

French Cave Paintings

An abstract geometric pattern composed of various blue shapes on a green background. The shapes include horizontal and vertical lines, a diagonal line, a large 'X' formed by two intersecting lines, a triangle, and a curved line. The pattern is distributed across the lower half of the image.

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FRENCH
CAVE PAINTINGS ***

20,000 Year Old Cave Paintings

Foreword by the Editor

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Rome, November 2000.

CONTENTS

- [Document: Cavep.eng](#)
- [Document: Cavep.fr](#)
- [List of Pictures \(JPEG\)](#)
- [JPEG Pictures](#)
 - [chevo11.jpg](#)
 - [mamot11.jpg](#)
 - [gvpda11.jpg](#)
 - [hyene11.jpg](#)
- [List of Pictures \(GIF\)](#)
- [GIF Pictures](#)
 - [chevo11.gif](#)
 - [mamot11.gif](#)
 - [gvpda.gif](#)
 - [hyene11.gif](#)

We are not sure Mr. Clottes wants to keep a copyright on these, or whether he wants to put them in the Public Domain; in either case, we would prefer not to jeopardize his rights, and we thus are preparing this release as if it were copyrighted in 1995.

The translation in the original message we received was: "All rights reserved" so we are presuming the copyright. "Tous droits reserves" in the original French message... which is also included in this package and in English.

If you want to get permission to use these for more uses than a private one, we suggest you contact the Ministry of Culture.

Here is the permission statement we received in both French and English, and we are VERY glad to have received it on such short notice, and did not want to disturb things further by asking an additional time for more details.

Monsieur,

Comme suite votre courrier électronique du 7 février dernier, je vous informe que M. Jean Clottes, conseiller scientifique du sous-directeur de l'archéologie et auteur des quatre photographies et du texte sur la grotte récemment découverte en Ardèche, a donné son autorisation pour l'utilisation de ses photographies dans le cadre du projet de CD-ROM Gutenberg.

Merci de ne pas oublier de mentionner son nom sur les documents publiés.

Sir,

As per your email of February 7th, I informed Mr. Jean Clottes, Scientific Consul to the Deputy-Director of Archeology and author of the four photographs and the texts concerning the cave paintings discovered in Ardèche, to get his authorization for the utilization of his photographs by the staff of Project Gutenberg's CDROM.

Please do not forget to mention his name in the documents you publish.

[<Contents](#)

Project Gutenberg Document: Cavep.eng

This is an English translation of the original message we received. This file should be named cavep.eng The original French language file should be named cavep.fr

Only the first portion has been translated, more coming.

AN EXCEPTIONAL ARCHEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY

A Paleolithical Embellished Cave found in France (Ardeche)

An exceptional archeological discovery has been made public on January 17, 1995, by the Minister of Culture and French-Speaking language <Francophonie>, Mr. Jacques TOUBON.

Discovered during December 1994 at Vallon-Pont-d'Arc (Ardeche, France), the cave, composed of several spacious galleries and dens, is adorned with some 300 paleolithical paintings and engravings (dating 18,000 - 20,000 years before present time), which focus on a wide variety of animals including bears, owls, mammoths, rhinos and felines.

The cave has also retained several vestiges of human activities: fireplaces <hearths>, entailed flints and other clues which denote an evolution in tools and habits. Totally left intact and untouched by any human intrusion throughout the ages, the cave represents an exceptional source of studies for archeologists.

In the wake of the artistical and archeological interest spawned by this thrilling discovery of national and international importance, the Director of Cultural Heritage has signed on January 13th the proceedings to classify the site. <I don't know if the translation makes sense: a "classified site" is a site which, due to its cultural importance, becomes an official patrimony of the nation> This

urgency measure, taking effect immediately, confers the cave for one year the same statute and privileges which the historical monuments benefit.

In order to ensure the preservation and the security of the cave, the Prefect of Ardeche has also signed on January 13 a by-law prohibiting the access to the cavity.

Paris, January the 18th, 1995

[< Contents](#) [< Document: Cavep.eng](#)

Project Gutenberg Document: Cavep.fr

This is the original message we received in French. This file should be named cavep.fr The English translation should be named cavep.eng

Decouverte d'une grotte ornee paleolithique a Vallon-Pont-d'Arc (Ardeche)

Cliches : Ministere de la culture et de la francophonie - Direction du Patrimoine Jean Clottes. Tous droits reserves.

Une decouverte archeologique d'une importance exceptionnelle vient d'intervenir dans les gorges de l'Ardeche, en limite du site naturel classe, en l'espece d'un vaste reseau souterrain orne d'un tres grand nombre de peintures et de gravures d'epoque paleolithique (vers 18000-20000 ans avant le present).

La decouverte est intervenue sur le territoire de la commune de Vallon-Pont-d'Arc, le 25 decembre dernier, dans le cadre d'une prospection archeologique autorisee au titre des dispositions de la loi validee du 27 septembre 1941 portant reglementation de la recherche archeologique de France. Elle est le fait de M. Jean-Marie Chauvet, agent de surveillance titulaire au sein du Service regional de l'archeologie (D.R.A.C Rhône-Alpes) assiste de deux benevoles Mme Eliette Brunel-Deschamps et M. Christian Hillaire.

Au terme d'une desobstruction manuelle conduite dans un boyau tres etroit marquant le fond d'une cavite mineure s'ouvrant dans les falaises du Cirque d'Estre, les inventeurs ont debouche par une cheminee dans un tres vaste reseau totalement vierge, richement concretionne et recelant de nombreux restes paleontologiques en place (os d'ours de cavernes- Ursus spelaeus- dans leur bauge d'hibernation). Les galeries, fortement dimensionnees (section de 5

x 4 metres en moyenne), joignent plusieurs vastes salles (jusqu'à 70 x 40 metres) et sont, de place en place, decorees de peintures et de gravures de figurations animalieres isolees ou organisees en panneaux comprenant plus de cinquante unites dont les dimensions varient de 0,50 m a 4 metres de long. Au total, environ 300 peintures a l'ocre rouge ou au noir ont ete actuellement observees et au moins autant de gravures. On remarque plusieurs cas de superposition, et, localement, des voiles concretionnes ou des griffades d'ours, l'ensemble de ces faits authentifiant (s'il en etait besoin) l'anciennete de ces decors.

a chaque extremite du reseau visite on peut constater la presence d'accès anciens actuellement colmates par des eboulis et des depots argileux.

L'ensemble des galeries parcourues cumule un lineaire de plusieurs centaines de metres au long duquel se developpe un bestiaire tres original et particulierement varie (chevaux, rhinoceros, lions, bisons, aurochs, ours, pantheres, mammouths, bouquetins, hiboux, etc...) accompagne de signes symboliques, de panneaux ponctues et de mains positives ou negatives.

Au plan artistique, il se degage un ensemble absolument unique dans le Sud de la France, que son importance et son originalite placent au meme rang que l'ensemble figure de Lascaux meme s'il n'offre pas de veritable polychromie ni le meme dimensionnement des representations.

Partout, les traits peints ou graves sont plus ou moins concretionnes. Les traits peints, vus dans leurs details, presentent l'aspect erode caracteristique des peintures anciennes, meme celles apparemment les mieux conservees. En outre, la grotte est vierge, avec des sols intacts et d'innombrables vestiges non touches. Dans une salle, un ensemble de gravures (cheval, mammoth, hibou) se trouve sur une retombee de voute a 5 ou 6 m du sol ; au-dessous, un vaste effondrement ancien explique ce qui s'est passe : une aspiration a provoque la formation de cet entonnoir et le sol sur lequel se trouvait l'artiste a alors disparu, de

sorte que les gravures sont maintenant inaccessibles. Donc, l'authenticite est evidente.

La zone a peintures rouges comprend plusieurs panneaux de points, auxquels s'ajoutent parfois des signes, y compris des signes complexes originaux. Les panneaux avec des animaux rouges sont divers : dans une petite galerie, un cerf, est suivi tout au fond, de trois ours des cavernes et d'un cheval. Ailleurs, un grand panneau comprend plusieurs ours, dont un a l'avant-train tachete, un felin lui aussi tachete sur le haut du corps, un bouquetin et deux mammoths. Sur une paroi se voient un enorme rhinoceros a la corne disproportionnee, trois autres rhinoceros, un mammoth, deux felins, quatre mains positives et deux ou trois negatives, un demi-cercles de points rouges, un grand bovine, un signe fait de deux demi-cercles accolés. En tout, outre les points et les signes, plusieurs mains negatives completes et les mains positives, une trentaine de representations animales rouges et deux petites tetes de chevaux jaunes ont deja ete denombres. L'ours domine suivi du mammoth, du cheval, du rhinoceros, du felin ; le cerf, le bouquetin, l'aurochs, les indetermines, n'etant representes qu'a un seul exemplaire chacun.

Une centaine de figures noires a ete denombree : les rhinoceros dominant largement, suivis des felins puis des chevaux, les ours, des rennes, des bisons, des aurochs. On note la presence de mammoths, de cerfs megaceros, d'un bouquetin, de deux indetermines. Parmi les gravures, a noter 5 mammoths, 3 bouquetins, 2 rhinoceros, 2 chevaux, 1 aurochs, 1 hibou.

La facture de ces representations est excellente. Les proportions des corps sont naturalistes. Il s'agit surtout de dessins au trait, encore que certains presentent des a-plats de peinture a l'interieur des tetes ou des corps et un rendu savant du modele. De nombreux details anatomiques sont precises, de sorte que les animaux sont le plus souvent determinables sans ambiguïte quant a l'espece et meme quant au sexe (femelles bisons, par exemple). Les dessins noirs ont "un air de famille" : la composition des

panneaux, la facture des animaux, la technique employee partout avec une egale maitrise feraient penser a une meme "main". On peut legitiment se demander s'il ne s'agirait pas, en tres grande partie, de l'œuvre d'une seule personne, un grand maitre du trait. Les recherches futures le preciseront.

Par le nombre et la diversite des œuvres, par leur qualite esthetique et leur conservation, par leur originalite aussi (dominance d'especes rares ailleurs), par la preservation du contexte, cette grotte est unique et d'une importance mondiale. C'est l'un des plus grand chefs d'œuvres de l'art prehistorique.

Au plan paleontologique, la cavite recele egaleme nt les restes d'une centaine d'ursides, soit en place dans leur loge d'hibernation, soit en position secondaire, que les os aient ete deplaces par le passage de l'Homme, ou que certains cranes aient ete redisposes par lui en des emplacements privileges de la grotte (par exemple au centre d'une salle en rotonde, sur un bloc rocheux).

Cette abondance de restes dans un milieu preserve de toute perturbation moderne confere un second caractere d'importance a la decouverte.

Au plan archeologique, il convient de souligner le caractere unique d'un milieu clos exempt de toute intrusion et de tout remaniement. Outre les figurations, l'Homme a laisse dans la cavite de nombreux temoins de ses activites : foyers, silex tailles, traces de torches d'eclairage, aménagements de blocs rocheux, agencement de restes faunistiques et, surtout, de tres nombreuses empreintes de cheminement me lees a celles des ours qui ont ete leurs contemporains dans les galeries. On remarque egaleme nt des points d'extraction du sediment : confection de boulettes d'argile, recherche d'oxydes de fer et de manganese pour la confection des peintures.

a ce jour, il parait que la grotte est le seul reseau orne totalement intact qui nous soit parvenu depuis le Paleolithique.

Au plan de l'étude du milieu, la très récente ouverture de la cavité permettra d'en étudier la climatologie interne. Il convient aussi de souligner la puissance des dépôts sédimentaires que la reprise d'érosion postérieure à l'occupation humaine a permis de mettre ponctuellement en évidence dans des puits de dissolution dirigés vers le réseau pérenne toujours actif à ce jour. La carbonatation des galeries est également intervenue après le passage de l'Homme, scellant en de nombreux points des artefacts dans la calcite.

Il existe là une occasion unique d'étude naturaliste visant à retracer l'évolution des milieux naturels durant le dernier glaciaire et l'Holocène.

C'est la convergence de l'ensemble de ces caractères, déjà exceptionnels pour chacun d'entre eux, qui confère une importance absolue au réseau nouvellement découvert.

[< Contents](#) [< Document: Cavep.fr](#)

List of Pictures (JPEG)

Cave Painting featuring several animals including equines and bovines.

[IMAGE >](#)

Picture Information

- *File name:* chevo11.jpg
- *Width:* 9.50000 inches (684 pixels)
- *Height:* 6.38889 inches (460 pixels)
- *X dpi:* 72
- *Y dpi:* 72
- *Size on media support (bytes):* 63,429
- *Format:* JPEG Bitmaps (JPG)
- *Subformat:* JPEG Compression
- *Type:* 24 Bit RGB Color

Cave Painting featuring a Mammoth and other animals

[IMAGE >](#)

Picture Information

- *File name:* mamot11.jpg
- *Width:* 9.40278 inches (677 pixels)
- *Height:* 6.47222 inches (466 pixels)
- *X dpi:* 72
- *Y dpi:* 72
- *Size on media support (bytes):* 70,961
- *Format:* JPEG Bitmaps (JPG)

- *Subformat:*JPEG Compression
- *Type:* 24 Bit RGB Color

Cave Painting featuring several animals including rhinoceros.

[IMAGE >](#)

Picture Information

- *File name:*gvpda11.jpg
- *Width:*9.44444 inches (680 pixels)
- *Height:*6.45833 inches (465 pixels)
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- *Y dpi:* 72
- *Size on media support (bytes):* 86,155
- *Format:*JPEG Bitmaps (JPG)
- *Subformat:* JPEG Compression
- *Type:* 24 Bit RGB Color

Cave Painting featuring a hy(a)ena and another unidentified maculated animal.

[IMAGE >](#)

Picture Information

- *File name:* hyene11.jpg
- *Width:*9.43055 inches (679 pixels)
- *Height:* 6.47222 inches (466 pixels)
- *X dpi:* 72
- *Y dpi:* 72
- *Size on media support (bytes):* 72,802
- *Format:*JPEG Bitmaps (JPG)

- *Subformat*: JPEG Compression
- *Type*: 24 Bit RGB Color

[<Contents](#) [<List of Pictures \(JPEG\)](#)

Pictures (JPEG)

Cave Painting featuring several animals including equines and bovines. (JPEG)

Image Description: Cave Painting featuring several animals including equines and bovines.

[< Contents](#) [<List of Pictures \(JPEG\)](#)

Cave Painting featuring a Mammoth and other animals. (JPEG)

Image Description: Cave Painting featuring a Mammoth and other animals.

[< Contents](#) [< List of Pictures \(JPEG\)](#)

Cave Painting featuring several animals including rhinoceros. (JPEG)

Image Description: Cave Painting featuring several animals including rhinoceros.

[< Contents](#) [< List of Pictures \(JPEG\)](#)

Cave Painting featuring a hy(a)ena and another unidentified maculated animal. (JPEG)

Image Description: Cave Painting featuring a hy(a)ena and another unidentified maculated animal.

[< Contents](#) [< List of Pictures JPEG\)](#)

List of Pictures (GIF)

Cave Painting featuring several animals including equines and bovines.

[IMAGE >](#)

Picture Information

- *File name:* chevo11.gif
- *Width:* 9.50000 inches (684 pixels)
- *Height:* 6.38889 inches (460 pixels)
- *X dpi:* 72
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- *Size on media support (bytes):* 263,751
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- *Subformat:* ZW Compression
- *Type:* 8 Bit paletted

Cave Painting featuring a Mammoth and other animals

[IMAGE >](#)

Picture Information

- *File name:* mamot11.gif
- *Width:* 9.40278 inches (677 pixels)
- *Height:* 6.47222 inches (466 pixels)
- *X dpi:* 72
- *Y dpi:* 72
- *Size on media support (bytes):* 268,285
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- *Subformat:*ZW Compression
- *Type:* 8 Bit paletted

Cave Painting featuring several animals including rhinoceros.

[IMAGE >](#)

Picture Information

- *File name:*gvpda.gif
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- *Height:*6.45833 inches (465 pixels)
- *X dpi:*72
- *Y dpi:* 72
- *Size on media support (bytes):* 312,161
- *Format:*CompuServe Bitmap (GIF)
- *Subformat:* ZW Compression
- *Type:* 8 Bit paletted

Cave Painting featuring a hy(a)ena and another unidentified maculated animal.

[IMAGE >](#)

Picture Information

- *File name:* hyene11.gif
- *Width:*9.43055 inches (679 pixels)
- *Height:* 6.47222 inches (466 pixels)
- *X dpi:* 72
- *Y dpi:* 72
- *Size on media support (bytes):* 285,906
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- *Subformat*:ZW Compression
- *Type*:8 Bit paletted

[<Contents](#) [<List of Pictures \(GIF\)](#)

Pictures (GIF)

Cave Painting featuring several animals including equines and bovines. (GIF)

Image Description: Cave Painting featuring several animals including equines and bovines.

[< Contents](#) [< List of Pictures \(GIF\)](#)

Cave Painting featuring a Mammoth and other animals. (GIF)

Image Description: Cave Painting featuring a Mammoth and other animals.

[< Contents](#) [< List of Pictures \(GIF\)](#)

Cave Painting featuring several animals including rhinoceros. (GIF)

Image Description: Cave Painting featuring several animals including rhinoceros.

[< Contents](#) [< List of Pictures \(GIF\)](#)

Cave Painting featuring a hy(a)ena and another unidentified maculated animal. (GIF)

Image Description: Cave Painting featuring a hy(a)ena and another unidentified maculated animal.

[< Contents](#)

[< List of Pictures \(GIF\)](#)

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FRENCH CAVE
PAINTINGS ***

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