STS 007 class notes class 4

General prehistory

Continuing importance of science in understanding history (and vice versa)
Paabo’s feat – first 1856 skeleton
Paabo’s comments on interbreeding – dominance matters

Svante Paabo Stockholm Nov. 08
Only one gene so far clearly linked to language (Fox P2), Neandertals have it
Analysis of one million base pairs of N. DNA by 2600
DNA sequencing in second generation: 3 billion bases by end of year
How different the self-conception of humans would be if Neandertals had survived
Forbidden experiment
See: http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/paabo09/paabo09_index.htm

Strands of evidence – sustaining and constraining
The riddle of consciousness

Discovery of cro-Magnon
Male, 50 years old, 5 bodies deliberately buried


From museum of prehistory (handouts)
Neandertal or Mousterian culture – “middle Paleolithic” (50-250,000 BP)

Fire

Tools (from 2.5 M BP)

(Carbon dating, radio carbon 14 decay – also uraniuim/thorium or potassium/argon ratios

Used wood, pelts, rocks

Burials: ochre nearby, grave goods, from 100K BP

Sometimes fished, hunted

Marks on bones, not necessarily cannibalism

As far east as Kurdistan and Palestine, north to Sweden, south to Spain

Flint tools, biface (symmetrical) “Swiss army knife” utensil


What makes us human? Not bipedalism (chickens) but “refusal/defiance of his condition”

Le grand refus – challenge against the universe

Gesture more than function: both practical and artistic

Cro-Magnons – Upper Paleolithic ca. 40-50000 BP

Use hand lamps (juniper fuse, animal fat), also torches

Social systems implied by hunt – chasing animals over cliffs

Cave bears until 15000 BP (300-800 kg, 2-3 m long, 1.3 m high)

Materials: animal, mineral (paintings), vegetable

Supplies for hunting and for art

Feathers – arrows

Ivory

Shells
Flints found in specific sites
Shells and bones used for apparel

See:
http://www.megalithic.co.uk/a558/a312/gallery/France/Aquitaine/aP5190370_Cro_Magnon.JPG
http://www.mos.org/evolution/fossils/photos/cro-magnon.jpg

Cave painting as needing many technologies – plural
What are they? Tools: Minerals, binder, brush, light, ventilation, state of mind/psychotropic mechanisms
Also network of connections – emphasized by Christian – also true of art today

Also riddle of consciousness –
Mystery of motivation
symbolic capacity: what does this mean?
Paabo on questions for which we will never know the answer
Discovery of imagination?

Font de Gaume
15-17000 BP – warmer then
The most extended frescoes are at the back, difficult to see
See: http://www.donsmaps.com/fontdegaume.html

Sophistication of the images
Perspective: twisted, to show movement
“3-D”
Cinematic effects
Curves of stone make belly of horses
One leg serves for both bison and deer
Mastery off observation of habits, shapes

Two colors/ polychromatic, only one still open
   Iron oxide is red, manganese dioxide powder is black

Four types of images: animals, stick people, geometry (tectiforms), hand
Ways of making images: hand/fingers, brush, blowpipe

100% humidity, necessary to keep paint on walls, mixed with water
See: http://williamcalvin.com/BHM/AbbeBureulCopy.jpg

Les combarelles

Very narrow
600 engravings mainly horses 52 of the anthropomorphic
15000 BP
Discovered 1901 authenticated by Abbe Breuil
Flint used to engrave
Calcite over engraving

Lascaux – “Sistine chapel of prehistory” – shaped like a sanctuary
Discovered 1940, closed since 1963
Lascaux II
“light show” of guide
¾ view, overlaps of herd
Forelegs of cow are stone
Stylized animals: horses have small head, deers have big antlers
The shaman? Sorcerer?
Cougnac
Pillar in middle
Music, on stalagmites and tites – flute found
Inner sanctum
Broken stalagmites/tites en route
Great drawing showing how stone shapes are used for legs of ibex
Wounded human figures on animals
Many “blazes” on animals
Drawn 25000-27000
Finger marks 14000

Pech-Merle
Very hard to get to, sealed up 12000 with return of cold weather
16000 BP black frieze’
Black frieze: horse, bison, mammoth
Also mammoth and auroch (black frieze)
One artist, knew order, sketched first
Elongated head of bear so you see it as if from an angle

Horse done 24000 BP – hands – red dots, ochre, spitted dots
Also aviform and tectiforms and
One line does a mammoth
Sketched with finger first
Claw marks of cave bear - teeth

Footprint of children, teenage boy
Get dates of Chauvet