
Documents

Considering the Evidence: Glimpses of Paleolithic Life



For historians accustomed to working with documents written during the time period they are studying, the Paleolithic era has often been an exercise in frustration. No such documents exist for the long era of gathering and hunting societies, for writing did not develop until quite late in the history of humankind—around 3500 B.C.E., with the emergence of the first civilizations. Thus historians have been dependent on the slender archeological remains of Paleolithic people—their bones, tools, fossilized seeds, paintings, and sculptures—for understanding the lives of these most distant of our ancestors.

In the twentieth century, anthropologists and other scholars descended on the few remaining gathering and hunting peoples, studying their cultures and collecting their stories, myths, and oral traditions. Historians are often skeptical about the usefulness of such material for understanding the distant past of Paleolithic societies. After all, gatherers and hunters in the modern era have often mixed and mingled with agricultural societies, have come under European colonial rule, or have been in contact with elements of modern civilization. Thus their cultures may well have changed substantially from earlier patterns of Paleolithic life.

While recognizing that twentieth-century accounts may not precisely describe earlier gathering and hunting societies, we are nonetheless fortunate to have these more recent materials. Despite their limitations, they provide us at least a glimpse into ways of living and thinking that have almost completely vanished from the earth. The two documents that follow represent this kind of material.

Document 1.1

A Paleolithic Woman in the Twentieth Century

In 1971 the American anthropologist Marjorie Shostak was conducting research among the San people of the Kalahari Desert on the border of Botswana and South Africa (see map, p. 25). There she became acquainted with a fifty-year-old woman called Nisa. Although Nisa had interacted with neighboring cattle-keeping people and with Europeans, she had lived most of her life “in the

bush,” fully participating in the gathering and hunting culture of her ancestors. Nisa proved willing to share with Shostak the intimate details of her life, including her memories of childhood, her five marriages, the birth of her children, her relationships with various lovers, and the deaths of loved ones. Those interviews became the basis for the remarkable book from which the following excerpts derive.

- What conflicts in San life does Nisa’s account reveal?
- What does her story indicate about San attitudes toward sex and marriage? How might you compare those attitudes with those of contemporary society?
- How does Nisa understand God, or the divine?
- How does she understand the purpose of the curing rituals in which she took part?
- How would you describe Nisa’s overall assessment of San life? Do you find it romanticized, realistic, or critical? What evidence from the passages supports your conclusions?
- How does this insider’s account of San life support, contradict, or supplement the description of San culture found on pages 25–29?

NISA

The Life and Words of an !Kung Woman

1969–1976

We are people who live in the bush, and who belong in the bush. We are not village people. I have no goats. I have no cattle. I am a person who owns nothing. That’s what people say I am: a poor person.... No donkey, either. I still carry things myself, in my kaross when I travel, and that’s why I live in the bush....

Family Life

We lived and lived, and as I kept growing, I started to carry my little brother around on my shoulders.

My heart was happy then; I had grown to love him and carried him everywhere. I’d play with him for a while and whenever he would start to cry, I’d take him to Mother so he could nurse. Then I’d take him back with me and we’d play together again.

That was when Kumsa was little. But once he was older and started to talk and then to run around, that’s when we were mean to each other and hit and fought all the time. Because that’s how children play. One child does mean things and the other children do mean things back. If your father goes out hunting one day, you think, “Won’t Daddy bring home meat? Then I can eat it, but I can also *stinge* it!” When your father does come home with meat, you say, “My daddy brought back meat and I won’t let you have *any* of it!” The other children say, “How come we play together yet you always treat us so badly?”

Source: Marjorie Shostak, *Nisa: The Life and Words of an !Kung Woman* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 41, 69, 87–89, 153–55, 166, 210–11, 226–27, 271, 299, 301–2, 316–17.

When Kumsa was bigger, we were like that all the time. Sometimes we'd hit each other. Other times, I'd grab him and bite him and said, "Oooo...what is this thing that has such a horrible face and no brains and is so mean? How come it is so mean to me when I'm not doing anything to it?" Then he'd say, "I'm going to *hit* you! What's protecting you that I shouldn't?" And I'd say, "You're just a baby! I, I am the one who's going to hit *you*! Why are you so miserable to me?" I'd insult him and he'd insult me and I'd insult him back. We'd just stay together and play like that....

Life in the Bush

We lived in the bush and my father set traps and killed steenbok and duiker and gemsbok and we lived, eating the animals and foods of the bush. We collected food, ground it in a mortar, and ate it. We also ate sweet nin berries and tsin beans. When I was growing up, there were no cows or goats.... I had never seen other peoples and didn't know anything other than life in the bush. That's where we lived and where we grew up.

Whenever my father killed an animal and I saw him coming home with meat draped over a stick, balanced on one shoulder—that's what made me happy. I'd cry out, "Mommy! Daddy's coming and he's bringing *meat*!" My heart would be happy when I greeted him, "Ho, ho, Daddy! We're going to eat meat!"

Or honey. Sometimes he'd go out and come home with honey. I'd be sitting around with my mother and then see something coming from way out in the bush. I'd look hard. Then, "Oooh, Daddy found a beehive! Oh, I'm going to eat honey! Daddy's come back with honey for us to eat!" And I'd thank him and call him wonderful names.

Sometimes my mother would be the one to see the honey. The two of us would be walking around gathering food and she'd find a beehive deep inside a termite mound or in a tree. I remember one time when she found it. I jumped and ran all around and was so excited I couldn't stop moving. We went to the village to get some containers, then went back

to the termite mound. I watched as she took the honey out. Then, we went home....

When we were living in the bush, some people gave and others stinged. But there were always enough people around who shared, people who liked one another, who were happy living together, and who didn't fight. And even if one person did sting, the other person would just get up and yell about it, whether it was meat or anything else, "What's doing this to you, making you not give us meat?"

When I was growing up, receiving food made my heart happy. There really wasn't anything, other than stingy people, that made me unhappy. I didn't like people who wouldn't give a little of what they had....

It's the same today. Here I am, long since an adult, yet even now, if a person doesn't give something to me, I won't give anything to that person....

Marriage

...The day of the wedding, everyone was there. All of Tashay's friends were sitting around, laughing and laughing. His younger brother said, "Tashay, you're too old. Get out of the way so I can marry her. Give her to me." And his nephew said, "Uncle, you're already old. Now, let *me* marry her." They were all sitting around, talking like that. They all wanted me.

I went to my mother's hut and sat there. I was wearing lots of beads and my hair was completely covered and full with ornaments.

That night there was another dance. We danced, and some people fell asleep and others kept dancing....

The next day they started [to build the marriage hut]. There were lots of people there—Tashay's mother, my mother, and my aunt worked on the hut; everyone else sat around, talking. Late in the day, the young men went and brought Tashay to the finished hut. They set him down beside it and stayed there with him, sitting around the fire....

They came and brought me back. Then they laid me down inside the hut. I cried and cried. People told me, "A man is not something that kills you; he

is someone who marries you, who becomes like your father or your older brother. He kills animals and gives you things to eat. Even tomorrow, while you are crying, Tashay may kill an animal. But when he returns, he won't give you any meat; only he will eat. Beads, too. He will get beads but he won't give them to you. Why are you so afraid of your husband and what are you crying about?"

I listened and was quiet. Later, we went to sleep. Tashay lay down beside the opening of the hut, near the fire, and I lay down inside; he thought I might try and run away again. He covered himself with a blanket and slept....

We began to live together, but I ran away, again and again. A part of my heart kept thinking, "How come I'm a child and have taken another husband?"...

We lived and lived, the two of us, together, and after a while I started to really like him and then, to love him. I had finally grown up and had learned how to love. I thought, "A man has sex with you. Yes, that's what a man does. I had thought that perhaps he didn't."

We lived on and I loved him and he loved me. I loved him the way a young adult knows how to love; I just *loved* him. Whenever he went away and I stayed behind, I'd miss him. I'd think, "Oh, when is my husband ever coming home? How come he's been gone so long?" I'd miss him and want him. When he'd come back my heart would be happy, "Eh, hey! My husband left and once again has come back."

We lived and when he wanted me, I didn't refuse; he just lay with me....

I...gave myself to him, gave and gave. We lay with each other and my breasts were very large. I was becoming a woman.

Loss

It was while we were visiting in the Tswana village and just after Kxau was born that Tashay died....

I lay there and thought, "Why did this happen? The two of us gave so much to each other and lived together so happily. Now I am alone, without a husband. I am already a widow. Why did God

trick me and take my husband? God is stingy! He just takes them from you. God's heart is truly far from people."...

Then I was without my husband and my heart was miserable. Every night I missed him and every night I cried, "I am without the man I married." I thought, "Where will I see the food that will help my children grow? Who is going to help me raise this newborn? My older brother and my younger brother are far away. Who is going to help me now?" Because Kxau had only just been born; he was so small he almost didn't exist. Then I said, "Everyday food will do it. I will start today to gather the food that will bring them up," and I went out and brought back what I could....

In your heart, your child, your mother, and your father are all equal. When any one of them dies, your heart feels pain. When your child dies, you think, "How come this little thing I held beside me and watched all that she did, today has died and left me? She was the only child I had with me; there wasn't another I spent my days with. We two stayed together and talked together. This God...his ways are foul! Why did he give me a little one and then take her away?"...

The death of your parents, husband, or children—they are equal in the amount of pain you feel when you lose them. But when they all die and you have no family left, then you really feel pain. There is no one to take care of you; you are completely alone....

That's the way it is. God is the one who destroys. It isn't people who do it. It is God himself.

Lovers

...Besa [Nisa's fourth husband] and I did argue a lot, usually about sex. He was just like a young man, almost a child, who lies with his wife day after day after day....

Every night Besa wanted me and every night he would make love to me. That Besa, something was wrong with his brain!...

We argued like that all the time....That man, he wanted sex more than anything else! After a

while, I realized I didn't like his ways. That's when I thought, "Perhaps I will leave him. Perhaps I'll find another man and see what he is like."

I didn't leave him, not for many years. But I did have lovers and so did he. Because, as I am Nisa, my lovers have been many. At that time, there was Tsaa and Nanau. One day Tsaa would make love to me, another day Nanau. They were jealous of each other, and once Tsaa even went to Besa and told him that Nanau and I were lovers. Besa said, "What can I do about it?"...

Because affairs—one married person making love to another not her husband—is something that even people from long ago knew. Even my father's father's father knew. There have also always been fights where poison arrows are shot and people are killed because of that. Having affairs is one of the things God gave us.

I have told you about my lovers, but I haven't finished telling you about all of them, because they are as many as my fingers and toes. Some have died and others are still alive. . . . When you are a woman, you don't just sit still and do nothing—you have lovers. You don't just sit with the man of your hut, with just one man. One man can give you very little. One man gives you only one kind of food to eat. But when you have lovers, one brings you something and another brings you something else. One comes at night with meat, another with money, another with beads. Your husband also does things and gives them to you.

But sitting with just one man? We don't do that. Does one man have enough thoughts for you?...

A Healing Ritual

...N/um—the power to heal—is a very good thing. This is a medicine very much like your medicine because it is strong. As your medicine helps people, our n/um helps people. But to heal with n/um means knowing how to trance. Because, it is in trance that the healing power sitting inside the healer's body—the n/um—starts to work. Both men and women learn how to cure with it, but not everyone wants to. Trance-medicine really hurts! As you begin to trance, the n/um slowly heats inside

you and pulls at you. It rises until it grabs your insides and takes your thoughts away. Your mind and your senses leave and you don't think clearly. Things become strange and start to change. You can't listen to people or understand what they say. You look at them and they suddenly become very tiny. You think, "What's happening? Is God doing this?" All that is inside you is the n/um; that is all you can feel.

You touch people, laying on hands, curing those you touch. When you finish, other people hold you and blow around your head and your face. Suddenly your senses go "Phah!" and come back to you. You think, "Eh hey, there are people here," and you see again as you usually do. . . .

N/um is powerful, but it is also very tricky. Sometimes it helps and sometimes it doesn't, because God doesn't always want a sick person to get better. . . .

I was a young woman when my mother and her younger sister started to teach me about drum-medicine. There is a root that helps you learn to trance, which they dug for me. My mother put it in my little leather pouch and said, "Now you will start learning this, because you are a young woman already." She had me keep it in my pouch for a few days. Then one day, she took it and pounded it along with some bulbs and some beans and cooked them together. It had a horrible taste and made my mouth feel foul. I threw some of it up. If she hadn't pounded it with the other foods, my stomach would have been much more upset and I would have thrown it all up; then it wouldn't have done anything for me. I drank it a number of times and threw up again and again. Finally I started to tremble. People rubbed my body as I sat there, feeling the effect getting stronger and stronger. My body shook harder and I started to cry. I cried while people touched me and helped me with what was happening to me.

Eventually, I learned how to break out of my self and trance. When the drum-medicine songs sounded, that's when I would start. Others would string beads and copper rings into my hair. As I began to trance, the women would say, "She's started to trance, now, so watch her carefully.

Don't let her fall." They would take care of me, touching me and helping. If another woman was also in a trance, she laid on hands and helped me.

They rubbed oil on my face and I stood there—a lovely young woman, trembling—until I was finished.

Document 1.2

Australian Aboriginal Mythology

The Aboriginal, or native, peoples of Australia have lived on their island/continent for probably 60,000 years. Until the arrival of Europeans in the late eighteenth century, they practiced a gathering and hunting way of life. That culture persisted into the twentieth century, and a small number of Aboriginal people practice it still. Over many centuries, an elaborate body of myths, legends, and stories evolved, reflecting Aboriginal understandings of the world. Known collectively as the Dreamtime, such stories served to anchor the landscape and its human and animal inhabitants to distant events and mythical ancestors. A contemporary Aboriginal artist, Semon Deeb, explains:

Around the beginning the Ancestral Beings rose from the folds of the earth and stretching up to the scorching sun they called, "I am!" As each Ancestor sang out their name, "I am Snake," "I am Honey Ant," they created the most sacred of their songs. Slowly they began to move across the barren land naming all things and thus bringing them into being. Their words forming verses as the Ancestors walked about, they sang mountains, rivers and deserts into existence. Wherever they went, their songs remained, creating a web of Songlines over the Country. As they travelled the Ancestors hunted, ate, made love, sang and danced leaving a trail of Dreaming along the songlines. Finally at the end of their journey the Ancestral Beings sang "back into" the earth where they can be seen as land formations, sleeping.²⁸

Transmitted orally and changing over time, numerous Dreamtime stories have been collected and set down in writing over the past two centuries. The tale presented here deals with the relationship of men and women, surely among the great themes of human reflection everywhere.

- What does this story suggest about the relationships between women and men? Does it support or undermine notions of gender equality among Paleolithic peoples? Is it consistent with the story associated with Visual Source 1.2 (see p. 45)?
- How are the familiar features of the known world—rivers, mountains, humans, animals, and male dominance—linked to ancient happenings in the Dreamtime?
- What aspects of a gathering and hunting way of life are reflected in this tale?

Stories from the Dreamtime

Twentieth Century

In the Dreamtime, in the land of the Murinbata people, a great river flowed from the hills through a wide plain to the sea. As it is today, the land then was rich with much fish and game. From the river rose at one place a series of high hills, where lived an old woman named Mutjinga, a woman of power. She it was who called the invisible spirits to her side with secret incantations that none other knew. She was a *kirman*, leader of the ceremonies in which the people sang and danced the exploits of the totemic beings so their spirits would be pleased and would bring food in its season and many children for the people. In those days, all the things in the world had both a physical form that could be touched, seen, and felt, and a spirit form, which was invisible. When living things died, their spirits went to a secret cave where they remained until it was time for them to be born again. Mutjinga was caretaker of this cave. Only she knew where it was. In the cave, she kept the sacred totems to which the spirits returned.

Mutjinga could speak with the spirits. Because she had this power, she could do many things which the men could not. She could send the spirits to frighten away game, to waylay people at night, or to cause a child to be born without life. The men feared the power of Mutjinga and did not consort with her. They called upon her to lead their dances and teach them songs, but none came to sit by her fire.

Mutjinga became lonely and sent for her young granddaughter to keep her company.

Mutjinga and the girl gathered bulbs and nuts and caught small game, but Mutjinga found no satisfaction in this food, for she craved the flesh of men...

[The story then recounts how Mutjinga dug a hole and covered it with branches in order to trap unsuspecting hunters. Magically turning herself into a goanna (a lizard), she

appeared to hunters, led them to their deaths in the hole, and then ate them. This fate befell even the younger brother of her granddaughter, despite the girl's unsuccessful efforts to save him. He too was killed and partially eaten, while Mutjinga kept the rest of his body in a nearby stream.]

The next morning, the little girl was at her early chores when she saw two men coming up the hillside. As she watched, recognition lit her face and she turned toward Mutjinga.

"It is my father and brother who come. Please do not harm them," she implored.

"I crave their flesh. If you trick me again I shall eat you, as well as your father and brother," Mutjinga warned. "This time I shall wait beside you until the men appear so you cannot deceive me."

The men approached the fire, paid their respects to the old woman, and greeted the child warmly. "Daughter, have you seen your brother who came hunting this way yesterday?" the father asked.

Mutjinga hastened to reply for the child. "No, we have not seen him," she said. "It is too bad, for nearby are many goanna holes. There is a large goanna right there," and she pointed to the hole where she kept the club.

"I thirst. First give me water," said the father.

"There is cold water in the stream," the little girl told him as she pointed down the hill.

The two men walked through the bush to the stream. As the father bent to drink, he saw the leg of his elder son, which Mutjinga had weighted down in the water with a large rock. At once he understood.

"The old woman will kill us unless we kill her first," he said to his younger son, and the two men returned to the fire.

"The goanna went into the tall grass," Mutjinga told them when they appeared. "Leave your spears and light a fire to burn the grass. This will drive the goanna out, and when it runs toward its hole, you can kill it with your spears."

The men went to fire the grass. As soon as they were out of sight, the father said, "Son, climb this

tree and watch the old woman closely. She works powerful magic.”

This the son did, and he saw Mutjinga speak the magic words. She repeated them twice. He watched as the woman and the girl changed into goannas. From the limb of the tree, he observed the larger goanna chase the smaller one into the bush. Soon great billows of smoke were rising from the burning grass. The small goanna scuttled from the bush, its companion nipping at its heels. They ran past the hunters and disappeared down the hole.

“Get the spears,” the father commanded and ran toward the hole. Just as the son returned, spears in hand, the ground beneath the father gave way and he plunged through. Waiting at the bottom was Mutjinga, club raised for the kill. But the son hurled his spear and Mutjinga fell bleeding to the ground.

The father seized her roughly. “Say the magic words that will release my daughter or we shall kill you,” he threatened.

Painfully Mutjinga did as she was bidden. The daughter changed into her human form and the two men and the girl climbed from the hole.

“Daughter, show us the secret cave where the spirits are hidden,” said the father, “and teach us the magic words you have learned from the old woman. We shall take the spirits to another place, and we shall have the power.”

And so it was. The father took the totems from that place and hid them in another cave. He became the *kirman*, the song leader, and he taught the people the sacred dances and ceremonies. To him they brought their problems and he judged between them when they quarreled. And to this day, the men have kept the power.

Using the Evidence: Glimpses of Paleolithic Life

1. **Considering human commonality and diversity:** The study of world history highlights both the common humanity of people from all times and places as well as the vast differences that have separated particular cultures from one another. How might these texts, as well as the paintings in the Visual Sources section (pp. 42–47), serve to illustrate both of these perspectives?
2. **Linking documents and text narrative:** How do these documents and images support or amplify particular statements made about Paleolithic life in this chapter? How might they challenge or contradict that narrative?
3. **Considering the relationship of technology and culture:** How might the gathering and hunting technology of the South African and Australian peoples discussed in this chapter have shaped their cultural understandings as expressed in these documents and images? In what ways might cultural expression, as a product of human imagination, have developed independently of their technology? Does it make sense to evaluate technology as more or less “advanced”? Should culture be assessed in the same way?

Visual Sources

Considering the Evidence: The Aboriginal Rock Painting of Australia



The rock paintings of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia represent what may be the longest continuously practiced artistic tradition in world history. Scholars have found evidence of these paintings dating to some 40,000 years ago, and the tradition has continued into the twentieth century and beyond as contemporary artists retouched and repainted ancient images and created new ones. A contemporary Aboriginal artist explained what those paintings meant to him:

When I look at my [dreaming] paintings it makes me feel good—happy in heart, spirit. Everything is there: all there in the caves, not lost. This is my secret side. This is my home—inside me.... Our dreaming, secret side—we must hold on to this, like our fathers, looking after it.... We give to our sons when we die. The sons keep this from their fathers, grandfathers. The sons will remember, they can carry on, not be lost. And it is still there—fathers' country with rock hole, painted cave.... The people keep their ceremony things and pictures—they make them new. They bring young boys for learning to the caves, telling the stories, giving the laws from grandfathers' fathers, learning to do the paintings—[the dreaming] way.²⁹

For native peoples of Australia, whose way of life has been so thoroughly disrupted by more than two centuries of European invasion and domination, this continuing artistic tradition provides a link to the past.

Created in caves and protected rock shelters all over this giant island/continent, these paintings were the products of the many distinct peoples of Paleolithic Australia. While they shared a common gathering and hunting way of life, each had its own language, stories, and ceremonies, which found expression in their paintings. Many of them depicted spirit figures or ancestors from the Dreamtime. Such images were often regarded, not as works of art by human artists, but as the actual ancestral beings themselves, able to convey their spiritual energy to their descendants. In this respect, they served something of the same purpose as the much later icons or religious paintings in the Christian world, said to convey the very presence of the divine. (See Visual Sources: Reading Byzantine Icons, pp. 466–71.)

Beyond religious or ceremonial purposes, Aboriginal rock painting also depicted various animals, some of them now extinct; stenciled images of human hands; and abstract designs, believed by scholars to represent coded symbols understood only by those who underwent proper ceremonial initiation. Other paintings portrayed scenes from daily life and were particularly focused on hunting. Still others recorded historical events such as the visits of fishermen from what is now Indonesia to the northern coasts of Australia. Images of European sailing ships, rifles, tools, and animals also found a place in the more recent expressions of Aboriginal rock painting.

The three images shown in this section are from the Kakadu National Park in Australia's Northern Territory, an area inhabited by humans for some 20,000 years. Some of the fading images in the park were repainted in the 1960s by Nayambolmi, one of the last of the traditional rock-art painters. As you examine these images, keep in mind that even the experts do not really know what they meant to the people who created them thousands of years ago. Our task is to appreciate, to imagine, and to speculate about these remarkable paintings rather than to decipher them with any precision.

In Visual Source 1.1, the largest and main figure at the top is Namondjok, a Creation Ancestor, who according to some accounts can be seen in the sky at night as a dark spot in the Milky Way galaxy. Other stories recount that Namondjok violated incest laws by sleeping with a woman from his clan who would have been considered his sister. To the right is Namarrgon, or Lightning Man, who generates the tremendous lightning storms that occur during the rainy season. The arc around his body represents the lightning, while the axes on his head, elbow, and feet are used to split the dark clouds, creating thunder and lightning. The female figure beneath Namondjok is Barrginj, the wife of Lightning Man, while the people below her, elaborately dressed, are perhaps on their way to a ceremony.

- What could an Aboriginal viewer learn about nature from this painting?
- What might he or she understand about the cosmic hierarchy?
- Why do you think the artist positioned people at the bottom of the picture? Might the positioning of Barrginj have meaning as well?
- How might you interpret the relative size of the various images in the painting?



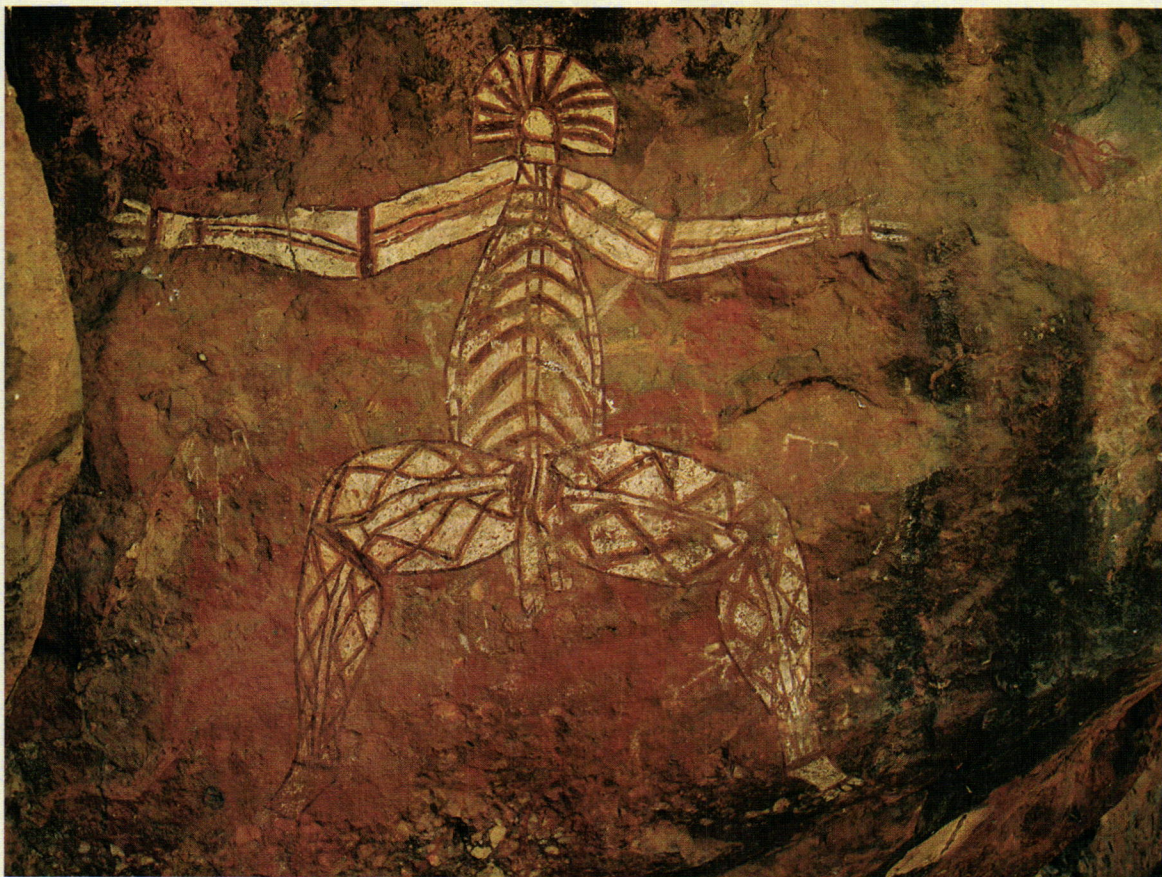
Visual Source 1.1 Namondjok, Namarrgon (Lightning Man), and Barrginj (J. Marshall/Visual Connection Archive)

Visual Source 1.2 depicts Nabalwinjbulwinj, said to be a wicked and dangerous male spirit who kills females by hitting them with a yam and then eating them.

- What message might such a story seek to convey?
- Does this story seem consistent with Document 1.2, which seeks to explain why men have power over women?

Visual Sources 1.1 and 1.2 both reflect a distinctive style of Aboriginal painting known as the X-ray tradition, in which the internal bones and organs of human or animal figures are depicted while also showing their outward appearance.

- What internal structures can you distinguish in these images?
- What purposes or intentions might lay behind such a style?



Visual Source 1.2 Nabalwinjbulwinj (J. Marshall/Visual Connection Archive)



Visual Source 1.3 A Hunting Scene (Oz Outback Internet Services, Queensland, Australia)

Visual Source 1.3 depicts a hunting scene, featuring either people or the thin Mimi spirits, said to inhabit the nooks and crannies of the area's rock formations. Notice the spears that the hunters carry. Various kinds of spears and spear-throwing devices had earlier replaced or supplemented the boomerang, while bows and arrows were unknown to the hunters of Australia before contact with Europeans.

- If the painting depicts real people or actual hunters, what purposes might it serve?
- What different understandings might emerge if the painting is seen as portraying Mimi spirits?
- How might a contemporary Aboriginal artist, such as the one quoted on page 42, understand this painting?

Using the Evidence: The Aboriginal Rock Painting of Australia

1. **Comparing rock art traditions:** How do these Paleolithic-era paintings compare with those from South Africa and southern France shown on pages 10 and 16?
2. **Considering art and religion:** How do these images reflect the religious understandings of the Dreamtime (see Document 1.2, pp. 39–41)?
3. **Seeking further evidence:** What additional information might help you to understand these images more fully?
4. **Connecting past and present:** In what ways do these paintings retain their ability to speak to people living in industrial societies of the twenty-first century? Or do they have meaning only for those who made them?