

October 2016

Armintxe Basque Cave Artwork: The Latest Find

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.boisestate.edu/boga>



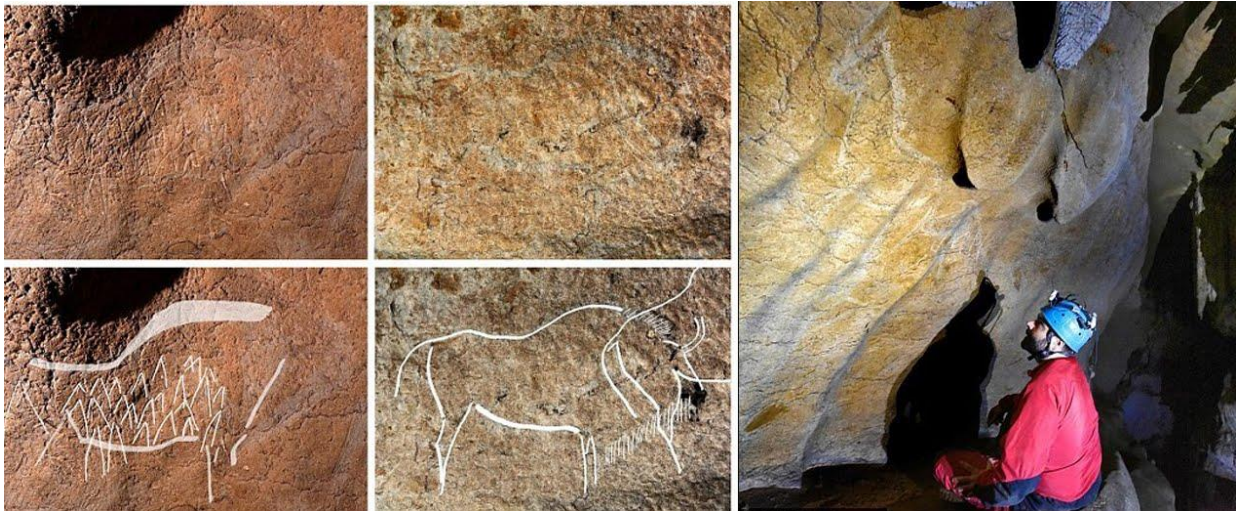
Part of the [Basque Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(2016) "*Armintxe* Basque Cave Artwork: The Latest Find," *BOGA: Basque Studies Consortium Journal*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 1 , Article 5.
Available at: <http://scholarworks.boisestate.edu/boga/vol4/iss1/5>

BOGA feature

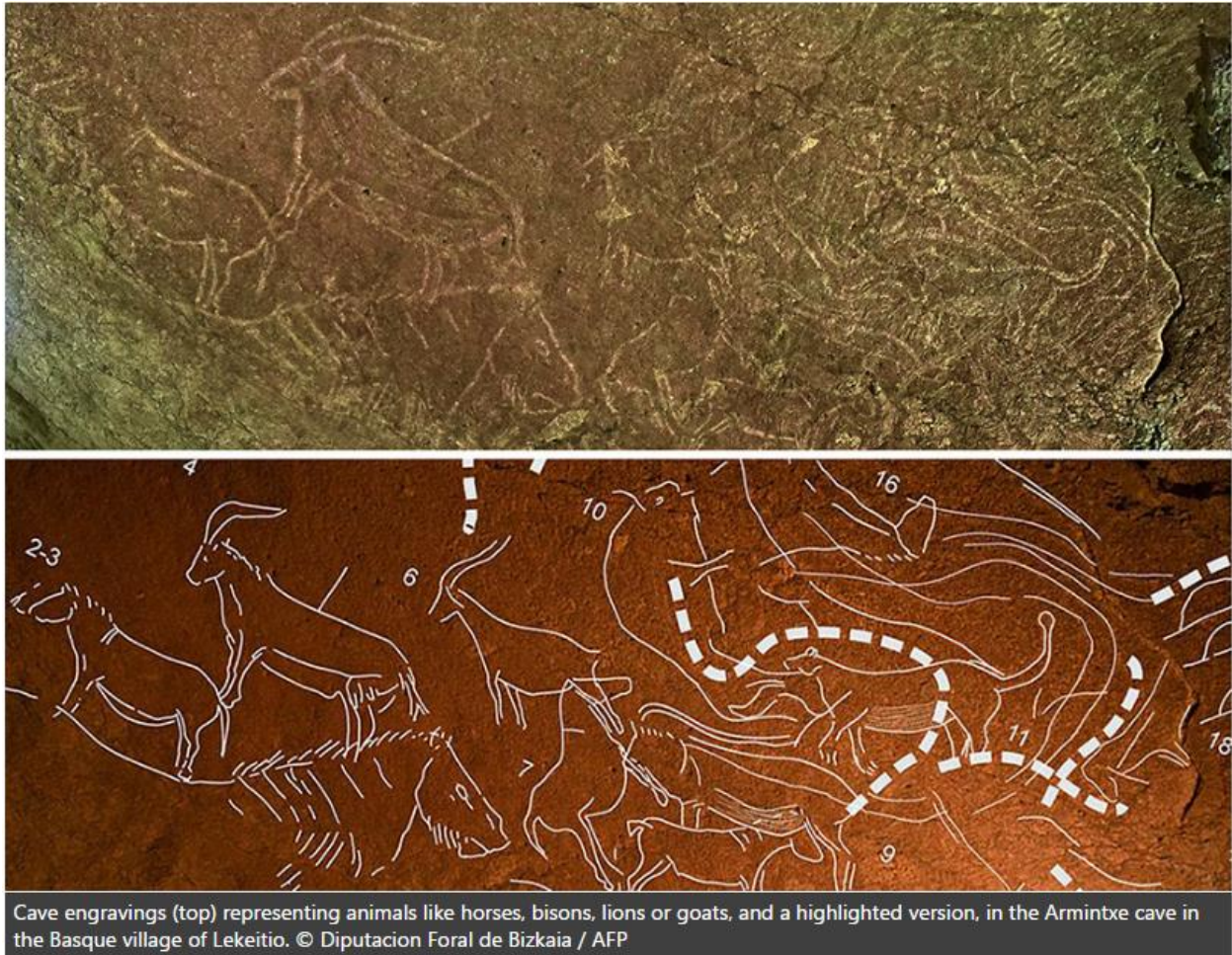
Armintxe Basque cave artwork: the latest find



SOURCE: https://i.ytimg.com/vi/q3RSCrk7_g0/maxresdefault.jpg

Feature's content sources: rt.com, the DailyMail.co.uk & BBC.com

Ancient cave paintings reaching back more than 14,000 years were recently found below the Basque town of Lekeitio (Bizkaia). The fifty images were found etched into stone at the *Armintxe* cave, depicting animals rarely seen in Paleolithic art, such as lions. Experts from the Provincial Council of Bizkaia made the discovery, and believe that they share many of the same characteristics as previous cave artwork in the Basque Country, suggesting close contact among these people who shared in the creation of these cave etchings.



SOURCE: <https://www.rt.com/viral/362841-basque-ancient-cave-painting/>

A question is whether these people who left us these ancient cave artworks were Basque. It is difficult to say, since while many of these etchings are good art (i.e., reflecting a close approximation of reality) these artists did not do us the favor of writing the name of the creatures in the Basque language because writing had not yet been introduced. In that part of the world, writing emerges in the second half of the first millennium BC, with the Phoenicians and Greeks.

Basques are known as the "mystery people" of western Europe because there are more questions than answers about these people, regarding their origins and their unique language. The homeland of the Basques, when we first find them in recorded history, is northern Spain and southern France. Two thousand years ago when the Romans moved into this part of the world, they encountered a people they considered to be strange because of their language. One name the Romans gave them was "vascones" (from which came the Spanish appellation *Vascos*, and the French version *Basque*). But the Basque's name for themselves is *Euskaldunak*, which means one who speaks Euskara or the Basque language. It is a unique language in the world today, with no known connection with any other language, and older than Spanish or French (since both those languages derived later from the Latin of the Romans). The late linguist Larry Trask stated that "the ancestral form of Basque

was introduced into western Europe long, long ago — at least thousands of years ago, and maybe even tens of thousands of years ago. Nobody knows. All the other modern languages of western Europe arrived much later.”¹



SOURCE: http://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2016/10/14/12/3961AFCA00000578-3837953-image-a-29_1476445843086.jpg

The cave had long since been well known to locals, but apparently no one had ventured further in where this 15 meter long panel of etchings was found, until they were discovered by archaeologist Diego Garate and caver Iñaki Intxaurre.

¹ <https://basquestudies.boisestate.edu/gutaz-basques/basque-basics/>

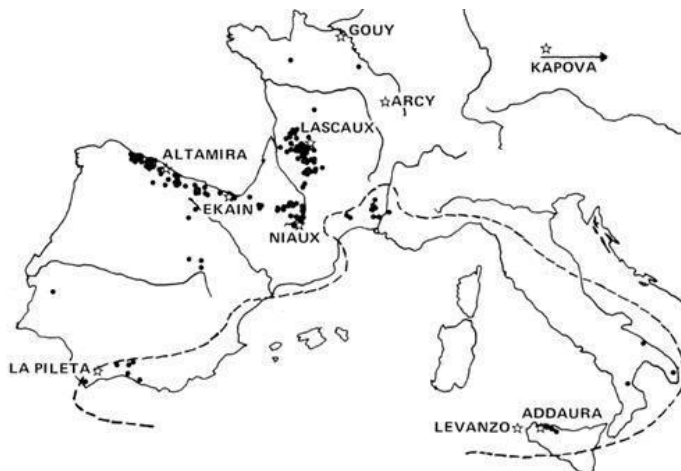
It is no exaggeration that this new find is extraordinary. Some of the etchings are much bigger than those previously found, with one horse about five feet long (150cm). Senior Biscay official Unai Rementeria proclaimed the recent find “a treasure of humanity” noting the discovery back in May of 2016. While not unique, since other cave etchings have many of the same features, other cave specialists and archaeologists hail the find to be one of the most spectacular and striking to date.

These most recent finds now add to the collection of Basque cave artwork in previously noted locales like Santimamine and Ekain (pictured)



SOURCE: <http://www.ice-age-europe.eu/files/bilder/Partner/Ekainberri/Pictures/EKAINBERRI%2003.jpg>

The cave will not be opened to the public, however, due to its inaccessibility (it's located under a residential building) and desire to preserve the paintings, using technological reproductions to give the public a glimpse of a lost world, that of the Paleolithic Age (“Old Stone Age”), when homo sapiens such as ourselves lived as hunters and gatherers, not knowing agriculture or livestock: they subsisted on hunting and fishing, and what they could directly procure from the land such as fruits, roots or herbs.



http://www.visioninconsciousness.org/AC_25/Cave_Paintings_06.jpg

Ancient cave paintings are not confined to the Basque Country. There have been numerous such findings in parts of western Europe.



<http://www.human-resonance.org/chauvet16.jpg>

Similar find: An archaeologist and a recreational cave explorer recently discovered at least 70 ancient cave paintings in the in the Atxurra caves in northern Spain. Although a team located the caves in 1929, the paintings are nearly 1,000 feet inside, and are barely visible to the untrained eye, so they haven't been seen until now. YouTube video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3RSCrk7_g0



More research will continue at the site. Little did the residents of the apartment complex in Leketio know what was below them: remnants of a world 14,000 years ago of people who inhabited this corner of western Europe. It's unlikely if we'll ever know for sure if these people were Basque speakers, but then--and now—we see that this was a place that people for a long time decided to call home. Every society produced some form of art, and here we have a glimpse into that mysterious world of millennia ago.



SOURCE: <https://www.rt.com/viral/362841-basque-ancient-cave-painting/>