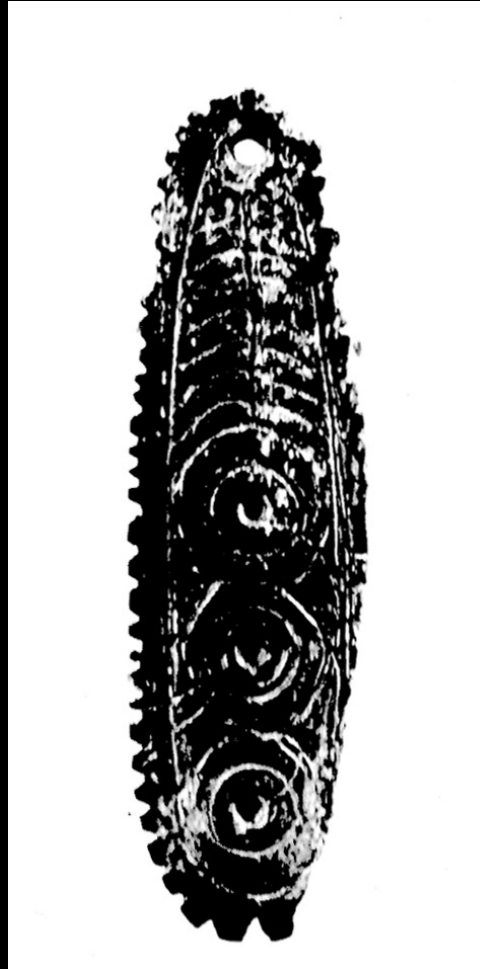
"Center inward and access the vulva-womb-seed source of yourself! the origin of your fertile, luteal power! and then emerge, sprout, branching out, opening your heart, blossoming, unfolding with new life!"



Reading Upper Paleolithic (European)

May be read in a similar way as the El Castillo composition

(Ruspoli M. 1986. *The Cave of Lascaux: The Final Photographs*: 154 after Glory)



Reading Upper Paleolithic (European)

Saint-Marcel pendant. Oval containing 3 concentric circles and branching tree-shape. Middle Magdalenian

White R. 1986. *Dark Caves, Bright Visions*: fig 111 (M.A.N. 74)

The Saint-Marcel pendant says:

“Center back inward, center into and from yourself, your core seed essence and tree of life, in each of its three worlds, Upper, Middle, and Lower! and then emerge anew, growing out of yourself, opening to the light and destiny of your luxuriant unfolding life!”



The big tree in the middle of the earth.

Tree; inclosure represents the world as visible from a given spot of observation—horizon.

Big Tree in the Middle of the earth, the *axis mundi*, the center and support of the universe
Anishinabe ('Ojibwe'), Algonquian. Midewiwin medicine society chant (on birch bark scrolls)
Anishinabe singer provided song translations of pictogras and shaman precept later provided explanatory comments,
Red Lake, Minnesota (Mallery G. 1888/1972. *Picture-writing of the American Indians*, Vol. 1: 240)



Reading Upper Paleolithic (European)

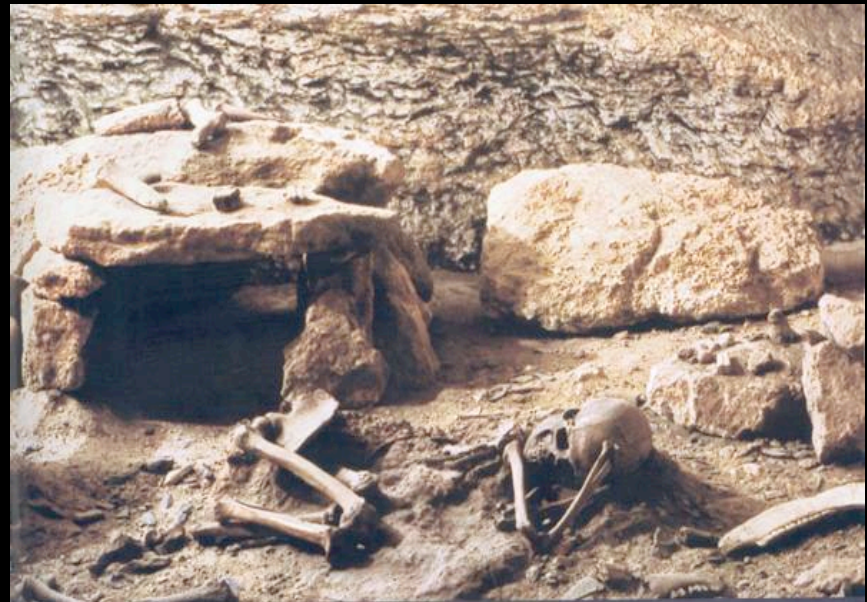
L: Mas d'Azil zigzags and branch tree. (Chollot-Varagnac M. 46.609).

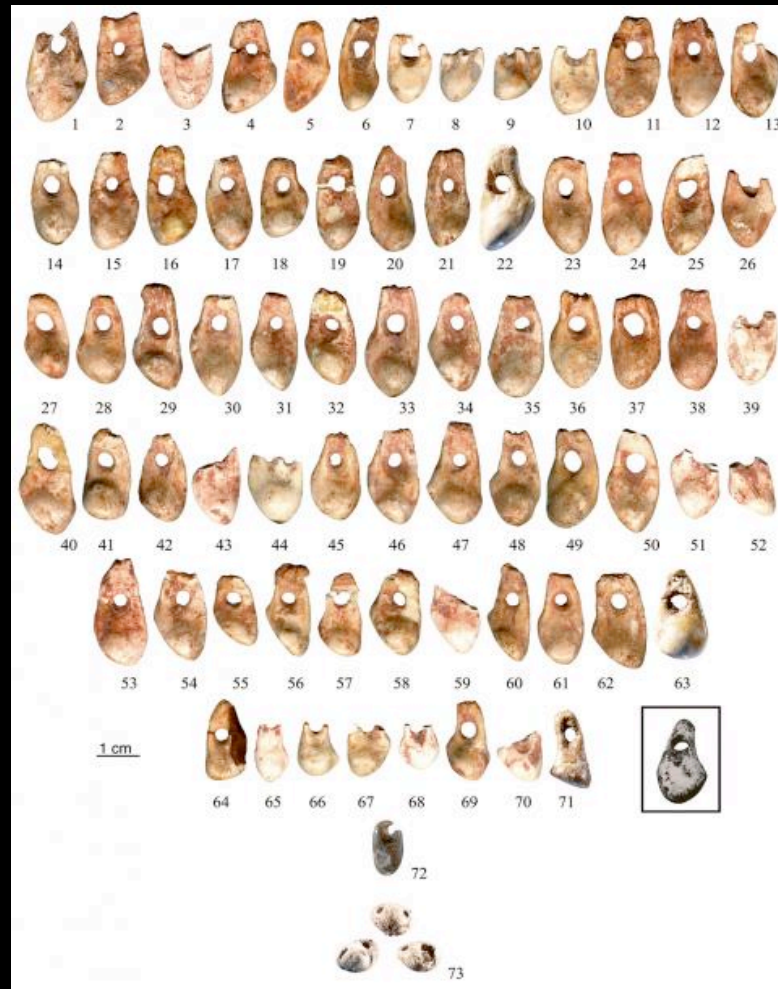
"Emerge new born, let your life unfold, branch, blossom! and then flow, letting your life stream forth like spring thaw waters, feeling the rising sap, green juice, within and within all living things, *veriditas!*"

Burial with Grave Goods, Germain-la-Rivière, France, Magdalenian

- 15,570±200 kya
- Young adult female
- Grave goods include a necklace of 71 perforated red deer canine (majority young stags) (source probably northern Spain)

(also 1 hind canine; steatite bead, shell, ochred bison skull and split reindeer antler near stone structure) (Vanhaeren and d'Errico 2005)





Burial with Grave Goods, Germain-la-Rivière, France, Magdalenian, ~15.6 kya

(Vanhaeren and d'Errico 2005: Fig. 6)

47 teeth have geometric markings (40 clear, 7 less precise), 23 no markings

Markings have traces of red ochre

(Von Petzinger 2011)



'Stroke'-signs, 'X'-signs and Combis, Germain-la-Rivière, France, Magdalenian, ~15.6 kya

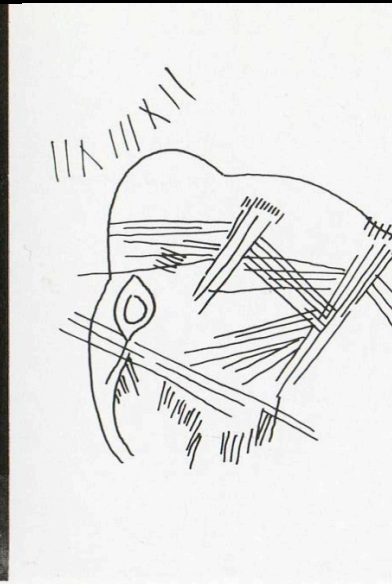
Labels: James Harrod. Top: clear and precise; Bottom L, C: less precise; R: no markings. Photos from Von Petzinger 2011)
(Vanhaeren and d'Errico 2005)



**'X'-sign, 'Stroke'-sign, 'Asterisk'-sign, 'Tri-Line', 'Pi'-sign and Combinations,
Germain-la-Rivière, France, Magdalenian, ~15.6 kya**

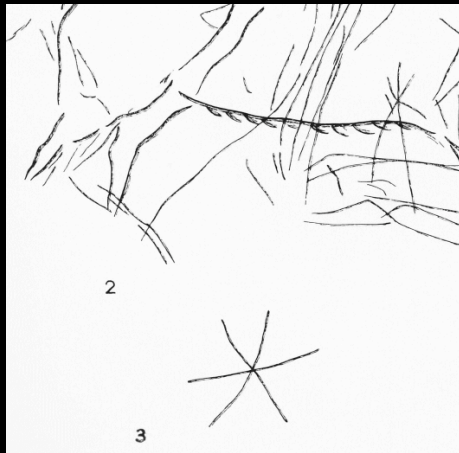
Labels: James Harrod. Photos from Von Petzinger 2011) (Vanhaeren and d'Errico 2005)

Comparison of Germain-la-Rivière beads to signs at Bernifal, France,
13–17 kya (Von Petzinger 2011)



Photo/drawing by A. Leroi-Gourhan

Comparison of Germain-la-Rivière bead signs to signs at Gabillou, France,
13–17 kya (Von Petzinger 2011)



Comparison and Photos from Von Petzinger 2011 based on drawings by J. Gaussen

