

Chapter 1: The Earliest Human Societies: 1-2 The Evolving Past
Book Title: World Civilizations
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1-2 The Evolving Past

Probably no other science—not even nuclear or genetic biology—has evolved so swiftly in the past forty or fifty years as archaeology and its associated *paleoanthropology*. Each season brings new discoveries about the age, the nature, and the locales of early humans, both before and after the emergence of *Homo sapiens*.

Toolmaking ability is a primary indicator of the development of hominids and human beings. The archaeological evidence we are discussing has recently been brought forward from southern Africa's Blombos cave complex. It shows that refined tools of both bone and stone were being made much earlier than previously thought, dating back well into the Paleolithic era, some 70,000 years ago. Some of the stone materials bear regular markings that have no discernible functional purpose and must therefore have been made for decoration or the aesthetic pleasure of the maker. In other words, they were rudimentary art forms, and as such they predate by many thousands of years the earliest previously dated art, found in the Paleolithic caves of France and Spain.

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