

Spanish Pictographs in Old European

Stuart Harris, March 2013

In March I revisited Spain to look for Old European pictographs among Aurignacian cave art. Two years before, in a visit to Altamira II, I had not seen any pictographs as the guide rushed us through. A search among the books in the museum store revealed fanciful designs, but nothing that looked like writing. This seemed rather bizarre, as the cave walls of France abound with writing, so I returned for a more thorough examination. This time I stayed rooted in the main hall while six tours passed through, and even managed to take some illegal photographs of pictographs that never appear in official publications.

Next I toured the nearby complex of caves at El Castillo, which has dots and shadowed hands that are at least 40,000 years old, and also has a few pictographs. But the caves are dark and the guides vigilant against cameras. Luckily, when I discussed with some guides in the lobby a pictograph of two touching diamonds, they corrected my drawing.

On Wikipedia, I found a pictograph from a cave in Andalusia of a deer with feathery antlers, which turned out to be a long inscription about a herd of diseased cattle. The date was Bronze Age, based upon types of tools and some contemporary drawings of Bronze-age boats.

Lastly, in my hotel room in Santillana del Mar near Altamira, a bust of Caesar carried an inscription in Old European, not exactly a pictograph, but informative just the same.

Altamira fallen man: 'A horrible thing strikes you'

At one side of Altamira Cave, a rebus inscription with eleven letters looks like a broken figure sprawled on the ground, a black cross of death pinned to his chest. The figure is displayed on a rock in the hall past the main gallery room. Stylistically it dates to around 20 ka because the scribe used charcoal to write, rather than ochre. 'The horrible thing' might be a seizure.

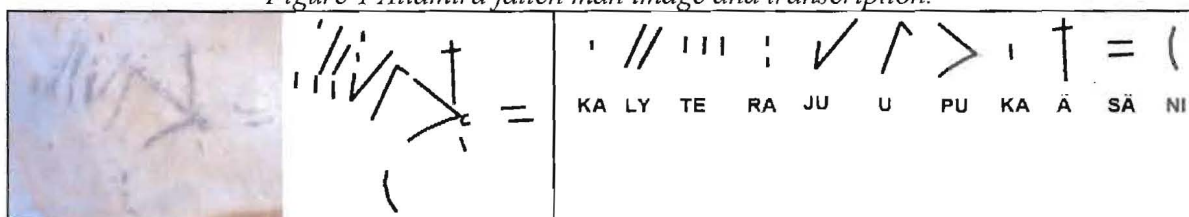
Translation

Old Eur: KA LY TE, RA-JU U. PU KA Ä-SÄ, NI.

Finnish: Kauhea lyöä te, raaju urho. Puhun kauhean äijässä, niin.

English: A horrible thing strikes you, busy champion. I will speak of the horrible thing with the old man, then.

Figure 1 Altamira fallen man image and transcription.



Notes on translation

The man's head is not a letter.

A wooden burial cross has an very long history.

KA < *kauhea* 'a horrible thing'

LY < *lyöä* 'strikes' in present tense; past tense would be *löi*, a different letter.

TE < *te* 'you'

RA-JU < *raaju* 'busy'

U < *urho* 'champion', abbreviated in writing to just U.

PU < *puhun* 'I will speak'

KA < *kauhean* 'of the horrible thing'

Ä-SÄ < *äijässä* 'with the old man'

NI < *niin* 'then'

Altamira fallen trees: 'A long storm toppled trees' or 'His old man felled trees'

At the foot of a polychrome bison in the main chamber of Altamira Cave in Spain, an artist constructed a rebus from Old European letters that mimics a fallen tree. Stylistically dated to 36 ka, the inscription has two possible translations: 'A long storm toppled trees' or 'His old man felled trees'. The former seems more unusual today, but perhaps not then.

Translation 1

Old Eur: Ä SÄ KA PU.

Finnish: Äijä sääien kaa'oi puut.

English: A long storm toppled trees.

Translation 2

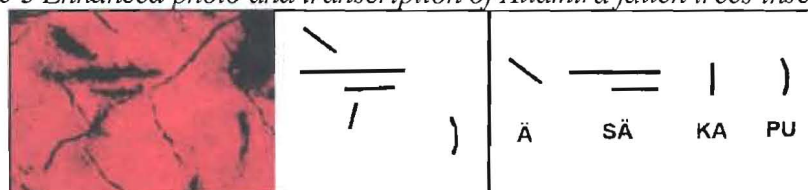
Finnish: Äijäsä kaa'oi puut.

English: His old man felled trees.

Figure 2 Inscription of fallen trees at foot of Altamira bison.



Figure 3 Enhanced photo and transcription of Altamira fallen trees inscription.



Notes on translation

The subject could be either 'his old man' or 'a long storm'.

The scribe leaned KA slightly to mirror the lean of letter Ä.

Ä SÄ < äijä sääien 'a long storm'

Ä-SÄ < äijäsä 'his-her old man'

KA < kaa'oi 'toppled, felled', from kaatui 'he-she-it toppled, felled, killed'

PU < puu 'tree' or puut 'trees'

Altamira red arrow: 'I rubbed the pole of a man'

In the main chamber of Altamira Cave, a lascivious-looking red arrow seems out of place beneath the hooves of an animal outlined in black. It is a rebus having nothing to do with the animal at all, but about sex with a man. The female scribe chose the verb 'to rub', which in Kalevala could mean 'to have sex', such as:

'What would come of this [a splinter] in the hands of a fair young girl, in the fingertips of a good virgin, if I put it in a maiden's hand, in the fingertips of a good virgin?' A tree stump head in a young girl's hand, in the fingertips of a good virgin. The young girl **rubbed** it with her two palms, with both hands, with both her thighs: a white squirrel was produced. Rune 20, translation Peabody.

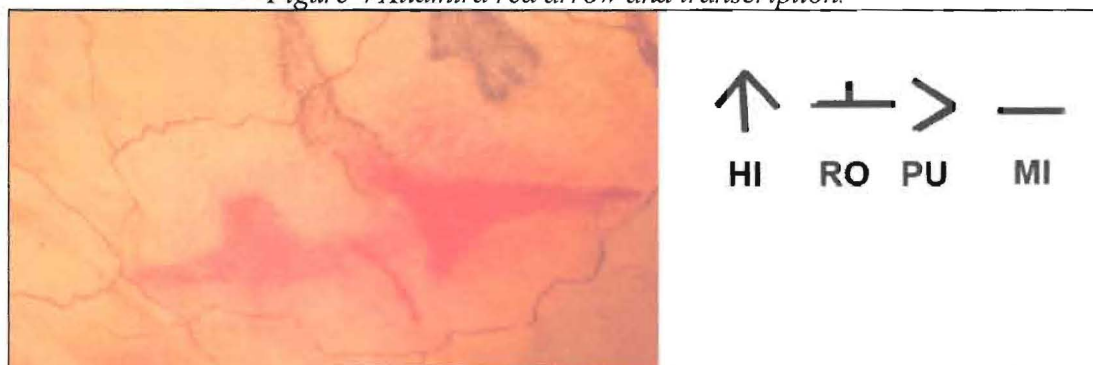
Translation

Old Eur: HI-RO PU MI.

Finnish: Hieroin puun miehen.

English: I rubbed the pole of a man.

Figure 4 Altamira red arrow and transcription.



Notes on translation

HI-RO has been combined into a single word. This form of the verb 'to rub' is not very specific.

The subject could be I, YOU, HE or SHE, and the tense could be past, present or future. If every word ends in N, then the subject is first person. If first person, then present tense is ruled out, leaving past and future. Future tense is the same word as present tense, which leaves only past tense.

The head of the pole glows brighter red.

HI-RO < *hieroin* 'I rubbed'.

PU < *puun* 'tree, pole, mast'

MI < *miehen* 'man's, of a man'

El Castillo diamonds: 'Then I will plan a marriage'

El Castillo Cave is one of four among a complex of caves near the top of El Castillo, a pyramid-shaped mountain 30 km south of Santander, Spain. The oldest images are red dots and red outlines of hands. One dot overlain with calcite dates to 40.8 ka by decay of uranium isotopes (Alistair Pike, U. Bristol, Uranium-series dating reveals Iberian paintings are Europe's oldest cave art, Science). Later artists depicted 130 animals, outlined in black or red. Adjacent Moneda and Pasiega Caves also have animals outlined in red or black.

At Altamira Cave in Spain, using the same uranium isotope technique, a club-shaped symbol among polychrome paintings dates to 35.6 ka.

At Nerjas Cave in southern Spain, six paintings of seals outlined in red date to 43.5–4.25 ka, from radiocarbon dating of organic residue beside the paintings.

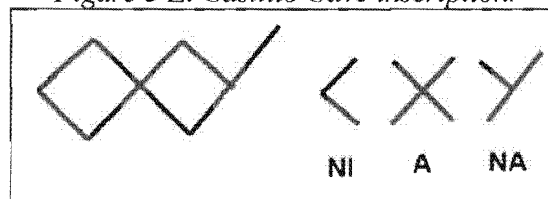
On the wall of El Castillo, at chest height above the present floor, an artist wrote a short note in red paint that looks like two diamonds touching. After expanding the diagram into Old European letters, it reads:

Old Eur: NI A NA.

Finnish: Niin aion naia.

English: Then I will plan a marriage.

Figure 5 El Castillo Cave inscription.



Notes on translation

NI < *niin* 'thus, then'

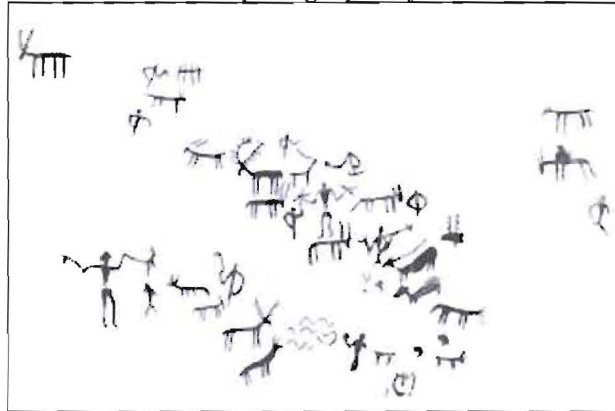
A < *aion* 'I plan, I shall-will plan'

NA < *nai'a* 'a marriage', or *naia* 'to marry'

Cueva de Bacinete deer: 'Cattle dilapidated from wound of disease'

Alconocales Natural Park near Cadiz, Spain, has been occupied since 30,000 BC. A marshy area in the park was recently drained, thus inadvertently ending a feeding location for migrating birds. Among the rocky hills and cork groves nestle more than fifty caves with traces of cave art, none easily accessible. The most well-known cave is Bacinete, whose art is associated with tools from the Copper Age and Bronze Age, say 3500 BC to 1000 BC. A contemporary drawing of a boat could be Phoenician, say 1500 BC to 600 BC. A large frieze contains well-preserved representations of men herding horned animals such as deer and cattle.

Figure 6 Cueva de Bacinete pictographs of men and herded animals.



Inside the cave, a pictograph in red ochre looks like a deer with feathery antlers. By enhancing red in a photograph of the deer, additional features become visible, such as the curve in the upper left corner, the pair of parallel lines above the right antler, and the horizontal line that crosses both antlers at their base. The scribe wrote the pictograph in two phases: broad strokes that shaped the deer, then fine details among the antlers.

Translation

Old European

KA RÄ RA-NA TA.

NI SA NY 10; SA LY RE MI.

Finnish

Karja rähjä raannan tauin.

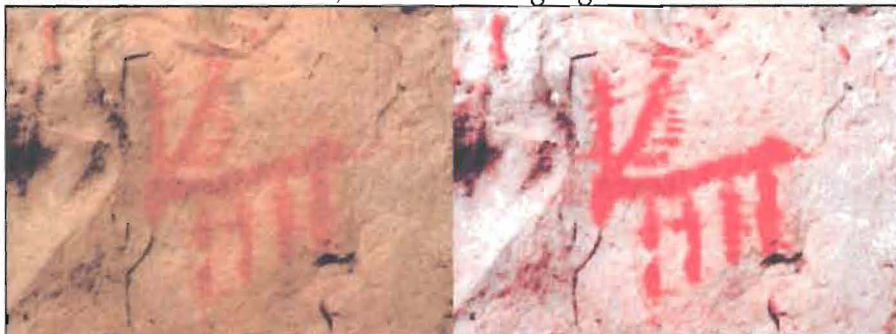
Niin saan nyt 10; saan lyöä rehu miehia.

English

Cattle dilapidated from wound of disease.

I will get now 10; I will begin to smite some food of men.

Figure 7 Cueva de Bacinete deer, enhanced to highlight red color. Source Wikipedia.



Notes on translation of broad strokes

Broad strokes form a set that begins the inscription.

Figure 8 Bacinete deer, transcription of broad strokes.



Because of vowel harmony, RÄ cannot combine with KA or RA. RÄ has only one meaning 'dilapidated', an adjective. Then KA, the preceding word, must be a noun. It has only two possibilities, cattle or table-beer, of which only cattle looks like the rebus. RA-NA meaning 'of-from a wound, wounds' explains why the cattle are dilapidated. TA meaning 'of disease' explains what created the wounds.

KA < *karja* 'cattle', was commonly written KA rather than KA-JA, especially in Spain.

RÄ < *rähjä* 'dilapidated'

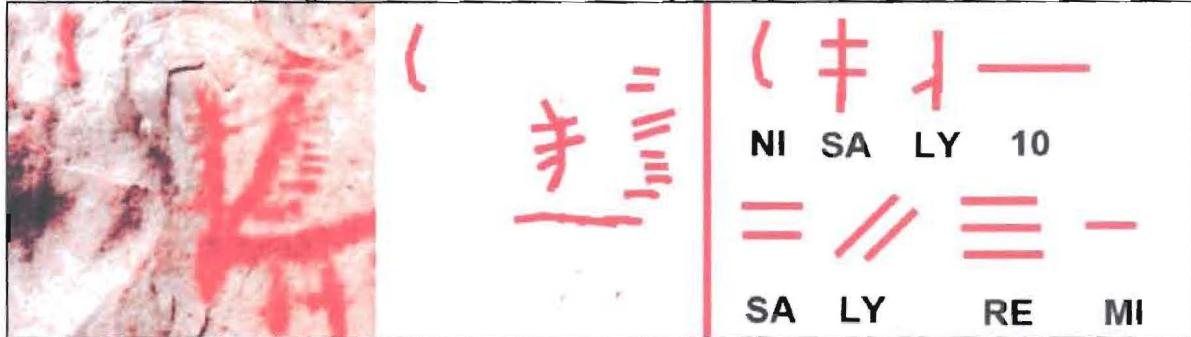
RA-NA < *raannan* 'from wound'

TA < *tauin* 'of disease'

Notes on translation of fine strokes

Fine strokes in the antlers form a second set of words that end the inscription.

Figure 9 Bacinete deer, transcription of fine strokes.



NI meaning 'thus' starts the second phrase, which determines what to do with the dilapidated cattle. NY has only one translation, *nyt* meaning 'now', which selects future tense. Number 10 is a long horizontal stroke; a shorter horizontal stroke is letter MI. *Saan* has two meanings depending on context: 'I will get' and 'I will begin'.

NI < *niin* 'thus'

SA < *saan* 'I will get'

NY < *nyt* 'now'

10 = 'ten', a long horizontal stroke, generally placed at the end of a phrase.

SA < *saan* 'I will begin', future tense to match previous verb.

LY < *lyöä* 'to strike, to smite'

RE < *rehu* 'some food'

MI < *miehia* 'of men'

Santillana del Mar bust of Caesar: 'Father among men'

At Santillana del Mar, Spain, on the wall of room 111 in 400-year-old Hotel Casona Solar de Hidalgo is a rectangular shield engraved with a bronze bust of Caesar, labeled Caesar VIII. Surrounding his head in profile are two circles of braided rope and a cross made of four octagons. Within each octagon, the head of a lion faces Caesar.

Caesar wears armor decorated with stylized letters in the script of Mason Marks or Owner's Marks, which proclaim him to be Father among Men. The word *ätä* for 'father' derives from *pääätä* meaning 'head'.

Owner's Marks: Ä-TÄ MI-TÄ

Finnish: Ätä miehistä

English: Father among men

Figure 1: Transcription of writing on a bronze bust of Caesar.



Notes on Translation

Ä-TÄ = *ätä* 'father' from *pääätä* 'head'; K06.082 'turned his **head** (*pääätä*) to the south'

MI-TÄ = *miehistä* 'among men'; K 09.399 "who **among men** (*miehistä*) has the competence"

You are invited to contact me about these or other inscriptions at stuhar@onlymyemail.com.