



PROCEEDINGS OF THE IFRAO CONGRESS
September 2010

2013 # 5

<http://www.palethnologie.org>
ISSN 2108-6532

directed by
Jean CLOTTE

PLEISTOCENE ART OF THE WORLD

Short articles



GRAVETTIAN ART OF PAVLOV I AND VI: an Aggregation Site and an Episodic Site Compared

Jiří SVOBODA

Structure of Pavlovian art

The Dolní Věstonice – Pavlov – Milovice area in south Moravia forms a typical example of a densely settled Gravettian (Pavlovian) hunters' area, showing an internal hierarchy in terms of importance and size of the sites. Until now, occurrence of art objects was limited to large aggregation sites that resulted from repeated human activities at one place, and represent palimpsests of intensive reoccupations (Pavlov I, Dolní Věstonice I).

This art shows a variability in terms of materials, techniques, forms and functions. In their broad outlines, a majority of the symbolic objects may be classified along predetermined dichotomies: ivory carvings versus clay plastics, mobile art (attached and carried around) versus static art (that fulfilled its role then remained discarded *in situ*), and “long-term art” versus “short-term art”.

Ivory carvings are typical representatives of long-term art. They display a variety of zoomorphic, anthropomorphic and geometric forms; the anthropomorphic symbols especially reached a sophisticated level of abstraction (as at Dolní Věstonice I). Partly, these carvings served for body decoration (as “diadems”, pendants, and other attachments) and some of the zoomorphic shapes show notches for some kind of attachment as well (*contours découpés* at Pavlov I). These carvings, attached to human bodies or part of interior scenes, became part of everyday life.

The clay plastics represents a typical phenomenon of south Moravian mobiliary art, in a variety of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic shapes and fragments. The humans are predominantly females, whereas the animals are mostly imposing and dominant species (mammoth, lions, bears, rhinoceros, caprids, horses, and owls). A short-term or episodic meaning is more likely in their case, be it play, ritual, or magic. Firing, in fact, terminated the “life” of the clay items.

Pavlov I

Pavlov I was excavated by Bohuslav Klíma between 1952 and 1972. A majority of mobiliary art items are concentrated in the SE part of the site where their spatial distribution tallies with an accumulation of settlement units, hearths, and lithic industries. A separate accumulation of baked clay pieces and ochre occurred inside one settlement unit of the NW part. The remarkable mammoth tusk with geometric engravings, interpreted as a “map” by Klíma, originates from the transitory zone in the centre of the site.

The ivory art comprises flat zoomorphic carvings of a lion and a mammoth, 2 pendants shaped as owls, one three-dimensional female carving, and a number of decorative carvings (more than 10 pendants and more than 50 decorated ovals and bands of ivory, the most typical of them interpreted as “diadems”). From formal analogies with other sites (Předmostí, Eliseevichi, Mezhirich), the tusk interpreted as a “map” may be a kind of spatial representation of the site’s vicinity, possibly recording the qualities of the terrain for hunting.

The ceramic assemblage of Pavlov I comprises about 10 anthropomorphs: 4 female figures, 2 males (?), and 4 human heads, and 20 zoomorphs: 4 mammoths, 2 rhinos, 2 reindeers (?), 4 larger herbivores, 1 caprid, 6 lions and 1 bear. Numerous separate “trunks”, “legs”, “heads”, and fragments complete the assemblage.

In addition, there is a large assemblage of perforated Tertiary shells, carnivore teeth, two human teeth, lumps of ochre as well as grindstones for ochre processing.

Pavlov VI

Pavlov VI, almost completely excavated in the summer of 2007, comprises a single settlement unit. Among the modelled clay objects, the most typical piece depicts the head and neck of a carnivore, possibly another lion. We observe a mouth, an unclear eye, and four short, parallel incisions on the neck. The other face was completely destroyed by a deep frontal incision, produced by a sharp object directed against the animal’s mouth while the clay was still wet. Injuries against clay heads of this dangerous predator is a practice repeatedly recorded in the Dolní Věstonice / Pavlov area and elsewhere in the Upper Paleolithic (as in the Lion’s Chapel at Les Trois-Frères), and may be of symbolic significance.



Modelled clay objects of Pavlov VI discovered in 2007; left: stylized owl; right: zoomorph plastics (photo: M. Frouz, Institute of Archaeology, AS CR, Brno).

Another clay piece represents the en face body silhouette of an owl, without anatomical or facial details (except several short incisions). Dolní Věstonice I provided three additional ceramic figurines of owls, which however differ from Pavlov VI by their slim stature and facial details and may represent another species.

In addition, there is a crackled fragment of a large part of an animal's trunk showing the typical curvature of the back, one leg and three short incisions on the surface; a flat plaque with short incisions on both faces, some crosscutting; an oval-shaped fragment bearing two short and deep incisions; an oval-shaped fragment showing long horizontal incisions. Finally, there are four conical pieces, commonly interpreted as "legs" (which however does not mean that they ever were part of complete figures – some could be produced separately as partial representations). Decorative items are represented by numerous Tertiary shells, four flat pebbles (some with incisions), and the tooth of an Arctic fox, all perforated by direct drilling (in contrast, perforations at Pavlov I and II were mostly made by combination of cutting and drilling). Ochre occurs as sharp-edged, grey-to-violet fragments of hematite or as earthy, red-to-orange pellets, and traces of red coloration are visible on Tertiary shells and on some lithics.

Conclusion

Until recently, complex Pavlovian art was associated to the semi-permanent "mega-sites", but the 2007 excavation at Pavlov VI demonstrates that some aspects of symbolic behaviour were practiced at the episodic sites as well.





 **PaLETHNOLOGY**
Bilingual review of prehistory