Reading Europe's Paleolithic Writing

Robert Duncan Enzmann
dburgy@aol.com

Donald Thomas Burgy

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr

Recommended Citation

Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol51/iss51/3

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Comparative Civilizations Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
A Note from the Editors:

Writing is as old as art. This may appear to be an astonishing claim to those who have been admiring paleolithic art for the past century as simply art, but who have not been able to read what may well be the writing system intrinsic in the art itself.

The authors have been visiting peleolithic sites for decades. They believe that writing did not appear xenogenetically in Mesopotamia 5,000 years ago but has in fact been a continuing human and universal system since at least as early as 12,500 BCE. In making these assertions they are presenting, we believe, an argument novel to our field of the comparative study of civilization that there has been a human and universal system at least as early as 12,500 BCE.

In addition, Enzmann and Burgy have analyzed many pieces of rock and cave art and have concluded that they have found there not only universal stories that tell of the work and skills of our primaeval ancestors, but also relate the meaning of these lives to the story tellers and their audiences.

One important part of their apparent discovery is that some of these ancient writing symbols, such as the "twist" sign, appear down through the ages and are similar to markings found in the Chinese language.

We realize that this might appear to some of our readers as an unusual article to run but we believe it will stimulate discussion on the rise of writing amongst human beings. Please note that the editors were asked not to edit or copyread the text and we have reproduced the text exactly as received. We look forward to readers' comments and will hope to post the dialogue on our web site, www.iscsc.net.
READING EUROPE'S PALEOLITHIC WRITING

Robert Duncan Enzmann
Donald Thomas Burgy
INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS

Gönnersdorf Platte 87
Here we read an engraved stone found in Gönnersdorf, a hunter/gatherer Winter dwelling on a terrace overlooking the Rhine River. The site is dated to Magdalenian culture of the late Bølling temperate climate c. 12,500 years BC. Our reading is based upon a drawing of the engraving by Gisela Fischer and our illustration is a detail of her drawing.
Three females are depicted in profile silhouette facing right. The sizes and shapes of their buttocks and breasts represent, when viewed from left to right, those of an old crone, a matron, and a maiden carrying her child papoose style with her teenage daughter before her. They are on a journey with the youngest walking ahead and oldest behind.

Engraved within the three female silhouettes are abstract signs which identify them as spinsters who twist fibers into strands of thread, string, yarn, lamp wicks, cords, etc.

The twist signs are comprised of two lines converging into one. Their shapes resemble the letter Y. They represent a spinster's process of twisting fibers together to make strands by rolling them along her hip or thigh with the fingers of
her right hand. Each female figure's twist sign is engraved on her right hip.

As the three spinsters work together they specialize in the chain of operations and this is signified by variations in the shape and size of their hip twists. The maiden's twist is small and comprised of finely incised lines signifying simple short
strands she twists at the process' beginning. The matron's is deeply incised long lines signifying longer stronger strands resulting from twisting together the maiden's products.

In earliest Germanic legend three ladies known as the Norns sit spinning strands by a spring beneath three roots of Yggdrasil, the world tree of all life. Old Urth, middle age Verdandi, and young Skuld preside over the fate of all gods and humans. They spin the threads of our lives and set their spans. Urth represents fate decreed at birth. Verdandi, 'to become' represents one's life on Earth. Skuld, 'something owed' represents death, the debt all must pay.

The three Norns weave the web of fate,
fastening the threads of destiny. Urth and Verdandi, what was and is, stretch the web from East to West, from dawn to dusk, and Skuld, what shall be, cuts it.

The three females represented in the Gönnersdorf engraving are the progenitors of the Norns and the Moirai of Greek myth: Klotho 'twister' 'spinner' who spins the thread of life, Lachasis 'allotment' 'share' 'portion' who measures it out 'to receive one's due' and Anthropos 'unturnable' 'inflexable' 'unchangeable' chooses when to cut it.

The three females are the source of the Fates of Roman myth who preside over birth, the Parcae, parere 'to bear' children: Nona, nonus 'a ninth' a mature birth, Decima 'a tenth' a postmature birth and
Morta, 'death' a still birth.

The three Gönnersdorf spinsters are Fates presiding over past, present and future. They are spinning substance, turning it into becoming, being and has been. They spin, measure and cut the thread of life's time.

The Gönnersdorf spinsters' names are unknown so we will refer to them as the Norns: Urth, Verdandi and Skuld. Skuld presides over the future rearing her child and teenage daughter who walks before her. They are ahead of the others walking to the right in the direction of the future. Old Urth at the left carries a silhouette of a man who died in the past. His empty silhouette identifies his non-existence and his position behind her
signifies that he is in the past.

The Gönnersdorf engraving's twist signs are writing. They are one example of the Paleolithic mother script which descended over millenia to become part of daughter writing systems in post-glacial civilizations.

In ancient Egypt a hieroglyph of two parallel twists represents warp threads signifying 'fringed fabric' 'item of clothing.' A triplet of twisted lamp wicks signifies 'greatest time' 'infinite time'. A cord with a triplet of knots signifies 'to plan' 'to found'.

![Hieroglyphs](image)
Various twist signs are written in Linear B script on a clay tablet found in the Minoan palace of Knossos on the island of Crete. The twists are written upon rectangles representing sacks of various fibers washed, carded, dyed and spun. The sacks were weighed so each held a standard amount. The signs were written as entries in the palace economy's accounting system.

Verdandi's inverted hip twist Λ is an unfinished strand. Urth's Y is finished. The Minoan inverted twists signify unfinished strands.
In the following Chinese characters twist signs signifying textile, time and/or life are identical to Paleolithic twists in form and meaning with the addition of circular representations of silk worm cocoons to identify the thread as silk.

Ti is a thread wound on a spool with a winch at the bottom 'succession of brothers'. Kuan is two parallel twists of silk warp threads 'to weave' 'to join' 'to fix'. Sun is a human figure with a twist of silk thread 'a connecting line of offspring' 'a grandson' 'posterity'.
The twist is only one example of the many signs written with the engraved Gönnersdorf images and only one example of how the Paleolithic mother script descended to daughter writing systems in various civilizations. The abstract signs and representational images of the Gönnersdorf engraving are typical of Magdalenian art which persisted throughout Europe from the Würm IV glacial maximum c. 16,000 years BC. to its end during the warm Alleröd climate c. 10,000 years BC. The signs and images of Magdalenian art are descended almost unchanged from Solutrean, Gravettian
and Aurignacian artistic traditions that preceded them.

A 17 inch high female figure sculpted in relief was found in Abri Laussel, a rock shelter overlooking the River Beune, a tributary of the Vézère in France. It is dated to the Gravettian culture during the warm moist Tursac Interstadial c. 23,000 years BC. She raises a bison horn incised with thirteen lines to signify thirteen months of a lunar year. A twist sign engraved on her right hip identifies her as a spinster. The spinster who holds up a calendric of the year is a Fate of time, the Norn who spins the thread of life and presides over destiny.
At present, the earliest known example of the art of painting is a wall mural in Chauvet cave in France which is dated c. 30,400 years BC. It is an example of earliest Aurignacian culture in Europe. Reproduced here is a detail of the Chauvet mural.

Three parallel vertical bands of four animal images are arranged in calendric sequences. In a band of four horses a Przewalski horse is at the band's bottom. It is a breed adapted to cold climate with its small body and short nose. It migrated into the region only in Winter. At the band's top is a Summer horse with large body and long nose.
In the center calendric band's bottom are two rhinoceros in a tête-à-tête confrontation, a scene typical of the late Autumn rut. It is the time when rhinos have grown their wooly Winter coats. The large twist sign written on one rhino labels it as an excellent source of wool for twisting. A longer twist written beside the Przewalski horse represents a spinster who is a Norn overseeing the Winter horse's fate. She is a Fate of time and life presiding over a calender of the four seasons as signified by fauna that migrate in and out of the region in chronological sequence annually.
Twist signs are written to modify the meanings of images in the earliest painting. Abstract writing and representational images are seamlessly together in the earliest painting. Writing is as old as art. The twist signs in the Chauvet painting, Gönnersdorf engraving and Chinese characters are evidence of an unbroken continuity from earliest Aurignacian culture in Europe to modern Asia. The many engraved stones paving the floor around Gönnersdorf's hearth are a great library. Their widespread distribution over the floor suggests widespread literacy and open access.
Works cited

Bauschatz, Paul C. 1982 "The Well and The Tree, World and Time In Early Germanic Culture." The University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst


Burgy, Donald Thomas. Drawing of Chauvet cave mural


Lalanne, J. G. et Chanoine J. Bouyssonie. 1941 "Le Gisement Paleolithique De Laussel." L'Anthropologie, tome 50, Nos. 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, Masson & Cie, Editeurs, Paris


Thank you to the librarians of the Tozzer Library, Harvard University