

## 7. 92,000, Qafzeh Cave and Ochre Symbolism

*ReGenesis* is the first open-access encyclopedia to  
liberate pre-colonial research  
to its rightful 3,000,000 BCE origins  
- and -  
liberate female spirituality.  
(RGS.)

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### *Symbolic Culture.*

Red ochre was at the core  
of the emergence of the earliest appearance  
of symbolic culture.  
(ECC: 509.)

### *Origin of Patristic Religions.*

Ochre's Living Lineage:  
The Gyne-Morphic Bloodline  
of Spirituality.  
(OLL.)

### Introduction:

Qafzeh or Kafzeh Cave is located on the terrace of Har Qedumim (Jebel Qafzeh) on the east bank of the Arabic Wadi el-Haj/Hebrew Nahal Mizra creek that runs through a steep escarpment facing the Yizrael (Esdraelon) Valley, Israel. (ECC: 501.) Given that 84 ochre (or ocher) stained artifacts have been discovered plus recent geological and archaeological data, it appears that "ochre was actively collected by the site's occupants, who transported it to the cave when layers XXIV-XVII were deposited some 100,000-90,000 BCE years ago." (ECC: 501.) Ochre was gathered and used not for mundane tasks but rather in a ritual manner that was "consistent with the existence of a symbolic culture." (ECC: 491.) Additional ethnographic evidence also suggests that in the Middle Paleolithic, language was evolving. During this process, symbolic networks emerged in which certain material objects had symbolic application, especially ochre. (ECC: 491.)

### Research:

Given the emergent significance of ochre artifacts, Qafzeh Cave has been an ongoing focus of numerous archaeological, geological, and ethnographical studies that have resulted in new chemical, mineralogical, and petrographic analysis along with recent stratigraphic distribution and sedimentological evidence. A considerable number of these Qafzeh Cave studies support the trajectory that, “red ochre was [is] at the core of the emergence of the earliest appearance of symbolic culture.” (ECC: 509.)

#### Further Considerations:

Evidence of evolving language skills, advancing co – evolution of cognition and symbolism, plus mortuary behaviors and first menarchal rituals is also significant. Not only is ochre recognized as a social symbolic construct in burial rituals, but also an indicator of menstruation and fertility. (Additional research pending on the possible relationship/correlation between the end of life – and – the beginning of new life.)

#### Menstruation:

According to a model aggregated from Khoisan ethnography, ochre (or ocher) was commonplace in ancient menarchal rituals. (ECC: 509.) The ritual use of ochre was the first cultural construct in response to menarchal rituals as ochre was a biological phenomenon of fertility and likely recognized as an aspect of menstruation. (ECC: 509.)

Calendar consciousness may have developed in women first, since every woman has a ‘body calendar’ – her monthly menstrual period. She would be the first to note the relationship between her own body cycle and the lunar cycle (UOH: 83, n. 12; RGS). (RGS: 92,000, Qafzeh Cave and Ochre Symbolism).

#### Qafzeh Cave:

The following adds to a broader discussion about the use of ochre as an indicator of first menstruation and fertility in Africa including the Qafzeh Cave.

On the basis of the abundant ochre record from Africa, whose beginnings can be traced to the late Middle Pleistocene, \* Knight, Power, and Watts (HSR: 114: OSC: 113-46) have postulated that symbolic culture as a systematic behavior emerged within an African Middle Stone Age population of modern humans. Their line of reasoning is characteristic of the ‘symbols as tokens’ approach in that it views symbols as information carriers and places their origins in rational behavior designed to satisfy material needs (AS: 46). ... According to the suggested model, the use of ochre as the first cultural symbolic construct emerged. As a sociobiological response to the reproductive stress experienced by females during the phase of encephalization [process of brain enlargement] associated with archaic *H. sapiens*. Menstruation was taken to indicate fertility. ... [C]ommunicated for the first time [as] a ‘symbolic’ construct, and because the symbol as such came into being only within a social context, they view the use of ochre as the beginning of symbolic culture.

Knight, Power, and Watts (HSR: 114: OSC: 113-46) see clear indications in the African archaeological record that the beginnings of the postulated symbolic culture long antedate the production of representational imagery on inanimate surfaces (i.e., Upper Paleolithic rock painting). Watts (OSC: 113-46) accepts that the Middle Stone Age does not share the elaborate symbolic culture evident in the Late Stone Age (and the Upper Paleolithic in Europe) but maintains that all the essential elements appear to have been in place by, or shortly before, the Last Interglacial-within the Middle Stone Age 2 and approximately coincident with the emergence of anatomically modern humans. Significantly, he notes that the frequency and intensity of the use of ochre increase gradually over time from the Middle Stone Age onwards (ECC: 508-11).

\* Pleistocene, as outlined by Cavalli-Sforza:

Lower Paleolithic: 1.7 million–700 thousand years ago

Middle Paleolithic: 700 thousand-130 thousand years ago

Upper Paleolithic: 130 thousand-10 thousand years ago  
(HGHG: 61).

Initiation, death, and burial rituals:

Given African records and other data, ochre or red pigments also have other ritual significance, including initiation, death, and burial. Erella Hovers and team acknowledge the cognizance of ochre and “ritual's role in installing symbolic representations in human minds. Key to hunter-gatherer [gatherer-hunter] symbolic inheritance is initiation.” (ECC: 513.) According to Van Gennep in *The Rites of Passage*, ‘death’ as followed by ‘rebirth’ is a form of resurrection. (ECC: 513: RP.) Death is not unrelated but rather a related process. C. Knight in, *Blood Relations: Menstruation and the Origins of Culture* speaks of this *inviolability* process as sacred and holy. (ECC: 513: BR.)

Social Construct:

Following 100,000 BCE, ochre became a social symbolic construct both in death and burial rituals. In the lower layers of Qafzeh Cave, burial graves were clustered in one area along with most of the 84 ochre artifacts. (ECC: 507.) Burial graves illustrate forms of a social component and or ritual honoring of kin. (ECC: 508.) A particular case in point at Qafzeh Cave was a double burial of an infant and adult female that included a burial tribute of deer antlers, suggesting the existence of referential associations of a higher order. “The record of Qafzeh Cave depicts the shift from a structured symbolic system in the making to one that is established and requires less intentional investment (ECC: 509).” The occurrence of ochre in these contexts and its use by hominids of this period is now clear: the primary use of ochre during the Paleolithic evolved and was repeated to such a degree that this ancient symbol system did and does continue to “communicate a complex social and cosmological message.” (ECC: 492.)

First known Symbolic Culture:

Summary of earliest symbolic constructs and later doctrinal theories. Based on the trajectory that the root or source of later canonical/redeemer religions and priestly practices grew out of ancient ritual cultures (TRS: 1-27; AAI: 160-88; NHI: 111), evidence indicates that Qafzeh Cave holds the honor as the first known symbolic culture. This culture included spiritual traditions focused on: the seasons; honored (female) menstruation \* and birthing events; rhythms of community life; and initiation-death-and-burial rites. All of these practices indicate extensive use of ochre. Having demonstrated that ochre is at the core of the earliest appearance of symbolic culture, propose that Qafzeh Cave is the earliest known spiritual culture.

\* Erich Jantsch discusses the moon's impact on the menstruation cycle of human females. "In people who live close to nature, it is not only coupled in its 28-day period with the cosmic rhythm of the moon, but also in phase with it (onset of menstruation one day before the full moon.)" (SOU: 214-215.)

#### Practice Precedes Theory:

Although Robertson Smith was not speaking specifically about Qafzeh Cave, his suggestion regarding ancient spiritual traditions and rituals that "practice preceded doctrinal theory" clearly resonates here. (TRS: 20; AAI: 186.) The *written* doctrinal or routinized theory of hierarchical religions may have begun in Lower Mesopotamia during the Protoliterate Period 3,400-2,900 BCE (or 3,000 BCE (AAI: 169-172) when "professional priesthoods, engaged in the reproduction of regional orthodoxies as a full-time job." (AAI: 171.) For numerous *Re-Genesis* entries on transitions from mother – rite to father – right (GMDP), see below.

#### Further ochre and ritual research:

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- Zorich, Zach. "Neanderthals in Color." *Archaeology* 65.3 (May-Jun. 2012): 18. (NC.)

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- Ehrenberg, Margaret. *Women in Prehistory*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 1989. 77-107. (WP.)
- Eliade, Mircea. *A History of Religious Ideas: From the Stone Age to the Eleusinian Mysteries*. 1976. Tran. W. R. Trask. Chicago, IL: U. of Chicago Press, 1978. 29-55. (HR.)
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- Reid, Andrew. "Interaction, Marginalization, and the Archaeology of the Kalahari." Ann Brower Stahl, Ed. *African Archaeology: A Critical Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2005. 353-377. (IMA.)
- Reiter, Rayna R. Ed. *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1975. (TAAW.)
- Turnbull, Colin. *The Forest People*: Simon and Schuster, 1961. (TFP.)
- Zour, Maryam, Saman Farzin, and Babak Aryanpour. "Women in Ancient Elam (According to the Archaeological and Historical Evidence)." *Anahita: Ancient Persian Goddess and Zoroastrian Yazata*. Ed. Payam Nabarz. London, England: Avalonia, 2013. 216-235. (WA.)

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Further research on ancient ochre: 500,000-300,000, Dark Mother Tan-Tan of Morocco; 285,000, Ochre at Kapthurin Formation Plus Other Sites; 280,000-250,000, The Berekhat Ram Figure; 70,000, Blombos Cave and V Shaped Engraving; 50,000, African Homo Sapiens Migrations and Matrilineal Motherline; 31,000, Chauvet Cave and Vulva Engravings; 10,000, Grotta dell’Addaura; 2600-2000, Early Bronze Age, Crete, Chthonian \* Prepalatial/Early Minoan (EM I-III); and 1500, Lachish Ewer, Triangle, and Menorah. (RGS.)  
\* Earth Mother, Chthonian.

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Further research on transitions from mother – rite to father – right: 4400-2500, Kurgan Invasions; 4400-2500, Olympus Hera; 4000-3000, Egypt, Africa, and Cathedra Goddesses; 3000-2780, Egyptian Bronze Age, 2686-2181, Old Kingdom Egypt (2600 Fifth Dynasty); 2300, Sumerian Transitions; 2300-2100, Edfu Egypt; 1580, Zeus; 1450-1260, Hattusa and Yazilikaya, Anatolia; 1100-800, Iron Age; 1100-800, Mediterranean Dark Ages; 1000, Double Goddess Transition; 800-500, Archaic Greek Age; 700-550, Apollo at Delphi and Didymaion; 668-626, Sumerian Mythology; 587-500, Demise of Sumerian and Babylonian Goddesses; 323-30, Kom Ombo Temple; and 305-30, Esna Temple. (RGS.) (Also see CE entries: 325, Council of Nicaea and Goddesses and Gods; 431, Council of Ephesus and Virgin Mary, Anatolia; 570, Mohammed's Birth; and 1207-1273, Rumi and Mother.) (RG.)

#### Whole and Undivided:

The following speaks to the theory that *mankind* is not a one size fits all. Over the centuries, there has been a historic shift to a culture and society in which half of the population (*females*) are considered: politically; philosophically; psychologically; professionally; theologically; spiritually; academically; scientifically; sexually; biologically and etc. inferior or less than the other half. (MHE: 150.)

The repercussions of this shift in the symbolic plane can be seen NOT only in the division of male gods from female gods, but also in the separation of sky from earth, of mind from body, of spirituality from sexuality. Incorporated into the mainstream of Greek thought and later crystallized in the philosophical writings of Plato, these ideas then pass via Neoplatonism into Christian theology and contribute to the symbolic worldview, which is still dominant in western [global (?)] society today. From this early Greek Geometric period onwards, European culture ceases

to offer the imaginative vocabulary for any human being, female or male, to experience themselves as whole and undivided (MHE: 150).

This hierarchical dis-order is discussed at length throughout *Re-Genesis*, including BCE entries: 4400-2500, Olympus Hera; 3100-2600, Proto Bronze Age Crete, Writing, and Heroes; 3000-1450, Gournia; 2500, Inanna, Holder of the Me; 2400, Sumerian Women in the Akkadian Period; 2400, Lilith and Eve; 2300, Sumerian Transitions; 1750, Hammurabian Dynasty, Babylon, Ishtar, and Inanna; 1580, Zeus; 1100-800, Iron Age; 1000, Gods; 800-500, Archaic Greek Age; 587-500, Demise of Sumerian and Babylonian Goddesses; 500-400 Classical Greek Era and Leading Male Authors; 384-322, Aristotle's Theory of Rational Male Dominance; and First Century BCE-Sixth Century CE, Summary of Female Catholic Priests and Synagogue Leaders. (RGS.)

PHOTO: © GSA. IMAGE: QAFZEH OR KAFZEH CAVE, ISRAEL.

ILLUSTRATION © GSA. DESCRIPTION: QAFZEH OR KAFZEH CAVE IN ISRAEL IS THE SITE OF ESTEEMED ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES INCLUDING 84 OCHRE-STAINED ARTIFACTS PLUS OTHER SIGNIFICANT GEOLOGICAL DATA.

SLIDE LOCATION , SHEET , ROW , SLEEVE , SLIDE # , 92,000 BCE.

ON LOCATION: ILLUSTRATION IN PROGRESS

NOTE 1: FIELDWORK PROJECT.

PHOTO NOTE: ILLUSTRATOR, CHRISI KARVONIDES.

PHOTO NOTE: FOR FURTHER QAFZEH OR KAFZEH CAVE RESEARCH AND IMAGES:

RESOURCE: (MUSEUM ART RESOURCE.)

RESOURCE: (BRITISH MUSEUM: LONDON, ENGLAND.)

RESOURCE: (ARCHAEOLOGY, ARCHITECTURE & ART.)

