

MYTHS AND PALAEOLITHIC FIGURATIONS
IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

(De "Symposium Intern. sur les Religions
de la Préhistoire". Valcamonica, 1972)

The decorated caves of the Upper Palaeolithic in the Basque country form the central part of the Franco-Cantabrian group of art, and include the « sanctuaries » of Etxeberri, Sasixiloaga, Isturitz, Alquerdi, Ekain, Goikolan, Santimamiñe, Laperra etc. The artists who decorated these caves executed naturalistic representations and non-naturalistic signs, taking account of their position and grouping. The present-day Basques, who have preserved their own language and ethnic identity over such a long period, still see in these caves numerous spirits, embodied in the ox, cow, horse, goat etc., as is shown by the myths relating to the caves at Otsibarre, Lexarrigubelle, Isturitz, Lezia (Sare), Akelarre, Austokieta, Obanzun, Marizulo, Usategui, Ubedi, Putterri, Olanoi, Aketegui, Kapildui, Oquina, and Santimamiñe. It may be possible to discover some relationship between the Basque myths and the Upper Palaeolithic figurations of the same region.