



Fig. 3.— Altamira Cave. Painting representing a bison.

Fig. 3.— Cueva de Altamira. Pintura representando un bisonte.

Cubillas, an avid hunter and tenant of the Santander nobleman from Puente de San Miguel, don Marcelino Sanz de Sautuola, went out on a hunting foray. His equipment consisted of a double-barreled shotgun, cleated boots, game bag and of course his dog, every good hunter's required companion. Dog and master were foraging around in the fields close to the Santander village of Santillana del Mar. Their carefree steps were abruptly cut short because all of a sudden a jackrabbit ran through open ground and scurried away in terror to hide its fuzzy body among the cracks between some rocks piled up at the base of a giant rock face. Hot on his tracks goes the dog in pursuit, but what was a hiding

place that fit the rabbit, became a quick trap for the dog. His master lifted the rocks trapping it and at that moment, the dank darkness of a hole blowing cool air onto the sweaty face of the hunter is suddenly uncovered. By sheer coincidence, as is often the case, our man discovered what later became the most famous of all prehistoric caves: the *Altamira Cave*.

Modesto Cubillas was well aware of don Marcelino's hobbies and knew that besides being a nobleman and landowner, he was also an accomplished researcher in the quest for the remote past of mankind, and very up to date on work of this kind that was being done in France. Therefore,



Fig. 4.— Altamira Cave. Painting representing a hind.

Fig. 4.— Cueva de Altamira. Pintura representando una cierva.

upon his return that tiresome morning, Cubillas informed Sanz de Sautuola of the existence of the cave. The latter put it down in his notebook, promising to examine it at first chance. This turned out to take a while, for it did not actually happen until 1875, seven years after Modesto Cubillas had found it. Though upon his initial examination the nobleman did see some signs painted on the rock, he paid them no heed, perhaps because he assumed that they had not been done by the hand of Prehistoric man, even though he may have discovered utensils made by them buried there.

In 1878 he went to Paris to visit the Universal Exposition. He himself left evidence of his voca-

tion when he wrote: *Prodded by my passion for study of this kind and very much excited by the large collections of prehistoric objects I had the pleasure of viewing many times during the Universal Exposition of 1878...*

But he did not make his second visit to the Altamira Cave until 1879, very possibly encouraged by what he had seen the year before at the Paris Exposition. He made this second visit in the company of his small daughter María. It was an outing; an excursion into the peaceful Santander summer during which the little girl, eyes bright with joy, never stopped asking one question after another. Her father felt a tender love for this

little child who brought happiness into his mid-life for he was born in 1831.

Once inside the cave, don Marcelino stopped at the entrance to recall the excavation started upon the first visit four years earlier. The little girl went browsing around this room with walls flickering by the fluttering candlelight of a flame wavering in the air currents, and looking at the wall outcroppings up and down, going up to the low ceiling, at that time fairly close to the floor due to accumulated deposits of sand on the bottom.

María's eyes detect masses of red color and the disquieting movement of the figures (fig. 3). Gasping, anxious and gripped with fear, she calls out to her father with a cry filled with terror. He then beholds something that he cannot believe is real. A thousand ideas come into his mind at once, confusing him. Gradually he was overcome by amazement, rejecting and accepting, but more than anything, he was filled with shudders of emotion. A year later, in 1880, he published an article under the title *Brief Notes on Some Prehistoric Objects in the Province of Santander*, where he also revealed the astonishing reality of Prehistoric wall Art. Although he allows some doubts to show through in some passages of his work, he puts them to rest with resounding positive affirmations establishing relationships between mobiliary and wall art.

This was all taken as a joke even by the most kindly of critics, and the least kindly of them even took to speculating that the paintings were the work of a French artist who would spend the summer at don Marcelino's farm, and that the two of them had worked out the fraud.

For some time now, Sanz de Sautuola had maintained a friendly relationship with don Juan de Vilanova, a Madrid professor and author of a book titled *The Origins of Mankind*, which had impressed don Marcelino. Little did these two

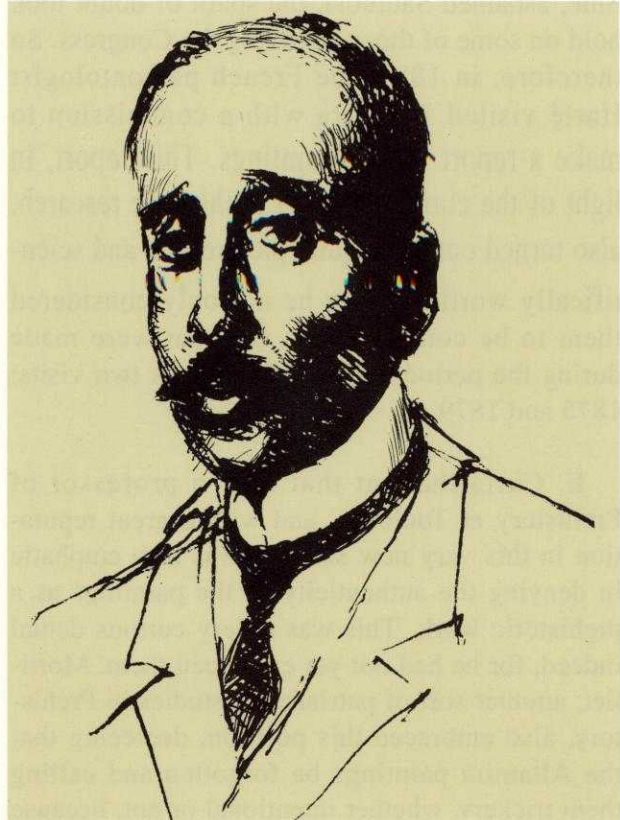


Fig. 5.—Portrait of Count de la Vega del Sella.

Fig. 5.—El conde de la Vega del Sella.

suspect at the time that they would become so united by the skepticism and stuffiness of official science that was so enamored of the prestige and awards blinding it. The only defender of Sautuola's truth was his professor friend Vilanova. But neither Sautuola's deserved fame earned in the field of research, nor his enthusiasm, precise intuition and critical sense, were able to overcome the stubbornness of these *great wise men* who with a persistence worthy of a higher cause, mocked this researcher from Santander or accused him of being a fraud.

This excitement about Altamira became an international tempest, with black clouds hanging and whirling above the heads of Sautuola and Vilanova. In 1880, the Congress of Prehistoric Anthropology and Archeology was held in Lisbon. Though the conclusions on the wall art of Altamira, which was all that was known at the

time, ashamed Sautuola, the spark of doubt took hold on some of those attending the Congress. So therefore, in 1881, the French paleontologist Harlé visited Altamira with a commission to make a report on the paintings. This report, in light of the current level of prehistoric research, also turned out to be quite picturesque and scientifically worthless; for he not only considered them to be contemporary, but that were made during the period between Sautuola's two visits: 1875 and 1879.

E. Cartailhac, at that time a professor of Prehistory at Toulouse, and with a great reputation in this very new science, was also emphatic in denying the authenticity of the paintings as a prehistoric work. This was a very curious denial indeed, for he had not yet even seen them. Mortillet, another sort of patriarch of studies in Prehistory, also embraced this position, decreeing that the Altamira paintings be forgotten and calling them trickery, whether intentional or not, because according to the mentality of the times, with the impressionists already around and about, primitive man could not paint like that, with such a *rather mediocre air of modernity* (fig. 4).

It would be unfair to throw all the blame for this denial onto French criticism. The list of Spanish doubters was long and swollen, but the large amount of mobiliary art objects that were being found in many European caves was defining a wider and wider group with engravings and reliefs of a stylized nature, into which the expressive formulas of Altamira wall art could be fitted. Such well qualified scientists as Piette, Rivière and even Cartailhac himself, although timidly, began to offer favorable opinions on the authenticity of the Altamira paintings.

The truth of Altamira is finally corroborated by discoveries of wall Art in France that were made from 1895 on. La Mouthe; Font-de-Gaume; Les Combarelles, etc., motivated Emile Cartailhac to nobly put forth his famous *Mea*

*culpa d'un sceptique*, published in 1902 in *L'Anthropologie* magazine. With this he began a new era in search of clarity through well-intentioned dialogue and exchange of ideas.

But neither Marcelino Sanz de Sautuola nor his co-worker and friend Juan de Vilanova were able to enjoy, at least not in this unpredictable world, the glory of having their truth recognized. Sautuola and Vilanova passed on with the bitter sadness of being misunderstood, and their frustration over the truth of Altamira. Sautuola died in 1888 and Vilanova, in 1893.

This necessarily brief background would be gravely amiss without mentioning the name of Ricardo, Duque de Estrada, Count de la Vega del Sella, a title he made famous by signing it on his scientific works. He was born in Pamplona on January, 1870 but he was an Asturian by parentage and because he considered himself so. His elementary education was in France and his secondary in San Sebastián, but at the age of eighteen he inherited the title, and those symbiotic ties of geography and nobility brought him to our region where he lived the rest of his life (fig. 5).

He studied Law, at the University of Oviedo, which he never practiced, finishing his degree in 1892. From then on, his palace at Nueva in Llanes was turned into headquarters where among other less consuming activities, plans were to be made, results collected and were the scene of the great vocational effort of his life: the study of Prehistory. Though he was not lacking in honors and titles, for he also held those of Grand Master of Granada and Gentleman of the Chamber of Alfonso XIII (with exercise and privileges) his great work, his life's work, that work which made his very Asturian title known throughout the European scientific world, and made it survive until our time together with his name, was his career as a prehistorian, crowned by notable discoveries and studies whose contributions are still valid. For such reason he also held further

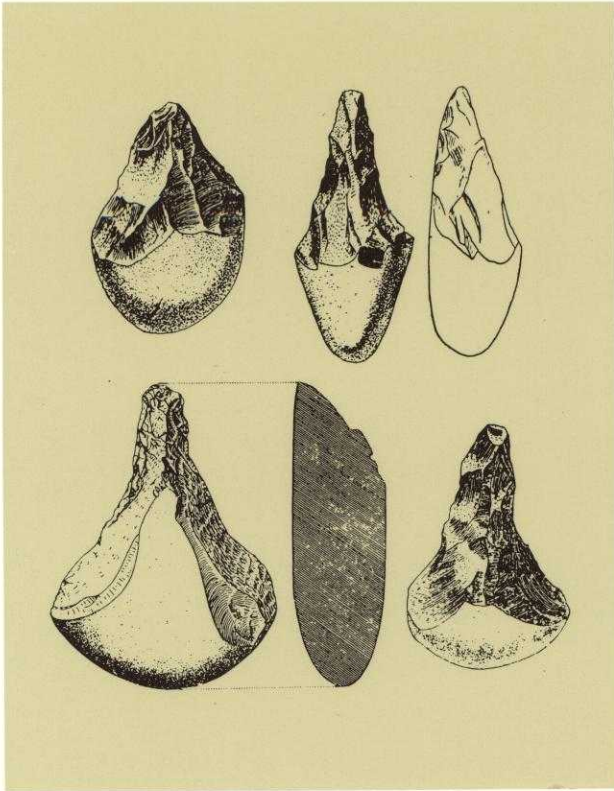


Fig. 6.- Asturian cutting tools.  
Fig. 6.- Picos asturienses.

appointments that were granted to him in recognition of his merits: Honorary Professor of the National Museum of Natural Sciences; Chairman of the Spanish Society of Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory, and Member of the Commission for Paleontological and Prehistoric Research.

As a child and youth he surely must have been moved by the sad events of Altamira, living through them as he did, on both sides of the border. Therefore, scientific method and seriousness were the rule in his work.

The list of deposits discovered by Count de la Vega del Sella in his ongoing search, mainly in rural areas of Asturias, would make these notes too long, as it also would be to list all his exemplary publications, the first title of which, *Peni-*

*cial Cave*, appears in 1914 after years as a novice prehistorian, and the last in 1935. In some of these publications his name appears together with names of prestigious figures such as Hugo Obermaier, Hernández Pacheco and Cabré.

But even though his contributions and studies were of vital importance for the knowledge of the Paleolithic cultures in the Cantabrian area, the discovery and study of a post-paleolithic or pre-neolithic stage which he himself baptised as *Asturian*, since it mainly developed in the Asturian region, gave an even higher profile to his outstanding personality as a celebrity (fig. 6).

So let these modest lines written with admiring enthusiasm and emotion serve as an homage, in an attempt to convey imperfectly to the reader these same feelings which so perfectly and honestly are deserved by the eminent figure of the Asturian prehistorian, Ricardo Duque de Estrada, Count de la Vega del Sella.

\* \* \* \*

*The title of a book should reflect its contents, and on this occasion, as we said from the start, it is about Art that was developed by Mankind in the Asturian region from Prehistory, with an examination of those that time has preserved. However, I feel it is necessary for this task to also include an introductory context to present some very general facts to the reader on the slow and difficult development of that race and the environment in which it lived, so that based upon such premises, we may bring into sharper focus the conquest of that artistic glory, which is definitely the thread that is best in holding together our lineage.*

*So even if brevity must be sacrificed, for brevity is a practice that no doubt can leave something missing, I shall go ahead with this introductory text.*

## CHAPTER I

# OF PREHISTORIC MAN AND HIS ENVIRONMENT

## INTRODUCTORY BACKGROUND

The chronology of the Prehistory of mankind seems to be loaded with suppositions and lacking in precise knowledge in the study of its most remote stages. The chronological range on the time when emerging mankind manifests itself as such through its works in stone is quite elastic, with differences of milleniums. These differences are accepted or rejected with no unanimous agreement, and shades of agreement and disagreement according to the degree of attractiveness of hypotheses. They may be based upon the authenticity of some findings, but in most instances these are not explicit due to their isolated nature, or the fact that they may lead to various different conclusions.

Thus, to study these bygone stages of Prehistory, a warp must be woven from methodical observations and use of the sciences of geology, statistics, paleontology, etc., etc., combined with an inseparable dose of sensitivity and imagination which for now, are mandatory.

It is something else again when talking about more recent stages, whose secrets are being rounded up gradually, thanks to progress in research tools providing obviously successful physical and chemical testing methods. One of these, widely used in the past thirty years, has

become very popular though it does not provide perfectly accurate data in its results. Nonethe-

less, it is the safest of all. I am referring to radioactive testing by Carbon 14. Its relative dating

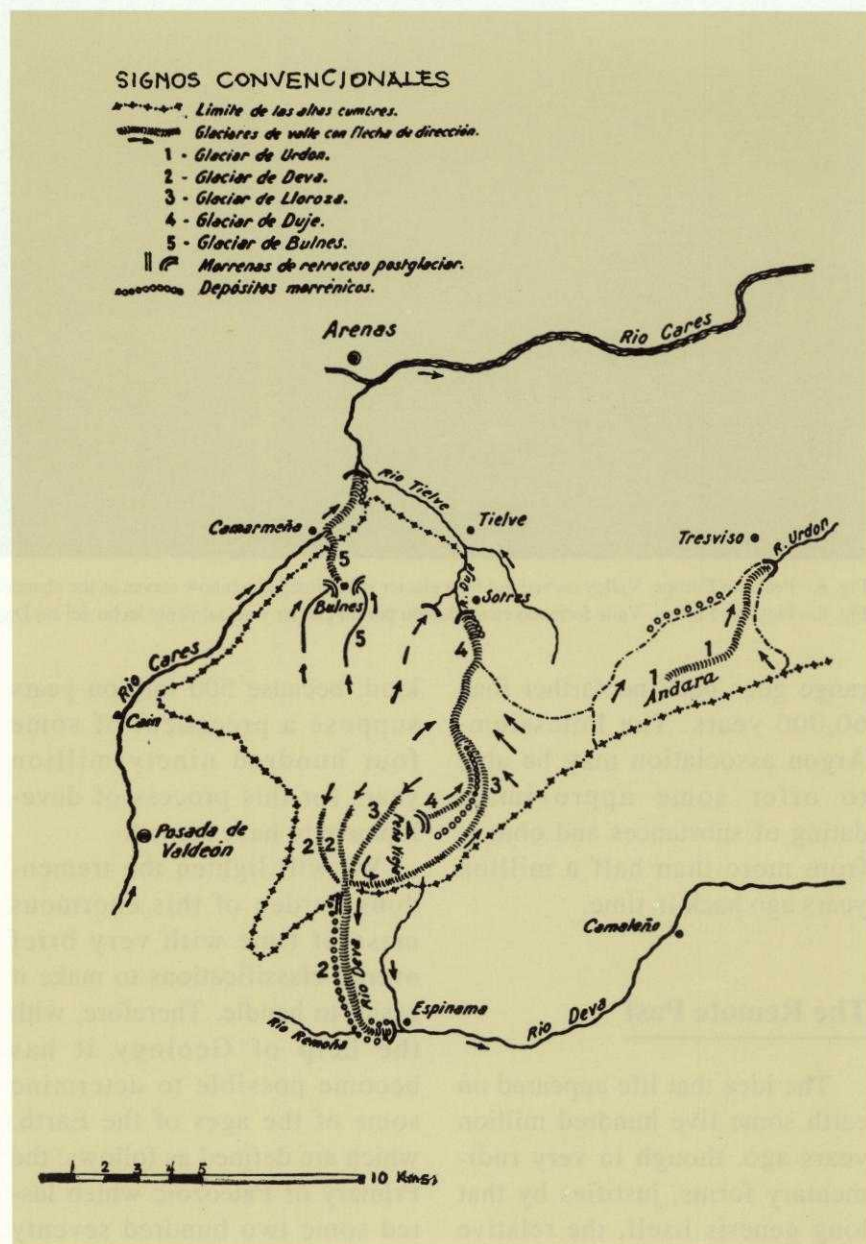


Fig. 7.- Glacial remains in the Peaks of Europe.

Fig. 7.- Vestigios glaciares en los Picos de Europa.



Fig. 8.—Peaks of Europe. Valley carved out by a glacier in its time, which now serves as the channel of the Dujé River.

Fig. 8.—Picos de Europa. Valle formado en su tiempo por un glaciar y actualmente lecho del río Dujé.

range goes back no farther than 60,000 years. The Potassium-Argon association may be able to offer some approximate dating of substances and objects from more than half a million years ago back in time.

### **The Remote Past**

The idea that life appeared on earth some five hundred million years ago, though in very rudimentary forms, justifies by that long genesis itself, the relative perfection and more than anything the great potential of man-

kind; because 500 million years suppose a precedent of some four hundred ninety million years for this process of development to have started.

We will lighten the tremendous burden of this enormous mass of time with very brief overall classifications to make it easier to handle. Therefore, with the help of Geology it has become possible to determine some of the ages of the Earth, which are defined as follows: the Primary or Paleozoic which lasted some two hundred seventy million years. This first period, the Cambrian, also saw the

emergence of the first invertebrates. Following, naturally, is the so-called Secondary or Mesozoic age spanning some one hundred fifty million years and finally, the Tertiary or Cenozoic age with some eighty million years, give or take a few, which has a short branch of only four million years in the honor of mankind. Man makes his appearance as such on the beginning of his road to improvement. It was man himself who set it apart as a separate unit and called it the Quaternary age.

The final periods of the Tertiary age, the Miocene and Pliocene,



Fig. 9.— Another aspect of Fig. 8 with remains of glacial moraine.

Fig. 9.— Otro aspecto de la figura anterior con restos de morrena glaciaria.

cene, are getting ready with the appearance of very complete forms of life to push mankind out into the world of life. These are the primates that have already evolved to more or less humanoid form, perhaps more as a presage than a reality. We give them names to emphasize certain milestones —*Australopithecus*, *Homo habilis*— which would have been a very modest evolutionary line with imperceptible changes from one generation to the next. But at that moment when the Supreme Creator decides that this being can now stand up on its two lower extremities,

He decrees development of his intellect through this change of position by giving the head an advantageous place at the highest point of the vertical, and full use of the upper extremities in the many tasks suggested by evolution. Thus was born *Homo erectus*.

The primates and their variants that evolved through the Pliocene are then the first steps in this ladder of arduous ascent to the human prototype.

We have also divided the Quaternary into two portions of time: the Pleistocene, which is the longest, and the Holocene, or

the current period in which we are living, starting between the years 10,000 and 8,000 B.C.

This first phase of the Quaternary, the Pleistocene, includes some different climatic changes with glacial and interglacial periods for which we use terminology based upon studies made in the Alps, using the names of four rivers there: Gunz, Mindel, Riss and Würm, though there is speculation about two other preliminary ones, Biber and Danube (fig. 7).

Man arrives in the harsh environment of his land as a true exile from Paradise. However,

his physical weakness for dealing with the tough tests of his mettle will be compensated for by the creative powers of his intellect, enabling him to survive (figs. 8 & 9).

### The Paleolithic Age

Paleolithic; this is the name we give to the first stage with vestiges of crafts made by the hand of man. Paleolithic: of ancient stone; of stone which in some way was made useful by man to serve himself. We also include any other activity he might have carried out within this same overall classification. Ancient stone; the Paleolithic period; he sculpts on hard stones of flint, quartz and ophite. From rudimentary working of clean pebbles, sometimes of doubtful origin, he goes all the way up to the great perfection of the final Paleolithic stage, full of beauty and effectiveness.

Despite the fact that Prehistoric man becomes known to us personified simply as Stone Age Man, he made use of a whole range of materials from the very earliest times. This qualifier is so attractive that we have labeled the next period by the name Neolithic: of new stone, or of polished stone. Though there is no doubt that he keeps on using stone, giving it new qualities of functionality and beauty, it is also no less true that stone, without completely losing its principal role, becomes just one of a

whole range of materials used, including the products of the potter's work.

The Paleolithic, then, which has a modest evolution (fig. 10), is proportionally similar to the evolution of life toward more

of Paleolithic man is so complete, that even today we keep returning to more encounters and re-encounters with Art of all times. The examples left by those men are still truly astonishing to us.

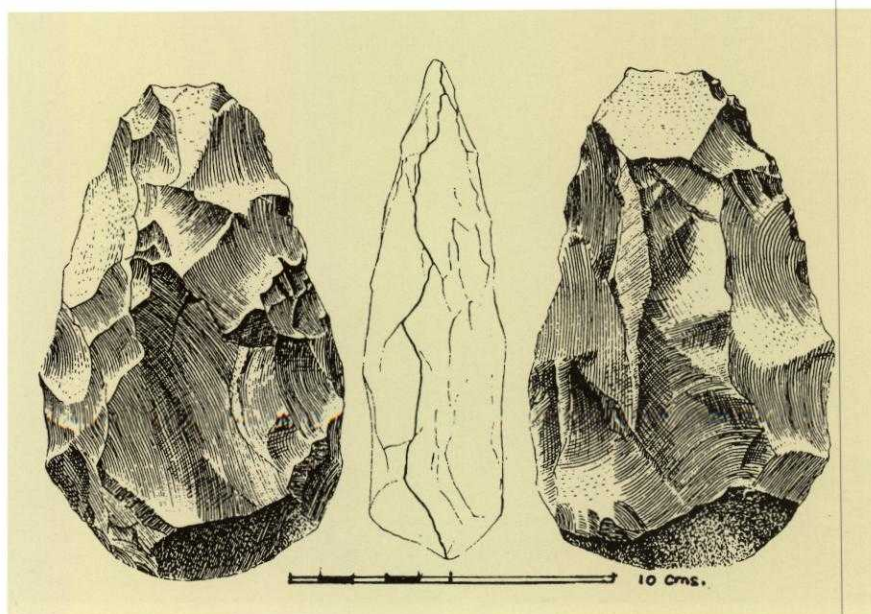


Fig. 10.—Acheulian hand-axe.

Fig. 10.—Hacha de mano achelense.

improved forms, including the evolution of man himself. From the pebble culture to the so-called *hand-axe*, the former on the road to mankind and the latter fully human, some two million years may have passed. Some say up to five; and from the *hand-axe* to varied forms of utensils (fig. 11), some 500,000, after which will come a stage of 50,000 years full of performance and quick ascent in a formidable escalation of technology leading to the conquest of more efficient instruments of survival and to one of the most valuable means of communication: Art. This art

There are two paleolithic phases or stages defined, called Lower Paleolithic and Upper Paleolithic, although the term Middle Paleolithic is also used. The lower, which is considered to be from the beginnings of that doubtful manufacture in stone by the hand of man, is the next 500,000 years; the Middle Paleolithic, the next 50,000 years after that; and from there on we are in the Upper Paleolithic.

But as always, such a definition between one stage and another is never fully in agreement with reality. Tomorrow this supposition may change, given the



Fig. 11.— Man using the "hand axe" to break sharp splinters off a bone.

Fig. 11.— Hombre utilizando el «hacha de mano» para arrancar de un hueso esquirlas aguzadas.

dynamics of the field of observations on remote Prehistory as I have already mentioned, as new discoveries worthy of consideration come into view.

This significant step of the so-called *pebble culture* took some two million years of effort; so immature and crude that there are many doubtful examples causing conjecture as to whether or not they were a product of a brain on the road of evolution or to the crafts of *Homo habilis* and

*Homo erectus*, the *missing link* found in Java by the Dutch physician Dubois and finally labelled by the name of Pithecanthropus, a name also applied to the findings in Peking and to later findings in Java by Professor Von Koenigswal, the new ones in China, etc., thus making up the *great family* of *Homo erectus*. Since then, a million and a half years of evolutionary adventures have gone by, from which we may clearly

see the first human crafts: the *hand-axe* (fig. 12), with many examples from many different places, allowing us to see the stages of improvement attained, and meaningful evidence at the end of the Acheulean.

The Acheulean culture, with its brief, almost Parisian prelude of the Chellean, later rebaptized as the Abbeville era, will have a cultural parallel in the technique of the flakes made by the Tayacian and Levalloisian, the latter

by preparing the core with facets resulting in regularly shaped flakes. With trimming on the edges, these provide scrapers and triangle tips.

We can see how man is working hard to find ways of adapting himself to the world, to this Creation into which he comes with great disadvantage. He is without natural defenses, but dwelling within him is the hopeful will of survival and dominance.

If we continue in pursuit of man's evolution, we will now come to the appearance of *Homo Sapiens primigenius* some one hundred thousand or more years ago, in a climate that is at times temperate around the interglaciation of the Riss and Würm. This race known as the Neanderthal belongs to the *Homo Sapiens primigenius*, because the roof of a skull showing evident evolutionary progress was found in 1856 in a cave in the valley of this name between Dusseldorf and Elberfeld. However, this one had traits of inferiority when compared to the human type that would make its appearance some fifty thousand years later, *Homo Sapiens sapiens* — *Homo sapientissimus*, I would call him— who went down in the history of Prehistory under the name of Cro-Magnon man, with which the Neanderthal became an intermediate link in the chain linking the Pithecanthropus and the Cro-Magnon. The *Neanderthal Man* should have actually

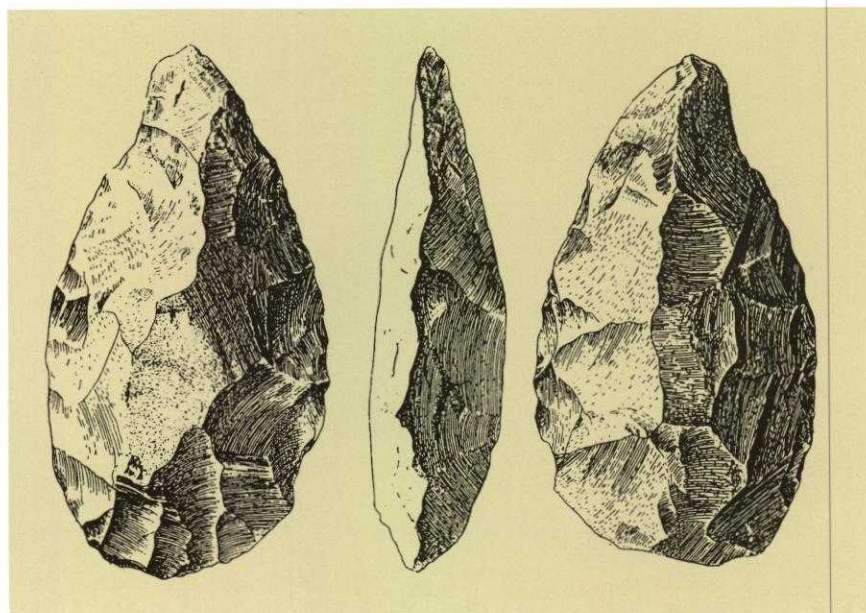


Fig. 12.— Fully developed Upper Acheulian hand axe.

Fig. 12.— «Hacha de mano» del Achelense superior evolucionada.

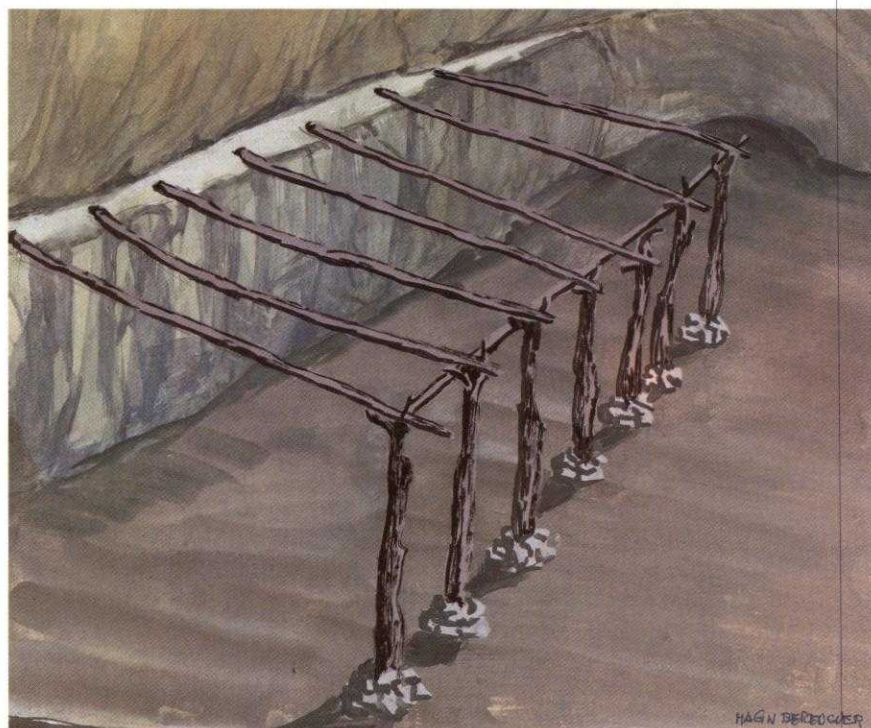


Fig. 13.— Cave of Lazaret. Reconstruction of the supposed structure of the cabin.

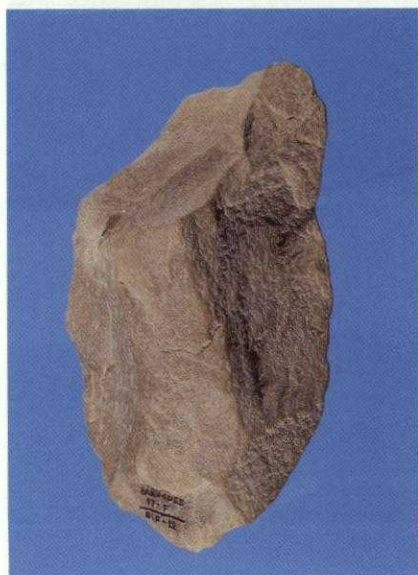
Fig. 13.— Cueva de Lazaret. Reconstitución de la estructura de la cabaña.

been the *Gibraltar Man* because findings, much more complete eight years before the German remains were found at Gibraltar;



Fig. 14.—Lazaret Cave. Reconstruction of the cabin.

Fig. 14.—Cueva de Lazaret. Reconstitución de la cabaña.



however at the time they were not properly identified.

Since the Neanderthal bone fragment, findings of this kind have been numerous and have served to determine the very wide area of occupation achieved by this race: Europe, Oceania, Near Asia and East Central and Southeast Africa.

Fig. 15.—Acheulian bifacial stone from Bañugues (Gozón).

Fig. 15.—Bifaz achelense de Bañugues (Gozón).

The Mousterian crafts belong to the Neanderthals, having received this name from the remains found at the site of Le Moustier in Dordogne.

At this point, it would be good to review the knowledge that Neanderthal Man had, because the image of these ancestors of prehistory commonly portrays them as beings having a very rudimentary brain: protruding jaw, beetle browed, so hairy that they are indistinguishable from their clothing made of poorly sewn furs; knock-need,



Fig. 16.— Limestone folds in the mountains, a favorable place for the formation of grottos and caverns.  
Fig. 16.— Relieves calizos de montaña, propicios para la formación de dolinas y simas.

with a loping walk and a tendency to stretch out their hands looking for a way to brace themselves on the ground with their hands. Of course, the reason is that for our egocentric mind of men who are about to embark upon the 21st Century, any man who is not historic does not seem to be a part of our ancestry. Nonetheless, Prehistoric man already has a capacity that never stops producing great surprises as we go deeper into his knowledge, even at that beginning stage toward the more complete formulas of the Upper Paleolithic. We judge our historical progress starting from



Fig. 17.— Gallery of the Tito Bustillo Cave (Ribadesella).  
Fig. 17.— Galería de la cueva «Tito Bustillo» (Ribadesella).



Fig. 18.— Limestone formations in the Peaks of Europe.

Fig. 18.— Agrupaciones calizas en los Picos de Europa.

scratch until we arrive at that magnificent chapter where we are able to split the atom and walk upon the Moon, and in this prideful thinking it is forgotten that our current progress and intellectual development have a million year track record behind them. Moreover, it has a hundred thousand year record which even then did not start from scratch, because there was a lengthy prelude in which the tiny spark of intellect struggled to effectively create the *dominator*. The discovery of the nature of fire and means of producing and controlling it, can be imagined a progress as significant in its time as

the discovery of atomic energy. And what can we say of the wheel? Even though its invention comes later, it existed way back in the early times of Humanity and yet man is still not able to replace it.

The Neanderthals knew how to make fire and were in control of it. Their crafts improve in comparison to earlier Acheulean work, though at first they follow in part some of its traditional features. They use wood and sharpened pieces of bone; they produce small bifacial stones which may be derived from the *hand-axe*, and other pieces with a serrated edge. They may have

used lance or dart tips and knew how to prepare skins. Naturally they were nomadic, following game as they did thousands of years before and thousands after, for game was one of their main sources of food. Although it may be supposed that these men practiced cannibalism, it is also supposed that they did so in observance of magical beliefs, to be able to assume the qualities of the deceased, as is still practiced by some primitive tribes.

The Riss/Würm interglaciation with its temperate climate, first allows man to set up his camps in the open, building huts as large as 550 sq. ft. on occa-

sion. However, he prefers to take advantage of the shelter of caverns where these are available.

Nonetheless, within the overall uniformity of Mousterian crafts, there are certain indications that a range of types is starting to become defined. This also emphasizes the cultural diversity of mankind in the human groups that created them. Due to the fact that they live in isolated clans, though contemporary and neighboring, they provide a diversity that in some cases could cause them to be considered to belong to a more advanced anthropological group. The bone findings at Ehringsdor, Saccopastore and Ganorice whose Neanderthal traits are not apparent, and the skull at Stenheim found in 1933 near Stuttgart with a clear tendency toward more modern forms, can support this supposition that is additionally supported by the jaw discovered at Montmaurin (France) associated with Mousterian crafts.

Professor F. Bordes had already pointed out this diversity in Mousterian crafts and a few years ago, Professor Henry de Lumley discovered other different types on the French Mediterranean coast.

The Charente group of Eastern Ferrassie type was established in Luberon and in the canyons of Verdon. During the same era, the mountains of Vaucluse and the region of the canyons of Nesque are occupied by

a group with Mousterian crafts typical of the Levalloisian. On the other side of the Rhone live the Charentians of the Quina type, who dominated the canyons of the Gardon.

The intent of the confusing paragraphs above on the diversity of anthropological remains and of man's own works, is to lead to the idea that these groups are evolving as their disappearance draws closer. This disappearance inevitably will come about, for such is human evolution, with the advent of another race or races who in the best of cases, will absorb them by mixing with them, and who will contribute new and of course more efficient techniques from the Upper Paleolithic.

It is exciting to see how hidden forces are instinctively pushing Neanderthal groups to progress, in their effort to resist the supposed invasion of new kinds of domination as yet unknown, but nonetheless expected as inevitable change. This competitive behavior is still alive in Humanity. The conquest of space encourages many of man's current efforts, such as the creation of new armaments as a coercive force to extend economic dominance, or technological progress in industry to allow conquest of other markets.

As I have said, in these evolutionary competitive efforts of the Mousterians, there are groups showing intermediate stages of transit to the Upper Paleolithic, and it is here where



Fig. 19.— Folded limestone along the eastern coast of Asturias.

Fig. 19.— Relieves calizos en la costa oriental asturiana.

the doubt raises up again as to whether the change of race is a gradual process through peaceful intrusion, or if on the contrary, it is by sudden invasion.



The Mousterian culture of the inhabitants of Provence shows great technical progress that makes us wonder if they had already made steps toward the

Chatelperronian, which is the entrance to the Upper Paleolithic culture; but we believe it was only local evolution of the same thing. It is more attractive to

look at this aspect of the Mousterian cultures as the result of the achievements of isolated groups who were finally defeated by better armed peoples.

Mousterian is still found in the Baume-Bonne region which could be contemporary to the ancient Aurignacian or Chatelperronian, and the group living there finished out its days completely in the Upper Paleolithic, perhaps unknown by new peoples or forgotten in its canyons and highlands.

Forty thousand years of Mousterian culture; forty thousand years of a genuine human culture, an extremely significant springboard for the takeoff of a rapid progression that made possible the plenitude of the Upper Paleolithic.

But as I was saying before, we mark history with very arbitrary milestones, and the evolution of Humanity does not actually follow these sudden road signs. Cultural evolution was accomplished along a smoothly curved line full of tiny ups and downs that invisible at a glance, but that gradually, continued building the progress of Humanity. However, since our knowledge is scarce, we have no choice but to define very broad stages or periods, specially in those remote times of Prehistory. And if this were not enough, now and then new discoveries are made to further complicate the chronological pattern. Thus, in 1967, a group of very spectacular findings were made in France between Provence and Rousellon, taking us one hundred twenty to two hundred thousand years back in time to the Riss Glaciation with pre-



Fig. 20.— Mousterian tip and scraper from the Forno or Conde Cave.

Fig. 20.— Punta y raedera musterienses de la cueva del Forno.

Neanderthal population. In some cases, levels from the Mindel glaciation have been reached.

Professor Henry de Lumley's excavations included two major deposits: one at Caune-de-L'Argo in the Departament of the Eastern Pyrenees and the other at Lazaret Cave at the entrance to Nice. In these excavations there are levels that go all the way back to the start of the Riss glaciation and up to Mindel/Riss.

Lazaret cave held great surprises for Professor H. Lumley. The entrance is some eighty feet above sea level. Besides an accumulation of pebbles at the entrance at the floor level of the cave that may have belonged to the Mindel/Riss shore, inside it but close to the entrance, in sediments from the end of Riss, was found a stone fence enclosing a

rectangular area. The fenced area was ostensibly parallel to one of the walls of the cave, and the accumulation of materiales inside it showed that it might belong to a room made by the hand of man.

Therefore, a search was for holes in the floor to confirm anchoring of posts for a structure that could have served for hanging hides on it. There were no results; however, seven small circles made with stones were found, arranged in such a way as to provide such anchoring. With this, and due to the need to place other horizontal beams for a supposed cover, Professor Lumley searched diligently for possible signs of support along the wall of stone, and although such supports were not found as an artificial work, they were found as a natural shelf along the wall, pro-



Fig. 21.— Schematic map of Europe, showing Quaternary glaciations.

Fig. 21.— Mapa esquemático de Europa, señalando las glaciaciones cuaternarias.

bably from erosion caused by the flow of water, which allowed for support of one of the ends of the cover beams, with the other end supported on the opposite post set up vertically in the ground (fig. 13). The height of the shelf and the height calculated for the vertical posts allowed the supposition that the cover was sloped to permit runoff of water from filtrations during times of heavy rains (fig. 14).

In the *Tito Bustillo* cave at Ribadesella, in a small boring made toward the area of access used by primitive man, we have confirmed evidence of four holes about four and one half inches in diameter with a depth of sixteen inches. It is possible that these holes could have also been used for anchoring wooden posts. The construction of hide huts within the cave room was frequent and a product of a long tradition,

because the period of time between the Lazaret and Ribadesella evidence is some seventy thousand years.

Professor Lumley's observations on the findings made do not stop here, and this is all so attractive that despite the fact that these quotes the Lower and Middle Paleolithic must be no more than a brief introductory prelude to the main subject of this book, which is the Upper

Paleolithic and its great budding of Art, I cannot resist the impulse to mention them.

Inside this supposed cabin were found the remains of fire that had been built directly on the floor and were not used as cooking fires, but instead were for the function of providing a certain amount of heat within the enclosure. Numerous very tiny sea shells from one to four millimeters in diameter were also found within the enclosure of the cabin, a circumstance that led to the supposition that these shellfish had not been picked up as food. Their habitat were among seaweed and presumably they had been gathered by man along the beach who took them to his dwelling to use them as stuffing for his bed.

The qualities of observation, imagination and sensitivity once again were put into the services of prehistoric research, along with the attention to detail and tests offered by modern scientific means, to open up new horizons in this remote past of more than one hundred thousand year ago.

Using our capabilities of imagination, we of course become excited from having had the opportunity to enter a dwelling of those remote ancestors, after feeling the punishment of the frigid conditions outside in our stiff bodies, to spend pleasant hours around the heat of a glowing fire under the evidently comfortable shelter of a hut of hides, while its regular inhabitants, scattered around inside, sew



Fig. 22.— Common fallow deer, quite plentiful in the Quaternary era.

Fig. 22.— Gamo común, muy abundante en la etapa Cuaternaria.

hides or prepare firewood, or chip away at a piece of flint, and the chief of the clan cuts up a shank of reindeer meat into well calculated portions for the last, and perhaps also the first, meal of the day. Outside, the gelid night would make this elemental dwelling and heart seem even more comfortable.

These new discoveries disturbed evolutionary issues on human type and cultures, showing the reality of these intermediate shadings between one label and another.

We cannot yet fully leave the stages of the Middle Paleolithic without noting what happens on the Iberian Peninsula and thus, of course, what happens in the region of Asturias. We could say that it is nothing special compared to the rest of inhabited Europe. In the Iberian Peninsula the first signs of human culture correspond to the first that are discovered in other European

sites, with findings of stones with prepared edges.

In Asturias, it seems that the oldest crafts are the Acheulian, especially the upper Acheulian, and Mousterian with an Acheulian tradition. The only evidence is from the Riss and Würm glaciations with the disappearance of the rest being credited to interglacial or postglacial erosion (fig 15).

The climatic condition of the glacial periods which were very cold, give rise to the supposition that inhabited areas would be along the coast or in the shelter of low, protected valleys. Man's penetration into the area of Asturias comes from Southern France. This together with some special geological conditions, favors larger population toward the eastern part of the region, which lasts into the Upper Paleolithic.

The fertile magic of the caverns mostly arose from hollows. These provide the



Fig. 23.— Asturcón horse, a type that is often found depicted on prehistoric art walls.  
Fig. 23.— Caballo Asturcón, cuyo tipo es muy representado en el arte prehistórico.



Fig. 24.— Brown bear, some of which still survive in Asturian forests.  
Fig. 24.— Oso pardo, del que aún superviven ejemplares en los bosques asturianos.

landscape, rich in limestone with some special features, which are shown in small, more or less circular valleys (fig. 16) that act somewhat akin to a funnel, attracting surface water runoff into them. Sometimes due to slow, erosive filtration and others due to the settling of these hollows, what happens is that these waters seep down into the

ground through cracks until they open up a channel through which they can now flow unhindered, tracing mazes of routes by ease of passage, or leaping down into deep abysses in search for an exit which will enable them to spring forth once again into the sunlight. But some of these underground water explorers went dry; some because an acci-

dent changed their course on land, others because the blazing sun prevailed and they dried up, and others because they changed course in their meanderings and opened up a new gallery. So that is how this cavern labyrinth became hollowed out, and some of its meanderings still show faint signs of their liquid creators (fig. 17).

So limestone prevails from the Deva-Cares to the Nalón, and one of its peculiarities is that it encourages the formation of those hollow underground channels than men used and made into the center of his lifestyle: the cave (figs. 18 & 19). For this reason, our central and eastern areas hosted many prehistoric generations. The caves are a fantastic world full of surprises, with unknown roads and a virgin atmosphere, and a whole artistic panorama of sculpture and color born of the unsurpassed symbiosis of water and minerals provided by Nature. They not only provided man with the generous refuge of their hollows, but also a whole exciting panorama that encouraged him to select it as the proper place for showing the expression of his spiritual desires.

However, in Asturias we do not have any evidence of human occupation in caves until after the middle of the Würm glaciation. Earlier Acheulian evidence would belong to open air camps, taking advantages of more temperate periods of the Riss/Würm. The areas of most ancient human

cave dwelling at least up to now, are those found at the Forno or Conde Cave in Tuñón (Sto. Adriano) where Mousterian crafts were found (fig. 20), in the Arnero cave (Posada de Llanes) and at La Cueva (Ribadesella).

If we make a summary of the progress of Lower and Middle Paleolithic man, we can see that after his slow and painful evolutionary climb at the end of these hundreds of thousands of years, this man is in possession of knowledge that more than compensates for his physical disadvantages within the created world. Utensils have been enriched by the invention of forms that were much more functional, lighter and sharper at the time of their use.

Their dwellings have features making them to some degree comfortable, more resistant to water and cold, with the adoption of a cubicle covered with hides under the protection of the solid rock of a cave; he knows how to light and use fire, etc., etc.

But there is an untouched issue that causes us to wonder. Do these men now feel any concern about their later destiny after the difficult life they are living? Do their thoughts stop to ponder any sort of higher force governing the forces of the earth upon which they are dwelling? Do their prayers or entreaties in any way ask for protection against the dangers around them?

With the status of our current knowledge, it is not possible for us to be assured that those men



Fig. 25.- A chamois; plentiful in the Cantabrian Range.

Fig. 25.- Ejemplar de rebeco. Abunda en la Cordillera Cantábrica.

at that time, who were no more than *Homo-Sapiens*, had religious awareness; but we can affirm that man practiced certain rites related to *something* he felt was supernatural; to hidden forces that scatter through the environment, coming from this *something* that cannot be defined as a part of his physical world and may be either evil or good.

This admirable facet of mankind which shows with still stronger evidence the great barrier separating him from the rest of the animal kingdom, is shown in his burial of the dead.

The burials at Ferrassie, La Quina, La Chapelle-aux-Saints and at Combe Grenal show us the special care used in these tasks with evident ceremonial signs. Sometimes it is a burial ground laid out with stones; on

other occasions it seems that a belief that the dead are able to return to hinder the activities of the living or to go after them is shown, which is suggested by the fact that bodies are buried tied up or with enormous boulders placed on their head, or buried with the head to the bottom, so in case the dead person tried to move, his road would go straight into the bowels of the earth and not toward the surface. This makes us suspect that a belief in a possible afterlife would have been included among the *spiritual* concerns of these men of the Middle Paleolithic Age, whose remains show us the ample spread of this race that, from what is known, lived on the three continents of the Old World with truly astounding cultural uniformity.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MORE RECENT TIMES OF THE PALEOLITHIC AGE ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURAL EXPANSION

Leaving behind that long stage of millions of years, we now come into the Upper Paleolithic, which in time is defined as some forty thousand plus years.

More than once we have asked whether the Neanderthal race disappeared by being wiped out by a new one coming in; or by stagnation and degeneration of those qualities that had made its survival possible up to

that point, leaving them wanting in a world with new demands. Or perhaps they mixed with new anthropologically different groups, thus giving birth to the Cro-Magnon type as a result of the mutation that came about. All this caused an extraordinary and decisive cultural change; so extraordinary and decisive that it opens up a brand new chapter in the great book of Humanity. We do not know the reason why.

The first manifestations of the Upper Paleolithic seem to belong to the Near East and Eastern Europe, with gradual spread to Western Europe. Their cultural forms were unknown in many parts of the world and, as always with reasonable suppositions, this new budding occurs in Southeast Asia, spilling out toward Europe and North Africa. In the rest of the wide world, including Asia and Africa below the Sahara, the old paleolithic forms remain in force.

Earth has just begun the second Würm glacial cycle; these are the last spasms of Pleistocene ice. Life for Upper Paleolithic man is fraught with dismal conditions. The land upon which mankind struggles for survival is cold and arid. In Europe, the ice cap will come down from the North going through the Scandinavian plains and down to Germany, until it takes the Elbe line covering Polish territory and going east, taking in a large part of Eurasia. This frozen mass covered the North Sea and went over almost all of Great Britain and Ireland. The Alps also had permanent ice cover, and were a huge frigid island. The Pyrenees chain also remained frozen, though its eastern and western ends were not fully covered by permanent ice (fig. 21).



Fig. 26.- Wild cock which despite all odds, still survives in the forests of Asturias.  
Fig. 26.- El urogallo que todavía subsiste en los bosques de Asturias.

European landscape and climate therefore experienced a significant transformation with these phenomena. These large, frozen surfaces locking up enormous masses of water, caused sea level to go down over three hundred feet. Therefore, a rather large coastal area that is now under water was dry land at that time.

Siberia or northern Canada can show us an example of the climate situation of a large part of Europe back in those days. In Asturias it is calculated that snow was permanent above 3,300 feet above sea level.

European man of the Upper Paleolithic has to live with this horrid cold. This land in which man struggles for survival is cold and arid, and these men, who already have a long past of hundreds of thousands of years, are gripped by frozen anguish. Therefore, living in caves is preferred wherever possible. As we have already pointed out, in Asturias, along the coast and rivers in canyons in the most sheltered valleys, there are many caves with signs of human life in the central and eastern half where there is an abundance of limestone.

In these areas there are forests mainly of evergreens, although sometimes in some nook or cranny of this rough terrain there are to be found micro-climates with forests of deciduous trees.

In this landscape, whose adornment we have tried to

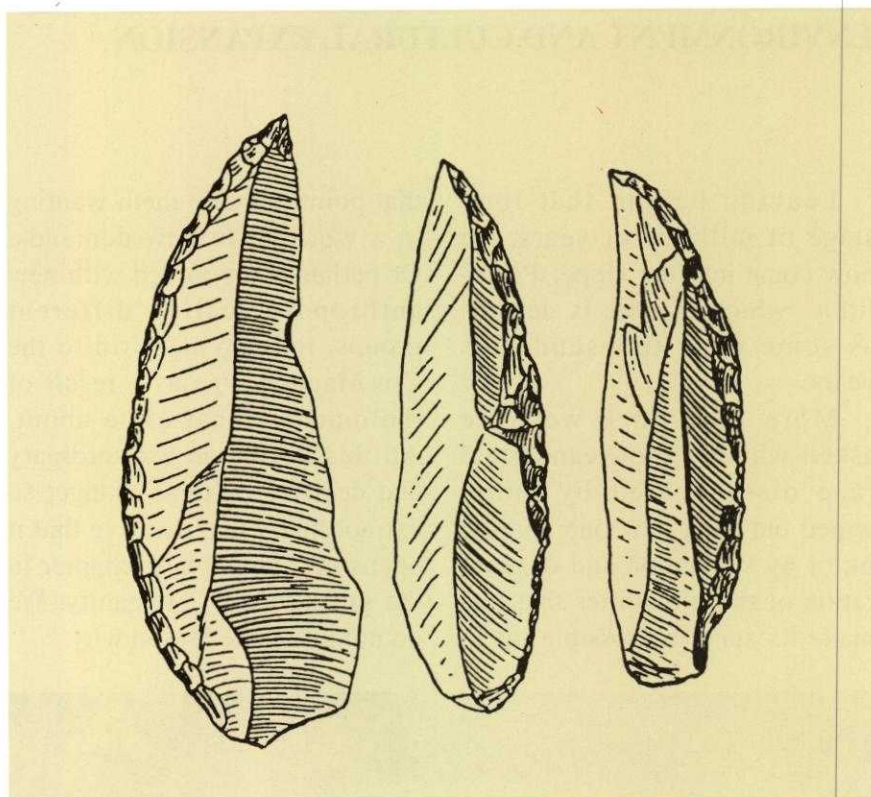


Fig. 27.— Chatelperron or Lower Aurignacian type tips.  
Fig. 27.— Puntas del tipo Chatelperron o Aurignaciense inferior.

briefly describe, and which possesses common features all along the Cantabrian shelf, the south of France, part of Italy and other European regions, our Upper Paleolithic man is not the only one around. There are also other beings, his companions in his voyage through this created world.

The mammoth and rhinoceros were common throughout Europe, although they reproduced more easily in the steppe country of Eastern Europe. Deer were abundant during times of more benign climate (fig. 22). Reindeer appear in the coldest areas, and occupy an important place in man's life. The reindeer,

whose bulky yet graceful silhouette we see in the first stages of the Upper Paleolithic Age in Europe during the times of extreme cold, is replaced by its cousin the deer when the ice begins to creep away from its grip on the land past the middle of the Upper Paleolithic. The reindeer come back again during the last ice age before the Holocene, with which we come around to our present climate and back to the deer again. But without a doubt, the reindeer was a good traveling companion for man; it is so involved with his life, that we constantly see it mixed in with the vestiges of that existence. It offered very

tasty meat; hides with which to cover his body and the framework of his huts; strong tendons for tying things firmly and lofty racks with which to make not only his weapons, but also beautiful symbolic and magical objects.

But the horse was even more significant than the reindeer to the survival of mankind due to the regularity of its presence at all times, for it can live just as well in the forest as it can on the plains, and due to the relative abundance of the herds (fig. 23). It may be that horses were one of the dreams that obsessed mankind the most, and not

exactly in terms of their immediate use as one of the main staples in his diet; rather the intelligent human perception of the potential of the horse because of the strength of its muscles and endurance and speed. The wonderful historic future of man's life together with the horse may have been foreseen by him, for such cooperation definitely became depicted as a subject in the imagined mythical versions of historical cultures.

To complete the zoological panorama of Western Europe we have the bear (fig. 24), the bison, the goat, the chamois (fig. 25), the aurochs, the arctic fox, the

wolf and the lion, that we usually think of as belonging to warm regions, when actually it was run off to those areas by mankind. The capercaillie (fig. 26) was one of the well known fowls and today it has largely disappeared in Europe, though it still remains in some forested areas in Asturias. In the rivers there were species such as the salmon and in the sea, large fish among which there were some identified within the mackerel family.

Such was Europe of the Upper Paleolithic era. The most significant known core of human culture forty thousand years ago was concentrated there, even though the first manifestations of this new stage may have started taking place in the Middle East, as mentioned above. Though Mousterian culture spread out evenly throughout a large part of the known world, new Paleolithic ways on the other hand, did not become manifested in very many places on Earth. At least, we are lacking *documents* or those we do have are not properly dated. Its cultural spread was limited to Europe, North Africa and Asia Minor.

So then the Upper Paleolithic could have been born in some yet unknown part of Southeast Asia, spreading out to Europe and North Africa, with the rest of Asia and Africa below the Sahara remaining unconnected to this evolution and faithful to the cultural forms of the Lower

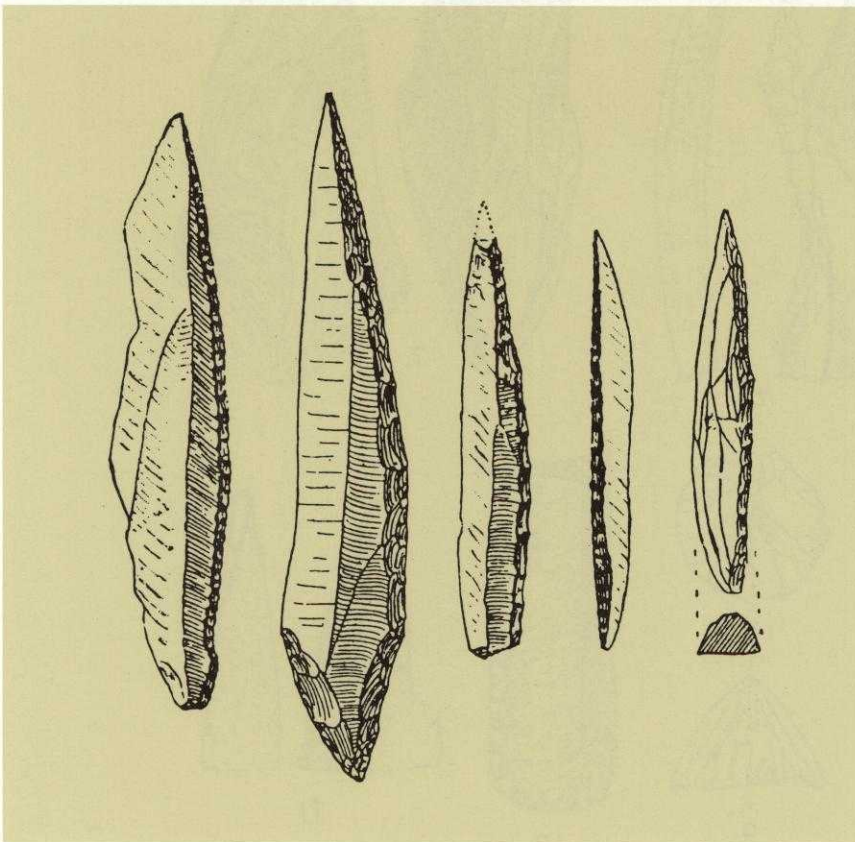
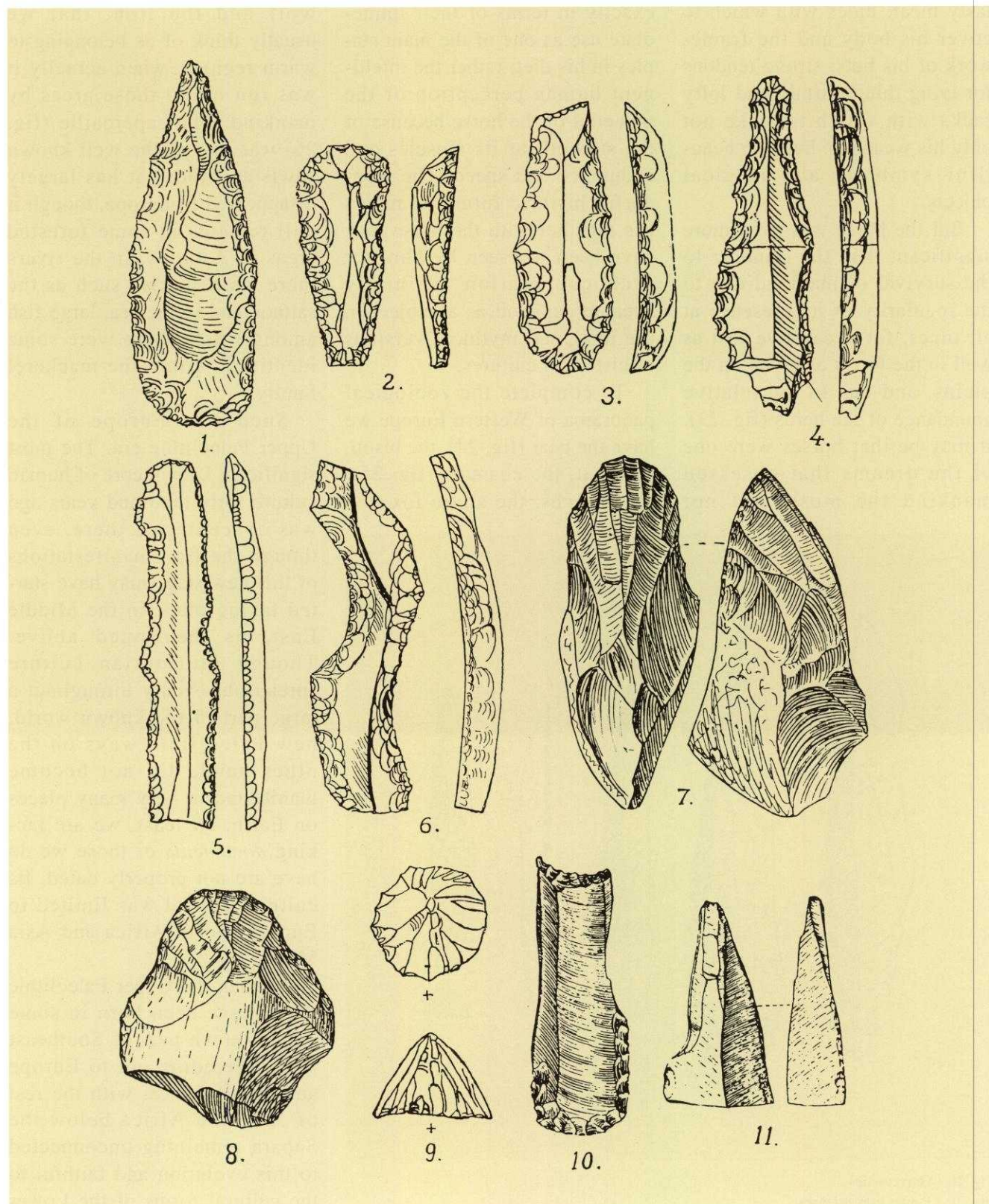


Fig. 28.—Gravette tips.

Fig. 28.—Puntas gravettienses.



and Middle Paleolithic. But even though the area of occupation is well defined insofar as utensils are concerned, it is not well defined in Art, because the Asian area provides no wall art nor decorated objects that could be dated more than ten thousand years. Also, figures painted and engraved on rock that can be found in overwhelming amounts in Africa, are not attributable to prehistoric times contemporary with those of the Europeans, but rather to much more recent times.

Even though material known from the Middle East is scarce, it is quite interesting: the cave of Zarzi, excavated by Miss Garrod, is in Iraq; Shainar Ksar Abil in Lebanon; Jabrud in Syria; Kara In and Okuzlù In in Turkey, etc. But it is in Europe where the great wealth of the Upper Paleolithic was produced. Our historical European culture was preceded by a road already traveled in the prehistoric stage; a road that becomes marked from there on by the same characteristics of itinerary and development. We cannot forget that the great historical Mediterranean culture starts from Miletus,

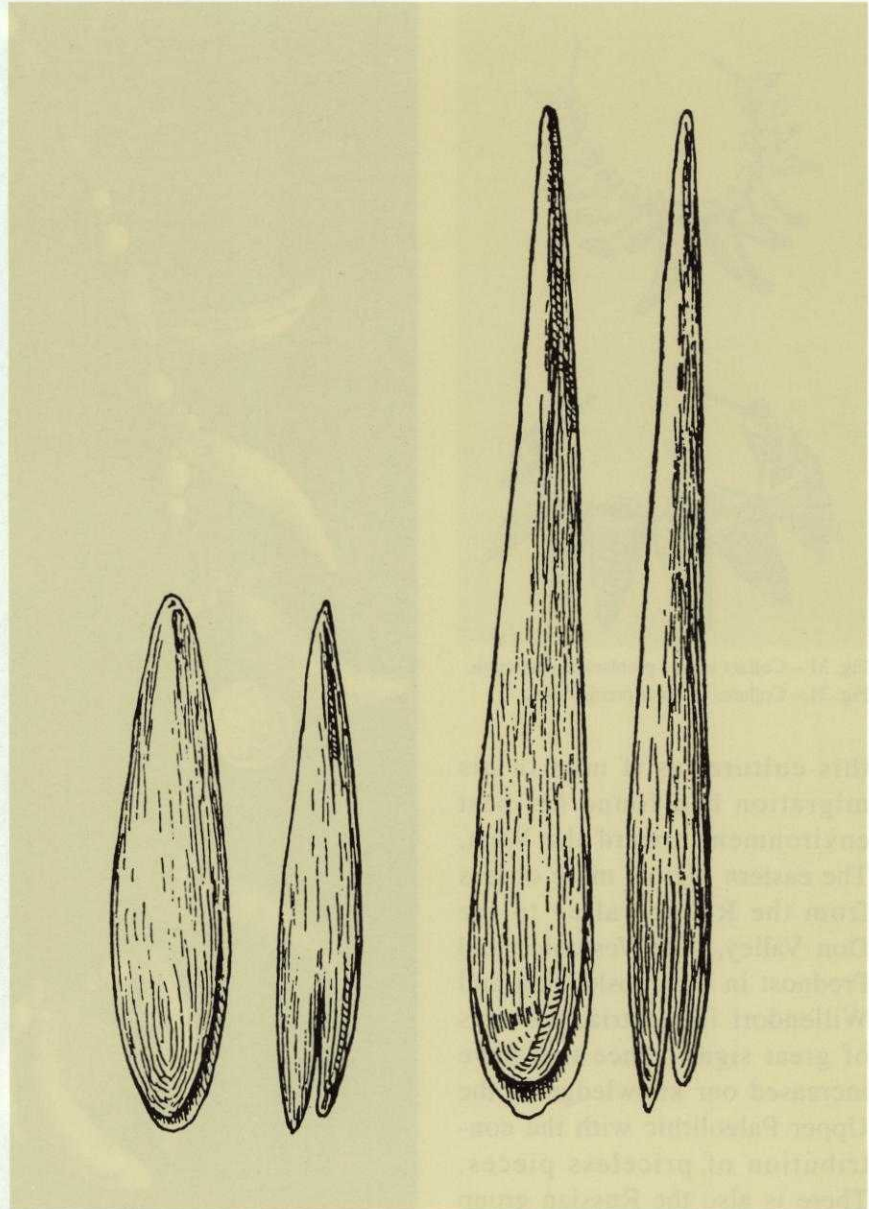


Fig. 30.— Aurignacian split bone tips.

Fig. 30.— Puntas de hueso hendidas auriñacienses.

Fig. 29.— Aurignacian tools. 1, 2, 3 & 4 are blades with much edge retouching; 5 & 6 are blades with hollows; 7, 8 & 9 are keel-shaped scrapers; 10 is an engraving tool with transverse retouching; 11 is a center point engraving tool.

Fig. 29.— Utiles auriñacienses. 1, 2, 3 y 4 hojas con fuertes retoques marginales; 5 y 6 con escotaduras; 7, 8 y 9 raspadores aquillados; 10 buril con retoque transversal; 11 buril de punta central.

which of course, has roots in civilizations from the Middle East and North Africa, and takes over all the western coasts on the shores of Mare Nostrum. Thus, the Upper Paleolithic, whose birth occurs in the eastern areas, also develops by spread-

ding out toward the West, and finds a home and abundance in Western Europe. Therefore, the European areas where manifestations of the Upper Paleolithic are concentrated, East and West, are different in their density, continuity and in the culmination of

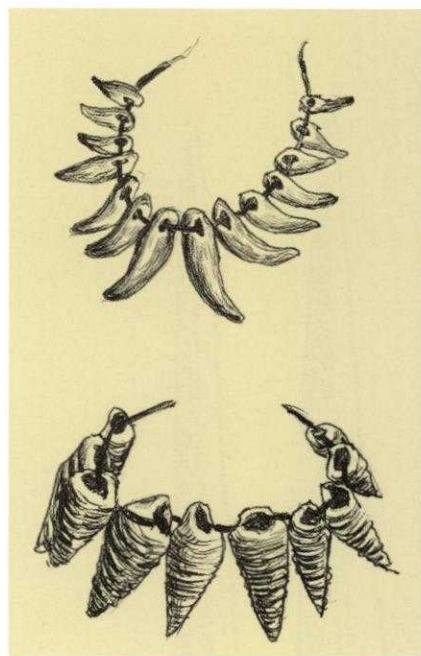


Fig. 31.—Collars from a prehistoric collection.

Fig. 31.—Collares de ajuar prehistórico.

this culture, as if man in his migration had found his best environment toward the West. The eastern region, more or less from the Rhone valley to the Don Valley, with Vestonice and Prednost in Czechoslovakia and Willendorf in Austria, are sites of great significance that have increased our knowledge of the Upper Paleolithic with the contribution of priceless pieces. There is also the Russian group with sites such as Kostenki, Gagarino, Avdevo, Mezine, etc., and the Siberian group with sites such as Malta or Buret.

It would be an uncertain task to determine the spread of the core and ramifications of the Upper Paleolithic, realizing that there are doubtful sites where despite evident remains of Mousterian culture, remains of



Fig. 32.—Collar belonging to a Motilón Indian. Note the inclusion of medals with images of saints.

Fig. 32.—Collar de un indio motilón, en el que se incluyen medallas con efigies de santos.

later stages are not nearly so evident, such as the case of the deposits in the valley of the Yellow River.

The areas of the Upper Paleolithic become well defined in the Eastern and Central parts of Europe, having their own well

defined features. Even though on first glance samples from there were interpreted as belonging to the same unit as the ones from Western Europe according to the French rule of classification, studies in recent years have pointed out the great differences existing

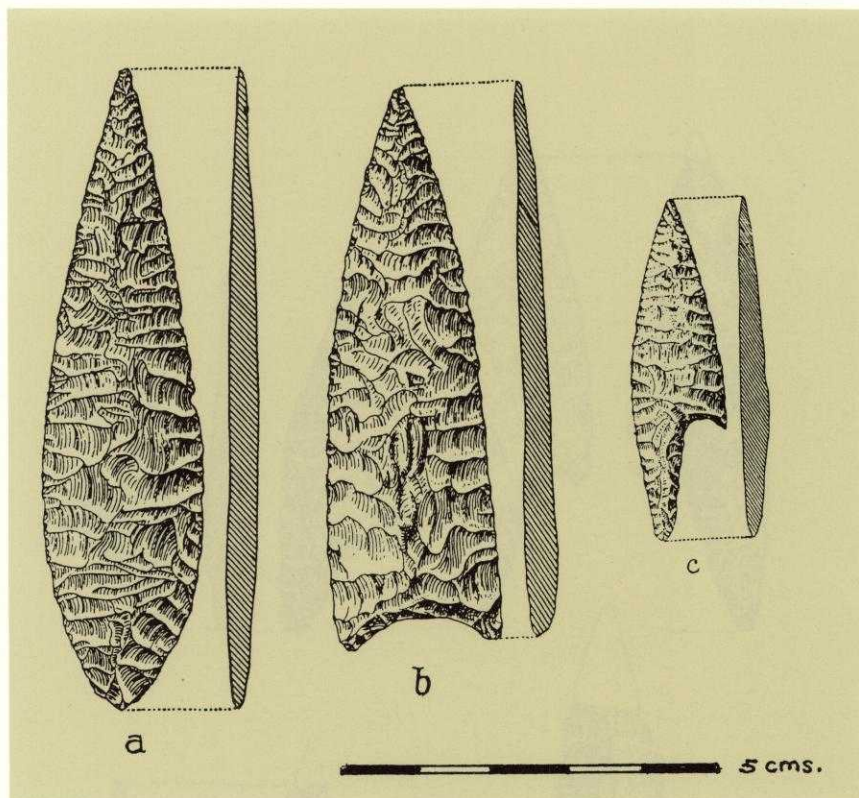


Fig. 33.— Solutrean tips: (a) and (b) are laurel leaf; (c) is notched.

Fig. 33.— Puntas solutrenses; «a» y «b» de «hoja de laurel»; «c» de muesca.

between the two, making us realize that although there may have been common origin, the stages of their spread and later settlement show clear differences manifesting local evolution, especially where art is concerned.

We do not know how much of the Upper Paleolithic in North Africa corresponds to contributions from this stage as we understand it in its European context, or if it is really local progress starting off in the Middle Paleolithic. For example, so-called Aterian crafts from the locality of Bir el Ater in Algeria have their roots in the Middle Paleolithic and initial expres-

sions of the Upper. In the manufacture of objects they show bifacial working and shaft elements, and at their Western limits in Morocco, flared arrowheads with shafts similar to those that were spread across Spain at a similar time. However, there is no evidence of contact between the two crafts. At the end of the Pleistocene several groups develop including the Sahara, which in its early phase is more or less contemporary to the Magdalenian.

The European Mediterranean region is partially included within the great Western culture of the Upper Paleolithic, but with distinguishing subtleties. The

Iberian Peninsula has a close relationship with recognized cultures in France, though in some cases there are local variants. We of course are excluding the Cantabrian shelf from this, which belongs to the Upper Paleolithic unit from Central and Southern France. In Italy, it shows a nature different from that of the French and Spanish. Though their knowledge may have been common, it shows subtleties that must have come from Central Europe.

So therefore, during the Upper Paleolithic our *Homo sapiens s.* was moving around in an area that is culturally defined as being from Russia to the Iberian Peninsula with greater or lesser differences, and along this road, Czechoslovakia and Austria as testimonial milestones of the traffic between East and West.

Some nine thousand years before Christ, when the climate left behind the rigors of cold and started to become more like the climate we enjoy today, the French-Cantabrian culture expanded to the North and Northeast, with Switzerland, the British Isles, Germany and Holland getting into it later on, areas where the last manifestations of the Paleolithic still flourished for a brief period of time.

In this whole panorama, the abundant enclave of deposits in France and Spain is defined as a vital nerve center; the brain and heart of the Upper Paleolithic. The watersheds of the Dordogne,

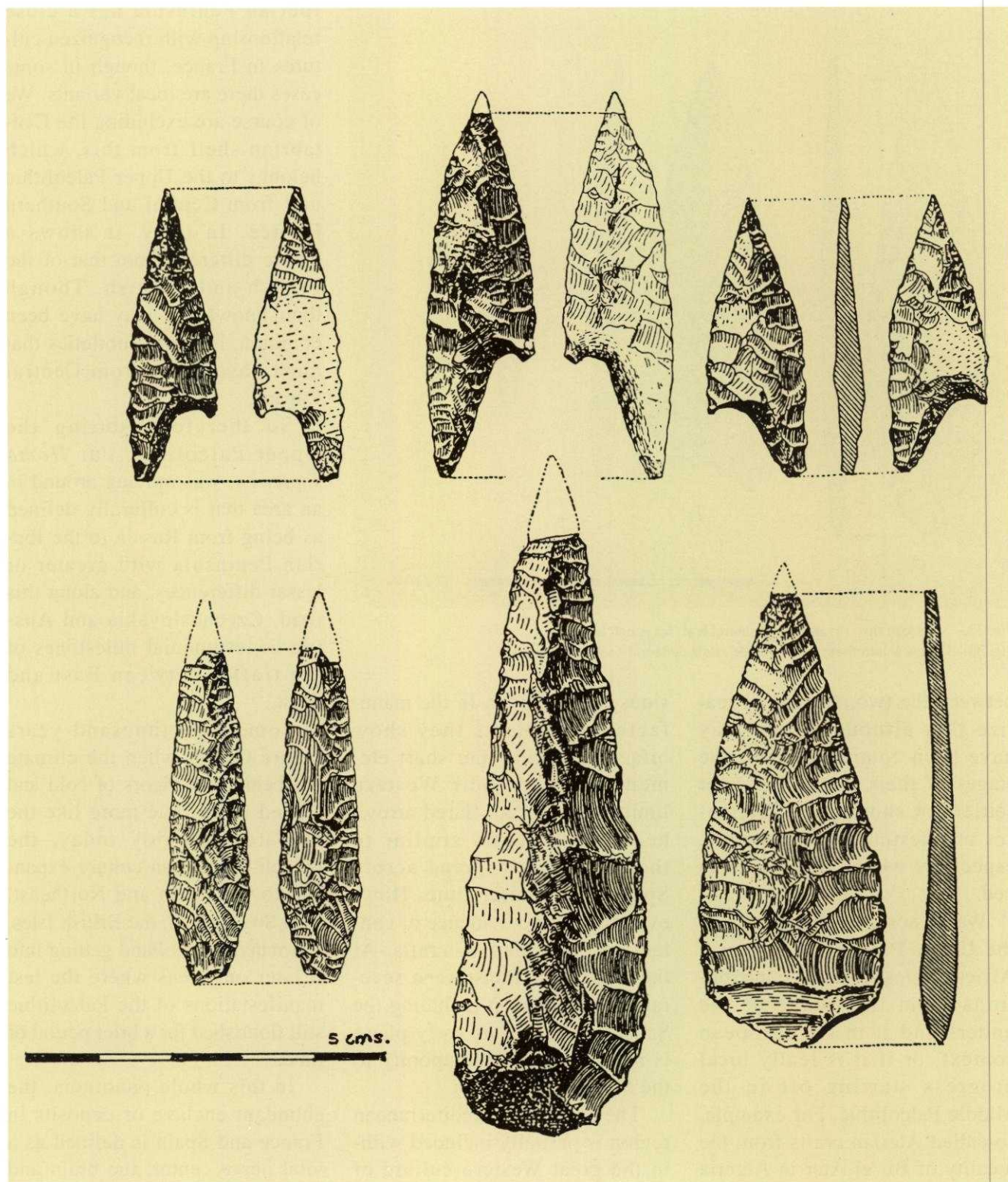


Fig. 34.— Cueto de la Mina Shelter (Llanes). Tips of a type from the Upper Solutrean.

Fig. 34.— Abrigo de Cueto de la Mina (Llanes). Tipo de puntas del Solutrense superior.

Garonne and Rhone, the Pyrenees region and the coastal part of Spanish Cantabria from Irún to Asturias include the most select part, although there are significant deposits farther south on the Peninsula itself.

So our prehistoric ancestors played on this stage as the protagonists of a frozen world, where the relative warmth of a few river valleys protected by guarding mountain walls battered by heavy storms, or similar warmth at sea level along the coast, provided certain comfort to those human groups so firmly committed to survival.

How does the life of this prehistoric population develop? Thanks to knowledge acquired throughout several decades of research that has become increasingly scientific with the availability of material salvaged from many excavations and the involvement of specialties required by this kind of work, along with varied hypotheses that gradually are being cleared up through support provided by new discoveries, a rather inexact picture has been drawn that to some extent provides an answer to the question that is posed.

Our ancestors lived together in small groups separated by a certain amount of territory. However, there was communication between them, because spread of cultural and craft forms back up this supposition. These groups were made up of small numbers of individuals to avoid problems with leadership

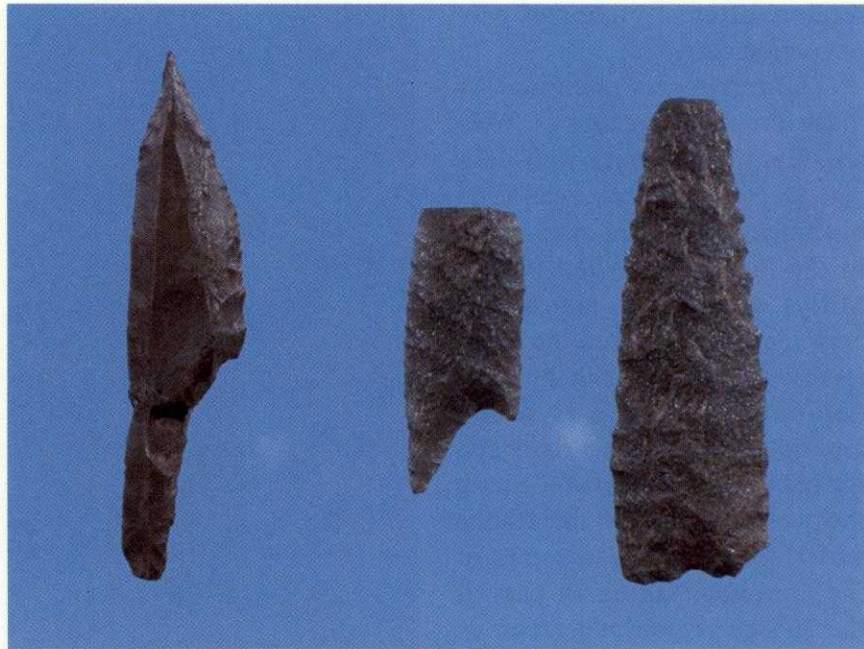


Fig. 35.—Cova Rosa (Ribadesella). Solutrean tips.

Fig. 35.—Cova Rosa (Ribadesella). Puntas solutrenses.

and food reserves, yet they were numerous enough, some twenty to forty individuals, because man knew his weakness in facing the great dangers around him alone. Illness would be frequent, but infants went through a series of trials that only the strongest could survive. Meat and fish composed one of the most desired diets, though they also ate fruit, vegetables, roots and honey.

They dwelt in caverns with some regularity and favored them during periods of intense cold, and set up near the entrance where they received not only shelter and protection from the rain and cold, but also had natural light, clean air and weak sunshine. But in addition to this natural rock shelter, man also built his home below: a hut of

posts and hides making his dwelling twice as comfortable; human manufacture coming from perhaps before Upper Paleolithic man (Lazaret cave), that continued in use after being more or less perfected. This has been confirmed by the important discovery of the cabin structure made with mammoth tusks at the very entrance of the great cave at Arcy-sur-Cure and others. Man also used outside camps under less severe climatic conditions.

These small human communities were nomadic, something they were used to in the search for vegetable foodstuffs and following the herds for hunting, which in avoidance of danger, would move to friendlier areas. Therefore, the shelter of the caverns remained there to