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Cover Picture: Upper Paleolithic Bradshaw rock art from Northwest Australia, dating from at least 17,500 years ago. Note the boomerang. (See article: *Australian Ice Age Rock Art May Depict Earth's Oldest Recordings of Shamanistic Rituals*).

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Australian Ice Age Rock Art May Depict Earth's Oldest Recordings of Shamanistic Rituals

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Bradshaw rock art, unique to the Kimberley, Northwestern Australia, depicts human-like figures characterized by extensive headdresses and elaborate body ornamentation. Numerous figures seem to float in space, as though in ecstatic behavior. Bradshaws, at least 17,500 years of age, may represent the world's oldest depictions of shamans and shamanistic rituals. Significantly, recent discoveries indicate some shamans may have been women. The worldwide distributional pattern of shamanism suggests it dispersed from a common source. Its possible representation in Bradshaw paintings gives important clues of the early spread of human behavioral patterns.

Keywords: Bradshaws, rock art, Kimberley, Upper Paleolithic, shamanism.

Recently, apparent shamanism depicted in Franco-Hispanic Ice Age rock art has become the subject of much attention (e.g. Smith, 1992; Bahn, 1998; Balter, 1999). However, rather than depicting ecstatic or shamanistic behavior itself, such as human-like figures dancing, drum-beating, hallucinating, or performing acts of healing,

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a majority of these cave paintings portray animals. Animals are a source of power from which shamans in many cultures derive their power. In stark contrast to Franco-Hispanic animal depictions, Bradshaw paintings principally depict human-like beings. Ethnographic studies (e.g. Elkin, 1950, 1977; Lommel, 1952; Eliade, 1973; Sales, 1992) show that shamanistic belief systems have been well developed in Australia, including the Kimberley region, where power is received in symbolic form provided by heroic beings, often from the rainbow or water serpents.

Bradshaws of the Kimberly probably represent the largest concentration of Upper Paleolithic Ice Age rock art in the world. Up to 100,000 rock art galleries are estimated to exist in the northern part of the Kimberley (Michaelsen, 1999; Michaelsen and Ebersole, in press). Data from recent excavations indicates that the Kimberley rock art system represents a minimum time span of 40,000 years (O'Connor, 1995; Fankhauser, et al., 1997). The northern Kimberley region is an isolated, rugged, and timeless tropical landmass, about the size of Denmark (Fig. 1). Bradshaw galleries are typically found on large, quartz-rich, sandstone overhangs, concentrated along the banks of seven major river systems. Other paintings are found in rock shelters.

Bradshaw rock art is named after the pastoralist, Joseph Bradshaw, who first documented it (i.e. Bradshaw, 1892), and the term is entrenched in the literature (e.g. Welch, 1993, 1996; Flood, 1995; Walsh, 1997; Watchman et al., 1997; Mulvaney and Kaminga, 1999; Walsh and Morwood, 1999). Artistically, Bradshaws are unusually advanced both in technique and breath of style. They seem to have arisen as unique compositions. However later superposition of elements in different styles and colors make interpretation somewhat difficult. New work by Watchman (1997) sheds some light on the nature of the pigments employed from a small number of samples. Overall, the principal color appears to have been derived from iron oxide rich material possibly from fine clay. There is no indication of a binder as oil, wax or albumin from egg which would likely contribute more carbon to the spectra. Thus, it appears that the natural process of silication may be solely responsible for their preservation. Paint may have been applied with the fingertip judging by the consistency and width of some outlines. Image processing also

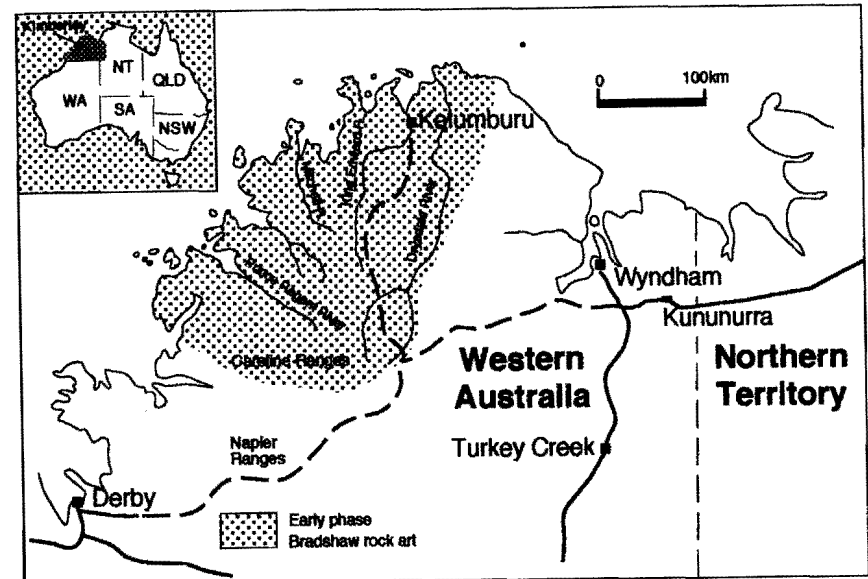


Figure 1. Location of Early Phase of Bradshaw Rock Art

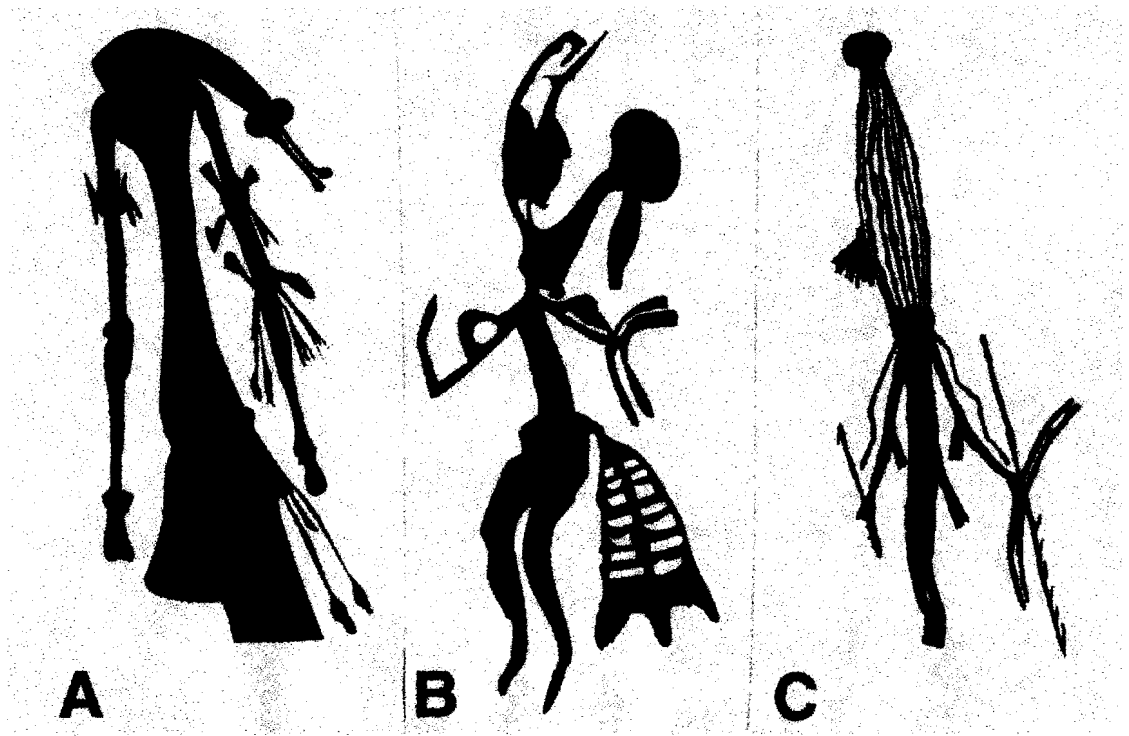


Fig. 2. Typical silhouette examples of human-like Bradshaws: A) Tasselled Figure; B) Sash Figure with large triangular appendage garment suggesting ceremonial usage. Note also boomerangs and large projections extending from its head; C) Polychrome Clothes Peg Figure with elaborate headdress and boomerangs, multi-barbed spear and spear-thrower (woomera).



Fig. 3. Three Sash Figures that resemble the Aboriginal sky-hero, Baiame. Note the large projections extending from the heads (left figure 21 x 13.5 cm).



Fig. 4. The central Tasseled Figure is possibly a female shaman and may be wearing a mask. The dotted lines, among various possibilities, could be liquid quartz crystals from Baiame (central figure 40 x 29.5 cm).



Fig. 5. Panel of Tasseled Figures showing headdresses or hats pointing in all directions suggesting dynamic movement, which is probably related to ecstatic dancing or a shamanistic vision quest (figure third from right 117 x 45.5 cm).

reveals that figures were often painted in outline first, then filled in. Engraving in the rock along outlines of figures may have served to sketch the compositions first. Special techniques in image processing reveal some well-painted faces with anatomically correct features, practically being portraits. In many instances, the human anatomy is represented in a highly evolved, realistic, and sensitive manner. Heavy and consistent stylization suggests the hand of talented and well-practiced artisans.

Evidence for sketching is highly important as it implies planning and hence a program, whose meaning is now largely lost. To date, there is no evidence of corrections or changes in composition by the artist, which further suggests a well-conceived plan prior to execution. The presence of later restorations implies that the paintings were well understood and perused over generations, demonstrating continuity over a presently unknown time span. Three distinct broad Bradshaw associations of paintings are evident (modified from Welch, 1996 and Walsh, 1997):

- 1) Tasselled Figures (oldest)
- 2) Sash Figures
- 3) Polychrome Clothes Peg Figures (youngest)

They clearly represent an explosion of artistic creativity. The dramatic changes in artistic style may represent punctuated periods of occupation and artistic expressions in the Kimberley (Walsh, 1997). Some Bradshaw paintings are clearly vandalized. Some are scratched by stones, others are stained by stone throws, and yet others have been broken by large rocks. Superposition of rock art images is another form of vandalism, and common throughout Kimberley. Significantly, superposition of image provides an important tool in rock art classification.

The three artistic styles appear very homogeneous on a regional scale. This may imply that a mobile population of hunter-gatherers created the paintings. This mobile lifestyle might be linked to a marginal, infertile environment due to reduced monsoonal effects in the northwest Kimberley during the last glacial maximum (e.g. Flood, 1995; Mulvaney and Kamminga, 1999). During this time span, Kimberley river systems would most likely have been ephemeral in

nature and consequently possible seasonal migrations would have been necessary to survive.

Dating of rock art is a far from simple exercise. In fact, it is notoriously difficult. Two different techniques have been used to date the Bradshaw rock art system. Mud wasp nests are abundant in the Kimberley with many covering the Bradshaw paintings. Single quartz grains embedded in one such nest has recently been dated by Roberts and co-workers (1997), using the optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) method, to be a minimum of 17,500 ± 1,800 years old. Watchman et al. (1997) published more recent dates of 3,900 and 1,450 years BP using the accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS) ¹⁴C method. The strongly diachronous dates might mirror problems with these dating techniques. Alternatively, the vast time span represented by the dates might genuinely reflect a long-lived rock art tradition which persisted in Kimberley for hundreds of generations. The numerous Bradshaw paintings, coupled with four distinctly different painting styles, and the evidence of art work restorations, might support this theory.

The Bradshaw paintings are quite small. Tasseled and Sash Figures are painted in red hues, and Polychrome Clothes Peg Figures in white, yellow and red hues. They are typically 10-70 cm long and 4-22 cm wide. Some Tasselled Figures are up to 135 cm tall and 49 cm wide. Bradshaw paintings predominantly depict slender, genderless, human-like figures wearing large, elongate headdresses or hats and bearing tassels hanging from their elbows, hips, and knees (Fig. 2). Some wear thick disks around the waist, neck, wrists, and elbows (Fig. 3). Skirts appear on some figures, and one observed figure wears straight-legged trousers that terminate about mid-calf in a bell shape. These garments are likely among the earliest known to humankind.

Some Sash Figures bear a triangular appendage that extends down close to the ground (Fig. 2B). If this were a piece of daily garb, it would presumably get damaged upon movement of the individual or damaged by dragging on rocks and vegetation. Consequently, it was most likely used for ceremonial purposes (Welch, 1996). A similar appendage on Sash Figures in Figure 3 is attached higher but also appears unsuitable for daily wear. In view that the appendage is

coupled with an odd shape extending from the head in Figure 2B, this painting seems most likely to represent an ecstatic ceremony, in which a vision quest or contact with a superhuman force may be occurring.

A number of Tasseled and Sash Figures appear to wear masks (Fig. 4). Numerous Tasseled and Sash Figures seem to float in space, as though in ecstatic behavior. Headdresses (or hats) point in all directions (Fig. 5), and in many cases, bent knees and various arm positions suggest movement, involving either dancing, ecstatic behavior, or both. These motifs may represent shamans and/or shamanistic rituals, or they could be depicting creation ceremonies which are also ecstatic. In these ceremonies the participants dance, beat the ground with sticks for rhythm, and sing. Both participants and onlookers become engrossed and ecstatic (Elkin, 1977). Ecstatic behavior is central to shamanism (Lommel, 1967). A state of ecstasy may be achieved by prolonged rhythmic movements or induced by hallucinogenic plants. Interestingly, eucalyptus leaves (a psychoactive drug) are commonly portrayed alongside Tasseled and Sash Figures that appear to be in motion. In some paintings, the figure's head is bent far back, looking up toward the sky. A sign parallels the humanoid's head as if to symbolize a vision or possession of some form of power. This is reminiscent of the recurring theme of the "Ecstatic Shaman" in textiles of the Paracas culture of Peru, in which the head is bent back and ritual objects are held in the hands.

Some Tasseled and Sash Figures carry dilly bags (possibly used for carrying food, amulets, tools, magic potions, or totems) and/or one to three arcs resembling boomerangs. However, the latter could be symbols rather than actual objects or, if objects, they may carry symbolic meaning. For example, the "boomerangs" could represent rainbows. The rainbow or rainbow-snake is a central feature in ceremonies, during an inauguration ceremony of Aboriginal shamans (Elkin, 1977; Roughsey, 1975). Bradshaws wearing garments with triads are pervasive: items dangling from hips and sometimes from elbows are usually forked into three branches, sometimes with solid triangles at the tips of the branches. Triadic objects also appear as solid triangles at ends of shafts held in hands (Fig. 4). In some scenes, three lines emanate from hands or fingers. Rock art of the African San tribe Lewis-Williams, 1981; Vinnicombe, 1976) displays similar lines, which either represent power being transferred from one

source to another or the intake or expulsion of some force. In the Bradshaws, another sign of power may be depicted by a human-like Sash Figure with two projections extending from its head (Figs. 2C, 3). Ethnographic work by Campbell shows that when such projections are accompanied by the correct words this act can magically kill an enemy or can be used to induce power (Campbell, 1989). Because shamans tend to be healers and life-givers, not deliverers of death (Elkin, 1977), the former role is more likely for shamans. In the Lascaux cave in France, a mythical animal has two similar projections emanating horizontally from its head. Anthropomorphic figures with similar horned-headdresses on Siberian and Saami drums have been explained as depictions of shamans (Autio, 1990).

With dates of European cave art going back 30,000 to 32,000 years in Grotte Chauvet at Ardeche, France (Clottes, 1966), shamanism is indeed ancient, if, as has been argued, some of the cave art does indeed represent shamanism. Grotte Chauvet cave paintings, like so many other Franco-Hispanic examples, are largely limited to animals. Some of these animals have lines drawn near the nose or mouth, similar to those painted during the next 20,000-year period. These lines may illustrate life-breath, where breath is regarded as a life-force among hunter-gatherers across the world (Smith, 1985). Breath signs together with other signs and symbols seem to link the animals with human-like figures found in some of the Franco-Hispanic caves, suggesting shamanism (Smith, 1992). A prominent figure observed in one Bradshaw scene also has a line at the mouth (Fig. 4) as does a small figure in another, which too may indicate life-breath. However, this sign seems comparatively rare among Bradshaw paintings.

Only occasionally do Bradshaw paintings depict animals, but they often include enigmatic signs. Some signs have vaguely anthropomorphic-looking forms radiating from above, touching the head (Fig. 2B). These may represent superhuman or metaphysical forces in contact with the human figures. Such forms also occur with three figures in Figure 3. Many Bradshaw paintings suggest a direct link to some Aboriginal belief systems which involve a God-like sky hero, Baiame, who was originally on earth as creator of natural features, rituals, and law. Baiame and the rainbow characterize a belief system differing from that of Dreamtime (i.e. Aboriginal

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creation mythology) (Elkin, 1950). Two large quartz crystals apparently extend from Baiame's shoulders to the sky (Drury, 1989). Perhaps the three Sash Figures in Figure 3, with large disks extending from the upper arms and rainbows in their right hands, represent Baiame. Numerous Bradshaw figures have lines extending down from the head, most dotted, but some continuous. These could be beads or cords, or they could symbolize life-forces. In one examined figure, dotted lines radiate from the entire body, except the legs. In others, they shower over the body in a way that may relate to the belief that Baiame brings a waterfall of liquid quartz to pour over the body of a new shaman during inauguration (Drury, 1989). A similar shower of lines, but over an uncertain form, is engraved on the cave wall at Lascaux, France (Smith, 1992). In some Aboriginal belief systems, when their shaman dies, he travels to the sky (realm of the dead) by the rays of the setting sun. This may be represented in one Bradshaw scene, which depicts a disk well above a human-like figure and lines extending from the disk to the figure's head. In one hand is a pair of long arcs, possibly symbolizing a rainbow.

Hunter-gatherer traditions and memories are extraordinarily conservative. If a tradition or memory is changed or forgotten, it loses its power. French cave art held similar artistic traditions over a 20,000-year period, and Australian Aborigines still remember sacred places from the Pleistocene that are now submerged (Breedon, 1988). Similarly, numerous North American peoples have retained knowledge and practices also harking back to the Ice Age (e.g. Anisimov, 1963; Klein, 1973; West, 1981). Thus, a continuity of signs stemming from a remote past is at least conceivable. Continuity of cultural practices across continents is a possibility that must also be entertained. Studies by Elkin show that Aboriginal and Tibetan shamanism have markedly close similarities; and recent research found shamanistic practices and meanings in native North American cultures very similar to those of the Aborigines (Andrews, 1998).

In one Bradshaw gallery, a central, human-like Tassel figure seems quite prominent with arms stretched out horizontally, while those standing to the one side are more subdued, as though by-standers to a shaman's actions. Those on the other side have arms uplifted as if participating in some manner (Fig. 4). Small breasts on each side of the chest of the central figure are clearly visible, as are those on two

figures in another gallery. This is significant, as it indicates that shamanism may have originated as a woman's role which over generations has been partly taken over by men. This idea is supported by the fact that several Siberian tribes speaking completely different languages all have a similar word for female shamans (e.g., udaghan, udagan, utygan). In contrast, the term for male shamans is distinct in each language (e.g. shaman, bo, oyun) (Czaplicka, 1914; Michael, 1972). Furthermore, shamans in Siberia and in the Americas frequently wear women's clothes and acquire feminine characteristics (Furst, 1973; Schleiser, 1987) as did shamans in Europe (Jones and Pennick, 1995). Perhaps related to this notion is the Basque folklore (probably from the Neolithic, if not earlier), in which one legend refers to a cave-dwelling priestess, who provides prophecies to her people.

Recent research by Klein (1999) and Quintana-Murci (1999) suggests that critical changes occurred within the Aurignacian culture that later radiated outward from North Africa about 50,000 years ago, from which other cultures worldwide developed. The worldwide pattern of shamanism suggests that it too may have dispersed during the Aurignacian from that centre of origin. Possible representation of shamanism in the Bradshaw paintings, being at least 17,500 years of age, gives important implications for the early spread of human behavioral patterns.

It may seem preposterous to extend comparisons not only across time and cultures, but even more so across continents. Yet shamanism itself traditionally does just that; and this makes the striking similarity of several symbols used by tribes across the continents at least noteworthy. Perhaps most similarities are just coincidental. Yet, new evidence on the pre-history of humankind is often accompanied by surprises. The worldwide pattern of shamanism indicates an ancient and possibly common heritage. Its representation in Bradshaw paintings suggests an early spread of these human behavioral patterns. Bradshaw figures may depict something other than shamanism, but for at least some of the scenes, shamanism seems the most plausible explanation.

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'Elen of the Hosts'

Part II of St. Alban and the End of Roman Britain

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In a continuation of his investigation into the origins of the legend of St. Alban of Romano-British tradition, begun in the article entitled the "St. Alban and the End of Roman Britain", the author here investigates further the Brittonic, Cornish and Breton roots of the Saint's name, suggesting a link with pre-Christian divinities.

Key Words: St. Alban, Elven, Elen, Christian Martyrs, Celtic paganism, Roman Britain, Breton and Cornish mythology.

In an attempt to verify that the British 'martyr' St. Alban's name does represent a continuation of the long tradition of divine names in *albh-* that we identified in Part I of this series, we can look at the problem from the other end again and try to see whether we can see any sign of Alban's tradition emerging into medieval Celtic sources: we can resume our search for likely derivatives of 'Alban/Albios' in the later cult evidence, returning, this time, to a Brittonic context. There are other Brittonic saints' names that look very close to the one we have already examined: 'Elven'. There is the Breton 'Elouan' and the Cornish 'Elwen' (Loth: 37-8, 131; Gould: II, 449-50), for instance. It is worth bearing in mind the many centuries between the Alban of our 5/6th century records and the late date that these cult names emerge into our records. We might consider whether these might not represent corruptions of an original 'Elven', or of a name that contained 'Elv-' < *alb(i)o*), or names that might easily have been confused with such forms, and so, being more familiar to contemporaries, have come to supplant them in the tradition?

A different, but similar name might have been arrived at, in other words, by a process of assimilation. Thus the *-wen* of 'Elwen' might

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