

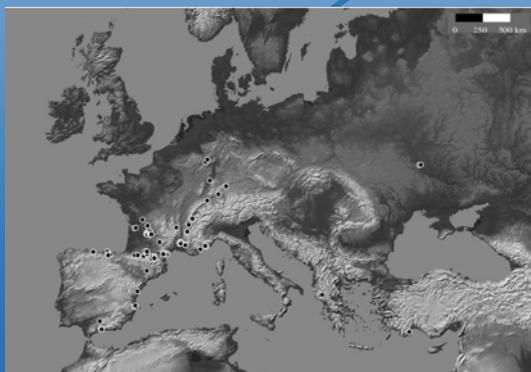
LONG-DISTANCE CONTACT AMONG UPPER PALAEOLITHIC GROUPS IN ATLANTIC EUROPE

The Upper Palaeolithic is the period which corresponds to the people of our own species (*Homo sapiens*, or AMH-anatomically modern humans) who lived during the Ice Age. In Europe it can be dated between *ca.* 40,000 and 11,700 years before present. Upper Palaeolithic people were hunter-gatherers who lived in very mobile groups. Estimations based on the behaviour of recent societies such as the Inuit (Eskimos) of Alaska suggests annual cycles of around 200 km.

Travelling was a necessity for Upper Palaeolithic groups of Atlantic Europe, as their subsistence largely depended on very mobile resources, such as herds of reindeer. Moreover, long-distance mobility was facilitated by an open landscape, where thick forests were absent. This was caused by the Ice Age that was at its coldest around 22,100 years ago. Water was frozen in large glaciers and ice sheets making the sea level much lower. This meant Great Britain was not an island, so the Palaeolithic hunters could travel from France to England just walking, without any necessity of navigation.



Europe during the last glacial. Red areas represent part of the continent that were emerged during the Upper Paleolithic.



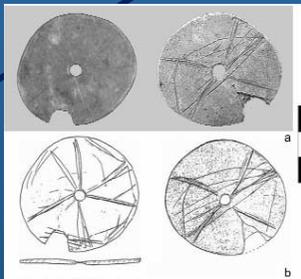
Distribution of European Magdalenian sites with marine molluscs of exclusively Mediterranean origin.

Archaeological research has demonstrated that some valuable objects and raw materials were transported very far from their places of origin. Let us mention, for instance, the appearance of flint from Bergerac (western France) in several sites in northern Spain, or the wide distribution in northern Spain, France and central Europe of shells collected in the shores of the Mediterranean.

Stylistic and technical similarities in the graphic expression of the Upper Palaeolithic groups suggest the existence of a very extended cultural community. During the middle Magdalenian (17,700-16,250 BP) similar portable art objects were made in very distant places, such as Asturias and Cantabria in northern Spain, Ariège in the French Pyrenees and the Rhine valley.



Cut-out bone from La Gama. Cantabria, Spain.



Bone disc from Aguas de Novales. Cantabria, Spain.



Bone disc from Mas d'Azil. Ariège, France.



Bone disc from Laugerie Basse. Dordogne, France.



Cut-out bone from Laugerie-Basse. Dordogne, France.

Rock art is also a testimony of the incredible extent of the cultural communities during the Upper Palaeolithic. From the Straits of Gibraltar to the Urals, similar stylistic solutions were used for the representation of a restricted catalogue of motives (animals such as the horse, the bison, the red deer, the ibex or the mammoth, humans, signs). The recent discovery of Palaeolithic engravings in the cave of Creswell Crags, in northern England, shows that Great Britain was included, together with the classic areas of SW France and northern Spain, in that wonderful circle of the oldest aesthetic expression of humankind.



Ibex/Deer from Creswell Crags, England.



Stag from Niaux. Ariège, France.

Common Cultural Connections

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